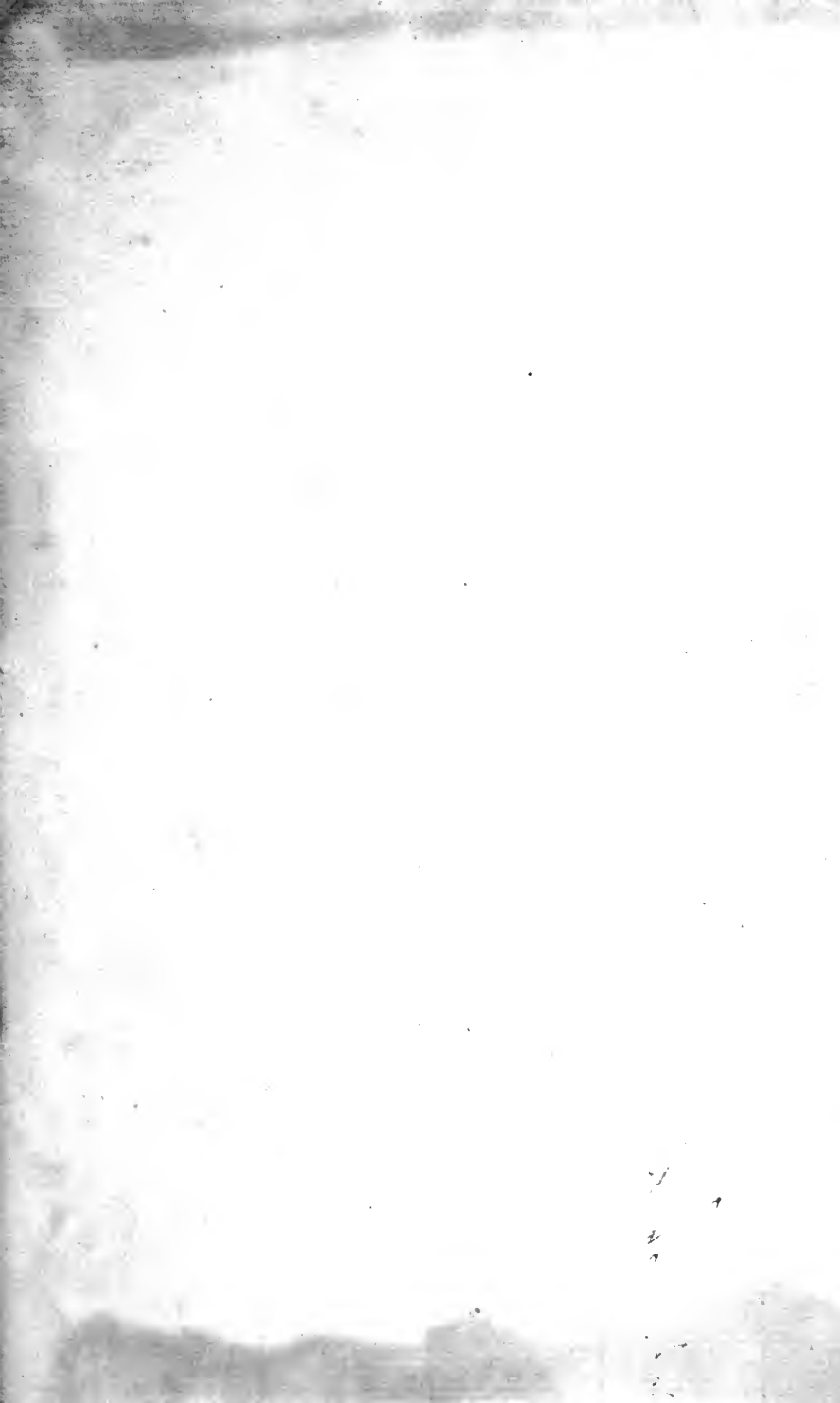


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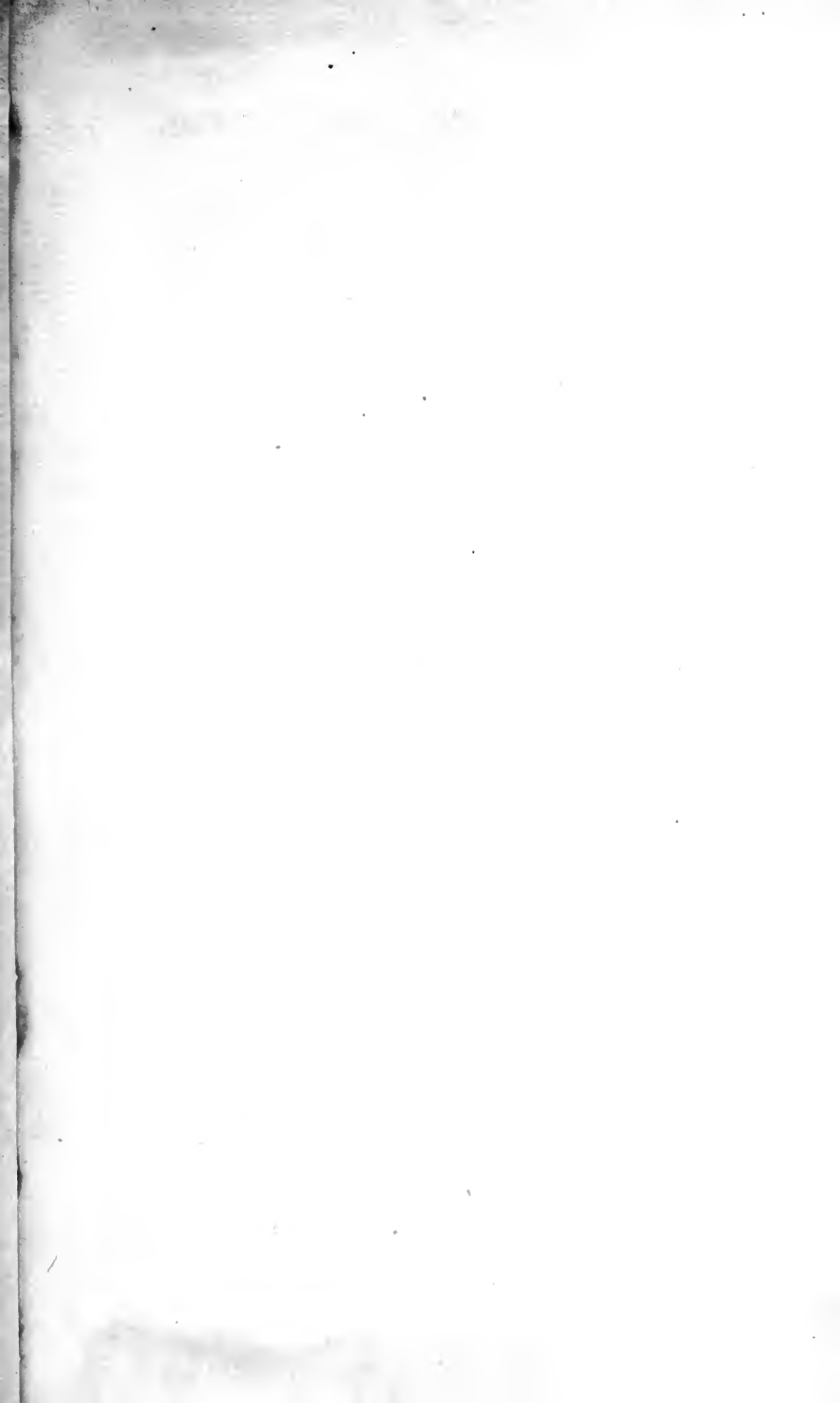








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Kt. Rev. J. O'Mahony.



**The Ecclesiastical Conferences,**

**THE SYNODAL DISCOURSES,**

AND

**EPISCOPAL MANDATES,**

OF

*MASSILLON BISHOP OF CLERMONT,*

ON THE

**PRINCIPAL DUTIES OF THE CLERGY.**

**TRANSLATED**

By the Rev. C. H. BOYLAN, of the Royal College of Maynooth.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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# A DISCOURSE

UPON

THE VOCATION TO THE ECCLESIAS-  
TICAL STATE: ADDRESSED TO THE  
YOUNG.

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INTENDING, my dear children, to consecrate yourselves to the holy ministry, you have, without doubt, carefully examined, whether it be God that has called you to a state into which Jesus Christ himself did not enter, without a mission from his Father, and into which no one has a right to enter without a mission from Jesus Christ: *Sicut misit me Pater, et ego mitto vos.*\* I suppose then that human considerations have had no share in a vocation, which is defiled and rendered illegitimate, by every mo-

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\* John c. xx. v. 21.

tive that proceeds not from the spirit of God. I suppose that your early morals have not, by their irregularity, already announced to you, that you should never presume to thrust yourselves into the sanctuary, the formidable gates of which, were in ancient times open only to innocence, and into which innocence itself did not enter without trembling: I suppose, in fine, that the enlightened judges to whom, in the tribunal, you have confided the details of your past life, and the most secret inclinations of your heart, have discovered in you, as far as it is given to the limited and ever uncertain lights of mortals to penetrate; have, I say, discovered in you, the marks of a true vocation; that in assenting to your installation in the holy place, they believed they were concurring in the eternal designs of God upon you; that they presumed, that in presenting yourselves to the church, you offered nothing to her, but what the Lord himself had chosen; and that they have said to you, with a holy confidence, as Laban said, of old, to Eliezar: *Ingrederere benedictæ Domini, cur foris stas?\** *Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou*

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\* Genesis. c. xxiv. v. 31.



*without?* But if, on the other hand, my dear children, these essential conditions are wanting to your vocation; if, before presenting yourselves in this place, you have not long examined before God, whether the design of consecrating yourselves to the holy ministry, came from him; if the order and circumstances of your birth, have had a greater share in it, than the order of the Almighty and the impulse of his grace; if the hope of finding in the sanctuary, a situation more comfortable, more honourable and commodious than awaited you at home, has decided your choice; if your vocation has had its origin, in the arrangements and the cupidity of friends; if they have consulted their interests, rather than your inclinations and the interests of your salvation, and if the necessities of your family, and not those of the church, have given you to the altar, your vocation, which began in the flesh, will end in the flesh. It is cupidity that has dedicated you to the church, and it will not fail to stain the whole course of your ministry; you cannot be the Priest of Jesus Christ, who knows you not, and who has not sent you; you will be merely the Priest of your own passions, and of those of your relatives, from whom alone

you have received your mission. When the relatives of Christ, according to the flesh, dazzled by views altogether carnal of his first miracles, and moved by the success of the opening of his mission, already conceiving the hope of a splendid fortune according to the world, and such is almost always the object of relatives: urge him to quit the obscurity of a village, and manifest himself to the world, on the occasion of a public solemnity in Jerusalem: *Si hæc facis, manifesta teipsum mundo*,\* what does Christ answer them? that they are ever ready to counsel those who are allied to them by blood, such steps and pursuits as may be glorious and profitable to themselves; and that they regard neither the designs of God, nor whom He has chosen, nor the times he has marked for the manifestation of his choice; that all times are good, and all persons equal in their eyes, provided they may contribute to the advancement of their earthly projects of ambition and fortune. In effect, every thing seems good to carnal parents: suppose a child vicious, born with inclinations altogether opposed to the sanctity of the ministry; yet, if his priest-

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\* John. c. vii. v. 4.

hood promises to him and to them, temporal advantages; behold their time and their vocation; they heed no other: *Tempus vestrum semper est paratum; tempus autem meum nondum advenit.*\* But the time of Jesus Christ is rarely the same as their's; and woe to those who do not await it; woe to those who anticipate it; woe to those who take the voice of flesh and blood for the voice of heaven, and confound the time of cupidity with the hour of grace: *Tempus vestrum semper est paratum; tempus autem meum nondum advenit.* Purity of motive is, then, the first mark of a vocation.

But although you should have no reproach to make yourselves, on the score of your motives; although an inclination from childhood, for the church, were to bespeak their purity; you ought still to ask yourselves, whether your morals hitherto have pronounced this early inclination to be the impulse of grace, rather than a mere impression of nature; for the second mark of a vocation is innocence of morals. You ought to examine, whether an innocent life has prepared you for this holy step; whether those

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\* John. c. vii. v. 6.

who were brought up with you, witnessing the candour, the wisdom and purity, of your early morals, have of themselves, destined you to the altar ; whether, as it were, they predicted that a life so prudent, so innocent in childhood, showed from afar, the image of a virtuous Priest, as Saint Paul assures us was the case of his disciple Timothy : *Secundum præcedentes in te prophetias.*\* For, if your morals have, hitherto, disavowed the holy state you are going to embrace ; if you bear no other mark of a vocation to the divine functions of the ministry, but the disorders of early youth ; if your past conduct, by its irregularities and excesses, seemed rather to point you out for the licentious soldiery of the world, than for the army of the church ; if, far from having the approbation and suffrages of the public, required by the church, in the ordination of her ministers, you have given cause to such as knew you, to foretel, that so far from ever becoming a worthy Priest, you would be even a scandalous layman ; approach not the holy place : present not at the altar, at which the victim bearing the slightest blemish was rejected, a body defiled by a thou-

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\* 1. Tim. c. i. v. 18.

and abominations: be not guilty of the frightful temerity of carrying into the sacred tabernacle, not only an unholy fire and strange incense, but even the criminal fire and impure odor of your scandalous disorders: enter not into the temple of the living God, to make a sacrilegious union of Christ with Belial, of the Holy of Holies with the shameful idol of passion and sin. An avenging flame may not come forth, as formerly, from the sanctuary, to devour you, and punish the guilt of your profanation; but the invisible hand of God will repel you, as a profane intruder, and a secret and impure fire will light up and burn with still greater violence in your soul; will defile and render it still more hideous than before, will reign in it to the end, will consume by degrees, the few remains of faith and of the fear of God, that had survived your disorders, and to the end, you will be stamped with the character of reprobation, and be a hidden curse in the midst of Israel.

I do not say that if heretofore you have had the misfortune of losing your innocence, and if by a prompt and sincere repentance, you have returned to a virtuous life, you ought absolutely renounce the idea of consecrating your-

self to the church. This was the rigorous law which she formerly observed: those who had fallen, that is, those who had committed even those private sins which kill the soul, and for which the canons enforced the exercise, and exacted the performance, of public penance: the faithful who had thus fallen, were for ever excluded from the sacred ministry: it was a stain which tears might expiate before God, but which they did not cover from the eyes of the church. She would not suffer even the most fervent of her public penitents ever to exercise the right of applying to others, those expiatory remedies, of which they had once, themselves stood in need: innocence alone was admitted into the venerable assembly of the ministers of her altar.

The necessities of the church, and the general depravation of morals, have obliged her to relax a little and with regret, from her first rigor; her discipline has changed, but her spirit, and the sanctity requisite for the ministry, are still the same. It is then always dreadful for us, to stand in need of her indulgence in this particular; it is dreadful for us, that the general corruption should be our only claim to enter the gates of the sanctuary; that the change

and the wickedness of the times should constitute our only title; that we should be as children brought forth, in the pains and groans of the church, and pastors not worthy of the glorious days of her liberty, but chosen in the hour of her necessity and constraint. It is necessary that, the reparation which you have made for those passing transgressions, and the lively and sincere repentance that has followed them, should, in the eyes of the church, hold, as it were, the place of a second innocence: it is necessary that a profound sentiment of your unworthiness, that a holy fear, in presenting yourself, to be associated to the ministers of the altar; a sincere and ardent zeal for the sanctification of those, who are to be confided to you, and a tender love for the church, indemnify her, for the defects in your ordination; make up for what she formerly required in those whom she deemed worthy of being chosen, and solace, in some measure, her grief, and the sad necessity of her indulgence, by the hope that the consequences of your repentance, will be even more useful to her, than the innocence which she once exacted. Do not increase her grief for the decay of her discipline; and in the conduct of souls, be the more exact

in causing her rules to be observed, in proportion as she seems to have relaxed them in your favor. But I repeat it, if from your early age, down to the present time, your life has been only one unbroken course of depravity and guilt; if your days may be reckoned by your crimes, and if sin has been the fixed and uniform state of your youth; you bear, engraven in indelible characters, on the corruption of your heart, the terrible sentence that excludes you for ever from the sanctuary. Would God have prepared you by a life altogether impure, for those divine functions which he has not confided even to Angels? would he himself have chosen a vessel of ignominy to place it on his holy altar? would he himself have conducted, as it were, by the hand, a body covered with defilement, into the interior of the awful sanctuary, to immolate the Lamb without spot, in the presence of the celestial spirits that encircle the altar? Could you bring yourself to such a persuasion, unless the justice of God were intent to punish your disorders by a blindness, which would be their consummation, and the last mark of his vengeance? But you promise to weep over your disorders, and to lead a life altogether new. Seek then a retreat among the



solitary and the penitent; and choose not for the atonement of your crimes, a ministry of holiness and authority, which presupposes virtues acquired, and not crimes to be expiated. You are the filth and refuse of the earth, and you think of becoming its salt? you are like another Lazarus, a rotten and infectious carcass, and you think of becoming the minister of resurrection and life! you have been hitherto chained in shameful bonds, and you dare present yourself to loosen the chains of your brethren? But ought we to despair of the mercy of the Lord? God forbid: repent sincerely of your sins; do penance for them, and God will forgive you: but he will not forgive the temerity of your guilty intrusion into the holy ministry; nor will your repentance be sincere, if notwithstanding your knowledge of the law that rejects you, you force the church to receive you into the number of her ministers. Abide the decision of the judge of your conscience: confide to him, with sincerity, the state of your soul, and the entire series of your past life; open to him, without disguise, this old and new treasure of iniquity. Be not satisfied with disclosing to him the latter circumstances of your life, and leaving the past in affected si-

lence and forgetfulness: you have chosen him to be in the presence of God, the arbiter of your vocation: make yourself entirely known, that he may be in a condition to judge; discover yourself to him such as you truly are, and such as God knows you to be. Listen with docility to whatever he shall announce, and receive his decision with submission: do not compel him to give externally a consent, which he refuses in secret, and which his piety, his lights and the laws of the church, equally forbid: wrest not from him a compliance, which the inviolable secrecy of his ministry, renders on his part unavoidable, and force him not to admit into the sanctuary, a candidate, whom God rejects and vomits forth from his mouth. If in defiance of his secret and salutary admonitions you have the frightful temerity to advance; if, like Saul, persuaded that he was reprov'd of God, you force another Samuel, oblig'd to secrecy, to honour you before men, and suffer you to usurp an honor which belongs not to you, and which God refuses: *Honora me coram senioribus populi:*\* I have nothing further to say to you: your reprobation will be written on your fore-

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\* 1. Kings. c. xv. v. 30.

head, in the sacred character with which you are to be marked; and all that can be done by the judge of your conscience, who knows your unworthiness, and the decree of the Lord by whom you are rejected, is to weep, during the rest of his days over the irrevocable misfortune of your destiny for eternity: *Et lugebat Samuel Saulem omnibus diebus vita suæ.\** Innocence of morals is then the second mark of a vocation.

I shall not dwell long on talents, which constitute the third mark. The Father of the family calls none but workmen into his vineyard: although he should have confided but a single talent to his servants, he designs that it should be improved, and the unprofitable servant is cast into exterior darkness: Jesus Christ has established and sent us, only to produce fruit: *Posui vos ut catis et fructum afferatis.†* In the world, it is not the custom to destine for the army, the law, or for public affairs, persons born without any talents for these different professions; and what could persuade you to enter the church, if you find in yourself no talents for the different employments, with which

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\* 1. Kings. c. xv. v. 35. † John. c. xv. v. 16.

she must entrust you? To be an unprofitable labourer, or not in a state to cultivate the vineyard, is an irrevocable cause of exclusion: it is to have neither title nor vocation to enter it. Perhaps you are called by a benefice, which your relations have a long time possessed, and to which you are destined to succeed: but this benefice is the penny which the Father of the family, that is to say, the church intends to give to none, but to those who toil in the improvement of her vineyard: it is the reward of labor, and not the recompence of effeminacy and idleness; nor can you have any right to receive it, but in proportion as you shall labour and render yourself useful. If you enjoy it without making yourself serviceable to the church, you enjoy a property which is not yours: you frustrate the intentions of the zealous and generous faithful, who in ancient times established those pious foundations, and bestowed them on the church, to supply the necessities of the virtuous and active pastor, not to minister to the luxury and voluptuousness of the worthless and the idle. Alas! these pious souls denied themselves the expenses and gratifications of magnificence and sensuality; they retrenched the superfluities and even the com-

forts of life, to enrich the church: how could it have entered into their thoughts, to secure by their retrenchment and economy, to the ministers of a crucified God, that ease and those superfluities which they did not deem themselves entitled to enjoy? You occupy the place and the revenue of a pastor who would have usefully served the church: you deprive her of a faithful labourer, who would have consoled her by the fruits of salvation, and who would have assisted and honoured her by talents, the want of which cannot fail to render you a disgrace and a burden to her.

And when I speak of talents, I am aware that they are of various degrees, that the Holy Spirit divides not his gifts equally to all; that all are not Prophets or Apostles; that one may render himself useful in one way, and another in another: *Alius quidem sic, alius vero sic*;\* that one star differs from another in glory, and that as there are different offices in the church, there must be different talents to fill them: but I say, that at least we must be fitted for some one of them. If you possess not that rare genius and that science which puffeth up, have

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\*1. Cor. c. vii. v. 7.

you at least that piety which edifieth, and sufficient knowledge of the truths of religion, to instruct your brethren? If you possess not the superior mind and extensive information requisite to confound the unbeliever and the rebellious children of the church, are you at least qualified to confirm the simple and the ignorant in piety and faith? If you feel that you do not possess the talents necessary to announce the gospel in cities, to the great and the powerful of the age, have you at least sufficient, to announce it with profit, to the poor and the little, who inhabit the country? Alas! if so, your talents may dazzle less, but they will also be less dangerous and more productive; safer for yourself, more profitable to your brethren: the word of the gospel ordinarily falls among the great and the rich, as amidst thorns and briars; it is only in the hearts of the simple and the poor that it finds a soil, prepared to bring forth fruit, a hundred fold. If you are unequal to the government of an extensive and populous parish, are you, at least qualified to assist in conducting it, under the eye of a holy and enlightened pastor; or can you perchance, undertake to tend a small flock that is easily managed. In fine, although it be true,

that the lips of the Priest shall keep knowledge and that they shall seek the law at his mouth,\* yet, if nature has denied to you, the talents necessary for public instruction, can you, at least, compensate for the deficiency, and supply their place, by counsel and unction in the tribunal; by prudence, by the knowledge of your duty, by the discernment of the diseases of the soul; by that zeal and that solid and enlightened piety, necessary for the ministry? for piety is the soul of all our talents; it alone can ensure the fruit of them: the most moderate, when combined with great piety, become oftentimes the most valuable to the church; and without it, the most brilliant are but like to the lightnings which dazzle and astonish, but which are speedily followed by the fall and the offensive smell of the thunder; I mean those public and shameful falls which spread an odor of death through the church, and which become the subject of her grief and her tears.

It is then the duty of each one of you, who are here assembled only to examine your vocation to the holy ministry, to ask himself in the presence of God, whether he finds in himself those

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\*Malach. c. ii. v. 7.

three essential marks of a legitimate call: purity of motive, innocence of morals, and talents useful to the church. If any one of these three be wanting; the common rule is, that your vocation is false, and that you are embracing a state to which God has not called you.

Now, my dear children, do you rightly understand what it is to enter into any state, whatever it may be, to which God has not destined you? It is to go out of the order of his providence, which in the eternal counsels, has marked out to each of us, the way in which he should journey during the days of his pilgrimage, and which alone can conduct him to salvation. We thus quit that path in which his goodness had prepared for us, infallible means of eternal happiness: we enter rashly on a strange way, in which his hand, which has not conducted us thither, will not support us; in which we walk quite alone; in which every step we take, leads us but farther astray; in which we resemble the unfortunate traveller, bewildered in the night, who finds at every step, precipices which he mistakes for the level road; who is exposed alone and in the midst of darkness to a thousand other perils, which he can neither foresee nor escape, and who, as the night is not to end for him,



is almost sure of perishing, or, at least, of never arriving at the happy term of his journey, without one of those chances and those miracles which prudence would not suffer itself to expect. Such is the condition of him, who rashly enters into a profession, and into a way for which God had not destined him: he walks in it alone, accompanied by nothing but his weaknesses; he is in a state, in which every thing is for him, turned into danger; in which he is deprived of those lights, of that special protection, that is to say, of those singular graces which are peculiar to that calling, and by the help of which he would have avoided all its dangers, but which God has prepared for those only, whom he himself had prepared and destined for that state.

Now, my dear children, if a truth so terrible, be nevertheless incontestable, in general reference to the rash choice of a state, to which God has not called us; if such choice draws down upon us the indignation of God, and renders us, during life, unworthy of his kindness and benevolence; what is to become of those who call themselves to a ministry of glory and holiness, with which he has not condescended to honour even the spirits of heaven? what is to

become of those who thrust themselves into the sanctuary, the only place on earth, which he seems to have reserved to himself, the habitation of his glory, the sacred and inviolable asylum of his doctrine and of his laws ; the treasury of his worship, of the homage which he exacts of men and of all the precious memorials of his love towards them ? With what fury will he not look upon the wretch, who dares to seat himself in the venerable assembly of his ministers ; who comes to compel the Almighty to establish him his envoy upon earth, to confide to him, against his will, the blood of his only Son, the divine functions of his mediation, of his redemption, of his priesthood ; and to usurp the possession of whatever, as most precious and most worthy of his power, his mercy had not ceased, from the beginning of the world, to prepare for the salvation of men ? What a treasure of wrath, what coals of fire is not such a wretch heaping on his own head ? how black the character of reprobation that is stamped on his soul by the sacred unction with which he is animated ? and the hands which the Pontiff and the presbytery impose upon his head, do they not devote him as a miserable victim, re-

jected of God, and destined to be an everlasting anathema?

So, my dear Children, a vicious Priest, and one who has forced himself against the order of God, into the holy ministry, is almost never converted. The older he grows, the more is he, every day, adding to the mass of his profanations and sacrileges: the divine favors themselves, of which he is the dispenser, harden him; every function is for him, a new crime, and adds a new link to his reprobation; and he dies as he lived, charged with the sacrilegious usurpation of the priesthood, and with all the crimes by which he profaned it: such is the experience of every day. In every other condition, we often behold consoling examples of sinners, who repent and are converted: a disorderly Priest, one who entered the holy ministry without being called, dies a reprobate: nor have the conversion of even a few bad Priests as yet consoled the church for the impenitence and deplorable end of all the rest.

Wherefore, my dear children, neglect nothing in the examination which you are to make here before God, on the subject of your vocation; our precautions cannot be too great, where a

false step is irreparable. Do not cease to ask yourselves, in this place of probation and retreat, where you are to consult the will of God in your regard ; whether the holy state to which you aspire, will consort with your past morals ; whether you engage in it, from pure motives, or bring to it those talents, which the church requires in every candidate: if one of those conditions be wanting, it is the same as if you wanted all. Pray without ceasing, and let your most ordinary petition be that of the Prophet: do thou, O Lord, thyself, show me the way in which I should walk ; and teach me what are the paths which thou hast prepared for me, and which alone can conduct me to salvation : *Vias tuas, Domine, demonstra mihi, et semitas tuas edoce me.*\* A few years of examination, of prayer and of retreat, are not too much to decide upon a choice, which itself must decide upon your eternal salvation and upon that of the people who are, one day, to be confided to your care ; that is to say, and let this thought never be forgotten, a choice which is to give to the altar, ministers of the salvation or the perdition

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\* Psalm. 24. v. 4.

of the faithful; the reproach of the church or its ornament and its glory; rocks of scandal in the way, or pillars to support the sacred edifice; the profaners or the dispensers of holy things; in a word, instruments of the mercy or the wrath of God, towards men. *Amen.*

## A DISCOURSE

ON

THE CHARACTERS WHICH OUGHT TO  
MARK THE ZEAL OF THE CLERGY  
AGAINST VICE.

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Emulationem Dei habent, sed non secundum  
scientiam.

*They have the zeal of God, but not according  
to knowledge.*

ROMANS. chap. x. ver. 2.

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**I**N a late discourse,\* we explained to you the necessity of zeal in the clergy; and you remained persuaded, that zeal against vice is the most essential duty of the priesthood, and the first effect of sacerdotal grace. But as zeal has its rules and its imperfections, and as there

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\*The discourse, on zeal for the salvation of souls, vol. 1. p. 425.

is a zeal according to knowledge, and a zeal of ignorance and temerity, it is important to paint both in their proper colours; and, whilst we enforce what should sanctify zeal, and render it useful to our brethren, guard you, at the same time, against whatever is likely to defile its excellence or destroy its fruit.

/ Now as zeal is nothing but charity itself, which urges us, which excites in us not only a sincere wish that our brethren be saved, but moreover, a lively and eager desire to labour for their salvation; to know whether our zeal be genuine or not, we have only to examine whether we can discover in it, those characters which Saint Paul considers as inseparable from true charity. For all zeal that is not likened to charity; that is not charity itself, active, compassionate, humble, meek, patient, disinterested, is not zeal according to knowledge, is not that zeal which honours the priesthood, that zeal which the church requires in all her ministers and expects from you.

I know that zeal like the spirit of God, from which it proceeds, assumes different forms according to the different characters of those whose hearts it inflames. In some it is more ardent, in others more gentle and insinuating; in others

again, more terrible and menacing. But these various lines terminate in the fixed point of charity: they are but so many ways conducting to the same end, and all bearing the divine character of the principle from which they proceed. Each one has his peculiar gift and his peculiar talent, but it is charity that moulds and directs them all, nor is there one that is not marked with its indelible impression. Let us then in a few simple reflections, review the various characters which the Apostle attributes to charity, for they are the same that combine to form a true zeal.

Zeal formed by charity is patient; *patiens est*;\* this is the first character. Yes, my brethren, however eager we may be for the salvation of our brethren, we must desire and expect it, in the order of God. Our secret pride becomes weary and disgusted when success does not correspond with our endeavours: we would often wish to render grace subservient to our own glory: we seek in the discharge of our functions that human applause which is attached to those prompt and visible benedictions, which God sometimes sheds upon the labors of his ministers: when this support fails us, our zeal

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\* 1. Cor. c. xiii. v. 4.



which was warmed by this forbidden fire alone, languishes and expires: the toil of the ministry becomes disgusting and insipid; we deem it useless, because our self-love is no longer paid without delay, for its pains: thus the first defect in reference to this first character, is caused by disappointment and disgust.

Sometimes, with the appearance of purer motives, we ascribe the little success of the word entirely to the hardness of sinners. We deem them unworthy of our cares, and exercise our ministry in their regard, with regret: their insensibility instead of moving us to pity and compassion, tends only to excite our murmurs and impatience: we grow cold and indifferent towards them, in proportion as their necessities should make us more alive to the miseries of their deplorable condition. I do not mean to say, that we should look with a tranquil eye on the impenitence of sinners, and on the failure of those efforts which we employ for their salvation. But it is their miserable situation that ought to affect us, and this sentiment of charity would rather awaken and inflame, than cool and extinguish, the ardor of our zeal.

We see pastors, every day, who complain of the indocility of their people, and whose com-

plaints are addressed too much to men and too little to God: this is the impatience of pride and self-love, and is the second defect in reference to the first character of zeal. We wish to succeed, because success flatters us, and because we always ascribe it to ourselves; and we become indignant against those who deprive us of this human consolation: it would appear, that they snatch away the glory to which we were entitled, and that they refuse to us that docility, which our vanity thought it had a right to expect from them; and hereupon we despise them; we abandon them almost with complacency to the hardness of their hearts; we take vengeance, as it were, on their insensibility by ours; and we appear as little concerned at their desperate state, as they seem regardless of our labors.

But, my brethren, the zeal of charity reproves, conjures, corrects, says the Apostle. Its patience grows and augments with the progress of disorder; and to new obstacles it opposes only the patience that produceth hope, that is, new cares and new exhortations: *In omni patientia et doctrina.*\* A zealous pastor expects

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\* 2. Tim. c. iv. v. 2.

success from God alone : his tears, his sighs, his prayers, solicit it without intermission : the more the justice of God seems to defer it, the more does he labour to obtain it, by redoubling his toils and his weeping ; he ascribes the little success of his ministry, solely to himself, to his secret infidelities, to his want of faith, and to those human weaknesses, which he apprehends are to be found mixed up with those purer sentiments, that should ever accompany the discharge of his functions.

Those pastors to whom God refuses visible success in their ministry, should enter into the dispositions of the Apostles on the lake of Genesareth : *Master*, said Simon to Jesus, *we have laboured all night, and have taken nothing ; but at thy word I will let down the net.\** Behold the language of that zeal which charity renders always patient : O Lord ! my toils for the people whom thou hast deigned to confide to me, have hitherto operated nothing : the hardness of their hearts seems to increase with my pains : I do not cease to cast my nets, but they return always empty, nor have I the consolation of drawing a single soul from the deep

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\* Luke. c. v. ver. 5.

waters of iniquity. Still thou dost command me to labour on, and not yield to fatigue: thou desirest that I should imitate thy patience and thy paternal tenderness, which is not weary of striking at the door of a rebellious heart, and which after having been a thousand times repulsed, still returns with increased eagerness and love. Animated by this consoling example, I shall not abandon the holy work: this thou dost command, and thy commands are a pledge of success: thou grantest it when thou pleasest, and our impatience, far from accelerating, retards, its accomplishment; thou wilt not suffer man to anticipate the secret and adorable order of the dispensation of thy graces: thou wishest to make us feel that we are not the distributors of them: that he that plants and waters is nothing, but that the increase, the change of hearts is the work of thy mercy and of thy power alone.

The first character then of zeal formed by charity is patience: *patiens est.*

From patience springs kindness, and this is the second character of that zeal which is formed by charity; it is kind and benignant: *Benigna est.\**

But when the Apostle reckons kindness among the characters of true zeal, we must not confound it with that easy indifference, that pusillanimity, that unmeaning benignity, which renders us so mild, so complaisant towards our brethren; so eager to gain their affections, and make them pleased with us; so anxious to remove far away, whatever might afflict them; so careful never to address them but in the language of peace, of confidence and mercy; so that far from filling them with terror on their guilty state, we tranquillize and encourage them, and secure for them in our sinful mildness a resource even against the secret alarms of their own conscience. This fault may have two sources; either it springs from a weakness and timidity of character, natural to us, or from an ignorance of the exactness, and the severity of the holy rules of our duty: that is to say, either because our kindness will not allow us to act according to our knowledge, or because our knowledge itself is false, being imbibed in vicious sources. In the first class are to be reckoned certain pastors, otherwise enlightened, and well instructed in the holy maxims of christian morality, but yet, from their weakness of character, so incapable of any thing great, firm,

or generous, that scarcely have they courage to tell a sinner, *thou art the man*.\* It would seem, that they fear to afflict or disturb him, by exposing to his view, all the horrors of his guilty state; and whilst thunder and lightning should issue from their mouth, the sweetness of honey distils from their lips. This is not what the Apostle calls the kindness of zeal and of charity; it is rather a cowardly degeneracy, which nothing can stimulate or awaken; and which the great concerns of the glory of God, and of the salvation of our brethren, leave as cold and unmoved as they found it: it is a timid and lazy disposition, which equally fears to trouble our own ease, or disturb the repose of others; and which causes our corrections and our exhortations always to bear the unruffled and placid character of the quiet and the insensibility of our soul. Such meekness is purely the offspring of natural temperament, and has little resemblance indeed to that kindness of zeal and of charity, which is the fruit of the holy Spirit.

It would be yet a greater mistake to confound this holy kindness with that easy but cri-

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\* 2. Kings. c. xii. v. 7.

minal condescension, which resting upon a vain and empty learning, substitutes false rules of conduct for the severity of the rules of the gospel, and prefers novel and human opinions to the maxims of the saints, to the doctrine of antiquity and to the spirit of christianity itself. Such benignity is a mortal sweet, that kills instead of curing; it is a science of darkness which seeks to palliate, rather than correct, crimes; and which, under pretence of not driving sinners to despair, encourages them to hope against hope itself: it is a detestable subtlety, which unable to reconcile the severity of ancient discipline, with the depravity and corruption of these latter times, has so far refined upon the simplicity of the gospel, as to persuade itself, that it has discovered new rules of duty, more favourable to the passions, and more within the reach of our practice and morals. Thus it has changed the immutable rules in proportion as morals have become more corrupt, and reconciled the gospel with that world, against which it will never cease to pronounce its maledictions and anathemas. All relaxation which tends only to justify the corruption of men, is a barbarous cruelty which charity abhors; to flatter our brethren in their disorders is not to

love them, it is to sweeten and disguise the poison, that they may swallow it without repugnance: it is to leave in their hearts the ulcer that corrodes and decays it; and to apply only those mild and palliative remedies, which merely take away the feeling of pain from the patient, but which neither arrest nor retard the progress of his disease.

Not but that we must equally avoid that intemperate severity, which by the excess and the impossibility of the reparation which it exacts, seems to hold out nothing to sinners but despair; that zeal always armed with harshness and terror, which exaggerates to extravagance, both the enormity of crime, and the difficulty of pardon; and which is calculated only to confirm the sinner in his guilt, by inspiring him with the idea, that virtue is impracticable. It is an indiscreet rigor, which casts the weak into despondence, and furnishes the libertine with motives of security: it is to render truth, which ought to be a consolation and a remedy, an object of aversion, an intolerable yoke: it is to know neither the frailties of man, nor the infinite mercies of the Lord; it is, in fine, to forget that Christ came not to call the just but sinners to repentance. In effect, it was not af-



ter this manner that the Redeemer drew publicans and sinners to himself. A sick man, undoubtedly, needs to be spared, and treated with caution; we must sometimes, even refrain from disclosing to him the dangerous extent of his disease, that we may not alarm his fears, nor overwhelm his weakness: but it is no less true that it would be wickedness to treat him as a sound man, when his disease is already inveterate, and when nothing but violent remedies can effect a cure: it is for the wisdom of zeal, to proportion its cares and its ministry in such sort, that the sinner may neither be flattered nor repulsed; that he may perceive all the danger of his state, and not despair of the remedy; that he may feel the whole extent of the debt which he owes to God, and see, with consolation, that in the resources of the church and the blood of Jesus Christ, he has wherewith to satisfy him.

The zeal, then, of charity, assumes different forms, according to the different necessities of our brethren. At one time it threatens, it affrights, it holds up terrific and overwhelming objects: at another, it consoles, it inspires confidence, it calms the agitated mind. But it is always the kindness of charity that supplies the

expressions either of terror or of consolation : it is it that borrows now the arms of a holy indignation, and again breathes nothing but tenderness and compassion : in a word, it is the kindness of charity that constitutes all its severity, as it is from its very severity that all its kindness springs. The impatience, the anger, the harshness, which we sometimes honour with the name of zeal, are disavowed by charity ; in such passions her divine features are not to be discovered ; they are the sallies of humor, the effect of temperament ; the imprudence of the Priest, and not the sacred functions of the ministry. The zeal that would destroy, that would dishonour, that would publish the infamy of those sinners whom it cannot correct, has not its source in charity ; for charity makes the disorders of her brethren, not the subject of her public invectives, but of her private tears ; she seeks not to cover them with disgrace before men, but to fill them with the holy and secret confusion which tends to repentance before God ; whatever may create bitterness and disgust in the heart of her brethren, appears to her, foreign to that zeal of which she is the principle.

Often, in effect, under a false pretext of zeal, we think every thing allowable against harden-

ed and obstinate sinners: in their regard we give ourselves up to all the impetuosity of a hasty disposition; we decry them in our private discourses; we point them out, as it were, with the finger in our public instructions; we describe them by features so marked, and so striking, that no one can mistake them; and we applaud ourselves for such conduct, as if a ministry of charity and reconciliation, could, without profanation, become a public ministry of satire, of animosity, and dislike.

Pastors charged with the instruction of their people, cannot be too much on their guard against this excess. By falling into it, they render their ministry, not only useless, but odious: they add to that alienation which sinners feel towards virtue, hatred for him who announces it; and by irritating the guilty, cause them to make a point of honor, of crime itself; so that it is no longer their frailty alone, which holds them in sin, it is a desire to manifest their rage and disgust, and a secret pleasure which they feel, in braving and mortifying the man, who has publicly condemned and vilified them.

The zeal of charity makes itself to be loved and respected even by those whom it reproves and corrects. If it fails to render vice odious,

at least it does not render the ministry contemptible; if it does not turn sinners from their disorders, at least it makes them esteem virtue: it is so tenderly alive to the miseries of its perishing brethren, that there is nothing either touching or pathetic which it does not employ to save them; and if sometimes, it goes too far, it is the excess of meekness and tenderness, rather than of harshness and rigor. It is a tender mother which, every day, brings forth children to Jesus Christ, and which, careful to remove far from them whatever might oppress their weakness, or wound their delicacy, reserves labor and toil and sorrow for herself alone. If success does not correspond to her anxious cares, tears and sighs are the only vengeance which she takes on their ingratitude; her love seems even to increase with their errors and their follies: the nearer she sees them to destruction, the more is her tenderness alarmed and her zeal inflamed: whether they wander in the paths of vice, or return to the paternal roof, they are always the dearest objects of her affection and solicitude: she never loses sight of them; their danger touches her much more than their insensibility towards her; she would even consent without pain, to

become, in their regard, a sort of anathema, provided that they should cease to be so, in regard to Jesus Christ; it is never either sourness or chagrin that dictates her remonstrances, it is love alone; and unless his people be sunk in barbarism, and divested of human nature, a pastor of this character must find some souls sensible, and grateful for his cares and his tenderness; and see his ministry and his labors rewarded and consoled by such success as he himself would not have even dared to expect. Such is the kindness of that zeal which springs from charity: *Benigna est.*

But, in the third place, the zeal formed by charity extinguishes in our breasts, not only all that bitterness and harshness which humor and impetuosity might mix up with our remonstrances; not only all the impatience and discouragement which the hardness of sinners and the fruitlessness of our cares in their regard, might produce in our soul, but moreover, makes us behold without jealousy, and with pleasure, the zeal of our brethren more fortunate, and their ministry attended with greater blessings and greater success than our own: *Non amulatur*; the zeal of charity is not jealous, and this is its third character.

Base jealousy not only dishonours zeal, but even supposes it extinct in our hearts. It is a detestable disposition which is afflicted even at the conversion of sinners, at the progress of the gospel, the glory of Jesus Christ and of his grace, when God operates these prodigies by the ministry of others; it is not the salvation of our brethren which we then propose to ourselves, but the vain honor of being, ourselves, its instruments and its ministers. The glory of God interests us only in as much, as it is mixed up with our own: it is a subject of chagrin to us that God should be glorified; we would wish to suspend the course of his boundless mercies towards our brethren, and dare I say it? we would behold them perish, with satisfaction, rather than see them saved by other cares and other talents than our own. Provided that Christ were preached, Saint Paul rejoiced to see the gospel fructify, even by the ministry of those who sought to decry him amongst the faithful: Moses wished that all his brethren might receive the spirit of prophecy, and the miraculous powers which the Lord had vouchsafed to confer on himself; and we would wish to stand alone and share with none the glory and the success of the sacred ministry: the ta-

lents that sparkle in others, and the merit that is superior to ours, are to us insupportable, and we regard the gifts which God bestows on our brethren, as our own confusion and reproach.

This spirit of jealousy amongst the ministers of God, is a grievous evil in the church, and an evil the more to be deplored, as it is both very ancient and very common. Alas! even the first annunciation of the gospel, those ages so fervent and so pure, were not exempt from it. Yes, my brethren, those very ages in which the rack and the gibbet were the certain portion of the ministry, were themselves infected with this poison: jealousy added new links and new rigors to the chains of the great Apostle; and there were found ministers of the same truths, who rejoiced to see the rapid and brilliant success of his Apostleship arrested by his bonds; as if the word of God could be held in fetters, together with him who announced it. Is it then surprising that a vice which could defile the hearts of Apostolic men, and spring up amidst all those prodigies of zeal, of sanctity, of courage, of disinterestedness, of charity, of patience, which then adorned and honoured the ministry, should have become more

frequent in the corruption of our morals? We hide it from ourselves, but it puts forth fruit the more bitter in proportion as its roots are the more deeply concealed in our hearts. We disguise it under the specious names of zeal and of charity; but what zeal is that, which is filled with sadness and disappointment, on beholding the glory of God and the knowledge of his name increase among men? and what charity is that, which is soured and discontented, at the sight of those choicer gifts, which God in his bounty, bestows on our brethren?

Yet, such is the scandal over which the church weeps every day: it is become a sort of abomination in the holy place. Identity of duties, which, one would think, ought to be a bond of union between persons destined for the same functions, is made a subject of division: we look upon each other with a jealous eye; we mutually depress the talents, and extenuate the success, of each other: the effects ascribed to the labors of our brethren, we treat as mere popular prepossession: we listen to their praises with an air which, at once, disavows them, nor do we recognise any good, save that which we ourselves produce: it would seem that the spirit of God, no longer breatheth where he will-



eth, and that he can no longer pour out those exterior gifts which cause the ministry to fructify, except upon us, and upon our party ; we eagerly resort to the meanest intrigues to attract the suffrages of the public to ourselves, and we persuade ourselves that we have rendered glory to God when we have withdrawn them from the men, on whom, without our artful and base precautions, they would certainly have been conferred ; as if the applause rather than the conversion, of our people, the praises of the preacher, rather than the secret effusions of grace on the hearts of his hearers, were to decide on our merits and success in the sight of God ; and shall I yet add, for our opprobrium is become too public to be now dissembled ? the scandal goes still farther ; we lacerate each other's character ; we render the zeal of our brethren suspected ; we impute to each other the excesses of rigor, or of relaxation, both alike opposed to the holy and prudent spirit of the gospel : the ministry of peace is turned into a warfare of strife and dissension ; we scatter the spirit of division through the faithful ; the prejudices and jealousies of the masters pass into their disciples : some are of Paul, others of Cephas, and in the end, none are of Jesus Christ. What a subject of sorrow

to the church, and of triumph to her enemies! Would it not be less afflicting to her to want labourers, than thus to see them annoying, decrying, contradicting one another; and in appearance, agreeing only in their mutual efforts to destroy the good which God might operate through their ministry. O my God! when shall those days of trouble and contention have an end? When shall we, united in the spirit of peace and of thy glory, offer to thee with one mind, vows, cares and labors for the salvation of our brethren?

In effect, my brethren, true zeal sees with holy transports the work of the gospel prosper in the hands of every minister employed by the church: provided Christ be preached, its desires are accomplished. A zealous Priest even persuades himself, that the talents of those who, like himself, are charged with the sacred functions of the ministry, are much better fitted to serve as the instruments of God's mercies towards sinners, because he thinks them unstained with those weaknesses that defile his own. Like Moses, he begs of the Lord to send whom he will send,\* esteeming himself unworthy to

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\* Exod. c. iv. v. 13.

be chosen for so sublime an office: like the Baptist,\* he is content to decrease, to be obscured and forgotten, provided that others increase, and cause the knowledge of Jesus Christ to increase in the hearts of men. He feels a much more pure and lively joy at the success of others than at his own, because he does not then fear, that his satisfaction springs from secret pride or from a complacency merely human. Nothing saddens him but to see the harvest so abundant and the labourers capable of gathering it so few: his prayers ascend to the throne of God, only to solicit him to increase their number, every day, in his church; and when the bounty of the Almighty deigns to send into his vineyard workmen gifted with his own spirit, he unites his grateful acknowledgments with those of the church, to bless the Father of lights and the author of every perfect gift; and his joy, his love for the church, his ardent desires for the conversion of sinners, make him already enter by anticipation, into all those blessings, which the Lord will operate amongst his people, by the ministry of those chosen servants. Whatever honours the church,

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\* John. c. iii. v. 30.

he deems an honor to himself: and thus demonstrates to all men, that there is nothing more noble, nothing more worthy of religion, than a zeal that is animated by charity, and on the contrary, that there is nothing so mean, so despicable, so ignominious to the sacred ministry, as a zeal that is defiled and debased by jealousy, rivalry, and uncharitable emulation.

But it would be doing but little to preserve our zeal from the poison of jealousy, if at the same time, we were not on our guard against the rocks of temerity and imprudence. So in the fourth place, the zeal of charity is not precipitate, and acts not rashly: *Non agit perperam*; and this is its fourth character. Now to act rashly is to pay no regard to times, to places, to persons, to manners, and to all those particulars on which the success of our zeal commonly depends.

Zeal is a wise and enlightened charity; it is a holy desire to be useful to our brethren, but a desire so enlightened and so prudent, as to guide us in the choice of the means most likely to secure so exalted an end. All that seems good, does not therefore appear to it convenient; all that seems allowable, it does not

therefore deem always expedient. The hearts, my brethren, of the greater part of men are so corrupt, so infected with pride, malice and perversity, so replete with inclinations opposed to their duty, that the slightest indiscretion on our part, when we endeavour to recal them to a sense of their christian obligations, becomes for them a reason to alienate them from it, the more: we must, as it were, smooth the paths in which they are to walk. To combat their perverse inclinations is more than enough for their strength, without being obliged in addition to pardon our indiscretion and our imprudence. If you foresee that your zeal will irritate, rather than cure, the patient, then wait till the Lord himself shall prepare a favourable moment for the reception of his word: do not expose the truth to contempt and derision: seek not to disburden yourself of your zeal, as of a weighty load, without regarding whether the place in which you throw it, be fit to receive it: this would be to seek rather to solace your own impatience, than to relieve the infirmities of your brother.

It is true, the Apostle commands us to reprove in season and out of season;\* that is

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\*2. Tim. c. iv. v. 2.

to say, we must not be disgusted, nor must our efforts be relaxed by the resistance and the impenitence of sinners; nor must the unprofitableness of our pains, and the failure of success cause us to abandon the sacred functions of the ministry: that is to say, when the disease is mortal and gaining ground, we must have no regard to the feelings of the patient, but arrest it without delay: that is to say, there are sometimes holy and necessary excesses of zeal, which appear rashness to the false sages of the world; but excesses enjoined and sanctified by charity, authorized by the command of heaven, and the wisdom of which is always justified by consoling and unexpected success. Behold what the Apostle calls reprov<sup>ing</sup> in season and out of season: but he does not mean that zeal in which he so much recommends a wise sobriety, should dispense us from the rules of christian prudence; or that the pretended sanctity of our intentions should excuse the indiscretion and temerity of our counsels or our conduct. Thus there are certain maxims, certain wise rules, from which zeal should never depart: it should regulate its instructions by the character of its hearers: it should choose its moments to admonish with profit, and not precipi-

tate those corrections which patience and time may better effect: its great object is to be serviceable to its brethren; and the same charitable zeal which forms this holy desire within our breast, is ever ingenious in providing those expedients which ensure its success.

We, every day, see pastors whose inconsiderate zeal plunges them into inconveniences capable of destroying the entire fruit of their labors, and in which, even the honor of their character is lost. They undertake every thing: whatever has the appearance of good, animates and puts them in motion: nothing appears to them impossible; nothing seems to be in its proper place: they would wish to change and remodel every thing; and under the pretext of restoring order, they begin by throwing whatever they touch into confusion. Restless, narrow, unruly, enterprising spirits, provided that they stir and agitate themselves, they think they have fulfilled all justice, and are content with themselves: with the boldest rashness they lash evils the most delicate, the most worthy of being treated with caution, the most liable to grievous and fatal consequences, the most capable of causing the prudence and address of the most consummate to hesitate and stop:

and on escaping from this rock, on which they had been just dashed, and where they had just exhibited to the public, a scene always disgraceful to the ministry, they go with the same headstrong confidence, to attempt a new enterprise, pregnant with no less danger, and likely to lead to similar confusion. Yet these are ministers, in other respects, edifying, laborious, without reproach, and whom piety itself plunges into these excesses; and on this account it is a subject of great affliction to the church, that in the small number of pastors, whom she reckons capable, by their talents and by the sanctity of their morals, of serving her with advantage, there should yet be found some, whose indiscretion and imprudence render them not only useless, but oftentimes injurious to her. For if the evils of their intemperate zeal fell only on themselves, and had no other effect than to destroy the fruit of their own labors, the church might be consoled for the failure of their functions, by the success of other virtuous and prudent ministers. † But what fills her with bitterness is to see, that their headstrong temerity discredits in the minds of worldly men, the most moderate and cautious zeal; and that one pastor, who, in attempting to apply a remedy to



the vices and scandals of the flock, may fall into excess and incur their censures and scorn, is sufficient to render all zeal ridiculous, and contemptible to sinners. The world is delighted to be able to persuade itself, that we cannot attack its disorders, without going into extremes which plain common sense condemns: it repeats then, with ostentation, that there is nothing but ridicule and littleness of mind, in our invectives against vice; and it triumphs when it beholds the sublime doctrine of the gospel which we preach and extol, disfigured and disgraced by the rash and senseless conduct of the ministry. It is in vain, that virtuous Priests offer themselves to its attention, with the tears of christian prudence and zeal; the very pomp and circumstance of instruction excites its mockery and contempt; it no longer perceives any thing serious or rational in those truths, besides which, all is vanity and folly; and confounding religion with the minister who announces its doctrines and its threats, it makes of the one and the other a horrible subject of derision and scorn.

Such are the evils of indiscreet and untimely zeal. We must treat the truths of religion with the same circumspection, and the same

awe, that we touch holy things: to commit and compromise our ministry, is not to respect it; let us, if we will, expose our lives, our health, our fortune, for the salvation of our brethren, and for the glory of that God whose ministers we are; but let us not risk his very glory itself, the interests of which are entrusted to our wisdom; let us remember that intemperate zeal in a Priest, causes his sacred name to be almost as much blasphemed, as dissolute and scandalous morals. For, at least, the impious and the profligate do not ascribe his immoralities to the church, which weeps over them, which abhors and punishes them: but the excesses and extravagancies of his zeal, they think, are produced and authorized by religion: on her they visit the imprudence of her ministers; they persuade themselves, that there is nothing but extravagance in the morality of the gospel, and that a doctrine, the masters and ministers of which are so wrong-headed and senseless, can form none but disciples and followers, as contemptible and absurd as themselves. *to page 65*

But, my brethren, the jealousy and rashness discoverable in zeal, are the ordinary consequences, the bitter fruits of pride: and for this reason it is, that the Apostle, the more effectually

ally to purge zeal from these two vices, adds, that we must also free it from pride: thus, in the fifth place, true zeal is not puffed up: *Non inflatur.*

In effect, it is not puffed up with its own talents or success, nor does it rejoice at the slender talents or the little success of its brethren: nor is it moved by the applause or the censure of men; by the favor, or the persecution and contempt of the great ones of the world; in a word, the poisonous blast of pride cannot taint the gifts of heaven in the heart of the truly zealous, for all its avenues are closed by charity. The zeal of charity ascribes nothing to itself; its first effect is to destroy in us all self-complacency; to establish the love of God in our breasts, on the ruins of the love of ourselves: to pull down man, as it were, and in his stead, to establish God alone the sovereign of our heart; so that united to God we heed but him alone, we act but for him alone, we feel neither joy, nor grief, nor satisfaction but in reference to God alone.

Thus, the zeal of charity is not puffed up with its own talents: how could it pride itself on gifts, which are not its own, which spring not from itself, and which are bestowed only

for the sake of its brethren? gifts, which add nothing to its virtues, and merely aggravate the great account which it has to render to God? Nor is it more puffed up with its success: it is God alone that operates the change of hearts; and if man contributes to the work any thing that can be called *his*, it is, perhaps, his weaknesses, which retard the progress of grace, and throw secret obstacles in the way of the mercies of the Lord, towards his brethren.

Yet how rarely is it, that we are not dazzled by the vain lustre of our success. *Rejoice not in this*, says Christ to his disciples, *that spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice in this, that your names are written in heaven.\** Alas! it is but too true, that we glory in the success which is not ours, and yet are not touched with those infidelities which belong to us alone, and which, whilst we contribute to inscribe the names of our brethren in the records of heaven, blot our own from the volume of life. What successes can ever equal those of Saint Paul's Apostleship? How many cities, provinces, entire nations called by his ministry to the knowledge of Jesus Christ! how many flou-

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\* Luke. c. x. v. 20.

rising churches founded by his toils! Yet he is full of fear, lest, whilst he laboured to instruct others, and establish them in the empire of Christ, he himself should be excluded: *Ne cum aliis prædicaverim, ipse reprobus efficiar.\** His splendid successes, far from inspiring him with confidence, filled him with alarms: not that he ascribed them to himself, for he often reminds us, that he who plants or waters is nothing, but he dreaded lest the illustrious gifts which God had conferred on him, should make him forget the weaknesses and the poverty of man.

The zeal then of charity is not puffed up by the splendor of its talents, or its successes: neither does it rejoice at the slender talents, or the little success of its brethren. It is persuaded that God withholds those exterior gifts, only to enrich them the more abundantly, with the interior and far more estimable gifts of charity and grace; far then from raising itself above them, by secret and proud comparisons, it respects, and, as it were, envies the fulness of their sanctity and justice, whilst it looks upon itself as a canal, which often remains

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\* 1. Cor. c. ix. v. 27.

empty, after having enriched by its waters, the plains through which it flowed. No, my brethren, it is not great talents that always suppose in us, the greatest virtues: they render us more useful to men, but do not always render us more agreeable to God: they advance his work in others, but often retard it in ourselves. The wisdom of God often employs for the consummation of his elect, instruments, which he had destined for this single purpose, and which he afterwards casts away. It is not what God operates through us, but solely what he operates in us, that should inspire us with confidence. Although we were to speak with the tongues of Angels, we may yet be but as the sounding brass or the tinkling cymbal, before God:\* it seems even that the just distributor of gifts and favors has so tempered the dispensation of them, that those on whom he appears to bestow those splendid, exterior favors, are not commonly those, into whose hearts he pours most abundantly the excellent and secret riches of his grace; and that, on the contrary, he seems to indemnify those to whom he has refused those brilliant talents, by an abundance of holiness known only to himself, and a thou-

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\* 1. Cor. c. xiii. v. 1.

sand times more worthy of being admired, than the vain lustre which attracts the applause of men, and which on that very account, leaves us often destitute of grace, and filled only with ourselves, in the sight of God.

In fine, the zeal of charity is not moved by the praise or the contempt, the favor or the frowns, of men. A holy Priest who proposes to himself, in the discharge of his functions, nothing but the salvation of his brethren, feels neither joy nor chagrin, neither hope nor fear, but, in reference to this single object; whatever does not conduce to this sole end of all his toils, nor announce its accomplishment, cannot affect him : those praises of men which are not a consoling pledge of their return to God, he regards as the clamours of the children mentioned in the gospel, who occupy themselves in the market-place in the puerile amusements of their age. He knows that those applauses spring from the pride, the prejudice, or the inconstancy of men ; that to-morrow they will trample under foot the idols which they erected to-day ; that they praise us rather to honour themselves, than to honour virtue ; that the fickleness and instability of their eulogy, takes away from it all that could even gratify pride ; that they often hate

and despise in secret, those whom they pretend to admire openly ; and that their heart but seldom ratifies the approbation of their lips.

The zeal of charity is not puffed up by praise ; but neither is it proud of contempt and persecution. It is true that crosses await piety, and that they are proposed as the glory and recompence of the ministry ; and hence, from the moment we begin to meet them, on the part of man, we think that we have a right to believe ourselves marked with the seal of Apostleship : thus we glory in the contradictions we sustain, as in an honor inseparable from the preaching of the gospel ; we fancy that we succeed to the zeal of the first Apostolic men, when we succeed to their tribulations ; and we persuade ourselves that we have fulfilled our ministry, with glory, when we have incurred, in the discharge of it, the disapprobation and abuse of those towards whom we exercised it. But why attribute the contradictions which you experience from them, rather to their malice, than to your own imprudence ? Have not your impatience, your peevishness and indiscretion, taken away from your zeal, all that could render it respectable, and brought down on your person, that contempt and persecution, which, with so



much satisfaction, you ascribe to your ministry? Was it not your intemperate or indecent manner of announcing the truth, that rendered it contemptible and ridiculous? To glory in such contradictions, is, oftentimes, to glory in the abuse which you have made of your ministry. Thus, in the discharge of our functions, neither the praise nor the contempt of men should flatter our pride: not their praise, for it is not our due; not their contempt, for we often deserve it.

We, every day, meet pastors who appear satisfied with themselves, because they have succeeded in incurring the hatred of sinners: it would seem that this is the only kind of success that gratifies them, or that they propose to themselves in the discharge of their duties: it would seem that, that truth, of which they are the ministers, that truth so amiable and so worthy of respect, were merely intended to irritate and disgust all those who hear it. I admit that the world, that world for which Christ refused to pray, cannot relish it; for the world is composed of hardened and rebellious hearts that reject it, of proud and disobedient spirits who impiously glory in treating it as weakness and folly. But there are, likewise, to be found hearts, which,

though immersed in a thousand shameful vices, still feel its force, its majesty, its wisdom, its necessity, and still respect maxims which they have not yet the courage to follow, nor the piety to taste; nay more, not only do they respect them, but they wish to conform to them; they love them, with a love indeed as yet feeble and inoperative, but their heart beats towards them, particularly if they are announced to them, with that wisdom and dignity which the ministry prescribes. Now sinners of this character always constitute the greatest number of our auditory, or of our flock.

No, my brethren, let there be nothing of self; let us not mix up the defects of man, in the zeal of charity; and then the truths we announce will indeed revolt the passions, but they will be respected even by those whom their passions drag along: their corrupt hearts will reject and despise them in appearance; but their reason and conscience will do homage to them in secret; they will openly oppose them, and censure their severity, but they will privately feel their equity, their moderation and wisdom: in a word, they will take a pride in condemning us, and will treat us as extravagant declaimers, but in their hearts they will justify

us and condemn themselves. Such is the zeal of charity; it is not puffed up, *non inflatur*; nothing can move it to pride, for the thought of what is properly its own, in its functions, the only one that could tend to inspire vanity, is precisely what humbles and abases it.

But if this zeal cannot bear the slightest contact of pride, it is still less sociable, with that criminal ambition, which is the last excess, and full consummation of pride: *Non est ambitiosa*; this is the sixth character.

When I speak of the ambition which must be avoided in zeal, I do not undertake to combat that absolutely false and hypocritical zeal, which regards the sacred functions of the ministry, as the road to honor and preferment, and labours, in appearance, for the salvation of its brethren, with the sole motive of elevating itself, and of obtaining a place of distinction and of repose in the church. This is a scandal over which we have had to weep more than once, in the present age: the honors of the sanctuary, designed to be the recompence of piety and of labor, have caused hypocritical zeal to be multiplied in the church; and the same national piety that would prefer none but the virtuous and faithful, has given birth to others,

who have borrowed the exterior, and the appearances of religious zeal, only to share in its reward. The corruption of men traffics in virtue and in vice, and turns every thing to its account: the scandals of the great are made the instrument of our elevation, and thus perpetuate the disorders of the ministry; whilst the holy example which their lives sometimes exhibit, produces rarely any thing in us but counterfeit virtues.

It is not then the base and palpable ambition of the hypocrite, who, corrupt of heart and abiding in guilt, devotes himself to the sacred ministry, as the surest path to fortune and pre-eminence; it is not, I say, such degenerate ambition, that is most to be dreaded by those who hear me in this place: to be capable of such a vice, we should be devoid of every sentiment of honor and religion: we should be hardened enough to sport, unmoved, with whatever is most venerable and most holy; to sustain with cool duplicity the character of public impostor, and perpetrate a thousand sacrilegious profanations, as the horrible means of supporting that character with success: now there are but few souls so reprobate, so dead to every feeling of shame and of remorse, as thus to

set the laws of man and the fear of God, at defiance.

But a more dangerous ambition is that which we conceal from ourselves; which is, however, the secret and hidden motive that animates, without our advertence, and by consequence vitiates, the entire detail of our most sacred functions. This is the ambition to be dreaded by the ministry, and the more so, as it is divested of those ugly and disgusting features, to which the conscience could not be reconciled, without pain. We are not public impostors; our morals are regular; we give ourselves up, honestly, to the duties of the ministry, we propose to ourselves to be useful to our brethren; but the view of a more distant object, animates and supports us. So many others have, heretofore, succeeded in this way; we do not despair of reaching the point which they attained; and we eye the recompence from afar. We dare not disclose our design to ourselves; but when our hopes have failed, and the phantom that sustained us has disappeared, disgust succeeds to zeal; health begins to be made a pretext to excuse us from our duties; the salvation of our brethren touches us but feebly, and we cease to be zealous, as soon as we cease to expect.

Another sort of ambition, and one not unfrequent in the ministry, is the ambition of success. The most pious of the clergy are not always proof against this temptation: we are eager to succeed, and to drag along both the little and the great, by the power of our eloquence and the force of truth: the glory of God and the public interest palliate, in our own eyes, the pride and injustice of this desire: but we are afflicted and disgusted when success does not correspond with our hopes: the secret but solid effects which God may produce by our ministry, are not a sufficient recompence to our vanity; we seek the splendor of applause, and would wish, like the proud and impious Herod, to hear our auditors exclaim: *it is the voice of a God and not of a man.*\* When this spectacle of vanity ceases, our energy subsides, and we bear with impatience, the silence and solitude by which we are surrounded; there is no longer any attraction for us in our functions; we feel nothing but their weight and toil: the reason is, that we were seeking ourselves, and when we find nothing but God, we imagine that we have lost our time and our pains.

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\* Acts. c. xii. v. 22.

So the seventh character of zeal animated by charity, is, that it seeks not its own interests: *Non quærit quæ sua sunt.*

4 A holy Priest proposes to himself to labour solely for God, in the order, and under the guidance, of God. He is well aware that the Holy Spirit breatheth where it willeth; that in the church there are different gifts and various talents, of which the most applauded are not always the most useful; he is mindful that having devoted himself to the ministry, his endowments and his talents are no longer his own, but belong entirely to his brethren; and thus, provided that he consecrates to their salvation, his toils, his cares, his vigils, he is satisfied that he has fulfilled the designs of God, in his regard. He does not even select that species of labor, most agreeable to his taste; he dedicates himself to that which the church assigns him, without examining its advantages or its inconveniences: what regards himself alone, he esteems of no account, in a ministry, which should be all for God and for his brethren. He considers himself as an instrument in the hands of the first pastors, ready to dig the foundation, or to rear and adorn the edifice; in a word, without any other destination, than that which

he receives from the church, by which he is employed. As pleased in the most obscure, as in the most brilliant stations; as full of zeal, when, after the example of Jesus Christ, he is to suffer the little children to approach him, as when he has to carry the words of salvation before the kings, and the great ones, of the earth; his only glory, his sole desire, is, that God may be glorified, and he himself forgotten.

Such, my brethren, is the spirit of true zeal: it implies a total abstraction from whatever relates to ourselves; that is to say, not only from our own glory, our conveniences, and our comforts, but even from our wishes, our prejudices, and our own particular views. For we often desire for ourselves functions, for which God has not intended us: we regard the taste by which we are led, as an intimation from above; and the disgust and repugnance which we feel to every other sort of duty, appears to us a full justification of our preference, and a sufficient reason for declining every other labor of the ministry. In vain is it marked out for us, by those who have the right of disposing of us: we find a thousand pretexts of health, of unfitness, of impossibility, for refusing: we do not



reflect, that it is not for us to send ourselves; that it is not enough to propose to ourselves what is good; that for us there is no good, save what the church requires of us; and that the will of heaven in our regard, is more frequently to be discovered in our repugnance than in our inclinations. Moses felt in himself, the most sovereign reluctance to undertake the conduct of the Israelites, to which he was called by God: his meekness, his timidity, the slowness of his speech, appeared to him very sufficient reasons for declining to carry the message of the Lord into the presence of Pharaoh, and command that hardened and oppressive monarch to permit the descendants of Jacob to go forth from the land of Egypt: his repugnance was still stronger than the reasons arising from his difficulty of utterance or his personal fears: yet he sacrifices both at the command of heaven; and the splendor of his success was at once both the striking proof of his mission and the reward of his obedience and his sacrifice. The lives of the Saints furnish a thousand examples of what ought to be our conduct: but the greater part of those who devote themselves to the ministry, seek some sensible, some human indemnity of their toils: if empty glory or base

interest be not their object, taste, at least, must be gratified. I do not mean to say, that we should interdict ourselves from all those functions to which we feel most inclined, or that a taste for any particular duty, is at once, a sufficient reason to make us avoid it; this would be an illusion still more dangerous than the former: for inclination towards any one function of the ministry, is oftentimes a proof of capacity for its right discharge; but inclination alone should not determine our choice; its decision, by itself, is always to be suspected; and if it would be unwise to exclude it altogether, it is no less wrong, to make it the sole arbiter of our choice. In effect, if we narrowly inspect our own wishes, we will find that they tend but rarely to what is most toilsome, most abject, or most ungrateful to us: the self-love from which they spring, seldom, indeed, proposes to itself such objects as mortify it, or leave it without the hope of being gratified: it seeks only to maintain itself, and to revive, as it were, from its very ashes, by the very actions that are destined to extinguish it; and as it dares not attack us by the attractions of vice, it vanquishes us more securely by the appearances of virtue.

The zeal, then, of charity seeks not its own: *Non quærit quæ sua sunt*; it proposes to itself no human consolations: neither amidst tribulations is it provoked to anger: *Non irritatur*. This is its eighth character.

The truth, of which we are the ministers, is the enemy of the world; of that world which Jesus Christ has reprovèd; and that world is the implacable enemy of the truth. They are, says Saint Augustine, two powers which mutually labour to destroy each other: truth wages an unceasing war with the world, and the world collects its strength, and directs its deadliest weapons against truth: this is the war which Christ came to bring upon earth, and by consequence, all who are engaged in the service of truth, must inevitably find the world armed against them; and as its efforts against her are unavailing, it finds itself obliged to shift its attacks against her ministers. It calumniates and reproaches them; it treats them as hypocrites and seducers; it makes them the impious subject of its derisions and its censures; it throws obstacles and contradictions in their way, and uses every art to render the holy ministry as disgusting to those who exercise it, as it is hateful to its revilers. Such are the crosses and tribu-

lations often attached to the most judicious and temperate exercise of zeal: but amidst those trials, zeal, ever supported by charity, is not provoked to anger, either against the world which loads it with insults, or against its functions which bring these sufferings upon it. On the contrary, as I have already said, zeal is generous and long-suffering, and becomes only more active, as sinners become more stubborn and rebellious; the more of their venom and bitterness is poured upon it, the more is its meekness and tenderness manifested towards them; the more hopeless their salvation appears, the more does it toil and pray for their conversion: and in return for all their unkindness and contempt, it is but agitated by a thousand secret and excruciating pangs; the pangs of a mother when her children are torn from her bosom. The zeal of charity employs none but the most prudent measures in the accomplishment of its designs, lest its own imprudence should expose it to the contradiction of sinners; but when in spite of those wise precautions, it meets the opposition, and incurs the odium, of the world, its sweetness and charity remain still the same: nothing can warp it from the holy tenor of its way. The first trial then of zeal is contradiction on the part of the world.

But there yet remain other more delicate and more difficult trials : and in the second place, a truly zealous minister is not provoked to anger against the superiors who employ him in an ungrateful and sterile labor. He does not accuse them of want of knowledge or discernment, nor erect himself into a censor of their conduct: he does not suspect them of unjust partialities, nor of reserving for greater favourites, more consoling and more honourable functions, whilst they condemn him to what is most laborious and obscure. He respects the command of God in the voice of those who hold his place here below, and even enters with greater confidence on those duties which are not of his own choosing, persuaded that if he should not meet in them the consolation of success, he will, at least, always find in them, the merit of submission and obedience. Nothing can ruffle his equanimity, because every event appears to him to be directed, in his regard, by the wise dispensations of a tender and merciful providence. Such is the second trial of zeal. Lastly, he will meet a trial in the very colleagues of his ministry, and in that diversity of doctrines and opinions which the devil scatters but too successfully, and which are so many fatal obstacles

to the progress of the gospel. But the truly zealous Priest is not provoked to anger; swells not into passion, against those of his brethren, who by their indiscretion or their false doctrines overturn the foundation which he had laid: he contents himself with begging of God to make known to them the truth; to dissipate their errors, and triumph over their prejudices by this divine light, that the unanimity of pastors, may give to truth that force and authority of which their divisions deprive it: he frets not the wounds, nor embitters the sorrows, of the church, by decrying his brethren, nor adds to the scandal of their perverseness and infidelity, that of his own hatred and rage: he knows that these miserable invectives against the ministers of religion, always rebound on the ministry itself, that by condemning one another, we authorize the world to refuse its respect and docility equally to us all, that it is sufficient to restore what ignorant or unfaithful Priests have destroyed, and wipe away those stains by which they have disfigured the beauty of truth, without blackening, disfiguring, and destroying their very persons.

Such are the trials which zeal has, every day, to encounter from the world, and even from

the very bottom of the sanctuary, whence we ought to expect only assistance and consolation. Without contradictions and trials, zeal would have no longer any merit: and they are thrown in our way by the wisdom of God, not to irritate, but to prove and crown our zeal; in such circumstances to turn upon men, and upbraid them for the opposition by which they endeavour to thwart the work of God, would be to upbraid God himself, who makes use of their malice for ends which are hidden from us. He wishes, perhaps, to render his glory the more conspicuous by the very difficulties which seem to be an insurmountable obstacle to its accomplishment: he has always conducted his designs, by means, in appearance, the most calculated to overthrow them; he commands Isaac to be sacrificed, when he intends him to be the father of an innumerable people; and he stirs up the whole world against the Apostles, at the very time when he designs to subject it to the faith, by their ministry. Those contradictions which his wisdom permits, have always preceded and announced success; all his works have been ever stamped with this divine character; and he wishes hereby not only to prove our faith, but to humble our pride. We would

wish to be able to ascribe the success of our holy undertakings to the prudence of our own measures ; he disconcerts them, and suffers the malice of men to turn them against ourselves ; he leaves us no longer any prospect or hope of succeeding, that the unexpected result may become his own work, and that we may attribute all the glory of it to him alone. Were every thing to go just as our zeal might desire ; were every path to be smoothed before us, a success so prompt, so uniform, so easy, would, perhaps, induce us to believe, that the greater part of the merit was our own ; we would, perhaps, secretly ascribe the honor of it to our talents, and to the wisdom of our conduct, nor would we recognise in it, as we ought, the power of the finger of God. But when obstacles themselves facilitate to us, his work ; when the good which we propose to ourselves, springs, as it were, from the very bosom of those contradictions which ought to have crushed it in its birth, and that all is accomplished, when all seemed most desperate, then it is, that we exclaim with the Prophet : *it is the Lord and not man who hath done all these things.* We shrink into insignificancy and nothingness ; we no longer confide in the arm of the flesh, nor in



the feeble aid of human talents ; we no longer regard the contradictions of men, as the bane of the ministry ; far from irritating, they tend but to console us ; far from depressing, they raise, our hope ; and far from cooling, they re-animate, our zeal ; the more they abound, the nearer ought we to think ourselves to that hour, when he who is pleased to make light shine forth out of darkness, will make them cease, and even render them subservient to his own work : we no longer reproach men with delaying or suspending that hour, by the obstacles which they throw in our way ; if our reproaches are directed against any quarter, it is against our own secret weaknesses which alone can impede the course of God's mercies, and retard the accomplishment of his designs towards our brethren. But even this sentiment of our own worthlessness and misery does not dishearten us ; it merely stimulates us to greater watchfulness over ourselves ; it renovates our fidelity to our duties ; it quickens our tepidity and sluggishness, and thereby prepares us to appear in battle with greater ardor, and with arms better fitted to vanquish every power that exalts itself against the science of God.

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From this character of zeal, there results another, the last of which we shall speak in this place: not only is it not provoked to anger against sinners, but it cannot even think evil of them: *Non cogitat malum.*

It is a fault but too common among persons of zeal, to imagine all lost in reference to certain sinners, whom they find insensible alike to all their instructions, all their advices and remonstrances; the more ardently they desire the salvation of those impenitent souls, the less do they hope it. They fancy that in the depravity and obduracy of their hearts, they behold written the malediction and the abandonment of God: their language corresponds to the temerity of their thoughts; they openly pity them as men already judged; they weep over their eternal ruin; and, as if they had already entered into the counsels of the Lord, or as though his mercies were not more abundant than our transgressions, they deplore as lost for ever, persons whom God, in his bounty, is, perhaps, on the point of saving. It is, of itself, a criminal temerity to anticipate the secret judgments of his justice. It is an insult offered to the power of his grace, to cut off, here below, even the most rebellious hearts from his

empire: it is to attempt to limit those striking instances of mercy, by which God has never ceased to console his church, in the conversion of the greatest sinners: it is to consider as useless, the blood of Jesus Christ, which still flows through the channels of the sacraments; it is to make of the present life, which is a time of repentance and of mercy, a time of wrath and vengeance; it is to contemn the intercession of the Saints and the supplications of the whole church, which are incessantly put up for their salvation.

Whilst Saul was persecuting the infant church, and inflicting so many sufferings on the faithful in Jerusalem, one would not have thought it rash to regard him as a scourge in the hands of God to purify his Saints, and be afterwards cast into the eternal fire to expiate the cruelties which he exercised towards the disciples: yet whilst he is still in arms against Jesus Christ, a sudden and unexpected stroke of his grace changes the persecutor into an Apostle. Judas, on the contrary, called by Christ himself to the Apostleship, the companion of his journies, the assertor of his doctrine, the witness of his miracles, appeared undoubtedly entitled to sit, on the last day, on one of the twelve thrones, with his

colleagues, to judge the twelve tribes of Israel : yet before the arrival of that great day, he himself is already judged ; he becomes *a child of perdition*,\* the first apostate from christianity, and dies a reprobate. The children of the kingdom may be cast out ; and God may raise up from the very stones, from the most hardened and insensible hearts, children to Abraham. The conversion of Satan and of his Angels, we are, alone forbidden to hope : but as to our brethren who are still amongst us, and for whom Christ has died, whatever may be the inveteracy or the number of their crimes, the blood of the true Abel may yet cry to heaven in their regard, not to demand their punishment, but to implore their repentance and forgiveness.

And truly, thou that judgest thy brother, before God has judged him, how knowest thou, says Saint Paul, whether thou thyself who appearest so firm in the way of the Lord, shalt not fall, to rise no more ; and whether thy brother whom thou thinkest fallen without resource, may not rise again, never to fall ? Who has revealed to you the adorable secrets of the mercy and the justice of the Lord, towards men ?

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\* John. c. xvii. v. 12.

Are not the perseverance of the just, and the conversion of the sinner, equally the pure effects of his grace, and the gifts of his gratuitous bounty; why then would you arrogate the right of hoping the former for yourself, and of despairing of the latter for your brother. Beware, says the Apostle, of judging before the time; there are in the treasures of the divine mercy so many resources that are hidden from us, and in the terrors of his justice so many abysses which we are forbidden to explore, that we must always work out our salvation with fear and trembling, and expect the salvation of our brethren with patience and confidence. Saint Monica wept over the dissoluteness of Augustine, and the monstrous errors with which he was infected, and her hope of the conversion of this child of her affection, gave a new weight, with God, to her prayers and tears. Samuel wept over Saul during the rest of his life, and although the Lord seemed to have rejected that unfortunate prince, the tears of the Prophet ceased not to solicit his conversion and salvation from the God of his fathers. The highest point of iniquity is oftentimes the first moment of grace: when the prodigal son seems farthest from home, without any hope of return, and as

if lost in a foreign land, then it is that he says, I will rise, and will go to my father; then it is that he returns in effect, that he receives the kiss of peace and reconciliation, and is restored to all his forfeited rights. It is thus that the zeal of true charity never despairs: *Omnia sperat*. But oftentimes not content to regard guilt as hopeless when it appears, and when we see it, we imagine that we see it where it does not exist: and this is one of the most essential faults against that character of zeal of which I am now speaking: *Non cogitat malum*. Yes, my brethren, of all the reproaches which the world casts upon us, this is certainly not the most unjust: the idea which we entertain of the depravity of men, makes every thing appear to us criminal in their conduct: we weep over their disorders without being sure that they exist, as if the air of piety which accompanies our tears could justify the temerity of our suspicions: we bring odium upon virtue, and cause the world to represent it as satirical and malignant: we exercise so little mercy towards the actions of worldlings, that it would seem, that piety authorized us to violate, in their regard, all the rules of christian charity; and we erect within ourselves a rigid tribunal where false

zeal fancies itself warranted to pass sentence on all the rest of men. In them, every thing presents the idea of vice to the eyes of our false virtue: all freedoms of intercourse with the other sex, although the mere effects of levity, we consider as criminal designs; a meeting which chance alone had produced, raises in our mind the suspicion of a shameful assignation; we imagine that we discover in a simple indecency of dress, a heart corrupted and abandoned to passion: an exterior less recollected in a person consecrated to God, is to us, an infallible sign that the spirit of the world, has, in her heart, supplanted the spirit of her vocation: we perceive a criminal ambition and a profane desire of sacred dignities, in conduct where there is oftentimes nothing but charity and zeal; we secretly accuse of pride, of ostentation, and of a wish of being praised, those brilliant enterprises where nothing was sought but the glory of God, and the honor and interests of the church; and on the slightest pretences we ascribe the most holy actions to motives altogether human and unworthy. Far from forming ourselves to that charity, which excuses all, we give ourselves up to that false zeal which poisons every thing and pardons

nothing, and think it a pious merit that we see more clearly than others into the faults of our brethren. Charity draws a veil over every thing and scarcely sees the evil which is seen by the world; and we alone pretend to discover what is invisible to the rest of men: charity hides what it cannot excuse, and we do not excuse even what appearances justify, or render at least uncertain. It would seem that we give glory to God, by esteeming our brethren to be weaker, more imperfect and more filled with human passions, than they appear to him, since we applaud ourselves on every discovery that comes in aid of our suspicions. Now, nothing is more unlike to true charity than that malignant eye, which opens only to search out the infirmities of our brethren; for the same charity that fills us with ardent desires of their salvation, points out to us in their dispositions and conduct, a thousand virtuous qualities, which encourage us to hope for their everlasting happiness. She finds even in their very passions something that raises the hope of their return to innocence and truth; through the frivolous pleasures of which it is now the slave, she discovers a sensible and honest heart, one day susceptible of the divine impressions of grace: in their very crimes she



sees rather the misfortune of age or of occasion, than the depravity of a soul utterly abandoned to vice; and in the errors and the disorders into which they are plunged by the force of example and the impetuosity of their passions, she finds, after all, more of levity than of deep malice and hopeless guilt. Far from blasting by the malignity of her conjectures, those slender and distant promises of virtue which she may perceive in them, she regards them as so many pledges of a change for the better, hereafter. She cannot distrust the appearances of piety, nor suspect hypocrisy where all seems virtuous; for a holy credulity always inclines and pre-occupies her in favor of her brethren. Simple herself and incapable of artifice, she is still less capable of suspecting it in others; nor is she on her guard against that error which leads us to judge too favourably of our brother; it is an error of piety which is honourable to our religion: she dreads only that temerity which would suspect evil where it does not exist, because it is a malignity which dishonours piety, by justifying the censures and sneers of the world against it. In every occurrence of which the different faces afford matter for different judgments, she ever sees but the favourable

side, and this pious indulgence is peculiarly calculated to gain our brethren, and lead them from the ways of iniquity to the paths of innocence and peace. When they behold us still hoping for their salvation in spite of their disorders; still addressing them in language which seems to soften down the very crimes of which they themselves are ashamed; still discovering in them susceptibilities of grace, at the very moment in which they thought themselves absolutely rejected by God; still tracing in the bent of their hearts, hitherto abandoned to the world and to passion, inclinations which invite them to return to their duty; when they see us turn, as it were, to their side, a charity so sweet and so attractive, a zeal thus blinded, as it were, by excess of tenderness, touches and transports them, covers them with a holy confusion, and fills their heart with a love of that virtue which can render those who announce it, thus amiable and compassionate.

Let us, my brethren, leave malignity of judgment and rashness of thought and suspicion, to the world: as hatred, envy and jealousy are the grand springs of its judgments, it is not surprising that they all bear the characters of these vices. As to us, who are destined by our ho-

ly profession, to be the vicars and ministers of the charity of Jesus Christ towards men, our thoughts and our judgments must be marked with the character of our functions and of our ministry. That cutting, peevish and satirical zeal, ever more ready to censure than to instruct; always clear-sighted in detecting the evil which escapes every other eye; always reluctant to give credit for virtue; ever uniform in ascribing all the actions of sinners to criminal motives; ever inaccessible to indulgence, and averse from interpretations favourable to its brethren: that zeal which allows itself every license in descanting on the faults of others; which makes their transgressions the subject of its satires, rather than of its prayers and tears; which boasts of having foretold the most shameful falls, and prides itself on the prediction; which openly vaunts that it was not the dupe of those appearances by which others were deceived, and which is less touched at the ruin of a brother, than it is gratified by the reflection that it has prophesied the truth in his regard: such zeal is not the charity which rejoices not in evil, which hopes all things, excuses all things, endures all things; but rather that vanity which turns every thing to the account of its own

glory ; it is the malice which sees iniquity every where, and which on the presumption of its own piety, would give to every thing an air of criminality and guilt.

Let us, then, my brethren, be watchful over ourselves, in the discharge of those functions, in which we seem to seek only the glory of God and the salvation of our people : the sanctity of the object which we propose to ourselves, generally removes all concern about the viciousness of those dispositions with which we prosecute its accomplishment ; and truly difficult is it for man, not to mix up something of *self* in every thing that passes through his hands, for he is an infected channel through which even the purest thing that flows, always contracts some defilement. But what ought to awaken our attention, still more, is that we are charged with the honor and the interests of religion, and that whatever we add of our own corruption to our functions, sinks her character, and dishonours her dignity. The world forgives us nothing ; it is delighted to be able to recriminate against us, and take revenge for those weaknesses with which we reproach it, by reproaching us, without indulgence, with our own. Our zeal against its disorders is already odious

enough to worldlings, without adding to it those defects, which of themselves would more than suffice to render it hateful: far from reclaiming them, we succeed only in supplying them by our intemperance with new pretexts for impenitence: we cause them to revolt against the truth, by depriving it of all that is amiable and fitted to gain the heart, and by presenting it to them in a form that can only inspire aversion and disgust.

Let us then, in order to gather and concentrate what has been said; let us remember, my brethren, that the zeal of charity, like charity itself, is patient, *patiens est*; that it is kind, *benigna est*; that it is not envious, *non æmularur*; not rash, *non agit perperam*; not vain, *non inflatur*; not ambitious, *non est ambitiosa*; not interested, *non quærit quæ sua sunt*; not fretful, whimsical and petulant, *non irritatur*; in a word, not suspicious, but ever ready to think well of its brethren, *non cogitat malum*. Let us banish from our zeal every odious character; let us put away our own spirit, that the spirit of God, alone, may speak and act in us: in the mouth of the first ministers of the gospel it conquered the world, and will again conquer it in ours, if it alone inspire us and speak

by our lips; if truth make so little progress among men, the fault is not her's but our's. The world was still more opposed to her in those days, when she began to appear with the preaching of the gospel: the fury of tyrants, the power of the Cesars, the vain wisdom of philosophy, the ancient superstitions of the entire world, the most shameful passions authorized by a worship, which the majesty of the laws rendered respectable; all these obstacles, so insurmountable in appearance, yielded, at once, to her sway; the profoundest darkness could not withstand nor countervail the glorious advance and bright effulgence of her light: and she would still be honoured with similar triumphs, were her cause confided to the same ministers. Let us enter into the spirit of our holy predecessors, and our efforts will be soon crowned with the like success: let us imitate their zeal, and we shall gather from it the same fruit: the word of God is not in bonds; it is our tongues that are tied down by those vices and chains that have already fettered our hearts: the arm of the Lord is not shortened; it is our charity that is become faint and languishing: the world is not more vicious; it is we alone that are become less sanctified and less faithful. Let us

render ourselves worthy to be the ministers and teachers of truth, and we shall soon form disciples to the love and practice of her doctrines, and again deliver the world from the thralldom of sin, by the excellence of her precepts and the power of her name. *Amen.*

## A DISCOURSE

ON

### THE MANNER IN WHICH THE CLERGY OUGHT TO CONVERSE WITH PERSONS OF THE WORLD.

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Conversationem vestram inter gentes habentes bonam; ut in eo quod detrectant de vobis tanquam de malefactoribus, ex bonis operibus vos considerantes, glorificent Deum.

*Having your conversation good among the Gentiles; that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by the good works which they shall behold in you, glorify God.*

1. PETER. chap. ii. ver. 12.

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**I**T is upon this advice of the Apostle, Saint Peter, my brethren, that I propose to myself to make some reflections, nothing appearing to me of greater consequence to the dignity of our ministry, than the manner in which we ought to live and converse with persons of the world,



It is certain, my brethren, that our state and our functions impose on us the inevitable necessity of living in the midst of the world. It was the privilege and the consolation of those happy solitaries, whom their vocation and first institution consecrated to seclusion and penance, to live entirely separated from it. Affrighted at the iniquities and the contradictions of that perverse city,\* they sought an asylum in the solitude of the cloister; and there, under the rule of a severe discipline, solely occupied with the mercies of God, who had withdrawn them from the general corruption, they sang together, night and day, canticles of thanksgiving, and made intercession for all the children of the church, who were still exposed to the perils and depravity of the world.

As for us, my brethren, who are destined to be the salt of the earth, we must be, as it were, mingled with it; we must form but one mass and one social body with those who inhabit it; and instead of seeking an asylum afar, against the contagion of their vices, we must be always at hand, with remedies for their disorders. This situation, which must be of such

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\* *Vidi iniquitatem et contradictionem in civitate.*

*Psalm. 54. v. 10.*

essential benefit to the world, is often pregnant with nothing but perils for us ; and established as we are to stem the torrent of vice and error that inundates the rest of men, we often suffer ourselves to be borne along in its stream. To avoid, then, this misfortune to which we are, every day, exposed, we have only to lay down those rules of prudence and religion, which must be observed in our commerce with persons of the world ; rules, the observance of which alone, can sanctify those perils, and the contempt of which must multiply and aggravate them without end.

#### FIRST REFLECTION.

The first rule regards the selection of those persons with whom we are permitted to enter into society, and here, you at once perceive that the intimacy of the greater part of those who compose what is properly called the world, is forbidden us. I do not speak merely of frequent and unnecessary converse with a sex, from which mere decency, and even the laws of the world itself, ought to estrange us. Although we were to bring to it the most pure intentions ; although we were to feel satisfied that our eyes would be simple and without

stain ; although we were to think that we have, hitherto, had nothing to reproach ourselves with before God on the subject ; yet does the very frivolousness of such assiduous intercourse, become the gravity of a Priest or the solemnity of his ministry ? Moreover, whether will the world, which beholds you out of your place in such society, judge of you from the innocence of your heart, which it cannot see, or from your unseemly conduct, by which it is offended ? inclined as it is to think evil of us, will it excuse a manifest imprudence, in consideration of virtuousness, which is hidden from it ; it, that can extract poison from our most innocent actions, and that often turns our very virtues into crimes ? Now, can a Priest, a pastor whose reputation is so valuable to the church and ought to be so dear to himself, as the whole success of his ministry depends on it, can he preserve tranquillity in a line of conduct which tarnishes it and renders it suspected ? ought he to be listened to, when, in reply to the general murmurs and to the public outcry which has reached us, and with which we reproach him, he answers, that they are calumnies invented by his enemies to ruin his character, and that he takes God for witness of his innocence ? Of

his innocence, my brethren? but although there were to be nothing worse than imprudence in his department, could he be esteemed innocent? although he had given cause to nothing worse than suspicion, could he be excused for having done nothing to remove the scandal? is it enough for a Priest to be exempt from guilt, ought he not to be exempt from the very appearance and suspicion of crime? Can he be guiltless when he sacrifices public opinion and the honor of the church to assiduities, in which folly, indecency and unprofitableness are the least criminal part?

But must we, you will say, for unfounded rumors, or for the first lying tale of the libertine, sever those intimacies which propriety, or the ancient relations of acquaintance or friendship, had cemented? and would it not be confessing our guilt, and declaring to the public that we ourselves did not esteem those ties innocent, to burst them at the first report which we hear, of their impropriety? It is in this we grossly delude ourselves; for, my brethren, is it not already a great evil, and a presumption of culpability disgraceful to a Priest, that these intimacies are of a nature to give rise to such insinuations? A holy Priest, a faithful pastor, en-

tirely occupied with his duties, does not find much spare time for frivolous and useless assiduities; indispensable attentions alone, duties of charity and the exercise of his functions, bring him into public, and whilst he remains abroad, the gravity of his ministry accompanies him in every place. That unnecessary and officious intercourse, of which people can speak, and which can be suspected, is little suited to any but an idle pastor, whose light and unpriestly life, far from preventing rash and scandalous suspicions, creates and circulates them. But he accredits them, you say, by attending to them and withdrawing himself: that is to say, he accredits them by confounding the malice of those who have been capable of forming or entertaining them: that is to say, he authorizes them, by closing the lips of the calumniator; by declaring that he holds nothing dearer than his duty and his reputation, and that he can, without regret, pluck out the eye that gives scandal to the least of his brethren: that is to say, in a word, that he warrants them by respecting his character, and by forcing those to respect it, who sought to asperse it; it is thus he dishonours himself, by removing the occasions of the scandal. Ah! would to God that he did

not dishonour himself far more, by obstinately holding out against the public rumors: would to God, that by persisting in those suspicious intimacies, he did not himself proclaim aloud, that he is held to them by ties of which innocence can possibly form no part! that he did not give room to say, that an unfortunate inclination bears down the sanctity of his state and the love of his reputation, and that he did not despise and forget the public insinuations, only because he has long since forgotten himself.

Alas! my brethren, how many tears has the afflicted church shed, and how many does she still pour out, every day, over the scandal and the public falls to which the pretended innocence of those intimacies has conducted her ministers! with what public opprobrium have they not covered the chaste spouse of Jesus Christ? what humiliating contempt have they not drawn on the whole sacred ministry; and what occasion have they not afforded to the abandoned and impious votaries of vice, to blaspheme the name of the Lord, and to accuse religion herself for the disorders of her ministers! but let us draw an eternal veil over these horrors, and not renew our sorrow before virtuous and faith-

ful pastors, who share it with us, and whose very presence assuages and consoles it.

As a consequence of the same rule, we are interdicted all society with the notorious lovers of vice and scoffers of virtue; with those men who openly glory in guilt, and madly boast of their excesses and their intemperance. Alas! my brethren, what can be the business or the apology of a Priest, consecrated to piety and to the defence of her maxims, in such assemblies? If he finds pleasure in them, he shares in their works of darkness: if he disapprove but feebly and through a kind of shame, he is a hypocrite who is ashamed only of himself, and not of the excesses of which he is the witness; and his pretended moderation, well known to be such, serves but to give a new impulse to debauchery, and to ensure new derisions to virtue. What a scandal, my brethren, and what a disgrace to the priesthood, that a Priest and a pastor should be mentioned in the story of a company, where licentiousness, gluttony and drunkenness have been the order and the glory of the feast; should be named perhaps, as the man who signalized himself most among his fellows, and who carried his excesses to a height to which no one could attain but himself: for,

my brethren, it is the ordinary lot of an unfortunate Priest who oversteps the boundaries of his profession, to go farther than people of the world in indulgence and licentiousness, and to superadd to the contempt of duty and of character, the contempt of decency and moderation.

You will undoubtedly say, that all society with persons of the world, is not of this character; that you need recreation, and that there are regular and prudent persons to be found, with whom you may live without danger to yourselves, and without injury to the interests of religion, or to the propriety of your character. I readily grant it, my brethren; but before I propose to you the rules by which you should be guided in forming worldly intimacies, I will tell you that in the society of worldlings, of men even prudent and wise according to the world, we always breathe the air of the world and of its maxims; its spirit grows upon us by little and little, and thus, that steady deportment and sacerdotal carriage so much recommended by the sacred canons and so worthy of our ministry, is imperceptibly supplanted by an exterior of indifference or of dissipation: I will tell you that by living in the intercourse of that world which you may call wise and re-



gular, we imbibe those principles and maxims which are approved by the false wisdom of the world, and which are ever infinitely removed from the doctrines and the maxims of the gospel; that we suffer the first spirit of our calling to become gradually extinct, and substitute in its stead the novel and false spirit of the age: I will tell you that conformity of tastes and inclinations is the cement of intercourse and of intimacy, and that if the commerce of the world be so necessary for you, it is a sure proof that its tastes and feelings are yours, and that you are not in your proper place, except in its society.

But, you will say, we have need of recreation, for no one can bear the fatigues of being always engaged in serious occupations. But, my brethren, permit me in reply, to address to you the words in which Saint Paul formerly reproached those disciples, who, instead of referring the adjudication of their quarrels to their brethren, resorted to the tribunals of the Gentiles: *Sic non est inter vos sapiens quisquam.*\* What! you cannot find in the number of your colleagues, discreet and amiable men in whose so-

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\* 1. Cor. e. vi v. 5.

ciety you could be cheered and amused, after the cares and fatigues of your occupations: *Sic non est inter vos sapiens quisquam?* Is it possible, that amidst so many ecclesiastics of easy manners, of cultivated minds and edifying conduct, you need to call the world to your assistance, and to decline a society that would be honourable to you, to go in quest of relaxation where you ought never to appear, save in the discharge of your duty. Alas! my brethren, can a good Priest, filled with the spirit of religion and the fear of God, go to seek recreation amidst the bustle and the dangers of the world? and what can he expect to find even amongst those, who to the eyes of the world, appear the most moderate and regular? errors and abuses which custom has consecrated, but which religion detests; passions honoured with those eulogies which are denied to virtue; Christ insulted in his maxims, in his worship, oftentimes even in his servants; charity extinguished by hatreds, by interests, by jealousies; conversations poisoned by a thousand black and public slanders; God offended and forgotten almost in every place; the entire world become almost as dissolute, as immersed in darkness, as pagan in its doctrine and practice, as

it was before the hour of its conversion and the light of the gospel. Such is the world, my brethren, and a minister of Jesus Christ would look for amusement in the midst of such abominations? Could he even restrain his tears amidst such scenes of horror? would he not, like Saint Paul, surrounded by the superstitions of Athens, feel his heart-strings torn almost asunder by the strong impulse of the spirit of God? *Incitabatur spiritus ejus in ipso*;\* and could he give himself to a moment's joy amidst objects so calculated to overwhelm him with melancholy and sorrow. No, my brethren, the world can be nothing but a vale of tears for a faithful minister of Jesus Christ; he removes far from the afflicting spectacle of sin and death, and makes it the continual subject of his sighs and his prayers; and how could he seek delight or indulge in amusement, over the ruins and desolation of the holy Jerusalem; over the carcasses, if I may so speak, of that multitude of his brethren, which he beholds perishing, every day, in the eyes of God.

And what adds to the injustice of those ministers who allege the innocence and necessity

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\* Acts. c. xvii. v. 16.

of those relaxations which they seek in the world, is, that they are commonly those who least need indulgence, and who neglect most the toilsome duties and anxious occupations of their state. Yes, my brethren, it is those lazy ministers, enemies alike to study and retirement, unfaithful to their duties and reckless of their responsibility, who frequent the world and trail themselves through its societies, not to recruit powers exhausted by labors, but to fly thought, and occupy that leisure and that idleness which they feel as a burden; them alone we behold, wasting in unprofitable commerce and importunate civilities, that time of which they rob their people; merging by their hurry, the sacred gravity of their functions, and hastening to throw aside amidst the dissipations of the world, that serious character which they wore with so much unwillingness and pain. Their whole life is an eternal vacuity; there is nothing serious in their conduct, not even the holy functions of the ministry, which they almost always debase by an air of irksomeness and hurry; what ought to be their consolation, constrains and fatigues them, and on quitting the scene of duty, they fly to the world, to relieve and solace their fatigues by new prevarications.

**SECOND REFLECTION.**

I have already said, my brethren, that a pastor who is faithful to his duties, who respects his profession and loves his flock, finds but little time to spare for the trifling and dissipation of secular intercourse. He appears but seldom among men, because those occasions of duty or of propriety which sometimes require his presence in the world, not being multiplied by a vicious taste, or by vain pretexts, are necessarily few; and the rareness of our communication with the world, constitutes a second rule, in this matter, just as essential as the first. We cannot but lose ourselves and sink in the general esteem, by appearing too often in the world; all corrupt as it is, it exacts of us a virtue without stain, and even without a single one of the inseparable weaknesses of humanity.

The more indulgent it is towards itself, the more rigid it is with regard to us; it overlooks its own worst disorders, and pardons nothing in us: its censorious and malignant eye, is ever upon us; an unguarded word, a mere inattention, a thoughtless step, a hasty assent, become so many crimes which it will not for-

give us ; it magnifies their number and draws from them, the most scandalous consequences ; nor in the very moment in which, through a condescension in its favor we lay aside, to a certain degree, the gravity of our character, does it forget to discover, in our conduct, more of relish for its pleasures, than of condescension for its weakness. It exhorts us to imitate the licence of its joys and of its pursuits ; it treats our reserve and precaution against seduction, as littleness of mind or contemptible faintheartedness ; and yet, if we relax ever so little, in order to humour its desires, it turns upon our kindness, and repays our complaisance with the most insulting derisions, and the most flagitious and dishonourable reproaches.

Thus, my brethren, we deceive ourselves, if we fancy that we secure the esteem and goodwill of the world, by being always in its society, and by familiarizing ourselves to its follies. The more it sees us, the less does it respect us, and from the moment in which it finds that we cannot do without it, it begins to despise us : let our visits to it be rare, and we shall appear in it with greater dignity, and be received with greater regard : let us wait till propriety or necessity, the performance of pro-

fessional duties, or the hope of relieving the miseries of the poor, calls us into the world; and let us appear in it encircled with all the sacred pomp of our character, as the envoys, and holding the place, of Jesus Christ; and in those circumstances, our ministry itself, and the command of God, will protect our innocence, and act as our safeguard in every emergency. When we seek the world for its own sake, we must conform to its manners and its caprices; we would be but badly received, were we to bring into it that dignified gravity, and that sacerdotal reserve, by which we ought always to be accompanied; we would derange its pleasures, would disconcert its assemblies, and interrupt the licentious tenor of its converse: we would be a burden to it, our very presence would surprise and disappoint it, and it would say of us, as of old the enemies of virtue said of the just man, in the book of Wisdom: *Gravis est nobis etiam ad videndum*.\* We must either avoid the world, or conform to its practices.

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\* Wisdom. c. ii. v. 15.

## THIRD REFLECTION.

Thus, my brethren, if we are faithful to the rule, which prescribes that we should appear in it but rarely, it will be very easy for us to carry to it that zeal, that gravity, and edification, which constitute the last rule touching the manner in which the clergy should converse with persons of the world; for these are the marks by which the people of the world should recognise a minister of Jesus Christ.

I say, first, that we should be ever distinguished by gravity of deportment in the world. Our manners, our actions, our language, our whole exterior should bespeak and sustain the sacred dignity of our profession: recreations the most authorized by general usage, familiarities the most customary and most allowable, those tales of humor and those efforts of pleasantry which are tolerated and admired in every society, would be unseemly and indecent in us: nothing can be worthy of us, which is not worthy of our ministry: we often persuade ourselves that we ought to accommodate ourselves to the taste, to the language and maxims of the world, that we may not appear ill-



bred and disagreeable company: but, my brethren, a Priest is out of his sphere, and cannot appear with propriety among men, save when he is, what is called, disagreeable company for the world: as soon as the world courts and adopts him, when it associates him to its members, and is delighted in his society, there is a decisive proof, that that Priest no longer respects the character or the decency of his profession. And this, my brethren, is what we see, every day: all those Priests whom the world admires and applauds, whose manners it approves, and with whose company it is charmed, are careless and worldly Priests, who preserve nothing of the priesthood but the name: their whole exterior bespeaks nothing but the spirit of the world; it is seen in the foppery and indecency of their dress; in the levity of their carriage and discourse, and frequently even in that air of indifference, and that absence of gravity, which they display in their holiest functions. If you had been of the world, said Christ to his Apostles, the world would love its own: *Quod suum erat diligeret*;\* but because you are not of the world, therefore

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\* John. c. xv. v. 19.

the world hateth you. No, my brethren, the world does not run after a holy and respectable pastor; it is not eager to cultivate his friendship, nor to associate him to its assemblies. It is when the afflictions that come from above, render consolation needful to men, when the approach of death shows that eternity is at hand; ah! then it is, that they seek and appreciate the services of a holy Priest. Those who before appeared to be so much valued and caressed are then flung aside; the sinner feels that they can be of no use to him in those high concerns to which they were consecrated by their ordination, and that however conversant in the pleasures or the business of the world, they are ignorant and unpractised in the things of heaven. Let us disabuse ourselves, my brethren; we always purchase the friendship and the applause of men at the expense of the dignity and the gravity of our ministry; it is not the world that gives up its prejudices and false maxims for the sake of a union with us, but it is we that soften down the sternness of our sacred obligations, to be admitted to its society and favor. Let us, then, never lay aside, before people of the world, the holy gravity of our state, or the venerable character of minis-

ters of Jesus Christ: let them not distinguish between the pastor at the foot of the altar, and the pastor in intercourse with men: do not suffer them to forget him, whom but a moment before, they had seen and feared in the temple of God; let them find him, every where, the same, every where respecting his character, and causing it to be respected by others; every where, as Saint Paul says, announcing piety by his very presence: *Promittentes pietatem.*\*

Then, my brethren, if we witness those abuses which usage perpetuates and justifies in the world, we have a right to condemn them: then, if those conversations in which charity and modesty are so commonly violated take place before us, our character authorizes us to blame them: then, even the world itself does not find fault with us for endeavouring to sanctify its entertainments by words of prudence and of edification. For, my brethren, as the pious Tobias said of old, the Lord has dispersed us among the people of the world who know not God, that we might manifest to them, the wonders of his holy law: *Ideo dispersit vos inter*

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\* 1. Tim. c. ii. v. 10.

*gentes, ut enarretis mirabilia ejus.\** No, my brethren, a virtuous Priest should not quit the converse of people of the world without mingling in the discourse some words of edification; when we are affected by the great truths of our faith; when we meditate on them, every day, at the foot of the crucifix; when we are penetrated with a lively desire of the salvation of our brethren, it is surely difficult to behold them straying and perishing, without, at least sometimes, compassionating their miseries, and without profiting of every opportunity to scatter some words of salvation through their prejudices and their errors; it would not, in such circumstances, be in our power to contain ourselves, or to impose upon our zeal a silence of timidity or of indifference. And how know you whether a simple and edifying reflection, uttered at a moment when it is not expected, may not become a word of life and salvation to your brother? People of the world come to our public instructions on their guard, as it were, and prejudiced against the truths which we announce to them; but in familiar converse truth takes the sinner unawares; friendship,

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\* Tobias. c. xiii. v. 4.

sweetness and simplicity give to unpremeditated and unexpected truth, a force, which falls rarely to the lot of more regular discourse; the effect is more certain, because the stroke is unforeseen: but although the dispositions of those who hear us were to render it ineffectual, yet, at least, we have honoured our ministry; we have edified those whom we could not undeceive, and faithful to the advice of the Apostle, we have sanctified our whole conversation: *In omni conversatione sancti sitis.*\*

But should we not be apprehensive of rendering ourselves importunate, or of exposing the truth to the contempt and derision of our hearers? no, my brethren, I admit that it would ill become a worldly and dissipated Priest, to utter the language of edification in the society of persons of the world: he has forfeited that right by his conduct: it would appear ridiculous in him to recal others to the recollection of those truths, which he seems to have so long forgotten, himself; the doctrine of piety would blush in his mouth, and people would still ask themselves, as in the days of old, is Saul too among the Prophets: *Num et Saul inter*

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\* 1. Peter. c. i. v. 15.

*prophetas ?\** But the advice of a wise and edifying Priest is listened to, and respected: the world itself expects it from him; it may be annoyed at it, but it is not surprised: it may reject truth, but it secretly respects its herald. I admit that in so important and delicate a matter, our conduct should be guided by the rules of prudence, and that we must not render truth odious by importunate and unseasonable repetition: that charity whose only object is the utility of its hearers, requires that we should choose the proper moments to introduce it with effect; and how many favourable occasions offer themselves to a holy Priest, amidst the idle and frivolous conversations of people of the world? They converse with him about their affairs, their projects, their embarrassments, their subjects of complaint against their enemies or their rivals, their disappointments and their grievances; now, will not the spirit of God, in a holy pastor, find in those various details, a thousand opportunities to deplore the disturbed and sorrowful life of the lovers of the world; to remind them of the peace, the sweetness and consolation of a vir-

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\* 1. Kings. c. x. v. 12.

tuous and christian life, and to bewail the wretched infatuation of that choice which, whilst it deprives them of all happiness in this world, prepares for them, through all their pains and troubles, an eternity of misery in the world to come.

Besides, my brethren, there are occasions, when we must no longer regard the reproach of being importunate, and when zeal alone must hold the place of prudence; and this is the last rule by which we are to be guided in our intercourse with the world. Yes, my brethren, a Priest is a public minister, charged with the honor of religion and the interests of God's glory among men: he must never suffer persons of the world, whoever they may be, to indulge, before him, in those discourses in which the respect due to the majesty of religion, is violated; in which the maxims of the gospel are insulted and contemned; in which impious doubts are audaciously proposed against our faith, and our most august mysteries are treated with derision; in which vice is justified and virtue turned into ridicule; in which, in fine, the libertinism and impiety of the topics and the language dishonour our very presence. Oh! then it is, that the piety and dignity of the

Priest should burst forth, without any other bounds than those of zeal: entrusted as he is by his profession, with the interests of religion and the cause of God, he must then regard no man according to the flesh; he must then forget the titles and the distinctions of those who forget themselves, and remember only, that he is appointed their master and instructor by the Most High, and that he holds from the church an authority which gives him a right to pull down and trample with a holy disdain, every despicable and impious spirit of man, which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God: *Destruentem omnem altitudinem extolentem se adversus scientiam Dei.*\* He who will not spare, before us, all that is most venerable upon earth, must not be spared in his turn; we should, like God, hear his proud and hateful assertions with a holy indignation; a burning zeal, and an impetuous ire are then the only duties prescribed by our character; delicacy and politeness are out of the question; we must, as the spirit of God dictates, answer the fool according to his folly, must confound his ostentation and his ignorance, and vindi-

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\*2. Cor. c. x. vv. 4. 5.



cate the glory of the Most High from the insults of a vile mortal. We owe no reserve, no quarter, to those sinners who set no bounds to their insolence and folly. Oh! my brethren, the people of the world deem it an honor to espouse, with warmth, the cause of a friend whose character is assailed in their presence; they boldly impose silence on the calumniator; they would be disgraced and would pass for false and cowardly souls, if they suffered their friends to be blackened, without undertaking their defence; and yet we will not feel ourselves, animated with a like zeal, to close the lips of the libertine, and to maintain loudly and courageously the interests of Jesus Christ? and we, whom he has called friends, when he associated us to the sacred ministry, we would imagine that we discharge the obligations imposed upon us by this tender and honourable title, by basely dissembling, by silently disapproving the insults heaped upon him, and by weakly sacrificing his name and his glory to vain considerations of human respect? no, my brethren, we are no longer those friends whom Christ has chosen, and the name is a reproach to us, when his insulted honor no longer awakens our love and our zeal.

Such, my brethren, is the manner in which we should live and converse with persons of the world; such the societies which we must there avoid; such the rareness of our communications even with those whom we are permitted to see; such the gravity, the edification, the zeal, that should distinguish us in every conjuncture and in every place.

Similar too was the admonition of the Apostle to his disciple Timothy: in the last days shall come on dangerous times;\* teachers of the gospel, restless, dissipated, worldly, stubborn, puffed up, lovers of pleasures more than of God; and of this sort we already see many, who have familiar access to the habitations of the faithful, who are to be found every where, who enter into the concerns and the quarrels of their brethren, pass their time in frivolous and vicious conversations, speak incessantly, and always unseasonably, of what they know, and of what they know not; who abuse the weakness of the sex to lead silly women captive, and make themselves masters of the houses which they frequent. But do thou, O man of God, says the same Apostle, in another place,

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\* 2. Tim. c. iii.

do thou fly these things: do not imitate examples so disgraceful to the holy ministry, and so calculated to make the Gentiles blaspheme the gospel of salvation which we announce. *Tu autem, O homo Dei, hæc fuge.\**

I shall conclude, my brethren, by addressing to you the same words: *Tu autem, O homo Dei, hæc fuge.* Were you men of the world, its interests, its errors, prejudices and folly would have been your portion; you would be obliged to conform to its maxims and its language, to justify its practices and rise up against all who dared to condemn them. But you are all men of God upon earth, that is to say, you are all charged with the interests of God, with the care of his glory, with the honor of his worship, with the deposite of his doctrine and of his laws. The lieutenant of the king speaks only in the name of his master; he causes the orders of his sovereign to be respected among the people, and regards no man; when there is question of the interests and authority of the master whom he represents, he lays aside the character of private individual, and assumes and displays that of the public man, of the

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\* 1. Tim. c. vi. v. 11.

king's representative. And shall we, my brethren, who are the men of God in the world: *Tu autem O homo Dei*; shall we put off the sacred and public character with which we are clothed, a character which exalts and consecrates us, to become men of the world. And shall we be ashamed to speak the language of him who sends us; shall we suffer him to be outraged in our presence, without asserting his glory and his interests, without using the authority with which he invests us, and rising up with a holy zeal against the contemners of his name, of his laws and of his worship? *Tu autem O homo Dei*. And shall we, my brethren, unmindful alike of him whom we represent and of the honor of bearing his authority, authorize by our conduct, the maxims of his enemy—the world, and appear leagued with it, in impious compact, to make its errors and its prejudices prevail over the venerable laws and sacred maxims which he has charged us to preserve and defend? *Tu autem O homo Dei*. No, my brethren, let us bear this august title on our forehead, through the entire detail of our conduct; let us be every where, the men of God; let our most indifferent actions, our conversations, our intimacies, our civilities, our amusements,

be ennobled and sanctified by this holy and honourable character; let us never debase ourselves by throwing it aside, and let us be ever mindful, that the world will respect it, in us, as long as we shall respect it ourselves. *Amen.*

## A DISCOURSE

ON

THE NECESSITY IN WHICH PASTORS  
ARE, OF RENEWING THEMSELVES IN  
THE SPIRIT OF THEIR VOCATION.

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Renovamini autem spiritu mentis vestræ.

*Be renewed in the spirit of your mind.*

EPHESIANS. chap. iv. v. 23.

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**T**O what men, my brethren, did the Apostle once address this word of exhortation? to ministers of the gospel, who, every day, laid down their lives for the master who had sent them; to whom death appeared a favor; who were persecuted, despised, trampled under foot, and who bore with joy every suffering for the elect; to the first preachers of the faith, among whom some were Apostles, some were Prophets, others

had received the gift of tongues, and the power of miracles; men, whose sanctity, the whole universe, with all its vain ostentation of learning, and wisdom, and philosophy, and unbelief, could not withstand.

Such were the men to whom the Apostle once recommended to renew themselves, in the spirit of their vocation; men who were yet filled with the first fruits of that spirit which had recently come down from heaven, and who, like their divine master, poured out of their own abundance, upon peoples and upon nations.

True is it also, that the abatement and decay of this first spirit of our ministry, is the greatest evil of the church, and the true source of the degradation and perdition of her ministers.

This same word, my brethren, I, this day, address to you and to myself; to us, who being called to the ministry in this age of degeneracy and relaxation, have, as it were, followed its spirit and its destiny; to us, who in the general languidness of the faith, far from assisting those who are perishing, can scarcely support ourselves. *Renovamini autem spiritu mentis vestræ.*

Permit me, then, at the opening of my episcopacy, of which you are to be the strength

and the consolation, to exhort you, whilst I exhort myself, to recal yourselves to the first spirit of your vocation. As we are all charged with the same burden, let us mutually animate each other to bear it worthily; and since Providence, perhaps, by a rigorous judgment on me and on the flock committed to my care, has placed me over this respectable diocess, and has associated you to me, as the co-operators of my episcopacy and my ministry, let us go together, to the true source of our evils and endeavour to discover their proper remedy. *go. to page 128+*

#### FIRST REFLECTION.

The first source of our infidelities in the duties of our holy profession, is, that oftentimes, without consulting the voice of heaven, it is we ourselves that have called ourselves to the ministry; it is vile interest, it is ambition, it is domestic arrangement, it is flesh and blood, it is the hands of man that have opened to us the terrible gates of the sanctuary; it is they that have installed us in the holy place: in it we are not the envoys of Jesus Christ but of the passions, and we soon become their sport and their ministers. !

In what light, think you, my brethren, will God regard the usurpers of his priesthood and



of his glory? what increase will he give to the labors of men, whom he knows not, and whom he rejects? they will find danger and perdition in every function: the sacred altar, the tremendous mysteries, the confidence of the faithful, the authority of the ministry, the revenues of the sanctuary, their natural talents, every thing will be abused; the fountain of action being once poisoned, the venom will flow through the entire detail of their lives. They are not, says the scripture, of the race of those men, who have been destined to operate the salvation, and extend the glory, of Israel; God has not intended them for chiefs and defenders of his people: they are overthrown at the first encounter; they are become the sport and the derision of the enemies of his covenant; they have caused his name to be blasphemed by the scandal of their lives; they have been the ruin of the souls of which they ought to have been the saviours and the guides; and not having entered by Jesus Christ, who is the way and the life, their ministry has become a ministry of error, of condemnation and death. *Ipsi autem non erant de semine virorum illorum, per quos salus facta est in Israel.\**

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\* 1. Mach. c. v. ver. 62.

How many ministers now eating the bread of the church, whom God has not called to her service? Remedies for this evil are rare, for it is truly difficult to change the path in which God has not commanded us to walk, into a path that will conduct us to salvation.

But the useful talents, which you possess for the government of the faithful, seemed to you, to be a voice from God, calling you to be their leader? It is not for you to regulate the employment of your talents, but for the great Father of the christian family, from whom you have received them: they may even become the source and the occasion of your perdition. The first and greatest talent, says the Apostle, is piety, which is profitable to all things; and not possessing it, you are not of the race of those men by whose ministry salvation must be wrought in Israel: *Ipsi autem non erant de semine virorum illorum, per quos salus facta est in Israel.*

But will not the success of our functions atone for the viciousness of those motives, by which we may have been conducted to the ministry? In vain will you prophesy in the name of the Lord, says Christ, if the Lord has not sent you; in vain will you cast out the im-

pure spirit from the souls of the faithful, by the ministry of the word; in vain will you operate wonders and gain the applause of men; God knows you not; this applause will itself corrupt your heart; it will be the empty and exclusive recompence of all your empty toils. You are workers of iniquity, according to the expression of the gospel: flesh and blood have opened to you the gates of the church—that kingdom of God, but you will never hold it by a just title, for you are not of the race of those men, by whose ministry Israel must be saved: *Ipsi autem non erant de semine virorum illorum per quos salus facta est in Israel.*

What conclusion should we deduce from this first reflection? That we must render our vocation sure by our good works; that sanctity of life is the most decisive mark of a call to the ministry; and that the grace which supports us in the labors and the dangers of the priesthood, is almost always the happy and the infallible effect of the grace that has confided it to us.

## SECOND REFLECTION.

The first source then of our infidelities, is the defect of vocation. But I will suppose it legi-

timate, and I say, that familiarity with holy things becomes for us a second source of relaxation and sin.

When the Priests and the Levites first saw the tabernacle which Moses had erected in the wilderness ; when they beheld the miraculous cloud which went before it, the majesty of God which overshadowed the awful spot, the oracles which were uttered from the bottom of the sanctuary, the magnificence and the august spectacle of the ceremonies and sacrifices, they approached it with a sacred horror : the purifications and other ceremonies which the law prescribed, were minutely and zealously observed. But the daily sight of the tabernacle gradually familiarized them to that holy object ; their precaution ceased with their respect ; the prodigy of the pillar of fire which God raised over it every night, lost its effect by time ; profanations quickly followed ; rash Priests dared to offer in it, an unhallowed fire ; others usurped the functions which were reserved to the High Priest alone ; in fine, the daughters of Madian soon became to them, an occasion of scandal and of fall, and scarce was there found in the whole tribe of Levi, a Phinees, one holy and zealous Priest, who had courage to avenge the

honor of the priesthood and the sanctity of the law, so basely insulted before an uncircumcised and infidel people.

Such is our history. In those happy days, when we first began to approach the sacred altar, the majesty of the tremendous mysteries, the prodigy which is operated in the hands of the Priest, the presence of the God, who is there offered in sacrifice, the silent awe of the Angels that encompass the sanctuary, these considerations filled our hearts with a holy dread; we trembled under the sacred vestments, and the oppressive honor of the priesthood; the slightest stains of guilt covered us with confusion; we fancied we saw the Angel of heaven, holding a flaming sword as of old, to guard the entrance of the holy place; the minutest ceremonies appeared to us mysterious and sublime.

But we became insensibly more confident: our respect decreased with our fears: we became familiarized to our own weaknesses and to the terrible mysteries which they insulted: prayer, recollection, and the flight of dangerous occasions, no longer appeared to us, necessary precautions: a conscience doubtful, embarrassed, and, consequently defiled, no longer affright-

ed us, we carried it without remorse, into the sanctuary: the most holy and terrific functions were no more to us than the most ordinary and the most vulgar, and far from awakening our fears or our faith, scarcely did they excite our attention: languor and disgust were the least criminal dispositions which we brought to our duties, and the altar itself, which ought to be the place of our consolation and our strength, became the theatre and the cause of our misfortunes and our crimes.

And hence, my brethren, so much indecency in the most awful functions of our ministry: hence so many Priests appear at the altar, in the midst of the holy temple, with less of gravity and precaution, than in the profane assemblies of the world: hence the praises of the Lord, those sacred canticles which have been the language of the faith and of the piety of every age, are sung with as much irreverence and indecorum as the very songs of dissoluteness and debauchery.

So the piety of the faithful has waxed cold, and no longer collects them, but with difficulty, in our temples. Those holy assemblies where the praises of the Lord were once celebrated with so much dignity, with such faith and com-

punction, were the consolation and delight of the first christians ; like the clergy they divided and reckoned the hours of the day by those divine hymns, and even amidst the horrors of persecution, they constituted the sweet solace of all their pains.

Now, alas ! even the most solemn days, bring them, with difficulty, to the foot of the altar ; nor do they hear without tedium and impatience, those sacred canticles which not piety or religion ; but languor and disgust, seem to chant.

In times of old, the idolatrous inhabitants of Babylon, who knew not the God of Israel, touched by the majestic hymns of the children of the captivity, who dwelt on the banks of their rivers, came and entreated them to sing to them from the canticles of Sion : *Hymnum cantate nobis de canticis Sion.*\* Disgusted with the fabulous and extravagant songs of their priests, and penetrated with the magnificence and the sublimity of the praises of the Lord, they delighted in the plaintive but harmonious recital of his greatness and his wonders, and the sweet and sacred harmony of the songs of Jerusalem, attracted the idolaters in crowds, to the habitations of the captive tribes, and made them weep with

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\* Psalm. 136. v. 3.

them, over the misfortunes of Judah: *Hymnum cantate nobis de canticis Sion.*

And yet, at the present day, the very people of God shun those heavenly canticles, and without regret, leave the ministers of religion to sing the praises of the God of their fathers in the solitude of our temples; and a duty so consoling has become a mean and a vulgar concern; is esteemed unworthy of the regard of the wealthy and the great, and consigned to the attention and respect of the last of the people.

Whence comes this misfortune? from the indecent hurry and the perfunctory recitation of the clergy: the praises of God, my brethren, are become degraded in our mouths. But your conduct, my brethren of the world, is not therefore the more excusable: the sanctity of the ministry does not necessarily depend, on the sanctity of the ministers: the words of eternal life, even in the mouth of the profane, are always worthy of your love and your respect; and in our cathedral, at least, the majestic solemnity of the ceremonies of the church, and the pious recollection of her ministers, which seem still to recal the spirit and piety of former times, ought also to revive in you the



faith, the zeal and the fervor of the early christians.

Behold, my brethren, the extremities to which we are conducted by a familiarity with holy things : we become relaxed, indifferent, disgusted ; we treat the holy mysteries without respect, without faith, without precaution, without one of the necessary dispositions ; and thus the crime of abuse and of sacrilege becomes inevitable. The abuse of holy things is then the last source of our corruption and misfortunes.

### THIRD REFLECTION.

O frightful abyss, out of which to escape is almost impossible ! has a bad Priest been ever converted ? and does not the Prophet say that the wounds of the sanctuary are desperate and incurable ? *Desperata est plaga ejus.\**

And when a Priest has once reached this point of abandonment and guilt, what is there which he will not abuse ? The sacred altar becomes the theatre of his crimes and profanations ; the dispensation of the sacraments and of the venerable mysteries is turned into a vile traffic of avarice and cupidity ; he uses the au-

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\*Mich. c. i. v. 9.

thority of the ministry as a snare to surprise the religion and the innocence of the faithful; the instruction of his people is a public prostitution of the sacred word, and the *sentence of his condemnation* pronounced by his own mouth. Advancing from crime to crime, as he proceeds from function to function; he is the man of sin, in the temple of the living God: whatever is most holy in religion, every day hardens his heart and consummates his reprobation; and the remedies of human infirmity tend but to quicken his frightful and inveterate disease.

And from hence, my brethren, what scandals for the faithful! faith becomes extinct among the flock; the piety of the just wavers; the weak have no longer any one to support them; libertines justify themselves by our example; religion is degraded together with her ministers.

Woe to that christian people to whom God in his wrath has given such wicked pastors! the crimes of the flock must indeed have irritated the justice of heaven, when it suffers such wolves to break into the fold.

You, men of the world, often triumph at those evils; you make the vices and the weak-

nesses of the clergy, the most ordinary subject of your derisions and censures; and you do not perceive that their disorders are but the punishment of your own crimes; you do not perceive that the most terrible chastisement which the anger of the Almighty can exercise on a people, is to raise up among them vicious pastors; ministers of religion, who are scandalous and unfaithful; guides to heaven, who conduct but to death.

Heretofore he punished the prevarications of the Jews, by captivity in a foreign land, by the plunder and desolation of Jerusalem, by public calamities, by the excessive tributes which were exacted by Egypt and Assyria: yet these sharp scourges did not bring back that stiff-necked race to the obedience of the law; it seemed that the justice of God was exhausted, and that there remained no farther chastisement to be exercised on his people; but the most terrible of all, was still in reserve.

“ Since I have visited Israel in my wrath,  
“ saith the Lord, and that all my chastisements  
“ upon her, have proved unavailing; I will  
“ raise up false Prophets in the midst of her;  
“ I will give her pastors who will seduce her  
“ by their example, and who, instead of be-

“ ing a resource, will be to her, an occasion  
 “ of scandal: beyond this, my anger cannot  
 “ go.”

Tremble, you my christian brethren, lest God should act with similar vengeance towards you. He has already visited you <sup>with</sup> (with public evils, with the scourge of war and the derangement of the seasons, with heavy burdens imposed by the necessities of the state,) with misery and suffering almost general: yet all those scourges have not turned you to the Lord: your crimes have even increased with your misfortunes: what new chastisement then, says the Lord, shall I inflict upon my people, since they cease not to add new crimes to their ancient prevarications? *Super quo percutiam vos ultra, ad dentes prevaricationem?*\* I will set over them, rulers without vigor, unfaithful pastors, scandalous and mercenary Priests, who shall teach them to forget me, and shall co-operate in their destruction: *Omne caput languidum, principes tui infideles, socii furum, omnes diligunt munera, sequuntur retributiones.*† Such is the last vengeance, which the Almighty in his wrath, exercises upon the crimes of the earth, and it is

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\* Isaiah. c. 1. v. 5.

† Ibid. c. 5. v. 25.

one which, perhaps, at this very hour, he is about to pour out on our sins.

But no, O Lord, thou wilt not thus strike the church of a diocess, (which the blood of the many martyrs who have laid its foundations, who repose under her altars and) who cry unceasingly to thee, on behalf of their brethren, will ever render precious in thy sight. Were the unworthiness of the chief pastor, whom thou hast, perhaps, in thy anger set over it, to arm thy justice, the faith of those holy bishops who once governed it, would restrain thy arm; thou wouldst remember thy venerable servants, who have sanctified the land of our habitation; the stones of our temples, where their ashes repose, would intercede in our favor; and thou wilt not permit this portion of thy inheritance, which has been purchased with their blood, and hallowed by their labors, ever to become the prey of libertinism and infidelity.

Look down, O Lord, from the high habitation of heaven, and cast an eye of mercy on this ancient seat of thy religion; on this vineyard which thy own right hand hath planted: be ever jealous of it, as of thy ancient heritage: renew in it, that first fruitfulness and beauty, which rendered it, once so agreeable

in thy sight; repair the ravages of time and decay, and restore it fully to that order and fertility by which it has been heretofore so distinguished: *Respice de cælo, et visita vineam istam, et perfice eam quam plantavit dextera tua.\**

Purify her ministers who are here assembled: renew in them, the first gifts of that spirit, which has consecrated them to thee, by a solemn and holy unction: inflame them with a new fire of charity and of zeal, that issuing from this temple like the Apostles from their retreat, they may infuse it into the hearts of the people committed to their care: *Et perfice eam quam plantavit dextera tua.*

Above all, stretch forth the arm of thy protection over the son of man, whom thou hast chosen for thy work, upon the first pastor, who sends up his supplications to thy throne, from this place: *Et super filium hominis quem confirmasti tibi.* Close thine eyes to his weaknesses, indue him with virtue and strength; support him that he may support his brethren: render him the model of the flock, of which

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\* Psalm. 79. vv. 15. 16.

thou hast constituted him the conductor and the chief, that walking in thy paths, we may all reach that happy country, whither our fathers, and our first pastors are gone before us.

*Amen.*





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**SYNODAL DISCOURSES.**

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## FIRST DISCOURSE.

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### ON THE INSTITUTION OF SYNODS.

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I SHALL add but a word, to the wise and excellent instruction which you have just received.\*

It were, indeed, to be wished, that in our synodal meetings we had only to encourage and animate one another, and to solace the toils of the holy ministry, by recounting, like the first disciples, the graces and wonders which

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\*Massillon alludes here, and at the beginning of the greater part of the following discourses, to the previous exhortation of his Proctor. One of the principal functions of this episcopal officer, was to address the assembled clergy on the subject of their duties at the solemn celebration of the Synod. His instruction usually preceded that of the Bishop.

the word of the gospel was operating among our people. There should be, in this place, an edifying spectacle and a public testimony of the zeal of pastors, instead of the afflicting reproof of their infidelities and their disorders; and these sacred assemblies have been established, rather to provide for the necessities of the faithful, than to apply remedies to the weaknesses and the prevarications of Priests. Yes, my brethren, our holy predecessors at certain times, as Saint Cyprian remarks, called around them, the clergy scattered over the country, and those who, in the episcopal city, lived under their own eyes, that together they might all fortify one another against the seductions and the persecutions of the world, against the enemies of the faith, and the innumerable perils by which they were surrounded: they called them to deliberate with them, on the necessities of the churches, to hear their virtuous counsel and clear up their doubts; so that it was the same spirit, which diffused itself from the first pastor over the whole ministry and governed the entire flock.

Zeal has since cooled; abuses have multiplied; the degeneracy of the faithful, far from quickening the energies, has relaxed the efforts

of the pastor, and the relaxation of the pastor has completed the corruption of the people.

In accusing but the relaxation of pastors, I am aware that I am far short of the truth: for would to God, that we had merely to rouse their tepidity and reanimate their zeal, without investigating their guilt and deploring their crimes.

You have just heard that the first source of the infidelities of ecclesiastics is a vile interest. From the moment that you regard the holy ministry as a sordid occasion of gain; that you make the gift of God subservient to a detestable avarice; that you are more alive to a mercenary profit than to the salvation of souls; that you exact your dues with unfeeling rigor, whilst you yourself, every day, forget or disregard what you owe to your people; that you measure the fruits of your holy mission, not by the increase of the faith and piety of your flock, but by the augmentation of your base and despicable profits; that you do not distinguish the art of arts, a ministry formidable to Angels themselves, the sacred and terrific functions of the priesthood, from a low and mercenary profession; in a word, that you

become of the number of those infamous buyers and sellers, whom Christ drove, with a holy indignation, from his temple : you are no longer the ministers of God's mercies towards his people ; you make void, as far as in you lies, his mysteries and his redemption ; you are, as an Apostle says,\* clouds without water, unfruitful trees of autumn, carnal and sensual men, to whom darkness and judgment are reserved for ever.

And hence, my brethren, those frequent falls which scandalize the faithful, and fill us with bitterness and affliction ; hence so many prevarications in the ministry ; hence the violation of the holiest ordinances of our predecessors, and the contempt of all rule and of all authority. When the heart is infected, its works quickly betray the corruption ; when the source of action is defiled, the bad odor soon spreads over the whole conduct. You are the witnesses of those things, you, my brethren, who are faithful to your ministry ; your tears mingle with mine over the mournful evil ; and your example, if it does not correct, at least condemns and confounds the vicious.

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\* Saint Jude.

There is one consolation which I cannot refuse either to you or to myself; it is, that the multitude of zealous and edifying pastors whom I have found, in my visitation, has greatly alleviated the sorrow, and solaced the affliction, caused by a small number of the contrary character. I have felt that the blood and merits of so many of our holy predecessors, whose memory we honour, still protected and governed this large church; that their spirit was not yet extinct in their sacred ashes, and that the arm and protection of the Almighty were not yet withdrawn from over our people.

Let us preserve and cherish the precious remains of this first spirit; and let us endeavour to transmit it, active, pure and generous, to our successors, as we have received it from those who preceded us.

Among the principal abuses which we have remarked in our visitation, there are two, to which we are determined to apply a remedy. The first, regards the females whom you employ in your service, and whose age is neither conformable to the injunctions of the sacred canons, nor to the particular statutes of this diocess. The second, respects the neglect of that regard to place, decency and precaution,

which we should observe in hearing confessions, particularly those of persons of the other sex. It would be too distressing, to unveil in this place, the shame of the sanctuary, and to bring before you, in detail, the various and mournful reasons which we have for renewing, on these two points, the ordinances of our predecessors, and even for adding others still more severe. These are wounds which we must hide whilst we heal: it is sufficient for me to inform you, that the good order of this diocess, the honor of the church, and the edification of the people, imperatively demand these precautions.

We therefore command, &c.

[Here follow the Regulations, which not being necessary to the present purpose of these volumes, are, in this and in every similar instance, omitted.]

## SECOND DISCOURSE.

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### ON THE LOVE OF PASTORS FOR THEIR FLOCKS.

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**Y**ou have just heard, that the faults of a Priest can never be light, because neglect of duty, is closely followed by hardness of heart. From the moment in which you lose that tender piety, which causes a perpetual dread of the terrible ministry, and makes man feel that he can never be sufficiently disposed for its awful duties, your functions become so many crimes, and abuse of the sacred functions leads to every thing but repentance. The altar, where the faithful generally find a resource, is the rock on which you perish, without hope or chance of safety ; and all the aids of salvation which Christ has established in his church, become for you, the occasion of judgment, and the seal of your reprobation ; and hence, my



brethren, the many scandals which afflict us and dishonour the church; which cause the name of the Lord to be blasphemed, and justify, as it were, the derisions of the impious against his worship; and as in this place, we must speak the whole truth, hence too the contempt of pastors and of their ministry. We, every day, behold with grief, the flock in rebellion against their shepherd: they who, as Saint Paul says, ought to be your crown and consolation, are turned into your enemies and accusers. That generous zeal, which boldly reproveth vice, may sometimes draw down on you, the hatred of the wicked; but such persecution has ever been the glory and the recompence of faithful pastors; we ought to share it with you, and our authority ought to be, in such cases, your asylum and support; we will never refuse it to you; and shall esteem ourselves but too happy, when pastors of this character shall offer themselves to implore it: we have the consolation of reckoning many of distinguished virtue among you, and their fidelity to their high trust, abates the pain and assuages the sorrow, which a first pastor cannot fail to experience, from the neglect and the unfaithfulness of the subaltern clergy. Feed then, the flock entrusted to you,

with the tenderness of a father, with the vigilance of a guide, with the disinterestedness of a disciple of the Apostles, with the decency and holiness of a minister of Jesus Christ: instruct them in their duties, and let your example ensure the success and fruit of your instructions; appear occupied and concerned about their salvation alone; forget your temporal interests, and never for a moment balance them with the eternal interests of their souls: do not convert a sacred ministry into a sordid speculation of gain: pervert not your authority to the unworthy purpose of gratifying personal animosities, nor turn the dispensation of the holy sacraments, which should be a work of charity, into an exercise of vengeance. It is of itself already a scandal, when a pastor is alienated from his flock; but it is a profanation, and the very height of crime, when he presumes thereupon, to refuse them the sacred mysteries: we are firmly resolved to arrest and punish this crying and odious abuse, which we have remarked with deep regret, in our visitation, and which, daily complaints convince us, is but too common in this diocess. Judge them in the tribunal, if you will; and if you find them unworthy, follow the laws of the church, and re-

move them, for a time, from the holy table: but do not refuse to admit them to the mysterious pool. Jesus Christ sends to it a man who was blind from his nativity, and he went and washed, and came seeing.\* The church opens this sacred bath to the most inveterate sinners, and what right can you have to close it against them, you who are only her ministers, and who have no authority but that which she confides, and which she does not entrust to you, save for the necessities and advantages of the faithful? You belong to them, your vocation, your mission, your functions are for them only: give yourself therefore, entirely to them, since you are all you are, solely for them. Already is the faith too dead in the breasts of christians, already is the worship of God too disparaged, the sacraments too neglected, without adding your assistance also, to harden their hearts, and to teach them by your misconduct, to confound what is divine with what is human, the sanctity of the ministry with the passions of the man.

Can we be then surprised at the little fruit which you produce in your parishes? We, eve-

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\*John. c. ix. v. 7.

ry day, see pastors grown old in the ministry, without drawing even one soul, from the evil of its ways, and going to appear before the great pastor Jesus Christ, not only with empty hands, but charged with their own iniquities and with those of their people. Render piety respectable, by rendering yourselves worthy of being respected; inspire all with an awe and dread of the holy mysteries, by the profound recollection with which you will treat them: make virtue amiable by manifesting its loveliness and facility, in your practice. Whatever may be the rudeness of your people, the holy life of the pastor will always have its effect; and I may add, that the more gross they are, the more they are struck by an example which is always before their eyes: their whole religion is in their senses: we ought to remember that the most savage nations have, heretofore, laid down their ferocity, at the voice and example of Apostolic men. It rarely happens that a faithful pastor does not gain the love, the respect and confidence of his flock, and without this confidence, your ministry profits nothing. If then you do not possess it, blame yourself alone; endeavour to deserve it by an irreprehensible life, by a tender charity, a pru-

dent zeal, an affable gravity; by a dignified and well sustained conduct; do not sink to the level of their grossness by an imitation of their manners; be their model and not their companion; in a word, do not resemble them, if you would make them resemble **Jesus Christ**.

### **THIRD DISCOURSE.**

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#### **ON THE NECESSITY OF RETREAT TO THE CLERGY, FOR THE RENOVATION OF THE GRACE OF THE PRIESTHOOD.**

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**I**T would be superfluous to offer any new reflections on the truths which you have just heard: it is not to instruct you, my brethren, that we speak in this place, but rather to recal your attention to what you already know: I have nothing newer to propose to you, than that you apply more to yourselves, those instructions and counsels, which it is your duty and your custom to bestow upon others. It is not our ignorance of the duties of our state, that will, one day, cause our ruin, but our having always known, and always neglected them; it is the having familiarized ourselves from the beginning of our ministry, with the most sublime

truths of religion, without being any longer moved by their importance ; and the having announced them so often to others, without reducing them to practice ourselves.

There was a time, when the Priest and the people lived in equal ignorance of our duties and of our mysteries : the blind were then leaders of the blind, and the ministry had become little else, than an occasion of fall to the children of the church, and of scandal and derision to her enemies. Light again shone upon the sanctuary : long trials in learning and piety, could alone conduct to the priesthood : the chief pastors did not impose hands lightly upon any one ; and the lips of the priest again became the repositories of doctrine. But this increase of knowledge in the ministry, was not long followed by a corresponding increase of fervor and zeal among the clergy : we have the consolation of finding them more enlightened, but we have not always that of seeing them more active, more pious, more faithful : and this we are compelled to lament the more, as there is nothing more to be feared, than the knowledge, without the practice, of our duty ; than to break the bread of heaven to our brethren, whilst we neglect to feed on it ourselves.

The most ordinary as well as the most dangerous evil, of our profession, is that dryness and insensibility into which we fall, and which increases, every day, amidst all the lights and all the terrors, the best calculated to awaken our conscience and nourish our piety. The christian who lives unmindful of his duty and forgetful of his God, finds in our exhortations and in the truths of which he was before ignorant, a resource of salvation; new and terrifying convictions, which turn his thoughts upon eternity, and make him enter into himself: but for us, they have neither novelty nor interest, and we utter them as light and customary topicks, which proceed from the lips, without touching the heart; which thus leave us just what we were, and which, consequently, have no other effect than to increase our apathy, and harden us the more: we bring about our own perdition, by the very aids which we employ to facilitate the conversion of our brethren.

So we, every day, behold among the faithful, public transgressors who enlightened by grace and touched by a sense of their enormities, return to God, and lead a regular and holy life; but have we often the consolation of seeing a disorderly and scandalous Priest, enter



seriously into himself, and by a sincere conversion edify the church which he had so often insulted and scandalized? It is in vain that, in the course of our visitations, we send them to houses of retreat, to renew them in the spirit of their vocation: they come out of them as bad as they went in; the days spent in those holy places, are days of irksomeness and constraint, oftentimes of hypocrisy, but never of repentance: they regard this remedy as a grievous evil, and are more ashamed of the charitable expedient to which we resort, to draw them from their disorders, than they are of the very disorders themselves: thus they are punished, but not changed, by retreat: and what avails it to chastise and afflict them, if, as the Apostle said, of old, this affliction does not lead them to penance? *Gaudeo, non quia contristati estis, sed quia contristati estis ad pœnitentiam.\** It is truly a disagreeable and mournful exercise of our jurisdiction, to employ it against those, who are our fellow-labourers in the same vineyard, who ought to share in our authority by sharing in our solicitude, and thus be our consolation and strength, instead of being our sorrow

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\*2. Cor. c. vii v. 9.

and reproach. And this exercise is the more painful to us, because they feel only the stroke under which they smart, whilst they are insensible to that tenderness of heart with which we seek to cure their disorders, and recal them from the evil of their ways.

Whence comes this misfortune, my brethren? from our infidelities, which are ever followed by the disgrace of religion and the scandal of the faithful; which arm against us the whole indignation of God, and which draw down the most terrible of those chastisements, which he inflicts upon mortals, in his wrath, I mean hardness of heart. And do not imagine that this scourge is confined to gross excesses and a total derangement of conduct; great crimes are not those which we have most to dread. The pious and clerical education which you have received in this place; the sanctity of those offices which you daily exercise, preserve you, for the greater part, from those horrible transgressions, by which innocence and piety and virtue are shipwrecked for ever: what we have most to fear, is a negligence in our duties; a familiar and unprofitable use of holy things; an abuse of our ministry, by the tepidity with which we fulfil it; an insipidity of heart, amidst whatever is

most fitted to quicken and cherish our piety; in fine, a habitual dispensation of the sacraments and a continual exercise of the sacred functions, whilst, at the same time, our lives are altogether worldly and dissipated, and every sentiment of our heart and every item of our conduct at variance with the spirit of our calling; that is to say, a system that would combine the most holy and exalted duties, with morals the most common and the most degenerate, the most meanly devoted to the self and the pursuits of the world, and the farthest removed from those generous sentiments of fervor and of zeal, without which, there is no security in our state, and no fruit in our ministry.

Behold, my brethren, what we have most to fear, and the more particularly as we abide for the greater part, in this deplorable situation, without anxiety, without remorse, and even without adverting to our danger. Gross crimes alarm the sinner, and may, sometimes lead him to repentance; but a state of inattention towards ourselves and towards our duties, a habitual negligence in the exercise of our functions, neither strikes nor affrights us; it presents nothing of that marked guilt, which raises up trouble and remorse in the conscience, and thus

by suffering us to remain tranquil in our prevarication, leaves scarce a chance of salvation or reform.

To avoid then, this terrible misfortune, or to escape from it, if you have been so unfortunate as to have already fallen into it, I see but one means, and that is, to come every year to this house of retreat, to call yourselves to a solemn and rigid account; to examine before God, whether you fulfil those duties, in which you were here once instructed, whether you are faithful to the resolutions which you formed, when you were associated to the holy ministry; whether you have not since fallen away from that spirit of fervor and of zeal with which you were then inflamed; in a word, whether you have not violated the sacred covenant, which you made with Jesus Christ and with his church, in consecrating yourself to the priesthood. The lamentable distance which you will find between your past sentiments and your present situation, will alarm you, if you have yet any faith remaining; the very walls of this sacred edifice, which once witnessed your promises, will silently reproach your unfaithfulness; every thing will remind you of those first effusions of the spirit of the priesthood, which you once received at the foot of the altar, in this holy place.

Yes, my brethren, there is a spirit of dissipation, which is inevitable in the discharge of public functions, and which always leads to insensibility, if prayer and recollection do not prevent so great a calamity; there is even a dislike arising from whatever is mortifying, perpetual and annoying to the passions, in our ministry, which ever terminates in a criminal estrangement from our duties, unless a renovation in the spirit of our calling, restore to us that relish and consolation which not only lightens the burdens, but sweetens all the privations, of our state. These are the two rocks on which the holy dispositions, which you at first manifested in the labors of the mission, have been dashed to pieces, dispositions which made us hope, that in you we should find faithful co-operators of our episcopacy, ready to share in our toils, to correct the abuses, to remedy the evils and supply some of the innumerable wants, of the large flock entrusted to our care. Do not then, my brethren, disappoint those hopes, which sprung from the grace that accompanied your ordination; come here, from time to time, to renew it, and to free and preserve it from that lethargic numbness, which is never far removed from death, nor from the total extinction of the

holy spirit. Saint Paul feared this misfortune even for his disciple Timothy ; a disciple whose childhood was so holy, whose youth was so pure, and so honoured with the public testimonies of the faithful ; yet still he feared that fervor might cool and zeal relent, and therefore exhorts him to stir up, from time to time, the grace which he received by the imposition of the hands of the presbytery.\*

No, my brethren, however pure may have been your vocation, however virtuous the morals which preceded your ordination, however holy the considerations which conducted you to the priesthood, you will not support yourself in it, your resolutions will be soon blasted and forgotten, and other sentiments more worldly and carnal will supersede those first sentiments of fervor and grace, unless you enter into yourselves, from time to time, and stir up in yourselves, the first spirit of your vocation. It is in those days of silence and retreat, that you will be sensible of your past losses ; that you will perceive how much you have fallen away from your first charity ; the courses which you have pursued, the transgressions which have re-

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\* 1. Tim. c. iv. v. 14.

duced you to this wretched condition, and the means which you must use and the paths on which you must enter, to return. Alas! my brethren, it is but too true, that in labouring for the salvation of others, we have almost always the misfortune of forgetting our own. Nor will our toils profit our brethren, if we are not filled with that spirit of faith, of piety and of fervor, without which our functions avail nothing: we shall sow and God will give no increase; we shall instruct and yet be but as the sounding brass or the tinkling cymbal; we shall cultivate the field, and it will produce nothing but thorns and thistles. We must, like Jesus Christ, give out of our abundance: if the heart is empty, our discourses and our instructions will be hollow and inefficacious; if we feel neither the zeal nor the love of virtue, will not our hearers be equally insensible? in a word, if the spirit of God be extinct within us, how shall we quicken it in the breasts of our brethren? A tepid and unfaithful pastor diffuses, as it were, his tepidity and faintheartedness over his whole people: he exhorts coldly and from habit, and is heard with equal indifference: he is roused from his lethargy neither by the sanctity, nor the awfulness, of his functions,

nor is his flock awakened from the slumber of death by his cowardly ministry or his languid and perfunctory warnings: he has not, I admit, great vices, but is it not a great vice in a Priest, that he has neither virtue nor zeal? It might be said that he is not guilty of great crimes, if it were not a great crime in a pastor, that he does no good. We do not receive complaints against him, in the course of our visitation, but what complaint can be more afflicting or more disgraceful to a pastor, than that he has merited no praise, and obtained no commendation. We are informed that he is not scandalous, and that there is nothing pointedly vicious in his conduct; but is it not a scandal, that there should be nothing edifying to be said of him, and that the absence of vice, should be his only eulogy? And what can be more scandalous in a man consecrated to God, than that all his virtues should be limited to the barren and ambiguous merit of giving no scandal.

Thou then, O man of God, fly this evil: *Tu autem O homo Dei, hæc fuge.\** Thou who art the man of God, upon earth, his minister, his

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\*1. Tim. c. vi. v. 11.



envoy, his co-operator for the salvation of souls! be worthy of these sublime and august titles. You are the man of God; be not then the man of earth, of flesh and blood, a man like to the other children of Adam: and for this purpose, come occasionally to this holy place, to call yourself to account, and to take a just view of the duties to which you are mancipated by the sanctity of your consecration, and by the office of minister of God. He has implanted in the greater part of you, inclinations virtuous and worthy of the priesthood; do not suffer them to droop and die in dissipation and neglect; cherish and cultivate these plants of grace and of vocation, before the enemy crush them and root them up: you have seen, and you still see, every day, the mournful consequences of the indifference and forgetfulness of your brethren: profit of their misfortune by the precautions which you will take to avoid it: *Tu autem O homo Dei, hæc fuge.* Should you disappoint these hopes, and blast the fair promises of virtue by carelessness and degeneracy, your guilt will be augmented, in proportion as the regularity of your morals, the principles of faith and of religion which you possess, and the requisite talents with which you are gifted

for the ministry, had put you in a condition to serve and edify the church, in a distinguished degree. As I have said before, we insensibly and inevitably fall away and become feeble in the discharge of our functions: come then to recruit your powers, and gather new strength, in retreat. I shall readily furnish means to those who excuse their absence by the plea of poverty: but I shall not cease to exhort you to this holy practice; and my counsel ought to make the greater impression on your hearts, because it has its source in my tenderness and esteem, and because it is honourable to you, since it supposes that you are, for the greater part, capable of deriving from it, all the fruit which we ardently desire, and for which we shall not cease to pray.

## **FOURTH DISCOURSE.**

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### **ON THE DISSENTIONS OF CURATES AND PARISH PRIESTS.**

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**W**ERE it necessary for me, my brethren, to add any thing to the solid instruction which you have just received, it would be to bear this honourable testimony to you, that the more intimate my personal knowledge of the state of the churches which Providence has confided to me becomes, the more edified I am, at the submission and zeal of the greater part of the pastors who govern them.

All that remains to be desired, is to see this spirit of order and subordination extend itself to all the clergy of your parishes, who have been established to labour under your guidance, rather than to share your authority; to meet the necessities, rather than dispute the rights, of your

churches ; to be your succour and consolation, instead of being your concurrents, and oftentimes the most afflicting cross of your ministry.

We reserve to ourselves the re-establishment of the rules of discipline, which, on this point, have been so entirely set aside in the diocess ; we pledge ourselves to restore to pastors, all the authority inseparable from their ministry and altogether necessary for the success of their functions, and by assigning to each one, his proper place, to preserve that harmony and that subordination, which alone can render all the members of the body useful to one another, and without which, all is confusion and scandal in the church.

It is already very afflicting, my brethren, as Saint Paul formerly said, that there should be contentions and disputes among us, about rights and precedence. Alas ! the right of which we ought to be most jealous, is that of sacrificing ourselves for the salvation of our brethren. Our ministry, you know, is not a ministry of domination, but of labor, of meekness and of charity. The signs of my Apostleship, said Saint Paul,\* are not my authority over the churches,

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\*2. Cor. c. xii.

but the toils and fatigues which I undergo for the increase of the gospel. We have been raised above others, only that we might be more particularly debtors to all; our authority is but a more general servitude; our titles are our duties, and our duties are all included and comprised in charity. Now charity is meek, patient, modest; it envieth not the glory of its brethren, for their glory is its own; its emulation is limited to the imitation of their virtues; it seeks only the interests of Christ and of his church; and to it, the place of greatest honor, is that, in which it can most promote the glory of God, and render itself most useful to his people.

Were we all animated by this spirit, we should soon see an end to all those dissensions, by which the parish Priests and Curates of the greater part of our parishes, are so scandalously divided: we should no longer behold strifes and contentions, perpetuated among those, who have been appointed to diffuse charity and peace among the faithful; the divisions of the sanctuary would no longer sink its functions and its authority into contempt: we should no longer have to lament the impious folly of those Priests, who carry their quarrels to the foot of the ve-

ry altar, and there vent their animosities in the presence of their people; profaning the majesty and the decency of public worship; violating the solemn gravity of the tremendous mysteries; turning the holy temple, that abode of peace and of reconciliation, into a theatre of hatred and detestation; and amid those scandalous profanations, reckoning the loss of souls and the disgrace of religion as nothing, in order to preserve and enforce rights, which have been instituted only for the honor of religion and the sanctification of the faithful. Alas! of what importance to the church are those silly and turbulent rights, which cover her with reproach and confusion, which overturn order and discipline, disturb the functions of the sacred ministry, profane her altars and her worship, and are an occasion of scandal and of transgression to her children, whose salvation is the exclusive object of all those rights with which she has invested us?

We cannot speak without profound sorrow, of an abuse, become almost universal in this diocess. The more Priests are multiplied in our parishes, the more do those scandalous dissentions increase: the multitude of labourers becomes an obstacle to the work of the gospel;

and what ought to be a new benediction for the people and a new consolation for the church, is but an additional snare for the one, and an additional subject of grief and of confusion for the other: and what is here most to be deplored, is, to say nothing more, that we see the greater part of those Priests live in a habit of idleness, totally unworthy of the priesthood, without relish or love for their duties, insensible to the necessities of the church, and the destruction of souls; and manifesting neither energy nor zeal, save in the maintenance of vain prerogatives, from which their morals alone would be sufficient to degrade them, even though the laws of the church and the order of the hierarchy, had not rendered them untenable.

Mean time, my brethren, till we shall have remedied this common and disgraceful disorder, be you at least, mindful that nothing but your example, can give efficacy to your instructions, or ensure the success of your ministry. Oftentimes even in those churches, where the pastor is alone, and where the concurrence of rivals cannot impede the progress of his labors, he finds among his parishioners, subjects of quarrel, of vexation and discontent. The spi-

rit of meekness and disinterestedness is the great virtue which above all, you should exhibit to your people: render yourselves amiable, if you wish to make yourselves really useful; have the tenderness of a father for the faithful over whom you are placed, and they will have for you, the love of children. The haughtiness, the bad temper and moroseness which you, too often, suffer to appear, render your exhortations as odious to them, as your persons; that eagerness for your own interests, so ordinary and so unseemly in pastors, causes them to imagine that you are more concerned about earthly lucre, than about the salvation of their souls, and thus disposes them, rather to contest your rights than to put off their vices: every appearance of avarice or harshness towards those rough but suspicious souls, becomes in their regard, an obstacle to the progress of your ministry; and must it not be afflicting to a pastor, who has yet any faith remaining, to see that his misconduct renders all his functions abortive; that the dislike in which he is held, alienates his whole people from God, and that he is himself the chief cause of the viciousness of his flock and of the inutility of his ministry?

This we have often beheld with grief in the course of our visitations; the flock in rebel-



lion against the shepherd, the sacraments neglected, religion forgotten, the whole ministry without fruit, because it was without confidence. Ah! why do you not rather take wrong? why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded, than scandalize the church of God? *Quare non magis fraudem patimini?*\* If Saint Paul puts this interrogation to the simple faithful, what would he not have required from their pastors? That holy Apostle desired to be an anathema for his brethren, and you will not bear with the slightest grievance, though it were to prevent them from perishing, and to render all your functions profitable in their regard. It is vain for you to say, that you must maintain your rights: alas! what rights of your's can be more valuable or more sacred, than the salvation of your brethren? Edify them, and they will respect both your person and your rights: appear solicitous about nothing but their salvation, and as a father, all their wealth and all their interests will be at your command: give yourselves entirely to them; and far from contesting your rights, or withholding what is your due, they will give themselves to you, without reserve: have for them the zeal and the ten-

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\* 1. Cor. c. vi. v. 7.

derness of a pastor, and you shall quickly possess over them, all the authority of a master: the love and the respect of the flock, is always the reward of the piety of the pastor. I know that there will be always some scandalous sinners, to hate him: but whilst they hate him, they are compelled to venerate him in secret; and the hatred with which they pursue the pastor is then, honourable to the ministry. Render yourselves odious only to the wicked; let your zeal burst forth in all its impetuosity only upon scandals: in a word, desire the salvation of your people, and you will quickly discover the means to be employed in order to save them. Remember that a pastor, occupied in litigating with his people, is a barbarous father, who far from instructing and protecting his children, studies only to plunder and undo them: and what renders this abuse more degrading to our character, is, that those squabbles and litigations turn almost always, upon interests so trivial, that we must have a very mean idea of our ministry and of the salvation of the souls committed to us, to sacrifice them to such contemptible and sordid considerations.

Let us then, my brethren, have higher sentiments, thoughts more elevated and more wor-

thy of our duties: in relation to the faithful, we hold the place of Jesus Christ, and continue his mission and his ministry among them; we are, as one of the fathers says, the vicars of his love for them; let us estimate our obligations by this high office; what tenderness, what elevation, what disinterestedness, what zeal, can ever suffice to fulfil them! let us leave to the dead to bury their dead;\* let us consign to the world, solicitude, suits and squabbles for the things of the world. As for us, my brethren, we have been called to a nobler and holier struggle; we have to contend exclusively against vice, to limit the empire of error; to enlarge the patrimony of Christ; to gain souls for his eternal kingdom: every other gain we should regard, with the Apostle, as dirt and as a real and serious loss. Meditate, my brethren, upon these holy truths, in which you were formerly nurtured, in this house of retreat; return to it again, to revive their impression in your hearts: add this new consolation to the many others, which, in the course of our visitations, we have derived from your virtuous conduct;

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**Dimittite mortuos sepelire mortuos.**

Mat. c. viii. v. 22.

let the faithful, far from complaining of you, always find in you a resource in their troubles, and an asylum in every misfortune; be their succour and support, and not their competitors and antagonists; overcome by your charity for them, those blunt and rugged dispositions which they receive from their low birth and rustic education; and have for your people, the same sentiments of peace, of mildness, of affability and of tenderness which we ever cherish for you in the bottom of our heart.

## FIFTH DISCOURSE.

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CONTINUATION OF THE SUBJECT OF  
THE DISSENTIONS BETWEEN CU-  
RATES AND PARISH PRIESTS.

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**T**O the edifying discourse which you have now heard, I feel myself obliged, my brethren, to add one reflection, namely, that such of you as are least remarkable for regularity of morals, for love of your duties, and for zeal for the salvation of souls, of which you shall render so rigorous an account, are the most ardent and clamorous for the maintenance of vain pretensions, which have been introduced by long abuse: this is the only point of the ministry, in which they take an interest. Little solicitous in other respects, to adorn their profession by sanctity of life, which alone can confer honor on the minister of Jesus Christ, they seek to honour it

by usurping prerogatives, which they would be unworthy to possess, were they even attached to their particular ministry. Thus to specify nothing worse, idleness and pride, are in the greater part of the clergy, the vicious sources of those scandalous disputes: essential duties are neglected; the disgrace of the priesthood, and the scandal of the faithful, are reckoned as nothing: and at a period too, when the clergy of this diocess has recently received so public and so mournful a humiliation,\* when we should all unite and animate one another to blot out the memory of so sad and so disgraceful an event, by a holy rivalry of piety, of zeal, of concord, and of edification, we keep alive the recollection of it, by our daily dissentions, and by animosities so public, that they even disturb and divide our cities and our parishes, and are brought before those lay tribunals, where the shame of the priesthood and the reproach of the ministry, have been already but too notorious.

Our design, my brethren, was to re-establish order and peace, in our churches: order had

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\* A pastor had been recently condemned to be burned by a decree of Parliament.

been entirely overthrown, the pastor being no longer the father of his people, nor the chief of the subaltern ministers appointed to labour under his guidance: peace which subsists only by order, was constantly disturbed, and in this state of confusion, the functions of the ministry were without fruit, the priesthood without honor, the faithful without succour, and all our cares to remedy so universal an abuse, entirely unavailing. It was then essentially necessary to provide for those evils by a general regulation, in which the sanction of the Prince has concurred with our authority: but the same spirit by which it has been dictated, ought to ensure its observance; that is to say, as has been represented to you with so much zeal, the pastors whom it has restored to their rights, ought not to abuse them; the curates whom it has re-established in that place, which the rules of the hierarchy assign them, ought to reflect that their situation will be honourable only in proportion as they shall render themselves serviceable to their people; and that they would be inexcusable, were they still to perpetuate divisions, of which the scandal must fall upon none but themselves, and of which they alone

must also bear the confusion and the punishment.

It would be a far greater consolation to us, if instead of those dissensions, so unseemly in the ministers of charity and peace, we were to see in every place, as we have seen in certain divisions of this diocess, the parish Priests and Curates of several conterminous parishes, uniting together in a holy association; assembling once a year, to animate each other to the practice of their duties; and by rules which we always approve with pleasure, binding themselves to charitable advice and mutual exhortation, to exclude those who shall have rendered themselves unworthy of so edifying a society, to succour each other in sickness, to watch over the spiritual and temporal necessities of their dying brethren, to protect their effects, and the titles and registers of their churches, from the cupidity and usurpation of their relatives; and in fine, as many die without succour and consolation, to assist them at the last moment with all the tenderness which charity and the unity of the same ministry must inspire.

Were these edifying associations established throughout the diocess, it would not be neces-



sary to frame ordinances like those which we are now about to publish, to prevent the dissipation and robbery of the titles and registers of our parishes, after the death of the pastor: every thing would then remain undisturbed; relatives would not consider themselves as heirs of those public monuments of the church, on which depend the public tranquillity, the certainty of marriages and of baptisms, the security and rights of families and of individuals; and parishes, on losing their pastor, would not then have the additional grief of finding the authentic titles and sacred testimonies of their religion and their condition, disappear with him.

But, my brethren, that these registries may be preserved and transmitted to your successors, you yourselves, must be careful during your administration to put them in a condition, in which they may be preserved and handed down. We have been scandalized, during our visitation, at the negligence of several pastors, on a point so essential: the statutes of the diocess, the ordinances of the state, and the rigorous penalties enacted against their infraction, the interest of the public, do not affect them: baptisms, marriages, obituary certificates,

that is, all that is most sacred, all that constitutes the security of religion and of the state; all this is written on detached sheets, without order, without care, without precaution; titles so august and so holy, are scattered about at random, as so much waste paper: and whilst there is no father of a family, who does not scrupulously keep the deeds of his property, the titles of his house, and the state of his temporal affairs in exact order, and in secure registers; pastors, the fathers of the faithful, suffer to remain in frightful disorder, the spiritual filiation of their children in the faith, the public testimonies of their christian origin, and all those titles which give them a right to the inheritance of the children of God. One must be very regardless of the grandeur and sanctity of religion, very little penetrated with the duties of the ministry, very little alive to the interests, and even to the salvation, of his people, to be capable of so criminal a neglect, and to persist in it even after being admonished. In effect, what can move the heart, or touch the sensibilities, of a pastor, if the majesty of religion, if what is most sacred on earth, if the public safety, the tranquillity of families or his own honor, will not interest him?

With you, my brethren, for whom this reproach is not intended, it would be unnecessary to continue longer on this view of the subject: let me therefore address to you, the beautiful words of Saint Paul to the Priests and the faithful of the church of Philippi; they are touching and instructive beyond any thing that I could utter. For the rest, my brethren, preserve the deposite of faith and of truth, which has been confided to you; draw from the pure sources of the scripture and of the fathers, sound principles of morals to guide both your people and yourselves; banish every superstitious practice from your parishes; never depart from the wise rules of truth, without which all that bears the name of piety is but scandal or delusion: *De cætero, fratres, quæcumque sunt vera . . . hæc cogitate.\**

Manifest a reserve in your morals and discourse: let nothing unbecoming the sanctity of your ministry, ever escape your lips; bear on your countenance that holy modesty and that priestly gravity which make those, who do not love, respect, religion: shun suspicious familiarities; and be mindful that a Priest, whose con-

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\* Philipp. c. iv. v. 8.

duct excites a suspicion of his virtue, is guilty of a crime which his innocence will never justify: *Quæcumque pudica, . . . . hæc cogitate.*

Display an inviolable equity, in your whole conduct; disinterestedness in the discharge of your functions; prudence and charity in your zeal; an equal affection for all the faithful over whom you are placed, since you are equally the father of all; no animosity save against vice, no predilection except for virtue; no distinction or acceptance of persons; let the sole necessities of the flock regulate the cares, and the attention, of the pastor: *Quæcumque justa . . . . hæc cogitate.*

Inspire your people with a respect for holy things, by treating them yourselves, in a solemn and holy manner; appear at the foot of the altar, like the elders before the throne of the lamb, struck with awe of the divine majesty, which has chosen it for a dwelling place; and let the modesty, the dread, the profound reverence with which you accompany the tremendous mysteries, teach the faithful, the holy dispositions with which they ought to attend them: *Quæcumque sancta . . . . hæc cogitate.*

If you wish to be serviceable to your people, render yourselves amiable to them; not

by unseemly familiarities, by participating in their excesses, or by becoming the companions of their pleasures, but by sharing in their afflictions and consoling their troubles: to draw souls to Jesus Christ, begin by gaining the heart; do not render the sacred ministry odious by the rudeness of your manners, the fickleness of your temper; nor contemptible by the sordidness of your views, or the meanness of your sentiments; never deny to the faithful committed to you, your counsel and assistance, for you owe them your very life: be their consolation and they will be yours; love them as your children and they will love you as their father: *Quæcumque amabilia . . . . hæc cogitate.*

Neglect nothing which may contribute to preserve your reputation pure and without stain, in the minds of the faithful; refrain even from things the most allowable, when they are likely to become a subject of scandal to your brethren; remember that the whole fruit of your ministry, depends on the good opinion which they entertain of you; do not disparage religion by debasing yourselves; let your example prepare and ensure the success of your exhortations; afford no just occasion of being re-

proached with any thing, which you are bound to interdict to others; and let the sweet odor of your life, diffused through your parishes, be a continual censure of the vices of your parishioners: *Quæcumque bonæ famæ . . . hæc cogitate.*

In fine, my brethren, if you are touched by the remembrance of those holy servants of God, who first preached the faith amongst us, and whose labors and blood made the seed of the gospel to fructify; if you are not insensible to the example of the many holy pastors whom the mercy of God still preserves, to bear the yoke with us; if you have yet remaining any love of virtue, and if the principles of faith and the desire of good be not extinct in your hearts: *Si qua virtus*: if the praises which the ancient church of Ireland\* has obtained from the whole earth; if her reputation for sanctity, her attachment to the faith, her stern adherence to venerable laws, inspire you with a holy emulation; if it would be shameful to dege-

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\*It must be almost unnecessary to advertise the pious and learned reader, that a slight change has been made in this passage, to accommodate the exhortation of the text, more immediately to the clergy of Ireland.

nerate from the virtue of your fathers, and to dishonour a church, of which so many illustrious monuments in sanctity, learning and discipline, have testified the glory in every age, and still proclaim it in our own days; *Si qua laus disciplinæ*: if such considerations rouse your tepidity and inflame your minds, repair the past defects of your ministry by more virtuous morals, and by a new zeal in the discharge of every duty: think often of the counsels which we have proffered on this solemn day, and let their influence sanctify your conduct and your functions: you will thus honour your ministry, you will sanctify your people and the God of peace shall abide with you for ever: *De cætero, fratres, quæcumque sunt vera, quæcumque pudica, quæcumque justa, quæcumque sancta, quæcumque amabilia, quæcumque bonæ famæ, si qua virtus, si qua laus disciplinæ, hæc cogitate . . . hæc agite, et Deus pacis erit vobiscum.*

## **SIXTH DISCOURSE.**

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### **ON THE LAMENTABLE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DISORDERS OF THE CLERGY.**

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**N**OTHING, my brethren, can be more edifying than the truths which you have just heard, and we have a confidence that these truths have always formed a rule of conduct for the greater part of those who are now present in this place; but we cannot dissemble that among so many faithful pastors, who are an example and an edification to the flock, there are some to be found, who scandalize their people, by morals far removed, indeed, from the sanctity of their state. This disorder so afflicting to the church, and so disgraceful to the priesthood, is the more entitled to our pity and attention, as it has ever been the fatal source of the ge-



neral corruption of morals, and of the extinction of the faith, among christians.

Yes, my brethren, you are well aware, that whilst the ministers of religion were holy, the church beheld with joy, innocence and sanctity reign among her children: the purity of christianity did not begin to be tarnished, till the virtue of its ministry began to decline; public morals have been vitiated only by the corruption of the clergy, and as is said by the Holy Ghost, disorder had its beginning in the house of God. Thus we may say, that our conduct alone decides the salvation or the perdition of our people; upon us alone depends the enlargement, or the decrease, of the kingdom of Jesus Christ upon earth; the consummation, or the failure, of his work; the benefit or the inutility of his blood and of his mission; the glory, or the opprobrium, of religion; the progress or the decay of the faith, and the whole success, or disappointment, of the designs of God for the salvation of men.

From the moment in which we are raised to the ministry, we become either sacred pillars to support the weak, or stones of stumbling by which even the strong are bruised and overthrown; we are either serpents of brass set

up to heal the wounds of the multitude, or golden calves in the camp of the Lord, to be an occasion of scandal, of debauchery and idolatry to his people: we can no longer stand or fall, alone; the destiny of the souls committed to our charge, is inseparably linked with ours.

Now, my brethren, what considerations can more powerfully recal us to the paths of our duty, if we have been so unfortunate as to have strayed from them? How frightful a situation is it for an unfaithful pastor, to be able to say continually to himself: I am placed in the church not to edify, but to destroy; I am a tempter and a murderer of the souls to whom I ought to be a father and a saviour; I am charged with the dispensation of the blood of Jesus Christ and of the graces of his church, only to employ for their perdition, all that was designed to facilitate their salvation: I am become a depository of doctrine, of faith and of piety, only to corrupt and annihilate them; and I employ against religion, every thing venerable and holy, which she had confided to me, to maintain and defend her.

Such, without any exaggeration, is the state of a bad Priest: he is by anticipation the man

of sin mentioned by Saint Paul,\* seated in the temple of the living God, making war against Jesus Christ, and robbing him of souls, at the very foot of that altar which was erected to preserve and sanctify them.

For, in good earnest, my brethren, what is to become of a rude and ignorant people, situated in remote and secluded parts of the country, and governed by a corrupt and scandalous Priest? the very thought fills me with horror: they know no other gospel than your morals, no other religion than your respect for holy things, no other duty than what is pointed out in your example; your conduct is their law, their religion, their christianity. Alas! the most faithful and laborious pastors find it hard enough, to refine their grossness and ignorance into the spirit of a christian life; to purge them from indecent and superstitious devotions, and lead them from animal and savage manners, to habits more virtuous, or, at least, more reasonable: they must first labour to fashion them into men, before they can form them into christians.

What will become then of this rude and unfortunate people, in the hands of a scandalous

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\* Thessal. c. ii.

Priest? all the helps of salvation become, in their regard, not only unavailing; but even pernicious. Instruction is at an end, for how can you instruct a flock, which you scandalize, every day? no more sacraments, for how will you teach them to approach worthily to holy things, which you, every day, profane before their eyes? no more faith, for how will they believe what you seem not to believe yourself? no more abhorrence of vice, for what criminality can they perceive, in transgressions, which are authorized by your example? It would require miracles of grace to preserve even one soul from corruption, in a parish thus accursed with a vicious guide. Have you then been born only to be a woe and curse to your brethren? and have we called you to our assistance, in the ministry, only to turn loose a devouring wolf on a portion of the flock, which Christ had committed to our care? Truly, my brethren, a bad Priest is the greatest scourge which the wrath of God can send upon the earth, to punish the sins of men.

But, my brethren, the more deplorable the lot of an unfaithful Priest, the more abundant are the consolations of an irreproachable pastor. He continues, on earth, the mission and

the ministry of Christ ; he co-operates with him for the consummation of the elect ; for the edification of the mystic body of Christ, for the accomplishment of all the designs of his mercy towards men ; he is in a manner, like Christ himself, the saviour of his people, the reconciler of heaven and of earth ; and in appearing, one day, accompanied by his flock, before the throne of the eternal Father, he will be able to say with confidence, like the Redeemer himself, *of them whom thou hast given me, I have not lost any one* :\* they were thine before the beginning of the world, I restore them to thee, because thou didst confide them to me, only that I might sanctify them, and thus prepare them to sing with all the elect, the praises of thy mercy for ever and ever.

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\* John. c. xviii. v. 9.

## SEVENTH DISCOURSE.

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### ON THE EXCELLENCE OF THE MINISTRY.

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YOU expect from me, of course, my brethren, some word of instruction and consolation on this occasion; however, I shall content myself, with conjuring you to meditate frequently on the following words of the Apostle, in his epistle to the Romans; they include every thing. The virtuous pastor will find in them wherewith to be edified, and the unworthy, wherewith to be confounded.

*Tu qui gloriaris in Deo et nosti voluntatem ejus, et probas utiliora, iustructus per legem, confidis teipsum esse ducem cæcorum lumen eorum qui in tenebris sunt, eruditorem insipientium, magistrum infantium, . . . qui ergo alium doces, teipsum non doces.\* &c.* Let us,

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\* Romans. c. ii. vv. 17. et seq.

my brethren, separately examine these words of the Apostle, words which we cannot too often meditate in the presence of God.

*Tu qui gloriaris in Deo.* Let us then, my brethren, whose greatest glory even here below, is to be the ministers of God ; we who owe to religion alone, those distinctions, which we enjoy among men ; we whom the dignity of the priesthood has drawn for the greater part, from a rank humble and obscure, according to the world, and rendered us respectable in the eyes of men ; we who are so jealous of the honors and the prerogatives attached to our state, and who glory in them, every day : *Tu qui gloriaris in Deo* ; let us not weaken, by our morals, the respect due to our consecration, nor accustom our people to draw a distinction between our person and our character, and thus visit the sanctity of our profession with the contempt and opprobrium due to our personal transgressions. Let us honour our priesthood, if we wish that it should honour us : the holy unction by which we have been consecrated, does, it is true, entitle us to respect, but it is piety alone, that can render us respectable ; and when we are found not to possess it, the contempt of our people increases in proportion, to

the respect which they would otherwise have awarded; and thus what ought to have secured their homage and veneration, tends but to aggravate our shame and disgrace. The world knows nothing, and in truth, there is nothing, more contemptible than a bad Priest.

*Tu qui gloriaris in Deo, et nosti voluntatem ejus, et probas utiliora instructus per legem.*

We who have been fed from our childhood with the most sacred truths of the law, we whom an ecclesiastical education, has early taught, not only the common rules of religion, but the sublime duties attached to our holy state, what shall we answer to God, if our morals have not corresponded with our knowledge; if, with superior information, we are perhaps less religious, less charitable, less disinterested, less temperate, less modest, less respectful towards holy things, than our people? A single truth announced to a simple christian, oftentimes affects him, opens his eyes and recalls him to God; and yet we, who announce all the truths of religion, persevere in our lethargy and hardness of heart: our blindness seems to augment with our very lights, and we stray whilst we bear the torch that points out the



path, and perish, whilst we save our brethren.

*Et probas utiliora, instructus per legem.* We, who are well aware of the height to which the gospel carries the perfection of a christian life, the mortification of the senses, the hatred and contempt of the world, the detachment from sublunary things, the continual desire of the goods of eternity, we are more attached to the earth and its sordid interests, more covetous, more the slaves of our senses; we live less by faith and by the spirit, than our rude and ignorant people, who discriminate with difficulty, between right and wrong, but in whom a fund of religion and of the fear of God, holds the place of knowledge and light. Alas! my brethren, we sometimes look upon these poor creatures, and their grossness in matters of religion, with a kind of contempt: their ignorance, it is true, easily leads them to superstition; but at least, that superstition is itself but an excess of religion: the simplicity of their faith, excuses their pious credulity before God: they believe too much, for want of knowledge, and through the abundance of their faith; and we, through want of faith, and by abusing our knowledge, never perform but in part and imperfectly, the

good which we know, and which we cannot doubt that God demands of us. Thus the ignorance of the people leads them to some excesses in devotion; and we, with all our pretended knowledge, live for the most part, without being even touched by the great truths or offices of religion, and without any sentiment of true piety.

*Confidis teipsum esse ducem cæcorum, lumen eorum qui in tenebris sunt, eruditorem insipientium, magistrum infantium, habentem formam scientiæ et veritatis in lege.*

That is to say, my brethren, those high functions, which fill us with confidence, should be the subject of our unceasing fears. We are the leaders of the blind, *ducem cæcorum*; but do we guide them? do we enlighten them? does it appear in the conduct of those over whom we preside, that they are under the command of a conductor and a chief; are they not like sheep which stray without a shepherd? Do we instruct them? does our example support and accredit our instructions? are we not blind leaders of the blind, and do we not precipitate them with ourselves, into the same pit, either by neglecting to instruct them, or by contravening and undoing the effect of our instructions, by

our morals? and thus will not our most exalted duties, our most glorious titles, become, themselves, the terrible subject of our ignominy and condemnation? *Lumen eorum qui in tenebris sunt.* We are, surely, the light of those, who are in darkness; but if, as Christ says, the light itself be turned into darkness, the whole body, continues he, an entire people, a whole church, will become darksome: *Totum corpus tuum tenebrosum erit.\** God had established us the canals of graces and lights for a poor and sinful people, but if the canal be once stopped, infected and corrupted, nothing will proceed from it, but stench and darkness and disease, and a dire contagion that will infect the whole flock; and death will flow upon this miserable people from the very source, whence should come the waters of salvation and life. We are the light of those who are in darkness, *Lumen eorum qui in tenebris sunt;* but it is prayer and study alone, that can render us the light of the faithful: prayer is the science of the heart, study, of the mind; but it is the former alone, that can render the latter valuable and useful. Now, how can the love and

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\* Matthew. c. vi. v. 23.

practice of prayer be possibly combined with the worldly and dissipated life of the greater part of my present auditory? As to study; your early years are employed in the pursuit of knowledge; but the priesthood once obtained, books and study soon disappear; as soon as we are charged with the instruction of the people, by obtaining a place in the ministry, we cease to qualify ourselves for the fulfilment of that arduous and imperative duty; and we even forget the little we once learned, at the very period, when we have to reduce it every day to practice, and when the perpetual recurrence of difficulties and doubts demands its augmentation. *Eruditorem insipientium*: those are called fools by the holy scripture, who, forgetful of the things of eternity, devote their industry and application to the concerns of the present scene: it is for us to teach and convince them, that the fear of God is the only wisdom, and that every thing beside, is but folly and affliction of spirit; that to be wise, prudent, knowing, eager only for the things of the world, to amass perishable goods, to scrape together a large fortune and abundant riches, to establish on the sand, a lasting city, without thinking on that which is prepared for us in heaven,

that such prudence is the prudence of fools, and the last and grossest of all infatuations. Yet, far from undeceiving them, do not our cares, our worldly inclinations and pursuits, our thirst of gain, our mean and sordid avarice, confirm them in their deplorable error? is not the avarice of Priests become so notorious, that it has almost passed into a proverb? is it not, almost in every place, the opprobrium of the priesthood? and do not the deaths of pastors, every day, confirm this odious and shameful scandal, and manifest, together with the mammon of iniquity which they had accumulated, their hardness towards the poor, the disgrace and prostitution of their ministry, and the justice of those murmurs and complaints, which were uttered against them by their people?

*Magistrum infantium.* The innocence and virtue of children are entrusted to us; their religion is a sacred deposite which God has placed in our hands: we have associated them to the faith by baptism, and it is for us to foster it, to strengthen it in them, and make it increase by our instructions: from us they have received the title which has made them christians: it is for us to teach them the engagements which they have contracted by this august name, and

to cultivate those young plants which we ourselves have planted in the field of Jesus Christ: *Magistrum infantium*. Since it is we who have brought them forth to the church, we ought to have for them, the tenderness of a mother, and this is one of the most essential and most consoling duties of our ministry; it is also that of which in the true spirit of our calling, we ought to be the most jealous. I am aware that there are many virtuous pastors who discharge this obligation with fidelity; and we ourselves in our visitations, have seen with heartfelt consolation, the industry and zeal with which they apply to this great duty: but how many are there who forget and neglect it? It is with sorrow I say it; how many are the parishes of which the poor and abandoned children scarce know the God whom they adore; where their knowledge of religion and its mysteries, is derived solely from the rude and ignorant instructions of their parents, and where Jesus Christ, the only name under heaven whereby man can be saved,\* is as little known, as among those savage tribes who have not yet heard the tidings of salvation? and as it is in their early

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\* Acts. c. iv. v. 12.

years alone, that the poor of the country can be taught, since the labors and the necessities of a more advanced age, do not leave them the necessary leisure, it happens, that instruction being neglected at the proper season, whole parishes, entire flocks are to be found, without religion, without faith, and even without a tincture of christianity; in a word, so destitute and ignorant, that they need new Apostles, to announce to them the faith, as it was announced to their fathers by Austremonius\* and his companions. † There are too, pastors to be found, who with talents for instruction, would think themselves degraded by this duty, and thus consign it to the inferior clergy: the care of children, which appeared to Christ himself so worthy of his zeal, appears to them, a concern unworthy to engage their great abilities: they reserve themselves for more splendid functions, which they fulfil without effect, because in their discharge, they seek only themselves. *geste hage?*

Hear then the conclusion of the Apostle, it is too just and too applicable to us all, to be ever forgotten.

*Qui ergo alium doces, teipsum non doces.*  
You then, whose essential duty it is to teach

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\*The first Bishop of the Diocess of Clermont.

others, and to point out to them, the paths of salvation, you do not begin by entering on the narrow road, and teaching yourself. What fruit can you expect from your instructions, you who contradict them, every day, by your conduct? Your morals have a voice, far more powerful and more persuasive than your discourse; they cry continually to your auditors, despise what you hear, the terrors of judgment are vain, the duties of religion, exaggerated; regard only our conduct, that is the standard beyond which you need not go, the model to which alone, you are bound to conform: and this deadly admonition is the only one, that produces any impression, the only one that is heard with patience and followed with docility.

*Qui prædicas non furandum, furaris.* You, who inveigh so loudly against dishonesty, against those who injure their neighbour, oppress their weakness, violate their rights, and by chicanery and fraud usurp their possessions, have you no reproach to make yourself on the score of injustice? have not vexatious suits and unjust demands prosecuted against those, to whom you ought to be a father and a protector, torn from them their wealth, and invested you with their spoils? Have you not coveted their gold more



than you have desired their salvation? and have the frequent complaints which have arisen from these scandalous oppressions, even touched your heart, whilst they dishonoured your ministry?

*Qui dicis non mæchandum, mæcharis.* You who, every day, admonish the faithful, that the christian's body is the temple of the Holy Ghost; who exhort those whom you unite in honourable wedlock to respect the sanctity of the conjugal obligation; can your suspicious familiarities, your cohabitation with persons of a different sex, forbidden both by the sacred canons and by the particular laws of this diocess; can the freedom of your manners and conversation inspire into your people, a horror of that vice, of which you carry the suspicion even to the foot of the altar, and a love of that virtue so dear to the priesthood, and of which you are so little jealous that you do not even preserve appearances?

*Qui abominaris idola, sacrilegium facis.* You who regard a Priest who renders his faith suspected, as a pagan and idolater, as an abomination in the holy place; you bear every day to the altar, a disordered and doubtful conscience, which disqualifies you for its duties and exposes you to sacrilege: you respect the truth

of the holy mysteries, whilst you disregard their sanctity, and treat them without caution, without recollection, oftentimes without gravity or even decency itself: you abhor those novel doctrines, which attack the purity of faith, and you do not abhor those dissipated and unclerical morals, with which you approach the altar, to insult anew and crucify Jesus Christ, the author and consummator of our faith: you imagine that you honour the church by remaining steadfast and submissive to her decisions, whilst you disgrace her, and expose her religion to the scorn of the impious, by violating, in their sight, the most venerable and the most sacred of her laws: *Qui in lege gloriaris, per prævaricationem legis Deum inhonoras.*

*Nomen enim Dei per vos blasphematur inter gentes.* By these words the Apostle closes his instruction. Yes, my brethren, let us avow it here, with tears: if the faith is almost extinguished among christians; if there are, at this day, to be found so many bold and licentious spirits, who treat all that is most venerable in faith, with derision and blasphemy; if the greater part of the people of the world, of those even who are esteemed more sober and more prudent than others, have ceased to regard

religion as an affair of importance; it is the want of piety, of modesty, of charity, of regularity, discernible in our conduct; it is the careless and worldly lives of Priests, that have led to those fatal extremities, and lulled the contemners of the gospel into a delusive security: the general desolation has had its beginning in the holy place.

*Nomen enim Dei per vos blasphematur inter gentes.* It is our bad example alone, that has eradicated from the hearts of the faithful, whatever yet remained in them of the fear of God: they, every day, as you well know, allege our passions, to justify the like passions in themselves: the example of our conduct calms their remorse, and thus they find in our morals, that confidence and security which their own conscience would deny them: they fancy that there is nothing truly divine or truly serious in that religion, which its very ministers teach them to disregard; and that vice and virtue are but names, assigned rather by the caprice of usage, than by the unerring voice of truth: *Nomen enim Dei, per vos blasphematur inter gentes.*

And, in conclusion, my brethren, do not imagine that these reflections regard none but scandalous Priests, (I have a confidence in the Lord

that there is not one of that character among my present hearers,) they respect all who lead a tepid, worldly and common life ; who do not, indeed, discover great vices in their conduct, but also who do not exhibit to their people, a single virtue ; whose morals neither shock nor edify, whose deportment neither breathes scandal, nor inspires devotion : they are like the rest of men ; they love pleasure, good cheer and dissipation ; they hate prayer, study and recollection : they love the commerce and amusements of the world, and seek its society as a relief from the irksomeness and oppression of their functions : we receive no heavy complaints of their conduct, but neither are we consoled by a single testimony of good, done by them in their parishes.

Now, my brethren, in a Priest and particularly in a pastor, not to edify, is to scandalize ; to manifest in his person, in his discourse, his inclinations, his actions, in his entire manner of life, nothing that provokes to virtue, is to inspire and authorize vice ; not to confirm by the holiness of his morals, the sanctity and the severity of the truths which he announces, is to disavow them : in a word, not to be more virtuous than his people, is to be a bad pastor, and

to dishonour his ministry. Let these weighty reflections, my brethren, make us often enter into ourselves; let us, at least, sometimes remember, that it is not great disorders that will damn the greater part of pastors; and that infinitely more will be condemned for not having done any good, than for having operated great iniquities in their churches. The tree which bears no fruit, is struck with malediction, as well as the tree which was dead and rooted up; and the gospel condemns the unprofitable and the unfaithful servant, to the same darkness, and the same eternal torments.

## EIGHTH DISCOURSE.

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### ON THE INSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN.

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To what you have now heard, on the subject of the most essential duty of your state—the instruction of children, I shall add one other reflection, which I entreat you to make with me; it is this, that upon your fidelity in the discharge of this duty, depends the whole fruit to be expected from your own or your successor's ministry.

I say from your own ministry: yes, my brethren, you shut out those children whom you neglect, and suffer to grow up in ignorance of our duties and our mysteries, you shut them out from all those benefits which they might, one day, find in your instructions. They are plants which you leave to wither whilst they

are young; and it will be vain for you to water and cultivate them, afterwards; the evil cannot be remedied; they are no longer susceptible of increase. They are children to whom you have given the birth of faith, by baptism; but being immediately abandoned, they become like those unfortunate foundlings, the wretched fruit of the inhumanity of their parents, for ever ignorant of their origin and their rights, of Jesus Christ of whom they are the brethren and coheirs, and of their mother the church, which has brought them forth; and the abandonment of their lives corresponds to that of their condition. Now, my brethren, can you have them always under your eyes, and not reproach yourselves with your insensibility towards these innocent victims, to whom, it would seem that you have given the life of faith by the sacrament of regeneration, only to snatch it from them as far as you can, and extinguish them as it were, in the cradle, by refusing to feed them with the holy milk of doctrine and truth? You abhor the barbarity of a mother, who, after giving birth to her infant, exposes and abandons it; but is not her conduct the natural image of the cruelty of a pastor, who after giving the life of faith to his children, exposes and forsakes them, and

gives them over to a total ignorance of the faith which they received, a thousand times more fatal than all the miseries of indigence and destitution? They will, it is true, bear into the presence of God, the august and indelible title of christian; but it will be the terrific title of your condemnation rather than of theirs; it will rise up against you, and demand vengeance for the profanation and neglect, to which you had consigned their souls, after embellishing them with this precious sign of salvation: you will have made christians without knowledge of Jesus Christ or of his mysteries; and how will you ever repair in their regard the omission of those first cares, which you owed them? how will you raise the edifice, when you have ruined the very foundation?

But what is most to be lamented, is, that you are preparing the same scandal and the same difficulties for those who come after you; you will leave at your death, a malediction in the midst of your people, a sore which no zeal or skill of your successors can ever heal. For let me ask you, what fruit can a holy Priest produce after you, in a parish, where he finds no knowledge of religion; where it will be necessary to bring back to the instructions of



childhood, those grown christians, whose age and occupations will always prevent the success of such an attempt? The very shame of again becoming children, will of itself, be an invincible obstacle to the zeal of a faithful pastor, who, like the Apostle, would wish to feed them with milk instead of solid food:\* they will die without knowing Jesus Christ who redeemed them, the church which regenerated them, and the Holy Ghost who sanctified them; and from the very bosom of christianity, and from amidst the lights of the gospel will go forth souls, as from the regions of infidelity, bearing into the presence of the Most High, the darkness and ignorance of the pagan and the savage.

Remember, then, my brethren, that children constitute the most valuable portion of your flock, and by consequence, that which you should hold most dear: be not ashamed to lower yourselves to the level of their wants and capacities; for this is the most consoling and the most honourable function of the ministry: our other cares we bestow upon sinners, and in treating their sores and purifying them from

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\* Hebr. c. v. ver. 12.

their defilements, we have always to fear lest we ourselves contract some infection ; it is here that we must really lower ourselves, and sink into the very depths of their misery and corruption ; but in the care of children there is nothing to offend the delicacy, or bring a blush over the sanctity, of our ministry ; for there is nothing on earth, so truly great, or so worthy of our homage, as innocence. Let us venerate in those tender and innocent souls, the precious treasure of the first grace of baptism, which they still preserve, and which we have all forfeited. In our public worship we honour those Saints, who after having had the misfortune of losing it, have afterwards, recovered it by penance and tears ; and why should we not have a like respect for children in whom the gift of sanctity and justice still abides unadulterated ? Let us regard them with a kind of religious veneration, as pure temples filled with the glory and the majesty of God, and as yet undefiled by the breath of satan : let us enter into those views of faith, and the cares which their infant age demands of us, far from appearing mean and contemptible, will appear worthy of the highest talents and of the most exalted dignities to be found in the ministry. They are precious de-

posites in the custody of which, we must be vigilant; placing them with respect in our temples, which they adorn by their sanctity, and preserving them from contamination with the same jealous caution as we do the precious relics of the martyrs, which repose under our altars, and which are honoured with the homage and veneration of our people. I shall not urge this reflection farther: we ourselves, have witnessed in our visitations, the attention and exactness of the greater part of the clergy in the fulfilment of this great duty; and our design, in what has now fallen from us, has been rather to bear testimony to their zeal and encourage their fidelity, than to rouse their apathy, or criminate their negligence.

*(P. 100) Schools -*

**NINTH DISCOURSE.**

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**ON THE AVARICE OF PRIESTS.**

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**I**T may appear to you, at first, my brethren, that the edifying discourse which you have just heard, on the use of ecclesiastical revenues, has but slender reference to the greater part of you. The scantiness of your income, which is scarce sufficient for your wants, seems to you, to preserve you from the ordinary abuses of goods consecrated to the church: you deceive yourselves, my brethren; the very mediocrity which should render those abuses less frequent among you, oftentimes multiplies them, and is, every day, made a pretext to justify them in your eyes. It is not abundance that con-

stitutes guilt, but the manner of acquiring and of enjoying what we possess: danger does not consist in the extent or the narrowness of our revenues, but in the greediness and the unfeeling rigor with which we exact them; in the avaricious and sordid attachment to money; and in fine, in the scandal, after having scraped riches together, of leaving goods consecrated to holy uses, a prey to the avidity of profane and worthless heirs. These are the abuses, which in the course of our visitations, as you well know, have often formed the subject of our remonstrances and of our sorrow.

I say the greediness and the unfeeling rigor with which you exact your dues. We hoped to prevent this scandal by a regulation which determines and ensures your rights; but this regulation itself, this letter of the law has served only to multiply prevarications, either by the open infractions of those who contemptuously pass the wise limits which we had defined, or by the false and partial interpretations which avarice gives them, every day. You are well aware that the first quality which the Apostle requires in a pastor, is that he cannot be even suspected, of a design to render the sanctity and the sublimity of his functions subservient

to a sordid gain: *Non turpis lucri cupidum.*\* Our whole ministry is a ministry of charity, of disinterestedness and of edification: what reproach then to a pastor and a father, to sell his cares and his tenderness rigorously to his children; to be in their regard, a strict and inexorable exacter, a base mercenary, unconcerned for their salvation or their perdition, and solely occupied about the earthly and sordid profit, which he may extract from his own family! Yes, my brethren, let the instructions of a pastor of this character be without fruit, this is not what touches him; let his whole life be spent without gaining a single soul to Jesus Christ; still his zeal leaves him quite undisturbed; he makes no complaint of the inutility of his mission, for he does not feel it; but let his functions be unrewarded with the miserable pelf which he had expected, then it is that his grief is awakened, that he reckons his services lost, and begins to feel the chagrin of being an unprofitable labourer. I am sensible, my brethren, that the very dignity of the ministry blushes at these reproaches; and it

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\* Tit. c. i. v. 7.

is with regret, I utter them before so respectable a presbytery. But where could I seek consolation for those scandals, but with you, my brethren, who are not ignorant of their existence, and who weep with me continually over them? Were these wounds, concealed like so many others, in the depths of the sanctuary, we might here dissemble them; but from this mercenary rigor, which exacts even beyond its stated right, every day, spring vexatious contests and scandalous suits, and even the lay tribunals themselves resound with the shame of the priesthood. Hence the odium and contempt of the flock for its pastor, and hence does religion present to the mind of a rude unreflecting people, the ideas of paltry gain and sordid traffic: and what is most disgraceful to the ministry in these circumstances, is, that the faithful from whom you exact your dues with such relentless severity, live for the most part, in a state of destitution capable of touching the most barbarous hearts; and yet, far from finding in their pastor, a father to console and lighten their miseries, they find in him an inexorable tyrant, who aggravates their distress, and completes their wretchedness.

I know it may sometimes happen, that the grossness or the little religion of some among your people, may so far sway them, as to refuse your most legitimate stipend: but besides that such occurrences are rare, I say that they are still less frequent, in the case of those pastors whose zeal, piety and disinterestedness render them respectable to their flocks; and, who, far from urging their claims beyond the prescribed limits, know how to relax their just rights, and to compassionate their people's misery, in those instances in which charity, justice and humanity seem to demand it. I say that the occasional refusal of the faithful, to discharge the honorary due to the functions of the pastor, has its source almost always, in the injustice and rigor of the pastor himself, who either claims more than his strict right, or more than the ability of the poor enables them to give. What is very true, my brethren, is, that these shameful altercations which happen, every day, between the pastor and his flock, occur in those parishes only, where the pastors are neither the most edifying, nor the most charitable, nor the most regular of this diocess.



Thus, my brethren, the first abuse, relative to the goods of the church, is unfeeling rigor in exacting them: the second, is the sordid avarice which after having exacted them with rigor, refuses to expend them on their possessor, and still less on those who are in want. You are well aware, my brethren, and a sad experience daily confirms the observation the more, that the parish Priests, who are most harsh and most greedy in exacting their dues, are they who live in the most sordid and indecent manner: they degrade their character by a kind of life, which the basest avarice alone can render supportable to them; their bowels are of iron, both for themselves and for the poor who live under their authority. Frugality is undoubtedly one of the principal virtues of the priesthood; but it deprives itself of certain comforts, solely to be the better able to relieve the necessities of the suffering and the indigent. If those penurious pastors who are so niggardly towards themselves, were afterwards charitable and profuse towards their destitute brethren, their conduct would be but the more worthy of our admiration and eulogy; they would be adding the sacrifice of penance to the virtue of charity, and would recal us to

the memory and examples of the happiest days of the church : but no, they are swayed by a mean and detestable avarice, which rendering them stingy towards themselves, renders them still more hardened and insensible to the miseries of the poor, who are every day before their eyes.

Yes, my brethren, it would appear that this vice is a malediction attached to the priesthood ; and to what infamy does it not daily prostitute the sacred dignity of our profession ? We see Priests and Pastors, degrading their character to the vilest and most disgraceful traffic : frequenting fairs and markets ; appearing more covetous of gain, more intelligent in business, more practised in the mean and unworthy arts of lucre, than the rest of men ; abandoning their parishes ; leaving the souls entrusted to them, to perish, rather than lose a base occasion of profit ; and often appearing in those scenes of tumult and riot, only to augment their scandal, either by a profane and indecent exterior, or in authorizing by their example, the intemperance, the drunkenness, the blasphemy, and other abuses, so ordinary in those haunts of vice. I am not surprised at it, my brethren ; an avaricious and money-making

Priest is capable of any thing: every principle, charity, religion, decency itself, the respect which he owes to his profession, is extinct in his heart: he is a base soul, incapable of feeling a single one of those noble sentiments, which the duties of the priesthood inspire. And what is here most terrible, and what should make us feel the more, the justice of God against a vice, which so much degrades religion and her ministers, is, that age which approaches us to that fatal term, when all this hoard of dirt shall melt from our sight, and when nothing shall remain to us but our works; age, which should undeceive us of this folly, augments our blindness, strengthens this unfortunate passion, and makes it revive and grow in the very ruins of a body which years and infirmity have brought to the brink of the grave; and serves only to make us rally the few desires and sentiments which still linger in our exhausted frames, in order to attach ourselves with greater devotedness and fury to what shall, in a few days, slip for ever from our grasp. Thou art just, O my God, and thou dost avenge daily, the honor of thy altars, by suffering this vile passion, which dishonours them, not to be extinguished but with those,

who have had the misfortune of abandoning themselves to its dominion.

For, in fine, my brethren, (and this is the third and last abuse of the goods of the church) what is the end of this painful and sordid life, which was spent in amassing unjust riches, by the most iniquitous contrivances and the most miserable parsimony? How does it end? I need not tell you, my brethren; by discovering to the public, in bringing to light those riches so sordidly accumulated; by discovering to it, the baseness of the pastor's life; by unveiling what ought to be buried in eternal darkness for the honor of the ministry, and by terminating by a more conspicuous and durable scandal, all the other scandals of his past life. Greedy relatives contest the price of the iniquities of this wicked pastor: these disputes so degrading to the ministry, are not unfrequently carried before the lay tribunals, and thus it happens that this unworthy Priest had, by the basest arts scraped together his miserable pelf, only to dishonour and blacken his memory for ever. He leaves hatred and dissension among his family; detestation of his character in the midst of his people; a subject of scandal and derision to the public; shame

to those who are engaged in the same ministry; and affliction in the hearts of all, by whom the glory of the church and the honor of religion are held dear. Hear the Apostle in his epistle to Timothy, predicting the fate of these mercenary pastors: *Radix enim omnium malorum est cupiditas . . . . nam qui volunt divites fieri incidunt in tentationem et in laqueum diaboli, et desideria multa inutilia et nociva quæ mergunt homines in interitum et perditionem:*\* they lead a sorrowful life, full of agitation and wretchedness, only to terminate it, by a still more dreadful misery.

*Tu autem O homo Dei, hæc fuge:* † as for you, my brethren, who are the support and the whole consolation of my episcopacy; you, who have not forgotten that the church has not made you Priests for yourselves, but that you might be men of God, solely occupied about his glory and interests upon earth; do you continue to avoid such abuses, so afflicting to the church, and so reproachful to the priesthood: *Hæc fuge: sectare vero justitiam, pietatem, fidem, charitatem, patientiam, mansuetudinem.* Conti-

\* 1. Tim. c. vi. vv. 9. 10.

† Ibid. c. vi. v. 11.

nue to place before your people an example of justice, *justitiam* : do not aggravate the yoke of their misery, but regulate your claims rather by their wants, than your own : let them learn from your disinterestedness, what should be their detachment from the goods of the world : do justice to yourselves, by putting yourselves in a condition, to reprove in them, a vice which you condemn by your very example. *Sectare vero justitiam, pietatem* : be mindful that godliness with contentment is great gain : *Quæstus magnus pietas cum sufficientia* ;\* that a holy pastor who possesses the love and confidence of his people is never in want ; and that his rights are always secure when they are established on the tenderness and the respect of his parishioners. *Sectare vero, justitiam, pietatem, fidem* : render faith and religion respectable to those rude creatures, by appearing yourself to prize and venerate nothing but what relates to religion and salvation : know no greater gain than that of the souls confided to your care, and let this be the most desirable and consoling recompence of your functions and your toils.

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\* Tim. c. vi. v. 6.

*Sectare vero justitiam, pietatem, fidem, charitatem*: be kind and charitable towards your people: all your titles proclaim the tenderness which you ought to have for them: suffer with the suffering; go in quest of the straying; support the weak and tottering; be not tired of stretching out your hands to the fallen; be the common father of all your people, nor refuse your affectionate services to any of their spiritual or their temporal wants; charity expects nothing; and ever remember that all you possess, and all that you are, is but for them.

*Sectare vero justitiam, pietatem, fidem, charitatem, patientiam*: do not be disgusted at the inutility of your cares and of your instructions to your people, for God does not always reward the zeal of his ministers, by prompt and visible success: continually sow the good seed, cultivate, water; he that gives the increase will know well how to make it fructify in the fitting time: we would wish to be paid without delay, for our pains, by their immediate fruit; but God does not grant our wishes, lest we should ascribe to ourselves and to our own feeble talents, that success which is the exclusive work of his grace. *Sectare vero justitiam, pietatem, fidem, charitatem, patientiam, mansue-*

*tudinem* : in fine, let neither the defects nor the coarseness of the people, whom we have to conduct, excuse our gusts of passion, nor ever exhaust that fund of mildness which is so necessary and so suitable to our ministry: let the sweetness of our manners, towards them, always bespeak that of our hearts; and let us render virtue and piety amiable to them, by making ourselves worthy of being loved. That zeal which sours and repels those whom it reproves, is the zeal of man and not of God: we must first gain the heart, before we can render it docile; harsh manners rather proclaim our own defects, than correct the defects of others: we must never spare vice, but we must always spare the sinner; and let us not alienate men irreconcilably from virtue, by exhibiting it under an odious and repulsive exterior. It is not humor, roughness or passion, but charity, that has established truth on earth; it was not lions but lambs that were sent by Jesus Christ, to announce it to the world; it was their sweetness and sufferings that advanced the work of the gospel, and it is by the same means that their successors must perpetuate and extend it among men; it is by following these counsels, my brethren, concludes the



same Apostle, that you will secure your own salvation, whilst you labour for the salvation of your brethren: *Hæc enim, faciens, et teipsum saluum facies et eos qui te audiunt.\**

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\*Tim. c. iv. v. 16.

## TENTH DISCOURSE.

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### ON PUBLIC PRAYER.

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WE have no doubt, my brethren, that you will receive with joy and gratitude the new breviary which we now present to you. It is an assistance and a consolation which was wanting to the church of Clermont, and one of which she was not unworthy; for we may say to her praise, that she has not degenerated from the decency and the gravity, with which the public office was celebrated in ancient times, and that in this particular, our cathedral has always served as a model to all the churches of the diocess.

You know, that public prayer is the most ordinary and most abundant channel of the graces which God pours upon his people; and too much care cannot be used, in eliminating

from it every thing that might distract the mind and dry up the heart ; or in concentrating in it, whatever is capable of fixing the attention of the one, and of affecting and inflaming the other. This we have proposed to ourselves in the composition and arrangement of this new breviary : we have retrenched whatever appeared to us unsuited to the decorum and dignity of the divine office, and have substituted those passages of the scriptures and of the holy fathers, which seemed to us best calculated either to instruct us in our duties, or to excite in us those tender and lively emotions of repentance, of supplication, gratitude, love, and adoration, which constitute before God, the entire merit of our prayers.

We have suffered nothing fabulous or even doubtful to remain, in the lives of those Saints whom the church proposes to our respect, both as models of virtue and objects of our public veneration : they have left us examples of every virtue so certain and so incontestable, that the church has no need of recurring to fictitious relations, to conciliate the admiration and respect of her children to those heroes of religion. The religious systems which have been devised by man, require to be supported by the

aid of human invention and accredited by imaginary wonders, but truth need look for no support beyond herself. In the large calendar of the blessed, we have preferred those, who have sanctified this province by their blood, their virtues, and their Apostolic labors; or those, whom this church, once so prolific of saintly missionaries, has sent forth to convert and sanctify other nations. We had a right to reclaim those who once were ours—the happy fruit of the land which we inhabit; and to divide the advantages of sharing in their protection, with those countries which they enlightened by the splendor of their miracles and the sanctity of their lives; they are so many intercessors which this church has transmitted to heaven, and she has a just title to share in their patronage and mediation.

Happy we, my brethren, if whilst our attention is recalled to those holy models, by the recital of the public office, we find in them, domestic examples of holiness not to condemn our degeneracy, but to direct and animate our virtues.

Thus, my brethren, this new public office and the new assistance which it offers to our piety, should be met by us with a renovation

of fervor and of zeal, in the performance of this pious duty. Prayer is the soul of the priesthood, it constitutes the stay, and ensures the success, of our ministry: it is the sacred fountain which waters the seed sown by us in the hearts of our people, and which gives to it, all its increase. A Priest and a Pastor who does not pray, is a dry channel, a cloud without water. Now, to pray with our lips, without attention, without one feeling of piety, without any sentiment of religion, is truly no prayer; it cannot be called communing with God, for he hears the heart alone: it is not the mouth but the heart that prays. Yet how many Priests are there, who are unacquainted with any other prayer, than the rambling and hurried recitation of their breviary? It is for them a painful task, which they endeavour to perform with such precipitation, that when it is over, they scarcely know whether they have spoken with God; at least they have neither recollection nor feeling of what they uttered, nor have they any other sentiment than that they have discharged a debt, and shaken off a yoke, which embarrassed and straitened them. They depart from prayer, as much strangers to God, as they approached it: from it no-

thing accrues to their people for whom they have offered no petition, and for whom in the ordinary dispensations of Providence, the prayers of the pastor are the fountains of grace: and as to themselves, what can they derive from it, but the increased indignation of heaven, and a stronger disgust for whatever has reference to piety, to the glory of God and to the sanctity of their ministry?

Yet, my brethren, we are established on earth as public mediators, whose chief duty it is, to intercede unceasingly with God, for the necessities and the iniquities of our people. The church which prays continually for her children, borrows our tongue and utters her supplications by our mouth: we are the interpreters of her vows and her sighs, and as deputies to represent to the Almighty, the scandals which dishonour and afflict her, the troubles and divisions by which she is torn; the wounds and sores by which she is afflicted and disfigured, and unceasingly procure remedies for those evils, which the depravity of her children continually renews: public graces are then attached to those public prayers which we offer, every day, to God, in the name of the church. Yes, my brethren, pious princes, ho-

ly pastors, Apostolical labourers, the extraordinary men whom God raises up from time to time in his church, the triumphs of the faith, the extirpation of error, the renovation of piety among the faithful, the tranquillity and abundance of empires and states, all those blessings we owe exclusively to the public or private prayers which the church puts up to the Lord of all, by our mouth: and it is equally true, that to the irreverence, the inattention, the disgust with which the greater part of pastors acquit themselves of this pious and sacred duty, the estrangement which they feel from whatever may be called prayer, the church owes the scourges, the calamities, the troubles, the licentiousness, the public and private evils under which she has so long groaned.

The general destiny therefore of the faithful, of states and of empires is, as it were, in our hands. Judge then, my brethren, whether a Priest and a public minister charged with the vows and the interests of his people at the court of the Almighty, should consider public prayer as a disagreeable and onerous duty, and private prayer as a work of supererogation, from which he is dispensed by the recital of his breviary, and the nature of his other func-

tions. A Priest, my brethren, is a man of prayer; this is his condition, it is his safeguard, his primary and perpetual duty; and I may also add that it is his surest comfort, his entire consolation.

For, alas! my brethren, what other consolation can a pastor find on quitting the most painful of his duties, than to cast himself at the foot of the crucifix, and there weep before God, over the impenitence of his people and the ill success of his labors; to entreat him to give a blessing to his endeavours, and incline his mercy towards such of his flock as his justice seems to have abandoned; to thank him, in fine, and refer all the glory to him alone, when through his ancient mercies to his people, any of them are withdrawn by his ministry, from the ways of perdition to the paths of virtue and truth? No, my brethren, our instructions shall be ever sterile, if our prayers and tears do not render them fruitful. We often excuse ourselves from the duty of instruction, by the plea that we have not received from nature the great talents requisite for this important office; but, my brethren, render your instructions efficacious by prayer; that alone will make up for every other talent, and with-



out it, the most shining talents will be but as the tinkling cymbal.

And truly, my brethren, can a pastor live among his parishioners, and behold them abiding in sin and perishing daily before his eyes, and yet not be moved to prayer, or pray rarely, or pray without fervor and zeal, or confine his prayers to the cold, heedless and precipitate recitation of his breviary? Aaron, the high Priest, seeing a part of his people struck by the hand of God and expiring around him, ran, says the scripture, to the midst of the multitude, between the dead and the living; he raises his hands to heaven and pours a flood of tears over the fate of his perishing brethren; he cries aloud, and supplicates the Lord; the raging flames are quenched, and the sword of the anger of God is withdrawn from Israel: a good pastor never prays in vain for his people: *Stans Aaron inter mortuos ac viventes, pro populo deprecatus est, et plaga cessavit.\**

Behold, my brethren, the image of a good pastor. He walks amidst his people, as it were, between the dead and the living; he sees ma-

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\*Numbers. c. 16. v. 48.

ny dead at his side, and others ready to expire, giving but some feeble signs of life; in the crimes which prevail among his flock, he beholds the invisible sword of the anger of heaven plunging numbers into eternal death; this he sees, and it is a spectacle which is every day under his eyes. If he be not moved at it, he is no pastor, he is a mercenary hireling, who beholds his sheep perishing, without emotion; he is a minister who has forfeited, or never received, the grace of the priesthood. But if the mournful sight touch his heart, ah! what should be the first impulse of his grief and of his zeal? what but to address himself to him who hath power of life and death, who leadeth down to hell and bringeth up again;\* to offer him the abundant tears of his sorrow and of his love for his people; to remind the angry judge, of his ancient mercies; to move the tenderness of the Father of all, by his sighs and groans, and offer himself as an anathema for his brethren? *Stans Aaron inter mortuos ac viventes, pro populo deprecatus est, et plaga cessavit.*

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\*Wisd. c. xvi. v. 13.—Tob. c. xiii. v. 2.

No, my brethren, a Priest, a Pastor who does not pray, who loves not prayer, belongs not to the church which prays without intermission; he has no communion with her spirit of charity and prayer. He is a barren and withered tree which cumbereth unprofitably the field of the Lord: he is the enemy and not the father of his people, a hireling who has usurped the place of the shepherd, and who flees on the approach of the wolf, because he is a hireling and has no care for the sheep.\* Thus, my brethren, be more faithful to the duty of prayer, and your functions will become more successful, your people more virtuous, your labors less disgustful; and the miseries of the flock and the evils of the church, will diminish.

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\* John. c. x. v. 12.

**ELEVENTH DISCOURSE.**

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**ON THE DECOROUS PERFORMANCE OF  
THE CEREMONIES OF THE CHURCH.**

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**T**HE new ritual so long expected in this diocess, has been appropriately and eloquently announced to you ; and we have only to add, that this new aid, with which we present you, for the exercise of your functions, should awaken in you new desires to perform them in a manner still more worthy of their holiness. Yes, my brethren, let us often call to mind, in the presence of God, all the grandeur and sublimity of our various duties : let us appear at the foot of the altar penetrated and terrified by the power which we receive from Jesus Christ over the souls of christians, who are the price of his blood, and who are destined to form but one Christ with himself, to glorify the Almighty Father, during the ages of eternity : let us fill

ourselves with these great truths, which are as the soul and the substance of our priesthood; then shall decorum, disinterestedness and the spirit of piety and zeal sanctify every office of our ministry.

I say decorum: alas! my brethren, and are we then reduced to the necessity of exhorting Priests themselves to respect their own ministry, a ministry which even the Angels view with respect and awe? As there is nothing more grand or more august, on earth, than to exercise in the place of Jesus Christ, the functions of his eternal priesthood, so there is nothing that should be accompanied with greater modesty, recollection and gravity, with more religious decorum and respect, than the performance of the pastor's duties. These are the maxims which we once imbibed in this holy place: we know that in the exercise of every office, we put on, as it were, the person of Jesus Christ, we are mediators between God and men, and continue in his place, the ministry of their reconciliation. What can be more calculated to penetrate us with a holy fear, if we but enter a little into ourselves, and consider what we are, compared to the celestial office which we discharge?

But those impressions so conformable to faith, wear away by long usage. Had we to dispense the sacraments and exercise the other solemn functions of the church but once, during the entire course of our priesthood; ah! then indeed we should surely feel a sacred horror in approaching them: we should be fully sensible of the divinity of the duty, and of the many imperfections, the miseries and the weakness which render frail men like us, unworthy to discharge it. But as though these divine functions lost something of their holiness by frequent use, or that we became worthy of them, in proportion as we administer them with less of decency and preparation, they no longer awaken our faith; alas! not even our attention; they are no longer for us, a work of religion, but a mere service enjoined by our state, which is distinguished by no internal nor external disposition from the other actions which constitute the ordinary detail of our lives, except perhaps by greater indecorum, carelessness and hurry. The High Priest of the law entered but once in the year, into the Holy of Holies; and what solemn preparations, what careful precaution, what infinite attention were used that he might not fail in the minutest of the ceremonies pre-

scribed for an action, of which after all, the mere blood of an animal constituted the whole majesty? We, my brethren, with the blood of Jesus Christ in our hands, enter every day into the true Holy of Holies, of which the first was but the shadow; we offer it to his Almighty Father, and in the administration of the sacraments we dispense it to the people; and thus we are, by the functions of our priesthood, a thousand times more exalted and venerable, than the Pontiff of the law. Yet, let us compare the majestic solemnity, the numberless precautions, the religious punctuality which characterised his ministry, with the careless and perfunctory manner, in which we daily exercise our far more elevated and formidable office; alas! my brethren, shall I reveal the truth? we often discharge it, even without reference to God, a duty which religion prescribes even in our most ordinary actions; we discharge it without dignity, without decency and with an air of carelessness and of precipitation, which we would not dare to manifest in the duties of society which we render to men. We are, every where else, more on our guard, more attentive and decorous; it is only in treating with a God of holiness and terror

that we appear without concern or reserve: it is only in the exercise of the divine functions which he has committed to us, that we indulge our whims, our humors, our caprices, without any constraint; that we take no pains to correct the indecorum and disorder of our manner and of our appearance; that we disregard and debase our religion, and habituate our people to respect neither our ministry nor our persons. What affects me most, my brethren, is to find that this scandal is no where so frequent, as among the ministers of the only religion which God has established on earth. Read the histories of ancient nations, and you will learn with what respect the priests of their idols performed the ceremonies of their extravagant and sacrilegious worship: they would have fancied the empire menaced with the greatest calamities, if through want of caution and exactness, the empty pomp of their ceremonies were disturbed, or the least circumstance omitted in the superstitious detail. Travel into those extensive regions where a false prophet has long usurped the homage due to none but Jesus Christ, and see whether you can discover among his ministers in the mosques of the dissolute east, the dissipation,



the indifference, the apathy and unconcern which we are compelled to deplore among ourselves: *Transite ad insulas Cethim, et videte: et in Cedar mittite, et considerate vehementer, si factum est hujusmodi.\**

No, my brethren, we alone who are the ministers of the everlasting covenant; we alone who discharge, in the place of Jesus Christ, the functions of his eternal priesthood; we alone who are charged with the only remedies that have been ordained to heal the disorders, and operate the salvation, of the whole earth; we alone, for whom a God made flesh, becomes a victim on our altars, to consecrate our offerings and sanctify our duties; we alone appear unmoved by the sublimity of our functions, and instead of that holy solemnity and that dignified gravity, which should mark our personage and deportment, and inspire the faithful with a religious respect for the pastor and his office, we exhibit nothing but the insipidity and unconcern of the rest of men in the most indifferent actions of their lives. That religion, which alone has formed the Saints in every age,

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\*Jeremiah. c. ii. v. 10.

is dishonoured by the men to whom it is confided, and they are as dissipated and careless in the temple of the living God, as in the most indifferent actions which they perform in society or at home: *Transite ad insulus Cethim, et videte si factum est hujuscemodi*: the first disposition then for the right performance of our duties, is a decorous exterior.

But, my brethren, the religious respect which we owe to our exalted functions, should be written not only in our whole exterior, but moreover, should be marked in the purity and the elevation of our views. When we perform our duties with decorum, we do not indeed scandalize our flock; but nevertheless we draw down the anger of heaven, both upon ourselves and upon our people, when we are influenced to discharge them, by sordid and unworthy motives: the second disposition therefore, is disinterestedness.

Alas! my brethren, whilst we apply to our people, the divine remedies of their spiritual diseases, what motive could influence us, save the charity of Jesus Christ, who intrusts them to us, and the desire and zeal of the salvation of our brethren? Is it possible that in distributing the graces and treasures of hea-

ven, a pastor could propose to himself a sordid and temporal profit? regardless of the success of his functions and of the inestimable fruits which the faithful may draw from them, can he occupy himself about the miserable earthly advantage which may accrue to himself? can he go still farther and squabble with his parishioners about the price of the blood of Jesus Christ, have the baseness to demand his infamous wages in advance, and thus deprive the poor, for whom Christ died, of the same right and the same facility of approaching the fountain of life, as the rich? If there be a pastor of this character to be found in this venerable assembly, may his money perish with him:\* this is the anathema and the excommunication, which together with this venerable presbytery, we pronounce against the wretch, after the example of the first of Bishops.

No, my brethren, of all the duties of the pastor, disinterestedness is that which chiefly ensures the success of his labors and the love of his people. And do not imagine that this

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\* Pecunia tua tecum sit in perditionem.

Acts. c. viii. v. 20.

disinterestedness will ever expose him to indigence; a pastor who is respected and loved by his people, is always rich. I do not mean that whilst he distributes spiritual riches and blessings to his flock, he may not be permitted to receive temporal ones in return; but I say, that it is disgraceful to the Priest and to his ministry, to exact them with harshness and rigor: I say that it is a crying scandal to treat of them as one would, of a menial service, and to adopt measures for securing the sordid recompence: I say that the laws which regulate the pastor's stipend, are designed to controul his avarice and not to limit his charity: I say that he ought to receive it, as a father receives the tribute of his children's tenderness and piety, and not as the mercenary claims the price of his labor, or as the unfeeling exacter tears the excessive tribute from a people overwhelmed with wretchedness: I say, in fine, that it rarely happens that the poorest flock will not, through a motive of religion, find in its very indigence, wherewith to remunerate the cares and services of a charitable pastor, and that the faithful are seldom penurious and ungrateful, except in parishes where the Priest is mercenary and avaricious.

Let us remove this anathema from amongst us, my brethren: you know, that it is the most universal mark of infamy which the world combines to cast upon the sanctity of our ministry: Its judgments upon every thing else, are false and unjust: and shall it never be right except against us, and shall our conduct continue, for ever, a public apology for the malignity which it bears us? This ill-will of worldlings, and the justification which our lives afford it, is the most ordinary and the most lamentable impediment to the success of our functions. A greedy and hireling pastor loves not his flock, he loves but its fleece; and his flock which knows him, regards him not as a father but as a ravenous wolf, and the more so, my brethren, since however slender may be the income which some of you possess, it will be always true, that you live amongst an impoverished people, who look upon your situation with envy, and in whose eyes your competency compared with their miserable condition, appears a state of opulence. Remove then by charity and disinterestedness, that alienation with which this difference of condition cannot fail of inspiring your people, for religion and its ministers: do not drive them to extremities by a harshness,

which would make them blaspheme the sanctity of the ministry, the maledictions of which always fall upon us: show them, after the example of the Apostle, that if you are in abundance, it is but for them, or if you are in poverty, it is but through your love for them; that if they suffer, you suffer also with them; that if they are consoled, you are also in consolation; and that, in fine, you are all you are, but for them. Pour into our hearts, O Lord! these sentiments of priestly charity and tenderness; and render us worthy to bear before thy people, the venerable name of pastor and of father, with which thou hast honoured us.

It is certain, my brethren, that nothing but true piety can make us enter into these generous sentiments, and enable us to discharge our difficult and exalted duties with disinterestedness and decorum: the last disposition therefore is piety.

This is the great principle, which regulates all the rest. Preserve the spirit and the grace of your vocation as the most precious of all treasures: never approach the sacred functions, I will not say with a guilty conscience, (for I speak to the ministers of the Lord and not to sacrilegious intruders,) but never approach them

with a clouded and doubtful conscience, that is to say, agitated by a thousand remorse which you cannot calm, and from which you cannot justify yourself: then neither indecorum nor base interest shall profane the sanctity of your functions, for we do not fall into those abuses, before men, till we have first fallen away from the virtues and the grace of our vocation, before God. Remember that a Priest holding always in his hands, the mysteries of religion and the graces of the church; always occupied either in offering up the adorable victim, or in communicating to the faithful, the price of his blood, there is for him no medium between piety and sacrilege, and if he be not a Saint, he is but little removed from a sacrilegious sinner.

Alas! my brethren, people of the world are lost, by spending their lives in a perpetual round of profane amusements, pleasures and occupations, which are incompatible with salvation, and which cause them to forget the great truths of religion; and we are lost amidst the most holy employments and duties, which bring the great truths of faith continually to our minds; and we contract new diseases, in applying to others the remedies of life. The world damns

itself, because it is occupied only about the things of the world; and we damn ourselves whilst we appear occupied only about works of holiness. What resource can remain for an unfaithful Priest, if all that is most sacred and terrible in religion but hardens and defiles him?

Remember the history of the sons of Heli.\* Though honoured with the priesthood, they found in the sanctity of their functions, the rock on which their innocence was dashed to pieces: the offerings of the people multiplied their profanations, and each succeeding sacrifice was for them a new crime: God struck them with a malediction, and avenged the majesty of his worship, and the glory of his name: the priestly succession was extinguished in that criminal family, and forty thousand Israelites perished by the sword of the Philistines, to expiate its sacrilegious abominations: the lamp of Israel went out, the sacrifice ceased and the ark of the covenant became the prey of the uncircumcised. So many were the scourges, that it would appear the anger of God had exhaust-

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\* 1. Kings. c. 2.



ed its chastisements, in punishing the profanation of an altar and a worship that were but figurative and void; in avenging the blood of goats and of oxen which the crimes of his ministers had defiled.

What chastisements, will not the profanations of the altar on which his only Son is immolated, the defilements and irreverences which insult the blood of the new alliance, draw down on our guilty heads? Who can say, whether the mournful scourges with which our people are already afflicted; the disorder of the seasons, the failure of the crops, the extraordinary and dreadful events which seem to combine in our days, to overwhelm a people already wretched and heartbroken; the decay and extinction of almost all faith and all piety in the world: who can say whether the daily perils of the church—of the holy ark, from disputes and contentions, and the still more dangerous attacks with which she is threatened; the rapid and frightful growth of incredulity which is daily raising itself upon the ruins of that faith, of which our national church had been always a trusty and venerable depositary; who can say whether all these scourges are not the chastisements exercised by a God outraged in his mys-

teries and his benefits; and who can say whether they do not even menace others still more dreadful? It would be for us, who are established mediators between God and man, to prevent and suspend them: and it is perhaps we ourselves that bring them down from heaven; perhaps the arm of the divine anger is raised only to punish our irreverences and our profanations; and that we, who ought to be the ministers of reconciliation between the Lord and his people, are the sole object of all his vengeance. No, my brethren, read the holy scriptures, and you will find in every part, that the sins of the Priests, never go unpunished: God always avenges the dignity and the glory of his insulted worship; and either strikes kingdoms and their inhabitants with the most direful calamities, or what is still more terrible and still more common, he strikes the Priests themselves with impenitence and hardness of heart.

Let us, my brethren, awaken to the truth of those terrific sentiments: and although through the mercy of God, I have this consolation, that of the great number of venerable pastors who now hear me, there is not, perhaps, one, who does not dispense the mysteries of faith and the graces of the church, in a manner worthy

of God, still let me entreat them to redouble their fervor and their zeal : let them weep unceasingly before God, over the infidelities of their brethren, over the opprobrium which they cast on the majesty of religion, and over the fatal calamities which ever result from their misconduct. Let us, my brethren, arrest by our prayers and our sighs, the arm of God's anger ever raised to revenge the profanation of his sanctuary : let us restore to the church, by a well sustained and edifying conduct, that honor and that glory, of which worthless and unfaithful ministers are depriving her, day after day ; let us, by our priestly demeanor, render religion respectable even to those who do not love it : let us compel the world to change its profane insinuations against persons consecrated to God ; and let the very presence of a Priest, become a censure on its disorders, and not a pretext to authorize and justify them. Vice, my brethren, will have much less sway in the world, from the moment that we shall begin to preach virtue by our example and our lives.

**TWELFTH DISCOURSE.**

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**ON THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER.**

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**N**OTHING can be more solid, my brethren, than the edifying reflections which you have just heard. You have been told, and I repeat it, that prayer is the first and the most inseparable duty of the ministry: it is, if I may so speak, the soul of the priesthood, and the only safeguard of the pastor; it alone can relieve the disgusts, soften down the disappointments, and prevent the dangers, of your functions; and there is nothing else that can ensure the success of your labors.

Yes, my brethren, prayer constitutes our only safety, in the course of our ministry. We have our miseries and our weaknesses, alas! and they are even the more to be feared by

us, as they still subsist with us, and accompany us in the most holy of our duties. Our situation, which on the one hand, requires that in treating the tremendous mysteries, our lives should imitate the life of Angels; and which on the other, leaves us always weak, always subject to the same failings, always sluggish in the practice of our duties; always giving too much to our senses, to sloth, to humor; a situation I say, which places us constantly between the altar and our own weaknesses, between the sanctity of God and the defilements of man, should terrify our indifference and awaken our faith: I shall allude to no worse vices, for I speak here to pastors, who are unblemished in the eyes of men, and who have no gross criminality wherewith to reproach themselves, before God. Now in those reflections upon our situation, so calculated to excite trouble and uncertainty in our souls, there is nothing but prayer that can calm and sustain us: it is the only remedy for those daily wounds, which if neglected, will insensibly mortify, and waste the entire beauty of the soul. We ought then, prostrate at the foot of the crucifix, often lay open to Jesus Christ with sorrow and confidence all our secret miseries; conjure him to render us

worthy of the ministry to which he has called us, and destroy in us, whatever may still be unsuited to its sanctity, or an obstacle to its success.

There is nothing, my brethren, more dangerous for our profession, than to suffer ourselves to sink tranquilly into habits of sloth, of immortification, of the love of our own ease, and of transgressing a thousand minor duties which we do not deem essential, and not recur frequently to prayer, which is the only resource provided by religion to awaken us from our insensibility. The peril of this state for us, is, that it exposes us every moment, either to profane holy things, or to treat them in a manner which offends God, and which by consequence, withdraws his graces from us and increases all our weaknesses: for, you are well aware, my brethren, that if the divine functions of the altar do not, every day, augment our faith and quicken our piety, they strengthen our corruption and aggravate our misery: and this is the first reflection.

In the second place, the duties of the ministry, have, as we daily experience, their pains and disgusts, when we endeavour to discharge them with fidelity. For their sake, we must

gain upon ourselves, we must do violence to our convenience and our slothfulness, we must take from our ease, from our rest and sleep: we must not dispose of our time and our labors at our own choice: the holy servitude by which we are bound, takes us, as it were, from ourselves to give us entirely to our people: we ought to be able to say, with the Apostle, that heat and cold, fatigue, journeys, rivers, hunger and thirst, are the portion of our ministry, and the signs of our Apostleship. Besides we often labour for ungrateful men: our toils are often rewarded with indifference, and even with indocility and murmuring: they often obtain for us, even the aversion of those, whose salvation we are seeking. Disgust and dejection are here to be feared: we grow weary of labors, of which we see neither the end nor the fruit; we no longer give ourselves to them with the same zeal; our self-love not being gratified by success, reclaims its rights and insinuates to us in secret, that painful and unprofitable cares cannot be duties. Now, by what means shall we support ourselves against this temptation to disgust, if we fail to approach the foot of the crucifix to gather new strength from Jesus Christ; if we decline the

consolation of confiding our disappointments and our troubles to the first great Pastor, whose place we occupy on earth? It is there, that in comparing ourselves with our holy predecessors, who gave their souls for his doctrine, we shall be confounded before him, at reckoning as any thing, the trivial sufferings attendant on our duties: it is there that we shall blush at the cowardice of being tempted to lay down our arms, almost before beginning the combat, and at the baseness of being dejected and repulsed by slender toils, whilst those holy pastors defied tribulations and sufferings, hunger, nakedness, persecutions, flames, the rack and all the fury of the tyrants to separate them from the love of Jesus Christ: it is from such conferences, my brethren, that we shall always go forth with a new relish for our duties and a new zeal for the salvation of our people. What before appeared to us toilsome and bitter, will then appear light and sweet; and the fatigues and contradictions inseparable from our functions, will become for us the most consoling proof of our vocation to the holy ministry. No, my brethren, let us not deceive ourselves; without prayer, we shall, at every moment, feel our duties burdensome and repulsive; we shall



drag along a painful and oppressive yoke, and shall bear the weight of the day and the heat, with repugnance: but every thing will be changed by prayer; our yoke will no longer weigh us down; our labors will increase, and our troubles and our repugnances vanish. You sometimes complain, my brethren, of the great multitude and pressure of your functions, and of your inability to discharge each in a becoming and profitable manner: but address yourself frequently to him who can change our weakness into strength; be earnest and constant in prayer, and those difficulties will disappear; those hills will be levelled; you will find yourself a new man, and your only complaint will be that you have not enough to do or to suffer for Jesus Christ: this is the second reflection.

But if nothing but prayer can lighten the toils, and sweeten the bitter disgusts, of our functions, there is also nothing but prayer that can prevent the dangers attendant on their discharge. For, my brethren, although we had no other evil to dread, than the dissipation inevitable in the discharge of our external duties, I would be right in declaring to you, that nothing but prayer could preserve us from

it. In effect, it is but too true, my brethren, that amidst the continual bustle and agitation of our functions, the interior man insensibly weakens and expires. In devoting ourselves to the necessities of others, we often sustain losses ourselves; we lose that secret and hidden life of faith which is the soul and the support of piety; we accustom ourselves to live outwardly and are never to be found in our own hearts; we approach the altar with a mind dissipated and shared and possessed by a thousand strange and tumultuary images; and thus we forget or disregard that silence of the senses and of the imagination, which is so necessary to enable the mind to dwell on the infinite sanctity of the victim which we offer, and on our own unworthiness to immolate such a sacrifice. Thus in labouring continually for others, and never for ourselves, the powers of our souls are weakened and exhausted; we become altogether exterior men; we form ourselves to this state of agitation; we cannot remain a moment with ourselves; we even seek pious excuses to escape reflection and dissipate ourselves abroad; we can no longer feel happiness but in the society of men; it is irksome and oppressive to us to be alone with God. Now

this state, which at first sight, presents nothing but what is agreeable in the eyes of men, has its dangers with God: we exhaust ourselves, without ever going to recruit our strength, at the feet of Jesus Christ: all our solicitude is confined to the exterior, and we never recal our thoughts to the inward consideration of our own state: we act outwardly for God, but the secret link that would connect us with him, is wanting: we run, as the Apostle says, but we run alone. The Lord, whose assistance we have not invoked, leaves us to our own weaknesses; and hence our conduct is more generally swayed by humor, by impetuosity, by vanity, by restlessness and temper, than by the love of our duty, and charity towards our brethren. Fidelity alone to prayer can preserve us from those dangers, and enable us, without turning us from our functions, to approach every duty with that spirit of prayer and of recollection, which will regulate and sanctify it, and which will dispose us at the same time, to return from the unavoidable dissipations of our office, to a still more intimate converse with our God.

Dissipation however, is, after all, but the slightest of the dangers attendant on our functions. How infinitely more formidable the pe-

rils that await us in the single duty of the confessional? Alas! my brethren, if prayer do not conduct and support us, how shall feeble man sustain himself under such trials? I do not ask, how they shall be able to bring to the sacred tribunal, the lights necessary to distinguish between one disease and another; or the firmness that will place them above human considerations, prevent them from sacrificing their duty to base complaisance, and from paying more attention to the rank of their penitents, than to the quality of their crimes: or the prudence that will neither discourage the sinner by unreasonable severity, nor lull him into security by excessive clemency; that will enable him to be a father and a judge; to observe the rule and save the transgressor, to enforce the rights of the divine justice, without being harsh and insensible to the weakness of man; in a word, to cut away the ulcer and yet give no unnecessary pain to the patient? I do not ask how a confessor can find this delicate and doubtful point, this wise mean, if he have not drawn from fervent and constant prayer at the foot of the crucifix, that sober wisdom of which the Apostle speaks, which ever mingles the oil of kindness with the wine of power, and like the

good Samaritan, tempers the dryness and rigor of zeal, with the tender feelings of compassion and clemency? but I ask you, how can a confessor, if he be not an interior man, and habituated in prayer to know his own wants, and to probe the private wounds of his own soul; how shall he discover the secret wants and diseases of the souls who address themselves to him? How shall he distinguish, and apply to them, those remedies which alone can afford them relief? how shall he penetrate into the interior of his penitent and make him know himself by discovering to him the real source of his vices, he who has never entered into his own heart, and who knows not himself? No, my brethren, a confessor who is not an interior man—a man of prayer, never penetrates below the surface of consciences. He hears the confession, but he knows not the sinner: he absolves, but does not unbind: he prescribes for the penitent, but is ignorant of his disease: he imposes penances, but never forms one true penitent. And to what cause, think you, my brethren, ought we to ascribe the inefficacy of the greater part of confessions? Whence comes it, that the remedy of penance though formerly so rare, was never applied

without effect; and that at the present day, when it is far more common and more ready of access, it scarce heals the sores of a single penitent? whence comes it that true conversion is so rarely effected, by approaching our confessionals? The true reason is, that the greater part of confessors, content with the penitent's recital of his transgressions, never inquire into the real dispositions of his heart; prescribe but external remedies which reach not the seat of the disorder; do not apply themselves to reform the inward man, which is unknown to them; in a word, the true reason is, that confessors see only the surface of consciences, and can form none but outward and superficial penitents.

I shall not speak of the other dangers attendant on this difficult and important duty, dangers amidst which prayer alone is our only protection. Alas! my brethren, in the sacred tribunal we are the depositaries of the frailties of a feeble sex: the fatal images which we bring from it, at least cloud the imagination, if they do not defile the heart; a fatal spark remains within us, which often kindles into a great conflagration. The practice of prayer alone can dissipate those phantoms, purify the

mind, and extinguish those sparks in their birth; for even pious intentions will not be sufficient to preserve us from the dangers of this delicate office. We are at first moved by the weaknesses of a frail sex, but it is to be feared that we shall soon suffer ourselves to be still more affected by its confidence: at first we attend merely to its wants, afterwards to frivolous details; we begin by zeal, and oftentimes end by attachment; we enter the tribunal, ministers; we come out of it, men. But let us not urge this painful and sorrowful subject, farther in this place, but respect the presence of the venerable presbytery by whom we are surrounded. You, yourselves, my brethren, anticipate any reflections, which it may be in my power to add; you are aware of the disgraces and the scandals, by which the weakness and the imprudence of Priests in the duties of the tribunal, have so often afflicted the church, and of the impious derisions, which they bring down, every day, on the holy ministry. The good which we should extract from their misconduct, the fruit which we should draw from the present discourse, is a firm conviction, that if prayer do not sustain us in this perilous function; if we approach it without vigi-

lant precaution; if we rashly expose ourselves to dangers the more to be dreaded, as we are there the sole judges and the only witnesses of what occurs; if we are guided in it by motives of curiosity, of human affection, or of satisfaction at the confidence reposed in us, the sacred tribunal, where we ought to purify the defilements of others, will be daily turned into an occasion of increasing our own: this is the third reflection.

Finally, my brethren, and this last and fourth reflection is not less entitled than the preceding, to your attention; not only is prayer indispensable as a safeguard against the perils incident to our functions, but also as a means of ensuring their efficacy and fruit: it is not enough that in their performance, we run no risk for ourselves, but moreover that when we exercise them, we be useful to others. Now, my brethren, you know full well, that we cultivate and water, but that God alone giveth the increase; and how can we expect it, if we are not constant in asking it, and if fervent and continual prayer do not draw down upon our functions, those invisible benedictions, which will cause them to fructify? We labour, for the most part, without fruit and without suc-



cess, because we labour alone; as if success depended on us, we look for it, from our own talents, our own cares and our own lights; and thus we omit to call to our assistance, him, who alone can render our toils efficacious and useful. I repeat it, my brethren, the neglect of prayer is the true cause of the slender good which the greater part of pastors effect among their people, although they otherwise discharge all the duties of their ministry with punctuality and decorum. They imagine, that they have fulfilled all justice, when they have acquitted themselves of those external labors, but by the little fruit with which they are attended, they ought to feel that there is some hidden vice, which renders them unproductive; and as long as their prayers will not interest the bounty of the Lord in the success of their duties; as long as they shall perform them, without addressing themselves to him to prepare the hearts of the receivers for their worthy participation, so long shall they pass their nights and days, like the Apostles, casting their nets and taking nothing; they may run a long and toilsome course, but they will die without having performed any thing, that is to say, without having gained even one soul to Jesus Christ.

And in good earnest, my brethren, what success can a pastor unaccustomed to prayer, promise himself from his instructions? how shall he exhort with effect, if he come not to the foot of the crucifix, to fill himself with a love of the truths which he is to announce, and with that spirit of unction which will render them amiable; to beg that touching zeal, that grace and force, which even the greatest sinners cannot entirely withstand? how can a pastor who never speaks to God, speak of him with profit, to his people? What dryness of conception, what frigidity of expression! he will indeed announce truths, but they will proceed from the lips and not from the heart; and will not be those which the celestial Father would have revealed to him in secret: he will exhort, not with the spirit of God, but the spirit of man: he will unfold the truth, but will not render it amiable: whatever exertions he may use to persuade, he will never appear persuaded, affected, penetrated, himself: it will be felt that he speaks a language to which he is a stranger—a language which his tongue may utter, but which is unknown to his heart. Solomon on a difficult occasion, discovered the true mother by the sincerity and the tenderness of her expres-

sions: alas, my brethren, from the words and the instructions of two pastors, it would be still more easy to discover which of them is the true father; which of them utters the sentiments of paternal love, feeds his children and carries them in his bosom, occupies himself continually with God about them, and is more solicitous about their preservation and safety than about the title or the rights of a pastor and father. And I appeal to yourselves, my brethren, whether a holy pastor, of moderate talents, a man of prayer, does not do more good, does not leave his audience more affected by his instructions, than the many others, who with more brilliant talents, never draw from prayer that unction, that tender feeling of piety, which alone can speak to the heart? Those doctrines and maxims which we love, and which we often meditate at the feet of Jesus Christ, we always treat in a far different manner from those which never affect us, because we seldom reflect on them: there is a language peculiar to the heart, which nothing can counterfeit. It is in vain that a dissipated pastor, thunders in the pulpit, and tries to supply the absence of piety and true zeal, by violence and clamor; the attempt deceives nobody, the arti-

fire betrays itself: it is at once perceived that his fire does not come down from heaven; and all his sounding vehemence will never announce the descent of the spirit of God, upon the hearts of the faithful assembled to hear him.

But, my brethren, although prayer were less indispensable than it is to the success of our functions; yet is it not a duty which we owe to our people? have we not taken upon ourselves, by our character of pastor and of minister of religion, the obligation of praying for them, without ceasing? is not this even the most essential duty of that priesthood, which establishes us mediators between God and his people? To the prayers of the pastor, it is, that God generally attaches the graces designed for the flock: we are bound, my brethren, to expose to him continually, the necessities of our people; to solicit for them the riches of his mercy; to disarm his anger and arrest those scourges which their prevarications have so often provoked; it is for us, to weep before him over the vices with which we see our people infected, and which our cares and our zeal have not been able to correct: it is our duty to beg of him, strength for the weak, contrition for the hardened, and perseverance for the just.

The more numerous are the wants of our people, the more frequent and ardent should be our prayers; nor should we ever appear before him, without bearing, like the Pontiff of the law, the names of the tribes inscribed on our hearts, that is to say, the names of the flock entrusted to our care; its concerns should ever constitute the principal subject of our prayers. Such is the order of the dispensation of grace: pastors are the public channels through which it must flow on the people; and their office is a public provision which the bounty of heaven has made against the public disorders which reign among men.

Thus a pastor who does not pray, or who prays but rapidly and with the extremity of his lips, in order to acquit himself of the public prayers to which he is bound by the church, is not a pastor but a hireling who feels no concern in the dearest interests of the flock: he is no father; the faithful who are entrusted to his paternal care, are not his children, they are orphans, without parent or protector: *Pupilli facti sumus absque patre*:\* his heart and his bo-

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\* Thren. c. v. ver. 3.

some feel not a father's tenderness and love: he likes the title by which they are subjected to his controul, but pays little regard to that by which he is bound to save them and subject them to God: he likes the place of shepherd but loves not the flock, for did he love it, could he be conscious of its disorders, and of the everlasting misfortunes to which it is hastening, without addressing himself to Him, who alone can change the perverse heart, and without pouring out his tears and sighs in the divine presence, to the end that not one of those committed to his protection should perish? And what do I say, my brethren? a pastor who does not pray, not only has no love for his people, but moreover he even withholds from them, what is strictly their due: by refusing to them his prayers, he deprives them of the graces and the helps which the goodness of God had destined for their relief and consolation: he refuses to his parishioners what they have the most sacred right of exacting from him: he occupies the place of a holy pastor, whose prayers would have drawn down a thousand benedictions on this miserable people, and in the sight of God, he is guilty of every crime which his prayers might have pre-

vented. Alas! my brethren, we often hear you complain of the disorders of your people, of the indocility and impenitence of your parishioners, and of the little effect of all your cares and all your labors for their salvation; but it is not before us, but before God, that you should complain and weep. Examine whether you are faithful in making their wants and miseries known to him; whether you solicit and importune him to turn a propitious countenance, to those whom he seems to have abandoned: the prayers of the pastor are rarely ineffectual; for God who has charged us to pray for our people, has also promised to hear our prayers. Alas! my brethren, it is a reflection that should make us tremble for our ministry, that we often complain of the disorders of our people, and that those disorders are almost in every case, our own crimes.

But, you will ask, how can leisure be found, for protracted and frequent prayers, amidst the infinite number and variety of your parochial duties? Alas! my brethren, notwithstanding the multitude of our labors and our pretended cares, how many are our vacant and useless moments? how many days devoted to idleness, to unprofitable converse, to business or amusements,

little suited perhaps to the sacred gravity of our ministry? how many are the moments, when idleness itself is found oppressive, and when we are a burden even to ourselves? my God! and a Priest, the envoy of heaven, upon earth, and bound to offer to God the vows of his people, will not find time to offer to him, his own, in prayer! and the dispenser of his graces and of his mysteries will maintain no intercourse with him, who has confided to him this glorious ministry, and in whose name and by whose authority, he speaks and acts! and he will give him no account of his gifts and of his heavenly riches, which he is charged to distribute, or of the use made of them by the souls committed to his guidance!

Besides, my brethren, it is not a large portion of your life, that we require of you to spend in prayer; that is the privilege and the consolation of those retired souls, who are exclusively occupied in meditating on the wonders of God's law, and in tasting, far from the world and in the concealment of his tabernacle, how sweet the Lord is to those that love him, and communicate continually with him. What is essential for us, my brethren, is rather a spirit of prayer in every function



and in every place, than a considerable portion of time snatched from other duties, and devoted to long meditations on holy things: what is important to us, is, before entering upon the discharge of any duty, to cast ourselves at the feet of Jesus Christ, and there fill ourselves with this holy spirit, that we may perform the sacred action about which we are engaged, in a manner pleasing to God and useful to our people; to return, for a moment, to the presence of God when the duty is over, to entertain ourselves with him and gather new strength, that we may resume our calling with increased zeal; in a word, to habituate ourselves to this secret and almost uninterrupted converse with God, to find him every where, and to take occasion from every occurrence, of raising our hearts to him. Behold the manner in which a Priest and a Pastor should be a man of prayer. We are greatly to be pitied, my brethren, if we fail to sanctify our whole ministry by this spirit of prayer, for we shall have all the labor and all the trouble incident to the discharge of our duties, and lose all the merit by omitting what would soften them down, would render them useful to others, and consoling to ourselves.

**THIRTEENTH DISCOURSE.**

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**ON COMPASSION FOR THE POOR.**

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**I**t should not be necessary for us, my brethren, to inspire you with sentiments of compassion and charity for the poor, of whom you are the pastors and the fathers: it is for you to soften the hardness, and awaken the indifference, of persons of the world, to a sense of their wants; and being as you are by your character, the guardians of your indigent parishioners, and the sole depositaries of their necessities and of their troubles, it might appear superfluous to exhort you to compassionate them, yourselves: still as the forcible address which you have just heard, has turned upon this part of your duty, I think it right to add a few reflections, on the subject.

I am aware, my brethren, that the depression of the times and unfavourable seasons, whilst they multiply poor in our parishes, do not increase the resources of pastors, and that even they themselves may suffer from the public calamities: I know, moreover, that the narrowness of your means, does not allow the greater part of you, to furnish the poor with all the relief which their misery requires; and this therefore is not what we exact of you. But, my brethren, however scanty your revenues, and however depressed the times, it is nevertheless quite certain, that in your parishes, you are far more at your ease, and far more able to supply your wants, than the greater part of the labourers and the miserable cottiers who inhabit them. And we have had the consolation of finding, in the course of our visitations, many charitable pastors, feeling as a father's bosom ought, the miseries of their children; giving according to their ability and even beyond it, as the Apostle says; softening down by their tenderness and cares, the misfortunes of their poor parishioners, and suffering with those whom they could not relieve: but on the other hand, we have often wept on finding many others, who were solely occupied with the

disgraceful care of amassing wealth ; hard-hearted towards themselves and still more insensible to the wants and the calamities of their people ; base and greedy pastors, who never think they have enough, and who seem to have been clothed with a sacred character, only to make it subservient to an infamous avarice. Behold my brethren, since it is right to speak out here, behold the most general disgrace of the priesthood : behold the vice which tarnishes all the holiness, and destroys the good odor, of the sanctuary : all do not carry it to the same lengths ; but there are but few, who are not infected by this leprosy ; and if, in many parishes the poor are abandoned, it is not always the want of means, but hardness and avarice that shuts up the bowels of the pastor against the cries and the wants of his people.

Yes, my brethren, let us speak the truth, here, since the opportunity offers, but let us speak it with sorrow : from the time in which our living becomes fixed and perpetual by being appointed to a parish ; we regard it as our own property and our own patrimony ; we attach ourselves to the possession, and endeavour to improve its revenue, as we would a temporal estate : frequently too it happens that the

smaller is our portion, the more we cling to it, and the more we share with the rich in their guilty attachment to worldly goods, and even refine upon their avarice and rapacity, without even the miserable plea of their luxury and voluptuousness. It would appear that this vice is a malediction entailed upon the priesthood: we conceal it from ourselves; we cover it with the miserable pretext of a prudent foresight; we fancy that we discover nothing in this sordid passion, but the indispensable duty of maintaining the rights of the church, and of enforcing the dues of our office; and the more we are the slaves of this passion, the more do we represent it to ourselves as a virtue.

Yet, my brethren, nothing so much tarnishes and degrades the generosity and sanctity of our ministry, as this base and detestable spirit. We, you are aware, are here on earth, the ministers of goods to come; the treasures which are unlocked and shut up by the keys confided to us, are the treasures of heaven; the riches which the Lord pours upon the faithful through our services, are the riches of grace: the gospel which we announce, is that word of life eternal which utters a curse upon the wealth of this world, and pronounces none happy or tru-

ly rich, but those who are poor in spirit and humble of heart; in a word, all that we are, as ministers of religion, that is, as dispensers of eternal goods, proclaims to our people the contempt of every thing transitory, and the exclusive desire of those goods, which are to endure for ever. What degradation then, my brethren, when the dispenser of eternal riches becomes himself, the slave of a filthy lucre which covers him with opprobrium! when the minister whom Jesus Christ has instituted to undeceive men, and eradicate the love of deceitful goods; like his divine master to curse the pelf of this world and inspire men with the contempt of earthly wealth, appears himself, to live and breathe only for money; to feel no concern, to have no inclination but to scrape it together!

But, it may be asked, must we not distinguish between a prudent foresight, which lays up a reserve against future necessities, from that base and sordid avarice which never thinks it has enough? is all precaution in this matter a crime? Undoubtedly not, my brethren; and were it necessary to reply to this wretched pretext of avarice, I would tell you, that a greedy Priest who lives only to amass gold, and a faithful and

prudent pastor who makes a decent provision for unforeseen exigencies, resemble each other in nothing. The foresight of the one interferes not with his functions or his duties, with the love and attentions which he owes to his people or the decency of his character, for it reposes more trust in God, than in the trifle which it reserves. The other hoards only to gratify his thirst of gold: it is not to provide against want, for he denies himself the very necessaries of life: his money is dearer to him than his health, his life, his salvation, his very self: all his actions, all his views, all his affections terminate in this base and disgraceful object. No one is deceived in him; he takes no care to conceal from the public eye, the wretched desire by which he is actuated; for it is the character of this odious passion in a Priest, to betray itself on every side, to do no single act which is not stamped with its cursed impression, and to be a mystery to none, but the wretch whom it infatuates. All other passions preserve at least appearances; those whom they sway, hide them from the public: the reckless fury of gratification, or the abandonment of God, may sometimes bring them to light; but the sinner, as far as he can, seeks the cover of

darkness: but as to the passion of avarice, a Priest conceals it from no one but himself: far from being carefully hidden from the eyes of the public, his conduct and his very person proclaim it aloud, and exhibit it in all its naked deformity; it is visible in his conversation, in his actions, in his deportment, and, if I may so speak, it is written on his very forehead.

Now, my brethren, can any thing be more degrading to a Priest and a Pastor, than the detestable and reprobate character entailed by this vice! a character of unnatural feeling and personal debasement to the individual, of opprobrium and scandal to the sacred ministry. First a character of unnatural feeling: he is a father and a pastor: he holds the place of the Sovereign Pastor, who gave his life for his sheep and who continues since his death, to feed them with his own precious body and blood; he is here on earth the vicar of his love for men; and what a horrible monster must he not be in the church, if flinging away those lovely and glorious titles, he takes to himself bowels of iron for his people? and this is truly the frightful situation of an avaricious Priest. How can it be expected that he will relieve the wants of the poor? he refuses to



himself the very necessities of life; he values nothing in his functions but the wretched gain that accrues from them; he exacts it with the most unfeeling rigor: the poor are not less exposed to his barbarous extortions than the rich; he transgresses the limits which the wisest laws have prescribed to his avarice; he breaks down those sacred barriers, which are of themselves humiliating enough to the holy ministry, and which a mournful necessity, that is to say, the avidity alone of certain Priests, had obliged us to erect; he knows neither law nor motive but the impulse of his insatiable avarice. The complaints and murmurings of the wretched people whom he harasses and oppresses by the excess and the rigor of his exactions, harden him instead of moving him to pity: his heart becomes more callous and insensible in proportion as the cries of his victims augment, and he doubles his barbarity towards those, who have ventured to lay their grievances before his superior. Should mortality prevail among his flock, do not imagine that he cares whether their death be precious in the sight of the Lord; the infamous sum which he derives from it, is the sole object of his concern, his sole consolation for losing them; and I say it with

horror, one perhaps which constitutes a subject of triumph and of barbarous joy: he is even disposed to leave the precious body of a christian, of a member of Jesus Christ, a prey to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the earth, if an impoverished family will not first capitulate with his avarice and ensure, by the advancement of an exorbitant retribution, the consolation of seeing the deceased reunited by christian sepulture, to those brethren and friends to whom faith had united him on earth.

Once more then, what a monster is such a pastor! and would to God that they were as rare in the church and in this diocess, as are physical monsters in the world! But it is not yet enough for them to turn their functions and the adorable blood of Jesus Christ into a detestable traffic: they are not content with rendering religion onerous, oppressive and odious to their wretched people, by their exactions; they drag them into unjust lawsuits; they even buy up litigated claims, and take advantage of their ill-gotten wealth, to usurp and vindicate by law, the property, which a poor but rightful possessor has not the means of defending against their cupidity: under pretence of serving those who apply to them for pecuniary aid,

they lend money at a usurious and tyrannical interest ; their services are destructive and barbarous, for whilst they pretend to afford relief to the oppressed, their only aim is to hasten their ruin and complete their despair. I am weary, my brethren, of exposing those horrors, in this place, before so many faithful and compassionate pastors : but what adds to my affliction, is, that I am merely developing a detail of infamy, which your own eyes have often beheld, and which your hearts have still more frequently detested : I do no more than bring before you, those complaints with which the avarice and cruelty of your brethren have so often filled the diocess, and which have a thousand times rent my bosom and rendered the yoke of my episcopacy galling and heavy.

To the reproach of unnatural feeling, my brethren, we must add the debasement and opprobrium into which this vile passion sinks the pastor and his ministry, and the base and indecent pursuits in which he is notoriously engaged. Follow and investigate the detail of his conduct ; he is a mean and unprincipled dealer ; he enters into the basest and most unseemly traffic ; whatever holds out the hope of gain, appears to him worthy of his most vigilant care,

and is at once preferred to the holy decency of his ministry ; he is seen more frequently in the public markets, than in his church or in the discharge of the duties of his parish. Better versed in the sordid arts of accumulating money, and the low rules of the meanest bargains, than in the laws of the church, he forgets that he is a father and a pastor, and feels no respect for the sublime title with which he is honoured, of minister of Jesus Christ. The only title to which he pays any regard is that of a vile and despicable trader : speak not to him of the value and salvation of the souls for whom he is to answer, it is a language which he cannot understand, for whatever will not increase his infamous hoard, seems to him an empty speculation, an idle chimera. He debases the dignity of his character by low and sordid manners, and he becomes by his vile thrift, by his squalid dress and the indecency of his whole exterior, a spectacle of derision to his people, and of shame to his brethren : he is a pauper not of religion, but of the world and of hell. Alas ! my brethren, we often excuse our little charity to our poor, by the smallness of our income, and our want of means ; we fear that we ourselves shall be in want : but let

us retrench for Jesus Christ, merely a part of those enjoyments, which this wretch retrenches for the devil, and we shall find our income abundant enough. He denies himself the very necessaries of life ; he struggles with himself about the most ordinary articles of dress : let us sacrifice to charity a portion at least, of those comforts and conveniences which this unhappy man devotes altogether to his avarice ; let us spare and lay aside for heaven, something at least of what he reserves entirely for the earth, and we shall find wherewith to supply our own wants and to relieve those of our poor. Shall not the noble generosity of charity be able to support the same retrenchments and privations, which an infamous vice, every day, sustains ? Shall a relentless and greedy pastor have courage to refuse himself every thing, to swell his treasure of dirt ; and a faithful and charitable pastor not have strength to deny himself something at least, to assist the indigent of his flock, and amass a treasure in heaven ? Shall satan have his paupers, and Jesus Christ not be powerful enough to have his ? and shall the base thrift and sordid economy of an avaricious Priest, after having made us blush before men, also cover us with confusion, and rise up

in testimony against us, before the tribunal of Jesus Christ!

And what is most to be deplored in a Priest abandoned to this degrading vice, is, that whilst age and reflection generally cure the other passions, this seems to be reanimated, and to gather new strength from the advance of years. The nearer he approaches to that fatal moment when his vile gatherings shall melt away and his long-cherished hoard be snatched from his grasp, the more attached he becomes to his money: far from saying to himself in those circumstances: *thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided,*\* the nearer death advances, the more eagerly does he fix his eyes and heart upon his wretched treasure; and the more does he consider it a needful provision for a chimerical futurity. Thus, if I may so speak, age renews the youth of this debasing passion: years, infirmities, reflection, but sink it the more deeply in the soul, and it feeds and thrives on the very remedies which heal or extinguish every other vice. Pastors, we our-

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\* Luke. c. xii. v. 20.

selves have seen, so worn and decrepid that they had scarce strength to support their ruined and tottering frames, and who in the total decay of all the faculties of the mind, seemed to preserve no remnant of sensibility, to give no sign of life, except for their money: avarice still raged within and burned with increased fury in the very wreck of nature: the last sigh was still for gold, the last thoughts turned upon wealth, and by the terrific judgment of God, the dying looks of the expiring wretch were directed to the pelf which death was tearing from his grasp, but of which it could not tear the love from his heart.

Go, now, barbarous and mercenary pastor, to appear at the tribunal of the Sovereign Pastor of souls: what mercy can you expect from this omnipotent and exasperated judge? you rely on his love and his tenderness for men? you, whose bosom has been steeled against the miseries of your brethren, and the cries of your children; you, who have been a wolf in the sheepfold, a scourge of satan upon the people of God? shall your cries and groans on the bed of death, if perchance you put them forth, move a tremendous and angry God, who has beheld you, to the very last, barbarously insensible to th

sufferings and the groans of a flock, of which he had constituted you the father and the comforter? Will you dare to raise your trembling hands towards his dread tribunal, those hands which he sees still filled with rapine, stained with the blood of his people, and with the profanation of holy things, of which you have made an infamous traffic, during your whole life? Great God! what shall then be the terrors of thy countenance, what thunders shall not then issue from thy mouth against the detested wretch whom thou didst appoint a pastor of thy people, and who used the authority with which thou didst invest him, only to oppress and tyrannize them?

What a scandal, my brethren, and what an opprobrium to the holy ministry, is not this odious passion in a pastor! The last trait of its infamous character, is, that having been a scandal during his life, it is also a scandal after his death. When his mortal scene is closed, his vile treasure, amassed by the baseness and thrift of so many years, so hidden, so buried, so carefully guarded, at length appears: the cursed hoard, till now concealed under an appearance of poverty, comes forth from darkness: the horrid mystery is at length unveiled to the eyes of the



poor, whom he suffered to languish in the most pinching want, and to the eyes of the people whom he oppressed, and from whom he exacted the last penny of his dues with the most unfeeling rigor, under pretence of his own indigence. What curses does not the disclosure of the iniquitous mystery collect upon his memory? what opprobrium does it not bring upon the sacred ministry! Greedy relatives contend about this wages of sin—the price of his immortal soul; their hateful disputes, together with the shame of the priesthood, are often dragged before the tribunals of the state, and a secular judge can with difficulty regulate the jarring pretensions or terminate the strife, which this guilty hoard had produced among claimants of the same family. The courts of justice have more than once resounded with this impious scandal; and this treasure which had been swelled and cemented by the blood of the flock, bears a divine anathema into the family of the litigants; it carries with it the unhappiness, the misery, the wretchedness, the hell, into which it has already plunged its unfortunate possessor.

But, my brethren, what regards us in those sad examples, and which should affect us most,

is, that they confirm in the minds of people of the world, the general opinion of the avarice of Priests: for the world, as you are aware, reproaches us with this passion as the universal and incurable vice of the priesthood. It regards us all, as infected and defiled with this hideous leprosy; and as attached by closer and stronger ties to our scanty store, than men of the world, to their superabundant riches: a Priest and a lover of money, are with them, synonymous terms. Whence arises a prejudice so universal and so reproachful to the sublimity and holiness of the priesthood? I know that the world is unjust in our regard, and that it is ever ready to ascribe such vices to us as would seem to justify its own transgressions. But, touching this reproach, let us also sincerely acknowledge that it is not always wrong, in its imputations of avarice: let us admit that although we derive but little from the altar, yet, that the fear of being reduced to want renders this little so dear to us, attaches us so ardently to its possession, excites anxieties and precautions so characteristic of this vice, awakens such vigilant and jealous attention to our rights, that however regular and pious our morals may otherwise be, they can seldom screen us from

the suspicion of avarice, in the minds of our people.

And this very suspicion, which is the more wakeful and penetrating as the interests of our people are concerned, throws a sort of cloud over our exertions and our zeal, destroys the entire effect of our regularity, renders the best efforts of our ministry abortive, and deprives our functions and our exhortations of that efficacy and force which would solace the labors of a painful and disinterested ministry, by certain and brilliant success.

Let us therefore, my brethren, be in this important matter, on our guard against ourselves; against those wants which cupidity magnifies, and against the fears which it produces, about futurity: the delusion is here so subtle and so specious that virtue itself is often surprised by it. Let us rather suffer our temporal rights to be diminished, than expose ourselves to the danger of scandalizing the weak; let us rather receive our dues from the piety and the liberality of the faithful, than tear them from their indigence: let us not enforce them as the mercenary price of our toils, but as a sacred homage which our people owe to religion, the support which a father derives from the ten-

derness and gratitude of his children. Let us carefully avoid whatever could induce our flock to suspect that we have any thing in view but their salvation: let us show ourselves more eager to serve those of the faithful, whose poverty deprives them of the means of recompensing our services, than those whose wealth may enable them to overpay our duties: let us not distinguish them by their ability to remunerate us, but by the need which they have of our ministry, and let the name of the poor be honourable in our eyes: *Parcet pauperi et inopi . . . . et honorabile nomen eorum coram illo.\** Let us not be so cruel as to aggravate the miseries of their destitute condition, by forgetfulness or indifference, when they require our ministry: let us console them by assiduous attentions and kind concern, if we cannot assist them with pecuniary relief: let us make them feel that their poverty is but a new title to our affection and regard; that by it they are more peculiarly our children, and that we are united to them by closer ties than to the rest of the faithful: let us regard them as the most privileged por-

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\* Psalm. 71. vv. 13. 14.

tion of our flock, and by their sufferings and prayers, the most capable of drawing down the divine benediction on our whole ministry. Let us esteem ourselves happy in having such intercessors at the throne of Jesus Christ; theirs is the voice of the mourning dove, which never utters its plaints or desires in vain: let us suffer with them, by compassionating their troubles and their destitution, and be ever mindful that our mission, like that of Christ himself, is almost exclusively for them: *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me.*\* Let us not deem our lot the worse for being cast among a people abounding in nothing but poverty and wretchedness, for it is there that the Almighty sheds more numerous and abundant graces on our ministry; we may gather for ourselves but little from their indigence, but how rich will be the harvest for Jesus Christ! Let us not be so weak as to consider those of our brethren more happy, who can scarce reckon any poor among their wealthy and comfortable parishioners: their duties are, indeed, better remunerated, but are they on that account more useful and productive? Their

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\* Luke. c. iv. v. 18.

flocks are better able to supply their necessities and increase their store, but are they more disposed to profit of their instructions? The thorns and solitudes of riches choke up the divine seed among them; the field appears more beautiful, but the soil is barren and ungrateful, and yields no fruit.\* And whilst the pastor of a poor parish, who instructs and exhorts simple and docile souls, men who are penetrated and confounded by the most ordinary truths of faith, and who, in all their miseries, bow down their necks in meek submission to the hand that strikes them, has the consolation of seeing his ministry produce, every day, an abundant harvest for heaven; the other sees his cares and toils almost always unfruitful, except for himself. Let us not, my brethren, reckon our labors well rewarded, except when they bear the fruits of life and salvation, nor estimate the value of our places or of our duties, save by the gain which may accrue from them to Jesus Christ.

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\* Luke. c. viii. v. 14.

## **FOURTEENTH DISCOURSE.**

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### **OF INSENSIBILITY IN THE WAYS OF GOD.**

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**I**T is a truth, my brethren, which cannot be too often repeated, that there is nothing more essentially necessary for us, in the exercise of our functions, than that interior spirit of religion and piety which would continually animate and sanctify them, and that, perhaps, at the same time, there is nothing more rare amongst us; that there is no evil to be compared with the insensibility of the pastor, in the discharge of his duties, and yet no evil more common. Thanks to the unbounded mercies of the Lord, we no longer live in those dark and corrupt ages, when the ignorance and the disorders of the clergy covered the holy ministry with pub-

lic opprobrium, and when the general depravity seemed to leave to the church, no other trace of her ancient beauty than the learning and fervor of the cloisters. The spirit of the priesthood has been, since, renewed by the foundation of seminaries and colleges, where the candidates for holy orders are early formed to the duties of the ministry, and where they imbibe from their very infancy, the doctrine and the piety of their holy state. Scandals are not now, as formerly, either common or tolerated in the clergy; the functions of the ministry have resumed the form and the decency prescribed by the sacred canons; instructions formerly so rare and so coarse, have become more frequent and more enlightened; in a word, the church has again recovered that exterior of dignity, of piety and decorum, of which the licentiousness and calamities of former ages had stript her. Yet whilst the face of the church, of that daughter of the king, has regained its beauty, her glory which is all from within, has not therefore returned: *Omnis gloria ejus, filiæ regis ab intus*;\* and we may still say, that amongst us, as in the days of

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\* Psalm. 44. v. 15.



the Apostle,\* a faithful dispenser must be sought for, and that it is hard to find him. And why, my brethren? it is not the public irregularity of their morals, which renders them now, as rare as in former times: through the bounty and favour of Jesus Christ, scandalous crimes in the clergy, now-a-days seldom wound the tenderness, and aggravate the solicitude, of the Bishop. No, my brethren, it is not crying transgressions that degrade the greater part of us, from the august appellation of faithful dispensers, but the want of those virtues, which are inseparable from it, and in which we are lamentably deficient: it is the absence of that interior spirit of piety and religion, and of that priestly and tender heart which the exercise of our duties would warm into devotion; it is because that sensibility, that respect, and that religious awe, which we owe to every thing that has reference to the occupations of the sacred ministry, are weakened and extinguished in us, even by the daily use of the most holy things. Behold, my brethren, our most ordinary, and

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\* *Hic jam quæritur inter dispensatores, ut fidelis quis inveniatur.*

1. Cor. c. iv. v. 2.

most formidable evil: our disorders are not notorious, but we are insensible and numb, as it were, in regard to the most terrific objects of religion, so that all that daily affects and rouses the piety and faith of ordinary christians, instead of even awakening our attention, augments our lethargy: that is to say, and this truth makes me tremble for you and for myself, my brethren; that is to say, that all those resources of religion, which grace, continually employs to touch and change the hearts of our people, confirm us in an insensibility which is at once both the most general and the most terrible malediction attached to the functions of the sacred ministry. The proofs of this tremendous truth, are but too common and too clear; they are disheartening, indeed, to us, my brethren.

The participation of holy things is a principal resource of religion, in which the ordinary faithful, every day, find the renovation of their piety or the remedy of their disorders. The christian who approaches seldom to the altar, is struck with a sacred terror, when he is about to perform so awful an action: the approach of a solemnity, which imposes this duty on him, makes him enter sincerely into himself; he has a profound feeling of his own unworthiness;

he casts himself at our feet, full of fear and of compunction; he draws forth from the treasury of his heart, the old and the new; he forms a thousand purposes, a thousand resolutions of a more christian life; he takes every precaution that he may not go to eat and drink judgment to himself; and those holy determinations, fortified by partaking of the body of Jesus Christ, either confirm him in the practices of a more virtuous life for the future, or at least sustain him, for some time, in the attempt. As for us, my brethren, can we say, that the participation of the body and blood of Christ, is to us a means or a pledge of salvation? Alas! with morals outwardly irreproachable, we yet daily approach the holy table, as we do common meats; this great and awful action, is for us like one of those ordinary and stated actions, which must enter into the detail, and occupy a portion, of our day, and the hour of mass is regulated just in the same manner as that of business, of our meals or perhaps of our pleasures; it is a daily task, forming a part of the servitude of our state; it awakens in us, no sentiment of fervor, of dread of holy things, of sorrow for our sins; no purpose of a more religious and clerical life: the bread of heaven is for

us the same as the bread of earth ; the adorable wine which purifies the heart and invigorates all the powers of the soul, is for us as a common wine, which stupifies our faculties and increases our lethargy. It cannot be remarked that on quitting the altar, we feel a new zeal for the salvation of our flock, a new relish for prayer, a new solicitude for the faithful discharge of all our duties : we had presented ourselves at it, without any lively sentiment of faith, of piety or fear, without a single resolution of amending our lives ; and we quit it the same as we approached it ; unless, indeed, that failing to improve by the holy sacrament the little benefit we derive from it, being an abuse of holy things, renders us more criminal than before, leads us into a kind of daily profanation, to the guilt of which we do not advert, and of which we never repent : thus the anathema remains on our heads to the very last, without terrifying us ; continually increases our insensibility, and conducts us in the end to a settled impenitence ; that is to say, the altar of the living God, daily hardens many Priests, and has not yet ever converted even one. The simple christian, O my God ! continually derives new life and new helps to salvation, from partaking of the adorable victim

which we offer to thee; and we who are the ministers of the sacrifice, and who divide it to others, draw from it no other advantage than an augmentation of our lethargic insensibility that renders our vices altogether incurable! Are we then Priests, O my God! but to add daily to our crimes, by a more frequent approach to the divine remedy itself, which thou hast established to expiate them, and to renew us unceasingly in the grace of the priesthood, which has consecrated us to thy altars?

The participation then of holy things, the first resource of salvation, and so useful to ordinary christians, is the first source of our insensibility.

The second resource which religion has provided for the salvation of the faithful, is the ministry of the word: that sacred word is not yet in bonds, and Apostolic labourers, have, every day, the consolation of making it fructify in our cities and our villages; the hearts of the simple open to those important truths, which are best understood by those who have had the happiness of reducing them to practice; hardened sinners, struck by the terror of God's judgments renounce their guilty courses, and for the future edify those by their penance,

whom they had scandalized by their crimes; in a word, in spite of the general corruption of morals, the truths of the gospel daily bring forth among the faithful, elect to Jesus Christ. As to us, my brethren, we are for the most part, unmoved by the doctrines which we announce to the faithful; our instructions are merely as an outward duty, which we owe to our people, and which as it frequently straitens us, we discharge with regret: they contain few of those great truths, which after being long meditated and relished, rise as it were from the bottom of the heart; they are the work of labor and study, not the fruit of piety and prayer: in those lectures and exercises by which we prepare for the ministry of the word, we seek merely what may enable us to instruct and exhort others, without any view or reference to ourselves: it would seem that the holy scriptures and pious treatises which we read, had no reference to us; that the most terrific truths of the gospel, were exclusively for our people, and that by announcing them to others, we acquire the privilege of being exempt from their application to ourselves. Thus the very study of those truths and the public instructions, which we prepare for our flock, tend in our regard but to dry up

our hearts and augment our insensibility: instead of studying those grand truths in the spirit of prayer and with reference to ourselves; instead of begging of Jesus Christ, when we read the divine volume of his doctrine and of his will, that he would begin by inflaming our own heart with the fire of his love, that from our abundance it might spread with greater effect to the hearts of our hearers, we are solely intent on the impression which they may produce on them; and thus it happens, through a curse attached to the discharge of the ministry without the spirit of piety and religion, that none are less moved by the denunciations of the gospel than they who proclaim them. Yet we are satisfied with ourselves, when those terrific truths, leaving to us all our insensibility, make some impression and operate some change in our people; we imagine that God pours his benediction on our labors. It is indeed true, that he displays the truth to the auditory, but he hides it from the preacher; he opens the hearts of our people to his voice, but he shuts ours against it: he makes use of us to water and cultivate the plants, which his heavenly Father had planted; but he consigns us to sterility and drought; in short he gives a

blessing to the ministry, but utters a malediction on the minister. Great God! thou wilt then, one day, condemn us by our own mouth! whilst we are arranging our instructions, we are writing our own judgment and condemnation! our very talents and the very success by which we are so much flattered, will in thy presence but cover us with everlasting confusion; the souls whom our discourses have converted to penance will rise up against us, at thy tribunal, and bear testimony of our insensibility; they will appear shocked and surprised, that truths so interesting, so affecting, in our mouths, have never had any effect upon our own hearts: thou, they will say with the Apostle, *thou therefore that teachest another teachest not thyself* :\* thou that instructest us that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*, † holdest him, every day, in thy hands, without loving or fearing him: thou declarest to us that he must *be adored in spirit and in truth*, ‡ and thou adorest him with only the extremity of thy lips: the truth which thou

\* Rom. c. ii. v. 21.      † Hebr. c. x. v. 31.

‡ John. c. iv. v. 23.



didst make known to us has delivered and saved us, and for thee who wert its minister, it will be from henceforth, but as a devouring fire to prey on that heart which it could not move, and as an eternal anathema, to continue to the end on thy devoted head!

The ministry of the word then, the second resource of salvation, which religion provides for the faithful, tends but to increase our insensibility.

What further reflection shall I yet add, my brethren? the tribunal itself where so many penitent souls by the sincerity of their sorrow and the abundance of their tears, daily expiate at our feet, the errors and the disorders of their past lives; where so many others find a remedy to invigorate their faith and quicken their languishing piety; the tribunal of penance, the third resource provided by religion for the salvation of her followers, that sacred pool where so many sick and diseased, every day, find health and strength, is for us but a dry bath, without virtue or healing, and removes not a single one of our numerous and inveterate infirmities. I speak not of the dangers that await this function, nor of those snares which beset the judge of consciences, and from which he does

not perhaps, escape without becoming even more guilty than the criminal whom he absolves. I think, I am addressing pastors who have no reproach of this atrocious character to make themselves : besides I do not now consider you as ministers of the sacrament of penance, but as penitents yourselves ; and I say, with grief, that the holy tribunal, which is so useful to the faithful, is of almost no advantage to the clergy. Familiarized as we are, to the criminal details which are there revealed to us, we ourselves approach the confessional, cold and indifferent, with all our faults, which we scarce consider such, and without a single emotion of grace and repentance : far from bringing to it, sincere resolutions of a more priestly, more interior and more faithful life ; a lively sorrow for our indulgent and selfish habits and for our tepidity and insensibility in the exercise of our functions ; far from feeling those throes and pangs of sorrow which ever accompany a true change and bespeak the new birth of Jesus Christ in the heart, we do not even feel that secret confusion and shame which naturally attends the confession of human frailties. By turns, confessors and penitents of each other, the sacred and awful character itself of the tribunal, which makes such

deep impression upon ordinary christians, loses for us, all its terror and majesty; our confessions are little else than a mutual and familiar converse of one pastor with another, and scarce affects us more than the most indifferent of our duties: laying open our conscience to Priests as tepid and dissipated as ourselves, as little animated by the spirit of faith, as blind and unconcerned for their own insensibility in the discharge of their duties, they take little trouble to detect and probe in our heart, the ulcer which they bear in the depths of their own, without adverting to their danger, and without ever thinking of applying the bitter but necessary remedy. Alas! can those who sleep profoundly themselves, awaken us from our lethargy? Thus the resource of the tribunal of penance, so beneficial to ordinary christians, is for us, like a medicine that has lost its virtues and that never reaches the true seat of our disease. We seek only to relieve ourselves from those sins, which weigh most heavily on our conscience, and which, if we ascended the altar without recurring to this sacrament, would render us guilty of sacrilegious profanation, even in our own eyes: we have neither intention nor idea of correcting our dissipated and unclerical lives;

of amending our worldly habits; of raising our mean and ordinary views to things more elevated; of shaking off our sluggishness and insensibility for whatever is most august in religion and most calculated to awaken and animate our faith; in short, we have no firm or decided purpose to rise from that state of lethargy in which we have abode so long, in which nothing moves or affects us, and which nevertheless renders us, in the sight of God, before whom we rashly present ourselves at the altar, like so many bodies without soul and without life, and infinitely more worthy of being spewed from his mouth than the lukewarm and disgusting draught, which is destined to the vomit. Thus, through our habitual torpor, feeling nothing weighty or enormous enough on our conscience to remove us from the altar, and still less alive to our insensibility and to that want of piety and faith in the fulfilment of our duties by which we are equally disqualified for the divine sacrifice, we ascend the altar to eat and drink our own condemnation: that is to say, by the habitual abuse of holy things we thicken the darkness and increase the chaos in which our heart is enveloped, and render it daily more difficult for us to comprehend, that a pastor

who, every day, exercises the functions of the holy ministry without the interior spirit of piety and religion, is but the phantom of a pastor; that it is not enough for us to be exempt from gross and infamous vice; and that it is a grievous and deadly crime for a Priest to be devoid of every sterling and priestly virtue. The tribunal of penance then, the third resource of salvation, which religion has provided for the faithful, is of no utility to us. Thus, O my God! it would appear, that we are ministers and dispensers of thy gifts and of all the resources of religion to others, only to render them unavailing and useless to ourselves!

What further resource then, my brethren, can still remain to rouse our faith and bring us to a sense of our danger? What? is it the remembrance, or even the sight of death? It is true that the remembrance, and particularly the sight of death, every day, strikes deep terror into the breasts of hardened sinners: but as for us, my brethren, our duties familiarize us, not only to the remembrance, but even to the very spectacle, of death; that terrific moment which decides for eternity; that utter dissolution of the body of clay, in which all things perish for man, and which the soul alone sur-

vives to be instantly and inexorably judged; this spectacle so calculated to confound and terrify him, in whose breast faith and hope, and the dread of futurity are not altogether extinguished, makes no impression, excites neither remorse, nor repentance, nor fear in our callous and insensible hearts: thus, the remembrance and the spectacle of death—the fourth resource which religion has provided for the faithful, leaves us all our insensibility. Yes, my brethren, we are called, every day, to assist some one of our flock, in this last combat; to furnish him with the last succors of religion, and support him in his agony, by reminding him of the mercies of the Lord, and of the hope which springs from the mystery of our redemption, of which we present to him the consoling symbol: we fortify his trembling soul, then pressed down under the weight of disease and of crime, by the prayers which the church prescribes to sustain it in this last hour; we call upon the holy Angels to conduct it into the bosom of Abraham; we say to it with the church; go forth O christian soul into life eternal: *Proficiscere anima Christiana* ;\* thou hadst

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\* See the *Ordo commendationis animæ*.

not here thy true country; return to the bosom of thy God, whence thou didst come; put off the clothing of mortality, and go to enjoy with Jesus Christ and all his elect, that new life which will never end, and which is promised to all those, who love him on earth: the dying man expires under our eyes, and, as it were, in our very hands; we leave the spectators terrified and moved at the sight; there is not one of them that does not enter into himself, that does not make reflections on the shortness of life, and on the wisdom and the necessity of preparing for the last moment by purer morals and more virtuous conduct; not one that does not resolve to do so: we alone quit the scene as tranquil and as insensible as we approached it; we alone, familiarized long, to the terrific and instructive spectacle, find in it nothing new to disturb or improve us: we return from it coldly to our ordinary occupations; weary, perhaps, of the length and sadness of the duty, we seek amusement to dissipate those slight impressions which perchance, might linger in our memory. Nay more, my brethren, we sometimes behold this sad spectacle attended with the most appalling circumstances: we see sudden deaths, in which the hand of God strikes

the dissolute and public sinner, without leaving a single instant between judgment and his guilty life: we run to assist him, but there is no longer time; God in his anger refuses even a moment to him, who had abused all his days: we sound in his ears some words of salvation; we raise our voice and call him aloud, but all in vain, he is deaf to our cries, and has no reply to give us; for the Lord has called him, and to him alone he must now answer: we shake and agitate him, we use every effort and every art to recal, if it were possible, the parting spirit from the region of death, but to no purpose; the guilty soul is already in the hands of the Angels of darkness, and they will not let slip their prey, at our word: but a moment before, as though he were immortal, he insulted the Almighty, whose hand was already lifted against him; he is now no more, he is judged, his lot is decided for ever. Such an occurrence, like the raging of thunder, fills a whole parish or city with terror and dismay; it is a lesson which each one takes to himself: but it is a lesson which has no instruction for us, it is a bolt which spends its force in the clouds. Perhaps, through decency, we exhort the spectators to profit of so striking an example, but



we do not think of applying it to ourselves. We recount the sad event to our acquaintance, without emotion ; we dilate upon its singularity and horror, but we do not advert to the strange circumstance of our own insensibility, more terrific still and more singular than the event itself : nay, perhaps, and I cannot utter it without horror ; perhaps, we are more concerned for the sum to be derived from the funeral of the deceased, than for the eternal misery of a soul which expired in sin, before our eyes. O my God ! even the terrific prodigies of thy justice, which strike a salutary dread into the hearts of christians, do not ruffle the calm insensibility of ours ! the heart of a tepid and indolent Priest, is a hardened heart, which nothing can soften ; and all the resources of salvation, which religion offers through our ministry to the faithful, will be for ourselves so many new subjects of condemnation !

Thus, my brethren, will the years of our ministry roll on, without gross scandal or shameful disorder, in the eyes of men, but also without the spirit of the priesthood or of religion, in the sight of God ; and the farther we advance in our course, the more will our indolence and our insensibility be augmented. For age,

at least, with people of the world, brings some desires, some chance of amendment; it extinguishes their passions, renders them unfit for pleasure, points out the near approach of death, and makes them feel the utter vacuity and folly of all that they have seen upon earth; it recalls them to their only true and solid object—the care of their salvation: age is then the fifth and last resource of salvation for ordinary christians. But as to a pastor who has grown old in this state of sluggishness and insensibility, amidst the most holy and awful duties, the more old age advances, the more insensible he becomes: his latter years put the seal to his impenitence: becoming more and more familiarized to the sublime and terrific functions of the priesthood, in proportion as his days are multiplied; he who once performed them, without any sentiment of piety or of faith, now exercises them without dignity and even without common decency. This, my brethren, we see and lament, every day; we behold pastors bent down by the weight of years, administering the sacraments, and also participating of them, themselves, with a familiarity and an indecency which dishonours religion, debases the sacred ministry, and even draws down on them-

selves the derisions of every part of their people. In vain do we admonish them to treat holy things in a holy manner; they look upon those indecencies as the privilege of their age, and leave to the care of the younger clergy the decorum and respect due to our great and exalted duties: they persuade themselves that their long practice, dispenses them from a scrupulous attention to the ceremonies prescribed by the church, and authorizes in them, a hastiness and a familiarity which deprives religious worship, not only of all semblance of piety but even of sober gravity and common decorum. We ascribe those unseemly and irreligious habits to simplicity, or to a debility of reason produced by old age; but we deceive ourselves: it is not senility that has occasioned those scandalous and indecent habits, but insensibility to their duties, which began in early life, and which having attained its utmost height, terminates at last in contempt:\* it is not the debility of intellect produced by old age, but the justice of God, which, weary of being so long

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\* *Impius cum in profundum venerit . . . contemnit.*

Prov. c. xviii. v. 3.

insulted by a ministry exercised without any sentiment of piety or of faith, has in the end, hardened his heart into final impenitence. Thus, old age itself, by which God continually calls so many of the faithful, to a more christian life, consummates the reprobation of the Priest: thus, religion offers to the christian, who has had the misfortune of going astray, a thousand resources in our ministry, to bring him back to God; and a Priest who has had the misfortune of exercising that ministry without fervor and without the spirit of piety and of religion, renders all those resources of salvation unavailing to himself: that is to say, my brethren, we ruin ourselves for eternity, by the very same means, by which others are saved; sinners in the world, daily quit their disorders, but a Priest almost never puts off his insensibility; and thus there is infinitely better reason to hope the conversion of a disorderly and notorious sinner, than of a pastor who long perseveres, indolent and insensible, amidst all that is most calculated to awaken his faith and alarm his fears. This, my brethren, is not the language of hasty and unreflecting zeal; it is the most certain and obvious truth that can regard us, and one which I cannot announce, without being terrified and

dismayed, myself. For, that I may compress all that has been said, into a few words, let me ask you, my brethren, upon what, can a pastor who exercises the duties of his ministry without the spirit of religion, rely for a change of heart? Is it on the participation of holy things? The faith of the simple christian is indeed there awakened, but it only lulls us into a deeper slumber. Is it on the ministry of the word? That exhibits the beauty of truth to our people, but hides it from ourselves. Is it on the tribunal of penance? That is a remedy, which, by applying to the disorders of others, we deprive of all force and activity for our own. Is it the remembrance or the spectacle of death? Hardened sinners are daily struck and converted by its horrific but salutary terrors, but as for us, by having its figure constantly before us, we cease not only to fear, but even to think of it. In fine, is it old age, at least? alas! years enfeeble the passions of people of the world, and prepare them for a change of life, but they put the last seal to the insensibility and impenitence of a Priest.

Great God! what hope then of salvation, what resources dost thou leave for us, whom thou hast chosen for thy holy ministry? The

faithful, assisted by the aids which thou hast left to thy church, daily return to thy service from the paths of guilt, and we who dispense them, find nothing in them but new occasions of forgetting thee and of ruining ourselves! Has the priesthood, O Lord!—that divine character which we share with Jesus Christ, become for us a character of reprobation? Has the sacred unction which consecrated us to thy altars, been turned into a burning and consuming oil, to penetrate into our bones and our very marrow, and dry up in our hearts those principles of love, of zeal, of charity, which constitute the whole life of the priesthood? no, O Lord! thou hast chosen us, not to destroy us, but to co-operate in the salvation of thy elect: our hearts are heavy and plunged into a profound lethargy, but they are as yet in thy hands: if the very dead hear thy voice, those who are but torpid and slumbering will not close their ears against it. Speak, O Lord! to our languid hearts, but speak to them in that strong and penetrating voice which cannot fail to pierce them; quicken our sluggishness, as thou didst formerly reanimate the dry bones,\* to form them into a great

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\* *Ossa arida, audite verbum Domini, &c.*

Ezech. c. xxxvii.

army, ready to combat for thy glory: rekindle in our listless hearts, the expiring flame of thy love and thy zeal, as thou didst once rekindle in the thick water, the sacred fire which the Priests, before going into captivity, had hidden at the bottom of a deep pit.\* Remember, O Lord! that by preventing our eternal ruin, thou also preventest the destruction of the souls entrusted to us; and that by bestowing on us, those graces which will render us zealous and fervent pastors, thou preparest the salvation of the numerous flock which cannot fail to wander far astray under feeble and unfaithful shepherds. We confess with sorrow, that we are unworthy of thy mercy; but at least, deign to look on thy people; have pity on the souls which have been purchased by all the blood of thy only Son, and which will escape eternal misery, if thou renewest the piety and the zeal of the pastors who conduct them: if we have incurred thy displeasure and provoked thy wrath, what hath been done by those whom thou hast regenerated in the bosom of thy church, that they should share our punishments? *Isti qui oves sunt, quid fecerunt?*† Be mindful, O Lord,

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\*2. Mach. c. i. v. 19. &c. †2. Reg. c. xxiv. v. 16.

of the ministry with which thou hast charged us, for their sake; and let our salvation be always precious in thy sight, since in thy adorable designs thou hast linked it to that of the flock, which thou hast committed to our care. Renovate and save us, O Saviour of men! that the pastor and flock being renewed in thy grace and devoted to thy service, may form that new fold and new people which thou didst descend from heaven, to form upon earth.



## FIFTEENTH DISCOURSE.

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### ON THE MEEKNESS NECESSARY FOR THE CLERGY.

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MEEKNESS in the discharge of our ministry, appears to me a subject of so much importance, that I cannot refrain from adding a few reflections to the solid and edifying discourse, which you have just heard.

Without doubt, my brethren, from the moment, in which we become pastors and fathers, mildness, tenderness and charity, ought to form our principal character, and constitute, as it were, the leading spirit of all our duties: yet, it is but too true that we often substitute humor, the spirit of domination and false zeal, for that kind and prudent charity, which alone can deserve success and render our labors profitable to our people. For the rest, my bre-

thren, the meekness of which we now treat, does not, properly speaking, regard the conduct of the clergy in the tribunal of penance, (we have on other occasions frequently established the rules that should direct that duty,) it regards their deportment in the discharge of their public functions, and in the ordinary business of life among their parishioners.

Now, I say first, that we often put humor, in the place of that meekness which is so amiable and so essential in the performance of our duties. Alas! my brethren, if the grace of the priesthood, in consecrating us to the holy ministry, changed our inclinations, as it changes our state; if it gave to our sentiments, the same elevation, as it gives to our character; if the sacred unction which is poured on our hands to hallow and sanctify them, were to diffuse its influence over our manners, to purify and soften them, it would be unnecessary for me to recommend to you a virtue, which would have been produced in you by the reception of the priesthood: but unfortunately we carry with us into the holy place, all the defects of disposition and of education; the sacred character which stamps us Priests, changes nothing in our natural character of men, and a Priest, born

with a coarse and overbearing mind, with a harsh or fretful temper, being once established in a parish, so far from finding in his new quality of pastor and of father, a check to his impetuous humor, and new motives to mildness and benignity, finds in it most commonly, new occasions of caprice and passion, new incentives to rudeness and selfishness. In a dependant and inferior station, we are meek and peaceful; the desire of preferment triumphs over the coarseness and impetuosity of our disposition; we obey with meekness and docility; but no sooner do we obtain a parish, than we begin to command with rough and haughty insolence; and we throw off all restraint at the very conjuncture, which should furnish a thousand additional reasons for curbing the sallies of passion, and softening down the natural stiffness of our minds. Hence the many complaints which daily reach us, of the coarseness and asperity of pastors: it is not the common people alone who complain; the very proprietor of the soil who hoped to find in his pastor an agreeable and edifying society, a counsellor in his perplexities, a consolation in his troubles, a steady and religious friend in his secluded retirement, discovers in him, oftentimes, a selfish and feroci-

ous parish Priest, wrapped up in himself, leading a repulsive and solitary life, disdaining all communication, without attention or even common civility to any, and contemning and despising the first man in his parish; opposing and contradicting him, and thereby filling him with disgust for the minister of religion, and for religion itself. But although his people were exclusively of the lower rank, still what good could a fretful and overbearing Priest hope to effect in the government of a flock, still more ferocious and intractable than himself? Every thing will disgust him with the coarse and savage manners of his parishioners, and in turn, every thing will revolt them against the sulky humor and stubborn pride of their pastor. His ministry will be a perpetual round of contention and squabble; he will profane the word of life by turning his instructions into public invectives against his people; and in his mouth, the divine truths of the gospel will be converted into the war-cry of dissension and strife. These, my brethren, are not mere conjectures, the complaints which so frequently reach us, from all quarters, too well confirm our just fears, and leave us no room to doubt the sad reality of this evil.

No, my brethren, it is for us who are raised to the character of fathers, to bear the defects of our children: a pastor who cannot suffer something, will never produce any real good. I admit that our patience and our meekness are, every day, put to frequent trials: a rude and ignorant flock almost never attend to convenience or propriety in approaching their pastor: if they come to complain, they inveigh in the grossest language; if to ask a favor, they heed neither time, nor place, nor occupation, nor a thousand other circumstances, which render their request unseasonable and importunate: they never advert to the engagements of the pastor, nor to the impropriety of their demands: they will brook no refusal nor rebuke, but become impatient and stubborn by every disappointment, for their rude habits and scanty knowledge, which blunt their perception of their own follies, sharpen their penetration for the errors of their guide. It is then for us, my brethren, to oppose a paternal mildness to the rudeness of our people, and to correct and soften them, by bearing their faults meekly. It would be vain for Saint Paul to exhort us in particular, to be patient towards all men; *Pa-*

*tientes estote ad omnes\**, if we were, every where, to meet that politeness and attention, which leave nothing for patience to endure. No, my brethren, exposed as we are to the repulsive and vexatious importunities of our people, we should not so often abandon ourselves to our impatience, were we soberly to reflect, that they but use their strict right, when they address themselves to us; that we belong to them and not to ourselves: *Non estis vestri*;† that by repelling them and by refusing to hear them, we deny them that time, which is no longer ours but theirs; it is a debt which they may justly demand. It may be that they choose an improper moment, or prefer an unreasonable request, but we are not therefore less their debtors, and however their folly or awkwardness may exercise our patience, it detracts nothing from our obligations. Thus, my brethren, the more fierce and headstrong are our people, the more meekness and charity does the pastor require to soften and humanize them. Notwithstanding all their roughness and fury, they are but as an impetuous wind which is stilled by a

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\* 1. Thess. c. v. ver. 14.    † 1. Cor. c. vi. v. 19.

slight shower—one mild and tender word calms their fury : peevishness and impatience, far from correcting their defects, tend but to manifest our own ; they do not protect us from their teasing importunity, but they deprive us of their confidence and love.

Now, my brethren, can a pastor who feels any concern for the salvation of the souls entrusted to him, refuse to sacrifice some momentary irritation, in order to gain their confidence and affections, and thus prepare the way for the success of his labors among them? The first preachers of the gospel were sent as lambs into the midst of wolves, and wolves, my brethren, which tore and devoured them, and whose rage could not be satiated but by their blood : yet their mildness and patience softened and overcame the ferocity of those savage beasts, and turned their barbarous persecutors into meek and docile lambs. We have succeeded to their mission as well as to their ministry, and like them, are sent as lambs into the midst of wolves. Had we still to encounter their barbarity like our holy predecessors ; were cruel torments the only recompence of our labors and our zeal, we should either renounce Jesus Christ and the ministry with which he had honoured

us, or go to meet our fate with a holy joy : and here, where we have nothing more trying to endure than the coarse manners of a rough and headstrong people ; here, where all our patience and all our heroic courage is confined to the forgiveness of some slight omissions of respect, of deference and attention in our people ; here, where the whole rage of those pretended wolves is merely that they are not sufficiently instructed in all those external forms of submission which would flatter our pride, we would magnify their want of obsequiousness into a crime ? we would fancy ourselves authorized to treat them with haughty contempt, and deem their rude simplicity an outrage, that would justify all our bitterness and rebuffs, and would thus, ourselves, become as devouring wolves, amidst the lambs to whom we are sent ? Alas ! my brethren, how shall we excuse ourselves for abandoning the patience and meekness of our ministry under such slender provocations ? How can we pretend to possess the virtues, and occupy the places, of our fathers, who endured the most exquisite tortures, and glorified Christ by their death, we who cannot suffer the slightest importunity, nor honour our station by sacrificing our convenience or curbing our temper ?



We are deceived, my brethren, by a spirit of habitual domineering over our people, and by arrogantly claiming for ourselves, the respect which they owe to our ministry alone: we look upon ourselves as their masters, when in reality we are but their ministers and servants.

And, behold, my brethren, the second fault which we commit against that meekness which should accompany and characterize the functions of the priesthood, it is the spirit of domineering over the flock—one of the most opposite that can be conceived to the spirit of a ministry of charity and humility. The princes of the earth, said Christ to his disciples, exercise an imperious authority over their people: pride and terror, pageantry and splendor, encircle their power; but, *it shall not be so among you*; modesty and tenderness, meekness and humility, shall be the most valuable privileges, and the most splendid ornaments, of your dignity; they regard themselves as the masters of their subjects, but you shall consider yourselves as their brethren and servants: they rule with haughty sway, but you shall govern by loving and serving your people: *Principes gentium*

*dominantur eorum, vos autem non sic.\** What pride then, can we feel, my brethren, from the possession of a dignity, which subjects us to all those over whom we are placed; which makes us debtors to all, and accountable for all? What can puff up our hearts, in stations of which the only advantage is, that they multiply our labors, our duties, our dangers and our troubles? We must have forgotten that we are the envoys, and that we hold the place, of a God, who was humble, patient and saturated with opprobrium; we must have forgotten that we are the ministers of a church, which is, here, in a strange land, sighing for her true country, when we presume to turn the sacred functions of the office with which she invests us, into a subject of pride, and render her authority odious, by lording it over her children.

Yet, under pretence of maintaining the honor and authority of that office, we are inexorable to those who commit the slightest inadvertencies against us; we enforce deference and submission with peevish exactness, less to ho-

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\* Matthew. c. xx. vv. 25. 26.

nour religion, than to cause ourselves to be respected; the slightest attack upon our rights rouses us into fury, and rankles in our mind; we make of our authority a yoke to press down our people, and not an instrument to support and defend them: we forget that our rights cannot be valuable to us, but in proportion as they are beneficial to others; that they have been bestowed on us to facilitate, not to impede, the success of our functions; to conciliate respect to religion, not to encompass our dignity with pageantry and terror; to render the example of our virtues more public and more influential, and not to render our authority more haughty and domineering.

I have already asked, and the question cannot be too often repeated, is it possible that the ministers of an insulted and crucified God, can find any right in their ministry, to authorize arrogance and pride? and can they persuade themselves that they are supporting the honor of a modest and humble office, by rendering it overbearing and punctilious? I am aware that the laws of the church and of the state require of the faithful a religious respect for the clergy; but we should endeavour to win, and not demand, this respect. The fear of the

laws may obtain for us external regard, but virtue alone can command the homage of the heart. Our flocks are already but too much disposed to view the temporal advantages of our situation, with an envious eye, and our rights soon begin to appear doubtful to them, when they once begin to suspect our virtue: the more eagerly we improve and enforce them, the greater is the suspicion that we do not hold them by a good title; the more rigorously we exact them, the more they are resisted: and although we were to increase them by quarrels and litigations, yet what would we gain, if we have lost the confidence and love of our people? Do we honour our ministry as the Apostle recommends,\* by rendering it odious and useless?

But, you will say, we must maintain the rights of the ministry, which are entrusted to our care, and not suffer them to be diminished or contemned in our hands. Yes, my brethren, let us maintain them by the superiority of our virtues; that is the way by which we

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\* Rom. c. xi. v. 13.—2. Cor. c. vi. v. iii.—2. Tim. c. iv. v. 11. &c.

shall always render them respectable: let us rule over our people by loving, by assisting, by edifying, them; it is by these means that we shall surely become their masters. Let us seek only the interests of their salvation, and they will not contest the immunities of our office: the authority with which we are invested is exclusively for their benefit; let us employ it for them, and not against them, and they themselves will become its most zealous defenders; it is not for ourselves, but for our people, that we are ministers of religion and pastors of the church; let us then devote ourselves to their wants, without reserve, without interest, with no other view than that of their salvation. Let this single motive be the consolation of our troubles, the recompence of our toils, and the most valued prerogative of our ministry: let us accommodate our talents, our character, our inclinations to the circumstances and to the necessities of our people: let us be weak with the feeble; let us weep with those who weep, and suffer with those who suffer: let us encourage the pusillanimous, stretch forth our hands to support the falling, reprove the restless with charity and mildness, bear with those who resist us, and vanquish their obsti-

nacy by our patience: in a word, let us become all to all in order to gain all to Jesus Christ, and we shall be the first, and the masters of all. No, my brethren, it is not want of respect for religion, that induces our people to contest the rights, and contemn the authority, of the ministry, but the abuse which so many of the clergy make of the prerogatives and immunities of their office. The noble modesty, the paternal disinterestedness of a virtuous pastor, impresses on his flock more veneration for his person, and more attention to his rights, than all the ardor and skilfulness by which a worldly Priest may maintain his dignity and enforce his privileges. Our rights, my brethren, are always better secured in the hearts of our people, than in the very documents which define and preserve them.

To these reflections you will reply, we readily admit that it is impossible for a pastor of peevish temper and of a domineering spirit; to preserve that character of meekness, without which, he can gain neither the confidence nor the love of his people: but how can he correct the disorders that reign among them, without a certain severity, which is almost always incompatible with the meekness of the pastor,

and with the affectionate attachment of his flock? Hence, my brethren, arises false zeal; the third fault against pastoral meekness.

We will tolerate no disorders, and in this we are right; but oftentimes, in correcting them, we fret and stimulate them, and render them more incorrigible than before, by the haughtiness of our manner and the bitterness of our reproof. This, says Saint Gregory, is the misfortune of a great many pastors: they cannot speak except in a tone of menace, to those sinners, whom they think themselves bound to reprehend; they know not how to address them in the language of a father's heart; and by the sternness of their countenance and the imperiousness of their voice, one would imagine that they intend rather to *command* them to correct their vices, than to inspire them with a love of virtue, or persuade them to amend their lives: *Nunquam clementer admonent; sed pastoralis mansuetudinis obliti, jure damnationis terrent.\** In effect, my brethren, the zeal of charity *dealeth not perversely*, says the Apostle; † in the remedies which it employs, it pro-

\* St. Gregor. lib. de Pastore. † 1. Cor. c. xiii. v. 4.

poses not to itself, the display of its authority, but the recovery of the patient; it feels no secret pride on beholding the transgressions of a brother, and far from contemptuously reproaching him with them, it considers itself the more criminal of the two, in the eyes of Him who penetrates the depths of the heart, and the secrets of conscience: *it is not provoked to wrath*,\* says the same Apostle; its anger is the anger of a tender parent, who, when he borrows the voice of the lion, knows well how to temper it with the meekness of the lamb. No, my brethren, we must appear to love the sinner when we reprove him, and show more tenderness for his person, than abhorrence for his vices: we must teach him to feel the iniquity of his conduct, by the very pain which it gives us to reprehend it. If we appear to triumph, as it were, in his vices, to be rejoiced on being able to exercise the authority of the ministry upon him, and delighted at the opportunity of covering him with confusion, he will naturally regard us as the enemies of his character, rather than of his vices: he will re-

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\* 1. Cor. c. xiii. v. 4.



pel the hand that seems raised rather to strike, than to heal, him; he will be persuaded that our aim is rather to destroy his reputation, than to save his soul; and our reproofs, far from withdrawing him from the paths of guilt, will estrange him more than ever from the way of salvation and life. Let us appear afflicted, my brethren, when our ministry will not suffer us to dissemble from a sinner, our knowledge of his public enormities, and let us convince him by the charity and tenderness of our remonstrances, that it costs us more pain to make them, than it costs him to hear them. Let us remember that Jesus Christ was esteemed the friend of sinners,\* on account of the divine sweetness with which he received them, of the holy familiarity with which he honoured them, and of the joy, with which he declared that the conversion of even one among them, would fill the holy Angels in heaven. Remember his tears over the impenitent Jerusalem, he wept oftener over the sins of his people, than he reproved them, and his prayers for them, always preceded and ensured

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\* *Ecce homo . . . . Publicanorum et peccatorum amicus.*

*Matt. c. xi. v. 19.*

the effect of his instructions ; let us ascribe to ourselves alone, the failure of ours : let us not impute our want of success to the hardness of sinners, but to the pride, the asperity, the harshness and the many other defects that vitiate and defile our zeal ; let us accuse the tepidity of our prayers for our people, and the uniform infidelity of our lives, by which we have rendered our words unworthy of that energy and virtue, which God gives to the exhortation of those alone, who are animated with his spirit and faithful to every duty. Let us humble ourselves before God, and weep over past vices and disappointments : let us multiply our prayers, in proportion as the transgressions of our people seem to increase, and move the Almighty to mercy by our sighs for our brethren, if we cannot move their hearts by our remonstrances ; and far from suffering ourselves to become more incensed against them by their obduracy, let us direct all our indignation, exclusively against ourselves.

When I exhort you to meekness, my brethren, in the discharge of your duties, I do not mean to justify the criminal indolence and torpid insensibility of a pastor, amidst the disorders of his people : the meekness of the priest-

hood is full of tenderness and charity for sinners, but it feels indignation and horror for their vices. A pastor whom the scandalous irregularities which he witnesses in his parish, do not affect, who lives tranquil and unmoved in the midst of public prevarications, who authorizes and encourages them by his silence, who will not disturb his indolent repose even for the salvation of his people; a pastor of this character, has not the charity and kindness of the gospel, he is an assassin and a murderer, and the most terrible scourge which the Almighty can send in his wrath, upon the sins of a people: he is no pastor, he is an idol, which has eyes and sees not, a tongue and speaks not, a heart and feels not: *Pastor et idolum*.\* He is not a Priest to offer gifts and victims for the sins of the people; he is himself a victim of malediction, covered and defiled with all the iniquities of the multitude: and would to God that his criminal indulgence towards the disorders of his parishioners, were not designed to procure from them, similar indulgence towards his own! God grant, that if he will not under-

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\* Zach. c. xi. v. 17.

take to heal the sick, it may not be through a dread, lest they should tell him to begin by healing himself; and that if he affects to close his eyes to the public irregularities, it may not be from an apprehension that the eyes of his people would open to the secret scandals of his own conduct. No, my brethren, a pastor, who beholds the corruption of the morals of his flock, with apathy and indifference, has either lost all faith, or he is himself more depraved than the sinners whom he tolerates.

I trust, my brethren, that there are none of this character to be found, in the venerable presbytery whom I am now addressing; but there is another sort of false meekness, less odious indeed, but perhaps, equally dangerous in the clergy: there are soft and timid pastors more studious of their own ease, than of the salvation of the souls for whom they are to answer; more desirous of gaining the affections and suffrages of their people, than of correcting their vices: they dissemble and tolerate every thing, lest they should sour the minds, and alienate the hearts, of their flock, whom they seek to attach to themselves and not to Jesus Christ: they are anxious to make them their panegyrists with the public and with their

superiors, in order to gain a false reputation for virtue, and not with the view of rendering them the better christians; in a word, to enjoy in greater security, the comforts of a situation, of which, increased vigilance and strict exactness would diminish the happiness and disturb the repose. These are they of whom Saint Gregory says, that they are pastors solely for themselves, and that they are more solicitous to make their flock love themselves than love and practise the truth: *Se magis a subditis diligi quam veritatem ament.*\* Now, my brethren, this is not the endearing and estimable meekness of the true pastor, but the meanness and duplicity of the mercenary; it is putting ourselves in the place of Jesus Christ. And, my brethren, what can be more disgraceful to a Priest, than to be gratified and delighted by the esteem and applause of a dissolute people, among whom Christ is hated, forgotten and despised? May he not then say with the Psalmist, that those who publish his praises, cover him in reality with opprobrium: *Et qui laudabant me, adversum me jurabant?*†

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\* S. Greg. Lib. de Pastore. † Psalm. 101. v. 9.

And what shall it profit him to have pleased men, if he has had the misfortune of offending God? If God condemns, shall men be able to justify, him? and does he not know, that it is impossible to please men by indulgence and servility, and be at the same time, the servant of Jesus Christ? *Si hominibus placerem, Christi servus non essem.\** Moreover, we are always punished even in this world, for that base condescension, by which we endeavour to conciliate the esteem and affections of our people; they take occasion from our very indulgence, to use less ceremony and reserve towards us; and the more eager they see us to please, and timid to contradict and correct, the less do they fear to resist and contemn us. It is the ordinary conduct of God towards those pastors in particular, who sacrifice the rules and duties of their state, to the vain applause and hollow friendship of men, that the ingratitude of their people quickly punishes their criminal condescension. He breaks and dissipates the bones of those timid and compromising pastors, says the royal Psalmist: he raises up in the midst

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\* Gal. c. i. v. 10.

of their flocks a spirit of rebellion against them, which brings many bitter sorrows, which forces them daily into new embarrassments, and soon destroys that iniquitous repose which they had endeavoured to contrive, at the expense of their duties, in the affection and esteem of their parishioners. God unmasks those degenerate pastors to the eyes of their people; he covers them with confusion, he renders them despicable to their whole flock, and suffers the contempt in which they were so long held, to break forth into open disaffection and outrageous insult: *Deus dissipavit ossa eorum qui hominibus placent; confusi sunt, quoniam Deus sprevit eos.\** Let us undeceive ourselves, my brethren; the very rudest of our people love and esteem at bottom, nothing but true virtue in the clergy. They know that God has appointed us to be the salt of the earth, to correct and purify men, to prevent or to heal the unsoundness and corruption of vice: yet so far from applying the salt of reproof and of zeal to their sores, we are afraid to touch them, or we apply mere palliatives; and thus they regard ourselves as a salt without sa-

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\* Psalm. 52. v. 6.

vor; they openly rejoice in our indulgence, but they despise us in secret; they are delighted to live under our direction, but they would not wish to die in it: they like us better than the zealous pastors of our neighbourhood, but they respect them more. By our degeneracy too, we daily lessen that authority over our people, which would be necessary even for our very repose: we bear every thing from them, we shut our eyes to their vices, whilst they will scarce suffer our very virtues to pass without censure. Aaron yields through weakness, to the demands of the Israelites, and constructs a golden calf\* for the impious homage and criminal rejoicings of his people; and as the reward of his base complaisance, this very people soon after contends with him for the first office of the priesthood, and a new miracle was necessary to confirm to him, the honor of the sanctuary, to which God had already called him. We always lose more than we gain, my brethren, in the minds of our flock, when we attempt to purchase their favor and love at the price of our duty.

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\* Exod. c. 32. v. 4. &c.



Thus, my brethren, pastoral tenderness is mild towards the sinner, but not complaisant to his vices; it seeks not to repel sinners by an excessive severity, but it seeks still less to gain their attachment by an excessive indulgence: it wishes not to render the sacred authority of the ministry odious by the bitterness or the importunity of its censures, but it wishes still less, to render its office convenient and agreeable by criminal forbearance. Let us endeavour to edify and save our people, for this is the only way in which we ought to be studious of pleasing them: let us not propose to ourselves to become agreeable to them, except by being useful; we shall not be judged by the love and the esteem in which we may have been held by our flock, but by the benefits which they shall have derived from our ministry: in short, let us not seek ourselves, but the interests of Jesus Christ, in our functions, and we shall readily find that wise mean of pastoral charity, which is equally removed from the excesses of an intemperate zeal, and the complaisance of criminal indulgence. The rod of Aaron and the manna, were laid beside the book of the law in the ark of the covenant: let us, my brethren, continually meditate that divine volume; and

preserve it in our hearts, as in an ark, formed by the hand of God himself; and we shall always find on one side of it, the mysterious rod, that is to say, pastoral zeal, which is never weary of reproof and correcting; and on the other, the heavenly manna, that is to say, that divine meekness, that priestly tenderness which gains, which attracts, and moves those hearts, which it cannot yet change, and which, without flattering the patient, knows how to sweeten the bitter remedy and induce him to try its virtue.

Behold, my brethren, the only true zeal, the only pastoral meekness to which I meant to exhort you: all other meekness, all other wisdom, which is in reality but another name for false prudence and self-love, which is more desirous to please sinners than to make them displeased with their transgressions, and which through fear of disturbing its own lethargic quiet, dares not agitate the settled tenor of their iniquitous passions, is not the wisdom which proceeds from above, says Saint James, which descends from the Father of lights, but the wisdom of flesh and blood, of the world and of the devil: *Non est enim ista sapientia desursum*

*descendens; sed terrena, animalis, diabolica.\**

The wisdom of charity, continues the same Apostle, the true pastoral meekness is marked in very different characters: First, it is generous and pure; *Quæ autem desursum est sapientia, primum quidem pudica.†* It is not actuated by human considerations: it seeks repose and happiness solely in its duty: it values the friendship of men only in as much as it renders them friends of God; but little solicitous about their opinions and esteem, its only concern is the care which they take of their salvation: it would feel a horror at the very idea of becoming agreeable at the expense of its obligations, and the praises of declared and hardened sinners would be to it, as so many reproaches: *Quæ desursum est sapientia, primum quidem pudica.*

In the second place, pastoral meekness is pacific: *Deinde pacifica.* It is not by accommodating the passions, but by disturbing their guilty calm, that a meek pastor carries true peace into the bosom of his people; his zeal troubles and alarms sinners, but it irritates them

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\* *Jacob. c. iii. v. 15.*

† *Idem. v. 17.*

only against themselves; by warring with their iniquities he restores them to virtue and tranquillity, and re-establishes in families that harmony and happiness which had been forfeited by crime. The sword of the word, which, in his mouth, pierces the secret folds of the heart, which agitates, confounds, overcomes a whole parish, changes it from a dwelling place of sin, into the abode of charity and peace; his pacific mildness calms dissensions, heals the wounds of resentment, reconciles fierce and inveterate enemies, and teaches them to forgive injuries, by manifesting his tenderness, and heaping his favors, on those from whom he had received the greatest insults: *Deinde pacifica.*

His meekness is modest, without being mean and servile: *Quæ desursum est sapientia . . . . modesta.* He makes no vain parade of his authority, which he causes to be felt solely by his tenderness and zeal for his people: far from proudly bearing on his forehead the title of his elevation, he carries in his breast no loftier pretension, than the humble and consoling title of pastor and of father, which makes him a debtor to all. Far from claiming marked attentions and invidious distinctions, he receives with pain, those regards which his virtue and his

modesty procure him; and thus he inspires a greater respect for religion, in proportion as he exacts less for himself: *Quæ desursum est sapientia . . . . modesta.*

But this is not enough, he is besides easy of persuasion, and by this means, insinuating and persuasive, himself: *Quæ desursum est sapientia . . . . suadibilis.* He is diffident of his own judgments and opinions; he has always an ardent and equal respect for truth, wherever she may appear; and believes that he participates in her triumph, when he sacrifices his own lights and views to the superior excellence of her cause: he is content with enlightening and instructing, without domineering over the minds of his people: his persuasion owes nothing to the tone of authority, it is effected solely by charity and meekness: animated with zeal, he is a lion, but like to the lion of Sampson, the honey of meekness is ever in his mouth. *Quæ autem desursum est sapientia . . . . suadabilis.*

What shall I yet add to his character? he is attached to persons of probity and virtue, and courts their society, that he may render sinners desirous of being worthy to share in the same confidence: *Quæ autem desursum est sa-*

*piencia . . . bonis consentiens.* He distinguishes his parishioners not by their property or birth, but by their virtue: he respects the powerful and the great, and renders to them those honors which religion prescribes, but whilst he honours their rank, he neither respects nor flatters their vices: the only true greatness in his eyes, is the love of virtue and the service of Jesus Christ: *Bonis consentiens.*

In fine, my brethren, to complete the character of meekness, his breast is full of sweetness and mercy for his people: *Quæ desursum est sapientia . . . plena misericordia et fructibus bonis.* Moved by their miseries and sufferings, he does not content himself with pity, but stretches forth the kind hand of a friend, and adds relief to his compassion: he is in pain when his slender means will not enable him to supply all their wants; he foregoes his own comforts that he may not be wanting to his indigent children: far from rigorously enforcing his rights, he shares with them his very necessities; but he has also the consolation of seeing the fruits of his ministry daily increase with those of his mercy: *Quæ desursum est sapientia . . . plena misericordia et fructibus bonis.*

Meditate without ceasing, my brethren, on those divine characters of meekness; never lose sight of them in the discharge of your ministry, that the public success and lasting fruit of your duties may become the glory of the church, the edification of this large diocess, the eternal monument of your talents and your zeal, and the consolation of the Chief Pastor whom God has suffered to continue so long at your head! *Hæc meditare in his esto, ut profectus tuus manifestus sit omnibus.\**

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\* 1. Tim. c. iv. v. 15.

## SIXTEENTH DISCOURSE.

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### ON THE STUDY AND KNOWLEDGE NECESSARY FOR THE CLERGY.

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ALAS! my brethren, are we then reduced to the necessity of coming here to tell you, as has been just done with so much eloquence and zeal, that study and knowledge are indispensably requisite for the clergy; that it is by us alone that religion is preserved and perpetuated among men; that it is upon us alone, the church relies for the preservation of the sacred deposit of faith; that she has established us to prevent error from corrupting the purity of her doctrine; to impede the corrupt maxims of worldly morals from prescribing against those of the gospel, and to hinder our people from returning to their former state, that is to say, from be-



coming as corrupt, as ignorant of the great truths of christianity, as when Saint Astremenius\* and his Apostolic companions, first announced to them, the glad tidings of salvation.

Without doubt, my brethren, you already anticipate the most striking reflections that could be offered to your attention, on this important subject. Of this truth we may say, as of the other essential duties of the ministry, that its evidence seems to supersede the necessity of proof and to render argument unnecessary to enforce it: in the duties of other states, doubts, conjunctures, obscurities may sometimes be found, which mitigate the strict letter of the law, and give rise to favourable interpretations; but the duties of the holy ministry, are all evident, incontrovertible, essentially connected with the first notion of the priesthood, admitted and acknowledged by the very persons who transgress them. Nevertheless, allow me to remark to you in this place, that a long familiarity with this very evidence itself, weakens its force and prevents it from producing any effect up-

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\* He was the first Bishop of the See of Clermont.

on our conduct: on every point we are already informed, and whatever be the particular obligation on which we are addressed, we learn nothing new, we anticipate all that can be said; we coldly repeat it to ourselves beforehand, and listen to it with equal indifference, when it is announced.

Thus you are already acquainted with every argument that I can urge, on the necessity of study and knowledge in the clergy: you are aware that we are the light of the world, the eyes of the body of the church, and that if the eye be evil, the whole body will be darksome;\* that the church tells us at our ordination, to go and *teach*; that we are the arks of the new covenant—the repositories of the law, and that being appointed to instruct others in its precepts, we should first know them, ourselves; that Priests and Pastors without knowledge and without light are blind leaders of the blind, and that they must fall into the pit with those whom they conduct;† in a word, that an ignorant Priest, has no right to the august title of the priesthood, and that he is the opprobrium

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\* Luke. c. xi. v. 34.

† Matt. c. xv. v. 14.

of the church, and the scorn even of the world. All this, my brethren, you already know; these are some of those fundamental truths with which our early years were imbued in this holy place: at first we were moved, affected and penetrated by them; but afterwards discovering them in every place, finding them in our books of piety and in the daily prayers which the church puts into our mouth, they have become familiar and trivial, and no longer touch our heart, or even arrest our attention: their splendor and beauty being always present, cease to interest or strike us: they become like those natural objects, the sight of which from long acquaintance ceases to attract any particular notice. We may apply the same reasoning to all our other essential duties: we were struck by them, when they were first introduced to our consideration, in this house of trial and retreat; but on our quitting this holy place, their influence was speedily weakened; every circumstance of our state bringing them continually to our minds, rendered us soon indifferent to their force and importance: by closing our eyes to the light of truth which was always before us, we plunged into misfortune and crime. When the Priests and the Levites, saw the pillar of fire resting

upon the Ark, the magnificent and awful sight struck them for some time, with a holy terror, with increased respect for the commands of Moses, and for the sanctity of their office; their zeal and fear promised a lasting fidelity: but on beholding the daily splendor of the miraculous light which failed not to return, their terror and respect gradually diminished; it became for them an ordinary object and was viewed without any emotion of reverence or dread: their zeal for the functions of the priesthood soon abated, their respect for the person and commission of Moses was turned into murmurs, they were soon ranked among the mutinous and the disobedient; and thus amidst all the grandeur of the law and the evidence of their duties, they prevaricated from the sanctity and the spirit of their ministry.

Similar, my brethren, is the history of our degeneracy, and particularly of our indifference for study: for some time we have been actuated by a sincere desire of advancing in that knowledge, without which, no real good can result from the labors of the ministry; but idleness, dissipation, and the example of many of our brethren, have insensibly relaxed our first ardor: we have fancied that we were learned

enough : and far from improving our elementary acquirements into solid knowledge, and blowing the spark of science into a flame, we have suffered our first light to go out, and forgotten the little which we once learned in college. And would to God that this complaint were not too well justified by sad experience ! For the greater number, the priesthood is the fatal term of study and application : they propose to themselves to acquire barely as much information as will enable them to sustain those disagreeable trials in knowledge and capacity, which they must undergo before being admitted to holy orders : but no sooner are they clothed with the sacred character, than they turn their regard from books to more attractive objects ; they are delighted that they are no longer to account to men, for their talents or their ignorance ; they are indifferent to the great account which they shall, one day, render at the tribunal of Jesus Christ, and feel no concern for the honor of the church, whose consent they surprised, when they presented themselves for the priesthood : literary toil has now no charm, they will advance no farther in the rugged paths of learning. Thus the attainment of the priesthood is turned into a ge-

neral privilege, to justify our ignorance, and authorize a cessation from study: yet it is then, that entering on the arduous duties of the ministry, we have greater need of industry and knowledge; we are Priests solely to serve the church, which we cannot do without that information and those lights which the sacred character does not bestow; it either pre-supposes, or it is a new obligation to acquire them; but we throw aside the arms of the holy warfare, the buckler of the faith and the sword of the word, at the very moment when the church commands us to enter into the fight: honor and duty are disregarded; the priesthood instead of filling us with courage and putting weapons in our hands for the battles of the Lord, seems to disarm and intimidate us: we feel no more taste for study; we no longer read; books, if we have any, are a useless lumber: and with certain pastors, it is a great deal if they can boast the possession of even a single copy of the bible.

We do not mean to insinuate that study should be your whole occupation, or that an attachment to books would warrant you to lose sight of the wants of your people: you ought to seek instruction exclusively for their benefit,

and dispense to them in public, the riches which you amass in secret. Thus, when we exhort you to study, we do not mean to recommend an application that would render you invisible to your parishioners, but a research that would give additional effect to your presence and your duties: studies of mere speculation or of pure curiosity, having no reference to their salvation, would consume to little purpose, that time which belongs not to you but to your flock. We do not require that you should propose to yourselves, the elucidation of the abstruse and intricate questions of ecclesiastical learning; such undertakings demand those extraordinary talents, which God has reserved to the small number of superior men, whom he raises up in every age, to stem the torrent of error, to confound the enemies of the faith, and to dissipate those clouds in which the pride and the temerity of innovation, attempt from time to time, to involve the purity and the antiquity of the doctrine of his church. All are not Prophets,\* nor are the gifts of the Holy Ghost imparted to all in equal splendor and

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\*1. Cor. c. xii. v. 29.

abundance ; but all should know Jesus Christ, and be possessed of a knowledge of his sacraments and his mysteries : we should be all versed in his maxims and his precepts, we should meditate them continually, should, like the Royal Prophet, make them our sustenance and the sweetest consolation of our lives ; we should draw from them that science and wisdom which would enable us to supply the wants and heal the diseases of the faithful committed to our care.

Alas ! my brethren, the Scribes and the Priests of the Jews, convinced that the knowledge of the precepts and the injunctions of the covenant was inseparable from the priesthood, pompously enlarged and displayed their philacteries, which were nothing but large scrolls of the law, with which they bordered the extremities of their robes : *Dilatant philacteria sua et magnificent fimbrias.*\* This was, indeed, a pharisaical and ridiculous affectation, but at least it teaches us that a Priest should never appear without bearing about with him the law, not indeed stitched to his garments, but deeply engraved on his mind and his heart. Even in

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\* Matt. c. xxiii. v. 5.



the days of paganism, the Priests of the idols were exclusively occupied in the assiduous study of the fables and extravagances of their mythology; they lived secluded in the temples, that they might answer the deluded individuals who came to consult them before being initiated into the impure and impious mysteries of their worship. And yet we, my brethren, who have been appointed to inform ourselves of a holy and divine religion, who have been charged to sink deeply into the sacred and consoling doctrine which Christ brought down from the bosom of his eternal Father and delivered upon earth, we feel no desire, no taste for its study or meditation: we regret the moments in which we are obliged to consult it: we are not ashamed of being ignorant not only of its most abstruse and difficult points, but even of those which are most essential to the right discharge of our ministry: we are content with an imperfect and superficial knowledge of its dogmas and its precepts: we fail to enter by diligent application, into the spirit and nature of the doctrines which we are established to interpret: how then shall we make those whose instruction is confided to us, love or understand them? And, my brethren, allow me to

ask you, are our people really acquainted with the ground work of religion, with the spirit of christianity, or with the rules of a true and interior piety? The greater part of them know merely some external practices of religion, some popular devotions, more profitable, perhaps, to the pastor than to the flock; but as to the real spirit of our faith and of our mysteries, as to our interior and essential duties, they know nothing about them; and how should they, when the pastors who have been appointed to teach them, have never taken any pains to study or learn them, themselves?

But you will reply that the greater part of country pastors, are provided with such slender income, that they have not sufficient means to procure books. Alas! my brethren, did they love books, were they desirous of possessing them, did they really feel the want of them; slender as is their revenue, they would easily find means of obtaining them. And besides, are so very many books requisite to teach us our duty? It is not a great number of books that we require of you, for those that are necessary are few; but a relish of study; a desire to be useful in your parishes, to draw from prayer those lights which even study will not

supply, to love the truths of salvation and to seek every opportunity of advancing in the knowledge of them, that you may make them known and relished by your people: in a word, what we require is a sincere wish to fulfil your duties: but place a pastor of the character which I am describing in the midst of all the books that have been written since the first days of the church, and you will find that so far from feeling any curiosity to read, he would be confounded at the very idea of perusing even one of them.

But every body, you will still say, is not born with certain talents, nor have all great capacity for learning. But it is for this very reason that they who use this language, should redouble their application, that superior industry and more intense labor may supply the defect of abilities, and make up for that quickness of apprehension which nature has denied them. And after all, are such rare talents really necessary, to understand the rules and the obligations of the holy ministry? Let a holy and diligent life stand in the place of great natural capacity: your good example will atone for whatever may be wanting to the dignity and elegance of your public discourses, or to the solidity and splendor

of your erudition. Was the servant whose portion was least—who received but one talent, excused for suffering it to remain unproductive?\*

I repeat the question, then, my brethren, are talents that strike men with admiration and awe, really indispensable to govern and direct a poor and simple people, in the paths which conduct to life? Alas! our chief duty is to love them and to be sincerely desirous of their salvation; to have for them the tender heart of a father and a pastor, that will be touched by their miseries and still more by their vices; to beg earnestly and unceasingly that the kingdom of God may be extended and consolidated, and that the blood of Jesus Christ may not have flowed in vain over the field confided to our cultivation. How learned and enlightened, my brethren, is a pastor who is thus disposed! and how happy is the people who possess a guide so simple, so humble, so uninformed in appearance, but so full of the spirit of God and of the holy ministry! Give, O Lord! to thy church, pastors thus lowly but truly great, little in their own esteem but worthy of their character and serviceable to thy people.

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\*Matt. c. 25. vv. 24. 25. &c.

But, unfortunately, my brethren, in the lives of those Priests and Pastors, who, to justify their idleness and their ignorance, allege either the want of books or their incapacity for learning, not only do we find neither study nor application, but neither do we discover piety nor zeal for their duties, nor love of prayer and retirement, nor any of those virtues which are often more useful and edifying in the church, than *the science which puffeth up*:\* ignorance, dissipation, idleness and neglect of duty go uniformly together. And let me ask you, my brethren, or rather do you who daily witness the evil which it grieves me to detail, put the question to yourselves; what kind of life do those ignorant, negligent and slothful pastors generally lead in their remote and solitary parishes? a life as mean, as earthly, and seldom so virtuous, as the rude people over whom they preside. But little solicitous to render the field of Jesus Christ fertile and productive, they suffer weeds and rubbish to smother the few good ears that spring up spontaneously; the care of improving the temporal property of their liv-

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\* Cor. c. viii. v. 1.

ings, engrosses all their attention and forms their entire occupation: avarice and neglect of duty bring them into squabbles and even into law-suits with their parishioners, to whom they ought to have been guardians and fathers, and among whom the church had placed them as so many Angels of peace. When temporal cares no longer invigorate their slothful energies, books and study having no attraction, home becomes insupportable; they wander about to dissipate their listlessness, or they go to cheer the dull tedium of such of their confreres as make profession of the same negligent life as themselves. Should any obstacle prevent them from escaping from their thralldom and confine them to their parishes, they drag their worthlessness about from house to house, and exhibit themselves to their people in such coarse and frequent familiarity, that they can never expect to be of the least use to them in their spiritual concerns. What a life, my brethren, for a Priest who holds the place of Jesus Christ, in the midst of his people; for a dispenser of his sacraments, of his mysteries, and of his graces!

Such, however, my brethren, is the inevitable consequence of idleness and neglect of

study in a Priest of the Most High. Hence too, those conferences so wisely established in this extensive diocess, by our predecessors, and so religiously kept up through the rest of the kingdom; those sacred institutions which have been always so useful in cementing a sacerdotal union among the clergy, so calculated to keep alive the spirit of holy emulation for the right discharge of the duties of the ministry, and so serviceable in clearing up the doubts and difficulties which cannot fail to occur in the fulfilment of the priestly office; those conferences which we have seen formerly frequented with so much zeal, we have the grief, at the close of our episcopacy, of beholding nearly abandoned, and almost fallen into disuse in several of our districts. Whence, my brethren, comes this sad and disedifying desertion? We cannot doubt it; ignorance, sloth, and neglect of study are the principal causes of the absence of those who stay away; little capable of benefiting those pious assemblies by their learning, and still less disposed to profit of the learning of others, the greater part are ashamed to make an exhibition of their idleness and their ignorance; and thus what renders this resource more necessary to them, makes it odi-

ous and withholds them from all literary contact with their brethren. There are also some, who fancy themselves learned enough, and who think they have no need of going to lose their time, in those meetings; but are they as well instructed as Saint Paul, who was raised up to heaven, and there imbibed in the bosom of God, those ineffable secrets which it is not given to man to utter, and who yet did not disdain to go up to Jerusalem to confer with Peter and James and the other disciples, and to profit of their knowledge, in order to conduct himself with greater wisdom and security in the duties of the Apostleship, persuaded that nothing but a holy concert among pastors could rapidly advance the work of the gospel? and you, who fancy that you know enough to dispense with those pious assemblies, who reside in the most secluded parts of the country, without adviser or assistant; you live without apprehension or scruple in dark and lonely solitudes, amidst the perils and doubts which continually encompass the duties of the priesthood; you contemn the succor which might be derived from a communion with your brethren in the ministry; you even deprive yourselves of the pleasure and delight of their holy and engaging society;



and thus the bonds of religion and charity, instead of binding you to them in eternal union, only cause a wider separation: you introduce a species of schism into a diocess, where the mercy of Jesus Christ had hitherto preserved unity and peace, and you incur the anathema pronounced by the Apostle against all who neglect the true spirit of their calling, and separate themselves from the church: *Qui segregant semetipsos . . . spiritum non habentes.*\*

I conjure you, my brethren, to remove this afflicting and disgraceful scandal: restore to this diocess the glory which it has long enjoyed from its regular observance of this useful article of discipline: my course is already far advanced; do not suffer it to close with the grief of seeing so holy a usage ready to expire; save my old age from this affliction; rather fill it with a new joy, by rekindling in your own bosoms a new zeal for your duties, and particularly for the established conferences: *Implete gaudium meum;*† with their restoration, the love of study and learning will revive. Second then, my brethren, on this important sub-

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\* Jude. v. 19.

† Philipp. c. ii. v. 2.

ject, the earnest desires of a Bishop, who has always loved you, who has never used his authority against his brethren without regret, and who has therefore reason to hope, that without recurring to threats, his remonstrances alone will reach your hearts and ensure your compliance.

# **SEVENTEENTH DISCOURSE**

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ON THE

**OBSERVANCE OF THE STATUTES AND  
ORDINANCES OF THE DIOCESS.**

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**I**T cannot be doubted, my brethren, that the ordinances of the chief pastors in the government of their flocks, are but a renewal of the ancient canons of the church. The laws which we impose are not new, they are merely the ancient rules of discipline, which the decisions of so many councils have consecrated from age to age; and far from increasing their rigor, we are compelled to soften down their severity, in order to accommodate them to the public relaxation of the morals of the clergy. Thus our ordinances have for object rather the maintenance of that external decency and regularity

in the ministry, which prevents scandalous disorder, than the restoration of that rigorous discipline, which so long proclaimed the fervor and zeal of our fathers. I am therefore induced from a sincere conviction of the importance of the subject, to add a few further reflections to the eloquent and edifying remonstrances which you have just heard, touching the forgetfulness and neglect into which the greater part of our regulations, and those of our predecessors, are insensibly falling in this diocess. I will admit, for I seek rather to excuse than to reprove you, that the scarcity of copies and the difficulty of obtaining them, may have occasioned this extensive evil: but in order to render the neglect of them inexcusable for the future, we shall forthwith collect and publish them together; and we hope that this new aid to the performance of your duties, will renew the love and the observance of the holy laws of the church, among her ministers.

In effect, my brethren, what pretence can be afterwards alleged by those who shall fancy themselves dispensed from conforming to the discipline prescribed by those holy laws? shall they regard them as arbitrary and indifferent enactments, which each one may transgress or

observe at his pleasure? this would be too gross an illusion: for the government of the church, of that spiritual kingdom of which Jesus Christ is the Head and the eternal King, would then rest merely on vain and useless laws, incapable of maintaining in it, that order, security and decorum, which human laws have so long upheld in civil society. What! my brethren, shall we then suppose that the church has assembled so many venerable councils, and enacted so many canons of discipline, touching the morals of the clergy, only to prescribe frivolous regulations, which each one of her ministers might violate without remorse? Shall we suppose that those ancient canons, those precious monuments of the most fervent and flourishing ages of christianity, which each succeeding generation has revered, which the church preserves as her most valuable and sacred deposite, which constitute the stay and the glory of her government, contain nothing but puerile decisions and unmeaning regulations, unworthy alike of the gravity of the holy assemblies which introduced them, of the spirit of God which presided at their deliberations, and of the learning and zeal of the illustrious prelates by whom they were sanctioned and enforced—prelates whose names

and works still form, at this day, the most safe and most respectable channel of tradition? Ah! what is there on earth, sacred and inviolable, if these holy institutions are not? And can the penalties and censures which they denounce against those who shall infringe them, suffer us to rank them with things arbitrary and indifferent?

So, my brethren, whilst those venerable regulations were religiously observed, the world itself, all carnal as it is, respected the order, the peace, the unanimity and piety which reigned among the clergy; the church, formidable by her sanctity, and like an army ranged in order of battle, presented nothing within that was not edifying to her children, and nothing without that was not respectable to the world and terrible to her enemies: *Terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata*.\* But although those sacred rules have always survived in the holy canons of the church, and in the ordinances and statutes of her Bishops, they did not always equally influence the conduct of the clergy, and from the time in which they began to be neglected, either through

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\* Cant. c. vi. v. 3.

the degeneracy of the second order, or the little zeal of the chief pastors in enforcing their observance, the entire face of christianity has been gradually disfigured; and, in fine, the ignorance and disorder of latter ages had so far infected and corrupted the ministers of religion, that proud and disobedient spirits turned their vices into a pretext for separating themselves from the unity of the church, as if the gates of hell had prevailed against her, or as if Christ had promised the perpetuity of virtue to each of his ministers, as he promised the perpetuity of truth to the whole ministry.

There is then nothing but the observance of the holy canons, and of the ancient laws of the church, revived and renewed by our ordinances and by those of our predecessors, that can preserve among the clergy that good odor of Jesus Christ which they are bound to diffuse throughout this diocess.

But usage, you will say, has prevailed, and the greater number of those ordinances are now neglected and forgotten. And let me tell you, my brethren, that this is precisely the cause of our present sorrow and complaints, and permit me to add that it should be also the subject of your confusion. What! you would al-

lege for your justification, the very justice of our reproaches! Common usage, you say, seems to authorize the neglect of them: but does such language suit ministers of Jesus Christ, charged with the instruction and salvation of his people? Alas! what will you then answer this very people, when to palliate the innumerable abuses of the world, against which you declaim so vehemently in the pulpit, they shall tell you, that they are justified by custom and example; that usage has prevailed; and that the maxims of the gospel and the ordinances of Jesus Christ, opposed to those abuses, are almost nowhere observed? you will tell them, of course, that corrupt usage cannot prescribe against the law, that Christ did not leave custom, but the gospel, for the rule of our conduct; and that in spite of the general corruption, there are yet every where to be found, some virtuous souls, who have learned from their Redeemer, that the road in which the greater number walk, is that broad way of perdition which leads to death; who dissent, instead of conforming, to the general example, and who regard the general practices of the multitude, as so many crimes. And similar, my brethren, should be your answer to yourselves; you ought to say that abuse,



however general it may be, cannot justify your transgression of the law, and that notwithstanding the number of your brethren who make no scruple of neglecting the statutes of the diocess and the laws of the church, God always preserves among you, some faithful pastors, (and you yourselves know them,) who are our glory and consolation, and who would consider it a species of apostacy, to transgress or contemn the sacred laws, which the authority of the church has imposed from the beginning, on the priesthood.

You will tell me, perhaps, that you admit the truth of this reasoning, but that you leave this great exactness to those fervent Priests, who pride themselves on a stricter and nicer regularity. But on what then, my brethren, should a minister of religion pride himself, but on holiness and regularity of life? Are there different degrees in the vocation to the priesthood? do you know any body of clergy, of whom some are called to a holy and edifying life, devoted to zeal, to labor, to charity, to good works, to the love and practice of the rules and obligations of their state; and others, to an easy, sensual and indolent life, estranged from labor, indifferent to virtue, and opposed to

every regulation that directs or constrains it? The distinction which you make between the exact and yourselves, is the terrible decree of your own condemnation, and yet you make it your apology?

But besides, those rules of which you consign the observance to those who pride themselves on exact regularity, have been made only for such, as like you, are careless and indifferent to their duties. It was not the conduct of the pious and exemplary, that compelled the church to enact so many holy canons, and to denounce censures against such of her ministers as would refuse to conform their deportment to those sacred laws: they were exclusively designed to correct the abuses which began to appear among the clergy, to prevent still greater, and to compel irregular and disorderly Priests to a deportment more edifying, and more suitable to the sanctity of their profession. Alas! my brethren, were all the Priests of the church holy and fervent, her canons would have been nothing but parental counsels to guide their zeal and moderate their ardor: she has then been induced to make laws, solely by the necessity of remedying actual abuses, and of preventing still greater scandals: her enactments, therefore, are

intended to affect those only whose infidelity of life demands such precautions, and not those virtuous and faithful Priests to whom they would be unnecessary: it is then, exclusively for the former that the church has multiplied her canons, and it is also for them that we renew them by our ordinances; it is for you alone and for those who resemble you, and who, like you, consign the observance of them to the fervent pastors who make profession of more exact regularity: for the law, says the Apostle, is not made for the just, but for the unjust and the disobedient: *Lex justo non est posita, sed injustis.*\*

But those vague and general pretexts are not what we have most to dread; for although we often use them, we ourselves easily perceive their injustice and folly: an evil more dangerous, and more to be feared by us, is the facility with which we devise personal pretences to dispense us from some one of those ordinances. We have already published rules in conformity with the sacred canons, touching the obligations of pastors to instruct their people,

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\* 1 Tim. c. i. v. 9.

to reside in their parishes and to avoid a sordid lucre in the discharge of their functions: let us confine ourselves for the present, to these three points; we shall hereafter find opportunities to speak of others. Now, suppose that a pastor, notwithstanding the rigorous obligation to instruct his people, which is imposed by his title, dispenses himself from preaching, and leaves his parish for whole years together, without sermon or instruction; he will tell us that he has no talent for speaking in public, and that from timidity or want of memory he could never expect to succeed, were he even to make the attempt. But he who offers this apology for his silence, has felt himself possessed of talent enough, to ambition and solicit the office of pastor, and yet he feels none for the instruction of his people? he has given himself as a shepherd to the flock, and yet he thinks himself incapable of directing and conducting it? the church thought that she consecrated his lips to be the depositaries and the interpreters of doctrine and truth; and yet he cannot bring himself to open them, and far from publishing the gospel of which he is the herald and Apostle, on the house-top, is but a dumb dog that will neither resist the wolf, nor give notice of his

approach? It is not then the church, that has appointed him a pastor, he has been called to that sacred trust, solely by himself: thus he professes himself an intruder and a usurper; and thus we ourselves in subscribing to his title, without knowing his true character, have only subscribed to the sentence of his reprobation, if deceiving himself, he will continue to hold it, as he once deceived the church when he usurped it.

But you have been born, you will say, with an unhappy memory, and cannot therefore with propriety, undertake to speak in public. But is the heart as bad and as stubborn as the memory? The grave and sacred duty of instruction is not a dry and puerile exercise of the memory, it is a fervent heart and bowels of mercy that should supply our words. Ah! my brethren, did we meditate the truths of religion in the sacred volume, did we truly love them; did we feed on them, as the Apostle says; did we make them our occupation and delight, we should feel neither difficulty nor reluctance when we are obliged to discourse of them to our people. We easily learn to speak of what we love: the heart furnishes an eloquence far more touching and powerful than that of the memory;

it speaks a language which the memory will never supply. A holy pastor, devoted to God and to the salvation of his people, finds, in the warmth of his zeal and the abundance of his heart, those burning expressions of the spirit of knowledge and love, which are a thousand times more effective, and more calculated to touch and convert sinners than all the pompous art and sounding periods of human eloquence. Do not then tell us that you are without capacity for public instruction, it is not the talents of an orator but a father, that we require of you, and what other talents does a father need to speak to his children, than tenderness, and the desire of serving them?

The first pretext then, is want of talents.

There are others, who readily admit, that public instruction is unquestionably the first and most indispensable duty of the pastor; that indeed they discharge it seldom, but that a feeble constitution and indifferent health will not allow them to perform it oftener. To show the folly of this pretext, we have only to send the greater part of those who allege it, to their conscience, and to ask them: can you fairly justify to God that pretended want of health, by which you excuse your silence, to men?

and is your conscience quite at ease as to the sincerity of this allegation? Does the infirmity which you put forward, render you unfit for any thing, except your duty? does it not leave strength enough to attend to your temporal concerns, and the calls of business; to support the pressure of occupations and engagements far more burdensome to health, than the mere toil of public instruction? nay, does it incapacitate you for pleasure, for dissipation, or for habits of intemperance and excess, capable of undermining the most vigorous health? Are you ever indisposed but when there is question of your ministry? and yet you allege for your sole apology, a weakness of body which is capable of bearing every thing, but fidelity to your obligations? Alas! it is not then your body but your heart, that is feeble, languishing and sick; it is not strength but piety that is wanting to you. Renew yourself in the spirit of your vocation and your vigor will be renewed like that of the eagle; and like the Apostle you will never be stronger than when you appear weakest: *Cum infirmior tunc potens sum.*\* Go to the root of your infirmity: cure

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\* 2. Cor. c. xii. v. 10.

the languor of your soul, and that of your body will quickly disappear: increase in faith, in charity, in zeal, and you will at the same time, increase also in health: give up the love of your ease, your pleasures, your idle and unprofitable life, and you will soon recover a taste for your duties: love the church, which has placed you in the honourable rank of its ministers, and you will feel no pleasure but in sacrificing yourself to the priesthood: be the good shepherd, and you will esteem yourself happy in giving your cares and your life for your flock, and far from alleging pretended infirmities to dispense you from tending them, even such as are real will not be able to arrest your zeal: you will derive a new and irresistible strength from your weakness; *Fortis est ut mors dilectio*:\* and thus the criminal illusion, which indifference and sloth have cast around you, will be dissipated by light from above and by the generous spirit of pastoral charity.

The second pretext, therefore, is want of health.

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\* Cant. c. viii. v. 6.



But there is yet a third description of pastors who allege a different excuse for their silence: we have preached, they say, for many years, and have instructed our people with punctuality and zeal; have we not a right at an advanced age to give ourselves some repose? you have, my brethren, and nothing can be more truly respectable than the rest of an aged pastor, whose years and long continued toils disable him from continuing his duties. But it is pastors of this venerable character who alone refuse to repose: in vain do we offer them an asylum, and exhort them to spare the remnant of a life so dear and so precious to the church; they are deaf to our remonstrances: their strength seems to be invigorated by years; and the older they grow, the more does their paternal tenderness increase for the beloved flock, which they have brought forth during so many years to Jesus Christ, and which they cannot resolve to abandon: *Ad huc multiplicabuntur in senecta uberi, et bene patientes crunt.*\* Whilst so many others, after a few years of toil, and still in the vigor of life, grow weary, give up,

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\* Psalm. 91. v. 15.

look backward, drag themselves along unwillingly in their course, are disgusted with their duties, think they have already done more than enough, seem to wish like the foolish labourers in the gospel, to reckon with the father of the family and demand their wages, as though they had already borne the weight of the day and the heat; and thus destroy by their alienation and their indolence, not only the whole fruit of their past labors; but also that which their exertions might still produce, and which their experience would render more certain and more lasting.

In vain do we flatter ourselves that a parish where we have, during a long period, carefully inculcated the knowledge and the obligations of a christian life, cannot now suffer from the want of instruction; that no one is ignorant of the mysteries or the duties of religion, and that therefore there is nothing new to teach them. But is the light of truth never obscured in the minds and the hearts of sinners? does not the quick and almost certain return of their passions continually raise up clouds, which we must never be weary of dissipating? do not the many who are merely stunned by the force of truth, still require repeated and long continued

efforts to fix their determination? do not those who after a brief and imperfect conversion miserably relapse into crime, still want a tender and charitable hand to raise them from their fall? Ought we to abandon those hardened sinners to their impenitence, who have hitherto resisted our preaching and our denunciations, and think ourselves without guilt whilst we leave them to descend tranquilly to perdition? Do not cowardly souls need to be confirmed and strengthened against the temptations which assail them from within and from without; and do not even the just require to be fortified against the accidents and vexations of life, and against the anxieties and difficulties of virtue itself? You pretend that every thing is done, when in reality you have still every thing to do. Does your people cease to be yours, by devoting a few years of labor to its welfare? do you cease yourself, to be a pastor, by having for some time discharged the functions of that office? or rather are you not inexcusable, after having long sown and cultivated with industry, to suffer yourself to despond, and to interrupt your labors at the very moment when you are on the point of gathering the fruit of all your toils? You begin to neglect your parish at the

precise time when the knowledge which long experience has given you, of the wants of your people, would render your instructions and cares far more beneficial to them; when your authority being already confirmed, and the confidence and docility of your people secured, you might undertake to introduce certain important regulations, to correct certain inveterate abuses, in a word, to establish a thousand necessary changes, which could not be even attempted in the beginning. No, my brethren, can a pastor who is still in a condition to labour, ever believe that he has acquired by his past toils, the privilege of passing the rest of his life in inglorious inactivity? do not the daily wants of his people protest against his indolence and degeneracy? are not his obligations, as lasting as his strength? Did Jesus Christ, the great model of pastors, declare that his mission was finished, and the ministry with which his Father had charged him, accomplished, till he himself consummated it by his sacrifice on the cross: *Consummatum est*.\* And shall a Priest think himself justified in abandoning his minis-

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\* John. c. xix. v. 30.

try, while the work with which he was charged, by the church, is yet hardly begun? Shall he be, one day, able to say with Christ to his eternal Father, that of those whom he had confided to him, not one had perished through his fault? *Quos dedisti mihi, non perdidisti ex iis quemquam.*\* Ought he not to regulate his zeal by the wants of his people, and not by the time which he has already employed in relieving them; should he not persevere to the end, and like the Apostle, joyously be made a victim, if necessary, upon the sacrifice and the homage of his own zeal, and of the faith of his people? *Sed etsi immolor supra sacrificium et obsequium fidei vestræ; gaudeo et congratulor.*†

The third pretext then, is the length and services of our ministry.

But if pastors form pretexts to dispense them from the duty of instruction, it is not surprising that they should contrive others on the obligation of residence, which is equally indispensable.

I shall not speak of that frequent and almost daily absence, which has nothing in view but

\*John. c. xviii. v. 9.

† Philipp. c. ii. v. 17.

amusement, dissipation, and excess, and in which a lazy and indifferent pastor, seeks to fill up the void of an unprofitable existence, by the eternal hurry of a rambling and bustling life, ever attended with a criminal oblivion of his duties; he is the continual scandal of the people, who witness his never-ending rambles, and the pest of the whole neighbourhood through which he is perpetually driving, to disturb the retirement of his clerical brethren, and to engage them, to come in turn to disturb his own: so that in certain districts the pastors are oftener seen on the highways, than in their very parishes.

And when I say, that I shall not speak of so deplorable an abuse, it is because no pretence of necessary recreation, or of becoming intercourse, can palliate or excuse it: besides, it is a scandal which a Priest cannot justify even to himself, and which therefore calls not for our arguments but our tears. I need not add, that a pastor is no where safe from his own weakness, but in the midst of his people; they form a secure rampart against his frailties; and God finding him in his place, assists and protects him against all the assaults of his foreign and domestic enemies. But when he withdraws

from this place of security; when idleness, dissipation, the love of pleasure and aversion from duty seduce him from his home, God no longer knows him, but leaves him without protection in the hands of his own passions. And hence; my brethren, as you well know, the intemperance and excesses of pastors: hence the forgetfulness of modesty and decency in discourse, amidst the boisterous merriment and gross enjoyments of the table: hence too it happens, that he who is a minister of Jesus Christ, whose tongue is daily consecrated anew, both by sacred words which Angels are not permitted to utter, and by the participation of the adorable mysteries, oftentimes so far forgets or despises the spirit and the dignity of his calling, as to glory in being less reserved and more licentious in conversation, than even men of the world: hence, in fine, the many still more lamentable disgraces which I blush to name, and the extinction of the spirit of the priesthood, among those of the younger clergy, whose opening years held forth the promise of greater utility and edification to this diocess.

You will tell me, perhaps, that it is neither the love of pleasure, nor repugnance to your duties, that urges you to such frequent absence

from your parish; but that it is exclusively caused by your zeal to maintain the rights of the church and those of your living, and by the necessity of defending yourself against the unjust suits and vexatious opposition of your parishioners.

Before replying to an allegation, as humiliating to a pastor as it is unfortunate for his flock, I might first inquire whether you are not yourself the aggressor; whether an insatiable cupidity and a contentious disposition so contrary to a ministry of charity and peace, have not conjured up imaginary rights, unknown to your predecessors, and having no existence, save in your wretched spirit of intrigue and chicane, and in your unlawful desires to augment your comforts and your wealth.

Neither shall I inquire whether the barbarous exaction of your claims from an impoverished people, has not led them to refuse you, those dues which they awarded to your predecessor, solely through respect for his piety and disinterestedness, and through gratitude for his zeal and his indefatigable attention to their necessities.

Setting aside those inquiries, which at once condemn the greater part, I shall content my-



self with asking, whether the privation of those trivial dues which you exact with such unfeeling rigor, and prosecute with such unrelenting animosity, under pretence of defending the rights of the church, constitute an inconvenience more afflicting to her, than the abandonment, and the want of succor and instruction, to which your absence consigns your people; not to mention the spirit of hatred, of rebellion and contempt with which your chicanery inspires them against you, and which puts it out of your power to be ever useful to them by your ministry? Compare those two evils; and see whether the paltry increase of your revenues can confer a benefit on the church, paramount to her grief that a whole flock redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ should be abandoned and perish. Alas, my brethren, the dearest rights of a pastor should be those which facilitate the success of his duties. In vain does he disguise his avarice under his pretended obligations to maintain the rights of the church; for her most legitimate and valued immunities are, that the faithful whom she has brought forth to Jesus Christ, be instructed in the truths of salvation; that by reducing them to practice, they may obtain that celestial inheritance which her spouse

has purchased for them with his blood ; that the number of the elect be increased and filled up, and thus arrive at the age of the fulness of Christ, which is to unite them for ever to her divine head. This is the only end of her prayers, of her sacraments, of her worship, and of all her most sacred rights : whatever does not conduce to this exclusive and sublime end of her establishment on earth ; and still more, whatever retards or essentially impedes its accomplishment, not only does she not covet nor ambition as a right, but she detests it as her shame and her opprobrium.

And do not tell me that you are not in this odious case ; that you have no quarrel with your flock, and that if you reside less habitually than you ought in your parish, it is because you have charge of orphan nephews and nieces, who would sink into poverty and want, from the plunder or the mismanagement of their property, if you did not place yourself at the head of their affairs.

This is the second pretext for dispensing with the obligation of residence.

Before showing its futility, I may be allowed to ask you, whether this absence which you suppose so important to the fortune of your re-

latives, is not caused more by the love of dissipation and bustle; by the ostentation of showing yourself necessary, and of displaying your talents and your credit, and, perhaps too, by attention to your individual interests, than by the necessity of promoting the welfare of your family? The mere suggestions of inclination are readily transformed into duties, when they appear to dispense us from our real obligations, which are always onerous and disagreeable: but although you were not in this situation, and though your relatives really needed your assistance, yet could you suppose yourself exempt on that account, from the services which you owe to your parish? Your family, you say, would fall into poverty and want, if you did not place yourself at the head of its affairs; but do you imagine that this plea will excuse you before God, if your absence produce ignorance and disorder among your people?

The residence of a pastor in his parish, is a duty inseparable from his title: therefore, the cares which you fancy that you owe to your relatives, being incompatible with your obligations to your parish, you must choose between them, and either renounce the sacred station of which you cannot discharge the duties, or give

up those cares which render them impracticable. This is not a counsel, nor a maxim of perfection, but a rigorous precept, which no author however lax his morality, has ever attempted to qualify even by an equivocal opinion: it is the unchangeable doctrine of the church. You are aware that Saint Cyprian, that illustrious and indulgent Bishop, deposed a Priest from his sacred dignity, who had accepted the guardianship of his nephews, and whose mistaken tenderness had seduced him from the peace and the functions of the sanctuary, to engage him again in the profane and agitating cares of the world. The church when she established you a pastor, commanded you to consecrate all your time and all your cares to your flock: she has permitted you to live by the altar, only on condition of serving the altar; and she considers it a crime that you should render the price and the recompence of your functions subservient to family interests and litigations, which of themselves, unavoidably turn you aside from those very functions themselves. The salvation of your people is far more precious in her eyes, than the fortune of your relatives: you will not hereafter be made responsible for the derangement of their affairs, but you shall

rigorously account for the disorders of your parish: connexions whom Providence suffers to remain in poverty, will in no degree influence your eternal lot; but a flock committed to your care, and left through your neglect, destitute of all the goods of faith, and of all the succors of religion, shall for ever cry for vengeance against you; in a word, your situation defines and points out your duties. Thus, when the Apostle\* forbids those who are enrolled in the host of the church, to mingle in the tumult of secular cares; the prohibition is not a mere advice, but a rigorous precept. Our relatives become strangers for us from the moment in which the church gives us a new family and new connexions, by withdrawing us from the world, by consecrating us to her service by the unction of the priesthood, and by establishing us pastors of the faithful. A Priest according to the order of Melchisedec, as we are taught by the same Apostle, has no longer father, nor mother, nor genealogy according to the flesh:

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\**Nemo militans Deo implicat se negotiis sæcularibus: ut ei placeat, cui se probavit.*

2. Tim. c. ii. v. 4.

*Sacerdos Dei Summi . . . sine patre; sine matre; sine genealogia;\** he is a man of heaven, and the ties by which he is bound, and the relations which he has to fulfil, are all spiritual and celestial. Thus, Jesus Christ hearing, whilst occupied in teaching the people and in fulfilling the high duties of his mission, that his mother and his brethren were without, desiring the consolation of his presence, he answered that those whom his heavenly Father had given him to instruct, were his mother and his brethren: *Nuntiatum est illi, mater tua et fratres tui stant foris, volentes te videre: Qui respondens dixit ad eos: mater mea et fratres mei hi sunt qui verbum Dei audiunt et faciunt.*†

Let us be then convinced, my brethren, that our truest and most indissoluble kinsfolk, are the people whom God has committed to our charge, and to whom he has given us for pastors. From flesh and blood we have received family and relatives, and we owe them, therefore, such charitable advice and assistance as may be compatible with our other obligations, for the grace of the priesthood does not extin-

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\* Hebr. c. vii. vv. 1. 3.

† Luke. c. viii. vv. 20. 21.

guish the sentiments of nature, but regulates and sanctifies them. But it is the church, it is God himself that has cemented the union between you and the people of your parish: they are the children over whom he has established you a father, and to them you owe your whole self in virtue of that character. You are no longer free, no longer your own, says the Apostle: *Non estis vestri*;\* you can no longer dispose of your time, your cares, your talents, at your own choice. Far from being permitted to devote any portion of them to other objects, you can never find enough for the faithful discharge of the innumerable and sublime duties of your ministry; and besides, whatever be the measure of your talents and of the other gifts which you possess, all belongs to the church, and to the people to whom she has united you. She alone can dissolve the sacred bond and connect you with other duties, but as long as it subsists, it brings with it a servitude, which leaves you no longer your own master. The title which places you over your

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\*1. Cor. c. vi. v. 19.

people, in reality subjects you to them ; by becoming their pastor, you become the minister and servant of all : they have all, a strict right to your time, your care, and your abilities ; to them your powers belong, they are their property and not yours : you are guilty of injustice and robbery in employing them otherwise than for their benefit ; and you must either renounce the title with which you are invested, or give up whatever is incompatible with the duties which it exacts.

The true source of these abuses and evasions, is, that the greater part, when appointed to a parish, instead of regarding their new preferment as a heavier yoke and a real servitude, consider it an independent and permanent situation, where they now begin to be their own masters, where they no longer depend on the caprice of parish priests or the partiality of the Bishop, and where they exchange for ever, the misery and uncertainty of their former subordinate condition, for competency, stability and ease. The advantages of this new state engross their whole attention : duty and labor are omitted and forgotten : the new relations which they have contracted, neither alarm their fears nor even occupy their thoughts : it would appear



that they are become pastors solely to enjoy a permanent place and a fixed and certain income: every thing else, the difficulty and peril of their new obligations, the responsibility and danger attached to their greater authority, the honor of religion and the glory of God, in a word, all that regards the salvation of the flock—the only essential object, is with them a secondary matter, which does not even enter into their calculations. But comforts, liberty, independence, these are the essential concerns which occupy their minds and influence all their measures; they ambition the most formidable office which a Priest can fill on earth, solely with a view to those advantages; and thus it is that the same human motives which vitiated their vocation, at their entrance into the holy ministry, afterwards infect and corrupt its entire course: they regard the most trifling impediments, the slightest difficulties, as more than sufficient reasons to dispense them from the most important duties attached to their appointment—duties too, which probably formed no part of their consideration, when they sought to obtain it. As they viewed the situation only in reference to themselves and to their own advantages, whatever straitens or incommodes them; whatever

disturbs their indolence, or ruffles their enjoyments, whatever contradicts their taste, their interests or their views, is allowed to triumph over every motive of duty and conscience: and hence the many frivolous pretexts which pastors form to themselves, to dispense them from the obligations of instruction, or residence in their parishes, and of disinterestedness in the performance of all their duties.

This abuse I had intended to combat in the last place, if the others had not led me too far: but I cannot omit to say a few words on it, in conclusion, and to direct your attention to our regulation regarding the honorary which pastors may receive for the exercise of their functions. Yes, my brethren, this ordinance so little honorable to the holy ministry, and which the disinterestedness of the clergy ought to have spared me the sorrow of publishing: this ordinance designed less to point out to the faithful what they owe their pastors, than to set limits to the avarice and rigor of pastors towards the faithful; less to teach the flock that they ought not to refuse temporal benedictions to those who dispense spiritual ones to them, than to teach the dispensers of holy things to dispense them in a holy manner, and not with the

base motive of paltry gain: this ordinance which I would wish to blot out from the number of those published by me, because it will be a lasting monument of the sordidness and avarice of the clergy, and of the oppression and just complaints of the people, which have rendered it necessary: of this ordinance, notwithstanding, I am, in spite of myself, compelled to speak, and to perpetuate the memory of it, in distinguishing it from the rest, by the severer penalties with which it is necessary to punish those who shall transgress it.

Yes, my brethren, with all the bitterness and sorrow of my heart, I have learned that there are still to be found in this diocess, pastors so mercenary, so little affected by the sublimity of their functions, the misery of their people, or the august and tender character of pastor and of father, as to dare transgress the wise bounds which, by a former ordinance we placed to their detestable avarice and cursed extortions. Far from feeling shame at a law by which they are dishonoured, and endeavouring to cast it into oblivion by a paternal and disinterested conduct, they themselves, by habitually infringing it, force their wretched people to cast it continually in their face, to appeal

to it as their protection, and to plead it even before the lay tribunals, to screen themselves from the infamous prosecutions of their avaricious and tyrannical pastors. What an opprobrium to the sacred ministry! what a disgrace to religion! what a scandal to the wavering and feeble virtue of the multitude! But what could I say to Priests so deserving of all the anathemas of the church, were there any of this detestable character among those who now hear me? Is it to remind them of the sacred laws of the church, touching the disinterestedness and charity of her ministers! of the sanctity of our functions, and of the inestimable gift of God, which is not bought nor sold for money! of the blood of Jesus Christ, that precious pledge of his love, of which we are the gratuitous dispensers, and not like Judas, the perfidious and execrable venders! But how could they be sensible to those great truths of faith, they who are not susceptible of the commonest sentiments of propriety, of modesty or of humanity? they are not even men; how then could they be moulded into ministers of Jesus Christ? nature has lost her rights in their hearts, how then could the sublime sentiments of religion

and of the priesthood exist in them? I feel the harshness of these expressions, but no language can adequately convey the abhorrence and indignation due to a scandal which covers the glory of the sanctuary with opprobrium, and which turns the temple of the living God into the infamous abode of robbers and venders of holy things.

The only resource against this lamentable evil, the only means of preventing it from infecting the whole diocess, is that you, my brethren, who bewail it with us and with the church; who are our glory and our consolation, and the worthy co-operators of our episcopacy in your parishes, would openly manifest your detestation of a conduct so disgraceful to the holy ministry; that you would lay aside all reserve, all forbearance, all human respect for those of your brethren whom you know to be deformed by this hideous vice. Keep no terms of intercourse or civility, with Priests who show that they have no community of sentiment with you not only on the priesthood, but even on religion and humanity: they are not your brothers; they are strangers and enemies who have entered into the inheritance, only

to plunder, to disgrace and destroy it. Should they persevere in their iniquitous course after your charitable admonition, publish their infamy to the world: utter your detestation of it in every place and in every society, and do not fail to solicit our just vengeance, against the impious hirelings: let no timid silence, no false prudence, in concealing this sacrilegious abomination from our knowledge, render you participators in a scandal so disgraceful to the church, the glory of which is integrally confided to you: let your public indignation against those unworthy brethren, and your total interruption of all commerce with them, proclaim to the faithful, the abhorrence of the church, for those base and contemptible mercenaries: *Si is qui frater nominatur, est aut avarus . . . aut rapax cum ejusmodi nec cibum sumere.\** Join your zeal to mine; this is one of those scandals which the Angels of the church must not delay till the harvest time to pluck up: it would be soon extirpated in the diocess, were virtuous pastors to unite their efforts with

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\*1. Cor. c. v. ver. 11.

mine, and by raising a public outcry against so monstrous an abuse, to cover the guilty with that confusion and opprobrium, with which their infamous avarice perpetually covers the church.

**EIGHTEENTH DISCOURSE.**

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**ON THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER.**

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**A**TTENTION to prayer, which has been just explained, and recommended to you with so much zeal, is not, my brethren, one of those obligations which are peculiar to the sanctity of our calling. It is the most essential duty of christianity: every christian ought to be a man of prayer; his views, his desires, his hopes, his affections, his very conversation as the Apostle expresses it,\* every thing, as far as regards him, is in heaven: every christian is a citizen of the world above, and a stranger on earth; all the

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\*Philipp. c. iii. v. 20.



external objects by which he is here surrounded, are so many obstacles which impede his journey and prolong his exile, and which should therefore, only quicken his ardor and inflame his desires for his true country; all the seductions which the world presents, all the secret combats which he has continually with his passions, and in which he, every **day**, experiences his own lamentable weakness; so many evils should admonish him to raise his eyes, **with-**out ceasing, to heaven, to send thither his sighs and prayers, and in every place, to address himself in secret, to Him who in heaven, is the invisible but faithful witness of his dangers and his troubles, and the only protector from whom he can expect consolation and strength. Every christian is then a man of prayer, and a christian who does not pray, is a man without God, without worship, without religion, without hope: this incontestible truth, being once established, what instructions do we not owe to our people, in order to inspire them with a love, and animate them to the practice, of prayer?

But, my brethren, if prayer is the soul of christianity; if the whole of religion, is, properly speaking, no more than a homage of love which we render to God, in order to publish

his greatness and his benefits, or to solicit his mercies and his assistance ; if all the exterior observances of our worship be no more than so many helps and facilities to pray ; if the worship itself has been established, for no other purpose than to make of each of the faithful an interior man, and a man of prayer ; if a christian who does not pray, is a man without God, without religion and without hope, how great a monster, O my God, is a Priest, a minister of that religion, an interpreter of her laws, a depository of her spirit, a dispenser of her graces, a public intercessor with God for the faithful, a mediator between God and his people, if he himself is not a man of prayer ! if he is not faithful to this duty ; if he is even unacquainted with its practice, that is to say, if he prays only with his lips, and at few and rapid intervals, without attention, and even without decency, without a single sentiment of piety and with so little respect, that his prayer is rather an insult to God, than the homage of religion to his supreme majesty. Alas ! my brethren, were you insensible to this truth, and were proofs necessary to convince you of its importance, how much would you be to be pitied ; and how much would I myself deserve

compassion, to be compelled to address such Priests, and such Pastors of the church, that chaste dove, which sighs and prays, without ceasing, by the mouth of her ministers! so, it is only for the purpose of our mutual edification, and to animate each other to the practice of a duty so consoling, and so inseparable from our functions, that I have determined to add a few words to what you have already heard.

Yes, my brethren, we Priests and Pastors of the church, have more need of the continual succors of prayer, than the rest of men. The more our duties require our presence in the world, the more do they expose us to its perils and seductions. Alas! what reliance can we place on our unstable resolutions, what on our frail inclinations, if the spirit of prayer do not support and fortify us, in our intercourse with men? It is not enough that we do not suffer ourselves to be weakened or infected by the contagious air which we breathe, we must appear endued with greater strength, invested with greater modesty, greater virtue and greater sanctity than the common run of the faithful, amongst whom we are obliged to be so continually: we must be to them in every place and

on every occasion, a sweet odor of Jesus Christ.\* Now, how difficult is it for a Priest, unless the practice of prayer has established him in a certain solidity of virtue, to be constantly in the midst of the abuses, the seductions and dissipations of the world, to hear the excuses which the world, every day, offers for its pursuits and its crimes, and not be moved and weakened by its language or its passions! He bears into its dangers, a heart devoid of those profound sentiments of religion, which the use of prayer fixes in the breast, and full of all those inclinations which render the world attractive and amiable to us, and justify its abuses and irregularities in our eyes. If by the fascination of the scene, virtue itself will be sometimes seduced, what must a Priest expect, who carries with him to those dangers, no other protection than his weakness and his frailties? and though mere decency were still to restrain him within certain bounds, yet the world is no longer deceived in him, it easily sees through the thin disguise, and at once breaks down the obstacles which human respect or a remnant of

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\*2. Cor. c. ii. v. 15.—*Christi bonus odor sumus Deo, &c.*

modesty may still throw in the way of a perfect junction between him and itself: it adopts him and reckons him as its own; and no longer perceives in him, that exterior of piety, of firmness, and of dignity which should ever bespeak the character, and the sanctity of a pastor: he is now but as the salt which has lost its savor, and which far from preserving other bodies from corruption, soon turns into putrefaction, itself.\*

But besides, my brethren, although our safety, amidst the dangers of the world in which our external functions engage us, did not require of us this fidelity to prayer, yet is not our very priesthood and our solemn dedication to the sanctuary, a state consecrated to prayer? Are we not mediators between God and his people; public intercessors, either to appease his anger, which their crimes continually provoke; or to turn away the scourges and the public calamities, which those crimes draw down on their perpetrators? It is our voice and our ministry that our people come then to implore, because they imagine that we have credit with

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\*Matt. c. v. ver. 13.

God, and a ready access to the throne of his mercy: but what access can we have to his presence, if the practice of prayer has never united, and, as it were, familiarized us to him? How shall we intercede for our people, if we have never known how to intercede for ourselves? how shall we mediate between God and sinners, if he knows us not; if constant prayer has not given us access to his presence: if we have not contracted by our fervor and assiduity in prayer, that holy familiarity with him, which would authorize us to lay before him, with confidence, the necessities of his people; which would put us in a condition to cool his anger, and even move his compassion, at the miseries which threaten the souls entrusted to our care; in a word, to do violence to his justice, and to address him in the persuasive language of tenderness, of piety, of faith, of zeal, and of profound submission to his adorable decrees, a language which is not uttered in vain, but which the practice of prayer alone, can teach us to speak.

In the general order of Providence, my brethren, and in the ordinary distribution of his graces, God has attached the salvation of the flock, to the prayers of the pastor; the fruit of

all his duties, almost always, depends on his prayers. They it is, that obtain for the faithful, those holy dispositions by which the sacraments which he administers, are rendered profitable to them: each one of the functions which we exercise, should be preceded by prayer, and by a secret appeal to Jesus Christ—the author and the principle of all the graces which his minister distributes in his name. Thus, if he imprints the indelible character of the faith, in the sacred waters of regeneration, he ought also to beg that the grace of innocence and of adoption, which they produce, may be never effaced from the soul of this new son of the church. If in the tribunal of penance he reconciles a sinner with his Creator, ought not his sighs and tears over the transgressions of this guilty christian, to ensure the sincerity and continuance of his penance, and obtain from Jesus Christ a ratification in heaven, of the sentence of absolution, which he has pronounced, upon earth? If he offers the victim of propitiation, must he not unite himself to the whole church, which by his mouth implores the clement and eternal Father, that the precious blood of his only Son, which is about to be shed on the altar, may not flow in vain, but that as it once

reconciled the human race, it may now purify and sanctify the flock which assists at the celebration of the holy mysteries? If he distributes this adorable victim to his people, should not his secret vows and ardent supplications ascend, during so august a ministry, to the throne of grace, to beg that this bread of Angels may become the bread of life to those who receive it, and that none may have the misfortune of eating and drinking their own damnation, by partaking of it unworthily? If he administers to the dying, the last sacraments of the church, should he not, on that touching occasion, endeavour by his secret but fervent prayers, to mitigate the severity of the tremendous judge, before whom the departing soul is going to appear; to remind him of his ancient mercies, and to persuade him to receive it into his eternal tabernacles? Review all the functions of the holy ministry, and say what must they become in the hands of a Priest, who does not discharge them with this spirit of recollection and of prayer.

I shall not speak of the duty of instruction, which he owes to his people. Alas! my brethren, what effect can his exhortations have, if the practice of prayer does not draw down up-



on them, that grace and that unction which alone can render them useful to his hearers? they will be but as the sounding brass or the tinkling cymbal; his words will go no farther than the ears of his auditors, for the spirit of God, which alone can speak to the heart, and which the habit of prayer has not made to abide in him, will not speak by his mouth. No, my brethren, the tongue of such a pastor will not be animated by that spirit of unction, of fire and of strength, which brooding over the passions of a heart tranquil in crime, as it once brooded over the waters at the creation,\* would agitate and divide and clear up its chaos; it is man alone that will speak by his mouth: it will be in vain for him to counterfeit the exterior zeal, and thunder forth the denunciations of the Almighty, he will, as the Apostle says, be but lashing the air: *Quasi ærem verberans.*† His language will be as cold, as sterile, as insipid as his heart; and the ministry of the word will be for him, a forced duty which will disgust and oppress him, and which he will endeavour to avoid; or it will be a theatre of vanity where

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\* Gen. c. 1.

† 1. Cor. c. ix. v. 26.

he will seek the base applause, and not the conversion or salvation, of his hearers.

And in effect, my brethren, how could he infuse into others, a relish for those holy truths which he himself has never relished, at the foot of the crucifix? How could he inspire his people with the love of prayer, he who has never tasted its sweets, and who is unconscious or regardless of those wants which render the practice of it so necessary to every christian? How could he form christians, that is, interior and spiritual men, he whose whole life is outward and in the senses, and who has never learned, by the practice of prayer, to enter into his own heart? No, my brethren, deprive a Priest and a Pastor of the spirit of prayer, you deprive him of soul, of strength, of life; he is but a moving carcass, which will soon infect all who approach it.

Even the public prayers which he is obliged to recite or chant, those divine psalms, those songs of immortality, so consoling to a good Priest and good Pastor, so calculated to soothe and refresh him after the painful and tumultuary toils of his functions; so suited to awaken in us, those sentiments of confidence, of gratitude and love, which we owe to God, and

that confusion, sorrow and repentance which we owe to our sins: those public prayers which the church regards as the ordinary sources of the graces which God pours upon individuals, and upon empires, are for a Priest of this character but a dry and compulsory obligation; a galling and slavish yoke; an oppressive and disgusting task; and thus the divine office of the church is recited with precipitation or indifference, and even the momentary constraint which it imposes, is solaced by a carelessness or indecency of attitude and manner, and by profane and worldly images which he then suffers to occupy his mind; and thus his whole behaviour during the discharge of this sacred duty, renders those divine anthems of praise, to him, a strange and unknown language; nor is he more alive than the people who know not God, to the solemn prayers which the church puts into his mouth to draw down upon himself and upon all the faithful, the benedictions which are ever attached to the sighs and deprecations of that chaste spouse. No, my brethren, and I cannot repeat this terrible truth too often, a Priest without the practice of prayer, without fidelity in prayer, however irreprehensible he may otherwise appear in the eyes of men,

is but the phantom of a Priest: *Pastor et idolum* :\* he is but the representation, without the soul and the reality of a pastor ; and his priesthood is but an empty and barren title, which neither binds him to God, with whom he has no communication, nor to the church, to which he is of no sort of advantage.

And when I speak of the necessity of prayer for a Priest and a Pastor, I do not mean that this holy exercise should occupy the greatest part of his time : he owes himself to his people ; he must go abroad to ascertain, and supply, their spiritual wants ; and his functions must never suffer from the length of his prayers. I mean, that prayer should precede, and sanctify, all his duties ; that the spirit of prayer should accompany him in every place ; that he ought to display on every occasion, even in his most indifferent actions, that interior man, that secret commerce with his God, which will announce piety and religion, on his very appearance among his people ; that he should render his ministry respectable in all places, and make his very presence a lesson of instruction

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\* Zach. c. xi. v. 17.

for those who approach him: this is what I understand by the practice of prayer, so essential in a minister of the church.

We must with regret, resign to those pious recluses, those chosen souls sheltered in sacred asylums, the happiness of being able to sigh without ceasing, and to pour forth their whole hearts, at the foot of the altar. They may there feast on the eternal truths, contemplate the ineffable wonders and greatness of the God who communicates himself to them, and enjoy, in the consolations which spring from the meditation of his mysteries, of his benefits and his promises, a foretaste of those delights, which can be fully possessed only in heaven: they have, beyond doubt, chosen the best part,\* which shall not be taken from them; but this holy and sweet repose is not designed for us, for the Lord has not called us to a state of life which anticipates on earth, the celestial life of the blessed in heaven. We are destined to combat the vices and the passions of the world, to destroy the empire of the devil among men, and to extend and consolidate the dominion of

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\* Luke. c. x. v. 42.

Christ: our ministry tears us from repose, and places the arms of our warfare in our hands: these arms are no other than prayer, and faith animated by charity; it is by these divine weapons alone that all our instructions, all our labors, and all our efforts can achieve success; it is from them that we must derive strength and protection in the hour of peril; and without them we are no more than rash and feeble men, exposed without defence, in the midst of our enemies, and must soon become the miserable victims of their seductions and of the snares which they are continually laying for us; that is to say, we must soon resemble the very people whom we should have conquered and reduced to the obedience of Jesus Christ: *Sicut populus, sic sacerdos.*\* And would to God, that this were but one of those ill-boding predictions which an over-timid zeal may sometimes inspire! A long acquaintance with my office, does not leave me this consolation, and the experience of every succeeding year has but too much strengthened the conviction, that a Priest without this spirit of recollection and of prayer,

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\* Isaiah. c. xxiv. v. 2.

never sustains himself long; that he soon becomes dissipated, that he either neglects his duties or discharges them without piety, without one interior sentiment of religion, oftentimes without respect and even without that decency which the world itself demands of him; and that he quickly becomes the scandal of his flock and the opprobrium of the church of God.

What a misfortune, my brethren, for a parish to be governed by such a pastor! even although a remnant of decency and of human fear, should have hitherto prevented him from falling into scandalous disorders, notwithstanding his careless and dissipated life, without prayer or recollection; yet what helps can his unfortunate people look for, in the ministry of such a Priest? will he calm the indignation of the Almighty towards his flock, or arrest the public calamities which the vengeance of heaven pours out on their sinful heads? Alas! it is he himself, perhaps, that has provoked the anger of God, nor can any thing, but new scourges, be expected from his deprecations. Will he console them in their poverty and in all the other evils with which it is attended? but where shall he find words of piety, of unction and of consolation, to soothe their destitution and wretchedness,

words which are to be learned only in prayer, at the foot of the cross? will he combat the vices and the public disorders, which exist in his parish? but he would require a priestly zeal, even to be moved at them; he should be touched by the loss of the souls committed to his care: and to have a heart susceptible of those impressions of zeal and of sorrow, so worthy of a pastor, it is necessary to have often felt, at the foot of the crucifix, what those souls have cost to Jesus Christ. Will he go up to the altar of the Most High? But in his profane hands, what can the sacred oblation obtain from God, but the consummation of the iniquity of him who presents it, and the estrangement of the propitious regard of heaven from the church and from the people amidst whom it is offered up? Once more then, what a misfortune for the devoted parish which the Lord in his anger, has committed to a pastor of this character! According to the expression of the Holy Ghost, he should have been like a salutary cloud, placed between heaven and the field which is confided to his cultivation: by the practice of prayer he ought to have attracted from above, those sacred influences, with which he might water and enrich the precious soil, and thus render it productive of



the fruits of salvation ; but having no communication with heaven by prayer, he is but as one of those arid clouds which are driven about by the fickle wind : *Nubes sine aqua, quæ a ventis circumferuntur.*\* No celestial dew descends from its bosom ; it yields no fertilizing influence, for it has received none ; and nothing issues from it, unless perhaps an infectious vapour, a deadly lightning, the horrid crash of scandal and of crime. *Nubes sine aqua, quæ a ventis circumferuntur.*

Let us, my brethren, collect those holy truths, which I have but rapidly touched : let us never lose sight of them. The spirit of prayer is the essential spirit of christianity ; but it is the soul, the substance and very life of the priesthood and of the sacred ministry. Every thing, in our external duties, raises and unites us to God ; at least, every function, elevates our hands, our looks, our tongue to heaven ; and shall our heart and mind alone be never raised to it in prayer, amidst so many objects calculated to recal us continually into the presence of the Most High ; amidst so many graces and

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\* Jude. v. 12.

benefits which we dispense in the sacraments, and which flow only from him; amidst so many public disorders, which we see, every day, increasing amongst the people committed to us, and which constantly remind us of recurring to him, to implore his mercy and turn away his anger; and amidst such scenes and such memorials, shall we deem it a penalty to maintain a holy intercourse with heaven, and shall the Lord himself amongst us, as in the idolatrous and benighted city of Athens, be but an unknown God? *Ignoto Deo.*\*

Give to thy ministers, O my God, a compassionate and paternal heart for their people: they will then know how to address thee, in their behalf, nor will they need our exhortations to animate them to prayer: their tender and affectionate heart would be as a continual prayer, and would, in every place, speak secretly to thee, about the necessities of their beloved children. A pastor, O my God, whom a moment of secret intercourse with thee, tires and annoys, and who has never learned to commune with thee about his flock, is not a pas-

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\*Acts. c. xvii. v. 23.

tor or a father, but a stranger, a usurper, and an intruder into thy family, the wants of whose children neither awaken his sensibility nor command his attention; neither affect his tenderness nor quicken his sloth. Still, O my God, we have often had the grief of beholding those mercenary hirelings, those base pastors, in possession of thine inheritance, and constituting a living abomination in the holy place. Thy Angels in vain solicit thee to pluck up now, this afflicting scandal, this pernicious cockle, from the divine field of thy church: in vain does she sometimes implore, that a prompt and terrible infliction of thy justice, would make some signal examples of those base and unfeeling ministers, which might operate as a warning to their imitators: thou awaitest the day of thy vengeance, and in our days, neither openest the earth, nor sendest forth from thy sanctuary, a devouring fire, to punish the profanations of those Dathans and Cores. But do thou thyself, O Almighty Lord, open at least, the eyes of thy first pastors; shed thy light on our ministry, and direct our choice that we may select none, but those whom thou thyself hast chosen: never suffer us through complaisance to men, or views of flesh and blood, to contribute, our-

selves, to the miseries and the opprobrium of thy church, by introducing into thy temple, ministers who would only sink and dishonour its holiness. Do thou, thyself, O Lord, secretly whisper to us, as of old to Samuel: *Non hunc elegit Dominus*;\* or rather render our hands motionless and withered, whenever we shall be about to impose them on the head of a candidate, on whom thy Holy Spirit cannot repose.

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\* Kings. c. xvi. v. 8.

## **NINETEENTH DISCOURSE.**

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### **ON THE CARE OF THE SICK.**

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**I**T appears to me almost superfluous, to add any new reflections to the pathetic and edifying discourse which you have now heard, on the care which you owe to the sick. † In effect, my brethren, inattention to the other duties of your state, though always inexcusable before God, may sometimes be palliated to men, who know neither the extent nor the rigor of your obligations: but the forgetfulness and abandonment of one of the sick, is an inhumanity which rouses the public against the barbarous and negligent pastor; which draws down upon him the hatred and contempt of his whole flock, who are filled with dismay at seeing themselves exposed to similar misfortune; which

scandalizes those who might have been the accomplices and approvers of his other disorders, and which cries for vengeance against him, both before God and men.

And in effect, my brethren, can a father see his children on the point of being snatched from his bosom, without, at least, running to their assistance and giving them the last marks of his tenderness and affection? Is he a pastor, or rather is he not a hireling, who beholds his sheep languishing and perhaps expiring, without deigning to assist or approach them? The true shepherd forsakes the ninety-nine in the desert, to go in quest of even one that had strayed; and you would leave one to perish unassisted, which is dying before your eyes in the midst of the fold!

No, my brethren, a Priest who neglects the care of his sick, who defers his visit till the certainty and close approach of death will brook no farther delay; who after many put-offs and disappointments, comes at last when the violence of the disease prevents his presence from being of any use, and perhaps deprives the last succors of the church of all their efficacy; can a pastor of this character, if every sentiment of religion be not dead in his heart, can he with-

out abhorring himself, behold a soul thus neglected, going to appear at the terrible tribunal of Jesus Christ? In that rigorous examination through which she must pass on quitting the body, what answer shall she make, when interrogated about the use which she has made of her last illness, about her fretfulness and impatience, about her want of submission to the will of God, about the little benefit which she has derived from the last sacraments of the church? What shall be her reply to Jesus Christ? He, O Lord, whom thou hadst appointed to uphold my weakness, and awaken my slumbering faith under the diseases with which thou didst afflict me; he who ought to have assisted me to bear my sufferings with resignation, as the just punishment of the crimes of my whole life; he who in the last moments at least, should have opened my eyes to the guilt and folly in which I had till then lived; the envoy himself, whom thou, O Lord, didst appoint my protector and friend, forsook me on my solitary bed of disease and sorrow, and left me a prey to my passions, my infirmities and my doubts, when I was on the point of being summoned into thy presence to hear from thy mouth, my everlasting doom: thou didst endure

the cross for my sake, but he would not undergo the most trivial inconvenience or privation to preserve to thee a soul which had cost thee so dear. Such shall be her answer to the great Judge of all; and can a pastor who is persuaded of this terrifying truth, still neglect even one of his sick? Oh! my brethren, it is on the bed of disease, and at the hour of death, that the souls committed to our charge, should be dearer to us than ever; the first article of that rigorous account which they are about to render to Jesus Christ, will be our apology or our condemnation. What moment more interesting to us than that in which we are called to their assistance? by giving up every other concern in order to console them, and afford them the last touching proofs of our charity and zeal, we soften them into gratitude for the sincere and lively interest which we take in their infirmities and their salvation, and thus move them to ask for us of Jesus Christ, on quitting the habitation of their bodies, the recompence of those pains and cares which have smoothed their descent to the grave, and obtained for them a death precious in the sight of the Lord.

First Reflection.



Besides, my brethren, when you fail in any other duty of your ministry, you may always flatter yourselves that you shall be able to repair the neglect, on some future occasion ; but when one of your abandoned sick, dies through your fault, without the holy rites of the church, you can no longer hope to expiate the enormity of your guilt. By withholding the succors of your ministry, you have blasted the last precious moments which the mercy of heaven still left this poor soul : there is no longer any resource : the crime of her reprobation shall remain for ever on your guilty head. And what return shall you ever be able to make to God, for the loss of a soul purchased by the blood of his only Son ? shall your tears ever wash away this terrible anathema ? Moreover, my brethren, the care of your sick parishioners is the only means left you, to atone for that disregard of their salvation which your negligence had manifested, during their lives. It is a precious opportunity for you, and one which God himself seems to have brought about, only that by unceasing cares and new efforts of zeal, you might restore to him a soul which your forgetfulness, your dissipation and neglect, had till then abandoned to a worldly and criminal life. When

you are informed that the hand of the Lord has struck her with dangerous infirmity, can you prefer an idle visit, a useless conversation, a sordid attention to temporal affairs, nay, perhaps, an indecent party of pleasure and dissipation, to the august and pressing duty that awaits you, a duty on many accounts, so important both to yourself and to this soul? Ought you to delay till the desperation of the case drags you, as if in spite of you, to the bed of death, which you reach at last, when, as I have said before, neither your presence nor the last remedies of the church, which you administer, can be of any avail! Will nothing stir you, till the case of your expiring brother is entirely hopeless, till it is impossible to awake him from the lethargy of death? What can a pastor do in these circumstances for this unfortunate christian? can he hope to inspire him with sentiments of sorrow for his past life? alas! he now feels nothing but the acute pangs of his disease. Does he exhort him to recal to his memory the number and duration of his sins? he is no longer in a condition to remember even whether he has sinned. Does he ask him to give some sign that he knows him? alas! he no longer knows himself. And yet a Priest shall imagine that he has dis-

charged his duty to God and man, when he has given the last rites of the church to the dying sinner; rites which he himself has not only rendered of no advantage, but which he has even profaned by his guilty negligence and delay? Shall he afterwards repeat those prayers which the church puts into our mouth, when we are present at the last agony of an expiring christian? shall he dare to call the holy Angels to the assistance of this soul to defend her from the invisible powers of darkness, to which he himself has consigned her for ever, and to supplicate those celestial spirits to accompany her into the presence of God? *Subvenite sancti Angeli Domini, suscipientes animam ejus et offerentes in conspectu Domini.\** What shall those messengers of the Almighty introduce to his adorable and tremendous presence? the frightful spectre of a soul which had sprung from the divine bosom and was called to immortal glory, and of which you who were the pastor and the father, have now made yourself the barbarous parricide: they shall detail to him the scandalous forgetfulness of all your duties, in which you live, shall entreat him to hurl all the thunders of his venge-

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\* See the *Ordo Commendationis animæ*.

ance against you, and like the Angels mentioned in the gospel, conjure him to let them go, themselves, and pluck up this cockle from his divine field: *Vis, imus et colligimus zizania?*\* They themselves shall solicit permission to destroy this unfaithful Priest, and to eradicate this impious scandal from the field of the church, which he watered with the precious blood of his only Son; they shall adjure him not to leave those souls, who cost him so dear, and who were destined to the immortal society of the Angels and Saints, to perish in the hands of a lazy and criminal Priest. *Vis, imus et colligimus zizania?* I need scarce add that my very bowels are torn asunder, when I am informed of the sick dying without the rites of the church, through the culpable neglect and delay of the pastor: nothing appears to me, more frightful, more infamous, more dishonourable to the ministry than this heavy reproach; and I am free to confess, that I cannot comprehend, how a Pastor and a Priest, can exhibit a barbarous insensibility, of which the Pagan and Samaritan, mentioned in the gospel,† was not capable. Second Reflection.

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\* Matt. c. 13. v. 28.

† Luke. c. 10. v. 33.

Yet, my brethren, as even among those Priests who have not entirely forgotten their duties, it often happens that more plausible pretexts of delay, lead to the same irremediable misfortune, it becomes my duty to add one further reflection, more applicable than the preceding, to the greater part of those who now hear me, and therefore better calculated to awaken them to a sense of the attentions and the cares which they owe to their sick. In effect, my brethren, your public instructions to your people, during the year, being addressed to persons still healthful and vigorous, death, eternity, judgment, the never-ending torments reserved for criminal souls, are objects which their health, their passions, their hope of many years yet to come, represent to them at such a distance, that they quickly disappear and are forgotten: if they are at all affected, the emotion is slight and transitory; and scarce agitates their false security for a moment. Alas! a sad experience of the little effect produced by our exhortations, has but too often made us weep over this misfortune; and we have, every day, the grief of seeing our people, after the most terrifying truths which we can announce to them, return tranquilly to the places, the occa-

sions, the habits, which lead to perdition. But the instructions which we address to the sinner when oppressed with infirmities and menaced with death, are rarely unsuccessful: he feels that the flesh, for which alone he lived, whilst he abandoned himself to all its irregular desires, is about to be reduced to putrefaction and rottenness; he is, as it were, on the threshold of death and of eternity, and hell so long forgotten, is now near, with all its horrors; all those great and terrific truths of faith, which before appeared empty phantoms, assume reality and consistency, they strike and penetrate him, and rush, as it were, together on his affrighted soul. A brief exhortation of charity and zeal, a simple reflection on the forgetfulness of God, in which he has always lived, and on the account which he is now about to render to him, is then sufficient to move and confound him: not one of your words returns to you empty; his eyes begin to open, his heart, till now solely occupied about the things of the world, which he is going to quit, returns and attaches itself to its eternal and only object; he deplores his blindness and folly; he confesses with confusion, that although born for God, and being obliged to live only to serve him, God alone has

had no share in the various occupations which have filled up the course of his days; he is sensible of the ingratitude and the enormity of his crimes and already anticipates the just and heavy chastisements which he feels he cannot now escape: you console and sustain him by the hope of pardon, founded on the infinite value of the Redeemer's blood, and on the inexhaustible mercy of a God, who never rejects the sinner when he returns to him with a sincere and penitent heart: you have the joy of witnessing his regrets and tears, and of beholding the humiliation and compunction of his heart painted on his expiring countenance; and should the moment which is to separate this soul from the body arrive during your sad ministry, what consolation for you, to be able to say to it with the church, Go forth O christian soul; *Proficiscere anima christiana*; return to the bosom of God, whence thou didst first come, and bear before his judgment-seat thy sorrow and thy tears, which mingled with the blood of Jesus Christ will, as we hope, obtain favor for thee from the clement and merciful Father of all. Now, my brethren, can a pastor be indifferent to this tender and affecting consolation, which is of itself capable of sweetening all the

bitterness and assuaging all the pains of the holy ministry? can he deprive himself of it by deferring under some vain pretext, that attendance and aid for which he is solicited in the name of a sick brother? Can the rigors of the season, the difficulties of the journey, the interruption and loss of sleep, a slight indisposition; can such trivial inconveniences be turned into reasons for putting off to another time, a duty which will never brook a moment's delay, and which when least expected, God often refuses to the sick and to the pastor himself? Yes, my brethren, these are the excuses by which pastors, irreproachable in other respects, oftentimes suffer themselves to be deceived. You allege the rigors of the season? but, my brethren, would they prevent you from going to take possession of a title or of a parish, where haste and despatch would be essential to success? and will you deem celerity and diligence of minor importance, when you are asked to go to secure for your brother a place in heaven, and to establish his title to an eternal inheritance? The time for attending to your temporal affairs is always convenient, as Christ observed to his relatives on earth: *Tempus autem vestrum semper*



*est paratum*.\* but his time, the time of fulfilling your duties, is always attended with difficulties and impediments: *Tempus meum nondum advenit*. Did the Apostolic men to whom we succeed, await convenient days and favourable weather before going to assist their brethren? they ran the course of their ministry *in frigore et nuditate*.† Will you allege the difficulties of the journey? but the good pastor goes in quest of his sheep far and wide, over rugged precipices and impassable mountains; and can the badness of the road be an obstacle, when a minister of Jesus Christ is called to open for an expiring christian, a path to heaven? Will you allege the interruption and loss of sleep? But would you not be filled with horror of yourself, at the guilt of exposing yourself to the chance of plunging a soul into the sleep of death, by delay, rather than retrench one hour from your indulgent and slothful rest? In fine, will you allege some bodily pain or slight indisposition? But, my brethren, sometimes remember that Jesus Christ, the true model of pastors, when exhausted by the length and cru-

\* John. c. vii. v. 6.

† 2. Cor. c. xi. v. 27.

elty of his agony, and ready to expire on the cross, did not refuse succor to a penitent thief, who was dying at his side, and who claimed his mercy and forgiveness; and shall a trivial infirmity render you deaf to the cries of a sinner who entreats the help of your ministry? and shall you be more solicitous about a trifling inconvenience to your health, than about the eternal salvation of a soul which is entrusted to your care, and which is, perhaps, now going to perish! Is it not rather in those circumstances that you should exclaim with the Apostle, *Cum infirmor, tunc potens sum*;\* my very infirmity will be changed for me into a new source of courage and strength? You are not ignorant that a pastor must be always ready to give his very life for his flock; and yet you will not give them a slender service, which at most, could not incommode your health for more than a few days? No, my brethren, we do not require of you the courage and zeal of the first ministers of the gospel, who regarded the death to which they daily exposed themselves for their brethren, as a desirable gain, as the most valuable recom-

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\*2. Cor. c. xii. v. 10.

pence of their labors: *Et mori lucrum.\** But we require that you would regard it as a crime and as a species of apostacy in the holy ministry, to be more afraid of increasing a light and passing indisposition, than of abandoning a soul for which you are to answer, to the certain risk of a miserable eternity. For, in fine, if the heroic courage, and the desire of martyrdom, which formerly animated the clergy, be no longer necessary in the present state of christianity, the first spirit, which is the spirit of the priesthood, still subsists, and can no more become extinct than the church itself. It is still of faith, as it was in the beginning, and shall be to the end, that we are not Priests for ourselves, but entirely for the souls committed to our care: this is the fundamental truth upon which the whole sacred ministry turns: to the souls over whom the church has appointed us pastors, we owe not only our cares, our strength, our talents, but even our very lives; all that we are, and all that we possess is theirs, and if in the discharge of so sacred and so honourable a debt, we were to exhaust our health, ought we

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\* Philipp. c. i. v. 21.

to regret so glorious a loss? would not the infirmities which might result from our labors and our fidelity to our duties, be far more consoling to us, and far more reputable, than a long life of inutility and sloth? And were the worst to happen, ought we to reckon our days on earth as untimely abridged, when we have exchanged them for days of happiness and immortality?

## TWENTIETH DISCOURSE.

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A REPLY TO THE COMPLAINTS OF THE  
PROCTOR\* AGAINST CERTAIN CLERI-  
CAL ABUSES.

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**I**N the large diocess, which Providence has committed to our vigilance and care, it is almost impossible that certain abuses should not appear from time to time, among the ministers of religion, however zealous and edifying the great body of the clergy. The early christian churches, in every respect so fervent and so pure, and in which the number of the faithful might be estimated by that of the martyrs, were not exempt from abuses and scandals. In the

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\* See the note to the first of these Synodal Discourses, p. 140.

midst of the Apostolic men who governed the people that had been newly subjected to Jesus Christ, satan raised up false Apostles who perverted that glorious name into a cloak for their disorders, and who changed the grace of piety, of faith and of the priesthood, into luxury and sordid gain. But if those early pastors, though endowed with the power of miracles and filled with the precious gifts of the Holy Ghost, which were visibly poured upon them, could not, with all their vigilance and zeal, prevent those ravening wolves from stealing in among the flock, how can we, their unworthy successors expect, with our sloth, the weakness of our piety and faith, and the mediocrity of our talents and wisdom, to exclude them from the fold? Such is the destiny of the church upon earth, that scandals and cockle will always spring up in that divine field: but if her Angels, that is to say her chief pastors, are not commanded to extirpate them before the harvest, at least they are commanded to prevent them from choking up the good seed.

For this purpose it is, that the exercise of our authority is demanded in the present instance. The first complaint which has been addressed to us, regards the indifference of many

of the clergy of particular districts, to those ecclesiastical conferences which have been so wisely established, and hitherto so universally upheld in this diocess. Am I to have the grief, my brethren, of beholding a usage so honourable to my clergy neglected and extinguished under my episcopacy, a usage too which I received as a precious deposit from the hands of my predecessors? Ought you not to be ashamed yourselves, to suffer a regulation, which did so much honor to those who are gone before you, to sink into disuse during your ministry? and ought you not to share in the confusion and sorrow which I feel at its decay?

Is it advisable, my brethren, to maintain this sacred institution, by enacting severe penalties against those who neglect it? but would not penalties seem misplaced when their object was to prevent the extinction of a usage which would redound so much to your credit, and of which you yourselves should desire the continuance? and in effect, what penalty could I pronounce in this place, more humiliating and disgraceful to you, than to put an end to those assemblies and forbid the venerable presbytery of this diocess to meet in conference, as being unworthy and incapable of conferring together

on the duties and the functions of their sacred ministry? And, my brethren, what is there in the church, more dignified and venerable than the assembly of her pastors? Those of the first rank meet to defend her against the enemies from without, who attack the immutability of her faith, and endeavour to dis sever that unity of doctrine which has been received from the Apostles and perpetuated in every church; and those of the second order, to preserve within each diocess, under the guidance of the Bishop, that innocence of morals, that union of hearts, that charity, benevolence and piety that will render christians worthy of their holy profession, and make the sanctity of their lives correspond with the purity of their faith. And I repeat it, therefore, my brethren, would it not be a heavy penalty, a species of ignominy for you, were we to forbid those public meetings of the clergy in this diocess; were we to judge you unworthy of conferring together on the rules and duties of your sacred calling, and thus to degrade you from an honourable right which constitutes the glory and the consolation of the priestly office?

Behold then, my brethren, the only penalty which we pronounce here in full synod, against



those Priests who absent themselves habitually from the conference of their district: after absentsing once or twice, they shall be first admonished by the President of the conference, of their neglect, and of the punishment that awaits it; and if notwithstanding his admonitions, they continue to stay away without assigning any satisfactory reason for their absence, the assembly, having previously denounced them to us, acting on our part and by our authority, shall declare them publicly and perpetually excluded, as unworthy of participating in the privileges of their brethren, whose learning and society they contemn. It shall not have the power of re-admitting them, even though they should come to offer themselves and frequently solicit their restoration, unless an express order signed by us, or one of our Vicars-general, permit them to be received, and remove the anathema which they had incurred by separating themselves from the society and communion of their confreres. Also, whilst they continue divided and severed, as it were, from the venerable body of the clergy, it would not be seemly that you should derive any aid from their vicinity or their services: we therefore command them to confine their labors to their own parishes,

within the limits of which, the mischiefs of their government will be but too extensive, even in the supposition that we deem it prudent to tolerate them there still : we revoke all the powers which they may have received from us or from our Vicars-general, to exercise their spiritual functions in the parishes of their neighbourhood : we forbid the contiguous pastors to invite them under any pretence whatever, to any share in their duties and solicitude ; you must consign them to the confusion and opprobrium of their exclusion and their solitude, and regard as unworthy of the sacred cause, those services which may be afforded by those degenerate soldiers who will not come to learn with you, the proper use of the spiritual arms which the church puts into their hands to extend the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

At bottom, my brethren, I am not surprised that those irregular Priests shun your meetings; and hate the society of their clerical brethren; your presence would silently reproach the private or perhaps the public baseness of their conduct. They would be covered with confusion, at finding themselves in company with pastors with whom neither their morals, nor their attention to the duties of their ministry, in any

degre connected them: the company to be met in scenes of feasting, of intemperance, of dissipation or of unseemly and suspicious dealings, has far greater charms for Priests of this character, than the virtuous and learned society of their associates in the holy ministry; whatever reminds them of the gravity and the decorum of the priesthood, annoys and disgusts them, for every feeling of dignity and of modesty has been long since banished from their breast: it appears folly to them, to go to discuss or to learn in your conferences, the duties and practices of a ministry, which they make public profession of trampling under foot. What pious doubts, what professional difficulties would they come to propose in those holy colloquies, they, who through want of knowledge or of religion, find no obscure points in the detail of their duties, doubt of nothing, treat the most sacred and most inviolable rules of their calling as idle scruples, and fall into the grossest omissions and transgressions without shame or remorse? They could not appear in your meetings, without secretly insulting the zeal, the modesty and the piety of their brethren; and without disturbing the gravity and decorum of your discussions by the indecency of their car-

riage and the coarseness of their discourse. Thus in putting the seal to their exclusion by our ordinance, and in forbidding them those pious conferences, our design is to turn into opprobrium and disgrace, the privilege of absenting from them, of which they are so proud, and which will cease to be a subject of triumph, when by a law humiliating and degrading to them, they shall be no longer free to return.

As for you, my brethren, let the piety, the dignity and wisdom of those clerical meetings, by conciliating to them the respect and veneration of your people, cover those of your brethren whom we have pronounced unworthy of assisting at them, with a still more public and more reproachful confusion; let not this exclusion be confined solely to those only who habitually absent; we command you to extend it even to the most assiduous and constant, from the moment in which their public conduct shall bring a reproach upon the holy ministry; for you should always have it in view when you assemble, to render its functions more beneficial to the people, and thus increase that religious respect with which they ought always to regard it. Let that intercourse of charity, of

knowledge and of zeal, which should be the soul of your conferences, never degenerate into pleasantries, dissipation and trifling; let the tenor and nature of your discussions be as grave as the motive which brings you together is holy; idle and unseasonable discourse, which in other circumstances might constitute but a light fault, would be here criminal and profane. Let charity harmonize your talents as well as your sentiments; let those who may be distinguished for their learning, be still more so for their modesty; let them not seek to diminish or obscure the merit of their brethren, but to benefit and serve them by their knowledge; let not bitterness, animosity or presumption disturb or destroy peace among Priests, who meet in conference only that they may be able to announce it with greater benediction and success to their people, when they separate. Let the place where you assemble, be for you like the retreat of the Apostles, whence you may go forth filled with a new and more ardent zeal for the salvation of the souls committed to your charge; let the dignity and wisdom of your discussions and remarks, recal the remembrance, the majesty and solemnity of the first assemblies of the ministers of the church; and

let not a usage which has enlightened and sanctified an idolatrous world, become in our hands, useless to those who have already received the faith.

It is not without pain, my brethren, that I have determined to reply to the second complaint; it regards the neglect and violation of the ordinance which forbids the clergy to have in their service persons of a different sex. This abuse, however, appears to us the more entitled to our attention, as it relates not to the transgression of a law peculiar to our diocess, but of a law which rests upon the canons of the councils of every age and of every nation, and against the transgressors of which, the most rigorous penalties have been always enacted and enforced. By its perpetuity it has become an unalterable rule of discipline; though times and manners have changed, it has never varied; and the church has always considered it so necessary and so suitable to the character and sanctity of the ministry, that notwithstanding the numerous mitigations which she has been obliged to tolerate, on many other points, she has never relaxed the rigid observance of this, nor the severe penalties annexed to its infraction: so high has been her sense of its im-

portance, that she has always looked upon the individuals who transgressed it, as apostates who degraded themselves from their dignity, and who, after having defiled and profaned the honourable yoke of the priesthood, shook it off altogether by impiously assuming the independence and the freedoms of the laity. We have renewed those penalties and censures by our ordinances, and we renew them again in this synod, in order that the promulgation of them may be more solemn; and we declare every Priest who shall retain in his establishment, a person of a different sex, under the age of fifty years, except his sister or his mother, suspended *ipso facto*, from all his sacerdotal functions; and we revoke and annul all the dispensations which we or our Vicars-general may have heretofore granted, in this matter. We reserve to ourselves alone, the power of dispensing in it for the future; and if particular circumstances which it is impossible to foresee, compel us at any time to relax the strict letter of our present statute, we shall give a written detail of the reasons that have induced us to depart from a law, which the weakness of man has rendered so necessary and so dear to the church. Our former indulgence, and our readiness to listen

to such allegations as seemed to authorize us to grant dispensations, may have multiplied transgressors, and called forth the complaints and the remonstrance to which we are now replying: but would to God, that the sole love of the ancient discipline of the church, had determined this venerable ecclesiastic,\* to awaken and solicit our authority against so dangerous an abuse! Without doubt, weighty reasons, private or perhaps public scandals have animated his piety and kindled his zeal; but you will spare me the sorrow of detailing them here; and I myself shall spare this venerable presbytery the grief of hearing them.

You assemble in this place, my brethren, only to solace the pains and assuage the sorrows attached to your functions: to confide to us your anxieties and troubles, and to hide in our paternal bosom, the bitterness and regrets which the indocility and the disorders of your people, always leave in the heart of a good pastor. How could I overwhelm, instead of consoling, you, by exposing here in public the guilt and shame of some of your own brethren?

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\* The Proctor, who preferred these complaints.



They do not indeed deserve to be honoured with that title, in our church, so venerable by its antiquity and by the number of virtuous pastors and curates who compose its priesthood: they are pestiferous and noisome plants, which satan has transplanted from the corrupt soil of the world, from a land of malediction, to place them in the sanctuary, and infect and contaminate the inheritance of Jesus Christ: but they shall not suffocate the good seed, but rather they shall be suffocated by it. Allow me then, to reserve to myself alone, the sorrow of knowing them, and the pain of extirpating them from the divine field, as plants which our heavenly Father hath not planted. The justice of God afflicts my episcopacy by their growth, only to punish me alone: he would surely have spared a Bishop more worthy of his exalted rank, and more agreeable in his sight, the bitter sorrow which I now feel; it is therefore just that I should confine it to myself alone. But it is among you, and from you, my brethren, that I seek and expect the only consolation of my affliction; it is your vigilance, your fidelity to your duties, your virtues worthy of the sanctity and dignity of the holy ministry, your zeal in the discharge of your functions;

your emulation to restore the honor of the priesthood, which has been tarnished in the minds of the people, by those unworthy Priests; it is you alone, my brethren, whose first fervor has not been cooled by age, nor by the labors of so many years, who can assuage my griefs and prevent that dejection for which there is no remedy, but the abdication of the difficult trust, which has brought on me so many sufferings.

Preceding you then, my brethren, rather by superiority of years than of dignity, permit me to conclude this discourse, the last perhaps which I shall have the consolation of addressing to you here; permit me to close it, with the tender and affecting advice, which the first and most ancient of Pastors addressed to the elders of the priesthood: *Seniores ergo, qui in vobis sunt, obsecro, consenior . . . . Pascite qui in vobis est gregem Dei.\** Continue to honour your ministry: the flock of Jesus Christ is confided to you, a flock dear to him, since he purchased it by the price of his life and of his blood; suffer it not to decay and perish for want of food;

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\* 1. Peter. c. v. ver. i.

be not weary of distributing to your people the word of the gospel, that bread of life, which alone can sustain the weak, encourage the pusillanimous, raise the fallen, bring back the strayed, awaken those who sleep, cure the diseased, animate the dead, and preserve and invigorate the life of those who still live. It is the daily bread of all, and without this divine nutriment and remedy, the flock becomes the prey of worms and rottenness: *Pascite qui in vobis est gregem Dei.* Let neither weight of years nor length of services ever relax our efforts in this essential function; let us be animated by nobler motives than mere decency and the desire of saving appearances; let our zeal increase as our strength decays, and let the performance of the work of God, be our most earnest proof of the fidelity which we owe him: *Pascite qui in vobis est gregem Dei, providentes non coacte sed spontaneè secundum Deum.* Let nothing mean or sordid ever contaminate the merit and the sanctity of your duties; let the redemption of the souls for which all your functions have been entrusted to you, be your only object, and your glorious recompence; and in all you do, seek no interests but those of Jesus Christ. Avarice in an aged pastor, is

almost always more the effect of years, than a passion of the heart: it is a great misery that in proportion as we approach the gates of eternity, and touch the fatal moment that shall dissipate our delusion, and tear our hearts from perishable things, we become more and more attached to money; and we suffer those coarse and disgraceful bonds to enchain us the more firmly, when we are on the point of seeing them utterly severed, and of feeling their ignominy and folly for all eternity: *Neque turpis lucri, gratia, sed voluntariè.\** In fine, my brethren, remember that the authority with which we are invested is but a real servitude: our authority is not an authority of domination, but of labor, of tenderness and solicitude. The rights of the faithful over us, are much more extensive and rigorous than ours over them: they have a right to demand our care, our time, our strength, our health, our life itself, if its sacrifice be necessary to them; and in return, our only right over them is that of edifying them by our example, and of upholding their piety and faith by our exhortations and by the help of the sa-

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\*1. Peter. c. v. ver. 2.

craments, which the church confides to our administration, for their sake. The sacred title which places us above them, is the same which subjects us to them: our only privilege is, to be charged with their salvation, and to answer for it to the Supreme Pastor of all; thus it should humble and terrify us, instead of rendering us haughty and proud. Our people should never feel our authority, except in our tenderness and care. We should exhibit ourselves to them as fathers and pastors, if we wish to regard them as our children and friends: that sourness of temper and roughness of manner, to which we are so often provoked by their coarse habits and mean condition, degrade us from those sublime and venerable names. Let us appear to be raised above them by the purity and sanctity of our morals; it is by this means alone that we can dignify and elevate our office: let us become models of faith and piety, of disinterestedness, of temperance, of meekness and of patience to them, this is the only superiority which we should be anxious to display to them: let us compel them to esteem our conduct, and they shall surely respect our character: *Non Dominantes in cleris, sed*

*forma facti gregis ex animo.\** These, my brethren, are great, unchangeable and eternal truths, interesting to every Priest, and worthy of the first of Apostles and of Pastors who uttered them; how could I terminate this discourse more appropriately than by repeating them? *Seniores ergo qui in vobis sunt, obsecro, consenior . . . . Pascite qui in vobis est gregem Dei, providentes non coacte sed spontaneè secundum Deum: neque turpis lucri gratia, sed voluntariè: neque ut dominantes in cleris, sed forma facti gregis ex animo. Et cum apparuerit Princeps Pastorum percipietes immarcescibilem gloriæ coronam. Amen.*

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\*1. Peter. c. v. ver. 3.

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**EPISCOPAL MANDATES.**

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**VOL. II.**

**2 F**

I.           **A MANDATE**

*(July 17, 1719.)*

TO SING THE TE DEUM, IN THANKSGIVING FOR THE  
CAPTURE OF THE CITY OF FONTARABIA.

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**J**OHAN BAPTIST, &c. &c. The Church has ever regarded the wars which arise among christian princes, as the chastisements of God upon kingdoms and upon their inhabitants; and if she commands us to sing canticles of thanksgiving and joy, for the success which attends the arms of the conqueror, it is only in the hope that victory will lead to a prompt and durable peace. So the King informs us by his letter of the 28th of June, that it is with grief he directs his first military operations against a prince, whose per-



son and interests are to him, on many accounts, so dear ; and that although the Almighty by the brilliant success with which he has crowned his arms, seems to approve the justice of his cause and the purity of his intentions, he should derive no satisfaction from triumph if it were not ancillary to the general pacification, which together with all his allies, he struggles to obtain from the King of Spain. The capture of Fontarabia does not then flatter his Majesty by the splendor of the conquest, but by the hope that it may dispose the two nations to a peace equally advantageous to both. It is to acknowledge the protection with which Providence has favoured his enterprise, and to obtain this desirable peace, that he commands us to offer a solemn thanksgiving to God.

Let us enter, my brethren, into those wise sentiments, so worthy of the most Christian King.\* Let us gratefully thank the Lord of all for the success with which he has blessed the arms of our young monarch ; but let us join to our thanksgiving, sincere and ardent vows

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\* The title of the King of France.

for peace, that, delivered from the horrors of war, *we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all piety and modesty.\**

For these reasons, &c.

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\*1. Tim. ii. v. 2.

## II. **A MANDATE**

(Sept. 20, 1719.)

TO SING THE TE DEUM, IN THANKSGIVING FOR THE  
CAPTURE OF THE CITY AND CASTLE OF SAINT  
SEBASTIAN.

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**P**EACE among christian Princes has been always the first object of the vows and prayers of the church; and the splendid successes with which heaven continues to favor the arms of the King, by the capture of the city and castle of Saint Sebastian, should rejoice us, only because they afford new hopes of obtaining that peace, which is so necessary to the kingdom and to all Europe. It is with those feelings, that his Majesty, touched by the miseries which follow in the train of war, regards this new conquest; it flatters him only because it seems a new proof of the justice of his cause, and of the purity

of his intentions, and because it affords new facilities to the pacification of those nations which have taken up the sword with regret. It is in this spirit that his Majesty, by his letter of the 30th of August, commands us to offer a solemn thanksgiving to God. These sentiments are so conformable to the spirit and intentions of the church, that we should enter into them with gladness, that our solemn and grateful thanks may become solemn vows for a speedy and lasting peace.

For these reasons, &c.

### III.

## **A MANDATE**

(*Oct. 31, 1720.*)

TO COMMAND PUBLIC PRAYERS TO AVERT THE  
CONTAGIOUS DISEASES THAT PREVAIL IN THE  
PROVINCE.

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**T**HOUGH distant from you, my dearest brethren, we may say with the Apostle, that you are always present to us: God alone knows the sorrow which our long separation has caused in my heart. The only solace of my grief, is the reflection, that the order of Providence itself detains me here; that the same hand which gave me to you, has taken me from you, and that the time marked for my return to my beloved flock, seems at length to approach.

But in awaiting the day when we shall be reunited and console one another, according to the expression of the Apostle, by the mutual testimony of charity and faith, I cannot lose

sight of your real and pressing necessities. The arm of the Lord raised against one of the largest provinces of the kingdom, awakens my tenderness and my fears for the people whom his bounty has committed to my care.

And, in effect, if public scourges are commonly the punishment of public prevarications, must we not fear for you, my dearest brethren? If the treasures of the patience and mercy of the Lord, be at last exhausted and the time of his wrath be now come; what will he find among you to disarm his vengeance, and propitiate his clemency and favor again? Do you imagine that those desolated cities which he has already consigned to contagion and death, are more guilty than you? they offer at least to the anger of the Almighty, the sighs and vows of their pastors, who, like Moses, placed between the living and the dead, raise their pure hands to heaven; who neither shun nor dread the contagious poison that ravages their flocks, and whose prayers and tears ought to be sufficient to arrest the arm and cool the wrath of the Lord. They can also glory in the great number of zealous and devoted ministers, who have already consummated their sacrifice in the field of their duty, and who with

a fervor worthy of ancient times, have given their souls for their brethren. Still the sword of God's anger is not yet sheathed; the innumerable victims already immolated, seem only to sharpen its fury, and to make it thirst for new slaughter.

What chastisements then does he reserve for us, if he proportion his inflictions to our infidelities? You have recourse to human precautions to prevent death and contagion from entering your cities: but what can the foresight or the precautions of men, avail against the counsels of God? Shall your walls protect you against the arm of the omnipotent? To human precautions, my brethren, let us add the only precaution that can render them successful: let us prevent the miseries which now threaten us, by causing those crimes to cease, which would surely bring them down on our heads. It is not enough to guard against external and foreign causes; go to the source, says the Lord, and take away the evil out of the midst of thee: *Auferres malum de medio tui.\**

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\* Deut. c. xiii. v. 5.

It is the licentiousness of public morals; it is, perhaps, also the dissipation and infidelity of the ministers of the altar, that has armed his vengeance; and it is the sincere repentance and the renovated piety and religion of every rank that must disarm it. It was thus that Nineveh of old, blotted out by the abundance of its tears, the sentence of condemnation that was already pronounced against it. The Almighty is never more easily propitiated than when he seems to be most irritated; and his chastisements are at once both the punishment and the remedy of our crimes: *Iratus es et misertus es nobis.*\*

Let us then, my brethren, throw ourselves upon his mercy; he holds out the rod of his indignation at a distance, only to recal us from the paths in which we have long strayed; he threatens, only that he may not be obliged to strike.

But although we had nothing to fear for ourselves, could we be insensible to the sufferings and the desolation of our brethren? could we refuse to the heart-rending spectacle

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\* Psalm. 59. v. i.



of their miseries, the tears of christian compassion and sorrow? And if distance will not allow us to offer any immediate alleviation of their calamities, can we deny them the succor at least of our prayers? Let us then pray, my dearest brethren, that those direful calamities, may cease; and let us accompany our prayers with those sentiments of compunction and of faith, that will cause them to ascend before the throne of the Lord, and snatch from his hand, the scourge with which he is striking his people. Let us offer to him the sacrifice of our passions, before he demands that of our lives.

For these reasons, &c.

## IV. **A MANDATE**

(*April 9, 1721.*)

FOR THE GENERAL VISITATION OF THE DIOCESS.

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SINCE the time, my dearest brethren, in which Providence suffered this large diocess to be committed to our care, it has not been in our power to discharge all the duties which our office prescribed, and which you were entitled to expect from us; superior considerations, which appeared to us in the order of God, had till now, detained the pastor at a distance from the flock. During this afflicting separation, we can say with truth, that we carried you always in our heart; but still we could neither console your troubles nor clear up your doubts, nor correct the abuses to which time and the passions of men may have given birth among you. As these are some of the principal duties of

our episcopacy, we think ourselves bound to delay them no longer: it is fit that the flock should know the pastor and hear his voice; and it is essentially necessary that the Bishop should be acquainted with his people and with the clergy appointed to direct them. Prepare then, my dearest brethren, for our coming, as for one who holds the place of Jesus Christ in your regard, on earth, and who is to answer to him for your souls. We hope that our visitation will bring an increase of spiritual graces and benedictions to every part of our diocess, and to every rank of our people, and that witnessing your piety and faith, we shall return from it filled with abundant consolations.

For these reasons, &c.

V. **A MANDATE**

(Sept. 16, 1721.)

TO COMMAND THE CONTINUATION OF THE PUBLIC PRAYERS ALREADY ENJOINED, TO AVERT THE CONTAGION THAT STILL PREVAILS IN THE PROVINCE.

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HITHERTO, my dearest brethren, the arm of the Lord, raised over one of the largest provinces of the monarchy, has appeared to us only at a distance. His justice inflicted those terrible chastisements, to make us enter into ourselves; it never strikes except to save. But the distance of the impending danger, suffered us to remain in our false security: we have wept over our brethren, but have not wept for ourselves: though guilty of similar crimes, we have not feared similar punishment. But at the present time, the wrath of God threatens us, and seems to approach us: his vengeance is

displayed at our own doors, it has affrighted us ; but has it converted us ? We are chilled by the terrors of his justice, but do we labour to appease it ? we even magnify the horrors of our danger ; but whilst our apprehensions are thus exaggerated, we abide tranquilly in those paths of iniquity and crime, in which we have long strayed, and which should constitute the just and exclusive subject of our fears. Let us enter, my dearest brethren, into the designs of God, let us repent of the transgressions by which we have roused his indignation, and we shall soon see his vengeance cease : it is our sins that have unsheathed the sword of his wrath ; our penance alone can stay his arm, and make it drop from his hand. Neither flight nor precaution will protect you from the visitation of his scourge : in vain would you call upon the mountains to hide you ; his eye searcheth the heavens and the earth, and in every place, his might reaches the sinner on whom he wishes to be avenged : the protection to be derived from religion far excels the security afforded by human prudence. Let nothing appear among you, deserving of his anger, and you may then live without apprehension of his chastisements ; you shall not perish, but shall

even save your brethren: were there ten just, to be found in Sodom, fire from heaven would not have devoured that guilty city. Let us then, my dearest brethren, pour forth our sighs and tears; let our prayers ascend to the throne of mercy; let us weep more over our iniquities than over the miseries that threaten us, and appear at the foot of the altar more terrified at the state of our conscience, than at the peril of our lives; in a word, let us be reconciled to God, and we shall have no cause to fear his vengeance.

For these reasons, &c.

## VI. **A MANDATE**

(Feb. 22, 1722.)

FOR THE PUBLICATION OF A JUBILEE.

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NEVER, my dearest brethren, did we stand in greater need of the graces of the church, than in the present season of affliction and calamity.

Neither the scourges with which God still strikes some of our provinces; nor those with which we ourselves have been recently menaced,\* have been hitherto able to force us to enter into ourselves: the approach of the danger awakened our fears, without exciting our compunction. We omitted nothing that could

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\* The contagion was at Canourgue, which borders Auvergne.

guard against the chastisement, but we have taken no care to appease Him that chastises.

The church now offers us a new opportunity of conversion, and if punishments have been unable to convert us, surely we will not be insensible to kindness and favor. The Sovereign Pontiff, who is the first dispenser of those graces, trembling under the weight of the universal episcopacy to which he has been lately called, opens the treasures of the church to all the faithful; and this signal of reconciliation and peace, seems to announce the cessation of the wrath of heaven, and to promise more tranquil and happier days. The Lord has for a long time, appeared a terrible and avenging God; but he appears, to day, a God of mercy and forgiveness. He no longer affrights by his inflictions, but attracts us by his benefits. What a misfortune for us, my brethren, if all these means of salvation should be afforded us in vain!

Yet, and we say it with grief, some will regard this time of grace and propitiation as troublesome and onerous, and feel nothing in this great and merciful favor, but the trouble of disposing themselves for its worthy reception: others will imagine all their debts to God, dis-



charged by participating in the graces of the church, and will seek them rather with a view of escaping the just rigors of penance, than of renewing their hatred of sin and their gratitude to heaven.

As for you, my dearest brethren, remember that the graces which you are to receive in those days of salvation, will be proportioned to the sanctity of the dispositions with which you approach them. The more you love, the more will be forgiven you; the more lively your repentance of your sins, the lighter shall be the punishments by which they must be expiated: in former times, it was the increased fervor and more abundant tears alone of public penitents, that obtained any relaxation of the canonical penalties. The church was moved by the excess of their penitential austerities: the spirit that guides her is still the same; her favors are destined solely for true penitents, and to their compunction alone does she open her bosom, and unlock her treasures.

Let us then, my dearest brethren, offer ourselves for the mercies of the Lord, with hearts truly humbled and contrite. Let us sincerely detest the crimes that have hitherto closed heaven against us, or which have opened it only

to bring down public calamities upon our country.

Let us return to God, who seems now to promise a cessation of his vengeance, since he even proffers his favors, and if we have not profited of his chastisements, let us, at least, not abuse his bounty.

For these reasons, &c.

## VII. **A MANDATE**

(*Nov. 30, 1722.*)

TO SING THE TE DEUM IN THANKSGIVING FOR THE  
CORONATION OF THE KING.

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**I**t is the piety alone of nations, my dearest brethren, that heaven rewards with good Kings. The princes whom the Lord raises to earthly thrones, are ordinarily the recompence or the chastisement, of the virtues or of the crimes of their subjects. Unite then your prayers to those of the church, to beg of God, that our young monarch may be a king according to his own heart; that the august ceremony which has impressed him with the sacred character of royalty, may produce in him all the benedictions of grace; that he may be the father of his people; that he may use according to the designs of God, that power which he holds from God alone: that his passions may be as obedient to

him as his people ; that he may reign happily over us, by first reigning over himself ; and that his rule may be as long as that of his great-grand-father,\* as pious as that of Saint Louis, as glorious as that of all his renowned ancestors together.

Those gladdening hopes already beam from his majestic countenance, and the presages of happiness and greatness which, every day, appear in his sacred person, anticipate our desires and confirm our confidence. Let us then, my dearest brethren, continue to supplicate the King of Kings and the Sovereign distributor of thrones and kingdoms, to multiply his gifts to this august prince ; to preserve the child of so many kings, and the only hope of so many provinces ; to make the beginning of his reign the commencement of our happiness, and to protect a monarchy in which the true faith ascended the throne with its kings, and in which it has since been perpetuated more pure and splendid than the gems which adorn their crown.

For these reasons, &c.

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\* Louis the Fourteenth reigned 72 years.

## VIII.      **A MANDATE**

(*March 1, 1723.*)

TO SING THE TE DEUM, IN THANKSGIVING FOR THE  
CESSATION OF THE CONTAGIOUS DISEASES WHICH  
HAD PREVAILED IN SEVERAL PROVINCES OF THE  
KINGDOM.

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**T**HE WRATH of the Lord, my dearest brethren, is at length appeased. His vengeance, as the Prophet says, has not suspended his mercies for ever; he has withdrawn his terrible arm, which pressed heavily on our provinces, and the scourge of contagion that wasted them, has ceased at last. It would seem, that the bounty of heaven had reserved this signal favor, for those happy days, in which our young monarch was to enter into full possession of his royal authority; and these beginnings inspire a just

hope, that his reign will be marked by a continuation of benefits from above: so his first care has been to command a solemn thanksgiving to be made throughout his kingdom, and to place himself and his people under the protection of Him, who strikes and who heals, who overturns, and preserves empires.

The signal favors which now call for our gratitude, my dearest brethren, should warm our bosoms and redouble the fervor of our prayers: the nearer the danger has approached you, the more lively and touching should be your acknowledgments to Him, who has preserved you from its fury. You beheld desolation and death on the frontiers of your province, and, as it were, at the gates of your cities; the exterminating sword, was long raised against you, and at every moment you expected the fatal stroke. Recal now your past fears and anxieties, and proportion your gratitude to your recent alarms: be mindful that the favors of God always pre-  
sage his indignation and vengeance. He is jealous of his gifts, and is never more prepared to strike, than when his marked and continued bounty, has found the hearts on which it was poured, hard and insensible: let *us* not make him repent of his clemency. Every thing

now, invites us to return to him; his benefits, which are to be requited by fidelity and love; the penitential season on which we have entered; the great and holy mysteries which are approaching, and in which the greater abundance of graces accorded, demands great preparation of mind and heart; and, in fine, our past errors, to which God may have afforded this opportunity of repentance, as the last favor of his mercy, and the last term of his patience.

For these reasons, &c.

## IX. **A MANDATE**

(*Nov. 15, 1724.*)

**FOR THE PUBLICATION OF THE JUBILEE.**

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**G**OD, whose mercies seem to increase in proportion to our iniquities, after having granted to the vows of the church, a chief according to his own heart, wishes, in addition, that this tender and charitable mother should open to us the treasure of her graces; either to fill us with gratitude at the proffer of so precious a gift, or in order that the solicitude and example of so holy a Pontiff may not be useless to his people.

Let us, my dearest brethren, correspond with the merciful designs of God upon us: he tries every means to recal us from our wanderings; and since we become, every day, more ingeni-



ous in contriving our own destruction, he daily employs new means to effect our salvation.

Above all, let us not, (as has perhaps been the case heretofore,) limit the fruit of those days of propitiation to some passing acts of penance. Let us not flatter ourselves that our sins are expiated, if we do not detest them from the bottom of our heart: let us not imagine that the graces of the church have purified us, unless they have changed us; nor reckon upon her indulgence except in as much as we can rely upon the sincerity of our repentance. Her bounty is a means of conversion, and not an exemption from penance; it smooths the paths of sanctity, but does not dispense us from walking in them: it is the help of our weakness, and not the apology of our cowardice: the blood of Jesus Christ from which it flows, always bears with it the character and seal of the cross; and the price by which we have been purchased and delivered, does not do away our obligation to suffer, but on the contrary imposes it.

Prepare then your hearts, my dearest brethren, particularly for those days, in which not only the church unlocks for you the treasury of her graces, but in which the heavens open to send down upon men, the Author of every gift

and of every grace. The desires of the just were rewarded with his first coming upon earth; the sighs of penance are necessary to make him descend anew into our hearts.

Let us, by a more christian life, draw down the benedictions of heaven upon the Pontiff whom the Lord in his great mercy has lately given to his people. Let us obtain them for the whole church confided to his care, and particularly for our own kingdom, whose sovereigns have always been her most powerful and zealous protectors; and, in fine, let us obtain them for our young monarch, descended from so many illustrious and holy Kings, that he may inherit their wisdom and their zeal for religion, as he inherits their crown.

For these reasons, &c.

## X.           **A MANDATE**

(*Sept. 24, 1725.*)

TO SING THE TE DEUM, FOR THE MARRIAGE OF  
THE KING.

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**W**HATEVER ensures the succession in empires, ensures also their tranquillity, and tranquillity constitutes the entire security of religion and of the laws. Our monarchy has more than once experienced the miseries which threaten the throne, when all hope of posterity ends with the prince, who fills it: it is for this reason that the nation so ardently desired, that our young King would hasten to raise up heirs to the throne, by an august and holy matrimonial alliance.

Our vows, my brethren, have been heard, and his choice has even surpassed our expectations. The counsels of flesh and blood, or the great interests of the world, commonly preside

in the marriages of sovereigns : religion alone proposed and concluded his. Thus in sharing his throne with the Princess Mary, he has placed by his side, wisdom, piety, clemency, and all those virtues, which support it more firmly and lastingly than the alliances of the most powerful kingdoms. Those connexions which interest cements, interest dissolves ; and it is not necessary to review the long annals of our history to know, that those great states which have given us Queens, have not always given us allies and friends. France needs no foreign aid, there is nothing but virtue necessary to her glory and stability ; and the misfortunes of the last reign have taught us, that she should be more anxious not to awaken the jealousy of her neighbours, by too powerful a connexion, than to protect herself against their hostility by alliances, which often lull us into a false security, and which never increase our strength.

Let us, my brethren, render immortal thanks to Him who disposes of sceptres and crowns, and who has perpetuated the French empire during so many ages, in the same royal house. He has bestowed on us an inestimable blessing in giving us a wise, pious and discerning

Queen, already mistress of the heart of the Prince and of his subjects, and likely to revive among us the days of Clotilda and of Blanche of Castile. Let us supplicate heaven that from this sacred union may spring heroes, who will mingle with the blood of Saint Louis, and with all the virtues which it transmits, those lofty qualities by which *she* is about to ennoble and sanctify it. Let us pray, that from her we may receive princes, who will be our fathers rather than our masters; that our young King—the beloved object of the nation's tenderness and hope, whilst he increases in years and in strength, may also strengthen in wisdom and grace; that he may love a people whose vows and tears and prayers have preserved him to France; that he may begin by sharing in our miseries and sufferings, as we shall one day share in his prosperity and glory. Every thing is in common between a good prince and his subjects; their misfortunes are his, as his felicity ought to be the happiness of his people; he cannot be great nor happy alone; such is the destiny of sovereigns, that they shall never be great kings till they have first been good masters.

For these reasons, &c.

**XI.           A MANDATE**

*(July 5, 1726.)*

TO BEG THE BENEDICTION OF HEAVEN, BY SOLEMN  
PUBLIC PRAYERS, UPON THE RESOLUTION OF HIS  
MAJESTY TO GOVERN THE STATE BY HIMSELF.

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**G**OD, my dearest brethren, who has always extended his mercy and protection to our monarchy, and who seems to have forgotten us in the time of our calamities and sufferings, only to load us with new favors, this day, gives new confidence to our hopes, and opens the prospect of a speedy relief from those evils into which, the wars of the last reign and the subsequent changes in the state, had plunged us, in spite of the active and vigilant administration of preceding ministers.

The King has just announced, that being established by God to rule this vast Empire, he intends to govern by himself. In effect, the care of the father of the family, is always more tender and more discerning than that of the most trusty and diligent servants: the patrimony which he administers, is his own, he governs his own house, his subjects are his own children. Thus the King, whose great purpose has been inspired from above, declares, that he proposes to himself nothing but the happiness of his people; that touched by their fidelity and attachment, he wishes to repay their devotion by giving himself entirely to his subjects, whose love he values more than their duty, and in whose hearts he is more anxious to reign, than over their properties or their persons. France, my dearest brethren, cannot fail to prosper, when her love of her sovereign, is to become the measure of her happiness; there is no more auspicious pledge of felicity than that which attaches it to our fidelity.

What immortal thanks do we not owe to Him, who holds in his hands the hearts as well as the sceptres of kings, and who has inspired our young monarch with the resolution of governing a great kingdom, at an age when other

princes are scarce in a condition to govern themselves; when pleasures are their most important concerns, and when relieved from the burden of sovereignty, there is nothing great in their lives or about their person, but the august and sacred title which has given them to us for masters.

To conciliate the support and benediction of heaven to his government, the King commands us to beg your vows and prayers. And on what occasion were they ever more justly solicited? it is for ourselves we pray, when we pray for our rulers: in imploring for them the virtues, which constitute good kings, we are entreating blessings for ourselves: a just and pious reign is the greatest gift which the Almighty can bestow upon the world. Let us then beg, my dearest brethren, that he will send down upon our young sovereign from the highest heaven, that wisdom which presides in the eternal counsels: that he will give him a paternal and affectionate heart for his people; that clemency, which is always the stay of authority; that moderation, which by respecting the laws, exalts and dignifies the throne; which, confining itself within the limits of its own states, is more intent on relieving distress and



correcting abuses, than on extending their bounds ; which leaves to neighbouring powers the dangerous honor of commencing hostilities ; and tries to conquer, only to have the glory of terminating the horrors of war. Let us pray that the Lord may unite in his royal person all the great qualities of those holy and illustrious Kings, who have heretofore swayed the destinies of France ; that his reign may rival the splendid dominion of his august Great-grand-father, whom he has proposed to himself as a model ; that like him, he may see his children's children round his throne ; and that, in fine, a reign which begins under such auspicious presages may be the reign of peace, of glory, of piety and of abundance.

For these reasons, &c.

## XII.      **A MANDATE**

(*Aug. 20, 1726.*)

TO SING THE TE DEUM, IN THANKSGIVING FOR THE  
RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KING'S HEALTH.

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**I**T is not long, my brethren, since we requested your public prayers, to bring down the benedictions of heaven, upon the favourable beginnings of our young Monarch's reign. Alas! whilst our temples still resounded with anthems of thanksgiving and solemn supplications, the hand of the Lord was upon him, and our songs of joy were turned into wailings and alarms. He had just given himself entirely to us, and taken upon himself, at a tender age, the whole burden of royalty; and scarce did we begin to possess him, and to taste the first fruits of his love, when we were menaced with his loss.

This precious remnant of so many princes ; this single spark, saved from the ruins and the extinction of the whole royal family ; this august and only pledge of the consolidation of the throne and of our internal tranquillity ; this gift of God to the French nation, to console her for her reverses and her losses ; this sacred sign, raised up by heaven to be the guarantee of the termination of public scourges, and of the peace of empires and nations ; this child of so many promises and so many hopes, the Lord who had given him to us in his mercy, has been more than once on the point of snatching from us, in his wrath.

Can it be, that to make us set a higher value upon his benefit, he has so often threatened us with its resumption ? But if our love of our King could become a security for his life ; if to preserve him always to his people, they had only to feel the greatness of the bounty which has left him to them ; if the sincerity of our gratitude could answer for the length of his days ; in a word, if the sentiments of our hearts could decide his lot ; alas ! what could remain to be desired for him ; and what could we ourselves have to fear ? France would be the happiest nation in the universe ; and the

Lord would, every day, pour out new blessings upon us, were he to proportion his favors to the abundance and the excess of our love for our sovereigns.

God therefore, in striking him, designed to punish solely our want of fidelity to Himself: it is our crimes alone that commonly occasion all the misfortunes of our rulers; they alone it was, that in those days of mourning, of which the memory is still fresh, snatched from us together so many princes, at once the pillars of the throne and the hope of the monarchy. The succession of the reigning line has never failed amongst us, except in those times when the corruption of the court, and the inundation of the public vices, drew down the wrath of heaven upon the nation: the royal stem ceased then to shoot, and the blood of the monarchy flowed not from the father to his children; God abandoned the nobility and the people to the spirit of dissension and revolt; the public disorganization expiated the public crimes; surely the sad example of past ages, should become a lesson of instruction to ours. God always punishes the iniquities of kingdoms, by depriving them of good kings, or by sending them bad ones in his anger; he has therefore saved

his people, by preserving to us our beloved monarch: *Egressus es in salutem populi tui, in salutem cum Christo tuo* ;\* let then the sincerity of our thanksgiving, correspond to the intensity of our past fears.

But let us be mindful that fidelity to God is the only gratitude which he demands, and which he will accept. For a long period his hand has been upon us, and we every day complain of the duration and severity of his chastisements; he has poured out upon us all the scourges of his wrath, in succession; he has lately shown us the last and the most dreadful, which remained for his justice to inflict on us, by menacing the life of the King. Let us expect no end to our miseries, till we shall be converted from our crimes. The signal interpositions by which he has conducted our young monarch to the throne, bespeak singular designs of mercy towards us. He is like a second Moses, saved alone by miraculous interference from the total wreck of his august race, one day to deliver his people from the heavy yoke of oppression and suffering. Already, like the holy king

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\* Habac. c. iii. v. 13.

of Judah, his eyes are seeking virtuous and faithful men, to seat them near his person and around this throne: *Oculi mei ad fidelis terræ ut sedeant mecum* :\* he intends, that the wise governor of his childhood, should also be the guide of his reign; that the same principles of humanity, of justice and of religion, which have shaped his early morals, should constitute the rules of his government; and that the same hands which pointed out to him, the perils and the dangers of the crown, should also assist him to sustain it, for the glory and happiness of France. Let us, my dear brethren, not render those happy presages unavailing, nor turn against ourselves, by continuing to irritate the Almighty, the splendid blessings which they promise.

For these reasons, &c.

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\* Psalm. 100. v. 6.

### XIII.     **A MANDATE**

(Feb. 3, 1727.)

FOR THE PUBLICATION OF THE JUBILEE OF THE  
HOLY YEAR.

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**WE** always proclaim to you, my dear brethren, with new joy, the graces and remedies which the church is never weary of proffering to our weakness; nothing would be wanting to our consolation, were the benefits which you ought to derive from them, to correspond to our vows and to your own necessities.

You awaited this time of indulgence and propitiation, with impatience, and viewed with a holy jealousy those kingdoms and churches where it had already begun. The salvation which you desired my dear brethren, has at length arrived: *The grace of God our Saviour*

*hath appeared to all men, instructing us that denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly and justly, and godly in this world,\* that our lives may bring no reproach on the sanctity of our vocation.*

Under the law of Moses, in the great jubilee year, which the church calls *holy*, the lands were suffered to repose; slaves recovered their liberty; families regained their alienated possessions; all debts were cancelled; and each one returned to his first condition. These things, my dear brethren, were but shadows of the future: the repose of the lands, prefigured that eternal rest where we shall be freed from all the anxieties of this world, and after which, we ought to sigh unceasingly. The slaves who recovered their liberty, represented us, who having been hitherto under the servitude of the devil and of the world, are now about to re-enter into the liberty of the children of God. The alienated possessions which returned to their former masters, are those possessions of grace, which we have alienated or forfeited; the virtue and justice which we had lost; the inheri-

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\* 1. Tit. c. 2. vv. 11. 12.



tance in Jesus Christ which we had dissipated, and to which the bounty of heaven is now about to restore us. In fine, the debts which were cancelled, are our crimes which have rendered us debtors to the divine justice, and which the blood of Jesus Christ is now about to wash away: we are going to return to our first condition, to that happy state in which the grace of baptism had first established us.

These, my dear brethren, are the inestimable favors which the church now proffers. The greater their value, the more holy should be our dispositions to receive them; for the gifts of God are not intended for souls who will not return sincerely to him. If our penance be only on our tongue, and consist of a mere confession of our sins, as perhaps has been the case hitherto; if the heart have no share in it, neither shall it participate in the graces of the church: thus the time of mercy will become for us, a time of rigorous justice, and we shall add to our other sins, the crime of abusing the favor by which they were to be expiated.

But our hopes of you, my dear brethren, are more consoling. *Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may*

*obtain mercy . . . . in seasonable aid;*\* let us offer to God, the sighs of an afflicted heart : let us not confine our prayers and supplications to our own immediate wants, but extend them to all the evils that afflict the church ; let the perils to which our holy faith is exposed, and the mournful divisions which dis-sever its unity, render us the more submissive to its authority, and the more zealous in its defence ; let the calamities of war too, with which we are now menaced, and which have been already but too long felt, invigorate our efforts, and quicken our devotion. Let us disarm the wrath of heaven, ready, perhaps, to burst upon us in this hour, and beg from above, that peace which the world is neither willing nor able to grant us. Let us solicit for princes and for kings, that spirit of concord which may unite all hearts, combine all interests, calm all animosities, and prevent the confusion and horrors of war.

Let us, above all, beg for our young King, that wisdom which anticipates the course of years ; a heart docile to prudent counsels, a

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\* Hebr. c. iv. v. 16.

sensibility which he was early taught to feel for public calamities, and which the sage advisers who approach the throne, daily foster in the royal breast ; a numerous offspring from his august marriage, and a reign which may be rather the reign of peace, of abundance and of justice, than of hostilities and conquests.

Let us second the pious intentions and fervent desires of the holy Pontiff whom the Lord has given in his mercy, to his church, and who ceases not to raise his pure hands to heaven, to turn away the scourges which the justice of God is preparing to pour out upon the malice of men. We shall obtain what we ask, if we ask it with faith : the prayers that are put up in common by the assembly of the faithful, have the privilege of access to the throne of the Eternal Majesty, and the Holy Ghost who inspires and dictates them in our hearts, is always heard.

For these reasons, &c.

XIV.      **A MANDATE**

(*Sept. 14, 1729.*)

FOR A GENERAL PROCESSION, AND TO SING THE TE  
DEUM, IN SOLEMN THANKSGIVING FOR THE BIRTH  
OF A DAUPHIN.

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**T**HE vows of France, my dearest brethren, have been heard at last. The Almighty, who, to make us feel the instability of human things, is pleased to transfer sceptres and empires continually from one race to another, continues by a singular mercy, to perpetuate the sovereignty of France in the same royal house, through an astonishing course of ages. He has at length, given a successor to the throne—a new stay to our monarchy, and a pledge of tranquillity and peace to all Europe. The blood of Saint Louis shall not cease to flow,—the race of the just shall not fail, and till the end, their de-

scendants shall possess the inheritance, which heaven awarded in the beginning, to the piety and the valor of their august ancestors. All those nations with which we are acquainted, have in the revolution of ages, more than once changed their masters; new families have ascended the throne of the former line, whose posterity had either failed or had been driven by usurpers from the empire of their fathers. Internal dissension, domestic strife, civil war, the subversion of the faith, in a word, the desolation of provinces and of nations has almost always been the bitter fruit of those sad changes. France alone, still preserves her ancient race, and with it, she also preserves the faith of her fathers, the laws of her monarchy, and the ancient and venerable institutions of church and state. If the vices of the nation render her now unworthy of this singular protection, we cannot doubt that God will award it to that fidelity and love which she has always had for her kings. Yes, my dearest brethren, the young prince whom heaven has lately granted to our desires, secures our fortunes, guarantees the tranquillity of our cities, protects the rights of every citizen, and affords the wise minister, who seems to hold in his hands the destinies

of Europe, new facilities for pacificating kings and nations, and for relieving our people, whom the calamities of the times and the preparations for an expected war, have not hitherto allowed to breathe from their past sufferings, or enjoy the sweets and advantages of peace.

It would be superfluous, my brethren, to exhort you to unite with the church in solemn thanksgiving for the inestimable gift which we have just obtained from the bounty of heaven. You have desired and begged it too earnestly of God, not to be filled with the liveliest gratitude at its reception. Let us then draw down upon this precious infant, not only by our thanksgiving, but still more by the sanctity of our lives, all the benedictions which will one day make him a prince after God's own heart. Good kings are always the reward of the piety of their people : let us render ourselves worthy of the favors of the Almighty ; heaven will never cease to protect us, whilst we continue obedient to its will.

For these reasons, &c.

## XV.      **A MANDATE**

(*Feb. 1, 1730.*)

FOR THE SECOND GENERAL VISITATION OF OUR  
DIOCESS.

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**WE** have already made, my dearest brethren, the first general visitation of this large Diocess. If we have found consolation in the zeal of many of the clergy, who truly share in our pastoral solicitude, God has not permitted our joy to be complete: the numberless wants of the people whom Providence has confided to us, the multitude of pastors whom we have appointed to guide them, and amongst whom, it must be expected that some will be less faithful and correct than the spirit of their vocation requires; the public disorders which ever result from their vices; the misery too, and

the sufferings of the districts through which we passed, all these evils have cast us to the earth, and filled our heart with bitterness and sorrow. We have trembled under the weight of our ministry, and the immensity of our duties; and to speak with the Apostle, you all know that we have appeared among you, penetrated with terror and fear, at the thought of our obligations and yours: *In timore, et tremore multo fui apud vos.\** But the burden which presses so heavily on our weakness, does not make us despond; our confidence indeed would be vain, did we rely solely on ourselves; but besides, that all our trust is in Him who sends us, and who has promised to continue with us to the end, the many holy Bishops who first governed this church, and who sanctified it by their labors and their blood, will solicit for us and for the people whom they subjugated to Jesus Christ, a part of that strength and energy and zeal with which they themselves were endued. They will not suffer this ancient and illustrious portion of the inheritance of Christ—the fruit of their sufferings and Apostleship, to lose

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\* 1. Cor. c. ii. v. 3.



all its beauty in the hands of an unworthy successor. Wherefore, my dear brethren, we feel ourselves bound to redouble our diligence and care, in proportion as our greater acquaintance with the necessities of our churches, seems to multiply and point out, our duties. We therefore announce to you, a second visitation: and this we hope you will receive, not as a menace of severity and chastisement, but as a proclamation of charity and peace; in order *that*, in the language of the Apostle, *your rejoicing may abound in Christ Jesus for me, by my coming to you again.*\* For you alone, my brethren, must be the glory and the consolation of my episcopacy, since you alone are co-operators with me in it: *only let your conversation be worthy of the gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you, or being absent, may hear of you, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind labouring together for the faith of the gospel.*†

Let us all then, my brethren, be renovated together, in that spirit of charity and zeal, which consoles the troubles, and promotes the

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\* Philipp. c. i. v. 26.

† Idem. v. 27.

success, of our functions. Let us, according to the advice of the Apostle, call to mind those holy pastors who first announced the word of the gospel to our people, and whilst we review the abundant benedictions of their ministry, and consider the crown of their labors, let us imitate their faith: *Mementote præpositorum vestrorum, qui vobis locuti sunt verbum Dei: quorum intuentès exitum conversationis, imitamini fidem.\** Let us be confounded and humbled at finding ourselves so unlike those ancient models: I do not suggest this comparison with a design of reproaching or saddening you, but with the view of proposing a new motive to sustain and encourage both you and myself, in the painful discharge of our duties.

As to the rest, my dear brethren, to conclude with the same Apostle, *God is my witness how I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray that your charity may more and more abound in knowledge and in all understanding: that you may approve the better things, that you may be sincere and without offence unto the day of Christ,*

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\* Heb. c. xiii. v. 7.

(that day of the coming of the Prince of Pastors, for which ours is but the preparation.)  
May we all run our course with energy and alacrity, that we may be all *filled with the fruit of justice through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.*

For these reasons, &c.

XVI.

## A MANDATE

(*Sept. 22, 1730.*)

TO SING THE TE DEUM, IN THANKSGIVING FOR THE  
BIRTH OF A DUKE OF ANJOU.

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WE prayed, my dear brethren, though we could scarce presume to hope, that God would bless the monarchy and the royal house, with the birth of a new prince. It is one of those singular favors by which heaven, in its mercy, rewards the piety of kings and of their people, and consolidates the tranquillity of empires. What remains for us, my dear brethren, but to render ourselves, every day, more worthy of God's benefits, and to beg earnestly of Him, that the same merciful protection which has vouchsafed to send us those precious pledges of security, may preserve them, and pour into

the hearts of those young princes, the fear of his holy name, a love for their people, and that sensibility to public miseries, which has ever constituted the surest and most durable glory of good kings.

May they live many years under the eyes of an august and religious Father, who sways that power by which France was once so formidable, solely for the pacification of Europe, and the happiness of his people.

May they enjoy to an advanced age, the example and tenderness of a pious Mother—a queen, whose virtues and happy offspring, realize all our wishes.

Thus educated under a peaceful and happy reign, they shall transmit its spirit and blessings to our descendants; and France, whilst she beholds the blood of Saint Louis continued on the throne, shall see perpetuated with it, his glory and felicity.

For these reasons, &c

## XVII. **A MANDATE**

(*Jan. 17, 1734.*)

TO SING THE TE DEUM, IN THANKSGIVING FOR THE  
PROSPERITY OF THE ARMS OF THE KING.

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**G**OD, my dear brethren, has just approved the pacific intentions of our King, and the justice of his cause, by a splendid victory: For this glorious triumph of our arms, we cannot sufficiently thank the Sovereign Lord of all, who guides the fate of battles and of empires: but as wars are ordinarily, scourges to punish our crimes, and as the most brilliant victories are always burdensome even to the conquerors, let us beg of Him, at the same time, to re-unite the hearts and the interests of christian princes; let us pray for the return of peace, preferable to the greatest conquests; and let us entreat

his ancient mercies towards this monarchy, that the spark of strife which has been just excited, and which threatens to inflame all Europe, may be extinguished in its birth, and not again involve us in those troubles, over which the tears of our people are not yet dry.

For these reasons, &c.

XVIII.      **A MANDATE**

(*Jan. 28, 1734.*)

TO SING THE TE DEUM IN THANKSGIVING FOR THE  
CAPTURE OF THE CASTLE OF MILAN.

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**T**HE new successes with which the Lord continues to crown the arms of the King, and to approve the justice of his cause, demands of us my dearest brethren, new and solemn thanks. It is just that the public expression of our gratitude should closely follow on the favors of heaven: but less dazzled by the splendor of victory, than moved by the calamities of war, let us mingle with our thanksgiving, christian desires for concord and peace. Let us enter into the sentiments of the church—that common parent, who now beholds with grief, the



nations which the same faith and the same hope unites in her tender bosom, armed for mutual destruction. She is always a tender *Rachel*, *bewailing the loss of her children* :\* let us unite our vows to hers, and implore Him, who holds in his hands the hearts of kings, and who inspires wise counsels into their ministers, to abbreviate those days of anger and bloodshed, which are always equally fatal to all the contending powers ; since the one side has to mourn their losses and reverses, and the other to lament the expenses and efforts by which they purchase victory. By thus conforming to the views of the church, our thanksgiving and prayers, animated by her spirit, shall ascend with confidence, to the throne of the God of peace and love : He will deign to regard the disinterested and pacific intentions of the King, with looks of mercy and protection ; and if He will not accord to our desires and to his, that peace which he has always loved, and which was born with him, and began to reign with him in Europe,

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\* Matt. c. ii. v. 18.

He will at least continue to accord to him, victories and conquests, that will render it desirable to those hostile powers by whom it has been disturbed.

For these reasons, &c.

## XIX.           **A MANDATE**

*(July 28, 1734.)*

TO SING THE TE DEUM IN THANKSGIVING FOR THE  
VICTORY GAINED OYER THE IMPERIALISTS IN  
ITALY, BY THE TROOPS OF THE KING AND THOSE  
OF HIS SARDINIAN MAJESTY.

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**L**ET us leave those who always judge of events by the false and narrow views of human wisdom, to glory in our victories and put forth songs of triumph and joy: for us, my dear brethren, guided by the light of faith, let us consider with a holy terror, that the wrath of God, must indeed be exasperated against men, since notwithstanding the universal desire of peace with which the calamities of the last wars had filled all the nations of Europe, and the sovereigns who rule them, discord has again

incited them to resume the sword with greater fury than before, and still inundates the earth with the blood of its inhabitants. It is true that God visibly favors the just hostilities of the King; all victorious as he is, he is still intent on peace; he wishes it for the sake of his people, and his wishes are rewarded with victories; but victory is ever the favor of a God irritated against the vices of men.

What a shocking spectacle, my brethren, is presented to us, even in that, which we have lately obtained! a carnage so horrible and so unexampled, as to be without parallel, save in the encounters of barbarous nations. The rivals alone of their fierce and cruel spirit could triumph in the achievements of this bloody and murderous day; for us, the splendor of victory is covered with a veil of mourning; the public testimonies of our gratitude to the God of armies, are clouded by the regrets of religion and humanity, and we cannot refuse to mingle with our solemn thanksgiving, tears of sorrow for the death of our relatives and friends, and for the many brave subjects who have generously sacrificed their lives, for the glory of the prince and the interests of the state.

What trophies then, could we erect on the sanguinary field, still covered with the mangled bodies of so many thousand christians? Let us go, my brethren, in spirit, to the scene of slaughter, and there amidst rivers of blood, and heaps of mutilated limbs, that will make us mourn over victory; there, where we have won the field only that we might meditate at leisure on the instability of human things and the inevitable miseries of war; there let us offer to the view of the God of peace, the sad spectacle, and move his paternal bosom to compassion by the piteous sight. Let us cause the voice of the blood that was spilt, to ascend to his throne, not to call down his vengeance as of old, but to calm and disarm it. Let us snatch from his hand the sword of justice which is again unsheathed over our necks: let us promise to him better lives, and he will grant us more tranquil times: let us cause the crimes which exasperate him, to cease, and he will turn away the scourges with which he now chastises us. The prayers which ascend to him for peace after victory, are always more surely heard: they are inspired by religion; the church herself then prays by our mouth; the spirit of

God asks for us, and forms within us those secret vows and sighs; and the Lord never rejects prayers which himself has inspired in our hearts.

Let us then, my dear brethren, assemble at the foot of his altars, more moved by the horrors of war, than by the glory of our triumph. Let us not ask of him, who descended on our earth only to *reconcile all things . . . . making peace through the blood of his cross*;\* let us not ask him to exterminate with his sword of vengeance, the nations that are armed against us; such prayers of blood, would recoil on our own heads: let us beg of him that peace which neither kings, nor victories, nor the world can give, and which must be the work of his infinite mercies alone: let us pray, that nations and kings being at length reconciled and united, may be exclusively occupied in serving Him; and that being more jealous of extending the reign of faith, than the bounds of their empires, they may no more take up the sword, save to carry the standard of religion and the

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\* Coloss. c. i. v. 20.

glory of the christian name, to those unbelieving nations which are, one day, to be called to the knowledge of the gospel: *In conveniendo populos in unum, et reges, ut serviant Domino.\**

For these reasons, &c.

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\* Psalm. 101. v. 23.

XX.

**A MANDATE**

(*Aug. 11, 1734.*)

TO SING THE TE DEUM, IN THANKSGIVING FOR THE  
CAPTURE OF PHILIPSBURGH.

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**T**HE continual success, my dear brethren, which every where attends the arms of the King, daily affords new proofs of the justice of his cause; the common motives of glory by which too many are swayed, would never have led our young sovereign into an expensive and dangerous war; his moderation is admitted even by our enemies, and his wisdom proposed no other object to his ambition, than to render his subjects happy, by a mild and pacific reign. He has armed solely to defend the cause of the innocent and the oppressed, and to protect the liberties of an allied nation which had been,



at all times, possessed of the right of choosing her own masters.

So God, the protector of those inviolable rights which constitute the safeguard of nations and empires, animates our troops with a bravery superior even to that, which had been long so characteristic of Frenchmen. The difficulty of the enterprise, facilitates their success; the ocean seems to conspire against them, only to render their conquests more glorious by appearing impossible; and every day is marked by new victories. Spain, having resumed her ancient valor, is rapidly reconquering the crowns of which the reverses of past times had deprived her; and the prince who usurped them is losing them, for having attempted to place a usurper at her head. Our enemies defeated in Italy, scarce find a resting place to cover or rally the wreck of their forces: and the most distinguished general of the hostile armies, has descended into Germany to oppose our troops, only to witness the valor of Frenchmen, and the capture of one of the most important places in the empire, before his eyes, without being able to afford it the slightest succor.

Such continued success demands of us, my dear brethren, solemn marks of gratitude to-

wards the Sovereign Dispenser of events: and the more particularly as it may, perhaps, awaken our foes to a sense of the injustice of their projects, and restore to Europe that peace for which it sighs, and which is always preferable to the most brilliant conquests. Let us, my brethren, not cease to implore it from Him who alone can give it; and let a prayer so worthy of religion ever accompany and sanctify the joy and solemnity of our public thanksgiving.

For these reasons, &c.

**A MANDATE**

(Oct. 22, 1734.)

TO SING THE TE DEUM, IN THANKSGIVING FOR THE VICTORY GAINED OVER THE IMPERIALISTS IN ITALY, BY THE TROOPS OF THE KING AND THOSE OF HIS SARDINIAN MAJESTY.

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THE peace which the church does not cease to implore for her children, and which we, my dear brethren, should implore with her, seems, every day, to recede farther from us. The Lord, irritated by the crimes of men, makes use of men to exercise his vengeance upon their fellows; and in arming them against one another, he punishes them by making them the instruments of his anger and his chastisements. The blood already shed has not yet appeased his justice, and a fresh battle in Italy still more sanguinary than the former, now presents a frightful spectacle to all Europe. But amidst so many horrors, the God of Charlemagne and of Saint Louis, gives to France and the successor of their crown and their faith, splendid proofs of his protection and favor: victory, every

where, attends our arms: the open bravery, the hidden snares, all the efforts of our enemies end only in discomfiture and shame; they may surprise the vigilance of our troops, but they cannot withstand their valor, and they are beaten as soon as they are within our reach. Our frontiers are secure from the ravages and calamities of war; and whilst the lands of our enemies are desolated, and their country a prey to the license of the soldiery, throughout France, the citizen enjoys his hearth undisturbed, and the labourer tills his fields in peace, and is happy to divide their fruits between the wants of his family and those of the state.

Let us not pride ourselves on those advantages, my brethren; let us, according to the advice of the Royal Prophet, not trust in *our bow*, nor expect victory from *our sword*.\* Our arms are victorious and our troops invincible, only because the Lord fights with us and for us. The same hand that now protects us, may also abandon us; and this we should apprehend the more, since notwithstanding our victories, we ought always to regard war as a scourge brought upon us by our crimes. Let us merit a continuance of the favors of heaven, by de-

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\* Psalm. 43. v. 7.

ploring the sad necessity which arms us against our brethren ; let our victories themselves become for us new motives to wish for peace ; let us always sanctify our thanksgiving by this christian desire, and it will be much more acceptable to Him who is the God and the Father of our enemies, as well as ours. His tenderness will revive towards them and towards us ; he will conciliate the interests by which we are divided, and which appear irreconcilable to human wisdom ; he will clear up the chaos of opposite pretensions, in which the reason of man is confounded, and which seems to hold out the dreary prospect of an eternal war. Empires and states, after the mournful struggles by which they are now convulsed, shall have past away, will take at last a steady and permanent attitude : He who drew the harmony and order of the universe out of original chaos, well knows how to mould the present confusion and troubles of the greater part of the nations of Europe, into tranquillity and concord : heaven-descended peace shall reunite the hearts and interests of all ; and we with our enemies, shall bless the infinite mercies of the Lord, who will graciously vouchsafe to grant it to the troubled earth.

For these reasons, &c.

## XXII.      **A MANDATE**

(*Aug. 29, 1736.*)

ON THE RETRENCHMENT OF CERTAIN HOLYDAYS.

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**T**HE church ever attentive to provide new helps to salvation, for her children, has from the beginning proposed to them, the example of those Saints whose virtues had been most conspicuous on earth; and in order that those great models of sanctity might influence us the more, she has consecrated the days destined to honour their triumph, to holy repose and public worship. But in proportion as the faith of the people waxed cold, and as those holy solemnities were multiplied, this wise and useful law has but served to multiply transgressions: it has become onerous and impracticable to the poor by interdicting labor, the only re-

source of their poverty; and the rest commanded on those holydays, has been for many others, nothing but an occasion of profaning them by gaming, by intemperance, and by the other excesses which usually spring from the idleness and vices of the people. It is to prevent those public evils, which are so disgraceful to religion, that we have resolved to follow the example of the greater part of the Bishops of France.

For these reasons, &c.

## XXIII. A MANDATE

(March 5, 1738.)

FOR THE THIRD GENERAL VISITATION OF THE  
DIOCESS.

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IN announcing to you, this day, my dearest brethren, our third general visitation, and saying to you with the Apostle to the christians of Corinth: *Ecce tertio hoc venio ad vos*;\* we may well add with the same Apostle, when he visited the churches of Asia, on his way to Jerusalem, that this is the last time we shall have the consolation of seeing you. *Et nunc ego scio, quia amplius non videbitis faciem meam, vos omnes*

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\*2. Cor. c. xiii. v. 1. .



*per quos transivi prædicans regnum Dei.\** The patience of the Lord has already too long borne our episcopacy, and deferred giving you in our stead, a Bishop after his own heart, who might repair our faults, co-operate more faithfully in his merciful designs towards you, and perfect among you the work of the gospel, which we have but feebly commenced. In awaiting the close of our career, which cannot be now distant, we shall not cease to carry you in our paternal bosom, nor shall the infirmities of age ever weaken the tender love which we have always entertained for our flock: too happy would we be, could we be assured that our tenderness was as useful to you, as it has been real and sincere. Prepare then, my dearest brethren, to receive in our humble person, Christ himself—the Sovereign Pastor and Bishop of your souls: † it is He, of whom we are but the feeble organs, that will visit, console, and instruct you, by our mouth. Although, as the same Apostle said to the faithful of Corinth, *our bodily presence* should appear *weak* to the eyes of worldlings and our

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\* Acts. c. xx. v. 25. † Peter. c. ii. v. 25.

speech *contemptible*\* to the false wisdom of pride, it is nevertheless Jesus Christ who will speak by us; it is He who will appear to you in our person, and who will conceal Himself under the humiliating exterior of our weakness and our mortality. Prepare then the way of this Pontiff of goods eternal, who is about to erect *his throne of grace*† in your churches, to pour out abundant blessings on all those, who shall approach Him with that confidence which love inspires, and with that profound conviction of those miseries and wants, which render the divine support so necessary to man.

As to you, my venerable brethren, who are associated to our priesthood and our ministry, and who participate with us in the care of the large flock committed to our pastoral solicitude, we confide in the Lord that the graces of this visitation will be poured on you, in still greater abundance than on your people: the more sublime and perilous your duties are, the more do you require new succors to fortify in you what is beginning to weaken, to confirm what is already tottering, and to re-

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\*2. Cor. c. x. v. 10.

†Heb. c. iv. v. 16.

kindle that fire of charity and zeal which is, perhaps, becoming extinct.

We ourselves, charged with a more general solicitude, and more exposed to yield under the heavy burden, which the inscrutable designs of Providence have imposed on us ; we have need of being reanimated by the example of the great number of virtuous pastors whom the mercy of Jesus Christ still preserves to this diocess, and whom we shall have the consolation of meeting in our journeys ; that thus the falling-off, inseparable from age, and still more from the fund of our corruption, may be prevented or retarded.

We hope then, venerable brethren, that you will have the same joy at seeing us again, which we shall feel in finding you still at the head of your respective flocks, feeding them with the bread of the sacred word, edifying and animating them by your example, sanctifying them by the helps and graces of the sacraments, and preparing all to bear, one day, to the feet of the Sovereign Pastor, the fruit of your labors and your cares, and to form with yourselves a portion of the everlasting church of the First-born, in heaven.

For these reasons, &c.

## XXIV. A MANDATE

(June 16, 1739.)

TO SING THE TE DEUM, IN THANKSGIVING FOR THE  
PEACE CONCLUDED BETWEEN THE KING AND THE  
EMPEROR.

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**W**E have always wept, my dear brethren, over the carnage and horrors of the late war : even the advantages which we gained could not console us for the deplorable effusion of christian blood ; and our solemn thanksgivings at the foot of the altar, were rather pious vows for peace, than songs of joy for our victories. The spirit of wisdom and moderation which guides the monarch, seemed also to sway our armies, and they were never more disposed to prefer the happiness of having no enemies, to the glory of vanquishing them, than during a

war in which they exhibited such proofs of valor, as never before challenged the admiration of men.

But however laudable the desire of peace, it was then neither wise nor possible to expect it. Two august houses, royal from the remotest times, and constantly occupied in vindicating by force of arms, the glory of a superior authority in Europe, had engaged nations and states, and almost the whole universe in their quarrels: the hearts of men seemed as irreconcilable as their interests; the terrible voice of God's anger, roused by our crimes, had, as it were, shook the whole earth with the fierce and appalling sound of war: *Dedit vocem suam, mota est terra; conturbatae sunt gentes, et inclinata sunt regna;*\* all were either involved in the mighty contest, or preparing to enter it, and the sanguinary struggle so far from relenting, seemed to be extending its desolating fury to those states which had, till then, remained quiet spectators of its progress.

What a prodigy, my brethren! at the time when the flame of discord, raging more fierce-

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\* Psalm. 45. v. 7.

ly than ever, seemed likely to go out no more, the Lord has made a universal calm succeed to the storm of war that agitated all Europe! *Venite et videte opera Domini, quæ posuit prodigia super terram, auferrens bella usque ad finem terræ.\**

The suspension of hostilities having already permitted you to anticipate the happiness of this miraculous peace, will diminish your surprise and perhaps your gratitude at its ratification. But be ever mindful of that memorable hour in which, contrary to all expectation, it was first announced to you as certain, and never forget the solemn and hearty thanksgiving which you all then offered with general acclamation to the Lord, amidst the surprise and joy of so happy an occurrence.

Without doubt, my dear brethren, the pacific dispositions of the King, even in the midst of victory, had moved the Lord to bestow on us this singular and unexpected favor. The wise principles in which he was educated, taught him to regard war, even when most fortunate, as one of the sharpest scourges of God's

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\*Psalm. 45. vv. 9. 10.

anger upon the sins of men : he was persuaded that conquests weaken and exhaust the very states which they aggrandize ; that the most glorious success of arms is of little value, when it does not serve to lighten the burdens, and dry up the tears, of a brave but impoverished people ; that kings have been established by God, rather to be the fathers and protectors of their subjects, than the conquerors of their neighbours ; and that in subjugating other nations by force of money and blood, they generally lose the confidence and love of their own people.

Let us pray, my dear brethren, that those virtuous and heroic dispositions may never be effaced from the soul of a prince so dear to France ; and that the wise minister who has engraved them betimes on the royal heart, may continue to improve them, as long as the love and interests of the nation, and the repose of Europe, require his counsels.

For these reasons, &c.

## XXV.      **A MANDATE**

(*Jan. 20, 1743.*)

FOR THE MISSIONS OF THE DIOCESS.

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As the hardness of our heart, my dearest brethren, is, every day, opposing new obstacles to the infinite mercies of God towards us; it would seem that on his side, his paternal bounty is never weary of trying new methods to recal us from our vices. He strikes our lands with sterility; he suffers the necessities of the state to augment our public burdens, whilst he cuts off a part of the means which would enable us to bear them. He has scattered contagion and death over our towns and fields; we have seen the father snatched from his children, and the beloved child from his parents, at our very sides: we have not yet ceased to complain, of those public calamities; but we do not think of causing those infidelities and crimes to cease, which have provoked the wrath and chastisements of heaven.



In vain do our pastors proclaim from the christian pulpit, that the times will become more favourable, if our morals become more virtuous and pure. In vain do they make our temples resound with the public prayers of the church, to render heaven more propitious to your sufferings; you run to them to solicit a change of seasons and not a change of heart: you pray that this perishable earth may change its barrenness into a happy fertility; but you do not pray that your sterile heart may become the good ground mentioned in the gospel, which watered by the dews of heaven produceth fruit a hundred fold. You wish to soften an angry God by your supplications, but you will touch nothing that provokes him, in your morals; that is to say, you wish that a God of sanctity would favour your passions, by restoring to you that abundance and prosperity which has hitherto nurtured and inflamed them. Your public supplications are rather the carnal clamors of a guilty multitude who grieve to find themselves deprived of the cherished object of their passions, than the true sighs of assembled penitents, who approach the foot of the altar to testify the sincerity of their contrition, for the abuse which they had long made, of the favors of heaven.

And how can you expect, my dear brethren, that prayers so defiled will appease an irritated God, or that they will obtain from his bounty, those blessings which you have been long abusing and which he could not grant you, except in his anger and as the occasions of your eternal perdition? Use your possessions according to the rules of faith, if you wish that the public prayers of the church should be heard for their preservation.

In vain then, my brethren, has God called you to his service by the public scourges with which he has chastised you, by the public prayers which implore their cessation, and by the remonstrances of your ordinary pastors, which should have taught you to turn your misfortunes and the public supplications of the church, to advantage. But his bounty is not to be overcome: to all those external succors which you abuse, he adds the secret and continual aids of grace. There is no sinner among you whose false security is not sometimes disturbed, by the hidden impulse of sharp remorse: he causes satiety itself to wean the guilty from their crimes: he makes them form a thousand resolutions to emerge, one day, from the frightful abyss in which they are plunged; but those

very desires always tranquillize them on their actual state, and go no farther than to make them form some vague project of future amendment, and to remain for the present, quietly as they are.

Thus it is, my brethren, that nothing awakens you from your lethargy, neither calamitous seasons, nor the public succors of the church; nor the secret impulses of grace; and for those who resemble you, death is always the fatal moment, in which their eyes, freed from the darkness of the body, open at last, but in vain, to the light of truth.

It is therefore to prevent this irreparable misfortune, that the Father of Mercies is about to make a last effort to compel you to enter, even now, into yourselves. He sent Angels of vengeance, of old, to his people, when deaf to all his warnings, they had carried their iniquities to the last extremity; he rained fire from heaven and reduced their proud cities to ashes: but it was not the fire of wrath but of charity, that Christ came to kindle upon earth: the Angels whom He sends and who are about to appear among you, are ministers of peace and reconciliation; and he will give *his sacred word* in their mouth.

That word of magnificence and power, which instead of destroying cities and exterminating their inhabitants, shall create in the midst of you a new heaven and a new earth: *Vox Domini in virtute: vox Domini in magnificentia.\**

That all-powerful word, which shall cast down the cedars of Lebanon—every edifice of pride, every fortune accumulated by fraud and injustice: *Vox Domini confringentis cedros Libani.*

That burning word of fire, of charity and zeal, which shall extinguish every impure flame, and light up chaste and holy affections in your hearts: *Vox Domini intercidentis flammam ignis.*

That fruitful word, which will cause those timid, slow and irresolute christians, who have long resisted the impulse of grace, to feel the throes of the spirit, and bring forth the new man in their hearts: *Vox Domini præparantis cervos.*

That Apostolic word, that voice of the sons of Zebedee, which shall shake the deserts; that is to say, souls the most hardened and unmoveable in iniquity, who make an impious boast of their impenitence, and in whose bosom no seed nor culture has ever been able to produce any thing but thorns: *Vox Domini concutientis desertum.*

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\* Psalm. 28. v. 4. &c.

In fine, that piercing word which shall penetrate the lowest depths of the guilty conscience, shall light up its darkest recesses; and by a sincere revelation, dissipate the thick chaos in which it has been so long enveloped: *Vox Domini revelabit condensa.*

It will be a beneficent word, and will not refuse its aid to any description of persons; it will proffer remedies for the most incurable and hopeless diseases; it will exclude no applicant from its solicitude and its benefits; that all may sing together in the temple of the Lord, the powers of his grace and the prodigy which has changed their hearts: *Et in Templo ejus omnes dicent gloriam.*

This then, my brethren, may be considered the last resource which the Almighty will draw from the treasures of his mercy, for your salvation. What a misfortune for you, if you should consummate your reprobation, by rendering it unavailing! Alas! I am filled with horror, at the very idea of the dire anathema; you would, at the same time, shut out the patience and mercy of God, from you, for ever. Yes, my brethren, I repeat it, the present is the moment that must decide on your eternity.

Grant, O Lord, that it may also be the moment marked in thy eternal counsels for the

salvation of this flock! may the excess of their miseries and infidelities become for them a pre-sage of thy abundant mercies. It is the utter extremity of their maladies, that makes us hope the success of the remedies, which thou pre-parest now to heal them; do thou, thyself, guide the hand of the charitable physicians whom thou sendest to apply them. Guide their tongues that they may persuade thy people to love the wholesome bitterness of penance, under which they will find joy and peace. Give their ministry that efficacy, which they themselves cannot give it; and lighten the weight of their Apostolic labors, by rendering them useful. They will find their toils light and sweet, O my God, if, invested with thy strength and with the honourable title of thy envoys, they shall be able to relieve the sinners to whom they are sent, from the heavy load of crime which presses them to the earth.

We recommend the pastors of the neighbouring parishes, to exhort their people to profit of the advantages which the vicinity of the missions offers them, and to assist as often as they shall be able at these pious exercises.

For these reasons, &c.

## A DISCOURSE

ADDRESSED TO A COMMUNITY OF RELIGIOUS LADIES.

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**I** WILL not conceal from you, my dear sisters, the profound grief with which I am filled, on this occasion. Was it for you to afflict me? and is it from this house that I ought to expect troubles and sorrows in my ministry? You ought, my dear sisters, to be the consolation of my episcopacy, as you have always been its most cherished portion: I should come here, only to be consoled by your piety, for the disorders and the scandals, which cannot fail to occur in the large diocese which Providence has entrusted to my care. To the regularity, the fervor, the peace and union which I should

find in this sacred asylum, I ought to look for the solace of those pains and sorrows, which reach me from other quarters: you should render the yoke of my episcopacy more tolerable, and yet you aggravate it; you render it more overwhelming and add a new load of bitterness to my other burdens. Once more then, is this the return, which a pastor who has always loved you tenderly, should expect from your obedience and gratitude?

Be mindful of the advice of Saint Paul, to the faithful of Galatia, who had fallen away from their first fervor by the dissensions which had risen amongst them; for loss of peace is the inevitable consequence of the decay of regularity and fervor. You formerly pressed forward, writes the Apostle, with so much concord and zeal, in the way of God, that you were the model of all the other churches of Asia, and the glory of those who first announced Jesus Christ amongst you: *Currebatis bene*.\* How then have you fallen away from this first grace? and what is the fatal obstacle which has arrested and disconcerted you? The poisonous

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\* Galat. c. v. ver. 7.



leaven of dissension has corrupted the gifts of God among you: I hear of nothing but your schisms and contentions; some are of Paul, others of Cephias or Apollo, none of Jesus Christ: was it then in the name of Paul or Cephias that you were baptized, or not rather in the name of Christ?

Behold, my dear sisters, what I here repeat to you, this day, in the bitterness of my heart. You walked formerly with so much fervor and union, in the practice of all your duties: *Currebatis bene*; your piety and wisdom were so conspicuous that you were proposed as a model to all the other monasteries of this extensive diocess: you spread on all sides, the sweet odor of Jesus Christ; your community was never mentioned but with high commendation of its unanimity and concord; you were the consolation of my predecessors and the glory of those servants of God who first conducted you in the paths of religious perfection. What cursed leaven of division, then, has soured and corrupted a mass, once so pure and holy? some are of Paul, others of Cephias, but none of Christ: but are you then the spouses of Paul or of Cephias, or not rather the spouses of Jesus Christ?

And was it then fitting, that after having been the joy and solace of my predecessors, you should be sisters of sorrow to me, and that my episcopacy should be reserved for scenes so distressing and so heart-rending to its possessor? Behold, my dear sisters, the true source of all your misfortunes: attached to your guides by motives altogether human, God does not bless their ministry in your regard: vanity, prepossession, and other motives still more censurable, determine your choice of a director: each one wishes to elevate the talents and lights of her Paul above the talents and lights of the Cephas of the other; and from those puerile attachments and predilections, spring antipathies, dislikes, cabals, the unprofitable use, and frequently the criminal abuse and profanation, of the sacraments; regrets, chagrin, disgust of your state, and in fine, divisions and dissensions, the greatest scourge with which God can strike a community of virgins. To similar evils may we trace the disgrace and decay of so many holy monasteries, which were once so fervent and so respectable, but over which the church now mourns, because they are become the scandal and mockery of the people, and the reproach of a religious life, by the dis-

sipation of their morals and the total abandonment of the virtues of their state.

Fear, my dear sisters, lest the same misfortune come upon you : when the stones of the building begin to loosen, the whole edifice is on the point of tumbling : it shakes and nods to its fall. Restore to me, my dear sisters, the joy and consolation of which you have deprived me : there is yet time. The ancient spirit of piety is not totally extinguished among you : God has not yet entirely abandoned you ; he is withdrawing, he threatens, but you still see him : he no longer pours on you, those abundant graces, which once made this sacred house, a public edification, and which sanctified the many christian virgins and exemplary superiors, whose still recent memory ought to overwhelm you with confusion and grief : your danger is great ; this I proclaim to you on the part of God ; but the evil is not without remedy. God has united you, my dear sisters, by the bonds of the same rule and of the same asylum : let not men then, separate what God has joined : have, all, but one heart and one soul, as you have all but one spouse and one hope : seek not empty consolations from without, in the vain succors of men ; seek true comfort in the

mutual tenderness and charity which you owe to one another: do not turn the asylum of joy, of peace and of innocence, to which God, in his unbounded mercy, has called you from the corruption of the world, do not, I say, turn it into the sorrowful abode of trouble, of discord and chagrin. Receive those guides whom Jesus Christ sends you, through my ministry, as you would receive Jesus Christ himself: those whom your own taste would select, are not in your regard, the envoys of Christ. They have not his mission but yours, and consequently no benediction can be attached to their ministry: under their guidance you would still languish in the same imperfections, the same dislikes, the same attachments, the same weaknesses.

If ever virgin possessed the right of choosing for herself a guide, it was doubtless the most holy of all virgins, the mother of God. Yet she waits till Christ himself, on his cross, points out to her, him, whom he wished should hold his place in her regard, on earth: she might have asked Peter, the first and the chief of all the Apostles, and in whom the superiority of lights and of talents, as well as the pre-eminence of dignity, should reside: she might have preferred James or Jude the brethren of our

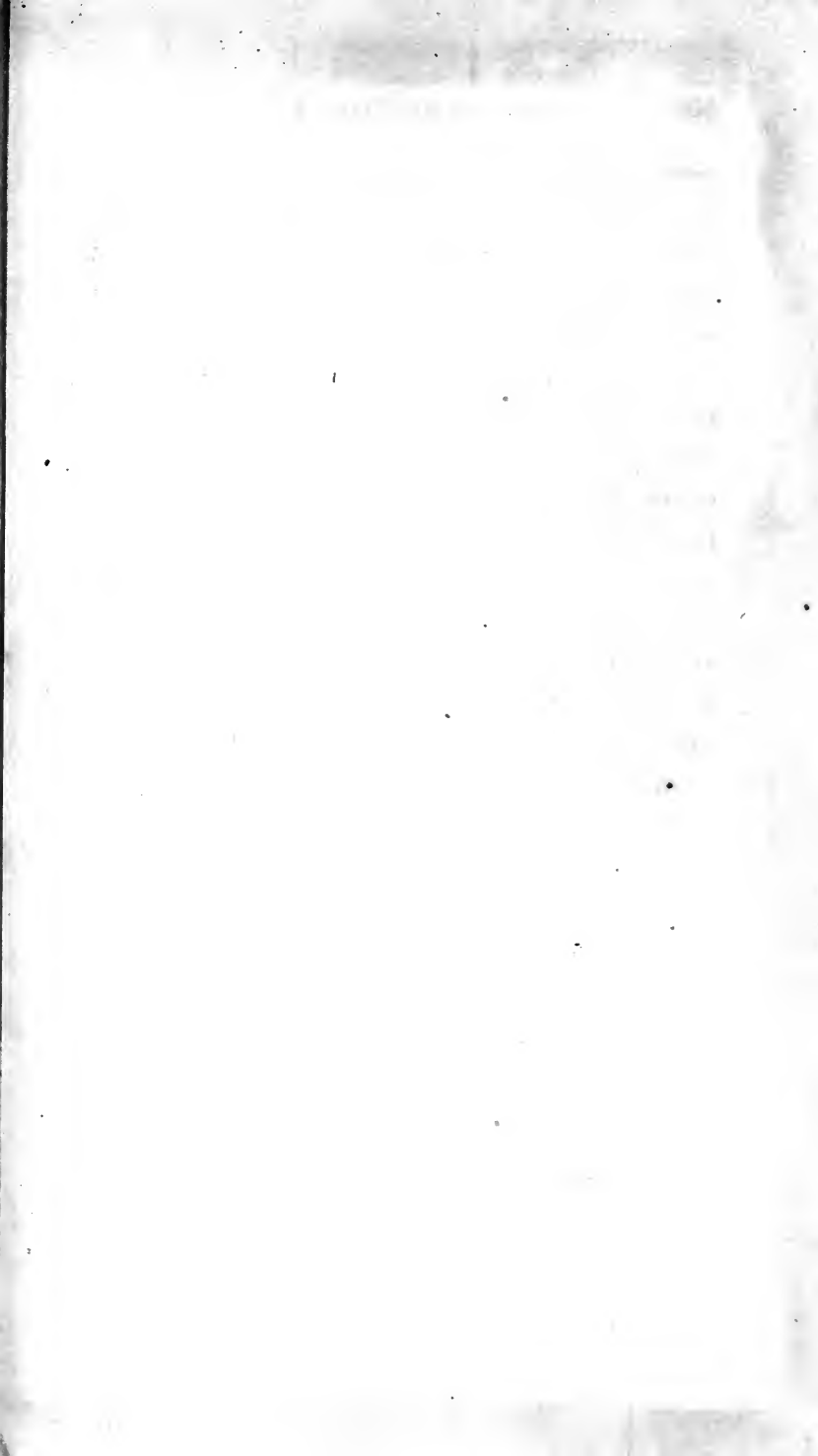
Lord, and who were united to her by blood; but she knew too well, that we are never safe in our own choice: she attaches herself to Saint John, to whom her divine Son confides her, and remains as docile to him as to Jesus Christ himself.

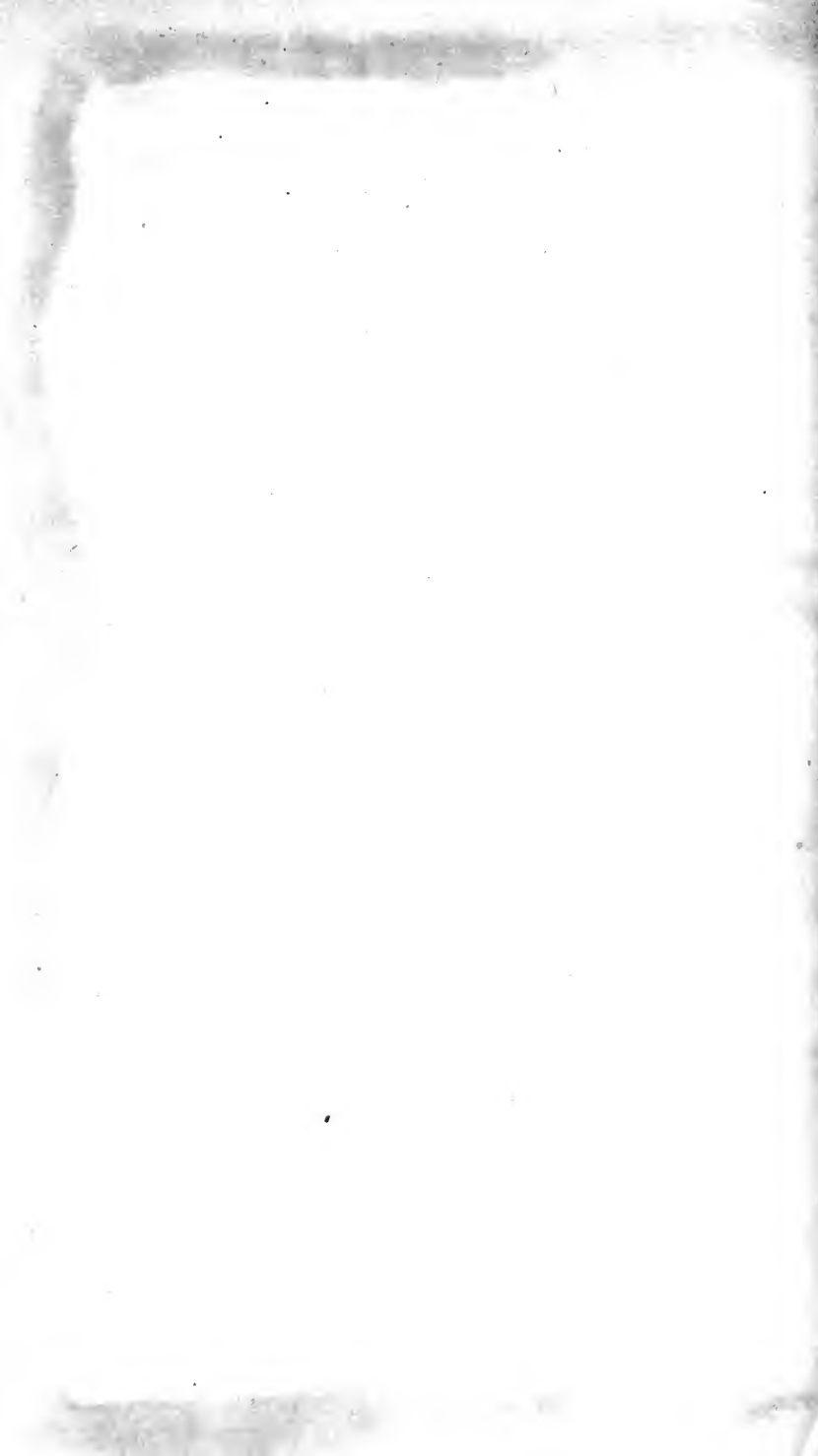
Never lose sight, my dear sisters, of this great model. Hold yourselves obedient to the direction of Jesus Christ; and esteem no guides safe or useful for you, but those whom he names for you, by my mouth: this blind submission to his orders, is itself, a disposition the best calculated, to draw down a great benediction on the ministry of those, who shall be appointed to conduct your souls. Do not compel the God of peace to remove far from you; you know that he abides only in the dwelling of peace: invite him to return to this sacred asylum, and you will recal him into your hearts: prepare yourselves to approach with fruit, to the holy mysteries, those mysteries of tenderness and love, which are profaned whenever they enter a heart tainted by the slightest aversion, so that the unworthy receiver, eats and drinks in them, his own condemnation.

Console me, then, my dear sisters, by a perfect reconciliation, at the foot of the crucifix:

depose there, whatever may yet remain, of secret antipathy and dislike: close for ever, the wound which your dissensions have made in my heart, and before I quit this place, give to each other the mutual kiss of peace. Let your hearts, now returned to your duty, go still farther than those external marks of charity; and let your tears, whilst they purify your souls, be as the blood of your grief, to confirm, this day, before Jesus Christ, your new alliance with one another: you forfeited every thing, in losing your peace; in recovering it, you will regain all things. I give it to you, my dear sisters, I leave it with you, and I hope that it will never again depart from this habitation.

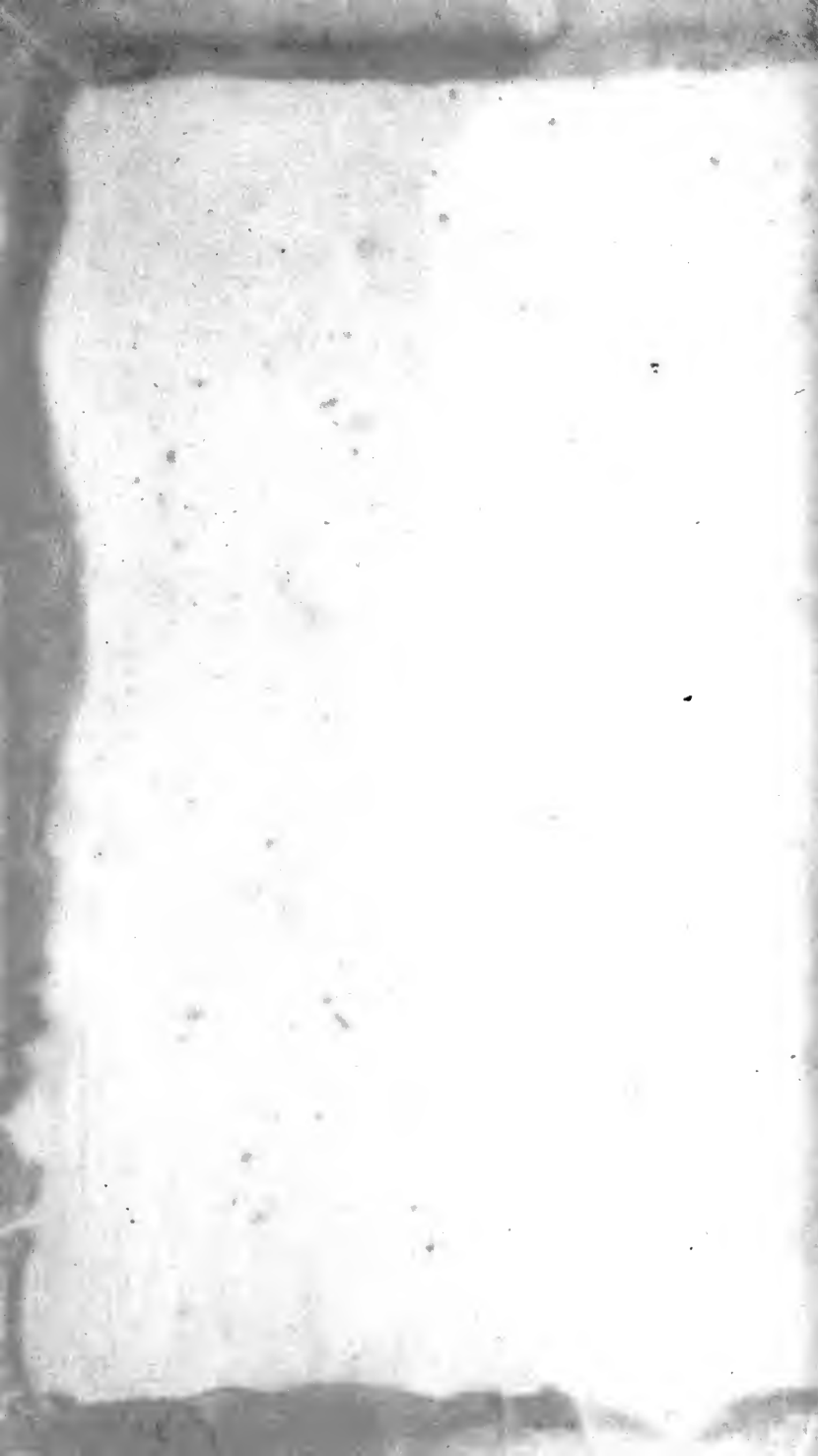
THE END.











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