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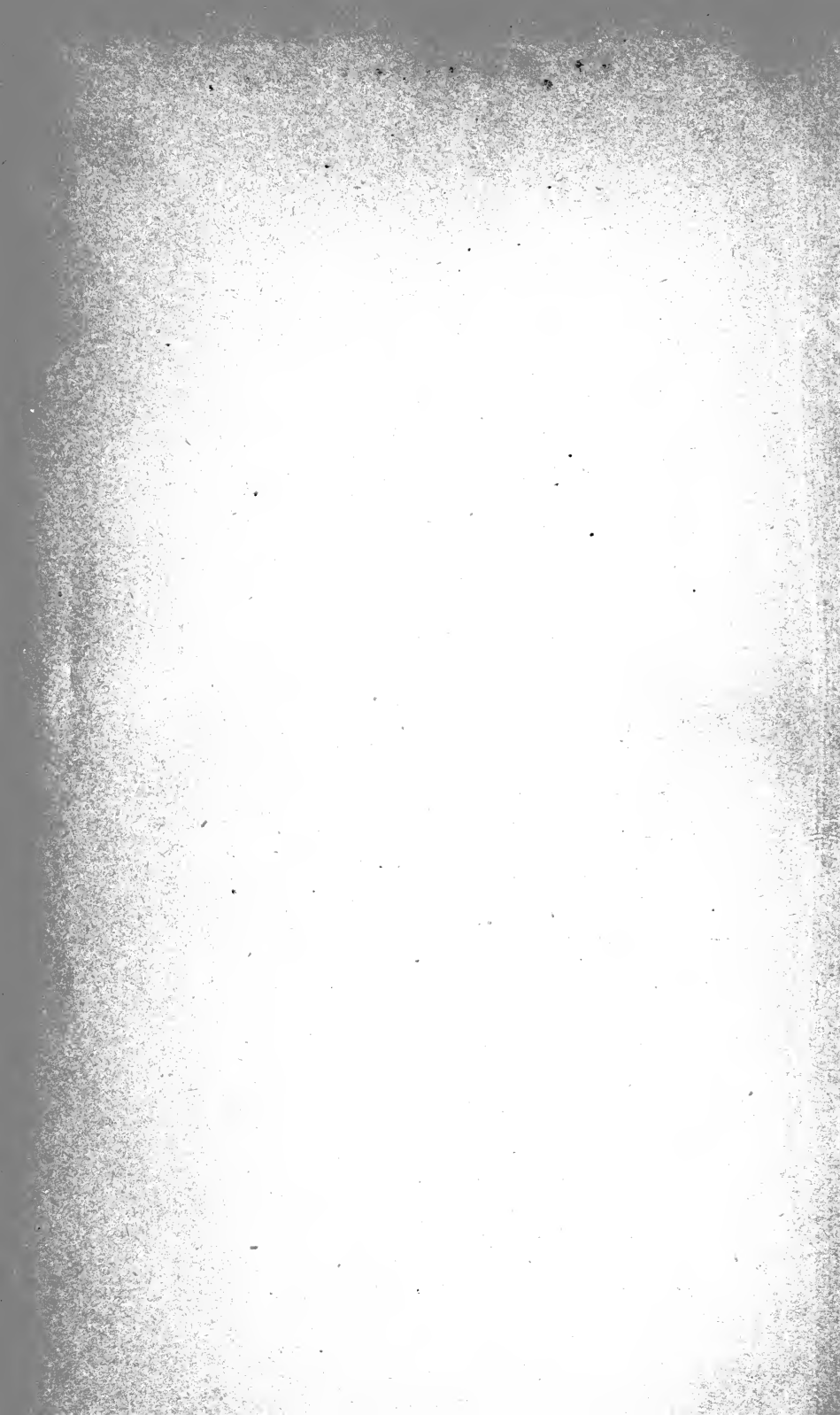
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XXVI. 9 ✓

NEW AND OLD (SERMONS),

A MONTHLY REPERTORY OF CATHOLIC PULPIT ELOQUENCE

EMBRACING

TWO SERMONS FOR EACH SUNDAY

AND

HOLY-DAY OF OBLIGATION

OF THE

ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR.

EDITED,

(IN CONJUNCTION WITH MANY OTHER CLERGYMEN,)

BY

Rev. AUGUSTINE WIRTH, O.S.B.

ELIZABETH, N. J.



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REV. AUGUSTINE WIRTH, O. S. B.

WHITSUNDAY.

AS THE SPIRIT THAT GOVERNS US, SO OUR LIFE.

"Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?" Acts 19 : 2.

By his glorious Resurrection, my beloved brethren, Jesus Christ was given back to his disciples, whom his death on the Cross had filled with sorrow and anguish. But he remained only for a short time visibly among them, for, forty days after his Resurrection, when his Apostles and disciples were assembled on Mount Olivet, he was elevated in the sight of all, and carried up into heaven. The day of his Ascension was to them a day of twofold and intense emotion; it was a day of *joy* as well as a day of *sadness*: a day of joy, since on it, their Lord and Master was glorified in their sight, and his heavenly commission confirmed in an extraordinary manner; but it was also a day of sorrow, because in the course of it they were called to part again so soon with him, who had been the only object of their joy and love, of their confidence and salvation. Christ, however, had foreseen their bitter affliction; he had foretold to them that he must leave them to return to his Father, but he had promised them at the same time, that he would send another Comforter, who would abide with them forever. This promise, my dear brethren, was no less fulfilled in its turn, than were the predictions of his Life, Death, and Resurrection; ten days after his Ascension, and fifty days after his Resurrection, the promised Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, with the fulness of all his graces, came upon the Apostles who were awaiting him in prayer, assembled with the Blessed Mother in the Cenacle. "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind coming; and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them cloven tongues, as it were of fire, and it sat upon each of them; and they were filled with the Holy Ghost; and they began to speak with diverse tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak." (Acts 2 : 2-5.) They began to preach with such power and unction, my brethren, that after St. Peter's first sermon, three thousand souls were converted; and these neophytes, like the Apostles themselves, were totally changed and reborn of the Holy Ghost, so that stripped of every attach-

ment to the goods of this world, they belonged, with all they possessed and were, to the Lord, and became in him, as it were, but one heart and one soul. By the descent of the Holy Ghost upon men, the kingdom of heaven was transplanted to the earth; and the only infallible mark by which to determine the citizens of that kingdom was not merely some certain external action or exercise,—not merely an oral profession of faith, but solely the Spirit whom they had received. “You believe, but have you also received the Holy Ghost?” This was the principal question addressed to all, and in its answer was involved the whole distinction between the Christian and the unbeliever.

Have you received the Holy Ghost? This is a question, my brethren, which each one of us should frequently put to himself, especially on this day, when we solemnly commemorate the first miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, and the foundation of the kingdom of God upon earth. The consideration of this subject shall, then, appropriately furnish the subject of our meditation, to-day. Hence, my beloved brethren, I shall proceed to ask: What is the spirit that governs us? Is it

- I. *The spirit of the world, or*
- II. *The Spirit that proceeds from the Father and the Son?*

I. That which enlivens the whole man, determines his actions, and is the cause and motive of his undertakings, is what is called the spirit of man. All depends on the character of this spirit. Where the good Spirit predominates, man is good; but where the bad spirit, on the other hand, rules and reigns, man is correspondingly bad. Hence, the spirit that governs an immortal soul, may be either the spirit of the world, or the Spirit of God. The Sacred Scriptures, in fact, draw a clear distinction between the children of the world and the children of God, declaring on the authority of the Eternal Truth, that no man can be a child of the world and a child of God at one and the same time: “You cannot serve God and Mammon.” “Whosoever becometh a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of Christ;” the spirit of the world expels the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God banishes the spirit of the world; there can be no peace, or truce,—there can be nothing in common,—between them. “There are two laws in us,” says the Apostle, “the law of the spirit and the law of the members;” and we must confess with him, my dear brethren, that these two laws are continually waging an intestine war against each other. The flesh is fighting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. Our goodness or wickedness, dear Christians, depends on the supremacy of one or other of these laws, so that we may justly say: “Man is such as the law is by which he is governed.” This is a very vital point; you cannot but agree with me, that a man can ask himself no more important question than this: “By what spirit am I governed,—by the spirit of the world, or by the Spirit of

God?" Each of these spirits produces its own effects; each has certain marks, by which it may be unerringly recognized.

Of the spirit of the world, St. John says: "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life." According to these words, the spirit of the world manifests itself in the individual as well as in the mass, by a triple concupiscence. This three-fold passion takes possession of all his powers and faculties, and governs him entirely; now, by the inordinate desire of temporal goods; again, by the lust of sensual gratifications; and still again, by the unlawful and excessive craving and seeking for human glory. There are people, my brethren, and alas! their name is legion, who are so mastered by the passion for temporal goods, that nothing can arouse them to action, or command their persevering efforts, save the prospect of making money or accumulating real estate. Such men do everything through a motive of self-interest. Wealth and luxury are the treasures of their hearts, on which their affections are unalterably fixed; and to these idols (which alone they adore) they sacrifice the eternal interests of both soul and body. Men of this description are governed by the spirit of the world; and not only have not as yet received the Holy Ghost, but what is more, they never can receive him, so long as they remain in this miserable state. The words of our Blessed Lord, himself: "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into heaven," are specially applicable in this case, since those who desire to become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snares of the devil. It is only by constant vigilance, and a spirit of earnest detachment, that those who live in the possession of wealth can hope to save their souls; and for this reason, St. Paul wrote of old to Timothy: "Charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded, nor to hope in uncertain riches, but in the living God (who giveth us abundantly all things to enjoy); and to do good; to be rich in good works; to distribute readily; to communicate *to others*. To lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may obtain true life." (1. Tim. 6 : 17-20.)

Others, caring little about riches, are bent on the gratifications of the flesh; and imagine that they were created for no other purpose than the enjoyment of sensual pleasure. Such unhappy creatures grovel in the mire of impure passions,—wallow, like swine, in the filth of their foul, criminal disorders. They forget the words and warning of the Inspired Writer that no unclean person "hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God," (Ephes. 5 : 5); and so they walk deliberately into the fire and brimstone of eternal damnation, with that other vast throng of drunkards and gluttons, of whom St. Paul says: "There are some whose God is their belly, and whose end is destruction." People of this description are ruled by the spirit of the world. They have no spiritual discernment for higher or holier things, and hence, the Apostle says: "The Spirit of God does not

dwell in them, because they have become flesh; and flesh has no part in the kingdom of God."

The third class, my dear brethren, comprises those whose whole satisfaction is in the good opinion of others; who, in short, "love the glory of men more than the glory of God." (John 12: 43.) Extremely delighted with the (oftentimes false) homage of their fellow-creatures, their every action and aim being directed towards calling forth fresh commendations, praises and flatteries, these, my brethren, are the proud, vain, presumptuous, and arrogant people of whom it is written, that God resists their prayer, while he gives grace to the humble.

All these are ruled by the spirit of the world, and have nothing in common with the Spirit of God. Reason, alone, should tell them, that they are led astray by that false and sensual spirit; for, as the tree is known by its fruits, so the spirit which rules man is clearly known by the manifest fruits of his works. The votaries of the world are never satisfied with their lot; on the contrary, the spirit which animates them, makes them every day more uneasy and unhappy. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing," says the Wise Man, "nor is the ear filled with hearing," (Eccles. 1: 8); and the passions of these unhappy worldlings are as insatiable as they are vile and powerful. He that has much, wishes to have more; and he that is high, endeavors to climb still higher; and thus, those who are governed by the spirit of the world are never happy. They seek happiness everywhere except where it is alone to be found—in God; and being constantly and bitterly disappointed in their quest, they frequently become weary of life, and put a period to their own existence, appearing, unsummoned, before the dread tribunal of their Judge.

For this reason, at all times, my brethren, but particularly on this day, there is no question more natural or more important than this: "'Have I received the Holy Ghost,' or does the unholy spirit of the world rule me?" Let us answer this question conscientiously by considering the fruits and effects of the Holy Ghost.

II. As the tree, so the fruit;—as the spirit of man, so his works.

Where the Holy Ghost is, there is *love for divine truth*; for that heavenly Spirit elevates the mind of man, and opens the eyes of his soul to the pure light from above. He awakens, in fine, a love for everything that God has revealed. Where there is indifference in hearing the word of God, carelessness and lukewarmness in observing it, and in the keeping of the divine commandments; where another word is heard and listened to with greater satisfaction, where the word of God has not yet become the treasure of the heart,—there, the Holy Ghost does not dwell. Such a criminal indifference and coldness is a sure sign, that, even though a man belong exteriorly to the number of the faithful, and share diligently in all their external exercises, he is no true Christian at heart; he is, in effect, nothing

more or less than a hypocrite, since the very essence and soul of Christianity, namely, the Holy Ghost, is wanting to him.

Where the Holy Ghost is, *there is true charity*. St. Paul says: "The charity of God is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us." (Rom. 5: 5.) This festival, my dear brethren, proves the truth of these words. The last vestige of selfishness and self-interest with which the disciples of Jesus were infected to a greater or less degree, totally disappeared the moment they received the Holy Ghost. None of them, thenceforth, thought of himself or of his own private advantage, but each, in his turn, laid what he possessed at the feet of the Apostles. They were all ready from that hour of Pentecostal grace to make a sacrifice, not only of their goods but also of themselves, for the love of Jesus; to live no more to themselves, because they lived and loved for God's sake alone. Where such charity as *this* is found, there, my brethren, the Holy Ghost infallibly dwells. But where there is no genuine charity, no pleasure in divine truths, there, notwithstanding a multitude of external devotions and apparent virtues, the soul possesses no true Christianity, since it is destitute of the Holy Ghost.

Understand me well, my dear brethren, and know that when I speak of the love which the Holy Ghost pours out into the hearts of the faithful, I mean quite a different sort of love from that which the children of this world have continually in their mouths and hearts. It is a love, which is not based upon flesh and blood, but upon faith and hope; a love which resists the desires of sensuality and subjects them to the commandments of God; a love which constrains man cheerfully to fulfill the will of God and submit to his ordinances: "He that loveth me," says Christ, "will keep my commandments," (John 14: 23); and this, (he further gives us to understand,) will cause his faithful follower neither trouble nor pain, for to such a one, (he says with consoling tenderness,) "My yoke is sweet, and my burden is light." (Matt. 11: 30.)

Where the Holy Ghost is, there is *intrepid heroism and unwavering firmness* in the cause of right. How timid and hesitating, how faint-hearted and cowardly, were the Apostles before the coming of the Holy Ghost! But after his descent upon them, on that first feast of Pentecost, their timidity and faint-heartedness vanished; they gave testimony of, and for Christ in the presence of the great and mighty of this world; they did not shrink from tortures and death in defence of his name. They manifested, in fine, the greatest intrepidity; no power upon earth being able to intimidate them, or separate them from the love of Jesus. Such an unflinching adherence to Christ and his Church, such a readiness to sacrifice everything for the excellent love of Jesus, is the surest sign of the Holy Ghost's being with us. Ask yourselves, then, my brethren, whether you have such a readiness to sacrifice everything for the love of Jesus. Your habitual dispositions on this point will soon make known to you with certainty, whether you have or have not received the Holy Ghost. Where that divine Spirit is,

dear Christians, there is *true comfort and consolation in difficulties; true light in doubtful affairs*; for he is the inexhaustible fountain of comfort, nay, the Comforter himself,—as well as “the true Light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world.” (John 1 : 9.) Before that glorious feast of Pentecost, how often were the Apostles sad and dejected; but how full of joy after they had received the Holy Ghost! They rejoiced to suffer reproach and ignominy for the name of Jesus; or as the Apostle says, “In all things we suffer tribulations, but are not distressed: we are straitened, but are not destitute; we suffer persecution, but are not forsaken; we are cast down, but perish not.” (2. Cor. 4: 8, 9.)

Where the Holy Ghost is, there is *true peace*. Jesus said to his Apostles at the Last Supper: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world giveth, do I give to you.” (John 14 : 27.) The Holy Ghost brings a three-fold peace into the heart of the faithful Christian; peace with himself, peace with his neighbor, and peace with his God. *Peace with himself*. Where the spirit of the world rules, one passion wages intestine war against the other, and man is, and remains, divided in himself. But where the Spirit of God dwells, there are calmness and sweet tranquillity; all passions are subdued and subjected to the law of God; the flesh obeys the Spirit, and the Christian enjoys a holy peace even in the midst of trials and tribulations, which is a foretaste of the eternal peace to come. “There remaineth a rest to the people of God.”

Secondly, he who possesses the Spirit of God lives at *peace with others*. As the spirit of the world is the author and disseminator of discord and disunion, and as it arms every man against his brother, (each selfishly seeking his own interest,) so it is proper to the Spirit of God to yield and give to every one his own. Where the Holy Ghost is, there, my dear brethren, is good will; and there the angels witness the verification of their words on the birthnight of the Prince of Peace,—“Peace on earth to men of good will.”

Lastly, what is most essential and important of all, the Holy Ghost produces in man that *peace with God* which passeth all understanding. He, the Paraclete, he, the source and fountain of eternal Love, pours out true charity into the hearts of the faithful, and with charity, reconciliation and union with God. Witness the Apostle who says: “*He that abideth in charity, abideth in God and God in him,*” (1. John 4: 16); and again: “You have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons whereby we cry: Abba, Father.” The children of this world frequently extend to each other greetings of peace; and they praise peace as the most precious of all treasures; but, governed as they are by the unholy spirit of the world, they know not what it is to enjoy true peace, since, *there is no peace for the wicked*, saith the Lord. Where discord, hatred, enmity, envy, and the like, have their abode, there the Holy Ghost cannot and does not dwell, for the fruits of that divine Spirit

are charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, and chastity.

Now, in conclusion, my beloved brethren, ask yourselves, each one of you, the same question with which we began our meditation: "Have I received the Holy Ghost?" and pondering upon the matter I have proposed for your consideration, answer it for yourselves sincerely and conscientiously. Blessed are you, if you can respond: "Yes, I have received the Holy Spirit of God; I feel within me his love of divine truth, his charity, his heroic courage and self-sacrifice, his consolation, his light, his three-fold peace!" But if you have not yet received that holy Spirit of God, (and this, my brethren, you will soon be able to determine by the presence or absence of his celestial fruits,)—let me assure you, that there is nothing more necessary for you than to remove every obstacle to his approach, and to fit yourselves for the reception of the good Spirit which our Lord has promised to give to all that ask him. The Scriptures tell us that after the Ascension of Christ into heaven,—the Apostles, in company with our Blessed Lady, persevered with one mind in prayer; and thereby, made themselves worthy of receiving the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Imitate that beautiful example, my dear brethren; take the advice of Jesus, pray without ceasing and unite your prayer to the pure prayers of the holy Mother of God; and, while the Holy Ghost descends upon you with all his gifts and graces, God will give you a store of healing unction here below, and life everlasting hereafter in heaven. Amen.

O. S. B.

WHITSUNDAY.

THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY GHOST:—HIS PAST AND PRESENT WORK IN THE CHURCH.

The solemn festival of Pentecost, which the Church is celebrating this day, my brethren, is always to her an occasion of joy, glory, and triumph. Commemorating the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, this festival is a solemnization, as it were, of the perfection of the Church and of the fulfilment of the ancient prophecies; and, while it records the infusion of wisdom, strength, and holiness into the Apostles, it gives a pledge and security of future ecclesiastical triumphs. For the Holy Ghost is the inward soul and spirit of the Church, infusing and preserving life within her, guiding her in her teachings, animating her in her trials, and leading her constantly forward in that steady and successful career which, notwithstanding many tribulations, is to issue in her eternal victory over sin and hell. Hence, upon every recurring festival of Pentecost, the Church is filled with a triple joy. She looks back upon the *past*, and remembers the glorious day upon which the great gift was so majestically conferred upon her, in the person of those dear ones, those Apostles of her divine Spouse, assembled in that upper chamber in Jerusalem. She feels, also, the *present indwelling* of the same holy Spirit, true and faithful in his union with her. And she looks cheerfully and confidently forward to *the future*, knowing that the promise so solemnly registered by the Eternal Truth can never fail; that the Holy Spirit is her Spouse and will remain faithfully united with her forever. In order that, upon this glorious solemnity, we may all share in the joy of the Church, and realize the blessings of the festival, let us turn our thoughts, my dear brethren, upon this holy Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, and study

- I. *What he is;*
- II. *What he has done;* and
- III. *What he is still doing in the Church.*

I. Let us elevate our souls, beloved Christians, to a contemplation of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, and consider the work of the Holy Ghost therein. With the Father and the Son, he forms that sublime and incomprehensible mystery. He is the Third Person of the Blessed Three; not the third in time, as if existing after the other Two, but the third in order, perfecting the union which for all eternity has subsisted in that inward mystery of the life of God. As the Father was always Father, generating

the Son from all eternity, as the Son was always Son to the Eternal Father, born of him before all ages; so the Holy Ghost, for all eternity, has been continuing in that ineffable mystery his work of union, binding Father and Son in a unity of Godhead, and sharing with them the same indivisible Divinity. He is the Love of the Father for the Son, and he is the return of Love from the Son to the Father, proceeding from both as from one principle, and with them to be forever adored and glorified.

To each of the divine Persons an outward action is assigned. Creation to the Father, Redemption to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost the work of sealing and perfecting by his outward operation, that which the Father and the Son have commenced, but have designedly left imperfect. Thus, in Creation, the Father *with* the Son and *in* the Son brings the world into existence. But it is still a confused, misshapen, and imperfect chaos,—an undefined collection of matter. But lo! the Spirit moves over the waters, and God says: “*Let there be light;*” and then, through the influence of that moving and living Spirit “*there was light,*” (Gen. 1: 3,) and creation becomes at once an object to be seen and admired in all the exquisite perfection and harmony of its works.

So again, in Revelation, God makes known truths which he communicates to man from the secret treasury of his wisdom. But it is through the workings of the Holy Ghost, that the world is enlightened with the knowledge of these truths. Hence, the Nicene Creed tells us of this Third Person of the adorable Trinity: “*Who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who spoke by the Prophets.*” And the same truth is repeated by St. Peter, when he reminds us of what we owe to his communication of the Holy Ghost to men: “*Holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost.*” (2. Pet. 1: 21.) Therefore it is, as you know, my dear brethren, that when we implore Almighty God to send upon us his light and his truth, we always invoke the Holy Ghost, beseeching him to instruct and enlighten the hearts of his faithful children.

Grace too—that great and important gift, without which we can do nothing, but by the help of which we can do all things—is a communication of the Holy Ghost. Taken in its twofold meaning of habitual and actual Grace, it is the work within us of him, who upon this day came down upon the Church. Habitual grace is that indwelling of the Holy Ghost in our souls, to which St. Paul testifies when he says: “*Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*” (1. Cor. 3: 16.) It is against the dreadful loss of this blessing that the Psalmist prayed, when he supplicated God: “*Take not thy Holy Spirit from me,*” (Ps. 50: 13); and against the abuse of whose inspirations St. Paul cautions us, when he warns us “*not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of Redemption.*” (Ephes. 4: 30.) Actual grace, furthermore, is that supernatural help of which the same Apostle declares: “*The spirit, also, helpeth our infirmity,*” (Rom. 8: 26); and of

which he does not hesitate to say: "*I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me,*" (Phil. 4: 13); and again: "*I have labored more abundantly, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.*" (1. Cor. 15: 10.)

And in that other greatest work of God, my brethren, the mystery of the Incarnation,—it is by the operation of the Holy Ghost, as you well know, that the mystery is effected. For when the anxious Virgin hears from the Archangel, that she has been decreed by God to be the Mother of the long-expected Redeemer of the world, when she asks in wonder how such a marvel can possibly come to pass consistently with her virginity, she receives the answer: "*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee*" (Luke 1: 35.) And later, when the good Joseph, filled with doubt and anxiety, knows not how to reconcile the state of his Virgin-spouse with that blameless innocence which was ever her predominant characteristic, the same Angel comes to solve the mystery, announcing to him: "*That which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost.*" (Matt. 1: 20.) The Creed always reminds us of this marvelous operation, dear brethren, when it bids us profess our faith in him: "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." Behold the work of the Holy Ghost, to whom the Church this day directs our thoughts! His inward work in the mystery of the Blessed Trinity; his outward work in perfecting Creation; in communicating to man the divine revelations, and in sanctifying and strengthening his soul by the infusion of divine grace; and, finally, in the accomplishment of the mystery of the Incarnation—a mystery, dear Christians, which gives such glory to God, and which has brought peace and salvation to the world.

II. But the event which the Church is celebrating to-day in a superabundance of joy, and which fills the whole world with jubilation, is that work of the Holy Spirit which especially concerns her own sublime mission and ministry. It was to this work that our dear Lord directed the attention of his Apostles, when, as the time approached for the withdrawal of his visible presence from their midst, he promised them another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who was to remain with them forever. On this day, my brethren, that promise is gloriously accomplished. The Apostles are assembled together in the Cenacle, in that retired upper chamber, where, since the time of the Ascension, they have been spending the days of their retreat, with Mary the Blessed Mother of their Lord. Pentecost has, at last, arrived; a solemn festival of the Old Law, the fiftieth day after the Pasch, as it is the fiftieth day after our Easter Sunday; the day, in fact, on which was commemorated the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai. It was a fitting day for the inauguration of the New Law; and the Holy Ghost comes down to consecrate it in the shape of tongues of fire. What a wonderful change takes place! That which was imperfect before is now fully completed. The Apostles who, until that hour, had been timid and hesitating men, become Christian heroes, champions of Christ, filled with

new light and strength. They go forth, like giants, rejoicing to run the career which has now opened before them.

To-day, they receive faculties to exercise a power which had been given to them by our Blessed Lord at the time of their ordination, but which had until now remained in abeyance. Through fear, as well as through obedience, some of them had so far shrunk from contact with the people; but now, they go boldly forward into the midst of the multitude, and proclaim in divers tongues the wonderful works of God. To-day, the first sermon is preached, the first dogmatic utterance made by the Church; and it finds utterance through Peter, who, thus, publicly assumes the authority and position already assigned to him as the Vicar of Christ and the visible head of the Church. He gives an authoritative interpretation to the words of the Prophet Joel, foretelling the wonders of that day, on which God had promised to send forth his Spirit upon the face of the earth. He proclaims the divinity and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; and although he had feared, not long before, to acknowledge his Lord in the presence of poor, idle servants and loiterers, he now declares his Name and his glory openly before representatives of every nation of the earth.

To-day, the first converts were made. Three thousand who have listened to the voice of Peter admit its power, do penance, and are baptized. Thus, the mark of Catholicity is at once given to the infant Church. For these three thousand neophytes are chosen from men of every race and clime, all happily and firmly united now in the faith of Peter. For this, and this alone, my brethren, is what is meant by Catholic faith,—one and the same faith, submission to one and the same authority, throughout all nations. Here was the difference between the new and the ancient Pentecost. At Sinai, when the Old Law was given, there were assembled together a multitude of one nation, because the Jewish church was intended to be a National Church; but at Jerusalem, a multitude from all the nations of the earth receive the law from this new Moses, because the new church was destined to be Catholic or Universal.

The work of that first grand Pentecost, my brethren, still continues. The festival does not merely commemorate a fact of the past. If the words of our dear Lord are true, (as they must certainly be,) when he said to his disciples of the Holy Spirit: "*He will abide with you forever,*" then the day of Pentecost still perpetuates its work, and what occurred upon that primal feast, when the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles, is still actively in progress. Do you need any further proof of this fact, dear Christians? Do you ask for any outward sign or manifestation of the truth that the Holy Spirit is still doing his work in the Church? You see such proof in the very fact of her existence, in the steadfast continuance of her successful work, in spite of all the strong and obstinate opposition of the world. Ask the reason of her success in the universal propagation of her kingdom; ask why she claims the gift of infallibility, and exercises it so

constantly; ask why in general councils, or in other utterances of the Church through the successor of St. Peter, she is able to declare positively what is to be believed and practised, able to command the assent and obedience of so many millions of faithful children. The answer is, that the day of Pentecost has done, and is still doing, its work; that the Holy Ghost, who, on Whitsunday, took up his abode in the bosom of the Church, is true and faithful to his promise, and has not abandoned, nor shall ever abandon, the fair and gracious Spouse whom he has chosen for himself from all eternity.

She, the holy Catholic Church, is sometimes called, not inappropriately, the Incarnation of the Holy Ghost. For, as in that deep mystery of the Word made flesh, we believe that the Second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity took an outward form, and came to dwell amongst us, so does the Holy Ghost unite himself with the Church, not, indeed, hypostatically, but yet dwelling and working within her in a divine and immortal fashion. As the divinity and humanity united formed one Christ, so the Holy Spirit and the outward body of the Church form the one, grand, Apostolic Church. There are in the latter, as in Christ, two natures, the divine and the human. The world can attack that part of her which is human, not that which is divine; just as our dear Lord's enemies attacked and persecuted him, and caused him to suffer sensibly in his Humanity; while, at the same time, they were utterly powerless to wound his Divinity. The Church is, and must be, perpetual, my brethren, and she is so, because the Holy Ghost hath dwelt in her unceasingly ever since the day of the primal Pentecost.

Nor shall the work of that divine Spirit be confined to the present or the past. To *the future*, also, does the Church ever look confidently forward, anticipating the fulfilment of this day's mystery. The gift bestowed on her, today, will certainly be held in everlasting remembrance, since it will actually be retained by her forever. The words of our dear Lord's promise on this point, are most explicit: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you *forever*, the Spirit of Truth." (John 14: 16.) *The Church is indefectible*; the gates of hell can never prevail against her. Hence, the confidence with which she is always inspired under all her trials. She knows that she must conquer, because God is with her and in her; he, the Omnipotent One, is far more powerful than all her enemies. The *Spirit of Wisdom*, which guides her in teaching and in defending the truth; the *Spirit of Holiness*, which animates her in the lessons of virtue which she is always inculcating by word and example; and the *Spirit of Strength*, which enables her to bear up successfully under all her trials,—this Spirit of the Most High will abide with her forever, and continue to lead her on to future victories. Behold, then, dear Christians, Pentecost is not only a record and commemoration of past triumphs, but it is also a pledge of future conquests. What the Holy Ghost has done in

the past, he is still doing in the present, and will continue to do forever in the Church.

III. And in *ourselves*, and in *each individual soul*, the Holy Ghost has a work to do which it behooves us to remember and to appreciate. How great has been the goodness and love of the Eternal Father, that he should give us his only-begotten Son! How great has been the love of the Father and the Son to give us the Holy Ghost! And, O my brethren, how great has been the goodness of the Holy Ghost, that he should vouchsafe to come and take up his abode within us, and accept us as his temples! For as creation was perfected when he moved over the waters, and brought light into the world; and as the Church was perfected when he descended upon her ministers, and began his work in them in that upper chamber in Jerusalem, so do we, individually, my brethren, become perfect by his operation. Each of us has a perfection to which we must aspire, and it is through the operation of the Holy Ghost that we are to attain it. The perfection of a soul consists in its union with God; the closer, that union, the greater, the perfection; and it is the Holy Ghost who is the bond of this union. Therefore, St. Paul, when he blessed his spiritual children, invoked upon them the "communication of the Holy Ghost." (2. Cor. 13: 13.)

We are all under a strict obligation to avoid sin; and the presence of the Holy Spirit within us is incompatible with sin in its grievous form. We are all called to be saints, and it is the working of the Holy Ghost in the individual soul that effects its sanctification. The wonderful influence which the Paraclete exercised over the souls of the Apostles will assuredly be experienced by us, in *our* turn, if we cherish diligently within us the presence of the divine Spirit. Before the fulfilment of the promise of this day, what timidity, pusillanimity, and want of self-sacrifice were evinced by the Apostles! They were not yet perfect, because the Holy Ghost had not yet been given to them. During the life-time of their Lord,—nay, even during the time of his bitter Passion, when their sympathy and loyalty, it might be supposed, would have called forth their zeal in his defence,—they were timid and vacillating. Even after his Resurrection, their faith remained so imperfect, that immediately before his Ascension, (after forty days' intercourse with them in his glorified life,) he had to censure them again for their incredulity. But, from the glorious day of Pentecost, how marvelous was the change wrought in them! The true apostolic spirit was manifested in those valiant men: Wisdom, Fortitude, Holiness, shone forth in each heroic face and form, and they merit, at last, the place they now hold among the first and greatest Saints of Christ.

In every subsequent age of the Church it has been the same. Whatever special gift has been wanted at any time amongst the elect of God, the Holy Ghost has at all times supplied the deficiency. From him, came forth the sublime Fortitude which made the martyrs of the first three centuries.

He breathed forth Wisdom, and lo! the Doctors, Fathers and Councilors of a later age were formed. He infused contempt for the world, a thirst for a closer union with God, and behold, there rose up a multitude of hermits and religious of both sexes, which peopled the deserts, and filled the wilderness with Saints. When barbarous lands have called for Apostles to convert them, he, the divine Spirit, has fitted them for their mission, and sent them out upon their ministry. When men of zeal have been required for correcting the abuses and crimes of civilized countries, it is he who formed the manly and vigorous Confessors, and inspired them to devote themselves to the work of protecting the Sanctity of the Church. Each of these has done, and (thanks be to God!) each is even now doing his work in behalf of God and religion, because of the indwelling of this same Holy Ghost!

How earnestly ought we not to pray, my brethren, that this holy Spirit may never be taken away from us! How carefully should we not guard ourselves against every sin which can drive him afar from our souls! We need his *Wisdom* to enable us to see all things in the light of faith, and to weigh all in the scales of eternity. We need his gift of *Strength* that we may effectually resist and conquer our enemies,—alas! so numerous, so strong, and so persistent. We need the *Holiness* which he infuses, and whereby he enables us to persevere until death in the state of sanctifying grace. For they, alone, my brethren, are admitted to the kingdom of glory, who, at the last hour, are proved, by being in the state of grace, to be his blessed temples. We need his *help* to secure for us that most important gift of final perseverance. And O, how difficult it is to persevere! It is comparatively easy to begin and even to continue for a time in the paths of virtue, but to go on steadily, not to fall back, but pressing forward to the crown, to keep up our state of innocence and fidelity to the end; that is the work, that is the labor, to which we feel ourselves,—unaided by *his* very special assistance,—to be quite unequal.

May he, the Holy Spirit of love, the Third Person of the ever-blessed Three, the bond of union between the Father and the Son,—who overshadowed the Blessed Mother of God and effected the mystery of the Incarnation; who came down upon the Apostles upon this day of Pentecost, and formed with the Church a union, indissoluble and eternal; who has made saints, and has led them on to their everlasting reward,—may he descend upon us all to-day, my brethren; may he make us faithful to his inspirations, and enable us to persevere to the end, transferring us, hereafter, from the kingdom of grace to the realms of endless Glory!

* May this grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the charity of God, and the communication of the Holy Ghost, be with us all! Amen.

SWEENEY, O. S. B.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS, THE SYMBOL OF FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY.

“Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Matt. 18: 19.

These are the words, my brethren, which our Redeemer spoke to his disciples, when he sent them into the world to teach all nations, to administer the Sacraments to believing souls, and to exhort them to the practice of a godly life. But these words were not limited to the Apostles alone: they regard, also, their successors, the bishops and priests of the holy Catholic Church, and hence, commissioned and sent by Christ himself. I stand here before you, to-day, dear Christians, to announce to you the happy tidings of the Gospel. I come to teach you that there is but one God, who created heaven and earth; one God, infinitely just, who reserves an eternal reward for all the elect, and an eternal punishment for all the wicked; a God, who is one in nature and essence, but threefold in person,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. I come to teach you, moreover, that God the Son became man, and died for us on the Cross; that he freed us from sin and its everlasting chastisements; and recovered for us the grace which we had forfeited by the disobedience of our first parents. That grace is indispensable, my brethren, and is to be found in the Sacraments, which he instituted in the Church, founded by him eighteen hundred years ago. I come to teach you that the Holy Ghost, having been diffused into your hearts, has made you the temples of God; and that being children of God, you must do his divine will as contained in his holy commandments. I come to teach you all these things and a great deal more besides; to unfold to you many high and sublime mysteries, which you are bound to believe; to point out to you the many and great mercies which you may legitimately hope for. It is my office, in fine, to make clear to you many important things which you must do, in order to please God and to save your soul. When, my brethren, will I get through with all this? It would take years and years, and I have only half an hour to do it in. All I can do, therefore, is to condense all these manifold truths into one short sentence, and say: *“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”* In this sign, and in these words, everything is cou-

tained that I am obliged to teach you, and that you are obliged to believe, for the sign of the Cross is

- I. *The symbol of our Faith;*
- II. *The symbol of our Hope and*
- III. *The symbol of our Charity.*

I. In teaching children, my beloved brethren, we begin with what is easy to comprehend; then, by degrees, we present to them the more difficult branches of knowledge; and so on, until, at last, we advance them to the most difficult studies of all. Children first learn the letters of the *Alphabet*, then spelling, and after that reading. But in the school of Christ, in which not man, but God himself, is the teacher, we begin at once with what is most difficult and finish with what is easy. Before the child has come to the use of reason, it is instructed in religious truth, and the beginning is made with the most profound mystery of the Holy Trinity. The child is taught to make the sign of the Cross. First of all, (young as he is,) he must know God the Father, who created him, God the Son, who redeemed him, and God the Holy Ghost, who sanctified him; he must know the Triune God, by whom, and through whom, and in whom, every thing exists, who was, is, and shall be forevermore. But how is it possible to teach a child this profound mystery which the grandest and most mature intellects cannot fathom? It is an easy matter. All that is necessary is, to teach the little one to make the sign of the Cross; and having once learned to make that saving sign, it already knows more than all the wise men and sages of the ancient heathen world, more than the most learned pagan philosophers that ever existed. Wherefore, Christ says: "I give thanks to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones." (Matt. 11: 25.) All other mysteries, all articles of faith, are contained in the sign of the Cross; they naturally flow from this one and eternal fundamental truth, as from their source; they radiate from the central fires of the Holy Trinity, as the effulgent rays from the noontide sun.

The sign of the Cross, my brethren, is, in short, an abridgment of the whole Catholic faith which we profess thereby. We believe in one God, who is eternal, infinitely holy, just, good, and merciful; who, by his omnipotent word, created out of nothing the heavens and the earth, Angels and men, and all things, visible and invisible; who cast the fallen angels from the heights of Paradise into the deepest abyss of hell; but we believe, also, that, having compassion for fallen man, he sent for his redemption his only-begotten Son, and that this, his Son, suffered and died on the Cross. By the sign of the Cross, dear Christians, we declare all these sublime and saving truths; we profess the Unity and Trinity of God, the Incarnation, Passion, and death of Jesus Christ; and hence, the Cross is a wonderful

sign, venerated in heaven and upon earth; a sign which shall appear with great glory on the last day; a truly divine sign, which sanctifies the world, overcomes the devil, and is, therefore, feared by hell. With this sign, the Apostles went forth and subdued the world; and without the sword, solely by the power of a bloodless victory, they made kings and princes vassals of the immortal King. With this sign, the martyrs conquered all the manifold tortures inflicted upon them, and triumphed gloriously over tyrants and despotic persecutors.

The Emperor Constantine saw this sign in the heavens, before the battle at the Tiber, bearing this luminous inscription: "*In hoc signo vinces*;"—"By this, you shall conquer." And by this sign he *did* conquer his enemy, Maxentius, and became the first Christian emperor of the universe, putting an end to the bloody persecution of the Church, and erecting numberless altars in honor of the Triune God.—St. George was summoned before the tyrant Diocletian, and condemned to drink a cup of poison, in testimony of the truth of his faith. All Antioch hastened to witness the spectacle. But lo! and behold, St. George, taking the fatal cup in his hand, made over it the sign of the Cross, and forthwith drank the deadly poison without any hurt to himself, so that thousands of spectators exclaimed in astonishment: "Great is the God of the Christians!" This miracle wrought by the saint was so striking and undeniable, that the Empress Alexandra, with several thousand pagans, was converted to Christianity. I might mention, my brethren, many other marvels wrought by the sign of the Cross, but I do not deem it necessary. You, yourselves, know what the Sacred Scripture says of our holy faith, that it *overcometh the world*, that it works miracles, that it removes mountains, that in its truth there are victory, and triumph, and life everlasting. For this reason, always make the sign of the Cross with the greatest devotion. When you say, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,—humbly bow your head and consider that you have God for a Father, God for a Brother, and God for a Friend; and reflect with a grateful heart on the truth, that God the Father has created you, that God the Son has redeemed you, that God the Holy Ghost has sanctified and preserved you.

II. But the sign of the Cross is not only a symbol of faith; it is, also, a symbol of *hope*. "Behold the wood of the Cross, on which hung the salvation of the world, come, let us adore," thus the Church sings on Good-Friday. The Cross is that blessed wood on which Eternal Innocence has hung, bearing all our grievous weight of guilt and punishment; on which our Eternal Lover has bled, and in the bath of his blood washed us from our sins; on which, in fine, a God died, that man might live forever. Through the Cross we have been reconciled to the divine Father; we have thereby recovered original justice, and all the graces necessary for the obtaining of life everlasting. The Cross, therefore, is the victorious sign of

all our hopes. By it, my brethren, we acknowledge that for *our* sake, a God descended from heaven upon earth; that for our sake, he assumed human nature, and in that nature suffered and died on the Cross for our salvation.

As the Cross on Calvary was the instrument of our redemption, so it is, and shall be to the end of time, the inexhaustible fountain, from which all the graces and blessings of heaven, as well as the means of grace, the Sacraments, flow to us. If one wishes to enter into the kingdom of God and to receive Baptism, it is by virtue of the Cross that original sin is remitted, sanctifying grace imparted, and heaven opened to him; for, as the priest pours the water on him in the form of a cross, he says at the same time: "I baptize thee *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*" If a Christian, after the loss of sanctifying grace by mortal sin, desires to be absolved from his sins and to be restored to the friendship of God, it is, again, by virtue of the Cross that he is released from his burden and reconciled to his offended God; for, again, the priest makes the sign of the Cross over him, saying: "I absolve thee from thy sins *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*" If a sick man departing from this world into eternity, mindful of his many transgressions of the Law, fears to appear before the eternal Lawgiver and Judge, it is, again, by virtue of the Cross, that he is anointed with the oil of salvation, and comforted and strengthened for his last solemn journey; for the priest anoints him in the form of a cross, saying: "Through this holy unction and his own tender mercy may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed by thy sight, by thy hearing,"—and so on through the remaining senses. In this way, all the other Sacraments are performed and administered, all graces imparted, all benedictions and blessings given. The Cross of Christ is the inexhaustible fountain of salvation, the pledge of our hope whilst living, and even after death, the victorious standard planted above our graves, revealing the sweet hope of a future resurrection.

Every Christian has sworn allegiance to this standard, when in Baptism he renounced the devil, with all his pomps and all his works. Every Christian has, also, placed himself afresh under this standard to follow the great Captain of the Cross, when with holy chrism he was anointed and made a soldier of Christ. Under this standard, alone, can a Christian hope for salvation. For this reason, he should embrace it courageously, and with the Apostle glory only in the Cross, believing in no other God save Christ Crucified, adoring no other Lord and Saviour save Christ Crucified. Dying, a God upon the Cross, Christ has ennobled the tree of Golgotha. Formerly it was a sign of ignominy, according to what is said: "Cursed is he that hangs on a gibbet," but, blessed be Christ's love and mercy! it is now the honor and the ornament of Christians. Who would be ashamed of it? Who would not carry it patiently, since a God-Man has carried it, and shed his blood upon it.

III. All the Saints of God have loved the Cross, have carried it, and gloried in it; and yet, there are, as the Apostle says with tears, *Christians who are enemies of the Cross*, Christians who fear and hate it, or who, at least, are ashamed of the symbol of their salvation. When such Christians are visited by poverty, they murmur against God, and are discontented. When the cross of sickness weighs heavily upon them, they impatiently wish for death to free them from their sufferings. If they are afflicted by any adversity, they are melancholy and sad, till they are delivered from it. What shall we say of such Christians? Do they not belong to that unhappy class of whom St. Paul says with tears, that they are enemies of the Cross? Truly, they do not seem to believe what that Apostle further says on the efficacy of sufferings,—that by many tribulations we must enter into heaven. Can they reasonably expect to be glorified with Christ, unless they suffer with him? Certainly not.

After the unlucky capture of Jerusalem by the Persians, nothing so much grieved the pious Emperor Heraclius as the loss of the Holy Cross, which had fallen into the hands of the enemy. To recover it, he made the most formidable preparations, and marched with a select army against the Persians. After defeating King Cosroe and his valiant followers in three of the bloodiest of battles, Heraclius compelled them to sue for peace, the first condition of which, was the surrender of the Holy Cross. Satisfied with this precious booty, the victorious emperor returned home to Constantinople, and thence to Jerusalem. There he took the Cross upon his own shoulders, and bare-footed, and divested of the splendor of his royal robes, he carried it up to Mount Calvary where it had formerly stood. Thus, my brethren, one of the bravest heroes the world has ever known, honored the Cross. Who would refuse to honor it? What is it, but the most glorious memorial of a crucified Saviour, of that God who has loved us from all eternity, and who was not satisfied till he bled for us on its sacred wood. On that bed of sorrow, he begot us with nameless pains and agonies, and made us the true children of God. By the Cross, he manifested his love for us, and by carrying the Cross after him, we must make him a return of purest love. He demands that much expressly, and so does his Apostle, when he exhorts us to do whatever we do in word or deed in the name of Christ, giving glory to the Father through him.

Let us, then, my dear brethren, as often as we make the sign of the Cross, give glory to the adorable Trinity which has created, redeemed, and sanctified us; and let us ever endeavor to express by that sublime and saving symbol, our *faith* in the Infinite Power which supports our weakness, our *hope* in the Infinite Wisdom which enlightens our darkness and ignorance, our *love* for the Infinite goodness and perfection, which attracts all hearts to himself, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

ON BAPTISM.

“Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Matt. 28: 19.

As children of Adam, my dear brethren, we are all sinners and rebels against God. With his disobedience and his sin, we have inherited the grievous punishment which was inflicted upon him. That first sin, committed by Adam and Eve in the terrestrial paradise, has reduced us, alas! to a most deplorable state. Born in sin, we were born, indeed, “children of wrath,”—deprived of the precious treasure of the grace of God. If death had surprised us in this sad state, we would have been forever excluded from the happiness of heaven, for the Holy of Holies must necessarily have rejected the impure vessels wherein sin was found. But, eternal thanks to the infinite goodness of God! he condescends to receive us into his paternal arms at our very entrance into the world. He admits us into his temple, and favors us with the most signal blessing of his mercy; one of his ministers pours upon us the holy waters of Baptism, that saving flood which makes us Christians, washes and purifies our souls; that priceless Sacrament which raises us from the grave of sin to the life of grace, by communicating to us sanctification, justice, redemption, the divine adoption, the effusion of the Holy Ghost, eternal life, and the kingdom of God, himself. This, dear Christians, is the excellent grace which has been conferred upon us by our Baptism; and Baptism being the first and most necessary of all the Sacraments, and, as the holy Fathers call it, the door of all the others, it is to this Sacrament that I will call your attention, on this day.

The word Baptism signifies a *washing* or *cleansing*, it being derived from a Greek word which means to dip or wash. Behold, what an appropriate name is this, since, in the Sacrament of Baptism, while the body is washed outwardly with water, the soul is washed inwardly with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and thereby cleansed from the guilt of both original and actual sin. Instituted by Christ, to efface original sin and, also, actual sins, (if any have been committed prior to its reception,) Baptism makes us Christians, children of God and of his Church, and heirs of his kingdom, besides giving us a right and title to the other Sacraments. It is a true Sacrament, my brethren, for it has all the elements necessary to constitute a Sacrament, viz.: *the outward sign* and *the inward grace*.

1. *The outward sign* is the pouring of water, and the pronouncing of the words. The matter of Baptism is every species of natural water—water from the sea, river, marsh, wells, springs—whatever, in short, simply bears the name of water. Baptism being absolutely necessary for the salvation of mankind without any exception, God has chosen as matter for this Sacrament, that natural element, which, as a rule, is always and everywhere within the reach of every human being. Moreover, water, in its general uses, represents most appropriately the spiritual effects of Baptism; for, while the former washes all stains and defilements from the body,—by the action of the latter upon the soul, it is purified from all its sins and impurities. Water, moreover, has the property of cooling the body to which it is applied, so Baptism has the virtue of extinguishing, at least, to a great extent, the heat of the passions. The words: “I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” are called the form. There is, then, in this Sacrament, my brethren, the matter and the form, which are its outward sign.

2. Again, there is the inward grace, that sacramental grace, which God imparts, whereby the soul is cleansed from original and actual sins, and restored to spotless innocence. “Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins.” (Acts 2: 38.) “Christ loved the Church, and delivered himself up for it, that he might sanctify it, cleansing by the laver of water in the word of life.” (Ephes. 5: 25.) This grace or inward cleansing of the soul is signified by the outward sign of Baptism, which is called a sign for this very reason.

3. Baptism is the institution of Christ; he instituted it when he commissioned his Apostles to administer it, saying: “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Baptism is absolutely necessary for salvation,—it is the most necessary of all Sacraments; as I have already said, it opens for us the door of the Church, and gives us a right to the other Sacraments, and a title to the kingdom of heaven; it cleanses us not only from sin, but also from its punishment. Without this Sacrament, we are not Christians. Our Blessed Lord assures us that no one can be saved without Baptism: “Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (John 3: 5.) And again, he says: “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not,” (and, consequently, will not be baptized,) “shall be condemned.” (Mark 16: 16.) St. Peter, also, said to the multitude, who, having been converted by his first sermon, asked him what they should do: “Do penance, and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins.” And of St. Paul it is recorded in the Acts

of the Apostles, that after his conversion and deliverance from both his corporal and spiritual blindness, "rising up, he was baptized." (Acts 9: 18.)

But if a man cannot receive the Sacrament of Baptism, (you may ask, my brethren,) can the want of it be in no other way supplied? Yes, the goodness of God is willing that the Baptism of water may be supplied by *martyrdom* which for this reason is called *the Baptism of blood*. Or, again, in case of necessity, his infinite mercy will accept the simple desire of being baptized, if it be accompanied by sentiments of perfect contrition; such being termed *the Baptism of desire*. A Jew falls sick, for instance, my brethren; he can neither speak, nor move, nor make known what passes in his soul. But he seeks the Lord in the sincerity of his heart; he earnestly desires to enter into the Church of Jesus Christ; he repents of his sins, has a true sorrow for them—a perfect contrition, but dies without having received the Sacrament of Baptism.—Will he be saved? Yes, for he enters the presence of God with the Baptism of desire, which has purified his soul, and rendered it holy and spotless as those of the baptized saints. In the early ages of Christianity, which were, also, days of persecution, pagans were to be seen, who struck with the faith, firmness, and heroic patience of the holy martyrs, cried out: "We, too, are Christians," and immediately delivered themselves up to death. They died children of God; they were baptized in their own blood; they ascended into heaven, and received from the hands of Jesus Christ, the palm of victory. Such was also the fate of the infants whom Herod caused to be massacred through hatred of the Saviour of the world; their blood was shed for Jesus Christ, and the Church honors them as the very flower of martyrs. But now-a-days, when the sword of a general persecution no longer strikes down the disciples of Christ, it is in the Sacrament of Baptism, alone, that our souls must be cleansed and purified. And with regard to your children, Christian parents, remember that by reason of the extreme tenderness of their age, they are incapable of conceiving the thought of salvation, or the desire of attaining heaven, and that they must be regenerated in the holy waters of Baptism. Delay not, therefore, for it is your sacred and indispensable duty to carry your children to the church, and to have them baptized, as soon as it can be done without danger to their health. It would be a great sin, on your part, to deprive them of the grace of this precious Sacrament, when there exists no necessity for delaying it.

The proper minister of this Sacrament is a bishop or priest; no other person can baptize solemnly or with the full ecclesiastical ceremonies, nor can any others lawfully baptize, except in case of necessity. But in such urgent cases, my brethren, when a priest cannot conveniently be had, any person, man or woman, may baptize; and not only may, but *must*, rather than let any one die without this essential Sacrament. In cases of necessity, Baptism is valid whether it be conferred by a Jew, an infidel, or a heretic,—provided, while baptizing, he has the intention of doing what the Catholic

Church does when she administers that Sacrament. Since there is no one among you, my brethren, who may not, at some time, be under the necessity of administering Baptism, it is highly important that you should know thoroughly the manner of conferring it. It is true, that for the valid administration of this Sacrament, one ablution is sufficient, but we must conform to the practice of the Church, which prescribes that the water should be poured three times on the head of the child or unbaptized adult. It is not enough to let fall a few drops of water, nor is it sufficient to dip the finger, or any other agent in the water, and with it touch the subject,—the water must be taken in a vase or cup, and poured on the head of the person to be baptized, taking care that it touch the body, it not being sufficient that it merely touch the hair or the clothes. While you are pouring the water, you must pronounce the words of the prescribed form. While saying: “I baptize thee in the name of the Father,” you must pour the water in the form of a cross; at the words: “and of the Son,” you again pour the water in the form of a cross, and conclude by pouring the water the third time in the same form, while saying: “and of the Holy Ghost.” Furthermore, it is *upon the head*, that the water should be poured, because the head is, as it were, the seat, where all the interior and exterior senses of man meet; but in case of necessity, the child must be baptized on any member that can be reached, when it cannot be done on the head or any other principal part of the body. Yet it is doubtful whether this Baptism is valid; you should, therefore, if possible, have it repeated conditionally. It is certainly null if one person were to pour the water, while another pronounced the words of the form; as it would also be null, if a substantial change were introduced into the form, for example, if the baptizer were to say: “I baptize thee in the name of the Holy Trinity,” without expressing the distinction of the three divine Persons. Our Lord required explicitly that we should pronounce separately the names of the three divine Persons of the adorable Trinity. It would likewise be null, my brethren, if the person administering the Baptism, had not, in that act the intention, at least, of doing what the Church does.

Is there any preparation necessary for Baptism? Children, of course, can make no preparation, nor is any required from them; but for those who have come to the use of reason, and desire to be baptized, they must first be instructed in the doctrines of the Church, and embrace the same with all their hearts and souls. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned.” “Going, therefore, *teach* all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Such catechumens, (as they were called in the early Church,) must, also, have true repentance for their sins, and be firmly resolved to lead a Christian life. “Do penance, and be baptized every one of you, for the remission of your sins.” A god-father and god-mother must be provided for those who have not yet come to the use of reason, to

answer the questions of the priest, and make the customary promises in the name of the baptized child: to be, as it were, sureties for the fulfillment of those baptismal vows; and to be, further, instructors of their god-child, in case the parents should neglect their duty in this respect, or be prevented by death, or other urgent circumstances, from performing it. Hence, they must be themselves sufficiently instructed in the Catholic faith; they must lead a Christian life, and must be, at least, Easter communicants; otherwise, they cannot be admitted as sponsors. It is well to know, also, that the latter contract a spiritual affinity with their god-child, and, also, with its parents, which prevents them from marrying either the one or the other.

By Baptism, beloved Christians, we become children of God the Father, brethren of Jesus Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost, and members of the Church; members of that holy society which our divine Saviour came to establish on earth. By this Sacrament, we obtain a right as children of God and of his Church, to partake of all the Sacraments, of the adorable Sacrifice of the Mass, of the prayers and good works of all the faithful, to have part in all the graces, in all the benefits, common to this divine society. What return shall we make to the Lord for the signal favors which his infinite mercy has bestowed upon us! Alas! my brethren, all that this God of goodness demands of us is, that we should offer to him, every day, the faithful fulfillment of the promises which we made to him at our Baptism. What are these promises? We *promised to believe in Jesus Christ*. We must, then, believe firmly that he is truly the Son of God who came down from heaven, assumed human nature, and died on the Cross to redeem the world. We must believe that he taught mankind a holy doctrine, the only one which can lead to salvation. We must believe that he left behind him, when he ascended into heaven, his faithful disciples, whom he charged to propagate his Gospel over the entire universe; and that he clothed them with full authority to teach all nations the truths which he revealed to the world. We must believe in the Church of Jesus Christ—the Church founded by the Apostles—the infallible depository of the sacred teachings which issued from the mouth of our divine Saviour. You have promised to remain ever united to his holy Church, and to obey her pastors, the successors of the Apostles, in heart and soul; and it is on this condition, that Baptism made you members of the mystical body of which Jesus Christ is the head, and outside of which no one can possess the holy Spirit of God. Believe then, my brethren, everything which the Church teaches, for it is the doctrine of Jesus Christ which she declares to the world. Perform well what she prescribes; *her* will is the will of the Son of God himself.

It must be acknowledged, dear Christians, (for alas! we experience it in our own souls every day,) that the holy waters of Baptism have not destroyed our enemies. Satan remains, and he is always a dangerous tempter;—the world remains, and it is ever full of evils and seductions fatal to many souls; ignorance and concupiscence remain, and are the pregnant causes of

continual and fatal relapses into sin. The Lord does not wish to deliver us from this struggle against our evil inclinations, just as he does not desire to preserve us from temporal infirmities. Why so? That we may be fully convinced of our own inherent weakness, and constantly call upon him who has said by the mouth of one of his devout servants: "Thou hast need of me, not I of thee." That we may be supplied with daily and precious opportunities of acquiring merit for eternal life. That, in fine, we may be reminded when we have fallen, that this earth is merely a place of exile; that, living in the practice of virtue and good works, supported by our immortal hopes, we must never cease to sigh after heaven, which is promised to those who shall have valiantly fought the good fight for the Lord. Struggle, then, unceasingly, dear Christians, and, by the grace of God, you must surely triumph. You have promised not to suffer yourselves to be vanquished; you have promised never to let yourselves be enslaved by the enemy of God. At the holy font of Baptism, you have renounced the devil and all his pomps, that is to say, pride, avarice, ambition; you have renounced his works, that is to say, sin, since the devil is the first author of sin, and he it is who continually solicits us to commit sin. Be men and women of good-will, and the God of mercy who has adopted you as his children, will not forsake you in the hour of temptation; pray, and the assistance of heaven will be given you.

To procure you the grace of Baptism, to make you his brethren and members, children of his heavenly Father, the Son of God became man, was made flesh, was born in poverty and misery, suffered every kind of contumely, was scourged, crowned with thorns, and died upon the Cross. O, I beseech you, my brethren, by the recollection of these mercies of the Lord, be grateful, love your divine Saviour, and every day of your life call to mind the extent and excellence of the grace which you have received in Baptism. Remember, and often renew, the promises which you there made. Be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, who has done everything to promote your salvation. Love him with your whole heart, for he has loved you to excess, even to the cruel death of the Cross; and he has in store for you a glorious crown of immortality, if you persevere to the end in his faith, in his hope, and in his love; a blessing which I wish you all, dear brethren, in the name of the adorable Trinity whose festival we celebrate to-day, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to whom be glory, and honor, and thanksgiving, and benediction, now, and for evermore. Amen.

CORPUS CHRISTI.

THE BREAD OF LIFE.

“My flesh is meat indeed; and my blood is drink indeed.” John 6 : 56.

The Gospel for this festival-day, my beloved brethren, is a part of the discourse which Christ delivered after the miraculous multiplication of bread, and wherein he promised the institution of the Holy Eucharist. He had fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes. Those who witnessed this miracle, filled with admiration and enthusiasm, wished to take him by force and make him king; but Jesus fled from them. He saw that the extravagant homage they sought to pay him, was not a reverential worship of his divinity; but merely a selfish desire to exalt the wonder-worker who had satisfied their own sensual necessities. Hence, on the following day, he took occasion from the impression which the miracle had made on them, not only to rebuke their carnal selfishness, but, also, to prepare their minds for the mysterious doctrine of the heavenly food which he was about to give to the world. “Amen, amen, I say to you: you seek me, not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man will give you; for him hath God the Father sealed.” (John 6 : 26, 27.) Thus, in the plainest words, he made clear to the multitude that the real fruit they should have derived from that great miracle was to believe that he, the Messiah, *was sent by God*. “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he hath sent,” (John 6 : 29,)—that you believe in me as your divine Redeemer. You have seen me, and you believe not. “This is the will of my Father that sent me: that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth in him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up in the last day.” (John 6 : 40.) “Amen, amen, I say unto you: He that believeth in me, hath everlasting life.” (Ibid. : 47.) In other words, our Lord would say: “You must believe that I am your Redeemer, and that, therefore, it is in my power to give you such bread as shall contain life everlasting. Thereupon, the Jews, always incredulous and hard-headed, demanded a new sign. “They said, therefore, to him: What sign, then, dost thou show that we may see, and may believe thee? What dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert.” (John 6 : 30, 31.) Jesus seized the opportunity to speak to them of the true bread from heaven, of the adorable Sacrament of his own Flesh and Blood, which he was soon about to institute as a lasting memorial of his infinite mercy and

love. "I am the bread of life, I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." (John 6 : 48, 51, 52.) In the Gospel of this festival, (the very title of which, *Corpus Christi*, signifies, as you know, the Body of Christ,) our Saviour teaches us, my beloved brethren,

- I. What this Bread of Life is which he gives us, and*
II. What are the effects it should produce in our souls.

I. Our Lord Jesus Christ openly proclaims what this divine food is. It is really his Flesh and Blood; for, in the plainest words imaginable, and intelligible to all, he said: "My flesh is meat indeed: and my blood is drink indeed." These few words are very significant, for

1. In order to redeem us, my dear brethren, Jesus assumed human flesh in the womb of the Immaculate Virgin, and afterwards sacrificed that same virginal Flesh for us on the Cross. To eat of the flesh of an immolated victim, according to the Israelites, was to partake of the full effects of the sacrifice. Thus, to the end that we might partake of the effects of the bloody sacrifice of Calvary, the divine Victim gave himself to us as our food.—Not content with becoming our companion in our earthly pilgrimage, dear Christians; not content with taking the form of a servant, and becoming, for love of us, obedient unto death; yea, not even content with enduring all the nameless tortures of a bloody death upon the Cross for our salvation, our merciful Jesus went so far as to give himself to us for our food. Almighty as he is, the infinite and inexhaustible Source of all riches and all bounty, he could not give us, my brethren, anything greater or better than himself. O love of our God, wondrous and incomprehensible to human intellect!

2. On the occasion when he proclaimed to the Jews, for the first time, this adorable mystery, Jesus had just given them miraculous bread, a kind of bread superior to ordinary bread; but he wishes them now to understand that the Bread from heaven, which he is about to give them, is something far superior to those miraculous loaves wherewith they have just been fed,—that it is, in short, an extraordinary bread calculated to produce extraordinary effects in those who ate it. "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert," said the Jews, presumptuously questioning the power of our Lord to surpass that marvel of Moses; but Jesus assured them that the heavenly bread which he intended to give was far superior even to manna. "Your fathers," he said to them, "did eat manna in the desert, and they died. This is the bread descending down from heaven, that, if any one eat of it, he may not die. He that eateth this bread shall live

forever." (John 6 : 49, 50-59.) Now, the manna, my beloved brethren, was called bread from heaven, the bread of Angels. It was, indeed, better than the miraculous bread with which Jesus had fed the Jews, and, consequently, better than ordinary bread. But our divine Lord promised to give us a kind of bread superior even to manna. This, he calls the *true* bread of heaven, to show us that the manna was but a figure of this heavenly bread. He calls it, also, the *living* bread, to show us that it is far more than ordinary bread, inasmuch as ordinary bread is not a living bread. Now, what is this bread, dear Christians, which Jesus Christ, in the Gospel of to-day, promises to give us? This bread, which is far superior to ordinary bread, far superior to the miraculous loaves of the Scriptures, nay, more, far superior even to the manna of Moses, the bread of Angels,—this true Bread from heaven, this living Bread, must indeed be something very extraordinary, something which has never yet been given to man, since, before promising it, before telling us what it is, our Lord insists so earnestly upon the necessity of faith. What, then, is this extraordinary bread? Our Lord tells us plainly, in clear words: "I am the bread of life. . . . I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever, and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. . . . My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." (John 6 : 48, 51, 52-56.)

2. Jesus, by saying that his Flesh is meat indeed and his Blood is drink indeed, compares his Flesh and Blood with the manna in the desert, or with the water springing forth from the rock struck with Moses' rod, or with any other food or drink of this earth; and intimates that neither the one nor the other of the latter, fulfils as truly and perfectly as his Flesh and Blood, the usual purposes of food or drink. No other food or drink, here below, confers and preserves the life of the soul; even the life of the body is preserved but for a short time by the use of ordinary meat and liquids; whilst the adorable Flesh and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ impart life everlasting, to the soul as well as to the body.

3. This sacramental mystery of his Flesh and Blood is the object of our meritorious faith, not of our actual, corporeal vision. Therefore, Jesus hides it under the species or appearances of bread and wine. On the eve of his Passion, he took bread, blessed it, and said: "This is my Body;" and he also took the chalice, that is, the cup of wine, blessed it, and said: "This is my Blood." He did not say: "My Body is in this bread, my Blood is in this wine." Nor did he say: "This *signifies* my Body, this *signifies* my Blood." Neither, again, did he say: "This will be my Body, this will be my Blood" (in the act of eating, in the act of drinking). All this is arbitrarily put into his mouth by men who are unwilling to believe the words he has plainly spoken. For Jesus says in clear, literal language:

“This is my Body, this is my Blood;”—this is my true Body, but under the species of bread; this is my true Blood, but under the species of wine. Thus, in his ineffable love, my dear brethren, he found the means of giving us his real Body to eat, and his real Blood to drink, preserving the Sacrament, at the same time, a sublime mystery of our faith.

4. “The Jews, therefore, debated among themselves, saying: “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” (John 6 : 53.) St. Cyril of Alexandria, who lived in the fifth century, asks here: “O Jew, how can you ask this question? Let me rather ask *you*: How did you go out of Egypt? Tell me, how was the rod of Moses turned into a serpent? How was water changed into blood? How was water given you from the rock? How was the manna brought down from heaven for you? How did the Jordan stand still in its bed? How did you pass through the midst of the sea, as through a dry plain? Or how, by a mere shout, did the impregnable walls of Jericho fall? And will you not cease to utter that ‘*How*’? Therefore, it becomes you to believe in Christ’s words, and to strive to learn the manner of the Eucharist, rather, than say inconsiderately, like men drunk with wine: ‘How can this man give us his flesh to eat?’”

The Jews understood our Lord wholly in a carnal sense. They thought it something horrible to be enjoined to eat human flesh and drink human blood. Hence, they questioned within themselves: How can a human body introduce eternal life into us? How can this body, which is of the same nature as our own, bestow immortality? “It is the Spirit that quickeneth,” said our Lord to them, (reading their thoughts); “the flesh profiteth nothing.” That is to say: “There is no absurdity in supposing that the flesh is not able to bestow life; the nature of flesh is such that of itself it cannot vivify in any way. On the contrary, it stands in need of vivifying power for its own preservation. Now, were you to humbly believe that I am the Messiah, your true God and Saviour; were you to reflect upon the mystery of my Incarnation; were you to believe that the divine and the human natures are both united in my person,—you would, also, understand that my flesh is meat indeed, and that my blood is drink indeed. You would understand that he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood, abides in me, and I in him, and thus has life everlasting. It is, therefore, very foolish on your part to be scandalized at my words. If you think that my flesh cannot infuse life into you, how shall it ascend into heaven? And yet, this spectacle shall eventually be presented to your gaze. What will you say then? When you behold my flesh (contrary as it may seem to its nature), ascend into heaven, will you still say that it possesses no vivifying power? ‘Amen, amen, I say to you, he that believeth in me, hath life everlasting.’ You must, then, believe me to be what I have so often told you. ‘The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and life.’ My flesh is not flesh only, it is spirit also, because it is perfectly united to

my divinity, and assumes the entire vivifying power of my Godhead. Although your human body, (because of the sin of Adam,) is subject to death, and forced to yield to corruption, yet, if I am in you, by means of this divine Sacrament, you shall possess within you the sure pledge of a glorious resurrection. It is incredible, yea, rather impossible, that life should not vivify those in whom it lives. By means of my own Flesh, I wish to introduce eternal life into you,—to sow, as it were, within you a certain marvelous seed of incorruption which shall destroy all that is corruptible in your nature. Receiving within your mortal bodies both my human and divine nature, you will become glorified by becoming sharers in that nature which is above all things.” It is thus that St. Cyril confounds the Jews for daring to say: “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

Let us not inquire, my brethren, with those stiff-necked Israelites, how Jesus can give us his Flesh to eat, and his Blood to drink. He whose word in this divine Sacrament we firmly believe, is the same God who, being immortal, found a means to become mortal, and thus to die for the expiation of our sins. He is the same Almighty God who called heaven and earth into being, and with whom no word is impossible. Oh! instead of scrutinizing and questioning those sublime mysteries which are incomprehensible to our finite understanding, let us bow down our rebellious reason at the foot of the altar, and humbly believe in the infinite, inventive, and almighty love of our God!

II. After having solemnly declared that his Body is meat indeed, and his Blood drink indeed, our divine Lord speaks further, in the Gospel of to-day, of the effects produced by this most holy mystery. “He that eateth my Flesh and drinketh my Blood,” says he, “abideth in me, and I in him.” To be intimately united with Jesus Christ, is, therefore, the principal effect of Holy Communion. This union, my beloved Christians, concerns both our body and our soul.

1. We are corporally united with Jesus every time we receive the sacred Host in the holy Communion. As his body is the bond of his union with us, since, by virtue of his Incarnation, he dwelt among us and was as one of us, so is the reception of his body, on our part, the bond of our union with him. By virtue of this union with the virginal Flesh of Jesus, our criminal flesh is subdued, with all its passions and carnal inclinations. The suffering Flesh of Christ, immolated for us on the Cross, wounded, and bruised, and bleeding in every part, impresses on our mind the necessity of mortification, nay, more, infuses into us the strength to embrace a life of Christian penance and self-denial. This Sacred Body of the Holy One who was not suffered to see corruption, is the germ, my brethren, of our own future resurrection.

Yet woe to him who, being in mortal sin, is only *corporally* united to Jesus Christ in the adorable Sacrament of the altar; woe to him who does not discern the Body of the Lord! St. Paul solemnly declares that such a one shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. "Whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord." (1. Cor. 11 : 27-29.) In short, my dear brethren, the unworthy communicant commits a grievous sacrilege; since, being defiled with mortal sin and under the dominion of the devil, he outrages our blessed Lord, and eats and drinks damnation to himself.

2. By a worthy Communion, on the other hand, *we are united most intimately with the soul of Jesus*. We are united with his holy will, and with his Sacred Heart; united with his grace, which is so necessary for us in order to practise virtue; united with his divinity, so that we are cleansed, sanctified, exalted, and, as it were, defied, made sharers in, and partakers of, his Godhead. Holy Communion imparts to our soul the grace of *perseverance*. For Jesus not only says that, by eating his Flesh, we are in him, but that we *abide* in him, and he in us. *To abide* implies, as you know, a permanent dwelling. This grace is the most precious of all, because without it, all other graces would be of no avail. Therefore, my brethren, those unhappy Christians who, after holy Communion, habitually relapse into their past mortal sins, have great reason to fear that, like the sinner mentioned in the Gospel, their last state shall be worse than their first, and that, in consequence, they will be doomed to perish eternally. Relapse into sin is too often, alas! a sure token and forerunner of eternal perdition.

The intimacy of our union with Christ in the holy Communion is expressed in these words: "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, the same, also, shall live by me." (John 6 : 58.) Jesus speaks here of the immortal life of the soul, as also of that of the body. Jesus Christ, as man, lives by virtue of the hypostatic union of his humanity with the Godhead; and we, in our turn, my brethren, attain to this supernatural and immortal life by becoming one with him in the Eucharistic union.

At the close of to-day's Gospel, my dear brethren, our divine Lord repeats the same assertion, at the same time, contrasting the true Bread of Life, with the manna given the Israelites in the desert. "This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and died. He that eateth this bread, shall live for ever." This divine Bread, Jesus Christ our Lord, descended from heaven, whilst the manna was a terrestrial food. The Body and Blood of the God-Man, in the Sacrament of the altar,

imparts true life, everlasting life, whereas the manna in the desert, far from being able to impart life, was only capable of preserving the life of the body for a short time. O my beloved brethren! let us prize, above all other treasures, this sublime mystery of the Altar! Let us frequently visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, to pay him the homage of grateful and devoted hearts; and, realizing with true Christian faith that his flesh is meat indeed, his blood is drink indeed, let us, by a frequent and fervent approach to a worthy Communion, nourish our souls with this adorable Bread of Life, that, abiding in him, and he in us, we may endeavor to be of the number of those chosen ones who, eating this Bread, "shall live forever." Amen.

CORPUS CHRISTI.

THE GREAT HOMAGE DUE THE BODY OF CHRIST.

"He that eateth this bread, shall live forever." John 6 : 59.

It was in these words that our Saviour extolled the wonderful powers of his most sacred body. Although material flesh, (being the Body of him who is true Man as well as true God,) it has the power of imparting grace to us, of giving us a supernatural, spiritual life, of cleansing and sanctifying our souls. A miraculous flesh, indeed! O blessed, immaculate Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, by thy pure affection for this divine flesh, formed from thy virginal flesh;—by thy celestial love for thine Eternal Spouse, the Holy Ghost, through whose miraculous operation this *Corpus Christi*—this Body of Christ—was formed in thy virginal womb,—give to my mouth, O Mary, thine own most beautiful and tender words, that I may worthily and becomingly speak of thy Son's most sacred Body, and extol the honor he confers upon us in becoming the true meat of our souls in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar! Great are the glory and homage due to the Sacred Body of Jesus Christ, and actually paid to it on this festival of Corpus Christi.

I. Great homage is due to the Sacred Body of Christ, on account of its personal union with God. The intimacy of this hypostatic union is emphatically expressed by St. John in these words: "*The word was made flesh.*" (John 1 : 14.) The divine Word, the Second Person of the adorable Trinity, eternally generated by the Eternal Father, becoming incarnate for love of us, is closely united to our human nature,—is like to us (as St. Paul declares), in all things, save in sin. Hence, we must acknowledge that this Flesh, formed in the immaculate womb of the Blessed Virgin, and born Man of her; this adorable Body of Christ transubstantiated in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and deposited and hidden in this, our tabernacle, is the true Flesh of a God. As God has become man, so this flesh has become the Flesh of God. From this, we necessarily and naturally infer that no homage can be too great which is paid to this Sacred Flesh of Jesus Christ. A truth which is beautifully expressed in the "*Lauda Sion Salvatorem,*" the *Sequence* appropriate to this festival of Corpus Christi:

*"Quantum potes, tantum aude,
Quia major omni laude,
Nec laudare sufficis;"*

which may be rendered in English something in this fashion:

“Attempt the arduous theme, ascend as high,
As soaring thoughts, or wings of faith can fly;
The wonder, then, above all praise, confess,
Immensely greater, than thou canst express.”

1. There is so much more reason, my dear brethren, to honor this divine Flesh, because it was so deeply abased by the Sacred Passion. “The more thou art annihilated for me,” said St. Bernard to our Lord, “the dearer thou art to me!” This venerable Flesh was scourged for our sake, and profaned and outraged by the hands of the executioners; it bore the weight of our iniquities, and paid the price of our Redemption. Our own Crucified Jesus sacrificed it for love of us on the altar of the cross, draining it there of the very last drop of his precious Blood. Although holy, “he made it a curse.” Therefore, dear Christians, it was but just to exalt it in proportion to the depths of its humiliation. And not only has he exalted it by raising it to its glorious place on the right hand of the Eternal Father in heaven, but, by the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, he has elevated his divine Flesh on earth, making it the central sun of the Church, the sublime Object of our worship and praise, the adorable source and strength of our faith, hope, and love, the inexhaustible fountain of all joy, and peace, and consolation.

2. Verily, the Holy Eucharist confers more honor upon the sacred Body of Jesus Christ than all the other glorious mysteries of Christianity. Great was the glory and splendor of that divine Flesh, when it arose on Easter Sunday from the sepulchre, but far greater is its glory and splendor in the holy Sacrament of the altar. If we are so happy as to attain eternal salvation, my dear brethren, these, our own mortal bodies, after their resurrection from the dead, will possess in common with the glorious Body of Jesus Christ, the marvelous qualities of impassibility, brightness, agility, and subtility. But only the Flesh of God, himself, can become the food and nourishment of souls, of spirits, as is the case with the adorable Flesh of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist. Whilst, in the ordinary course of nature, the spirit animates the flesh,—in this Blessed Sacrament, the Flesh animates the spirit, and serves as meat for the preservation of its supernatural life. Hear the beautiful words of St. Ambrose: “When the Son of God spoke to the Jews of this miraculous food, he said not: ‘I am meat indeed,’ but he said: ‘*My flesh* is meat indeed.’” It is not directly his soul, nor his Godhead which he gives us as a nourishment for our souls, but it is his Flesh; although soul and divinity are in the Blessed Eucharist as concomitants.

How great, then, is the honor God conferred upon the Flesh of his Son

in this mystery, since it renders us spiritual, imparts divine grace, and makes us live the life of God himself! The Church expresses this effect produced by the adorable Flesh of Jesus Christ, by the words she puts into the mouth of her priests when they distribute the sacred Hosts in the Holy Communion: "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul unto life everlasting." Let us rejoice, my dear brethren, over this admirable exaltation of the Body of Christ! In the order of nature, the soul guards and preserves the life of the body,—in the order of grace, the Body, the blessed Body of our Lord and God, guards and preserves the life of the soul. "He that eateth my flesh . . . hath everlasting life." (John 6 : 55.)

II. Should we be surprised after all this, my brethren, at the exposition of this Sacred Body made by the Church in her holy temples for our worship and admiration? Should we not adore the divine Flesh which is the source of our life, and the pledge of our immortality? And where could we find better motives for adoring it than in the Blessed Eucharist? Not only is it there the blessed food and nourishment of our souls, but it is the last solemn testament of our Lord, the convincing proof of his infinite love, and the Sacrament which perpetually commemorates his bitter Passion and Death. In instituting the feast of Corpus Christi, the Church was prompted by all these motives, to promote the worship of this adorable Flesh. One particular solemnity characterizes the festival of to-day, viz. : that the Body of Christ is borne by the priest through the aisles of the Church, with special pomp and splendor, accompanied and followed by numerous attendants, strewing flowers, and casting incense in its path; and, where circumstances permit and national customs authorize, the procession of the Blessed Sacrament on Corpus Christi extends to the outside world, and makes its way in triumph through the streets of the city, or through the meadows and roads of the country-side. On what is this beautiful ceremony founded? It is founded, my brethren, on solid and most consoling reasons :

I. Jesus Christ is carried about, on this festival of Corpus Christi, in commemoration of his carrying himself in his own sacred hands, when giving his Body and Blood to the Apostles at the Last Supper. By this grand action, dear Christians, he achieved the greatest triumph of an incomprehensible mystery, the mystery not only of the Word made flesh for love of us, but, also, of bread made Flesh by his divine Word alone. And, to-day, whilst the Blessed Sacrament is carried about by the anointed hands of the priests, the Church reminds us of it all, by those words of the *Pange Lingua* which she enjoins her choristers to chant on Corpus Christi Day :

*"Cibum turbæ duodencæ
Se dat suis manibus."*

2. And why, on the same occasion, is Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist carried outside of the church, through the meadows and country-roads, through the public streets and thoroughfares? In order to thank him for having travelled in his mortal life, through the cities and villages of Palestine, doing good to all who needed his sacred ministrations: "He went about doing good." (Acts 10: 38.) Because Joseph, the son of Jacob, in a time of famine had provided all Egypt with bread, King Pharaoh made him ascend a chariot, and proceed in triumph through all the provinces of his kingdom, that every one might pay him homage, and prostrate themselves before him. Because the Son of God has given us, my dear brethren, the supersubstantial Bread of Life, the Church places him on a throne, and carries him up and down through all her blessed realm, that he may be adored, and praised, and thanked by all her faithful children. Besides, the Church intends, thereby, to make a solemn profession of her faith against heretics and infidels.

She wishes, also, to make satisfaction and reparation to Jesus for all the offences and outrages committed against his Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. Yes, my brethren, the Church, not satisfied with the commemoration of Maundy-Thursday, has instituted this additional feast of the Holy Eucharist for our sakes, as an opportunity of penance and reparation, whereby we may atone for all the sins committed against our hidden God and Saviour. She would have us, on Corpus Christi, condole with our outraged Lord on all the insults offered to his concealed majesty and dignity; and, by our increased faith and fervor, make amends to him for all the scandals given in our churches, for all the sacrilegious Communionings there received, for all the Masses offered by unworthy or careless priests.

In compliance with this desire of the Church, my beloved brethren, pay special honor and homage to the adorable Flesh of our divine Saviour. Imitate the penitent Mary Magdalen, who lavishly expended her precious unguent in anointing the feet of Jesus, and who did not hesitate to wipe them with her beautiful, golden hair. (John 12: 3.) Love the beauty of the tabernacle where the adorable Body of Christ, the sacred pledge of redemption for our sins, abides in silent abasement. Say often to that hidden God: "I have loved, O Lord! the beauty of thy house, and the place where thy glory dwelleth;" and, instead of satisfying and gratifying your exorbitant vanity in the decoration of your own poor, perishable body,—adorn rather with rarest and costliest ornaments, this sacred dwelling-place of our blessed Saviour's Body and Blood, of his Soul and Divinity. At the solemn procession of to-day, cry out, my beloved brethren, with the spouse in the Canticles: "I sought him whom my soul loveth, I sought him and found him not (in his usual abode). I will rise and will go about the city; in the streets and the broad-ways. I will seek him whom my soul loveth." Adding with holy triumph and delight: "I have found him whom my soul loveth; I held him: and I will not let him go, till I bring him into my mother's house." (Cant. 3: 1, 2, 4.)—*Adapted from BOURDALOUE.*

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE TEPIDITY OF LUKEWARM CHRISTIANS.

“I know thy works; that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold, or hot: but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I shall begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.” Apoc. 3 : 15, 16.

“The whole world is seated in wickedness.” (1. John 5 : 19.) Thus, my beloved brethren, complained the Apostle St. John; and our divine Saviour had, before that, said to his disciples: “It is impossible that scandals should not come: but woe to him through whom they come.” (Luke 17 : 1.) As he, the Infinite Sanctity and Purity, denounced all sin and its evil consequences, so his representatives, the priests, must be opposed to the wickedness and the scandals of the world. They cannot declare white to be black; they cannot indorse a certain thing as commendable, when it is, on the contrary, worthy of condemnation; they are bound in conscience, bound by their sacred duty, to tear off the mask of sanctity from the hypocrite; and, obeying the Scriptural precept: “Be angry, yet sin not,”—they must burn with lawful anger at the injuries whereby wicked men seek to defile the inheritance of Christ. For, if the latter was so consumed with zeal for his Father’s glory, that the text of the Psalmist was applied to him: “The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up,” (John 2 : 17); the fire of holy anger against iniquity of every sort must, also, consume his disciples. Among us, my brethren, each one’s sole concern and care should be “that every tongue confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. 2 : 11.) I appeal to you, dear friends; does that man labor in the spirit of his Master, who calmly countenances sin and vice, who, like a witness who is deaf and dumb, beholds, unmoved, the kingdom of God more and more devastated, each day, upon the face of the earth? Assuredly not. On the contrary, the true Christian must say, with the Apostle: “Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is scandalized, and I do not burn?” (2 Cor. 11 : 29.) As that same Apostle once burned with holy indignation, when he found superstition rampant in the celebrated city of Athens; as he, alone and single-handed, combated error, and ridiculed the idols which the inhabitants adored, and preached to them the “unknown God;”—nay, as St. Paul even desired “to be made the refuse of this world, the offscouring of all, (1. Cor. 4 : 13,) if only, thereby, he could save his brethren from perdition, so all true disciples of Christ must arm themselves with the sword of the divine word, and, without fear or hesitation, “be instant in season, and out of season, reprove, entreat,

and rebuke with all patience and doctrine," (2. Tim. 4 : 23,) in order to lead the souls that have gone astray, back into the path of salvation.

This obligation which lies upon all Christian men, is, especially, the office of the priest of God ; hence, my brethren, I shall speak to you, to-day, of a sin which is very wide-spread in the present age, and which, by little and little, undermines the salvation of innumerable souls. As this sin has its parallel in the Gospel, permit me to remind you of that parable of St. Luke's, wherein it is recorded that a certain man made a great supper, and invited many. The expected guests, however, were indifferent to this kindness on the part of their friend: and the Sacred Text states that "they began all at once to make excuse. The first said to him : I have bought a farm, and I must needs go out and see it : I pray thee, have me excused. And another said : I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them : I pray thee, have me excused. And another said : I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." (Luke 14 : 18-20.) Do not many of you, my brethren, make similar excuses when the divine Master calls you to his Banquet by the mouth of his servants? Why do you not go regularly to Mass on Sundays? Why do you slight the precepts of the Church! Why? I ask again. "Oh," some will say, "I must needs do this or that, to-day; I cannot go to Mass." The slothful will, and will not. At present, these lukewarm Catholics have no time; but, after a while, (they tell you,) they will be more regular in their attendance at Mass, and in the reception of the Sacraments. Thus, they procrastinate from day to day, resembling Felix, the governor of Cesarea, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles that, "coming with Drusilla, his wife, who was a Jewess, he called for Paul, and heard from him the faith which is in Christ Jesus." But the Inspired Word goes on to state that, as St. Paul "treated of justice, and chastity, and of the judgment to come, Felix, being terrified, answered: "For this time, go thy ways; but at a convenient time I will send for thee." (Acts 24 : 24, 25.) How many Christians, alas! make vain excuses of a similar kind! But judgment is already passed on them, as it was on the negligent guests of the Gospel narrative. "I say to you that none of those men, that were called, shall taste my supper." (Luke 14 : 24.)

We are called, in our turn, my brethren, as St. John declares, "to the marriage-supper of the Lamb," (Apoc. 19 ; 9); but, by neglecting and abusing the graces which God offers us through his Church, we render ourselves unworthy of that heavenly banquet. If we put off the work of conversion, from day to day, God will and must say to us: "I know thy works; that thou art neither cold, nor hot: I would thou wert cold, or hot: but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold, nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." (Apoc. 3 : 15, 16.) How terrible are these words! how awful this threat! Abominable, indeed, must be the offense of lukewarmness when it sickens even the strong, loving Heart

of our long-suffering God. But, in the first place, he requires of his creatures—*faith*; for “he that doth not believe is already judged,” (John 3 : 18); and in the second place, *good works*, to which faith prompts us, for “faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself.” (James 2 : 17.) Hence, our faith, my dear Christians, must be accompanied by good works: “Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 7 : 21.) In this question of faith and works, there is no middle way for the true follower of Christ; his own divine lips have said: “he that is not with me, is against me: and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth.” (Luke 11 : 23.) I will, therefore, consider with you, to-day, my brethren, the subject of indifferentism, or tepidity, with regard to faith and virtue, which, in our days, is so prevalent and fatal an evil; and to this end, I will proceed to demonstrate how this prevailing tepidity, or lukewarmness, manifests itself,

I. *In relation to Faith*; and

II. *In relation to Virtue.*

I. The wisdom of this world has selected the owl for its symbol. It could not have chosen a better one; for as this bird, with its blinking, cat-like eyes, shuns blindly the light of day, and delights only in the deepest gloom of night,—so the wise and the prudent of this world cannot endure the fiery splendor of the Christian truths; their eyes are weak, and they prefer to grope in darkness, rather than to face the light which flows from heaven. Can it surprise you that these so-called enlightened men are like children, “tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, in the wickedness of men, in craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive?” (Ephes. 4 : 14.) Indeed, there are many who desire to please every one, and who are mastered by a sovereign dread of displeasing the world. This is the favorite idea of our enlightened nineteenth century. Hence, some embrace certain (or rather, *uncertain*) opinions to-day, only to exchange them for others, (equally uncertain,) to-morrow. The passage: “Prove all things; hold that which is good,” (1. Thess. 5 : 21,) appears to be the maxim of our enlightened men. They go on dissecting and sifting their religious beliefs, day after day, until nothing is left of the original propositions; to-day, they believe one article of faith to be sound doctrine; to-morrow, they doubt whether or not it is even a divine truth; and, after to-morrow, they are ready to discard it altogether. To please others, they would reject the old Head of the corner-stone and put a new one in its place, to wit: the so-called religion of the honest man, which finds so many adherents in our days, embracing which, they forget that “the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner,” (Matt. 21 : 42); and that “no one can lay another foundation but that

which is already laid: which is Christ Jesus." (1. Cor. 3 : 11.) Be well assured, my brethren, that "there is no salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4 : 12.) "And in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and in hell." (Phil. 2 : 10.)

The admonition of Christ: "Be ye wise as serpents, and simple as doves," (Matt. 10 : 16,) is also a perfect stronghold of defense for the enlightened men of our day. They are willing to sacrifice even their persuasions and convictions to the considerations of a perverted prudence; and this is a disgrace and a shame for a Christian. For Christ "was not, *IT IS* and *IT IS NOT*; but, *IT IS*, was in him." (2. Cor. 1 : 19.) Hence, the follower of Christ must not be unstable and wavering; he must not pursue one course of action, to-day, and another, to-morrow; neither must he show forth in his exterior that which does not exist in his interior; for, "you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8 : 32.) Each and every one of the actions of a Christian should be a clear, candid, and most sincere expression of his conviction. It is impossible to affirm and deny, at one and the same time, to draw sweet and bitter waters simultaneously from the same fountain. To act in this manner, is to destroy all faith. "There is but one God and one faith." True faith is always the same, immutable as the God that gave it; it can never be subject to change or shadow of alteration.

There are many Christians, however, who do not waver in their inward belief, but who are ashamed to profess openly their faith in Jesus Christ. When they are told that it is written in the Gospel: "God forbid that I should glory, but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," (Gal. 6 : 14,) they say, that they cannot understand, why the ignominy of the cross should be preferred to the alluring honors and pleasures of this life. They are ashamed of making the sign of the Cross,— "But whosoever shall deny me before men, I will, also, deny him before my Father who is in heaven," (Matt. 10 : 33,) cries out our divine Lord to these cowards. To establish the Catholic Church upon earth, it was necessary that oceans of blood, the blood of the holy martyrs, should purple the green fields of almost all parts of the then known world. How, then, can men hesitate to declare their belief in the same Catholic faith of this present time, in an age so free from religious persecution, and in a country where each one is at liberty to embrace that form of religion which he or she may choose to profess. But "this is the judgment: because the light is come into the world, and men loved darkness, rather than the light: for their works were evil." (John 3 : 19.) The Lord "came unto his own; and his own received him not." (John 1 : 11.) Alas! the evil of a false and cowardly shame has taken deep root in the hearts of the present generation! They blush at the service of God; when they ought, rather, to reflect that the Church has far more reason to blush for her degenerate children. We can fancy that holy spouse of Christ, crying out to

them with these words, (wherein our Lord foretold through David, the treason of Judas as well as of all his time-serving followers): "If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it. And if he that hated me had spoken great things against me: I would, perhaps, have hidden myself from him. But thou, a man of one mind, my guide and my familiar, who didst take sweet meats together with me: in the house of God we walked with consent." (Ps. 54 : 13-16.)

Again, my brethren, there are others, who esteem Christianity lightly, because, as they say, it demands too much of a man, and puts him under too great a restraint. When they are told: "Do penance, for the kingdom of God is at hand." (Matt. 4 : 17.) "Unless you do penance, you shall likewise perish," (Luke 13 : 3); they rebel, and kick against the goad. Some say: "The institution of confession is an invention of the priests;" others say: "Confession is too painful to flesh and blood;" and thus they become hardened in sin, and either abandon the Sacrament of Penance altogether, or comply merely with the letter of the law. Because the Church commands them to approach the sacred Tribunal at Easter, they go through custom or to avoid giving scandal, but alas! they there conceal their sins, they excuse, palliate, or color them, so as to make them appear less grievous. When they are told: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed," (John 20 : 29,) they say: "This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" (John 6 : 61,) and refuse to submit their reason and understanding to the mysteries of Faith. They would willingly believe in the Sacramental Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, if only, like Thomas, they could feel his sacred Flesh with their fingers. When they are told: "Speak to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord. Giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father," (Ephes. 5 : 19, 20,) they say: "This is pharisaical extravagance, fanatical enthusiasm. 'God is a spirit: and they that adore him, must adore him in spirit and in truth.'" (John 4 : 24.) Alas! my brethren, Christianity to such people is a much-abused and unsaleable ware, which has been brought repeatedly to the market-place; and they fail to see in it that pearl of great price, for whose purchase the wise merchant of the Gospel sold all that he possessed. Religion, (according to these wiseacres,) is only an instrument to keep the people quiet; the ceremonies of the Church are so much useless show and mummery—but professing themselves wise, they become fools. O, that these men might never forget that "it is impossible to please God without faith," (Hebr. 11 : 6,) and that the heavenly Father hath "hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them to little ones." (Matt. 11 : 25.) O, that they would listen to Christ when he plainly declares: "Amen, amen, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath everlasting life; and cometh not into judgment, but is passed from death to life." (John 5 : 24.) Void of faith as they are, on what

foundation can they build their hopes of salvation, if not on the belief in God? Ah, they build as the spider weaves his web,—in the air. Hence, the building they erect cannot fail, sooner or later, to tumble down, and bury its unhappy architect under its ruins.

I beseech you, my brethren, for the love of Christ, renounce at once your indifference in matters of faith; be like men, and not, like children, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine. Profess your faith openly; be not divided, as Christ is not divided. Why blush at the service of God? “Whosoever shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven,” (Matt. 10 : 32,) and, “whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my Gospel, of him I shall be ashamed, when I shall come in my glory; such, I shall not acknowledge as my disciples.”—Believe, like simple-hearted children, all that God has revealed, without trying to pry into the secrets of Providence; believe that God is the Eternal Truth, and that, since he can neither deceive nor be deceived, he proposes to our belief nothing but the truth. Believe that the Church can never err in what she teaches, because Christ has promised to be with her all days, even to the consummation of the world. Frame no vain excuses; a generous effort is required of you, on behalf of your immortal soul; and never forget what the Lord says, in the Gospel of this day, of those who excused themselves: “I say to you that none of those who were called, but refused to come, shall taste my supper.”

II. *How does this prevailing indifferentism manifest itself in relation to virtue?* The Israelites would have been delighted to eat of the sweet and abundant grapes, pomegranates, and figs, that grew in the land of Chanaan; but having heard that there dwelt there certain monsters, or giants of a tall stature, they could not make up their minds to take the land. Tell me, my brethren, do not indifferent Christians resemble these timorous people? They will, and they will not; but the Scripture says: “The kingdom of God suffereth violence; and the violent bear it away.” (Matt. 11 : 12.) Behold, the monsters and giants of the land of Chanaan! Cowardly Christians dread this violence; the love of their own ease and convenience is shocked at the prospect of unremitting labor and suffering. They would pluck roses without thorns; they would fain reap a golden harvest, without having sown any seed. Therefore it is that, in their imagination, they paint the road to heaven as very easy. They say: “Man is weak,” and even “the just man shall fall seven times,” (Prov. 24 : 16); and thus they give themselves, as it were, a “free pass” to heaven, and offer the innate weakness of the children of Eve as an unanswerable excuse for their own inertness and slothfulness in the all-important affair of salvation. They cannot believe with the Inspired Writer, that: “The patient man is better than the valiant: and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh cities,” (Prov. 16 : 32); and, not believing it, much less will they consent to practise it.

They rebel against the command to deny themselves. "That is too hard." they say; "our good and merciful God cannot be so cruel and heartless as to require that man should torture himself by such restrictions." When it is said to them: "If thy right eye cause thee to offend, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is better for thee, that one of thy members should perish, than that thy whole body should be cast into hell," (Matt. 5 : 29, 30,)—(that is, whatever is a stumbling-block, or occasion of sin to us, we must remove from us,)—they cry out: "Cruel inhumanity, unreasonable martyrdom! Did not God place us in this world that we might enjoy ourselves? Why do you talk of fasting and good works? Does not God make all things grow for our use and benefit? Would it not be rank ingratitude if we refused to receive his gifts? Such notions and whims are not fit for our enlightened age. Only monks and hermits could introduce such doctrines and practices into the world!" And yet, my brethren, yet, O poor, deluded sinners! the words of Christ are incontrovertibly true: "Whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14 : 27.) True, also, is the declaration of St. Paul: "They who are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with its vices and concupiscences." (Gal. 5 : 24.) May these words of our divine Lord and his faithful Apostle animate you, dear Christians, to-day, to hunger and thirst after justice!

There is another class of Catholics who love virtue, but lack the strong will to practise it. At Athens, in Greece, there was an ancient statue of stone, representing a young man in a sitting posture; leaning on both of his arms, he gave himself the appearance of a person in the act of rising up; nevertheless, he rose not, but remained always sitting. Many Christians resemble this statue. They make good resolutions to avoid sin and to practise virtue, they make frequent fresh starts in the right direction, and persevere for some time in doing good, but some unfortunate moment of temptation comes, and all their excellent resolutions have vanished. The desire for conversion and amendment of life was only a transient emotion, like the heat of a man, sick with fever, which, as soon as it is over, leaves the patient weaker and more enervated than he was before. Virtue, my dear brethren, is not an affair of patch-work; Christ says: "No man putteth a piece of new cloth to an old garment: for it taketh away what was whole from the garment, and the rent is made worse." (Matt. 9 : 16.) Alas, it is only too true, that many linger and delay, when their eternal salvation is concerned; and it is equally true, that the high-road to hell is paved with good resolutions, that is to say, with good resolutions that were never put into practice. Half for this, and half for that, is as good as nothing. Wavering Christians, who do all things by halves, giving to God a divided heart, are already judged: "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the other: or he will hold to the one, and despise the other." "You cannot serve God and mammon" (that is, worldly interests),

(Matt. 6 : 24.) Indeed, no one can be an angel and a devil at one and the same time. "Give me thy heart," says God; and recollect well, dear friends, that by these words, he demands the whole heart, and not a part of it; if we refuse to give him our whole, undivided heart, love, and affection, he will say to us those dreadful words of St. John to the Bishop of Laodicea: "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold, nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." (Apoc. 3 : 16.)

Again, there are other Christians, my brethren, who are, as it were, buried in bad habits, so that they believe it to be impossible for them ever to put off the old man with the vices and concupiscences. Bad example has, perhaps, corrupted the child in early youth; when a young man, he did not restrain his sinful inclinations; and now, being in his prime, he is wise in the flesh, with a corrupt and hardened heart. To soften a rock would, indeed, be the eighth wonder of the world. A rock remains a rock forever. Those words of the prophet are only too true and forcible, as experience teaches us: "If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots; you, also, may do well when you have learned evil." (Jer. 13 : 23.) Such habitual sinners will be lost; there is no salvation for them; they, themselves, give up all hope of being saved. They say: "Everything has its proper season, and each season its privileges, who can live so strictly, as these priests require? We live only once,—therefore, let us rejoice, and enjoy ourselves." But we read in the prophecies of Isaias: "Woe to you that call evil good, and good evil: that put darkness *for* light, and light *for* darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Woe to you that are wise in your own eyes, and prudent in your own conceits." (Is. 5 : 20, 21.) "For what things a man shall sow, those, also, shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh, also, shall reap corruption; but he that soweth in the Spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting." (Gal. 6 : 8.)

It is very natural, my brethren, that these effeminate men should strive with all their might to open the gate to sin and vice; and, altogether, to introduce a new order into the world. Leaf by leaf, the blossoms fall; a rivulet, by little and little, becomes a river; why, then, should not thoughtlessness end in folly and madness. Listen to them: "We are born of nothing, and after this life we shall be as if we had not been; for the breath of our nostrils is smoke; and speech, a spark to move our hearts; which being put out, our body shall be ashes; and our spirit shall be poured abroad as soft air; and our life shall pass away as the trace of a cloud, and shall be dispersed as a mist, which is driven away by the beams of the sun, and overpowered with the heat thereof. And our name in time shall be forgotten; and no man shall have any remembrance of our works. . . . Come, therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine, and ointments: and let not the flower of the time pass by us.

Let us crown ourselves with roses, before they are withered ; let no meadow escape our riot. Let none of us go without his part in luxury : let us everywhere leave tokens of joy ; for this is our portion, and this *our* lot." (Wisd. 2 : 2-9.) is it not pitiable to hear rational beings use such language? But they will say hereafter, as it is written : "We fools, we have erred from the way of truth ; we have walked through hard ways ; but the way of the Lord we have not known." (Wisd. 5 : 6, 7.) "And they shall say to the mountains : Cover us, and to the hills : Fall upon us." (Osee 10 : 8.) For "these, (the wicked,) shall go into everlasting punishment." (Matt. 25 : 46.) And hell shall resound from their fall, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished." (Mark 9 : 47.)

In conclusion, my brethren, I lay before you the words of St. Bernardine of Sienna, who says : "I have seen and heard that usurers, robbers, thieves, murderers, and harlots, have turned from their evil ways and have been converted, but I tremble, because I have never seen or heard that a lukewarm Christian has ever been converted." Therefore, if you be in this alarming state of indifference, renounce it, I beseech of you, without delay. Believe firmly what the Catholic Church teaches ; and not only believe, but practise what you believe ; for what will it avail you to believe well, and to live ill? What will it avail you to have faith strong enough to remove mountains, if you refuse to regulate your lives in accordance with its teachings? "What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and to lose his soul?" Keep your consciences undefiled, have compassion on your poor soul ; think of your last end, and you shall never sin. Renouncing from this day, our indifference and tepidity with regard to faith and virtue, let us beseech God to renew in our behalf the promise which he made of old to his chosen people through the mouth of the prophet Ezechiel : "I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh, that you may be mine for time and eternity." (Ezechiel 36 : 26.) Amen.

O. S. B.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE HOME OF THE EUCHARIST.

6. *A certain man made a great supper, and invited many.* Luke 14 : 16.

1. After the Most High had manifested his tender love and mercy to fallen man, in a thousand striking ways, but more especially in the preservation of Noah and his family amid the universal Deluge, in the call of Abraham, in the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt, and in the giving of the Law to Moses, there came a time, my beloved brethren, in the fourth age of the world, when God wished to come closer to his people still. He commanded their wise young king, the virtuous son of David, who ruled them, to build a temple worthy of him. The cedars of Libanus, the quarries of Judea, the genius of Syrian artificers, and the gold of Saba were laid under tribute. After seven years, the august Temple of Solomon stood out against the Eastern skies. How grand, how majestic that Temple was! It was a city in itself. There was the court of Israel, where the priests lived, and the treasures of the Temple were kept, the vestments all covered with bullion, the vessels of purest gold. There was the interior court, where none but priests might enter; the sanctuary, with its great golden altar, where sweetest perfumes were burned every morning. There, too, was the Holy of Holies, where the Ark of the Covenant rested, and where the high priest, alone, might enter, and he but once a year. "And there was nothing in the Temple," says the Scripture, "that was not covered with gold."

Who, that has witnessed the ceremonies of to-day, can help wandering back in imagination to that other great dedicatory festival, when the ancients of Israel and the princes of the tribes, the common people, the priests, and King Solomon, himself, marched in line amid the sound of sacred trumpets to carry the Covenant of the Lord under golden-winged cherubim out of the city of David, and to proclaim the triumph of the God of Israel! When the Ark was deposited in its destined place, when the last victim was immolated, after the choral swell of the last chanted psalm had died away in the far-reaching span of arches, lo and behold! a miraculous cloud burst out from the Holy of Holies and filled every part of the Temple, so that the priests could no longer continue their functions. This cloud was a certain sign to the thousands whom it enveloped, that God was present among them. The great king, whose name is the synonym of wisdom, fell upon his knees. "O Lord!" he exclaimed, "thou art the God of Israel, and there is no other God in heaven or on earth besides

thee." The awe-struck worshippers bent their faces down to the golden pavements, and again the king spoke: "Is it credible that thou shouldst dwell among men? If the Heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house which I have built!"

Brethren, this was the Old Jerusalem. This was not the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which St. John saw coming down from heaven, adorned as a bride for her husband. Beloved Saint! once privileged to lean on God's own bosom,—thou, whom the Fathers called the Eagle, and the Greeks Divine, how, to-night, can I follow thee in thy winged flight past the stars and the pearly gates, on to the footstool of the resplendent Throne? How can mortal eye gaze on that "more perfect tabernacle not made with hands," coming out from the sanctuary of uncreated love? How can mortal ear listen to that voice, begotten of God's love for man, breaking joyfully upon the prisoner's solitude at Patmos louder than the roar of the Archipelago, more real than the clank of Domitian's chains, the voice from the throne: "Behold the tabernacle of God with man, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God, himself, with them shall be their God." (Apoc. 21 : 3.)

If the brightness of the vision cheered the heart of the saintly prisoner in his dungeon cell, what joy should be ours, my brethren, who witness its reality! Although the Church of Christ, like her Divine Founder, must carry her cross and wear her crown of thorns, still she has her seasons of sweetest rapture. As in warfare, there are moments when the smoke of battle is lifted into the clouds, and the soldiers, covered with wounds and scars, and the glory-dust of victory, meet around their camp fires to sing of fields that have been won, so has the Church her moments of rejoicing, when the truce of God is proclaimed in the combats of the Saints. There was joy when the first Church was dug out of the tufa, under the throne of the Cæsars. There was joy when the Standard of the Cross took the place of the Roman Eagle. There was joy when the great cathedrals of Europe—those everlasting monuments of Christian faith—swung open their doors publicly to the faithful. Need I tell you that this is a day of great joy for us, my brethren? It is an historic day, marking, as it does, the dedication of the forty-sixth church in this great city of our New World, and the one hundred and third in the diocese. To-day, our American vineyard of the Lord becomes the cynosure of Christendom. The Church may be receiving hard blows in other quarters of the world. There is a vein of sadness running through all the Encyclicals of Leo XIII. Yet, to-day, the ecclesiastical historian, casting his glance along the line of centuries, sees that, with us, at least, there is cause for joy.

Your present church, my beloved brethren, though very, very beautiful; your prospective one, grander still in material splendor, bears no proportion to the temple of Jerusalem. It has neither the costly architecture, nor the gorgeous vestments, nor the golden altars, nor the Ark of the Covenant,

nor the luminous cloud of the Old Jerusalem ; and yet, it is of infinitely greater value.

II. Its tabernacle contains Jesus himself, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, really and truly present, within a few feet of you, within the reach of your voice, within the easy range of your vision, as really and as truly and as literally, as he was present to St. John when he leaned upon his bosom at the Last Supper, or beheld him in the glorious vision of the Apocalypse. There are many things in your newly-dedicated church which I might dwell upon—the Font, where the robe of innocence is put upon the newly-made Christian, the Tribunal of mercy, where grace and pardon meet ; the Pulpit, whence the Word of God is spoken to you, even as Jesus spoke to the disciples on the mountain ; but all these things I must pass over to address you on the august theme of that Treasure of treasures which the Heaven of heavens cannot contain. In speaking of the Blessed Sacrament, I think the present is an occasion that does not call for polemics. If any person present has not yet become acquainted with the unanswerable logic on which the doctrine of Transubstantiation rests, I can only refer him to the ten thousand volumes that treat the subject scientifically. I would suggest a simpler method to begin with. Read that portion of the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel, where our Lord promises to institute the Sacrament of the Eucharist ; and then read the Gospel narrative of the Last Supper. There is no dogma in the whole category of religious truth more clearly stated. Our Saviour has taken good care to present this doctrine in such a literal and lucid form that there can be no room for honest doubt. No man ever felt this more forcibly than even the great heresiarch, Luther, himself. "I wish," he says, "that some one could persuade me that in the Eucharist there is nothing but bread and wine ; but the Gospel is too plain to admit of the slightest doubt. This dogma," he continues, "is founded on the Gospel, on the most unmistakable words. It has been believed, from the beginning of the Christian Church, throughout the entire world, up to the present time. Whoever does not believe it, cannot believe in Christianity." It is not in a polemical spirit, but in the spirit of profoundest charity, that I say : the same facts that confronted the founder of Protestantism, and drew from him this candid avowal, three hundred years ago, confront his followers, to-day. The Gospel is as plain and explicit, now, as then. "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you." (John 6 : 54.) "This is my body." (Matt. 26 : 26.) "This is my blood." (Ibid. : 28.) Now, as then, these expressions present but one meaning to the unprejudiced mind. This was the meaning they presented to the mind of St. Ignatius of Antioch, a disciple of St. Peter. This was the meaning which St. Justin, the philosopher, gave them, notwithstanding the discipline of the secret, in his apology to the Emperors of Rome. All the great minds of the past,

whose works cast a resplendent light upon the gloom of the by-gone centuries, understood these words in a literal sense. This was the sense in which they were understood by Tertullian and Origin, St. Cyprian, the three hundred and eighteen Fathers of the Council of Nice, the mighty Ambrose, St. Chrysostom, St. Augustine, St. Anselm, St. Bernard, St. Thomas. But why enumerate names? Did not all the universities teach it for fifteen hundred years? Did not all the orators preach it? Is not secular history full of it? Do not all the surviving heretical sects that cut themselves off from the Church still believe it—the Armenians, the Copts, the Greeks? To-day, my dear Catholic brethren, you can go down into the Catacombs at Rome, and see for yourselves that all the love of the early Christians was centred around the altar. There you can see that the dawn of Christian art, which did not reach its meridian splendor till the time of Leo X., owed its first inspiration to the Last Supper. There, too, you can see a marble tabernacle, similar in shape to the one that adorns your present altar, chiseled out by some poor Christian artist not long after the death of the first Pontiff. The very stones, after the lapse of fifteen centuries, speak as eloquently as the writings of the Fathers, of the early Christian belief in the Real Presence.

The grand Cathedrals of Europe, many of them commenced in the eleventh or twelfth centuries, the churches of every Christian land, in every age, and in every place,—in the city, in the village, in the plain, and on the mountain-side, in their interior appointments and ornaments, in their paintings, and sculptures, and tablets, prove as plainly as any truth can be proved that the doctrine of the Catholic Church, in regard to the Real Presence is absolutely identical with that which was believed and taught in Apostolic times. Now, brethren, if we find that all the millions of Christians in every generation, since Christianity began, believed in the doctrine of the Real Presence, as we now believe it, that every one of the sects who separated from the Church still continued to believe it, with the solitary exception of one sect, which had the very best of interested motives for disbelieving it, (having lost the Apostolic succession and, consequently, the priesthood,) is it possible that any man's conception of God's love of truth is so poor as to imagine he would allow those millions in every generation, whom he came to teach, for whom he came to die, to be led by his plain, unmistakable words into the most abhorrent idolatry? The thought is unbearable.

It is one of the misfortunes of our age that we must be always proving, always answering objections. Nothing can be more opposite to the child-like spirit of faith. And yet, in one way, it has its advantages.

III. Our age has put forward all possible kinds of objections to the Holy Eucharist, and on all possible grounds, historical, biblical, scientific, philosophic. The intellectual activity employed in answering these objec-

tions, has simply served to make Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament better known and better loved. In satisfying the why and wherefore of the unbeliever, not new doctrine, but new knowledge, is acquired. It is wonderful enough that God should deign to dwell upon this altar, that the broken Heart of the Crucified One should be locally present here, within a few feet of us ; that, at any hour of the day or night, we can come here before him and tell him our sorrows, and that, while we tremblingly kneel here before him, as we would if we met him in the Garden among the olive trees, and whisper to him that we love him more than all the world, more than father or mother, wife or home, we are perfectly conscious of receiving sweet messages from the tabernacle, assuring us that he pities us and loves us.

All this is wonderful enough, but that he should be received by us in Holy Communion, that this should be the very object of the Eucharistic Presence, is a mystery of love which eternity, alone, can suffice to explain. No matter what may be the vicissitudes of the Eucharistic life, each host has but one destination. It may be borne along in triumphant procession under a gorgeous canopy ; it may be placed upon a throne of gold and crystal in the glittering remonstrance ; our flowers may bloom and our lights may gleam, our incense rise, and our sweet-voiced chants ascend to do it honor, still the final term, the last home and resting-place of every Sacred Host is a human breast.

There is an old philosophic definition of the Holy Eucharist given by the school-men, hundreds of years ago, which is of priceless value. They define this Sacrament to be God's plan for uniting himself with the soul of man. In our cold, logical discussions there is a tendency to leave God's character, which is infinite love, out of view. In a thousand places of Sacred Scripture, the Most High condescends to make use of familiar types of human love to lead us on to some sort of comprehension of his love for us. "The mother," he says, "may forget the child of her bosom, but I will not forget thee." "The bridegroom shall rejoice over his bride, and thy God shall rejoice over thee." God's love of souls is not pity, nor compassion, nor benevolence. It is love, real love. It is human love intensified to infinitude. He has never implanted a desire in the human heart, which he will not fulfil. If we could know what is most in accordance with real, genuine love, we could at once prophesy what God will do. You have only to study your own heart, and know what you desire most, to know what God will do. The human heart is boundless in its desires. Only God's immensity will satisfy it. A thirst after union with God is the most noticeable feature of all religion, even in its falsest and most degraded forms. No matter how wild the orgies, or how hideous the mysteries in which this thirst for union finds expression, there never yet was any religion whose ritual did not show an unslaked thirst for union with the divinity. Christianity has only broadened, deepened, and intensified

this desire. No one was ever loved as Jesus is loved. The story of his life and death has melted into the pure, young heart of childhood, and into the fiery, impassioned soul of manhood. He is loved with a love now, that has no parallel among the Saints of the old law. And is not union the end of love? Express itself as it may, there is in man's soul an unquenchable thirst for union with God. "O God, for thee my soul hath thirsted; for thee my flesh, in a desert land, where there is no way and no water, my soul hath thirsted for the strong, living God." Great as is our desire for union with him, his desire for union with us is greater still. No fond mother ever ran to embrace and press to her heart the child of her love, that has been widely separated from her for years, with half the eager tenderness that Jesus longs to be received by us in Holy Communion. God desires this union, man longs for it, hence, the institution of the Holy Communion, the master-piece of God's love, the realization of the divine peace. And O, my beloved brethren, if our hearts, purified by penance, and enlivened with faith, hope, and charity, become the habitual home of the Holy Eucharist here below, what better pledge can we have, than *this*, of eternal life and glory hereafter, since we constantly entertain and worship within us, him whose divine lips have unfailingly declared: "He that eateth this bread shall live forever." (John 6 : 59.)

Resumé and adaptation of a discourse delivered at the dedication of a Catholic church by

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FOR THE FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

THE LOVE OF THE DIVINE HEART.

“Come to me all you that labor, and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you.” *Matt. 11 : 18.*

When we wish to represent a person as very amiable, we say of him : “He has a good heart, a truly good heart.” A good heart, as soon as it is known as such, begets affection, for love, (as the proverb says,) always begets love. If we thus, my dear brethren, feel ourselves compelled to give our love to men of good heart, can we possibly refuse our love to the best of hearts, to the Sacred Heart of Jesus? Of him, it may truly be said : “To know him is to love him.” His divine Spouse, the Church, well aware of this, has instituted the festival of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and calls upon us to venerate it with the most fervent devotion and love. In order to stimulate you still more to these admirable sentiments, I propose, dear Christians, to show you, to-day, that Jesus had

- I. The best and most loving Heart here upon earth; and has*
- II. The best and most loving Heart, now, in heaven.*

Our blessed Lord had the best and most loving heart, when he sojourned here below, towards *his heavenly Father*. He gave evidence of this by valuing the will of his heavenly Father above everything else, and making its fulfillment his only business upon earth. One day, when his disciples brought food which they had bought in the city, and set it before him, saying : “Rabbi, eat,”—he gave them this significant answer : “I have food to eat, which you know not of.” (John 4 : 32.) His disciples thinking that some one had brought him something to eat, Jesus, seeing their error, explained to them further : “My food is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perfect his work.” (Ibid. : 34) A man who is very hungry thinks of nothing else, wishes and seeks nothing else, but how to procure some food ; so Jesus thought of nothing else, wished and sought nothing else, save the will of his heavenly Father. Why did he come into this world and assume human nature? In order to fulfil the will of his Father; for when God decreed to send his Son into the world, for the redemption of sinful man, Jesus declared himself ready for his mission, saying : “Behold, I come to do thy will, O God.” He was born in misery and led a life of poverty for thirty-three years, for no other reason, than to do the will

of his Father, as he says himself: "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me." It was the will of his heavenly Father that he should suffer and die for us; and that he was ready for the sacrifice, we learn from his discourse on Holy Thursday when he said to his disciples: "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment (to suffer and to die), so I do. Arise, let us go hence." Again, on Mount Olivet, after having said to his disciples: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death,"—in an agony of bloody sweat, he sighed and prayed: "O my Father, if it is possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." However bitter and terrible the approaching death of the Cross appeared to his human nature, he resigned himself to the will of his heavenly Father, and, if it pleased him, desired to suffer and to die. He permitted himself to be scourged and crowned with thorns, to be buffeted, to be spit upon, to be mocked, to be nailed to the cross, and finally to die on it—and why? In order to fulfil his heavenly Father's will. Hence, the Apostle says: "He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross." If, in speaking of a child who readily complies with the orders of his earthly parent, we say: "This child has a good heart," must we not, with far more reason, say the same of Jesus, who from the crib to the Cross, fulfilled the will of his Father so submissively and constantly? How is it with you, in this respect, my beloved brethren? Can it be said of you with truth, that you have a good heart towards God, your heavenly Father? That you may be able to answer this question with benefit to your souls, reflect whether in all the incidents and tribulations of life, you recognize the will of God, and submit to them with Christian resignation; whether in the various duties of your state, you seek, as far as possible, to do that holy will. You are, perhaps, irritable, easily excited, and in your excitement, you say and do many things which are sinful. It is the will of God that you should subdue your anger, and become meek and patient. Perhaps, a sinful familiarity exists between you and a person of the opposite sex. You must discontinue this criminal friendship. Perhaps, you retain ill-gotten goods in your possession. Restitution must be made. God demands this of you. Perhaps, you are addicted to cursing, blaspheming, and sinning grossly against temperance or purity. You must give up these bad habits, for such is the will of God. Heretofore, you have been careless in prayer, in listening to the word of God, and in receiving the Sacraments. It is the will of God that you overcome your sloth in his service, and fulfil your religious duties with greater fervor. Examine yourselves as to how you have complied with the will of God in the past, in doing good and avoiding evil, in order to know whether you have rightly performed the will of God, and whether it can be said of you that you have a good heart.

Jesus had the best and most loving Heart *towards sinners*. The Gospel

gives us numerous examples of the amiable and merciful conduct of Christ towards sinners. He sat at table and even condescended to eat with them, that he might instruct and save their souls. He announced to Zacheus his intention of becoming his guest, and thus, by his tender courtesy and kindness, prevailed upon him to make restitution by bestowing half his substance on the poor. Conversing with the sinful Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, he converted her, and, through her, led many of her countrymen into the way of salvation. Though surrounded by sanctimonious Scribes and Pharisees, he had compassion on the adulteress, and delivered her from their hands, in order that he might free her from her guilt. He defended the great penitent, Mary Magdalene, from the uncharitable judgment of the Jews, allowed her to anoint his feet, and forgave her a multitude of sins. On the night of his cruel Passion, he looked so sympathizingly upon Peter, after he had thrice denied him in the high-priest's hall, that the poor, cowardly Apostle went out and wept bitterly. He had mercy on the penitent thief on Calvary, and promised him Paradise. Finally, he prayed for sinners on the cross, and died for their redemption.

Towards children. The amiable conduct of our blessed Lord towards children is really touching, and his condescension and friendship for them astonish us, my dear brethren.

One day, some mothers brought their children to him that he might lay his hands upon them and bless them, but the disciples, fearing that they might be troublesome to him after the fatigues of the day, rebuked them and would not give them access to their Master. However well-meant this conduct of the Apostles might have been, Jesus upbraided them for it, saying: "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me, for the kingdom of heaven is for such." And embracing them, and laying his hands upon them, he blessed them. On another occasion, Jesus calling unto him a little child, set him in the midst of them, and said: "Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." He also manifested his love for children by declaring that he would consider all acts of kindness done to little ones, as done to himself. "He that shall receive such a little child in my name, receiveth me." He, then, pronounced woe against him who should scandalize a little child, saying, that it were better for such a man that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the depths of the sea. When, after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, he repaired to the temple, the children gathered around him, and cried out "Hosannah to the Son of David!" The Scribes and Pharisees, filled with envy and indignation, suggested that they should hold their peace, but he, defending the children's cause, said: "Have you never read: Out of the mouths of infants and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" Such was the love of Jesus for children.

Towards the poor and the sick. That Jesus had a particular love for the

poor, the destitute, and the outcast, is evident from his having chosen for his mother an unknown Jewish maiden, and for his Foster-father, the poor carpenter of Galilee; that his chosen Apostles were fishermen and publicans, and that he himself, lived in such poverty as to be able to say: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of man has not where to lay his head." (Matt. 8: 20.) It was his rule to associate habitually with the poor; and he expressly declared that the poor should have the Gospel preached to them. Twice, he performed a miracle, in order to feed the hungry multitudes which had collected about him. And O, what merciful love did he not show for the sick, and such as were afflicted with various infirmities of the body! Was there ever one who implored his help in vain? A man, sick of the palsy, is brought to him, and at his word he rises, takes up his bed, and walks. Another, born blind, is brought to him, and he, at once, restores to him his sight. A woman, troubled with an issue of blood, touches the hem of his garment, and she is instantly healed. Ten lepers beseech him to heal them, and whilst, at his command, they go to show themselves to the priests, they find themselves cleansed of their horrible disorder. Jesus approaches the city of Naim, whence a dead man is carried out on the way to the sepulchre. The mother weeps. Jesus consoles her, saying: "Weep not;" and, commanding the corpse to arise, restores the widow, her son. At the grave of Lazarus, he weeps himself; and at his powerful word, Lazarus comes forth from the grave, alive and well. Had not Jesus, my brethren, the best and most loving Heart towards the poor and the afflicted?

We, in our turn, should imitate this kind-heartedness and charity of Jesus, for he has said: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also." We should have a good heart towards all men, especially towards sinners, making every effort to save them, by giving them a good example, and by praying for their conversion. Beware of scandalizing any one by word or deed. Christian parents, be as solicitous as possible that your children grow up in piety and innocence. Be friendly, affable, and charitable to the poor, the sick, the afflicted, for religion pure and undefiled with God and the Father is: "To visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulations, and to keep one's self unspotted from the world."

II. Jesus, dwelling in heaven, has the most perfect and loving of all hearts. He is not like some men who, when they have acquired riches, honors, and dignities, are ashamed of their former poor relatives and friends, and will not longer recognize them. In his glory, he is as loving, friendly, and condescending as when he was living in misery in this lower world. Whence the Apostle says: "We have not a high-priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things, like as we are, yet without sin. Let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid."

(Hebr. 4 : 16.) Hence, what Jesus did so lovingly and tenderly for the salvation of mankind upon earth, he continues to do with equal love and tenderness in heaven.

Christ *prayed much during his earthly life*; he often went to the synagogue and into the temple to pray. He watched and prayed during whole nights, even out upon the cold, open, mountain-side. And for whom did he pray? Not for himself, but for us, my brethren, that we might apply his merits to ourselves, and work out our salvation. Do you not think the God-Man prays for us, now, in heaven? Most assuredly; for St. John plainly asserts as much, when he says: "My little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just." (1. John 2 : 1.) What a happiness! We have not only the Saints, the Angels, and the Blessed Virgin Mary, to aid us by their prayers, but Christ himself, for our Mediator and Advocate with God the Father!

Jesus taught men the way of truth; for three years, he preached the Gospel to the high and to the lowly, to the learned and illiterate, to friends and enemies. He continues to do so through his representatives, the bishops and priests. They preach the same doctrine which he preached to his contemporaries, and by it, and his holy Spirit, he leads the Church into all truth, and enables her to preserve his doctrine pure and undefiled until the end of time.

Christ forgave sins. Witness: Mary Magdalene, the man afflicted with the palsy, the penitent thief on the cross. He continues still, my dear brethren, to forgive sins. When the priest in the confessional absolves the sinner, he does, and can do, it only by the power of Christ; without this power, he could not forgive the least venial offence, much less a mortal sin. We owe the grace of absolution to Jesus Christ as much as did those to whom he remitted their sins during his earthly life. Nay, more, we can now obtain the forgiveness of our sins far easier than did those people who lived at the time of Christ. They had sometimes to travel for days over rough and weary roads, in order to come to Christ; and had frequently to expose themselves to great confusion and humiliation when they appeared as sinners before him, seeking the remission of their sins; while we need only go into a confessional near home, and, in secret, disclose our sins to a priest, to obtain the holy absolution.

Christ offered himself on the cross, in order to redeem mankind, and reconcile them to God. Christ does this even to this day. He daily offers himself, in an unbloody manner, on thousands of altars in the Sacrifice of the Mass, in order to apply to us the merits of his bloody sacrifice on Calvary. Each Sacrifice of the Mass is of the same infinite value as the Sacrifice of the Cross, because in the one, as in the other, Jesus Christ is both Priest and Victim.

Christ protected his own, and would not permit any harm to befall them.

Even when he was apprehended by his enemies, he interested himself for the safety of his followers: "If you seek me, let these go." And when the high-priest questioned him, (as the Gospel states,) about his disciples and his doctrine, he abstained from any mention of the former, and confined himself simply to a defence of the latter. In the same manner, my dear brethren, he now protects his Church. He has promised to remain with that divine Spouse all days, even to the consummation of the world, and that the gates of hell should never prevail against her; and he has been fulfilling his promise for the last eighteen hundred years. The Church has passed through countless persecutions during that period of time, yet she stands immovable as a rock, upon which the waves of a boisterous sea continually break in vain. Come what may, the Church will exist to the end of time, and all the efforts of her enemies to destroy her, will prove abortive. O, what thanks do we not owe to our Saviour in heaven for extending to us, now, my brethren, the same mercy and love he manifested to men during his earthly career; and how zealous we should be to avail ourselves of the means of grace which he offers us for our salvation!

Jesus in heaven has still the most loving and tender of hearts. In St. Paul, we have an evident proof of the love with which Jesus *interests himself in heaven for sinners*. Saul was the most bitter enemy and persecutor of the Christians. He even went designedly from Jerusalem to Damascus, in search of Christians, determined on bringing them (men and women alike), bound to Jerusalem. But, as he went on his journey, "it came to pass, that he drew near to Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shined round about him, and falling on the ground, he heard a voice, saying to him: "'Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?' And he said: 'Who art thou, Lord?' And he: 'I am Jesus whom thou dost persecute. It is hard for thee to kick against the goad.' And he, trembling and astonished, said: 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'" (Acts 9: 3-7.) In the meantime, Christ orders Ananias to go to Saul and lay his hands upon him. Saul is baptized, becomes an Apostle, saves not only his own soul, but the souls of countless Jews and Gentiles. On the day of judgment, my beloved brethren, we will be astonished when we learn the excess of love which Jesus in heaven has showed to poor sinners on earth; and the superabundance of grace which he has bestowed upon them enabling them to gain heaven in the end.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus in that blessed abode, is still overflowing with tender love of *children*. Is it not a manifest sign of the love of Jesus for children, that, immediately after their birth, he cleanses them from the stain of original sin, sanctifies them, and makes them children of God and heirs of heaven? Is it not a proof of his love for children, that he strictly obliges parents to provide for the temporal and spiritual welfare of their offspring, and to educate them for heaven? And does he not, furthermore, evince his love for children when he recommends them to the special care of his divine

Spouse and her ministry, commanding the priests to instruct them in the Christian Doctrine in church and school, and directing the bishops to go to them, and, by the administration of the Sacrament of Confirmation, to fortify them for the coming struggle against the enemies of their salvation. And is it not the Association of the Holy Childhood of Jesus upon which he looks from heaven with a special delight, because the object of that Confraternity is to conduct pagan children to salvation by the administration of baptism, and to provide for their instruction in educational institutions?

Finally, *towards the sick and afflicted*. Great was the number of the sick and of those afflicted with various infirmities of the body, whom the Apostles healed by manifest miracles. St. Peter possessed this miraculous gift in so eminent a degree that his shadow, falling upon the diseased, instantly freed them from their infirmities; and of St. Paul we read, that his cincture and aprons healed the sick upon whom they were laid. Innumerable are the miracles which the Saints of the Catholic Church have wrought at all times and in all places. But from whom, my brethren, did the Apostles and Saints receive the power to work these miracles? From Jesus Christ,—for no saint or angel can work a miracle, save in the holy and all-powerful Name of Jesus. The deep interest which Jesus still manifests for the poor, the sick, and the afflicted, is evident from the promises which he made to those who perform works of mercy, as well as from the graces with which he usually rewards such works even here on earth. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” (Matt. 5 : 7.)

Ah! yes, my beloved brethren, as the Sacred Heart of Jesus was the best and most loving of all hearts on earth, so it is the best and most loving of all hearts, now, in heaven. Therefore, have confidence in that divine Heart, and bring all your wants and necessities before his throne of grace, with the full hope of obtaining the grant of your petitions, and a favorable answer to your prayers. Ask him, especially, for those spiritual goods which you need for the salvation of your soul; importune him for a true contrition for your sins and the forgiveness of them; for strength to overcome all temptations, for perseverance in virtue, for an exact fulfilment of the duties of religion and of your state of life, and for final perseverance in his love and grace. He will most assuredly confer these blessings upon you, if you have a fervent desire for them, and do what is required on your part, to obtain them. Ask him, also, for all that you need for your temporal welfare, my brethren, and he will grant your prayers as far as they are necessary, good, and expedient for your eternal salvation; since he, himself, puts this petition into your heart and on your lips: “Give us, this day, our daily bread.” Keep your heart free from all sinful inclinations and desires, that it may be more conformable to the holy and Sacred Heart of Jesus, and that his words may be fully verified in you: “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.” (Matt. 5 : 8.) And humbly, adoring, to-day, the

divine Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, pour forth to it your tender sentiments of gratitude for its excessive love, of lively sorrow for all those past sins and ingratitude whereby you have pierced it to its sacred core; and strive to kindle in your souls a fervent and efficacious desire to make reparation in the future for all the insults and outrages heaped upon the wounded Heart of your God.

ZOLLNER.

FOR THE FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

LESSONS TO BE DRAWN FROM DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART.

“This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” Luke 15 : 2.

The feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the feast of our Blessed Lord's love and mercy for sinners. In it, my dear brethren, the Church manifests her appreciation of that love and mercy, which the proud and cruel Pharisees condemned in this day's Gospel, but which our dear Saviour so beautifully and forcibly defended and justified by his two illustrations of the stray sheep and the lost piece of money. Our divine Lord had come to seek and to save all that were lost. What the Pharisees said of him was quite true: He *did* receive sinners most tenderly, and was accustomed to take his food in their company. He went about amongst them, in order that, making himself one of them, he might be more accessible to their wants and miseries. He often conversed with them: he performed miracles in their presence; he became their guest; he mingled with them with a touching humility and meek simplicity, so that he might, now and then, influence a single individual, or gain one soul to himself. You can readily recall, my brethren, the instances of Zacheus, of the Samaritan woman at the well, of Mary Magdalene in the house of Simon, and of Matthew the Publican, called to the apostolate from the receipt of custom. The Pharisees declared themselves scandalized at all this; they blamed his gentle condescension with the poor and the outcast, and complained among themselves in the words of our text: “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” What is the reply of Jesus? He answers by a series of parables in which he manifests his passionate love for each individual soul, no matter how poor, how insignificant its owner might appear in the eyes of the world. He knew the value of each immortal spirit, and had already laid down in his public preaching the maxim that nothing here below,—yea, not even the gaining of the whole world,—can compensate a man for the loss of his one, priceless soul. “What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

He himself, is the Good Shepherd of the parable, (for so he had elsewhere styled himself,) who goes in quest of the one stray sheep; he is the poor woman who searches anxiously until she finds her one lost piece of money; and O, above all, my brethren, he is the Father of the Prodigal, who receives and welcomes back, with sighs of joy, his wayward, but now penitent, child. It is his own love for souls that he paints for us under these touching symbols; a love active, generous, self-sacrificing, forbear-

ing, and individual. Does not this love deserve to be recorded, dear Christians, and to be specially commemorated? Our Lord felt that it should be, and therefore, (through one of his holy servants,) intimated his own personal wish that this Festival should be instituted; that, by it, the faithful should be drawn to dwell upon the tenderness of that Sacred Heart, which loved mankind so much, that it did not hesitate to exhaust and consume itself, in testimony of its love.

I. To a faithful and obedient Catholic, it is quite sufficient for the acceptance of any devotion, that his holy Mother, the Church, recommends it and approves of it, for that blessed Spouse of Christ will never urge us to practise any devotion which is not solid, and an incentive to real piety. But she is not satisfied with this. She wishes us to understand as well as to be moved; and, indeed, she wishes us to be moved, *because* we understand. She does not will that we should be merely passive; but that we should appreciate, as fully as possible, the motives by which she, herself, is actuated in recommending and encouraging a favorite devotion. Knowledge and love go together in her teachings; but knowledge comes before love; and she does not ask us, my brethren, to love that which we do not know. She reminds us that God made us to know him and to love him, to know him first, and then to love him: because, if we truly know him, we cannot help being convinced, that he truly deserves our love.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart flows easily and naturally from the doctrine of the *Incarnation*. And the Church accepts the mystery of the Incarnation in all its reality, its fulness, its consequences. She is always giving us proofs how warmly she appreciates this holy mystery. In fact, no single mystery of Christ's career escapes her keen and loving eye. The Birth, the Infancy, the Life, the Labors, the Passion and Death, the Resurrection and Ascension of our dear Lord, are, each of them, brought in its proper time and order, (and with its special lessons,) before us.

We believe that our blessed Lord was really and truly *Man*; not in appearance only, as certain heretics once taught, but in reality, a perfect man, possessed of a rational soul and human flesh. He had a body with all its organs, and a soul with all its faculties; and as in us, so in him, the soul and body mutually influenced each other. We adore the Sacred Humanity because of its Union with the Divine Nature, from which (from the first instant of its existence) it never has been separated. We adore his Flesh residing with us in the Blessed Sacrament; we adore his Precious Blood, because it is his, and because it is a part of his living Body. We adore, therefore, his Sacred Heart, through which that precious Blood circulates, and which was in him, as in all men, the special seat of his *Will*.

Almighty God, in his dealings with man, sets great store upon the offering of the heart. "*Son, give me thy heart,*" is a request which he makes of each of his children. And when he lays down the law of love, and

states the principle of that relation which he insists should exist between his children and himself, he demands that we should love him *with our whole heart*.—Do not we, ourselves, my brethren, in our dealings with each other, look specially to the heart of those with whom we are connected in friendship or love? We never esteem those who are insincere, who say in words what they do not sincerely feel in their hearts, or who profess to give outward tokens of affection, and, at the same time, keep back what is of infinitely more value to a true friend,—the tribute of a loving heart. We may be willing to plead guilty, sometimes, to faults by which we may have offended others, we may acknowledge that we have been impetuous, forgetful, or unguarded in our words, but we can never bring ourselves to admit that we have been heartless and insincere. Here, we all make haste to defend ourselves, my brethren,—though, on other charges, we may submit silently to censure. Our Lord came upon earth to teach us lessons of love, he came to regulate the affections of the heart, and he, so far, succeeded with regard to those who listened to his teachings, and followed them, that of his early disciples it was said: “*The multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul.*” (Acts 4 : 32.)

When the Church, therefore, brings before us the Sacred Heart of Jesus as an object of devotion, and wishes us to reflect upon what that Heart did for us, she is alluding, in reality, to his immense love, of which his Heart was the seat. In the Liturgy of the Festival which we are now celebrating, two exterior proofs of the sentiments of the Sacred Heart are especially brought before us, namely: *The Passion, and the Blessed Sacrament*. In each of these manifestations, we have the strongest evidence of the power of his love. What more could he have done than to have suffered and died for us as he did, except that he should be constantly repeating those sufferings, and giving us a lasting memorial of his Death? Turn your thoughts for a moment upon the Passion, dear Christians, and you will see all through its bitter course, the influence and action of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Long before that time of cruel anguish arrived, he had been anticipating its advent, and had desired it in his heart. Even as regards the Incarnation of the divine Word, my brethren, a willingness to suffer was implied in the very beginning of its decree: as witness the words which the Only-begotten Son addressed to his Eternal Father: “A body thou hast fitted to me: holocausts for sin did not please thee. Then said I: Behold, I come to do thy will.” (Hebr. 10 : 5-7.) And when the time, for which he had been longing, had, at last, arrived, it was in his Sacred Heart that his sufferings were first evinced. His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane was its first act. And what does that agony imply? He has not yet fallen into the power of his enemies, and no human hand has touched him. The scourging, the crowning with thorns, the carrying of his Cross, and the Crucifixion, have not yet taken place; but already the Precious Blood begins to be shed. He buries himself in solitude, and

begins to be sorrowful and sad. Fear overwhelms him, and he sinks down under the terrible weight which oppresses him. He rehearses in that hour of agony, all the details of his coming Passion; and his Sacred Heart is crushed under the pressure of that dread, agonizing vision. Great as were the physical sufferings, to which he was subjected in the last hour of his life, (the triumphant hour of his enemies and of the powers of darkness,) they were as nothing in comparison to the grief, the fear, the desolation, and the anguish, which reigned within him from the commencement of his Passion in the Garden of Olives, until its consummation on Calvary,—attaining its highest, its most agonizing degree when he cried out in a loud voice upon the Cross, a few moments before his death: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” And why was all this, my brethren? It was, because he became man in order to redeem us from the punishment due to our iniquities. It is the heart of man that gives consent to sin, and takes delight in the commission of sin. From the heart of man, (he himself, has told us,) come forth evil thoughts, and every kind of crime. And hence, he willed that, at the time he was making such bitter atonement for the sins of men, his own Sacred Heart should be the chief seat of his sufferings and torments. Even the last outrage of the Passion, dear Christians, again concerns his adorable Heart; for, just before he is taken down from the Cross, his side is opened by the centurion’s spear, and from his wounded Heart pour forth the last drops of blood and water. Can we, then, pretend to value the Passion of our most loving Redeemer, and not pay special homage and reverence to his Sacred Heart? Can we forget that our Lord, in his revelation to the Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, pointed to his wounded Heart, and said: “Behold this Heart, which has loved mankind so much, and which receives from them only ingratitude and coldness in return for its love!”

The Blessed Sacrament and the Passion are intimately connected, and it is the same Sacred Heart which does its work in both of these mysterious proofs of Divine love. In the Passion, however, divine justice shared the empire of love; but it was love, alone, which suggested the institution of the adorable Eucharist. It was just before the commencement of his Agony in the Garden, that, having loved his own who were in the world, and loved them to the end, he fulfilled at the Last Supper, the promise he had made soon after the call of the Apostles,—inaugurating in that solemn hour, his Sacramental life. By virtue of the power which, (in the words: “Do this in commemoration of me,”) he then gave to his Apostles, we have forever abiding in our midst, the same Jesus who was born of the Virgin Mary, at Bethlehem, and who labored, suffered, and died for our salvation. We have his true Body living again on our altars and in our tabernacles; and within that Body still beats the Sacred Heart, as it beat upon that holy night, when the disciple whom Jesus loved, reposing upon his breast, heard and felt it throbbing beneath his favored head. What St.

John felt in those privileged moments, our faith and love should make us feel every time we visit the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, or receive the Sacred Host in the Holy Communion. Devotion to the Sacred Heart must have burned and glowed in the heart of that happy and loving disciple at the Last Supper, and if we really love the Blessed Sacrament and believe firmly in this holy Mystery, the same devotion ought, also, to burn and glow in *our* hearts. In every circumstance in which we view the Blessed Sacrament, the Sacred Heart is doing its work. In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, it sheds again the Precious Blood which circulates through its veins. In holy Communion, it draws us to its secret depths, and the heart of man is pressed to the Heart of God, until both are fused together, as two pieces of melted wax in one. Constantly present in its quiet home in the Tabernacle, it is always beating with love for us, and is there fulfilling what was once prophetically said of it in the past: "*I have chosen this place that my heart may be here forever.*"—If, then, you value the Passion of our dear Lord, and if you love the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, you admit the principle of devotion to the Sacred Heart; and thus understand, my beloved, that the Church, thereby, attracts us more and more closely to a union with God.

II. And what are the lessons we should learn, my brethren, from this admirable devotion, for our own profit and practice?

Love is the first lesson. This is the direct and immediate return that is demanded of us. The Sacred Heart proclaims to us the love of Jesus, and, on that account, it appeals most powerfully to us for the love of our own poor hearts. Love, as you well know, always demands a return, and if it gain not that return, it is dissatisfied, and becomes a source of pain to us, rather than of joy and comfort. This you discover, my brethren, in your intercourse with your fellow-men. It matters little to you if you are not loved by those for whom you have no esteem, but if a friend, if one upon whom you have bestowed the affection of your heart, treats you coldly, and makes you no return of love, you become sad and ill at ease. Your heart is wounded, and feels most sensibly the pain of the wound. Behold, in like manner, the Sacred Heart of Jesus is always represented with an open, bleeding wound,—not only because the spear of the soldier pierced it, long ago, on Calvary, but because our coldness, our ingratitude, our sinful want of love, have pierced, and continue to pierce it, to its very core. St. John, who was privileged to fathom the depths of our Saviour's love, even at its very source, pleads and argues with us, saying: "Let us, therefore, love God, because God first hath loved us." (1. John 4 : 19.)

Generosity and a spirit of self-sacrifice must be added to our love, my brethren; for this, too, is the lesson of the Sacred Heart. The love of that Heart was, certainly, not an inactive one; neither was it a limited nor a sentimental love. Well, may our generous Lord ask us, what more he

could have done for us than he has done through the immensity of his love. Can we dare to ask the same question of him, dear Christians? Alas! alas! we have done so little. We are so timid and grudging in the service of God. We shrink from every sacrifice, and fear to make the least effort that might cost us a momentary pain or inconvenience. Devotion to the Sacred Heart is a grand specific for tepidity.

Humility and meekness are, also, taught us by this devotion. In fact, these might be called the favorite virtues which our Lord came to teach us through his Sacred Heart, saying: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." (Matt. 11 : 29.) Nor are these to be considered as mere speculative virtues. The want of these virtues, or the existence of the contrary vices, is the root of innumerable sins in our intercourse with our fellow-creatures. Pride, and a want of forbearance with others, are the source of that want of fraternal charity which so widely prevails in this unhappy world. Do our hearts bear any resemblance whatever to his, who forgave his enemies, who suffered and died for them, and who left us an example that we should do to others what his Sacred Heart moved him to do for us?

One more lesson we may learn, beloved brethren, in the school of the divine Heart,—and *that* is the salutary lesson of fervor in prayer. It was whilst he agonized in prayer in the Garden, at the very beginning of his Passion, that the Sacred Heart of our dear Lord was crushed beneath the stupendous weight of the sorrows that oppressed it. How fervent and persevering was that sad three-hours' prayer! How cold, alas! and how brief and distracted are our daily prayers! And why so? Because our hearts are so little in our work, and our treasure is elsewhere. How beautifully, my dear brethren, does the holy Spirit teach us that prayer is a work of the heart, and that it is to the heart far more than to the words, that Almighty God has regard, when he accepts the tribute we offer him in time of prayer. He rejects those who pretend to honor him with their lips, whilst their heart is far from him.

Let us, then, learn from the Sacred Heart of Jesus *how to pray* and *how to love*. And although, hitherto, my beloved brethren, we may have done but little towards arriving at a closer union with God, let the Sacred Heart, to-day, suggest to us sorrow for the past, and greater fervor for the future. Now, and every day, let this be your favorite prayer and aspiration: "*Grant, O my Jesus, that before I die, I may do something for the love of thee.*" And, living or dying, may our souls constantly breathe forth to the adorable Heart of the God-Man, the precious, indulgenced petition of the Church,

"O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I implore,
That I may ever love thee more and more!"

SWEENEY, O. S. B.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

“Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness.” Ephes. 5 : 2.

I. The Catholic Church, my brethren, speaking through the Council of Trent, as through a mouth-piece, commands her preachers, and all others having the care of souls, to explain the holy Sacrifice of the Mass to their people carefully and frequently. Our good Mother, the Church, has made this law, my dear Christians, to the end that we may all know what a great treasure God has left to us in this sublime Sacrifice of the altar, and what great advantages we may derive from a faithful and devout attendance thereat. The same sweet love for men which pressed our Lord Jesus Christ, in the first instance, to institute this adorable Sacrifice of the New Law, presses him, also, to desire that its transcendent nature and effects should be made known to the whole world as fully and as clearly as possible. The Sacrifice of the Mass is by far the richest treasure which Christ has left to his Church. Yet, my brethren, there are many persons who treat it with indifference, and take little or no pains to rightly understand its value, or the manifold graces and blessings which it contains. Strange to say, while the great mass of Catholics frequently meditate upon the infinite love of Jesus Christ in instituting the Blessed Eucharist as a *Sacrament*, comparatively few ever reflect upon his equally infinite love in instituting it, also, as a *Sacrifice!*

By sacrifice is meant: the external offering to God alone, of some sensible or visible thing, made by a priest, or lawful minister; the partial destruction or total annihilation of the victim being the acknowledgment of Almighty God's supreme dominion over us, and of our total dependence on him. Christian sacrifice cannot be offered to any one but to God alone.

The strongest instincts of nature, my brethren, prompt us to offer sacrifice to the Deity as an essential and acceptable act of religion. Hence, from the commencement of the world, all nations, even the most barbarous and illiterate, have offered sacrifice of one kind or another to the divinities they worshipped. In the Old Law, sacrifices of divers kinds were frequently offered to God.

Abel offered sacrifice of “the firstlings of his flock,” (Gen. 4); Noah “built an altar unto the Lord: and taking of all cattle and fowls that were clean, offered holocausts upon the altar,” (Gen. 8); Melchisedech, “bringing forth bread and wine,” offered them in sacrifice; “for he was the priest

of the Most High," (Gen. 14); Abraham "came to the place which God had shown him, where he built an altar, and laid the wood in order upon it: and when he had bound Isaac his son, he laid him on the altar upon the pile of wood, and he put forth his hand, and took the sword, to sacrifice his son. And, behold, an Angel of the Lord from heaven called to him, saying: Abraham, Abraham, . . . Lay not thy hand upon the boy, neither do thou anything to him; now I know, that thou fearest God, and hast not spared thy only-begotten son for my sake. Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw behind his back a ram amongst the briers, sticking fast by the horns, which he took and offered for a holocaust instead of his son." (Gen. 22.) Elias, too, built an altar to the name of the Lord . . . "and laid the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it upon the wood. . . . And when it was, now, time to offer the holocaust, Elias, the prophet, came near, and said: O Lord, God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Israel, show this day that thou art the God of Israel, and I thy servant, and that according to thy commandment I have done all these things. . . . Then the fire of the Lord fell (from heaven), and consumed the holocaust. . . . And when all the people saw this, they fell on their faces, and said: the Lord he is God, the Lord he is God." (III. Kings 18.)

The sacrifices of the Old Law were, some of them, bloody; others, unbloody. The bloody sacrifices consisted chiefly of lambs, oxen, and goats. Sometimes, as in the case of our Lord's Presentation, the victims were birds: "They carried him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. . . . And to offer sacrifice, according as it is written in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons." (Luke 2: 22-24.) The unbloody sacrifices were mainly of flour, and wine, and oil, etc. These ancient sacrifices, though offered up by the hands of the holy Patriarchs, had no intrinsic value of their own. They were but *poor and weak elements*, quite incapable of canceling sin, quite incapable of conferring God's grace upon those who offered them, or upon those for whom they were offered. "For it is impossible," says St. Paul, "that with the blood of oxen and goats, sins should be taken away." (Heb. 10: 4.) Those sacrifices were but mere types and figures of the true Sacrifice yet to come,—that is, of the holy Mass,—and it was only as such, that they were in any sense acceptable to God. Compared with the Sacrifice of the Mass, they were but as vague shadows, compared to the solid substance.

II. But, at length, the shadows and symbols have given place to the sublime reality. Moved by an incomparable love for fallen man, the eternal Word of God, descended from heaven, was *made flesh, and dwelt amongst us*: he came to offer himself in sacrifice for our redemption. And, in that eventful hour, all the ancient sacrifices were forever abolished. In view of that divine Victim, they became displeasing (rather than pleasing) to God; the only Sacrifice he would consent to accept as worthy of him,

was that of his Eternal Son. Our Lord Jesus Christ, speaking to his heavenly Father on this subject, says: "Sacrifices, and oblations, and holocausts for sin thou wouldst not, neither are *they* pleasing to thee which are offered according to the (Old) Law. Then said I: Behold, I come to do thy will, O God; he taketh away the first (or ancient sacrifices), that he may establish that which followeth (that is the Sacrifice of the Mass). By the which will, we are sanctified by the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ once." (Hebr. 10: 8-11.)

The Mass, my beloved brethren, is the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, which are really present upon our altars under the appearances of bread and wine, and are offered to God by the priest for the living and the dead.

This sublime oblation is no new sacrifice in the Catholic Church. The testimony of the holy Fathers, the sacred archives of antiquity, furnish abundant records and proofs of its existence in the Church, since the days of Christ and his Apostles. Nor, indeed, for more than fifteen hundred years, was there found one bold or bad enough to deny it, until Martin Luther, of dismal and execrable memory, raised his heretical voice against it in the sixteenth century, and thus deprived himself, and millions besides, of the many graces purchased for them by the Sacrifice of the Cross, and made applicable to them by Christ through the Sacrifice of the Mass.

The latter was clearly foretold by the Prophet Malachy when he declares to the Jews, as the mouth-piece of the Most High (1: 10, 11): "I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts, I will not receive a gift of your hand. For, from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation." From this passage, my dear Christians, we see that, from the period of our Lord's Crucifixion, the sacrifices of the Jews were rejected; that a *clean* oblation was instituted in their stead; and that this clean oblation was offered to his name among the Gentiles throughout the whole world, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof. This, we know for a certainty, since the words of the prophet apply with striking force and exactness to the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and not to any other sacrifice on the face of the earth: not to the sacrifices of the Jews, for God expressly declares, through Malachy, that he would not receive a gift from their hands, nor to the Sacrifice of the Cross, for that was offered up in only *one* place, and not "*in every place.*" In a word, the prophet's description does not correspond with any sacrifice but the adorable Sacrifice of our altars, which is verily "a clean oblation, offered up in every place from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same." Again, my brethren, the royal Psalmist calls Jesus Christ a priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedech. Now, you must understand that Melchisedech was a mysterious priest and king of the Old Law, who offered sacrifice to God, *only under the form of bread and wine.*

“If, then, perfection was by the Levitical priesthood,” says St. Paul, “(for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchisedech, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? . . . For he, of whom these things are spoken, is of another tribe, of which no one attendeth at the altar. For it is evident, that our Lord sprung out of Juda, in which tribe, Moses spoke nothing concerning priests. And it is, yet, far more evident if, according to the similitude of Melchisedech, there ariseth another priest, who is made not according to a carnal commandment, but according to the power of an indissoluble life: for he testifieth: Thou art a priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedech.” (Heb. 7: 11-18.) The application of this passage to the holy Sacrifice of the Mass is so obvious, my brethren, that it scarcely needs a word of further comment; for, in the Mass, Christ shall invisibly be offered up in the Sacrifice *forever*; and shall, furthermore, invariably offer himself to the Eternal Father, therein, according to the order of Melchisedech, that is, under the form of *bread* and *wine*. (Ps. 109: 9.) But let us even suppose, that there were no Sacrifice of the *Mass*, and that, (as some non-Catholics maintain,) the Psalmist referred in his remarkable prophecy exclusively to our Lord’s Sacrifice upon the Cross, do you not see that Christ could not be rightly called “*a priest forever*” upon Mount Calvary, inasmuch as the Sacrifice of the Cross was offered by him only *once*, and *in one place*? Do you not see, also, that he could not there be declared “*a priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedech*,” inasmuch as the sacrifice of Mount Calvary was not offered according to the order of Melchisedech at all, not offered under the form of *bread and wine*, but according to the order of Aaron, that is, in a bloody manner?

In the New Testament, too, we find clear and abundant proofs of the Catholic doctrine, respecting the Sacrifice of the Mass. St. Matthew (26: 26), describing the Last Supper, states that Jesus Christ “took bread, and blessed, and broke, and gave to his disciples: and said: Take ye, and eat: *This is my body*. And taking the chalice, he gave thanks: and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this, for this is *my blood!*” Here, we see, dear brethren, that Jesus offered himself in Sacrifice; his blood was represented as separated from his body. Thus, it was mystically *shed*, though not actually shed, for the actual blood-shedding took place afterwards, when he expired on the Cross. This change in the victim,—namely, the body represented under one form, and the blood under another, and both thus apparently separated, one from the other, shows forth most strikingly the death of our Saviour: “the Lamb *is, as it were*, slain.” (Apoc. 5: 6.) This same Sacramental separation, namely, the Body of Christ, under the form of bread, and the Blood, under the form of wine, is sufficient to constitute a Sacrifice, and is, in reality, the Sacrifice of the Mass; or, in other words, is the *Sacrifice of the Cross* in an *unbloody* form, together with

the real infinite merits of the same, *applied* according to the intention of the person who offers it. By giving us the Sacrifice of the Mass, Jesus Christ has lovingly put into our hands the key by which to possess ourselves of the infinite merits which he purchased for us by the Sacrifice of the Cross, and which he has left carefully locked up therein (as in a divine treasure-house), for our use and benefit. Hence, the Mass is the real application of the fruits of the Sacrifice of the Cross, as well as the unbloody repetition of that same sacrifice. "We, therefore, confess," says the Council of Trent, "that the Sacrifice of the Mass is, and ought to be, considered one and the same as that of the Cross, as the Victim is one and the same, namely, Christ our Lord, who immolated himself, once only, after a bloody manner, on the altar of the Cross. For the bloody and unbloody Victim are not two victims, but one only, whose *sacrifice is daily renewed* in the Eucharist, in obedience to the command of the Lord: "Do this for a commemoration of me." (Luke 22 : 19.) [Cat. of the Council of Trent.]

In every Mass of our altars, dear brethren, the same Christ is, therefore, contained and immolated in an unbloody manner, who once offered himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the Cross. For the Victim is one and the same, now offering himself by the ministry of his priests. (C. of Trent.) You see, then, that it was our Lord Jesus Christ who offered up the first Mass, on the eve of his bitter Passion and Death; and it is he, also, who offers up every Mass; for the priest who outwardly offers it, is only the visible minister of Christ; Christ, himself, is the Invisible Priest and Victim. Wherefore the Mass is the original, the self-same Sacrifice as that of the Cross, only differing from the latter in the manner of its oblation.

When our divine Lord had celebrated his First Mass at his Last Supper, he gave power and command to his twelve Apostles, present with him on that occasion, and to all their lawful successors—that is, the priests of the Catholic Church—to offer up the same sublime Sacrifice until the end of the world. "Do this," said he, "for a commemoration of me." (Luke 22 : 19.) Hence it is, that in the Mass, the priests take bread and wine, and by virtue of the power of Christ given unto them at their ordination, they change the whole substance of the bread into the Body of Christ, and the whole substance of the wine into his Blood: and no part or atom of either substance remains. (Con. of Trent; Sess. 13 : 2.) The species, however, of both the bread and wine remain unchanged; and this is ordained by our Lord not only to exercise our faith, but, also, in order to veil the dazzling splendors of his Divinity, which no mortal can see and live. In every Mass, the priest acts in the name of Christ, and uses the words of Christ. Hence, the words used at the moment of Transubstantiation, are: "This is my Body—this is my Blood." And whilst the priest thus outwardly offers the Sacrifice of the Mass, it is Christ, himself, who really and invisibly offers it through his chosen minister. Jesus Christ, then, is, (as I

have already said,) both Priest and Victim in this "clean oblation," foretold by the prophet Malachy, and the same he shall continue to be in each and every Mass that is or will be offered until the end of the world.

III. The Sacrifice of the Mass, my beloved brethren, is offered up for four great ends :

I. To give fitting, or, in other words, infinite praise and honor to Almighty God.

(a) The natural law, written in the heart of man, directs that every inferior should pay homage to his superior; and, furthermore, that this homage should be always in proportion to the rank and dignity of the superior. Now, this being the case, we should pay to Almighty God, as the Supreme Creator and Ruler of the universe, as our first Beginning and our last End, infinite praise, infinite honor. Anything short of the infinite would not be sufficient, nor would it be adequately worthy of his acceptance. But, since all our human offerings, all our human acts, are, like ourselves, finite, how can we offer any infinite gift to our good and merciful God?

If all the creatures of this world, no matter how rich, or beautiful, or delightful, they might be in themselves, were brought to the feet of Almighty God, and laid there as an offering, they would not be worthy of his acceptance; for there is nothing worthy of God's acceptance, except God, himself. Jesus Christ, then, seeing this great want on the part of man, has in a marvelous excess of divine love, supplied it by offering *himself*, a God of infinite worth, to his Eternal Father in the Sacrifice of the Mass. In that holy Sacrifice, dear Christians, we can give infinite praise and honor to God by uniting ourselves to the offering made to him on our altars by the consecrated hands of his priest. Nay, more, by every Mass that we offer, or get the priest to offer for us,—by every Mass at which we assist, we can cooperate in the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ, in our behalf; for, thereby discharging our first and chief duty to God, we acknowledge our total dependence on him, and return him fitting praise and honor. The accumulated worship of the Saints and Angels in Paradise, of the Archangels, the Cherubim, the Seraphim, the Thrones, the Dominations, and the Powers, is unspeakably grand and pleasing to Almighty God; but it is, as it were, nothing, in comparison with the praise and honor given to him by a single Mass celebrated by a poor, obscure priest, in some hidden corner of this lower world. For the praise of all those celestial beings, great though it be, is only *finite*, whereas the praise given by a Mass is *infinite*!

(b) The second great end, for which we offer up the Sacrifice of the Mass, is to make infinite satisfaction to God for the sins of his creatures.

Happily, my beloved brethren, we can all make sufficient satisfaction to God for our sins by this sublime Sacrifice of the altar ; and by this Sacrifice, alone. For, as the Sacrifice of the Cross satisfied the divine Justice for the sins of the world, so the Sacrifice of the Mass, and it, alone, satisfies for the sins of those who offer it, or cause it to be offered. And this it does, by applying, to each of our needy souls, the infinite merits purchased by the Sacrifice of the Cross for mankind in general. But here it must be carefully understood, that the Mass does not satisfy for our mortal sins *immediately*; it does not *immediately* cancel such sins, as the Sacrament of Penance does, when properly received. It cancels them only *mediately*, that is, it gives us actual graces and helps, whereby our souls may be freed from their guilt at an early and convenient time. And thus, by the Sacrifice of the altar, dear Christians, the graces and merits, purchased by our Lord on Calvary for mankind in general, are communicated to the individual souls for whom the Mass is offered.

Who, then, can estimate the value or importance of having Masses offered for your intention, or in behalf of the sinner? Who can enumerate the benefits to be derived from frequent assistance at this adorable Sacrifice, offering it up with the intentions of the priest? Who can adequately describe the consoling clemency which God extends to us on account of the Sacrifice of the Mass! "The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass," says St. Leonard of Port Maurice, "is the true and sole reason of such stupendous clemency, for in it we offer to the Eternal Father, the Great Victim, Jesus Christ. This is the sun of our holy Church which dissipates the clouds, and restores serenity to the heavens. This, indeed, is the celestial rainbow that stills the tempest of the divine Justice. For my own part, I am persuaded that, if it were not for the holy Mass, the world would have long since tottered from its foundations, crushed beneath the enormous weight of so many accumulated iniquities. The Mass is the ponderous and powerful supporter on which the world rests—which keeps it from falling into horrid chaos. . . . Ah, indeed, if it were not for this holy Victim (Jesus Christ), once offered for us on the Cross, and now daily offered on our altars, we, one and all, might renounce all hope of heaven, and look on hell as our final destination." (Hidden Treasure.)

(c) We owe to God a debt of infinite gratitude for all the favors and blessings, both spiritual and temporal, which he has bestowed upon us. We are deeply indebted to him for all those beautiful and priceless graces which he has given us in the past, and still continues to give us in the present. We are indebted to our Lord Jesus Christ for the wondrous love he has displayed in the Redemption of man; and, above all, we are indebted to him for the institution of the Sacraments, for his Real Presence in the Blessed Eucharist, and for his promise to abide therein, even to the consummation of the world. What return can we make for all these

favors? What offering can we make from our poverty, worthy of this all-bountiful God? Well, brethren, we have in the Mass, and in it alone, an offering that is worthy: "an oblation and a sacrifice to God, for an odor of sweetness." (Eph. 5 : 2.) In the Mass, we offer to God his Divine Son; and that spotless Victim being a gift of infinite value, our offering of gratitude to Almighty God, is, thus, an adequate return for all his favors.

(d) The fourth great end for which Mass is said, my brethren, is: to beg Almighty God for all graces and favors, both spiritual and temporal, which we require. We are all poor beggars in the sight of God. Like the bishop of Laodicea, we are all "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Apoc. 3 : 17.) We need many things from God; and, owing to our multiplied and enormous sins, we require specially a mediator to make intercession for us with the Most High. And so, out of love for us (and in spite of our utter unworthiness), Jesus Christ (O strange and marvelous mercy!) has chosen to be our Mediator, and, even more, to be *himself* our Victim of propitiation in the Sacrifice of the Mass. Whether the priest be a holy saint or an unworthy man, the intrinsic value of the Mass,—because of the Invisible Priest, Jesus Christ,—is necessarily infinite; although, according to the teaching of St. Thomas, the application of the Sacrifice is of greater or less efficacy in proportion to the dispositions of the person who celebrates it, or for whom it is offered. Christ, in the Mass, is "able, also, to save forever them that come unto God by himself; always living to make intercession for us. For it was fitting that we should have such a High Priest—holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Heb. 7 : 25, etc.)

What then, dear Christians, may you not expect through the Mass, when offered up for your intention? For, in every such Mass, Jesus Christ earnestly implores for you all that you desire from his Eternal Father. Jesus and the Eternal Father are *one*; therefore, in the Mass, and through the Mass, you are sure to obtain all that you *rightly* ask for; and much more in addition. "Assuredly," says St. Jerome, "the Lord grants all the favors for which we petition him in the Mass, provided they be suitable to us; and what is far more admirable, he very often grants us that for which we do not petition him, always provided that we place no obstacles to his holy designs." St. Bernard, speaking of the intrinsic value of the Mass, says, that "more is gained by one single Mass than by distributing all your substance among the poor, or going on pilgrimages to all the most venerable sanctuaries on this globe." St. Thomas, the Angelic Doctor, states that "the Holy Mass contains all those fruits, all those graces, nay, all those infinite treasures which the Son of God showered so abundantly upon his Church, in the bloody Sacrifice of the Cross."

Since Almighty God has, then, vouchsafed to give us the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, he has, with it, given us the means to obtain all good things. By

offering up a Mass, or by causing it to be offered for you, my brethren, it may be said that, in a certain sense, you make God your debtor. For, in that "clean oblation" of the altar, you lovingly offer Jesus Christ to his Eternal Father in sacrifice; and thereby, you make Almighty God an *infinite* offering, in return for the *finite* creatures he bestows upon you from his bounty, for your use and benefit.

Let us, then, my brethren, in all our undertakings, make an offering of the Mass to God, and ask him in that holy Sacrifice for all such favors, great or small, as we may need or desire. He cannot easily refuse us, for it is the transcendent nature of God not to be outdone by us, his creatures, in kindness or in generosity. We seek for many graces at the hands of God. We stand in need of many blessings. Let us offer up the Mass to obtain them. Let us offer it up to obtain the full forgiveness of our manifold sins, both known and unknown. Let us offer up the Mass to obtain the conversion of all poor sinners. Let us offer it up to obtain protection from the many temptations of Satan. Let us offer it up, too, for all temporal things, such as good health of body and mind, and success in our lawful business. Let us offer up Masses for the sick and the dying, that they may obtain the grace of a happy death. And, furthermore, let us frequently offer up the sublime Sacrifice of the altar for all the souls suffering in purgatory, especially for those imprisoned therein through our fault, whether friends or otherwise, that they may be speedily released from their pains, and joyfully admitted into the presence of God in heaven.

IV. My brethren, frequently assist at the holy Mass. Remember, there is no half hour so well spent, as the half hour devoted to attendance at this holy Sacrifice. You know, of course, that the laity assisting at Mass, offer the Sacrifice in union with the priest. Hence, the latter says at that holy time, *Orate fratres*, etc., "Pray, brethren, that *my* and *your* sacrifice may be pleasing in the sight of God the Father Omnipotent."

Great blessings descend upon those who join with the priest in devoutly offering up this great sacrifice. St. Gregory says: "A well-disposed man, who hears holy Mass with due attention, is preserved in the way of rectitude, while grace and merit increase in him; and he continues to make new acquisitions of virtue which render him more and more acceptable to God." "Whoever hears Mass devoutly every day," says St. Augustine, "shall be preserved from a sudden death, which is the most awful weapon with which divine justice punishes the sinner." But, my brethren, listen to the sublime language of St. Leonard of Port Maurice on this subject: "Would that I could ascend," says he, "to the summit of the loftiest mountain, and cry aloud, so that the whole world might hear me, exclaiming: 'Foolish, foolish people, what are ye doing? Why will you not hasten to the churches to assist at every Mass celebrated therein? Why will you not imitate those holy Angels who, according to St. John Chrysostom, descend

in thousands from the heavens, when Mass is being celebrated, and array themselves before our altars, covered with wings of holy awe, tarrying there during the august sacrifice, in order to intercede more efficaciously for us, knowing well that this is the most opportune time and most propitious occasion that can be, for obtaining favors from Heaven?" (Hid. Treasure.) And St. Leonard, furthermore, adds the following very emphatic words—(they are the burning words of a saint):—"Let me, on bended knees," he says, "and with hands uplifted, implore all who read this little work on the Sacrifice of the Mass not to close it till they have made a firm resolution of henceforth employing all possible diligence in assisting at Mass, and causing to be celebrated as many Masses as their means will permit, not only for the souls of the deceased, but, also, for their own souls!" (Ibid.)

Oh! my brethren, let us thank Almighty God a thousand times for his unspeakable love towards us in having given to us in the Church the rich treasure of the Mass! Let us ask Mary, the crowned Queen of Heaven, to thank our Blessed Lord and God, again and again, for his love for us, individually, in thus, also, having made known to us the hidden riches of this adorable Sacrifice, and the untold benefits we may derive from it, both for time and for eternity! It is a precious mine of exhaustless wealth, a treasury of grace, a perennial fountain of blessings; it is the sun and centre of the whole system of true religion; it is the heavenly focus,—inexpressibly loved and lovely—in which are concentrated all the soul-saving rays of God's beauty and royal splendor, of his glory, and majesty, and Divinity. The Mass is the miracle of miracles—it is the mystery of God's deep, boundless, and burning love for man!—"Having loved his own, who were in the world," says St. John the Evangelist, "he loved them to the end." (John 13: 1.) Amen.

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THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE MERCY OF GOD TO THE REPENTING SINNER.

“The publicans and sinners drew near unto Jesus to hear him.” Luke 15 : 1.

My beloved brethren, I cannot but call the approach of the publicans and sinners to Christ, recorded by St. Luke in to-day's Gospel, a remarkable and instructive occurrence. Instructive, indeed, even if we consider nothing else but *the cause* of their approach. For why did these men who were so notorious on account of the bad lives they led, draw near unto Christ? Was it, perhaps, curiosity to hear that renowned Teacher, and to see his miracles? or did they come to him, with hatred in their hearts, like the Pharisees, who, as we read frequently in the Inspired Text, came to Jesus, not to be advised or corrected by him; not with the intention of hearing his doctrine, or of modeling their lives upon his teachings, but simply to watch him with censorious malice, and lay snares for his ultimate destruction? No! these poor, despised people of to-day's Gospel were more noble-minded than their hypocritical censors and oppressors; they came to Jesus with a good intention; they came to hear him; they came with care and solicitude for the salvation of their souls; they came, urged by the promptings of their conscience, by the impulse of converting grace, with an humble desire to hear the word of Life! I do not err, when I say that these men, although they may have lost all claims to virtue, were still not deprived of divine faith. They did not possess the grace of God, but they had a certain desire for it in their hearts; they lived in sin, but were uneasy in that bondage of Satan; they considered sin, in short, the greatest evil that could have befallen them.

The state of the sinner is, doubtless, a very lamentable one; nevertheless, my brethren, we must not give up the hope of amendment, so long as a certain foundation of faith remains in his heart, preserving in him some sort of respect and desire for virtue, some sincere, but slender bond that ties him to God. As long as that bond, (feeble as it is,) remains unbroken, we must never presume to consider him lost.

If the principles of religion and virtue have been instilled into the heart of the sinner, in his childhood or youth; if, though leading a sinful, dissolute life, he retain in his heart, buried, as it were, under dust and ashes, the priceless treasure of his early belief; if the fear of God and a certain remorse of conscience, from time to time, warn him of his danger, and reveal to him the fact that he is fast approaching the brink of an everlasting ruin,—there is still some hope, that he will, one day, change his life, and

forsake his iniquities. Moreover, if we notice that he perseveres in saying his daily prayers; that he goes to Mass, and listens to the word of God with respect, there is no reason to despair of his ultimate conversion. He may have wandered from the way of the Lord, he may have entered on the path of vice, and may have strayed away, for a time, from the fold of the good Shepherd, but the seed of all holiness and perfection, divine *Faith*, is still within his soul, and in due season, it may strike its roots so deeply in his heart, that the beautiful flower of a true conversion may bloom forth in his future, edifying life. Who would dare to assert, that such a sinner will never become a sincere penitent? Sometimes, it is true, our patience is nearly exhausted; sometimes, a long, wearisome time elapses before our hopes of a dear one's conversion are realized,—but all those tedious delays and trials must not discourage us. Are there not in nature certain seeds, which lie hidden in the ground for many years, yet spring up, at last, and bear sweet flowers and fruit when they seemed, indeed, to have been utterly forgotten? What wonder, then, if the same blessed miracle should happen in the fair garden of God's long-suffering mercy and love?

And what shall we say of those men who are ignorant of the fundamental principles of religion; who are ignorant of all that is true and good, of all that elevates human nature, and makes it holy and perfect; to whom God, Christ, and the Gospel, are nameless mysteries? What can be expected of men, who daily sink deeper into the slough of infidelity and contempt of God; of men who scoff at everything holy and divine; of men who wallow in the mire of iniquity, crying out ever with their sensual prototypes, mentioned in the Book of Wisdom: "Eat, drink, and enjoy the good things that are present; for, after this, we shall be, as if we had not been!"—? Ah! yes, my brethren, we may cherish a faint hope of the conversion even of such gross materialists as these; we may fondly persuade ourselves, that they will yet enter into themselves, and discern the light of heavenly truth. But the question is, what shall animate them to abandon their sinful life? What mighty Hand shall draw them from the dark abyss of their misery, and place them securely in the road of salvation? My brethren, we must pray for them, pray fervently and perseveringly for the conversion of sinners, always remembering that God is gracious and rich in mercy, even to those who grievously offend him. This is our only hope and consolation.

From all that I have said, you will recognize the vital importance of this subject to those who have been intrusted by God with the education and direction of others. O, fathers and mothers! heads of Christian families! our holy religion cries out to you, especially: Take care of the souls committed to your charge! Let it be your first and most important business to instil good, sound principles into the hearts of your children and dependents, and engrave them deeply on their minds. Embrace every opportunity, be instant in season and out of season, reprove and rebuke with

all patience, and teach them unceasingly, both by word and example, that there is a God, infinitely perfect, by whom we were created, and whose faithful service must be our life-long glory and delight. Instruct them, that God is the reader and searcher of all our inmost thoughts and our most secret actions; that we must, one day, render an account to him of all our thoughts, words, works, and omissions; that he who does not fear God, nor imitate Christ, he who does not avoid evil, and lead a pious, chaste life, cannot stand before the judgment-seat of the Lord, and will be lost forever. The firmer you establish these principles of faith in your children's minds, the better you provide for the temporal and eternal welfare of their future lives. "But if we do all this, (methinks, I hear you ask,) do you thereby assure us that none of these well-trained souls shall ever lapse from the path of virtue?" Ah! would to God, my brethren, that I could give you so consoling an assurance! But, alas! the world, as we all know, is evil, and full of pit-falls; it is seated in wickedness. And we, alas! know the carelessness and levity of the youthful mind. It is very easy to corrupt the best of children, especially when the wholesome restraints of home are withdrawn from them, and they see so many bad examples set before them, on every side. They may deviate from the right road; perhaps, you will live to see and bewail the time when it will appear as if all your labors, and instructions, and prayers for their truest welfare had been thrown away on them. Nevertheless, no matter how dark or discouraging the prospect may be, do not give up hope. Remember the parable of the Prodigal Son. Those who have never known what is good and pleasing to God, who have never been trained in the practice of their religion, will seldom or never abandon their debaucheries, and be converted to God. It is next to impossible for such souls to repent. Who could be so foolish as to expect a crop from a field which has never been tilled, or sowed with good seed? But those who have been instructed in their youth, who have been made practise their religion in their childhood, may eventually return from their evil ways. Yes, trusting in the mercy and goodness of God, we have reason, my beloved brethren, to hope and to expect that they will return to the Lord their God before they die.

The Gospel of to-day presents us with a consoling picture of the publicans and sinners drawing near to Christ to listen to his words. These poor creatures may never have known the blessings of pious, parental training, but their ignorance was not wilful or malicious. A sincere belief in God, an ardent longing for higher and holier things, had taken possession of their hearts, and awakened in them a lively knowledge of their own misery and helplessness. Constrained by the reproaches of their guilty consciences, conducted by a merciful grace and light from above, they draw near unto the Lord, to hear from him the words of life and the doctrine of salvation.

When these poor, humble penitents approached to the feet of Christ, the

Pharisees and Scribes murmured, in the bitterness of their censorious hearts, and were scandalized at him for receiving sinners. But he spoke to them with infinite patience and tenderness, and justified his mercy by these two parables: "What man among you, that hath a hundred sheep; and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost until he find it? And when he hath found it, doth he not lay it upon his shoulders, rejoicing? Or, what woman having ten groats, if she lose one groat, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently, till she find it? And when she hath found it, call together her friends and neighbors, saying: Rejoice with me, because I have found the groat which I had lost."

These, my brethren, are some of the most gracious words that ever dropped from the lips of our blessed Saviour! These are words replete with mercy, and hope, and consolation for us poor, sinful men! Represent to yourselves a shepherd keeping guard over a flock of one hundred sheep. One of them, more restless and adventurous than the others, strays away from the fold. What trouble does it not cause the shepherd! How he frets about the poor, silly wanderer! how he runs up hill and down dale to seek it, lest it should sink exhausted in some obscure spot, and be devoured by wild beasts. And when he has found it, behold, O my brethren, how he rejoices,—how he lays it upon his shoulders, and brings it merrily back to the fold. Or, again: represent to yourselves a poor woman, who possesses no other wealth in this world but ten paltry groats. If she lose but one, how great is that loss to her who is so very poor! She spares no pains to find her coin again; she lights a candle, she sweeps the whole house and seeks diligently, till, at length, finding it, she is overwhelmed with delight, and calls loudly upon her neighbors and friends to rejoice with her in the restoration of her little treasure.

Behold, two beautiful parables which the incarnate Word himself has chosen, to give us some faint idea of the bounty of God, and of his tender mercy to sinners! This mercy appeared visibly to the world, when the only-begotten Son of God sojourned among us, in the form of man. For his coming upon earth, his doctrine, his actions, his sufferings,—what else have they been, if not a perpetual seeking and saving of that which was lost? As he was before, so is he after those golden days, always the same merciful God, who wills that none be lost. Where is the sinner, who can truthfully say that God forsakes him, that he refuses him his love, help, and assistance? That longanimity and indulgence, with which God supports for years the transgressors of his law,—those oft-repeated invitations to repentance, those secret, never-ceasing inquietudes and remorse of conscience, those temporal losses and painful accidents, what are they, my dear brethren, if not an effect of the mercy of God, who follows the sinner wherever he goes; who seeks him, as St. Denis the Areopagite says, like a despised Lover, pleading for his affections, and is anxious to conduct him

back to the way of salvation. "I desire not the death of the wicked," saith the Lord, "but that he be converted and live." (Ezech. 33 : 11.)

If the mercy of our heavenly Father was not so great, and if we had not been assured of it most solemnly by the words of his divine Son, we should be, my dear Christians, of all beings the most miserable. How much would we not have to fear, with regard to our past life! Moreover, at the awful hour of death, we should be deprived of every consolation; we could neither think nor say those blessed words which afford so much comfort and ease to a dying soul: "I trust in my good God; he is gracious, and merciful, and rich in mercy; he will not despise an humble and contrite heart!"

Many a sinner, however, is deterred from a change of life by false notions of the difficulties which beset the way of penance. Imagination paints the path of repentance as sown altogether with thorns and briars; it delineates the life of a converted sinner as one of prevailing sadness and melancholy, in which great sacrifices are to be made, and stupendous penances embraced. But this is a false opinion, dictated by the Father of lies. Call to your mind, my brethren, the consoling parable of the lost sheep. The shepherd (says Christ) seeks it; and when he has found it, he lays it upon his shoulders, and brings it back to the flock. Now, if I were allowed to interpret these divine words, I would say, on the part of our blessed Lord: "Men, sinners, be not afraid of penance. What you imagine to be difficult, only appears to be so; it will soon become light and agreeable to you! Take courage; commence earnestly; I will assist you with my holy grace, support your weakness, and carry you on my shoulders. Behold, 'my yoke is sweet, and my burden light.'" I do not say this, my brethren, however, with the intention of deceiving you as to the rigors and austerities of penance. Ah! no; far from it; but at the same time, your imagination must not exaggerate those necessary acts of self-denial and mortification, nor should you conceal from yourselves their blessed fruits and advantages, which overbalance everything hard and disagreeable to flesh and blood. Penance, it is true, has its struggles and austerities; you will have to deny yourselves many a precious and agreeable gratification, to fight many a battle against corrupt nature and evil habits; against the combined powers of the world, the flesh, and the devil. But Penance has, also, its pleasures and delights. That peace of conscience, which is an immediate consequence of a true conversion; that quiet contentment, that cheerful contemplation of the present, the past, and the future; the love and friendship of God,—are not all these goods and advantages most precious compensations for the pleasures of sin renounced, for the pains and difficulties of a penitential life embraced?

The good shepherd lays the sheep upon his shoulders, and carries it back to the flock. The Lord will share with you every trial and trouble of your conversion; he will pour the oil of heavenly consolation into your

souls, and open to you in your prayers, fastings, and tears, a source of never-ceasing joy and exultation. You will, also, understand, how a renowned penitent of our Church, the great bishop and Doctor, St. Augustine, (who, after having loathed and dreaded penance for a long time, at last, courageously embraced it,) could bewail his delusion, and cry out with burning love to God: "Too late have I known thee, O Eternal Truth! Too late have I loved thee, O Beauty, ever ancient and ever new!"

After our divine Saviour had related to the Scribes and Pharisees the parable of the shepherd and his lost sheep, of the woman and her missing groat, he concludes, my brethren, with these glad and consoling words: "So I say to you, there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance." This, dear Christians, I recognize as a special revelation of God, and, indeed, a very encouraging one; for, by it, we learn what takes place in Paradise, among the heavenly choirs, as often as a sinner on earth enters into himself, and does penance for the past. The blessed inhabitants of the Land of true light and love know far better than we do, the value of an immortal soul, which the Eternal Father has created according to the likeness of the adorable Trinity, which the divine Son has purchased by his precious Blood, and which the Holy Ghost has sealed unto the blessed day of conversion and salvation.

"There shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance!" As the Angels and Saints are not only friends of God, but, also, friends of man, co-laborers, by their powerful intercession, in the important affair of his salvation,—what pleasure, what intense satisfaction must it not afford them when their ardent desires are realized; when the number of the just on earth, and of the elect in heaven, becomes more and more multiplied; when Jesus, the Good Shepherd, succeeds in leading back, even one dearly-purchased sheep, from the way of destruction to the road that leads to life everlasting! "There shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance." Yea, brethren, a joy which not only enlivens heaven, but sheds down its golden effulgence in sweetest blessing upon the earth!

Let us, then, above all things, dear Christians, work out our own salvation; let us pray, labor, and put our trust in the power, and wisdom, and mercy of him who has said: "Without me, you can do nothing." And thus, reposing confidently upon his sacred shoulders, hidden securely in his protecting bosom, our light shall shine forth so brightly before men, that all may see, admire, and adore the mercy, goodness, and compassion of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

O. S. B.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE INTRINSIC MALICE OF MORTAL SIN.

“Know thou, and see, that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee, to have left the Lord thy God.” Jer. 2 : 19.

The prophet Daniel, being, on one occasion, in Babylon, and seeing the inhabitants of that great city adoring as their God a horrible dragon, because it devoured a great quantity of food every day,—the prophet, my beloved brethren, on witnessing this abominable sight, was fired with a holy zeal; and in order to disabuse them of their errors, and let them see that they were paying divine honors not to an almighty and wise God, but to a vile beast, declared to them that he would put it to death without sword or any other kind of arms. Accordingly, having obtained permission of the governor of the city, he mixed a quantity of poisonous matter, and placed it before the dragon; the foul monster, forthwith, opening its mouth, commenced devouring the mixture most ravenously; but, after a short time, its jaws cleaved together, it ceased breathing, and falling on the ground, was found to be dead. The prophet then drew it forth, in presence of the people, and pointing it out to them, said in a loud voice: “Behold, O people of Babylon, what you have hitherto been worshipping as a living Deity—as a living God!—Oh, be confounded,” said he, “be filled with shame for having bowed your head, for having bent your knee, for having paid divine honor, and asked favors and blessings of a monster so horrible and vile that it could not free itself from death; behold, then, before you the object of your worship, and be filled with confusion and shame!” Ah, dearly beloved brethren, why have I not, on this occasion, the zeal and the unction of the prophet Daniel? Why have I not the power to expose to your view, and lay before your eyes, another monster, incomparably more horrible than the dragon of Babylon, and which, alas! is too often venerated and idolized by the greater part of mankind?—Would to God, that I could exterminate before you the hydra-headed dragon of *Mortal Sin*, and manifest to you, in their true colors, the malice and enormity of that dreadful monster,—crying out to you, with Daniel: “Behold what you have hitherto worshipped and esteemed; behold your God; behold in what you have hitherto placed your hopes,—behold, in a word, for what a vile, abominable creature, you have turned your back upon your true God!” Ah! at these words, at such a shocking, terrific vision, I am confident, my brethren, that, with the help of divine grace, you would be filled with

shame and confusion ; you would conceive so great a horror and detestation of your past sins, as never, never more to commit them !

Permit me, then, to lay before you and explain to you, to-day, *the intrinsic malice of mortal sin*, or the malice of mortal sin considered in itself, availing myself, for that purpose, of the words which the prophet Jeremias addressed of old to the chosen, but unfaithful, children of the Old Law : “ Know and see, O people of Israel, that it is an evil and a bitter thing for you to have abandoned the Lord your God.” Consider, then, dear Christians, that Mortal Sin is a great evil,

- I. *On account of the injury and insult which it offers to God ;*
- II. *On account of the misfortunes it entails on the person who commits it.*

Let us beg of the Holy Spirit to enlighten our understandings, inflame our wills, and soften our hard hearts, that we may draw proper fruit from the consideration of these sacred truths.

I. “ Who,” says the Wise Man, “ can understand sins ? ”—My beloved brethren, there is no created being either in heaven or on earth, in purgatory or in hell, who can comprehend or understand fully the great injury, the great outrage, the great *insult* that is offered to God’s infinite majesty by the commission of even one grievous sin. Only God alone, who knows and perfectly understands himself, can know and understand the malice of mortal sin. Nevertheless, to form some feeble idea of it, and to gain such knowledge of it as is within our reach, and as will cause us to abhor and detest it, all the days of our lives, let us, first, test its malice by the light of Reason itself.

Reason itself, my dear brethren, teaches us that the malice of an injury, or insult, is measured by the condition or rank of the one who offers it, as well as by that of the person to whom it is offered. If, for example, one peasant insult another by striking him in the face, there can be no doubt that such an act is an evil and offensive thing. But if that same peasant should inflict a like insult on a superior,—for instance, should strike in the face an emperor, or a king, or (still worse) the Pope of Rome,—would not the malice of the outrage be greatly increased ? Most assuredly it would, being an offence deserving of the most severe punishment. Now, dear brethren, let us apply this rule to mortal sin, and endeavor to form some idea of the outrage, or insult, offered to Almighty God by its commission.

Who, then, is this God, O miserable sinner ! against whom you dare to raise your hand, when you commit a mortal sin ? Is he, perchance, a creature like yourself ? Or is he even a monarch or king, like unto the other monarchs or kings of the earth ? Ah ! what are all the mighty rulers of the earth,—nay, what are all the Angels, Archangels, Powers, Principalities, Dominations, Cherubim, and Seraphim of heaven,—what are all

creatures, I say, either in heaven or on earth, compared to the great God, the Lord of lords and King of kings? They are as nothing, my brethren; they are (as the Scripture says) "as if they never existed;"—for God is that grand, that all-powerful, that omnipotent Being, who is from all eternity, who never had a beginning and will never have an end; who dwells in light inaccessible, whose throne is the heavens, and whose footstool the earth; who brought forth all things, both in the heavens and in the earth, out of nothing; and whose voice all creation obeys.—He is, in fine, the Anointed King of ages, whose power is infinite, and whose wisdom and goodness surpass the limits of all human understanding. Now, this great and incomprehensible God says to me, and to you, my brethren, and to all mankind: "I am your God; I have brought you forth out of nothing; to me, you owe your being and your life; it is in my power to reduce you again to your original nothingness, for I can do all things; nor is there any other power to whom I am bound to render an account. In proof of my supreme dominion, and because my glory and your good demand it, I make known to you a law which, under pain of eternal death, I command you to observe; and that law is: "Thou shalt have no other God but me,—for to me are due both thine external homage and the internal affections of thy heart.—Thou shalt not blaspheme my sacred name, nor even take it in vain.—Thou shalt sanctify my Sabbath-days and holy-days of obligation.—Thou shalt honor and obey thy parents and lawful superiors; and even love thine enemies, as neighbors.—Thou shalt not kill nor quarrel.—Thou shalt not steal nor plunder thy neighbor's goods nor substance.—Thou art commanded to refrain from all sins in thought, word, and deed against the holy virtue of purity; neither shalt thou deliberately entertain any unlawful desires for thy neighbor's wife, or thy neighbor's goods.—In fine, I command all to observe my sacred laws, as prescribed by my divine Spouse, the Church, the certain and infallible organ of my will and desires."

Thus, the Almighty God speaks,—and you, O sinner, when you commit mortal sin, what do you reply? With unheard-of rashness and audacity, you rise up against your God, and, if not by word of mouth, at least by your evil acts, you cry out: "Who is this God that claims to be my master?"—You, O sinner, every time you offend God grievously, boldly repeat the words of the wicked one mentioned in the Holy Scripture: "Who is God, that I should hear his voice?"—"I am my own master," you insolently proclaim; "and I will do as I please. What are laws and precepts to *me*? What are Sabbath-days and holy-days,—fasts and self-denials, but driveling inventions for old women and children! I wish to please myself; I wish to take revenge; I wish to enjoy those unlawful gratifications; I wish to possess my neighbor's goods, and make free with my neighbor's wife,—why should *I*, a free man, submit to all these tiresome restraints? O, no! I am bound to live according to my own independent fashion!"

Thus speaks the sinner, at least by his acts; and it is of such the Almighty complains by the mouth of the prophet Jeremias: "Thou hast broken my yoke, thou hast broken my chains asunder, thou hast said: 'I will not serve.'" (Jer. 2 : 20.) Oh! unheard-of insolence, unheard-of audacity, unheard-of rashness, thus to fly in the face of an all-powerful, an all-wise, and all-bountiful God! Miserable sinner, dust and ashes, nothingness and worms! vile creature, whose existence and preservation depend upon the patience of a long-suffering God, is it thus you dare to rise up and rebel against the Almighty One to whom you owe everything you possess? Behold, my brethren, the awful outrage, the awful insult, offered to the infinite majesty of the Most High, by mortal sin! Who can doubt it, since God himself, speaking of sinners through the mouth of the prophet Isaias, says of them: "They have made little of my commandments, they have despised me." (Is. 1 : 2.)

But this is not all, my brethren; man, by consenting to mortal sin, is guilty of a still greater outrage than this, offers a still more cutting insult to the Almighty God. The prophet Osee (12 : 17) represents the sinner with a balance in his hand, in one scale of which he places the Almighty God, and in the other, the object of his sinful desires, whatever it may be. For example, the thief, the unjust man, places his neighbor's substance, his neighbor's goods, on one side of the scale, and the Almighty God on the other, and thus, with the balance in his hand, he says; "I prefer my neighbor's goods and substance to the love and friendship of the Almighty God," and forthwith, boldly proceeds to gratify his illicit covetousness at the sacrifice of God, of grace, of eternal salvation. Again, the lustful profligate, the impure sensualist, places his bad thoughts, his unlawful desires, the object of his criminal passion, on one side of the scale, and the love and friendship of his God on the other, and O, (horrible to relate!) he permits some filthy, abominable gratification, some beastly pleasure, to outweigh the Holy of holies, the Infinite Sanctity, and Purity, and Loveliness of God! Thus he prefers the vile passion of lust to the grace and friendship of God, thus he prefers death to life,—hell to heaven. So it is with the vindictive or revengeful man, so it is with the drunkard and the miser, so it is, in a word, with every other sinner who is guilty of mortal sin; he deliberately prefers the momentary gratification of his passions and unlawful desires, to the love and friendship of God, his Creator, his Redeemer, his Preserver and Sanctifier. Great Heavens! can there be conceived any outrage more stupendous, any insult or slight more galling than this? Most assuredly, no!

When we ponder upon the history of our Blessed Lord's Passion, and contemplate the Jews preferring the robber and murderer, Barabbas, to the innocent Lamb of God, O my beloved brethren, do we not shudder with horror, and feel the blood, as it were, congealing in our veins? Do we not cry out, with mingled anguish and indignation: "Oh, what an unjust,

what a hard-hearted, what a cruel and merciless people, thus to prefer the robber and murderer, Barabbas, to the meek and gentle Jesus, to the holy and innocent Saviour of the world!" But, dear brethren, when we commit mortal sin, we are more cruel and hard-hearted than those very Jews; since, as St. Paul says, the Jews would not have crucified the Son of God if they had known him to be such; but *we*, knowing our Lord Jesus Christ as our Redeemer and Brother, knowing how dear our salvation has cost him, even to the very last drop of his blood, yet commit mortal sins, whereby (as St. Paul further says) "we crucify again the Son of God, and make a mockery of him."—Yes, my dear Christians, by every mortal sin we commit, we renew, as far as lies in our power, the bitter sufferings, the Passion, and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and expose him anew to all the mockeries and insults of the Jews. With those unhappy and abandoned people, we cry out in the face of heaven and earth: "'Away with this Man; and release unto us Barabbas!' (Luke 23: 18.) Away with God—away with Jesus Christ and his holy grace and friendship, and grant us the gratification of our passions, grant us that momentary pleasure, grant us those objects of our unlawful desires. Away with Jesus, and let him be crucified!" Such, dear brethren, is the language of the sinner; and, let me ask you, can you conceive a baser ingratitude than this? Can a greater outrage or a more galling indignity be offered our dear Lord, than this deplorable insult? Ah! most assuredly, no. Little wonder, then, that the prophet Jeremias, contemplating this incomprehensible ingratitude with the vision of the heaven-gifted seer, and heart-broken with grief and anguish, addressed himself to the heavens above his head, (as though seeking *there*, a consolation denied him upon the earth,) and cried out: "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and ye gates thereof, be very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have done two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (Jer. 2: 12.)

But this is not enough, my beloved brethren; the outrage which man offers to God by sin does not end even here. The patriarch Job discovers, in his turn, an insult still greater than any we hitherto considered. It consists in this, that the sinner raises his impious hand against the Almighty and, as far as lies in his power, endeavors to conquer and destroy him. "He hath stretched out his hand against God, and hath strengthened himself against the Almighty." (Job 15: 25.) This may, perhaps, at first sight, appear strange and an exaggeration, but it is not so,—it is, alas! too true, as a little reflection will convince us. If the great God of heaven and earth were capable of suffering grief or sorrow, his grief and sorrow, on seeing himself offended by one of his own creatures, would be infinite; and this (if his nature were capable of it), would suffice of itself to put him to death. Know, then, O sinner, that when you commit a mortal sin, you do all that is in your power to kill your Creator, to destroy, to annihilate

him. Your mortal sins are so many fatal, so many deadly arrows, hurled against the very existence of the Almighty God. O my beloved Christians ! what more can I say of the guilt of mortal sin ! That you may the better understand its enormity, picture to yourselves, I beg of you, an immense quantity of combustible matter concealed in the caverns of the earth, and which some evil-minded person, some son of perdition, deliberately ignites in a fatal moment, causing it to burst its way through the bowels of the universe, instantly destroying entire cities, towns, and villages, blowing man and beast to atoms; in a word, utterly annihilating every creature, animate and inanimate, on the surface of the globe. Nay, suppose that the cruel and stupendous work of destruction does not stop at the earth, but extending through space to the very empyrean, destroys with its fell stroke the Saints and Angels of Paradise, yea, even the Blessed Virgin herself, the Queen of heaven and earth. What would you think of the monster of iniquity, whose hand had wrought such dire and universal ruin ? What idea would you form of the enormity of his crime ? Would you not say that such a dark and desperate deed was beyond all comprehension, beyond all power of words or human utterance to express ? And yet, my dear brethren, (O holy faith, enlighten our blindness with one ray of thy light !) yet, I dare assert, that when we commit mortal sin, we do what is, (shall I say ?) ten times, a hundred times, a thousand times, or a million times worse ? Nay, rather what is *infinitely* worse ; because, as far as lies in our power, we thereby put our good God to death, we take away the life of the Most High, whose life is infinitely more valuable than the lives of all imaginable creatures either in heaven or on the earth, since the Scripture says that “all creatures are, in the sight of God, as if they did not exist at all.” *Omnes gentes quasi non sint, sic sunt coram eo.*” (Is. 40 : 17.) O infinite malice of mortal sin ! who can comprehend it, or what can be compared to it ?

Perhaps, after all this, you will say, O sinner, that there is nothing more to be said of the guilt or malice of mortal sin ? Do not flatter yourself, that the terrible subject is quite exhausted. This God whom you have offended, is your Father, and a Father so good, so kind, so loving, that your earthly father, compared to him, does not deserve the name. Our divine Lord himself says : “Call none your father upon earth, for one is your Father who is in heaven.” (Matt. 23 : 10.) He is our Father, because he created us ; he is our Father, because he preserves us ; he is our Father, because he has redeemed us, and purchased for us an inheritance of never-ending happiness in heaven. Now, this Father says to me, and to each of you, my brethren, in the person of the prophet Malachy : “If, therefore, I am your Father, where is my honor ?” (Mal. 1.) If I am your Father, where is the respect, where is the love, the obedience, that you owe me ? Ah, ungrateful child ! what more could I do for you ? After having created you to my own image and likeness, in preference to so many other possible beings ; after having redeemed you with my

precious Blood, dying for you upon the cross, in order to give you life, I have, moreover, in preference to so many others, (who, as the Scripture says, "sit yet in the darkness and shadow of death,") called you to the true Church; I have sanctified you by baptism, I have given you my Holy Spirit, I have infused my holy grace into your soul, I have strengthened you by my Sacraments; nay, more, I have even nourished and fed you with my own precious Body and Blood. Gifts of this sublime nature, surely merited correspondence, merited love,—yet, in place of love, you have given me nothing but hatred; in place of thanking me for my benefits, you have boldly insulted me by committing mortal sin, the greatest outrage you could possibly offer me! If I had been your sworn enemy, you could not have treated me worse.

O my beloved brethren, in the secret depths of our hearts, let us ask ourselves seriously, do we not deserve these just reproaches from the Almighty God? Who is there amongst us so innocent that he can truthfully assure himself he does not merit them by his sins? Oh, few indeed; very few, if any at all. Well might St. Augustine cry out that, "to offend so good a father, or do anything against his will, is an act of the greatest cruelty."—And this, more especially, when we consider the means, the instruments we make use of in offending him. And, brethren, what are these means, these instruments? They are his own precious gifts. For example, our tongue is his gift, yet we offend him with that member whenever we speak obscene or immodest words, whenever we curse or swear, or blaspheme the holy name of God; whenever we calumniate, belie, or, in any other way, take away our neighbor's good name or character. Was it, then, for the purpose of offending him with it, that he gave you the use of your tongue? Certainly not; but to praise him, to bless his holy name. Your hands, too, are made use of to offend God by stealing, by fighting, by immodest touches, etc.; your eyes, by reading bad books, by looking at immodest objects, and the like; now, who gave you those hands,—who gave you those eyes? Are they not the free gift of God? Could he not have caused you to be born without hands and without eyes, like so many others who are born blind and maimed? And yet, you continually make your members, your senses, the means of offending God? Ah! ungrateful wretch, thus to fling back those free and excellent gifts into the very face of the divine Donor,—thus to do him evil, because he has done you good! Surely, so generous and liberal a Benefactor is worthy of more gratitude and filial service!

St. John describes, in the Apocalypse, the vision of a horrible monster having seven heads, each surpassing the other in hideousness and deformity; even such, my brethren, is the foul monster of Mortal Sin; whatever way it is considered, in whatever aspect it is viewed, some fresh deformity, some fresh abomination, some new degree of malice, is ever presenting itself to our view. For, besides being an offence against God, as our Creator and Father,

it is, also, an offence against him as our Redeemer and Sanctifier; and, considered under this aspect, how greatly is not its malice increased, especially when committed by a Christian! If a Jew or an infidel commit sin, it is certainly a wicked and an evil thing, because it is a violation of the natural law, implanted in the heart of every human being. But that a Christian should commit mortal sin, a Christian, who believes, as the fundamental article of his holy religion, that Jesus Christ is the true Son of God; that he left the bosom of his Father, and descended upon earth to destroy and annihilate sin; that, in order to effect this, he suffered the most cruel torments, and shed the last drop of his blood on an infamous gibbet on Mt. Calvary; that a Christian, I say, professing this faith, should commit a mortal sin, is beyond comprehension or explanation.—What else is mortal sin but a contemning or despising of the Son of God, Jesus Christ; what else is it but an insult to his sufferings, a trampling upon his precious Blood, a renewal of his Passion and Death, by fastening him again to the cross? What else is it, my brethren, but declaring by our acts: “If Christ died for sin, that is no affair of mine,—let that be his own loss;—I wish to follow the bent of my own evil inclinations, I wish to commit sin; if Jesus Christ is put to death thereby, what does it matter to *me*?” O God, what awful, what tremendous, what unheard-of excesses!

Ah! dearly-beloved Christians, do not, for a moment, imagine that these are exaggerations.—No; this is the infallible doctrine of Jesus Christ, as made known to us by the apostle St. Paul, who, (as I have already quoted,) says of sinners, that, as far as lies in their power, they “crucify again the Son of God, and make a mockery of him!” Oh! at these reflections, what guilty heart will not be moved to compunction, what hardened eye will not be moved to tears? And yet, alas! there are sinners to be found who, far from being moved to tears of compunction, exult, and boast of their sins, as of some great or heroic deed; who, according to the words of the Wise Man, “are glad when they have done evil, and rejoice in most wicked things.” (Prov. 2 : 14.) Ah! poor, blinded sinners, if you refuse to bewail your sins, because, by them, you have outraged and insulted your God, your Creator, and your Redeemer, bewail them, at least, for your own sakes, because of the misfortunes and calamities they entail on the unhappy transgressor. “Know and see, that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God.”

II. It sometimes happens, my dear brethren, that, notwithstanding his crimes, the sinner enjoys a certain term of uninterrupted prosperity; his health is excellent; he continues his usual sports and amusements without let or hindrance, and he maintains his good name in the eyes of the world. So long as things go on in this way, he says to himself: “I have sinned, and what evil, what harm, hath befallen me?” (Eccles. 5 : 4.) What evil, what harm, has befallen you? Ah! unhappy wretch! in speaking thus,

you resemble those sick persons who, in the paroxysms of their malady, in the very height of their mortal sickness, are heard to declare that they feel no pain—that they are, in fact, getting well; whereas, mortification having already set in, they are at that very moment, on the brink of eternity. “What harm has befallen me?” you ask, O unhappy sinner! Listen, and if you are not deprived of all reason, if you have not lost the last vestige of faith, you cannot refrain from shedding tears, considering the dreadful state of your soul. Before falling into sin, you were the adopted child of God; his sanctifying grace, infused into your soul by baptism, elevated you to that sublime dignity. God loved you tenderly as his child, and, as he himself says, he found his delight in being with you: “My delight is to be with the children of men.” “You WERE,” as St. Augustine says, “the temple of the most high God; you WERE the spouse of Christ; you WERE the tabernacle of the Holy Ghost, and so often as I repeat you WERE, *so often* must I shed tears, because you ARE *not* what you WERE!” Now, after having fallen into mortal sin, what has become of you? O God! what a fatal change! what a dreadful fall! From being the child of God, you have become the child of the devil. “You are from your father, the devil,” says the Eternal Truth himself. The tender love that he bore you is changed into an implacable and necessary hatred, since, on account of his ineffable sanctity, God cannot but hate the wicked and his wickedness alike. That exquisite loveliness of your pure soul which, heretofore, so sweetly enamored the heart of your God, is changed into an indescribable and loathsome ugliness; and now, in his sight, in the sight of his Blessed Mother and of all the Saints, you have become an object of horror, disgust, and abomination. At these reflections, then, poor sinner, have you not good reason to be confounded, good reason to tremble with dread and consternation? The Almighty God, your Creator, your Redeemer, your Father, your Judge, shall *he*, then, be your enemy? Oh! what a reflection! What will you do without him? Or where will you flee from his presence, since his majesty fills all space? As the Scripture says: “Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I fly from thy face? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there; if I descend into hell, thou art present; if I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there, too, shall thy right hand be to smite and destroy me.” (Ps. 138.) When you were his child, behold, through sanctifying grace and the merits of Jesus Christ, you had a genuine right and title to the kingdom of heaven. Happy, thrice happy, would it have been for you, poor sinner, had you died while in that fortunate state, since you would then have been admitted into the company of the Saints and Angels, a crowned prince of glory. But so long as you remain in mortal sin, that blessed kingdom is lost to you forever. It is related of the arch-heretic, Luther, the father of the so-called Reformation (which might more truly have been termed the *De*-formation, inasmuch as it wrought nothing, save

ruin and havoc in the fairest portion of Christ's vineyard), that, looking up, one night, at the heavens, so calm and serene in their starry beauty, he soliloquized with these terrible accents of despair: "O Luther, behold what a delightful country, (meaning heaven,) you have lost!" You, O sinner, so long as you remain in sin, can echo with truth those despairing words: "O heaven, O Paradise, you are, indeed, lovely and beautiful, but not for me, whose sins have barred against me the gates of the heavenly kingdom!" When Esau found himself deprived of his birthright (having sold it for a mess of pottage), the Scripture says that he roared like a lion, writhing under a deadly wound: "He roared out with a great cry." (Gen. 27: 34.) Yet what was Esau's loss, compared to *yours*, unhappy sinner? A little of the transitory and perishable goods of this earth, contrasted with the immense, the eternal, the infinite joys of heaven? Still, like Esau, you have sacrificed your precious treasures for a momentary, unlawful pleasure, for a handful of perishable goods, for some trivial or brutal gratification. How, then, can you refrain from tears? How can you cease to lament your sins all the days of your life, since this is the only means left you, to repair the loss, and make good the injury you have sustained? Penance, my beloved brethren, is the only plank of safety left us, after the miserable shipwreck of our baptismal innocence. But, perhaps, you make little account of having forfeited your title to eternal happiness by mortal sin. Although you are well aware that you have merited eternal chastisement in hell, perchance, you console yourselves with the thought that you will not have to incur this dreadful penalty until after death, and *that* you regard as a thing of the dim, distant future. Alas! do you not know that life is terribly uncertain, that even your very sins hasten the approach of death? Behold here another of the dreadful effects of mortal sin—namely, that it shortens the life of man, a fact of which we have ample proof in the Inspired Word of God, which so frequently declares that the sinner's days shall be shortened. "The years of the wicked," says the Wise Man, in the Book of Proverbs, "shall be shortened." (Prov. 10: 27.) And again (to pass over many other texts of like nature), does not St. Paul assure us, that "the man of blood and the deceitful (man) shall not see half their days?" (1 Cor. 15: 56.) How true these threats of the Almighty are, and how often they have been verified, can be proved from many examples recorded in sacred history. Amongst others, my brethren, we read in the annals of Baronius, (Ann. 518,) of a certain Emperor, named Anastasius, to whom, in punishment of his sins, there appeared, one day, a man of very venerable appearance, holding a large book in his hand. The aged apparition opened the book, and after having written some words in it, he looked at the Emperor Anastasius, and said to him: "Behold, on account of the wickedness of your life, I hereby shorten it by fourteen years!" After speaking these words, he departed. Shortly after, the heavens became quite dark, the clouds began to thicken, the lightning flashed, and loud peals of thunder

resounded through the air. The Emperor, terrified at these dreadful and ominous appearances, and judging that the threat just made to him by his ghostly visitant was about being put into execution, thought to escape by hiding himself in the safest and best defended part of the palace. But who can escape the anger of God? In a few moments, a dreadful thunderbolt burst its way into the palace—even into the very stronghold where the wicked emperor was hiding himself; and, in spite of all his power and might, that weapon of divine wrath, striking the guilty Anastasius, killed him on the spot. This, then, dear brethren, is one of many examples of how the Almighty executes his threat of shortening the sinner's days.

But, let the life of the transgressor be long or short, what sort of a life is it, after all? Alas! it is a most miserable and unhappy life; and in this, dear Christians, we behold another terrible effect of mortal sin, viz., that it does not permit the sinner to enjoy a moment of real joy or happiness. "There is no peace for the wicked," saith the Lord. (Is. 48 : 22.) Ah! if you enter into yourself, and wish to acknowledge the truth, you must confess, O sinner! that *this* is an undeniable fact. Recall, for a moment, the days of your early innocence, and consider how happy and contented you were then. What peace, what consolation, you enjoyed when you cherished a tender, practical devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, when you frequently approached the Holy Communion, and nourished your soul with the immaculate Flesh and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. But now, *now* you are uneasy, now you are disturbed and distracted. A burden both to yourself and others—nothing, now, consoles you: everything tends to embitter your temper; even your very amusements and recreations which you so anxiously pursue, in the hope of forgetting in them the fierce pangs of your internal anguish and remorse, even these become to you, in a short time, occasions of horror and unspeakable disgust. In a word, nothing now goes well with you, O sinner!

But whence all this? What is it that thus disturbs and disquiets you? Oh! my dear brethren, these are the infallible consequences of *mortal sin*. Yes, sin—deadly sin, is the serpent that poisons, the worm that gnaws and devours the very life of your soul. No, "there is no peace for the wicked." Methinks, I hear some miserable sinner say that *he* is not thus troubled, that he feels none of this remorse for his grievous crimes, that his mind is easy, his heart quite at rest.—Good God! your mind undisturbed, your heart at rest, while in a state of mortal sin? Ah! then, indeed, are you to be pitied; then, indeed, are you to be commiserated, as a man in the very jaws of death and hell! That uneasiness, that remorse, which, alas! you fail to experience, are, at least, some feeble indications of surviving faith; but lacking them now, you shall feel them with tenfold violence at the hour of death. In that most dreadful moment, as the holy Scriptures declare, sinners "shall come with fear at the thought of their sins." "And they shall be troubled with a dreadful fear." (Wisd. 4 : 20-5 : 2.) Uneasiness and

remorse shall be your portion for all eternity in that bottomless pit of hell, where, our Lord himself says : "Their worm dieth not." (Mark 9 : 43.) One of the bitterest and most galling stings of that deadly worm will be the remembrance of God's grace, which you abused and rejected, the recollection of the lost merits with which your soul was once so richly adorned. Behold here, my dear Christians, another lamentable effect produced by mortal sin. A soul enriched with sanctifying grace, is like a vessel laden with priceless jewels, directing its course towards the harbor of the heavenly Sion, and daily adding to its precious store. Sanctifying grace itself, the habits of holy virtue which it has acquired, the merits of Jesus Christ, of which it is a sharer, are so many priceless treasures ; the good that a soul does in this state, the prayers, the almsdeeds, even its indifferent acts, performed with a view to please God, are so many new graces for heaven—according to the words of the Apostle : "To them that love God, all things work together unto good." (Rom. 8 : 28.) Oh, thrice happy soul ! but, alas ! what a change when it falls into mortal sin ! Then all, *all* is lost, for sin is that cruel and rapacious thief that despoils, that robs us of every treasure. At present, such a loss is not properly understood or valued ; but woe, thrice woe, to the soul that waits to understand and lament it, without effect, in the regions of everlasting misery !

Finally, mortal sin degrades and debases the soul in a most horrible manner. Considered in its own nature, the soul is a most noble spirit, created to the image of God himself, little less than an angel ; adorned with sanctifying grace, it is a creature so beautiful in the eyes of the Most High, that he himself is enamored of it, and calls it his friend, his sister, his spouse. But, falling into mortal sin, that beautiful soul, my brethren, falls from *such* a height into such an abyss of vileness and degradation, that it is reduced almost to a level with the beast of the field—according to the words of the Psalmist : "And man, when he was in honor, he did not understand ; he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them." (Ps. 48 : 13.) Nay, more, as St. Bernard declares, "if a beast could speak, it would say, on seeing a man who has fallen into mortal sin : 'You are become like unto myself.'" St. Chrysostom even goes further still, and says, that not only is the sinner rendered equal to the beasts of the field, but, in a certain sense, is reduced to a lower level than these ; and he founds this doctrine on that of King David, who, in one of his Psalms, invites not only the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, but even the very scorpions, dragons, and serpents, to praise the Lord, but says nothing about the sinner ; the sinner, *alone*, is excluded from that universal chorus of homage and benediction. "Now, what sign is this ?" says the holy Doctor. "What other sign can it be, than that the sinner is, in the eye of God, worse than all the beasts, or even the most horrible monsters?" (Hom. Cum. presb. fuit ordin.) O accursed sin ! O evil, above every other evil !

Let us, then, my brethren, in conclusion, heap together all the manifold evils of mortal sin, and contemplate them, as it were, with one glance of the eye. Mortal sin is a great evil, in the first place, on account of the outrage it offers to God as our Creator and Father; and because, by it, the sufferings of our Redeemer are again renewed. In the second place, it is a great evil, on account of the misfortunes and calamities it entails on the person who commits it, inasmuch as it not only deprives him of sanctifying grace, and robs him of his title to eternal happiness, but makes him a child of the devil, and liable to hell's eternal punishments; inasmuch, as it gnaws his conscience with the undying worm of remorse, deprives him of all the merits of Jesus Christ, and of his own good works, lowers him to the level of the brute beasts, shortens his days, and subjects him to a thousand temporal chastisements. Good God! can any evil, any calamity, be conceived more direful than that of mortal sin! Small wonder, that the Saints held it in such horror, and, (as we read in their lives,) looked upon it as something awful and prodigious. For example, a St. Gaetanus, considering the sins that would result from a certain gathering of the people at Naples, took sick, and died of pure grief. A St. Juliana Falconieri and a St. Stanislaus Kostka fell into a swoon, and fainted away, at the very mention of certain sins, in their presence. A St. Isabella sweated blood at the consideration of all the sins that were committed in the world. A Sister Mary of the Crucifixion shed tears of blood at seeing a person stain his soul with mortal sin. All this, I say, my brethren, should not be wondered at; it is little or nothing, in comparison to what accursed sin deserves.

That which is, above all, calculated to give us a proper and clear idea of the infinite malice of mortal sin, is the contemplation of our Lord Jesus Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, on the night of his bitter Passion. There, we behold the Man-God, the Saviour of the world, prostrate on the earth, quite exhausted and almost reduced to the last agony. There, we behold blood gushing forth from every part of his body, in such quantities, as to moisten his sacred garments, and flow upon the earth in streams. "And his sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground." (Luke 22 : 24.) What is it that thus causes his blood to burst from the pores of his sacred, virginal Flesh? Neither sword nor lance are here to wound him, neither soldiers nor executioners to buffet or strike him—why, then, this outpouring of his precious blood? Ah! Christians, too well you know it! He has taken our sins upon his innocent shoulders; he is about to expiate them, about to offer satisfaction for them to God's infinite justice by his cruel Passion and Death. This it is that, with its infinite and loathsome weight oppresses him, and causes the blood to flow from all parts of his sacred body. O cursed sin! O infinite evil! for which a God sweats blood,—for which a God is reduced to such dreadful agony—for which a God dies on a cross! Now it is, that I understand

(at least, to some extent,) your malice. But, O my dear brethren, what will become of us who have so often been guilty of mortal sins? Perhaps, our grievous offences are as numerous as the very hairs of our head—sins of thought, word, deed, and omission; sins of hatred, of anger, of revenge; sins of blasphemy, of cursing, of swearing, of rash oaths, of perjury, of backbiting, of calumny, of detraction; sins of dishonesty and theft, sins of impurity and immorality, sins of intemperance and drunkenness, sins of every kind and sort and description! Great God! at such a horrid spectacle, at such an overwhelming sight, what shall we do? Where shall we flee for refuge? What shall become of our immortal souls? Shall we be condemned to hell's eternal torments, as we have deserved, or will God pardon us, notwithstanding our black ingratitude towards him? Ah! yes, he will, dear brethren; but on one condition, namely, that we repent of all these offences against him, and make amends for the past by applying ourselves, in real earnestness, to his love and service, during the remainder of our lives.

Let us, then, throw ourselves at the feet of Jesus Crucified; and with his arms extended and his sacred Head bowed down towards us, he will once more embrace us, and give us the kiss of peace. But in seeking Jesus, my beloved brethren, let us seek him through Mary, his blessed Mother and ours, also,—yes, we are her children, and children that cost her dearly, begotten in pain and anguish, at the very foot of the Cross. Let us, then, seek reconciliation with Jesus through her; and she, who anxiously desires our salvation, will intercede for us, and obtain for us the grace of true repentance, the grace to hate and detest mortal sin, during the remainder of our lives, and cause us to look upon it as the only evil to be avoided, here below, if we would have a share in God's kingdom hereafter. Amen, Amen.

REV. FLORENCE MCCARTHY,
Ballyheigue, Co. Kerry,
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FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON PURITY OF INTENTION.

“ *Master, we have labored all the night, and have taken nothing.*”
Luke 5 : 5.

To labor long and diligently, yet without profit, is a depressing and lamentable thing. Saying this, you may suppose, perhaps, my dear brethren, that I allude to the poor apostles of Christ, who, in the Gospel of to-day, complained to him, at the lake of Genesareth, that they had toiled all night at their nets, without taking even one fish. Nay, it is not those good apostolic fishermen of the past, but, rather, the unhappy children of this present world, that demand and deserve our entire sympathy. Persons of every state, sex, age, climate, and condition, have their heads and hands full of work, day and night, during the whole term of their mortal lives; and yet, in the hour of death, when God commands them to draw their nets to the shore, they will find out, to their utter dismay, that, after all their labor and fatigue, they have taken nothing; they will confess, that they have suffered and toiled in vain, losing not only one night, but a whole life-time, in their profitless pursuits. Whence this misfortune, my beloved brethren? Alas! like the apostles, they cast their nets too near the shore! They have toiled too close to the earthy bank of the stream. Their undertakings have all been prompted solely by low, earthly motives; and hence, it is not to be wondered at, that, in the last evening of life, they find the net of their good works empty. O my beloved Christians, I implore of you, let us draw back a little from the land, let us launch out into the deep,—if, at the end of our lives, we would hope to receive some heavenly recompense for our labors. By launching out into the deep, I mean that our actions should have their source in God, and in him, alone, should seek their aim and end. For then, only, will our labor be attended with genuine fruit and blessing. In order to accomplish this most perfectly, in all our actions, my dear brethren, we should have

- I. *God in our hearts;*
- II. *God in our minds;* and
- III. *God before our eyes.*

I. We must always have God *in our hearts*; divine grace must sanctify our actions. To be acceptable to God, our works must be Christian works, full and valid in his sight; and they can only be such when they

are performed in the state of grace and in the divine friendship. Eloquence, wisdom, knowledge, science,—yea, even the grandest heroic actions, are as nothing before God, if they proceed from a soul in a state of mortal sin; if they are void of charity, they are naught, save vanity of vanities. Of what use shall *that* be, my brethren, which serves not the end for which we were created? The great Doctor of the Church, St. Bernard, calls our works *the seed of eternity*; but, if that important seed be void of God and his grace, how shall it ever produce in the soul the beautiful fruit of eternal life? Works which are not stamped with the seal of divine charity, can never be received as pure gold or current coin at the bank of heaven; and since, in that blessed spot, there is no reward without merit, so, too, there is no merit without grace. Who does not know this? How much, then, are those to be pitied who live habitually in a state of mortal sin! The royal Prophet gave a very good description of them when he said: “The wicked walk round about;” for, as the dumb beast in the tread-mill toils hard the whole day, yet goes round and round in the same unvarying circle,—so, too, O wretched sinner! with all your labor and continual toil, you make no progress in the true way of salvation. You may give alms, and say your prayers; you may go to Mass every day, and keep all the fasts and feasts prescribed by the Church; but, in spite of these apparent good works, I assure you, that you only walk round about in a circle of perdition, and do not acquire any of those merits, to which eternal life is promised. So long as you return not to God, and so long as God returns not to you, everything you may do with a view to eternity, is vain and useless. Nevertheless, my dear brethren, even if you be at present in this hapless state, (which God forbid!) you must not omit any of your accustomed exercises of virtue, for, although they are incapable of meriting for the sinner everlasting joys, they may accelerate the grace of his conversion, appease the wrath of God, and deliver his soul from the slavery of the devil. But if you trifle with the grace of God, and delay your repentance to the hour of death, your pious practices will avail nothing for eternal salvation, and you will be forced to say, alas! with far more truth and sad significance than the apostles: “We have labored all the night, and have taken nothing.” How happy, on the contrary, is the lot of those whose works are performed in the state of grace; no action is without merit, none without praise, none without reward. Be the work of the just man ever so small or insignificant, because of the inestimable value which it derives from the favor of God, the most trifling is of more value in his sight, than all the sublime and heroic actions of the sinner. Do we not read in the Sacred Scriptures, my dear brethren, that the spindle of the valiant woman is praised above the sword of Nebucadonosor? The draught of water poured out by King David, through a motive of love, above the fat victims of disobedient Saul; and the little mite of the poor widow, above the gold and silver of the proud Pharisee?

What, then, ought we to do, my beloved? We should resolve, this day, this hour, in this holy temple of the Lord, never more to admit mortal sin into the sanctuary of our hearts. Mortal sin! what a monster! A monster, that ruthlessly devours all the merits of our good actions; a monster, whose deadly presence in our souls poisons all the sweet and wholesome fruits of virtue; a monster, which defiles and destroys all the fair loveliness of our pious exercises. If you have not the erudition, knowledge, or wealth, to perform great and important works, have patience, dear brethren, and content yourself, at least, with the little you can do; for that little, sanctified, glorified, and, as it were, *divinized* by God and his grace, is far grander and more precious, before heaven, than the mind of man can conceive. Flee, therefore, from sin as from the face of a serpent; hate and detest it from the bottom of your heart, and resolve here, to-day, in the sacred presence of your Eucharistic King, sooner to die than commit it any more.

II. We must always have God *in our mind*—that is, all our actions are to be referred to him, to his greater honor and glory. It is not sufficient, my beloved, that a work be good in itself, in order to be meritorious for eternal life; it must, also, be well and perfectly performed; and this good and perfect performance of it depends on the pure intention with which it is animated. “The light of thy body is thy eye; if thy eye be simple,” says Jesus, “thy whole body will be lightsome.” (Matt. 6 : 22.) A simple or single eye, however, requires two things: *love in the intention*, and *truth in the selection*; in other words, the work must be good in itself, and must be performed for God’s sake. If the one or the other of these requisites be wanting, the whole body of the work loses its light, and what should serve to illumine the soul of man, becomes the fruit of darkness. Behold, therefore, my brethren, how mistaken are those Christians who center their attention and diligence exclusively upon the work they undertake, and not upon God, for whose sake alone all our actions should be done. If we carefully weigh the matter in the scales of the sanctuary, what is this but to content one’s self with a worthless creature, void of light and life,—to prefer a dead dog to a living lion? I, for my part, feel assured that many, in the hour of death, will be exceedingly sorry for this delusion. Alas! when they summon their works together, to present them all at the judgment-seat of God, they will fail to answer the summons; for their apparent virtues and pious practices, lacking a pure intention, are like the apples of the Dead Sea, fair to the sight, but crumbling into ashes at the strong, searching test of eternity. It is to be feared that Christ, at that solemn hour, will have occasion to say to them what he said to the Pharisees of old: “Woe to you, . . . hypocrites, because you are like to whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men’s bones and of all filthiness.” (Matt. 23 : 27.)

If, then, my brethren, we desire, one day, to be welcomed favorably at the tribunal of God, let us follow the advice of St. Augustine, and, in all our works, regard not so much the action itself, as the intention with which it is performed. If you had been present at the prayer of King Ezechias, in his palace, or of the Pharisee in the temple, you would have been inclined to believe that both were pious men; yet, whilst the one was blessed by God, the other was rejected by him. If you had been permitted to gaze upon the costly and beautiful attire of the two ancient Queens, Jezebel and Esther, you would, no doubt, have judged both to be vain and wanton women; yet, whilst Jezebel's dress called down upon her the thunderbolts of the divine wrath, Esther's caused blessings to descend from heaven upon herself and her beloved people. We may justly ask, my brethren, why does so wide a disparity exist between the results of actions seemingly so similar? Because of the different intentions which prompted them! Esther and Ezechias both referred their works to God, Jezebel, and the Pharisee did not. Oh, how grossly do we deceive ourselves, my beloved, when we only look, as it were, at the outer bark of the work! We would judge differently, if we could penetrate into the marrow of the intention. Hence, we should not consider so much what a man does, but rather, for what end he does it. The devil knows very well how to win the victory over us, in this matter; for, (cunning serpent that he is!) perceiving that we are averse to vice, and resolved to lead a Christian life, he tries to corrupt and destroy, at least, the intention of our good works, being thoroughly aware that, when the root of the tree is rotten and worm-eaten, its deceptive growth and fruit belong solely to him. In order to defend ourselves from this robber, the prophet advises us, to stretch out our hands to heaven: "Lift up your hands to the holy place;" that is, refer all your actions, by means of a good intention, to God alone, and begin not any work but with the pure design of gaining his approbation and increasing his glory. What a multitude of merits might we not accumulate, my beloved brethren, if we spent our lives in such an edifying, Christian manner! And do you question, perhaps, whether it is not wholly in our power to do so? What else is required but a rapid thought soaring up to heaven, on whose pure wings, (as on those of a snow-white dove,) every good work may ascend, in a moment, to God. What else is required but a pious aspiration, such as this: "It is for *you*, O Lord! I perform this action; it is for *your* glory; it is because *you* will and desire it!" Behold! my brethren, a prayer of this kind occupies but an instant of time, yet it is capable of turning to gold the commonest, the most indifferent actions of life! Our good works, thus performed, become holy, and are meritorious for eternal life, as the Apostle says: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all things for the glory of God." (1 Cor. 10:31.) How vast and precious will be the treasure of merits acquired every day, my dear brethren, if we but perform all our works with a pure and holy

intention! What consolation for the dying Christian to look back upon his past life, and behold the blessing of God upon all his days and all his works, because they were works and days having the will, the honor, and the glory of God for their sole and sacred end! What powerful assistance will be his in that last solemn hour; what an abundant reward may he not expect in eternity from God, the rich Rewarder of all his just and single-hearted servants! Unspeakably foolish are we, therefore, my brethren,—if, failing to embrace so easy a means,—we do not strive to work out for ourselves a like happy destiny. Let us, then, banish all vain, selfish, and worldly motives, by which, day after day, year after year, we lose the merit of our good works, and, perhaps, in the end, imperil the salvation of our souls. Dedicating to God alone all our future thoughts, words, and actions, let him, alone, be the heart of our hearts and the soul of our souls.

III. We must keep God always *before our eyes*;—that is, we must walk habitually in his holy presence. The best incentive to perform our actions altogether for God and with God, is to frequently remind ourselves that we are laboring under his all-seeing eye, and must have an earnest and solicitous care not to offend him. David asks why the ways of the wicked are always filthy; and what, my brethren, do you think is the reason he gives in answer to his own question? He says: “*God is not before his eyes*; his ways are filthy at all times.” (Ps. 10: 5.) The moment the sinner loses the thought or fear of God’s presence, that moment he loses, also, the heavenly light that illumines his path, the guide that leads him to a secure end, the bridle designed by divine wisdom to restrain and withhold him from sin. Hence, it follows, that, left to himself, and to the dark corruption of his fallen nature, he rushes blindly and recklessly from one miserable vice to another.

As wilful forgetfulness, or contempt, of God’s presence is the cause of the latter’s withdrawal from the sinner, so he that walks habitually in the divine presence enjoys (like Adam, before his fall,) the happiness of always walking with God. What temptation can be strong enough to overcome a soul supported by that all-powerful, abiding presence? “If God is with us, who shall be against us?” The world may display its vanities and riches, the flesh may offer its alluring pleasures, the devil may cunningly hold forth the bait of his tempting pomps and honors; but, reminding himself of the presence of God, the true Christian will at once discover the nothingness of all wealth and vanities, the gross degradation of all sensual pleasures, the emptiness of earthly fame and glory. In vain, the world will endeavor to take him captive by caresses or threats; the charms of creatures must yield to the charms of the Creator; the fear of men, to the fear of God, and the love of the goods of this perishable world to the love of a God who is infinite and everlasting. Divine faith, whilst it keeps the soul habitually in the presence of God, places continually before her eyes his

majesty, goodness, and beauty, and, consequently, convinces her of the right and title which God possesses to our love, our preference, our unalterable homage and service. Neither in the darkness of night, nor in the depths of the most deserted solitude, can such a soul be induced to transgress the law of God, since, even in the thickest and most impenetrable gloom, she sees God, by whom she is, also, seen; and even in the depths of the stillest desert, she hears the mighty voice of the Most High demanding from her a persevering constancy and fidelity. In effect, beloved Christians, how did that heroine of chastity, whom Daniel describes, withstand the violent assaults that were made upon her chastity? What was the shield with which she defended herself in the hour of temptation—what the arms with which she conquered her enemies? *The presence of God!* By this, alone, she obtained strength and victory. She foresaw that her treacherous tempters, should she refuse their foul proposals, would defame her innocence, dishonor her name with the blackest calumnies, and condemn her to yield up the ghost, under a cruel rain of stones. “But all this does not terrify me,” said the unconquerable heroine; “they may tarnish my reputation, they may even take away my life, but never shall I be tempted to offend that God, who is present to me in every place: ‘It is better for me,’ she said, ‘to fall into your hands, without doing this thing, than to sin in the sight of the Lord.’” (Dan. 13 : 23.)

When God, in the person of Abraham, would give to his numberless descendants an epitome, or summary, of perfection, it consisted wholly in these three simple words: “*Walk before me.*” “Remember thy last end, and thou wilt never sin,” says the Inspired Writer; and it might be said, dear brethren, with equal force and truth: Remember the Eye of God, and thou wilt never forfeit his grace. Truly, a Christian would deserve everlasting reproach, if that all-seeing Eye failed to exercise over him, at least, as potent an influence as the eye of man exercises over the hearts of worldlings. How often has the conviction: “I am here in the open gaze of the public; the world is looking at me, and judging my conduct,” animated you, my brethren, to act honorably in your several enterprises and duties, and gain the applause of your fellow-men. Now, if the eye of the world thus moves you to aspire to the vain praise of mortals, shall not the eye of God have power enough to excite you to do his holy will, and gain his undying approbation? Behold, with what patience the first martyr of the New Law bore the calumnies and furious assaults of the Jews. Whence, you ask, does he draw his intrepid and joyous courage in the midst of that bloody ordeal? Lo! the undaunted soldier of Christ, even under a crushing shower of stones, lifts up his eyes to heaven, and there sees his Redeemer regarding lovingly the supreme trial of his faithful martyr: “I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.” (Acts 7 : 55.) Ah! if we, also, would open the eyes of faith, and repeat these words: “I see Jesus, my Lord and Saviour, standing at the right hand of

his Eternal Father, ready and willing to assist me with his grace, and regarding me continually with the eye of his Omniscience,"—how great would be our desire to glorify God, and to avoid sin! If we would frequently call to mind the divine presence, how meritorious would be our life, dear brethren, how holy and tranquil our death! Where is the Christian who does not long to enjoy the presence of God in his dying hour? If we, in our turn, would share with the Saints that ineffable consolation, let us walk before God during life. "Precious, in the sight of God, is the death of his saints." (Ps. 115 : 15.) And this happiness, far from being impossible or difficult, is within the grasp of every Christian soul; since, to obtain it, nothing else is required but to make our life precious by walking in the presence of our God. Courage, then, my beloved brethren; and striving earnestly to fulfil each duty with a pure intention,—having God *in our hearts*, God *in our minds*, and God, habitually, *before our eyes*,—we shall not be forced to cry, at the hour of death, (with the tired laborers of the Gospel,) "Master, we have labored all the night, and have taken nothing!"—but at the last, solemn moment we shall be able to land our nets, well-filled with a precious store of good and perfect works, from the deep sea of Time, upon the blessed shores of Eternal Life. Amen.

O. S. B.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE QUALITIES OF TRUE CHRISTIAN RECONCILIATION.

“Leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go to be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” Matt. 5 : 24.

Who has given us this commandment, my beloved brethren? It is neither Moses, nor Elias, nor any earthly law-giver or potentate who lays down for us this doctrine; but Jesus Christ, whom our sins have nailed to the cross,—that sovereign Judge, to whom all judgment has been given by the Father,—that Lord of lords and King of kings, who shall decide, at last, whether we merit endless misery or perpetual happiness. It is Jesus Christ who speaks,—and he never spoke with greater authority, he never declared his will more emphatically than in this instance, since he knew that none but himself could oblige us to forgive and love our enemies. When he opened his lips for his first public discourse, he gave voice to that excellent and truly divine Sermon on the Mount, which contains the whole summary of evangelical perfection, the law of peace and good-will which should characterize his followers, and unite them in the golden bonds of true fraternal charity. “You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill, shall be guilty of the judgment. But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be guilty of the judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother Raca, shall be guilty of the council. And whosoever shall say: Thou fool, shall be guilty of hell-fire. Therefore, if thou offerest thy gift at the altar, and there shalt remember that thy brother hath anything against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go to be reconciled to thy brother; and then come and offer thy gift.” (Matt. 5 : 21–25.) Again he says: “You have heard that it hath been said: Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thy enemy. But I say to you: Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: pray for them that persecute and calumniate you; that you may be the children of your Father, who is in heaven. . . . For if you love those that love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not, also, the heathens the same?” (Matt. 5 : 43–48.) The law is plain, the commandment most express;—thus speaks Jesus to his followers: “I, your Lord and your God, the ruler of all hearts, the supreme Law-giver of the universe, having, in my infinite love and mercy created you and redeemed you by my precious blood, I command you: ‘Love your enemies.’ forgive them, if they have offended

you, if you wish to be my disciples ; ‘ for by this all men shall know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.’ If you do not love your enemies, if, on the contrary, you hate them, and seek revenge upon them, you are not my disciples. If your hearts are hard, resentful, and unforgiving, it is useless for you to approach my altar, or offer to me any gift, no matter how precious. I reject your sacrifice ; your prayer is an abomination to me ; my ears are shut against it. I have no blessing, no grace for the man who hates his neighbor.”

Hearken, my beloved, to the commandment of our God ! It is general, and suffers no exception whatsoever. Many, however, deceive themselves in its practice ; they imagine themselves reconciled to their enemies, yet, all the while, they bear about with them the poisoned arrow of resentment which rankles in the heart, and makes it continually bleed afresh. Whence comes this, my brethren ? Ah ! that is the very question I am about to solve to-day, confining myself strictly, to the interpretation of my text. If we would be truly reconciled to our enemies, what qualities must our reconciliation possess, in order to correspond with the spirit of peace and Christian love ? The answer is contained in the explicit words of Christ : “ Leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go to be reconciled to thy brother ; and then come and offer thy gift.” (Matt. 5 : 24.)

- I. *Our reconciliation will cost us some trouble* : “ LEAVE THY GIFT, . . . AND GO.”
- II. *Our reconciliation must be prompt* : “ FIRST GO.” And
- III. *Our reconciliation must be sincere and universal* : “ BE RECONCILED TO THY BROTHER.”

I. A reconciliation, my dear brethren, is always a painful task ; but, though it may be repugnant to flesh and blood, though it may cost a great deal of self-denial, though our pride and our self-love be bitterly opposed to it, it must be done, for Christ says : “ Go ! ” Many may contend, in reply : “ But, Father, to pardon injuries, to forgive offences, to be reconciled to one’s enemies, to love them that hate us, is very hard—nay, it is an impossibility.” I do not deny, my beloved children, that the practice of Christian forgiveness is difficult, and, in fact, harder than anything else. I remember what a certain holy martyr said, when his executioners demanded of him a miracle : “ I love you, my murderers, as my brothers. Do you require a greater miracle of me than this ? ” The pardon of injuries and offences, the love of enemies, is a virtue which, although rare among Christians, is absolutely necessary for salvation. You may repeat, again and again : “ It is impossible to human nature to love those that hate us.” If it were impossible, Christ would not have commanded it ; since the Council of Trent says, that God does not command impossibilities, and the Sacred Scriptures repeatedly exhort us to keep the com-

mandments; therefore, with God's grace, we can keep them, because we can do all things in him that strengthens us. Christ inculcated the love of enemies on every occasion, not only by his word, but, also, by his own divine example, his whole life being a continual exercise of fraternal charity. It was his love for his enemies that brought him down from heaven, and led him to endure the greatest hardships, humiliations, and sufferings. All the base treatment he received from the Jews, could not hinder him from spending three whole years among them, in continual endeavors to convert them, and procure their everlasting happiness. He healed their sick, he cleansed their lepers, he cast out their devils, and performed, in short, all kinds of miracles, during that time, for the sake of a people, the most ungrateful that ever trod the face of the earth,—a people who, he foresaw, would repay all his loving bounty and benefits by putting him, in the end, to a most ignominious death. And, O my brethren, at his Last Supper, when the hour of his cruel Passion was at hand, did he not prostrate himself before Judas, the infamous traitor, and there, with the most amazing humility and meekness, wash and wipe his vile feet as lovingly and tenderly as though he were one of his best and truest friends? If we follow him, in spirit, to Mount Calvary, and behold him barbarously nailed to the Cross, we shall find him, in the very freshness of his bleeding wounds and painful agony, forgetful of himself, and, with his first words upon the cruel Tree, imploring mercy and pardon for his murderers: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23 : 34.)

Will you, then, say, my brethren, that it is impossible for you to love your enemies? Did Christ promise heaven to cowards? Does not the kingdom of heaven suffer violence, and do not the violent—that is, the brave, bear it away? If it is painful to flesh and blood to love our enemies, why do we not do violence to flesh and blood? Is it not the narrow way that leads to life? It is difficult to love an enemy, you say. But why? Because *you* have been offended? If, on the other hand, you were the offender, would you not speak otherwise? Would you not praise the wisdom of the Law-giver who has commanded the pardon of injuries? You still persist in saying: "It is hard; nature revolts against it." That is very true; corrupt nature is opposed to it; but, blessed be God! his grace can do what nature cannot; his grace can achieve the noblest of all victories. "Love," says A Kempis, "performs and effects many things, where he that loves not, faints, and lies down." (Lib. 3 : cap. 5.) The Lord has promised us his help; the Lord will grant it; he commands no impossibility. After this, will you again say, my dear Christians, that it is too hard—nay, that it is impossible—to pardon injuries? Say, rather, that it is too hard—nay, that it is impossible to obtain the pardon of your sins from God. For, under such circumstances, when you recite the Lord's Prayer, you cry out, virtually, to God instead of: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us."—"O Lord, do not forgive me

my sins, for I can never bring myself to forgive those who sin against me!"

We must reconcile ourselves to our brethren before offering our gifts at the altar, not only interiorly, but, also, exteriorly, for our Blessed Lord says: "'Leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go to be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.'—Go, leave the sanctuary, seek thy brother, give him the kiss of peace, before you come to my banquet; let your tongue pronounce the words of reconciliation, before it becomes the resting-place of my Body, before it imbrues itself with my precious Blood."

Now, if God required only the forgiveness of the heart—that is, interior forgiveness, you might forgive your enemy without actually seeking his presence. But, no, says the Lord, that is not enough; your enemy must know that you have forgiven him—that you are reconciled to him; you must, therefore, first go to him, and give him external tokens of your friendship. On this account, as I have said, my dear brethren, a reconciliation, between enemies, is always a difficult and painful piece of work.

II. Our reconciliation must be *prompt*. If you be already at the altar, and about to lay your gift upon it, and there remember that your brother has anything against you, what does the Lord say you are to do? "First go to be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Obedience is better than sacrifice; obedience to the command of God is of more worth to him than any other gift you could offer. The first and most acceptable sacrifice, in the eyes of God, is a reconciliation with your enemy, without which you cannot hope for any blessing or grace. If we should have all faith, so that we could move mountains, if we should distribute all our goods to feed the poor, and if we should chastise our bodies seven times a day, and deliver them to be burned, if our virtues should be a continual source of edification to our neighbors, and if, as missionaries to the ends of the earth, we should have made known the name of God to all mankind, and converted millions of souls,—if, with all this, we deliberately entertain hatred in our own hearts against any one of our fellow-men, and refuse to be reconciled to him, the whole of our good works,—our prayers, fasts, and alms-deeds,—will be rejected by God, and avail us naught to salvation. He exclaims to us, as it were, from his throne upon our altars: "'First go to be reconciled,' go *without delay*, make peace with your brother, 'and then come and offer thy gift.' And, unless you do so at once, the prayer out of your mouth, the gift out of your hand, will not please me, and you cannot hope, O sinner! for mercy or pardon from me!"

If any of you, my brethren, have, at present, the misfortune to live in enmity with one of your fellow-men, the affair of reconciliation must be your first, and most important, business. The sun must not go down upon

your anger. But, alas! what do people generally say when they have been offended? "I will forgive, but not at present; I cannot do it just now; the offence is too great, the wound too recent, the heart still bleeds under the blow!" Ah! who can hear such language without shuddering! How will it be possible to forgive, after time has deepened and aggravated the wound? You will consent to live on in the displeasure of God, and thus wilfully expose yourself to the danger of being eternally lost? Who has assured you that the time which you propose to yourself will ever be granted to you? "He who has promised pardon to the penitent, has not promised a to-morrow to the sinner," says the great St. Augustine. What if *you* should be suddenly snatched away? If death should cut short the thread of your life before the work of reconciliation is accomplished, what would be the result? You will forgive after a while? Why not *now*? Your heart becomes harder, the wound deeper, and the reconciliation more difficult, every day. Or will you say, it is good to make my enemy feel his fault, before I forgive him? Does God deal with you in this manner? He forgives you as soon as you prostrate yourself before him, and ask his pardon; and yet, *you*, a poor worm of the earth, postpone reconciliation from day to day, in order to make your enemy sensible of his fault! God forgives you innumerable sins of malice, and you refuse to pardon an offence from your brother, arising very often from frailty or thoughtlessness, rather, than from any deliberate intention to offend. Oh, enter into yourself, poor, deluded sinner, I implore you, that you may discover the dangers and risks to which your eternal salvation is exposed, that you may see clearly the gross inconsistency and injustice of your conduct! Make haste to be reconciled to your brother.

III. Our reconciliation must be *sincere and universal*.

(1) *Sincere*,—without any mental reservation; without dissembling; it must be manifested, not by words alone, but, also, by exterior tokens and signs. We must give our offending brother the kiss of peace, but, look well to it, dear Christians, that it be not the kiss of Judas. We must wish him no evil, but, on the contrary, render to him good for evil. This is the kind of reconciliation our Lord requires of us, when he says: "First go to be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Does he not thereby give us to understand that our heart must be free from every kind of dissembling, and must bear testimony to itself that Christian love and peace are once more restored between us and our brother, and that he no longer cherishes any grudge or resentment against us; that we love each other, in fine, as if nothing had ever happened to disturb the harmony of our friendship. Now, let us look at the conduct of the generality of Christians, and see how they act in this matter. They will tell you, perhaps, that they are reconciled to their enemies, that they have

pardoned all the injuries received,—but if such a one has forgiven his brother from his heart, why does he experience the keenest pain when he hears him praised? Why does he expose his faults? Why rejoice when a misfortune or evil befalls him? Why, (I ask that false friend,) why do you complain of your former enemy, on the slightest pretext, and make little of him in your circle of acquaintances, though you declare, at the same time, that you have forgiven him? Can we call such conduct as this, sincere forgiveness? You say, *I will forgive him the injury he has done me, but I cannot forget it.* This, also, is not sincere forgiveness. You say, *I forgive, yet the gall of hatred and aversion still remains in your heart,* and you become angry as soon as you see him; what sort of forgiveness is this? You say, *we are friends again, I have sworn him eternal friendship,*—ah! rather say, eternal hatred. Your dark scowl, your lowering countenance, your ill-concealed aversion and repugnance to his society, all are sufficient to convince the most casual observer that you are not sincerely reconciled to your enemy, that the fire is still lurking under the ashes, ready to flash forth in full blaze upon the first occasion.

(2) Lastly, my dear brethren, our reconciliation must be *universal*; that is to say, we must become reconciled to every one who has offended us, no matter who he may be; and, for this reason, Jesus calls such a one, our *brother*. “If thou offerest thy gift at the altar, and there shalt remember that *thy brother* hath anything against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go to be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” As if our blessed Lord would say: “If it is hard to flesh and blood to forgive one’s enemy, do not regard your offender as an enemy, but as your brother; he, like you, is a child of your heavenly Father, a disciple of mine, redeemed (as you were) by my own most precious Blood, and destined (as you are) to inherit the same divine, everlasting Kingdom,—in short, he is your brother. Need I say more, in order to move you to mercy and forgiveness? Have you living hearts of flesh, or hearts of senseless stone? Joseph, the son of Jacob, hearing, in his Egyptian exile, the mere mention of the name of brother, bursts into tears, and bids the trembling brothers, who had so deeply wronged him in the past, arise from their knees. Kissing them fondly, he says, in kindest tones: “Fear not. I shall think no more of the injury you have done me. You are my brothers, that is enough; all shall be forgiven and forgotten in that one sweet name!”

O my dear Christians, considering this beautiful example of fraternal charity, will you not now understand more clearly the significance of those words of Christ: ‘First go to be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift’? That you may the better comprehend the importance of this commandment, and how strictly the Church, at all times, has obliged her children to its performance, I will remind you of the practice

of the primitive Christians. In the early ages of the Church, when the congregation was assembled at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, when the divine Lamb had been offered to the Eternal Father, and the banquet of the holy Communion was about to be given to the faithful, a Deacon addressed the assembly, crying in a loud voice: "Whosoever has anything against his brother—any ill feeling, anger, or hatred—let him first 'go to be reconciled,' before he approaches the holy Table. No angry, revengeful man can be permitted to taste the Supper in which the God of peace, love, and meekness gives himself to be our food!"

After this, my beloved brethren, will you continue to entertain hatred in your hearts against any of your neighbors? Will you put off your reconciliation with him from day to day? Will you not heed the Voice issuing from this sacred Tabernacle and saying to each one of you: "'First go, to be reconciled to thy brother,' and then come and offer the gift of thy heart"? Remember the words: "*He that hateth his brother is a murderer,*" and judgment without mercy upon him who showeth no mercy. Hence, I say to you with St. Paul: "Put ye on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience: bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if any have a complaint against another: even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so do you also. But, above all things, have charity, which is the bond of perfection." (Col. 3: 12-14.) "For the rest, brethren, rejoice; be perfect; take exhortation; be of one mind; have peace: and the God of peace and of love will be with you." (2 Cor. 13: 11.) Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE FORGIVENESS OF ENEMIES.

“If thou offerest thy gift at the altar, and there shalt remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go to be reconciled to thy brother; and then come and offer thy gift.”
Matt. 5: 23, 24.

Would to God that all men might heed these words of our Saviour! But, alas! there are many, even amongst Catholics, who, perhaps, for years have been fostering an implacable hatred against those who have offended them. Why are they not willing to forgive, why do they continue to act upon the unchristian maxim that it is lawful to hate one's enemies? They are not willing to forgive, because they believe it to be impossible, unnecessary, and undignified to forgive. To them, therefore, my dear brethren, I say: You must forgive, because

- I. *Forgiveness is possible;*
- II. *Forgiveness is necessary;*
- III. *Forgiveness is dignified; and*
- IV. *Forgiveness is a condition of salvation.*

I. Forgiveness is possible, beloved Christians; if it were not possible, God would not have commanded us to forgive our offenders, for God never commands an impossibility. Even by the natural law, we are bound to forgive; for that law of our conscience declares to us that it is unreasonable and unjust to persevere in hatred towards our fellow-men whom God has created in his own image and likeness, for the same end as ourselves; and in whose society he has made us live. To deem it impossible, to forgive injuries and offences, is a *fatal delusion*, and a *blasphemy*.

I. *A fatal delusion.* In all the ages of the world, there have been striking examples of men who considered revenge a bad passion, and who have readily forgiven the greatest offences. Such men, my brethren, have been found *amongst the Gentiles*,—heathen heroes, who, without the light of the law, did the things prescribed by the law. Phocion, a prominent citizen of Greece, had been sentenced by his fellow-citizens to drink a cup of poison. Before taking the deadly draught, he said to his son: “This is my last will, O son, that thou mayest soon forget this cup of poison, and never take revenge for it.” *Among the Jews*, whose history abounds

with dark illustrations of the ancient law of retaliation: "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,"—even among that revengeful people we find, by the mysterious providence of God, this divine counsel: "When thy enemy shall fall, be not glad, and in his ruin let not thy heart rejoice." (Prov. 24: 17.) Joseph forgave his brothers, David, his enemy, Saul. But we are Christians, and live by the law of the Gospel. Hear, then, what Christ says: "I say to you: love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you." And then, with merciful condescension, our Lord proceeds to give the reason *why*: "That you may be children of your Father, who is in heaven: who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust. For if you love those that love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? do not, also, the heathens the same? Be ye, therefore, perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. 5: 44-48.) Now, to become true children of God, my brethren, to become like him just and perfect, we must love what he loves. We know that God loves all his creatures, but, most of all, his rational creatures, for they are made in his image. St. Catharine of Genoa complained once to our Lord: "Lord, thou biddest me love my neighbor, and I can love only thee." And he said to her: "Catharine, they who love *me*, love those whom *I* love." Christ prayed for his enemies on the Cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23: 34.) "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," (Acts 7: 59,) was the prayer of St. Stephen for those who stoned him. "Verily, I forgive thee, and thou shalt be my brother, in place of him whom thou hast killed," said the Christian knight, St. John Gualbert, to the murderer of his brother, who, unarmed as he was, begged for his life in the name of the Crucified One. If to all these, it was possible to forgive, why should it not be possible to *us*?

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2. To say that it is impossible for us to forgive our offenders or enemies, is not only a fatal delusion, but also a *blasphemy*. God requires us to forgive those who offend us, and, as our supreme *Lord and Master*, he has a right to do so. We have a commandment to forgive, founded on the law of nature, on the written law, and on the law of grace. Hear what your Lord and God says to you, O Christian! "If you love those that love you, what reward shall you have?" (Matt. 5: 46.) And is God's authority not enough for us? God wills it. "Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you, pray for them that persecute and calumniate you." (Matt. 5: 44.) What answer do you make? Does the Gospel say that you must love your enemies, but only when they do not belie or calumniate you? Now, "O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" (Rom. 9: 20.)

He requires us to forgive our offender, and he has a right to do so as our *Father and Benefactor*. If our *enemy* does not deserve forgiveness, God, at least, deserves the sacrifice of our enmity. "What shall I render to the Lord, for all the things that he hath rendered to me?" (Ps. 95: 12.) Forgive! This is the best proof of your gratitude towards, and love for, God. That good God commands us: "Forgive." Let us be obedient. Obedience is better than sacrifice. "If thou offerest thy gift at the altar, and there shalt remember that thy brother hath anything against you, leave there thy gift before thy altar, and first go to be reconciled to thy brother; and then come and offer thy gift." Your sacrifice will not give pleasure to me, saith the Lord, unless you first obey my law which says to you: "Forgive!"

Children of the Eternal Father in heaven, all men, my beloved, are brothers and sisters, in his sight. Accordingly, they should entertain a tender love, a sincere fraternal charity, for one another. It is, however, a lamentable fact that Christians hate, revile, abuse, and even curse their fellow-men, as though it were no sin. Listen to what our Saviour says in the Gospel of this day: "Whosoever shall say to his brother Raca, shall be guilty of the council." Behold in that meek and gentle Jesus the divine Model we must imitate, if we would hope to enter heaven. How many outrages committed against him, does he not forgive sinful men? His example is in itself a commandment for us." "Be you, therefore, perfect as, also, your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. 5: 48.) Will you say again, my brethren, that it is impossible for you to forgive? Remember that your future Judge says to you: "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven." (Luke 6: 37.) Do you not tell a lie in the face of God, do you not call down his avenging wrath upon your hapless head, every time you say to him, with an unforgiving heart, in the Lord's prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them who trespass against us"? If you were to speak the truth, your words, under such circumstances, would be: "Lord, take revenge on me, as I take revenge on my enemies. Forgive me not my trespasses, as I forgive not them who trespass against me." Or will you perhaps, declare openly and rebelliously, my brethren, that you *cannot* forgive? Then, alas! must you, also, declare that you renounce all hope of God's forgiveness. If that good God commands you to forgive, is it not blasphemous to assert that what he requires of you, is impossible of performance?

II. Forgiveness is not only possible, but also *necessary*.

1. *Reason* teaches it. Noble and generous is the conduct of him who is ready for reconciliation. He manifests strength of mind and magnanimity of soul by forgiving the offence inflicted. "He overcomes evil by good." How dreadful are the consequences of implacability! Man is

easily offended. If men were not mutually ready to forgive, where would you find peace and happiness here below? Would not our life upon earth, would not the society of our fellow-men, become to us a continual source of unhappiness and misery?

2. *Revelation* enforces forgiveness. In the Old Testament, God said: "Seek not revenge, nor be mindful of the injury of thy citizens." (Lev. 19: 18.) "Remember the covenant of the most High, and overlook the ignorance of thy neighbor." (Eccles. 28: 9.) And our Lord Jesus Christ teaches forgiveness both by word and example. "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven." (Luke 6: 37.) "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you." (Luke 6: 27.) The wicked servant who throttled his fellow-servant, because of his inability to pay his debt, was delivered to the torturers: "So, also, shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." (Matt. 18: 35.) Dying, our long-suffering Redeemer prayed for those who had crucified him: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23: 34.) He, also, taught forgiveness, when he taught us how to pray: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." (Matt. 6: 12.)

The Apostles teach the same doctrine of forgiveness. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, says: "Revenge not yourselves, my dearly-beloved, but give place to wrath (of God); for it is written: Revenge is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." (Rom. 12: 19.) And in his Epistle to the Colossians: "Put ye on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, . . . bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if any have a complaint against another; even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so do you also." (Col. 3: 12, 13.) And in his Epistle to the Ephesians, he says: "Let not the sun go down upon your anger." (Ephes. 4: 26.)

III. Forgiveness is not *undignified*; on the contrary, it is most noble, laudable, and meritorious.

1. Do not say: "If I offer to make up with this or that person, he or she will think me mean-spirited, and despise me the more for it." Do not believe it. On the contrary, by forgiving the offences committed against you, you gain the favor of men and the complacency of God. Only ruffians become more arrogant in consequence of your willingness to forgive; with the majority of men, it produces contrary effects. The Scripture says: "A soft answer turneth away wrath." "If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him drink; for doing this, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." (Rom. 12: 20.) This is the only vengeance, my dear brethren, which, as true Christians, you should know and practice. By your kindness you will disarm the anger of your enemy. **Your**

return of good for evil will mortify him—will prove, in short, a real pain to him, as St. Augustine says: “Thou shalt cause him the pain of confusion, and thus change his mind;” for there is something good in every man, my brethren, even though you may have to dig deep down in order to find it; but, as the heat of the sun draws the frost out of the ground, so a forgiving spirit will draw to the surface the good qualities of even the worst of men. Nor is this all; by forgiving the offences committed against you, you will gain the good pleasure of God, who says: “Forgive thy neighbor, if he has hurt thee: and then shall thy sins be forgiven to thee when thou prayest.” (Eccles. 27: 2.) And again: “If you forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will, also, forgive you your offences.” (Matt. 6: 14.)

2. He who is not willing to forgive, sins against *God the Father* by violating one of his commandments: “Judgment without mercy on him that hath not done mercy.” (James 2: 13.) He sins against *God the Son*. He denies him, because he denies the characteristic feature and virtue of Christianity. “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.” (John 13: 35.) He sins *against the Holy Ghost*, the Spirit of love, who appeared especially, of old, in the form of a dove, the meekest of birds, and of fiery tongues, the symbols of burning, glowing charity. He sins against his *fellow-man*, who holds the place of God. Our Lord has declared, with his own sacred lips, that the good or evil we do our neighbor, he considers as done to himself: “Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me.” (Matt. 25: 40.) And, finally, the unforgiving man sins *against himself*. He pronounces the sentence of condemnation upon his own head, whenever he prays: “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.” God will answer to his prayer: “Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant.” (Luke 19: 22.)

IV. My beloved brethren, *our salvation depends upon the forgiveness of the offences committed against us*. We must forgive, because God commands us to forgive, and he commands no impossibility; it is in our power to forgive, because he strengthens us by his grace, and thereby enables us to keep his commandments. We can do all things in him who strengthens us. It may be repugnant to flesh and blood, but it is not impossible for us to forgive. It would be cruel in God to command impossibilities, and then punish us for our disobedience. No, no: our supreme Ruler is no cruel task-master; it would be blasphemy to attribute such unreasonable cruelties to our loving and most just God, whose heart is more the heart of a father than we are able to comprehend. It is not only possible for us to forgive injuries and offences committed against us, but we **MUST** forgive, dear brethren, if we value the salvation of our souls—or, in other words,

if we wish to be saved. What, then, will you do? You, who are cherishing a bitter hatred against your neighbor. You say: "I cannot forgive at present; the wound is too fresh, the offence too great. I will forgive after a while." You will forgive "after a while?" You intend, then, to go on hating a person, for the present, whom you propose to love after a while, in the uncertain future? Do not believe it. It is the devil who deceives you; it is a whisper from the infernal regions below. If you do not forgive NOW, and AT ONCE, you will never forgive; for your aversion to your enemy, mark my words, will grow stronger every day. Do you renounce your hope of heaven? No. What, then, will you do? How will you obtain the forgiveness of your sins? You say: "I will pray." Let me tell you that your prayer, arising from a cold, callous, revengeful, and unforgiving heart, will be an abomination to the God of love,—will be an insult and an outrage to that meek and gentle Jesus, who shed the last drop of his blood for a world full of cruel enemies. Your prayers will be turned into curses upon yourself. What a bitter lot to reap perdition, instead of consolation, even from prayer itself, that last remedy, when all others have failed, the only true source of comfort to a Christian here on earth! Perhaps, you will have Masses said for your soul? You may do that, too; but you will derive no benefit from them, unless you forgive. Perhaps, you will do penance—fast on bread and water. Alas! you may scourge yourself to blood, and keep two Lents in the year, instead of one, but all will do you no good, unless you forgive. Will you give alms? You may give all your substance to the poor. You may even, as St. Paul says, deliver your body to be buried, *i. e.*, become a martyr for the faith,—but, if you have not charity, if you do not forgive your enemies, it will profit you nothing. God cries out to you: I want no sacrifices from you, but an obedient spirit, for mine is the earth and the fulness thereof. I command you to forgive, and unless you forgive and try to forget, you cannot be saved. "If thou offerest thy gift at the altar, and there shalt remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go to be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

May God grant to us all, my beloved brethren, a heart always ready for reconciliation, that in us his word may be fulfilled: "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." (Matt. 5 : 9.)
Amen.

BOURDALOUE.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE DUTY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRISTIAN ECONOMY.

“They took up that which was left of the fragments.” Mark 8 : 8.

The portion of the Gospel which has just been read, my beloved brethren, contains a remarkable narrative, the record of an astonishing event in the life of Christ, whereby our faith in him is wonderfully strengthened; since, in the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes, Jesus exhibits himself in his true character as Lord and Master of Nature, who needs but to will a thing, in order that it be done. The concluding words of this day's Gospel are very significant, and suggest to us all a useful, practical lesson. “They took up that which was left of the fragments.” By these words, dear Christians, a very precious moral virtue—Economy—is highly recommended to our practice. Many other moral virtues are extolled and expatiated upon, throughout the year, in this holy place, but Economy is seldom spoken of, so that, at first sight, it might not appear to belong to that category of virtues, whose practice must be enforced from the Catholic pulpit. Yet, it is one of their shining circle, for all that, and cannot be too forcibly or impressively recommended by the zealous preacher to the Christians of these, our extravagant and pleasure-seeking days. Hence, I have concluded to make this little esteemed, yet most important, virtue of Economy, the subject of my present discourse, confining myself, however, to-day, to the satisfactory solution of the two following questions:

- I. *What is understood by Economy, in the Christian sense?*
- II. *Why should we practise Christian Economy?*

I. What is understood by Christian economy? Economy, in the Christian sense, is liable to many erroneous conceptions. Man's idea of economy is, by turns, either

1. *Too limited, or*
2. *Too extravagant.*

1. A narrow view of economy, my dear brethren, would limit the practice of that virtue to financial affairs alone,—esteeming those only as economical who curtail their pecuniary expenses as much as possible. But,

allow me to inform you, that there is an economy in other things far more precious than money.

(a) *There is an economy in words.* The Sacred Scripture says : "In the multitude of words there shall not want sin : but he that refraineth his lips is most wise." (Prov. 10 : 19.) Again : "Let your speech be : yea, yea : no, no : that you may not fall under judgment." (James 5 : 12.) Our Blessed Lord teaches the same, when he says : "Let your speech be, yea, yea, no, no ; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh from evil." (Matt. 5 : 37.) Again, our Lord says : "But I say to you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment." (Matt. 12 : 36.) From this, my brethren, you perceive that our Lord counsels us to be economical in our speech. And that which he recommends by his words, he also teaches by his example. How reticent was he before Pilate and Herod ! He spoke not a single word in his own defence. How little did his holy Precursor, St. John, say when the ambassadors of the Sanhedrim urged him to tell them who he was, and by whom he was commissioned to preach ! He said not one syllable more than was absolutely necessary. Oh ! how prodigal, on the contrary, are many Christians in their words ! They love to speak continually of their own superiority, of their actions, of their exercises, and of the imaginary good works which they practise. They are only silent upon the subject of their own short-comings, their mistakes, their miseries ; but, on the other hand, how readily they speak of the frailties, faults, and sins of their neighbors ; and, being once roused to anger, how they rage with furious words, what floods of curses and blasphemies rush from their mouths ; how they insult and calumniate their supposed offenders ! Examine yourselves, on this point, my dear Christians, and resolve, with the grace of God, to restrain, for the future, all excessive and sinful use of the tongue. "If any man offend not in word," says the apostle, "the same is a perfect man." (James 3 : 2.) But, besides economy in speech, there is also :

(b) *Economy in the use of time.* Time, beloved brethren, is a most precious treasure of this present life, appointed by the providence of God to man, wherewith to purchase eternal happiness. But how few esteem this precious treasure ? How many cast from them, unvalued, the hours, days, and years of their lives, like so many worthless pebbles, thrown by a careless hand ? A great deal of time, for instance, is wasted in superfluous, unnecessary sleep. The healthy adult, who spends more than the third of twenty-four hours of the day in sleep, cannot be said to be economical in the use of time. He who sacrifices half-days, and the half or the whole of his nights in drunken carousals, gambling, or other forms of dissipation, is a spendthrift, a sluggard, who squanders the days of his life, given him by the good God for a higher and a holier purpose. Such a

man, my brethren, is anything but economical. - "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be made rich," thus speaks the Lord to every immortal soul by the mouth of his Beloved Disciple (Apoc. 3 : 18); hence, I say to you, dear Christians, buy the tried gold of time, and be economical in its use. Employ it for the purpose for which it is given,—that is, for the gaining of eternal riches, since it is, indeed, the golden coin wherewith we purchase Paradise.

2. I have already said that, as the views of some with regard to Christian economy, are too limited, so there are others who go to excess in their practice of that virtue. These, my brethren, are

(a) The so-called niggards, or misers, miserable, narrow-hearted men, who refuse to expend money, even for reasonable or charitable purposes. For example, their rank in society, their own health, or that of their family, demand of them certain expenditures which they are well able to make; but money, being dearer to them than all else, they obstinately persist in living in the meanest and most niggardly fashion, depriving themselves and families of necessary food, clothing, and medical attendance, sooner than sacrifice for those purposes a reasonable portion of their idolized gold. Such as these cannot be truthfully called economical people, but, rather, misers, hated and despised by God and man.

(b) The avaricious, also, go too far in their ideas of economy. Among such covetous creatures, I class those who are too solicitous for temporal goods, and who can never get enough of them. They may already possess hundreds of dollars, yet they long for the acquisition of as many hundreds of thousands. Some enjoy such an abundant share of this world's goods, that they and theirs are more than amply provided for till the end of their days, and yet they are constantly racking their brains as to how to increase their temporal possessions. They take no thought of how they may make use of their gold and lands for the glory of God, and their own and their families' salvation, but act as if they would deprive all their fellow-men of their possessions, and, by a sinful monopoly, cut off every source of sustenance from others. Neither are these people, my brethren, economical, in the Christian sense; on the contrary, they are covetous, insatiable wretches, who sin grievously against God and man.

(c) Finally, the miser extends his idea of economy too far, because he permits himself to be so captivated by gold as to give it his heart and all his affections,—to make it, in short, his idol, even though he may not, actually, fall down before it and adore it, as the Israelites did to the Golden Calf in the desert. The miser is economical, indeed, but not in the true Christian sense. Rich men, who are economical, in a Christian sense, do not close

their hearts against the needy. The royal Prophet says : "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor : the Lord will deliver him in the evil day." (Ps. 40 : 2.) But the miser lacks this understanding of the miseries and sufferings of the poor. He does not consider that alms-giving is a thing of obligation, and not of option. He could easily give, from his abundance, to the afflicted poor of Christ, but he refuses to do so, and thus acts like the rich glutton in the Gospel. The latter had it in his power to feed the hungry Lazarus with the crumbs from his table, and to cover his ulcerated nakedness with some cast-off garments ; but he had no feeling or sympathy for him ; he did not understand "concerning the needy and the poor;" and hence, the Lord refused to deliver him in the evil day of judgment.

And now, dearly-beloved, since you know what is *not* Christian economy, hear, at least, what it really *is*. By it you must understand *the reasonable use and care of temporal goods*. You must allow nothing to go to loss, must squander nothing, waste nothing, whether money or valuables, words or time, unless required by your own needs or those of your neighbors. Moreover, you must not exaggerate your wants, or go to excess in such matters, but endeavor to satisfy your real necessities, as well as those of others, in the simplest manner possible. This is to be economical in the Christian sense. And such economy, dear friends, is a Christian duty. I will proceed to explain the grounds for this duty, in the second part of my instruction.

II. *Why should we practise Christian economy?*

1. Because God wishes us to be economical. It is true, the good God, in his infinitely great bounty, often bestows his blessings in superabundance ; but he does not, on that account, wish us to be gluttons with his gifts and graces, devouring them, as it were, whole, and all at once. Rather, it is his will that we should economize them for our future use, or that of others. When Jesus had performed the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, (mentioned in the Gospel of to-day,) there still remained a quantity of bread, after the wants of the people had been satisfied. Think you, my brethren, that the Apostles then said to each other : "Let the remains of the bread lie here upon the ground. It is true, it may be ruined, but what of that? Our Master can easily create more." No, my beloved, they gathered up all that remained, even to the broken pieces, and filled seven baskets with the fragments. They practised such economy, because they knew that when, on a former occasion, Jesus fed the five thousand with the five barley-loaves and two fishes, (as is related by St. John, in the sixth chapter of his Gospel), our divine Saviour expressly commanded that they should "gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost." (John 6 : 12.) The gifts of God must be honored, say the

false economists of the world. But are they honored, my brethren, when they are abused by drunkenness, gluttony, or neglect? "Economy is wealth," says the adage. There is no art required to maintain and support ourselves and our families in ease and comfort, if we have an abundance or superfluity of temporal goods; but the triumph of a prudent economy consists in making a little go far, and do duty for much. The proverb truly says: "Nature (that is, a simple, unartificial heart,) is content with little."

"Man wants but little here below, nor wants that little long."

2. The practice of economy, dear Christians, further, concerns not only the present, but the future. Living in the world, every one must expect to spend money, from time to time. But such expenditures, as a natural consequence, presuppose an income. This, every man should seek to acquire. By the wise decree of our Creator, the majority of the human family are dependent for their income, upon the labor of their hands. They must, then, work industriously, in order to acquire such an income. "In the sweat of thy face, shalt thou eat bread." (Gen. 3: 18.) "If any man will not work, neither let him eat." (2. Thess. 3: 10,) says St. Paul. And all those who earn money, should regulate their expenditures by their earnings, and not spend more than they take in; but rather, the contrary. A man will not become rich by what he earns, but by what he saves. Savings accumulate by degrees. If every hour, a single drop fall into a pitcher, by degrees the vessel will be filled. Certainly, if the pitcher has a hole in it, nothing will stay therein; that is to say, where economy is not practised, nothing will be laid by; economy being a sure source of revenue, keeping together all that comes into its fountain. And these honest savings, my brethren, what a blessing, what a benefit are they not, when unexpected expenses arise! When one falls sick, grows old and feeble, or when one has no longer strength or opportunity to work and earn money,—how precious *then*, are the golden fruits of past toil, and Christian economy! One does not need to envy the strong or wealthy, or to become a burden to others, if he hold in his grasp the lawful savings of long, industrious years. All of you—especially, you, O good servants and married artisans—observe the lesson contained in the proverb: "Waste not, want not!"

3. We should be economical, also, dear Christians, because prudent economy protects us from many dangerous occasions of sin, and from many degrading vices. He who is saving, will not indulge in pride and dress, because rich dresses cost much money. He who is saving does not give himself up to drunkenness, for intemperate habits, (as the unfortunate inebriate knows too well,) are disastrously expensive. The economical man is not a gormand, or a glutton, for dainty dishes and the

gratification of the appetite, soon empty the savings-box, He who is economical does not form any illicit or lustful connections ; since, in the end, they must be dearly paid for, not only with money, but, also, with honor, with health, and with peace of conscience. Neither will he engage in sinful, malicious law-suits, since they, too, involve heavy and unsatisfactory expense. Above all, the economical man, in his lawful desire to save, will shun idleness, the mother and origin of all other vices. In these, and many kindred ways, my dear brethren, economy proclaims itself the most powerful bulwark against a variety of moral aberrations. Therefore, let it be highly recommended to your practice, and never fail to cultivate it as a virtue of sterling value and importance.

4. Lastly, my beloved friends, I would recommend economy to you, because, without it, a penitential life can scarcely be practised ; and a penitential life is absolutely necessary for a Christian who wishes to reach heaven. Aside from the road of baptismal innocence, there is no other way to Paradise, but the rough road of penance, or of the penitential life. But such a life demands a genuine victory over nature,—demands a persevering spirit of self-denial and mortification. Now, I ask : If one be not economical in food and drink, in clothing and amusements, and in other necessities of the body, can he overcome himself, deny himself, mortify and crucify his gross and pleasure-seeking flesh ? Certainly not. Let me illustrate this. There are, for example, certain people who can do their work satisfactorily, without drinking beer ; now, these should, habitually, abstain from all stimulants, since they would do wrong in creating a necessity where none exists. There are others who daily need from one to two pints of beer, on account of the nature of their occupation or work. Let them drink that measure,—as St. Paul said to Timothy,—for their stomach's sake. (1 Tim. 5 : 23.) But, if they drink more than two pints, say even three, they manifest, at once, their want of a penitential spirit. The same rule holds good as to eating. The natural law requires that one should eat nourishing food, suitable to his condition in life. He who eats more than is necessary, or who is dainty as to the quality of his food, sins grossly against the rule of a penitential life, and, on that account, will hardly reach heaven. Hence, spiritual writers give us this maxim : “ Eat and drink only as much as bodily necessity requires, and no more.” But more appropriate, still, to the spirit of penance, is the practice of ceasing to eat and drink at the very time when we most enjoy or relish our food and drink ; for at that moment, surely, our corporal wants, as well as the Christian spirit of self-denial, are alike satisfied.

Last, but not least of all, my brethren, I desire to call your attention to a most delightful fruit of Christian economy. And what is the name of this precious fruit ? Oh, it is most sweet to the taste, and lovely to the eye ! You know it well,—it is *Charity*—charity for suffering

humanity. Wherever we find large, flourishing Catholic congregations, especially in our great cities, there we find, also, a number of stately buildings, handsomely-ornamented and well-endowed churches, hospitals for the sick, orphanages, asylums, academies, schools, and the multitudinous retreats for the poor and the afflicted. Who established all these noble institutions? They were all founded or perfected by those, who had cultivated and practised, for years, the virtue of Christian economy. So much, at least, is certain, and cannot be gainsaid, that none of those charitable institutions were ever established by spendthrifts, since the latter, wealthy though they may be, always selfishly imagine that they need their abundant means for themselves and their future wants, and hence never entertain the idea of making a pious foundation, or of contributing to an object of charity. If it be true, therefore, my dear brethren, that the tree is judged by its fruits, we may justly conclude from the good and delicious fruit which Christian economy produces, how worthy and commendable is this excellent moral virtue. O my beloved brethren, let me recommend to you all the practice of economy, and especially to *you*, fathers and mothers, heads of Catholic families.

If both husband and wife are thrifty and saving, it cannot easily happen, that, when the time for necessary payments arrives, the money will not be ready to meet them. Thus, will be averted many an ugly quarrel and domestic bickering, which so often arise, when just debts cannot be paid. The bitter, grinding poverty, which results from waste and wilful neglect, is the most fruitful of all disturbers of family peace. And to you, too, unmarried workmen, and women living at service, I would earnestly recommend economy, so that you may be secured in your old days, against both corporal and spiritual misery. Even *you*, little children, boys and girls, let me advise you, to save the pennies which are given you, or which you earn. Do not squander them in the purchase of dainties or gewgaws, but carefully keep them together, so that you may make some provision for your future maintenance in the event of your parents' death; or in any case, that you may acquire and practise the useful art of economy. That will be of more use to you in your future life, than any great dowry which your father or mother may bequeath to you; for economy is wealth. Finally, I entreat you, all good parents within reach of my voice, to encourage your children to save; and to bring them up in the strict practice of Christian economy. You will preserve them, thereby, from many evils, and guide them on securely in the narrow paths of self-denial, which will lead them safely to the everlasting rewards of heaven. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON INTEMPERANCE.

“Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, so do you also reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom. 6 : 9-11.

It is not difficult to perceive, my dear brethren, that man is gifted with a nature superior to that of other and lower animals. The latter are governed solely by that natural instinct which impels them to consult their own preservation ; they are mere creatures of appetite. Groveling on the earth, they fulfil, it is true, the end of their existence, but they are wholly incapable of any high or noble impulse. Man, on the contrary, is endowed with a beautiful and spiritual nature. In him, the sublime perfections of the Almighty reside in miniature. An elevated sentiment of affection, pure and disinterested,—gratitude, which returns all good offices to him who has proved himself a kind and generous benefactor, have, in many instances, shone resplendent in the human character. Magnanimity, hospitality, and all their sister virtues, combine to decorate and render bright and glorious the humanity of which we are all partakers. But in the bright galaxy of valuable qualities which man possesses, that independence of will by which he is free to choose for himself whether he will perform or omit an action, is specially refulgent. The beasts of the field are guided solely by their appetite,—consequently, when their provender is given them, they have no other rule to direct them in the quantity they shall take, than the appetite with which nature has gifted them. Man, differently constituted, has dominion over his appetite. It is in his power to regulate it according to the dictates of reason and the requirements of the body : and, moreover, he is bound to do so. But, alas ! nobly endowed in this respect, as man has been by the Creator, nevertheless, he sometimes proves untrue to the grander gifts of his nature. Is it not amazing that one, upon whom have been showered, in such abundance, the richest spiritual endowments, should perpetrate acts unworthy of his rank, of his faculties, and of his destiny ? Considering man only as a being endowed with the most transcendent faculties, we might well lean to the opinion that all admonitions and instructions given him as to the necessity of shunning vice and practising virtue, would be acts of pure supererogation. But, from the rapid growth and alarming prevalence of a certain familiar, and, alas ! most insidious vice, I deem it advisable, to-day, my brethren, to state some reasons, among many, why it should be avoided. The vice of which I

speak is drunkenness, or the sin of indulging too freely in intoxicating liquors, even to the temporary deprivation of reason. The few thoughts to which I purpose now to give expression, will regard the evil of drunkenness,

- I. *In itself*; and
- II. *Its lamentable effects.*

I. No one denies that the descent of the drunkard to the lowest depths of degradation and brutalization, is an easy, but, also, a gradual one. In order that we may the better see how low he falls by becoming addicted to his pet sin, let us first, my brethren, take a survey of the magnificent soul of man. Formed to the image and likeness of that infinitely perfect Being, whose beauty is reflected in the dazzling lustre of the sun, whose voice is heard in the loud and rumbling noise of the thunder, and whose power is seen in the stupendous firmament which, as a garment, envelopes our earth, man's soul has in itself three faculties—the memory, the understanding, and the will. Though these are united in the same essence, yet they discharge different functions. The memory recalls the joys and sorrows of the past, the happy scenes of our childhood, when we were the idols of loving and anxious parents; the little songs endeared to us as the favorites of our friends; and the romantic aspirations and ardent longings we were accustomed to foster in our young hearts.

The understanding teaches us to mark out the line between what is based upon solid and irrefragable evidence, and what has only the flimsy testimony of an erring intellect in its favor. By the understanding, we rise to the knowledge of the great maxims and glorious truths which God, through his infallible Church, has communicated to mankind. By the understanding we, from premises given, deduce a proper and consequential conclusion. On this conclusion, it is the part of the will to act. We are so formed, that, in all our actions, we are free and unconstrained, enjoying, in all that we say or do, an untrammelled liberty of choice. God was pleased thus to confer free will upon us that we might, by a legitimate exercise of it, pay to him a just homage, and render ourselves worthy of eternal happiness.

Here let me pause, my brethren, and inquire what effect has drunkenness upon the faculties I have mentioned. Does it in any manner operate to their disadvantage? Can it be said to derogate anything from their excellence? Is the memory affected by deep and protracted potations? Answer me, all ye who have ever been the victims of intemperance. Is not the memory of the inebriate, for the time, completely clouded? Alas! you know too well that drunkenness deprives man of the power of remembering. Instead of a quick apprehension of events long past, instead of the prompt rendition of a song unheard for years, there succeeds a torpor

which drowns the most familiar recollections in oblivion,—an idiotic blank on which nothing noble or pure remains imprinted. Does it leave man's reason intact? Can that be called reason which is the most driveling absurdity? Can the ravings of one in delirium be denominated the calm, majestic, coherent enunciations of reason? Can he who acts without a motive, who seems a mere automaton, a human machine enjoying the power of speech and motion (and even those, only to an imperfect degree), be estimated a rational being? O reason! resplendent emanation of the very bosom of the Divinity, can we so far debase thy sublime name as to couple it with that of a sensual oblivion and an infamous irrationality? Where is the will in drunkenness? It is absent. It is not the grand election of good that characterizes the actions of the drunkard, but the weakened and vitiated will that blindly follows where unruly passion leads, and causes the many crimes committed under the influence of excessive drink. In drunkenness, the dignity of man is lost. His glorious position, as the noblest and most exalted creature of God, is exchanged for the miserable state of the unreasoning brute. Saddening, indeed, it is to reflect that the poor brute, which, with a stolid indifference, enters its stall, or roams through the pasture, unconscious of the beauties of creation, utterly ignorant of the eternal laws of nature, of the promise of a future life or of the possession of God, should become in any event the equal of magnificent, enlightened, independent man. Does it not call to the cheek the crimson blush of shame to recollect the degradation of that nature which we, my beloved brethren, share in common with the miserable drunkard? Even though there be a certain satisfaction in drunkenness, that satisfaction is certainly of too low and sinful a kind, for man to stoop to its enjoyment. Moreover, the pleasure of possessing the property of another, or the pleasure of revenging an injury, does not lessen the crime or palliate the infamy of the robber or murderer; nay, so far from such being the case, the intensity of the pleasure felt in such actions, is but the measure of their guilt, and the criterion of their penalty.

It is, indeed, true, my dear Christians, that, without the use of reason, sin cannot exist. Where reason is wanting, sin must also be wanting. The wretch, who has robbed himself of the use of reason by excessive indulgence in drink, may impudently plead that, when intoxicated, he cannot commit formal sin. Does that excuse him? Not at all! Does God excuse the suicide who has rashly and wickedly laid violent hands upon himself? Ah! my brethren, you might well be shocked, if, while gazing at a form, which bore the outward semblance of a man, you were told that the creature before you was human only in appearance, possessing, in reality, the heart of a tiger or of some less noble animal. How would you not shrink from that monster, as though contamination were in its very touch! How would you shudder at its ghastly, soulless glances, and shut your ears to its boisterous, unmeaning laughter! Yet you shrink

not from the drunkard with a like sense of horror or of hatred, although the weird and repulsive attributes of this imaginary monster are the result of no moral deformity, while the drunkard's transient bestiality, on the other hand, is so foul and criminal, as to make, if possible, the very Angels weep.

Let us, now, turn our attention to a further consideration of the calamitous results of intemperance. As the drunkard himself is, primarily and chiefly, the sufferer by his detestable vice, a calm survey of the diversified losses he sustains thereby, will not be out of place, I think, on the present occasion. His time, which might be well spent in some useful and lucrative employment, is devoted to his comrades of the tavern—men, sunk like himself, in degradation and squalor; men, whose friendship is contagion, and whose discourse and manners exhibit unequivocal signs of a marked and deep-rooted depravity. His money, which should be devoted to the interests of his family, and to providing for their necessities, is lavished upon wretches whose claim to his companionship has no other basis than their common breach of decorum, and open defiance of a wholesome public opinion. His health, which temperate habits would have long preserved in its naturally robust state, is fast breaking down under the accumulated weight of many and disgusting diseases which his reckless way of living has brought upon him. Finally, his soul, more precious—ininitely more precious—than all else, is stripped of its robe of innocence, and clothed in the black and tattered raiment of the most degrading guilt.

And if the drunkard himself be in such a sad plight, is his family happy? By no means! His poor wife and children, deprived of that aid which he is bound by every human and divine tie, to secure to them, are in a most miserable condition. Perhaps, the much-abused wife and mother may by some scanty employment earn sufficient to keep herself and her children from actual starvation; but too often, alas! even those wretched means of support are denied her by the stigma resting upon her hapless husband's character, and there is no way left her to earn anything. She and her children dwell in a dilapidated old house, whose aged roof creaks in the tempest, affording, at the best, a very insufficient shelter from the showers of hail or rain, and whose cheerless aspect almost chills the blood of any benevolent neighbor, who may have the charity to visit the shunned homesteads of the outcast poor. The clothing which the woe-worn mother and neglected children call their own, are such as would not be deemed sufficient to breast the light breeze of spring, let alone the bitter, stinging blast of winter. The hearth is truly dreary. No fire flashes upon bright and smiling faces, or sheds its pleasant light upon a host of domestic delights and pure household joys. The little ones nestle close to their heart-broken mother, and murmur in her ear the name of their unnatural father. Poverty is written upon their shrunken countenances, and the pallor of their cheeks gives token, that the inhuman treatment the flower

has received in its blossom will soon cause it to wither away and die. As the cold increases in intensity, they crouch closer and closer to their heroic mother, and strive to keep their little limbs warm by contact with her loving bosom. Many a tedious hour has passed since food entered their lips. The last dollar was taken away by their father to the tavern, and, unless God directs some charitable person to their humble abode, they may perish of hunger, while the man, or, rather, *the monster*, who has left them, thus, is rioting in the society of his boon companions. If they expect his return to the dismal habitation of woe which they call "home," it is with sentiments of dread and terror. Their bruised and blackened bodies tell a horrifying tale. His brain on fire with poisonous liquor,—maddened by the fact that no one will supply him with money for a further carouse,—the drunkard is accustomed to wreak his ill-humor upon his defenceless wife and family. Even should those children survive the bad treatment to which they are subjected, think you not, my brethren, that their minds are sown with an evil seed? Can the conduct of their father be forgotten? Will they not imitate the example set them from earliest infancy, and accompany their vile parent, in the end, to his accustomed haunts? Or will they fly from the house to avoid his presence, and join the desperate outcasts of society—those who live by preying upon their fellow-men, the swindler, the thief, and the murderer? "The most shocking scandals that we have to deplore, spring from Intemperance," says the Pastoral Letter of the Plenary Council of Baltimore. Let me implore of you, then, my beloved brethren, to take active measures towards the eradication of this terrible and most prevalent vice. Cultivate a practical devotion to the Sacred Thirst of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the Cross. Practise, if need be, a total abstinence from intoxicating liquors; and if you have hitherto been the victim of habitual intemperance, make, to-day, with the help of God, a firm and generous resolution to break at once the chains of that most loathsome and degrading slavery. Rise from the dark grave of intemperance, never more to return to it,—for, as "Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, so do you also reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Amen.

REV. P. A. TREACY.

Burlington, N. J.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

AS THE PARENTS ARE, SO THE CHILDREN.

*“Every good tree yieldeth good fruit, and the bad tree yieldeth bad fruit
Wherefore, by their fruits you shall know them.” Matt. 7 : 17-20.*

Addressing myself, brethren, on the present occasion, especially, to the married portion of the congregation, and to those who aspire to holy wedlock, let me say to them : Fathers and mothers, and all aspirants to Christian matrimony, would you wish to know what sort of fruit your marriage-union will produce? Would you wish to know what sort of children will be yours? If so, examine well into your own character and habitual disposition, examine well the quality or nature of the tree, if you would rightly judge of the fruit, since, according to the Gospel of this day, it is “by their fruits you shall know them Every good tree yieldeth good fruit, and the bad tree yieldeth bad fruit.” As this subject is a most interesting and important one, I humbly beg you to give it your earnest and undivided attention.

A rather strange question, my brethren, has been treated of, or discussed, amongst natural philosophers, viz., to which parent do the children or offspring bear the closest resemblance; or, in common parlance, which do they “take most after?” Some maintain that children, as a rule, resemble the father more than the mother, while others again assert that the general run of children are more like the mother than the father; and each class produce arguments to prove their respective theories. But, brethren, as this speculative question does not bear, (at least, practically,) on our subject to-day, let it suffice for us to consider, on this occasion, the more general, (and almost unvarying rule,) that the virtues or vices of parents are repeated in the characters of their offspring. In other words, good parents are almost certain to have good children, whilst vicious and corrupt fathers and mothers will be cursed, in their turn, with a vicious and corrupt progeny. It is true, as a well-known adage remarks, that “every rule suffers an exception;” and hence, there are examples, both in Sacred and profane history, where wicked sons have been born to the best of parents; while, on the other hand, the very worst of parents have sometimes produced the most exemplary children. For instance, we read in the Old Testament that Absalom, though the son of David,—“a man according to God’s own heart,”—was a most dissolute profligate, and a rebel against his own father, whom he sought to dethrone and deprive of his

kingdom. To Isaac, the most peaceable of men, was born the hot headed and resentful Esau. From Noah the just, sprang Cham, the most wicked and perverse of men; and the silly, foolish Roboam was the son of Solomon, the wisest of kings. On the other hand, the ungrateful and vindictive Saul begot Jonathan, the mildest and most grateful of men; and from the incestuous Ammon, the son of the impious king Menones, was descended Jonas, the very personification of all that was pure and upright. Again, my brethren, we read in profane history, that the Emperor Cæsar Augustus was so unhappy and unfortunate in his children and grandchildren, that he often wished he had remained unmarried, preferring that the royal line should become extinct in himself, rather than his illustrious blood be disgraced by such unworthy descendants.

The transmission, then, as it were, or handing down of either virtue or vice, from father to son, does not always follow an infallible rule; but, as in morals, we do not class an occasional occurrence under the head of a general rule, neither do we maintain as a fixed fact, that evil dispositions are always hereditary. Yet, my brethren, we will usually find, (as your own experience with the world has, doubtless, taught you), that vicious parents beget vicious children. The Holy Ghost himself declares, in the most express terms: "The children of sinners become children of abominations." (Eccles. 41 : 8.) Or, again: "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matt. 7 : 16); and, speaking in a special manner to mothers, he lays down a rule that, "as the mother is, so will the daughter be." Hence, alluding to Herod's daughter, who, (as a reward for her voluptuous dance, demanded the head of St. John the Baptist upon a dish,) St. Ambrose says, that she could not be otherwise than *bad*, being the daughter of an adultress. It is, indeed, a common proverb among the holy Fathers, that as the parent is, so will the son be. This rule, as I have already said, my beloved brethren, may sometimes suffer an extraordinary exception; but, as a *general* thing, the words of the Holy Ghost are verified: "The children of sinners become children of abominations."

But, brethren, why seek to prove, by authority or argument, what is proved by the experience of all places and of all times? Show me, for example, a proud, vain, haughty, or ambitious father, and I will show you proud, vain, haughty, and ambitious children. Point out to me a parent addicted to cursing or swearing, neglecting Mass, Sacraments, Vespers, daily prayers, Lenten devotions, or other religious duties, and I will show you, in my turn, children who live in the continual violation of the Second Commandment, and who never hear a Mass, approach a Sacrament, recite a prayer, or attend devotions, from one year's end to the other. Give me parents prone to anger, revenge, backbiting, calumny, and detraction, and I will show you bad-tempered, vindictive, and uncharitable children. Show me, in a word, parents addicted to drunkenness, or impurity in any of its abominable shapes, and I will show you children who

are moral lepers, revealing, even in their tenderest years, the tendency to the vilest and most loathsome of vices.

So true are the words of the Holy Ghost: "As the father is, so is the son;" or, "as the mother is, so is the daughter;" and, in confirmation of the fact, there is a remarkable incident, my dear brethren, recorded in the Old Testament. We there read, that the patriarch Jacob, on the occasion of a great famine in his own country, sent his sons into Egypt to purchase corn. After obeying their father's command, the sons of Jacob were about to return with the grain to their native place; but just before their departure, their brother Joseph who, (without their knowledge), was Viceroy of Egypt, caused a silver cup to be placed secretly in one of Benjamin's bags. When the brethren had gone a few miles towards home, they were followed and overtaken by some of the Viceroy's servants, and accused of stealing the silver cup. In vain they pleaded their innocence. A search being made,—to their intense astonishment and fright, the silver cup was found, (where it had been placed,) in one of Benjamin's sacks. Although wholly innocent of the supposed theft, Benjamin made no defence of himself; neither did his brothers seek to excuse his apparent guilt; but simply sued for pardon from the Viceroy, which was promptly granted. Now, brethren, a most celebrated commentator on the holy Scriptures, Cornelius a Lapide, here asks the question, why did not Benjamin's brothers plead in his defence, or why did they act as if they considered him guilty? He (Cornelius a Lapide) replies by drawing attention to the fact, that all the other brothers were the sons of Lia. Benjamin, alone, was the son of Rachel, who, when leaving her father's house, stole some of his idols or household gods, and was thereby guilty of theft; hence, the step-brothers looked with a suspicious eye on Benjamin, as the son of a dishonest mother. Behold here, my brethren, how suspicion is attached to the children of parents who stand convicted of any crime in the eyes of the world;—as the proverb says: "Tawny parents beget tawny children;" and though the latter be not so, in reality, still they are commonly regarded as stained with the parental stigma. O, my beloved brethren, how instructive is this example for all who hear and heed it! Publish it, I implore of you, to all your friends and acquaintances who are not present here, to-day. Recount it to all those who care little or nothing, for Mass, for the Sacraments, for daily prayers, and the holy devotions of the Church. Recount it to those who care little or nothing about leading a truly virtuous and Christian life in the blessed fear and love of God. Recount it, especially, to those unfortunate fathers and mothers who, being themselves wicked and addicted to evil and vicious habits, are afterwards astonished that their children turn out immoral and irreligious, fearing neither God nor man.—Say to such parents frankly—why are you astonished, and why do you complain? Do you, perhaps, expect the God whom you have mocked to work miracles in your behalf? "If the son is as is the father—

if the daughter is as is the mother," blame only yourselves, who have made your children so many pledges or earnest of the bitterness and remorse you will have to endure for all eternity, if you do not repent and try by your fervent prayers, by your future good example, to undo the evil you have done in the past.

O, fathers and mothers here present, treasure up these words of warning and advice, and apply them earnestly to your own individual lives.—Do you wish your children to be devout and God-fearing? If so, be yourselves devout, and full of the fear of God.—Do you wish your children to be pure and virtuous? If so, look to it that your own lives be chaste, and abounding with every Christian virtue. Brethren, the case is clear; being good and virtuous and God-fearing yourselves, you will be anxious to give your children, at the proper time, a thoroughly Catholic education. You will instil into their tender minds, the holy fear and love of God, and will instruct them in all the duties of a Christian. You will be solicitous in correcting their faults, in guarding the innocence of their souls, and, above all, in giving them *good example*, which has far more weight and effect than many words. This, your solicitude, when accompanied by fervent prayer to God, who extends his fatherly and all-protecting hand over your children, (enlightening and inspiring them with what is good,) will be blessed and rewarded by him most abundantly. Yes, beloved Christian parents, I repeat it again, be good and virtuous, and doubt not but that your children will be according to the desires of your hearts. Not only do the holy Fathers of the Church unanimously bear witness to this truth, but it is proved by numerous striking examples in Sacred and profane history, which want of time prevents me from laying before you at present. Thrice happy are the parents who, carefully instructing and edifying their children, thus rear them up for heaven,—for they themselves shall receive a triple crown for their reward.—First, a crown of honor, even in this life, since, as the Holy Ghost declares in the Book of Proverbs, a virtuous child is the joy, consolation, satisfaction, and crown of his father. Secondly, they shall receive a crown of grace, for, as St. Paul teaches, the virtuous education of children is the cause of their parents' salvation;—and, thirdly, they shall receive a crown of glory in heaven, since, according to the prophet Daniel, those who instruct many unto justice, and impart to others the science of salvation, shall shine as stars for all eternity; a happiness which I wish you all, my beloved brethren, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

REV. FLORENCE MCCARTHY, P. P.

Ballyheigue, Co. Kerry, Ireland.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE DEATH OF THE SINNER.

“For the wages of sin, is death. But the grace of God, everlasting life, in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom. 6 : 23.

If we except the Saints of God, who, (being filled with an overwhelming sense of the emptiness of all earthly things), continually desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ,—all men, my brethren, desire to live : and all men dread the idea of death, as the greatest of misfortunes. Though they seem to live as if their sole desire was to delay the close of their existence, yet, strange to say, they all flatter themselves, at the same time, that they will eventually die the death of the just. The death of the unrepenting sinner, (they will tell you,) is by far the most dreadful calamity that can possibly happen to any creature, and yet, with all imaginable coolness and unconcern, they walk straight to their doom, merrily pursuing a path which, they are assured, will conduct them to perdition. It is in vain, that the preacher of God hurls at them the terrible threat : “As a man lives, so will he die ;” they will neither renounce the ways of sin, nor relinquish the expectation of a happy death.

Gladly would I display before your eyes to-day, dear Christians, the folly and danger of this fatal illusion, by contrasting for you the death of the sinner and the death of the just ; thereby, stimulating your fears by the terrors of the one, and arousing your holy desires by the consolations of the other ; but, as the subject is far too copious for a single discourse, I will confine myself to the first point of our meditation, and endeavor to describe to you on this occasion, *the death of the sinner* alone.

I. In the very outset, my beloved brethren, let me announce to you, or rather, permit me to remind you of one certain fact, namely : that each one of us must, eventually, die the death of the sinner or the death of the just. There is no alternative. Were you blest with all the riches, honors, and pleasures of this world ; were the term of your mortal existence extended beyond the allotted span of man ; nevertheless, the day will inevitably come when you will be summoned into eternity. In that solemn hour, you will either die in your sins, or sleep happily in the grace and love of God. To the end that you may be induced to avert by works of penance the first and most dreadful of these alternatives, come with me, dear brethren, to the bedside of the dying sinner, and there let us contemplate the anguish and despair which overwhelm his soul at the awful

moment of dissolution. Behold him stretched on the bed of death. The world to him is no more ; its vanities, its pleasures, its hopes, its expectations, make no impression on his mind : he has done with them forever : his thoughts are now otherwise engaged. Contemplating the vision of his past life, he is reflecting on his present unhappy state, and looking forward with dread to that which awaits him hereafter. Let us follow the course of his reflections, and endeavor to profit by his experience. He recalls the events of his past life,—but what consolation do they afford him ? The vanished years are as an unsubstantial dream ; like one who, in a vision of his sleep, has fancied himself possessed of immense riches, he awakens from his troubled slumber, and finds nothing in his hands. He casts about him in vain, for the fruit of his past labors. The world, whose smiles he has courted with such earnest eagerness, is fast flying from him ; the riches he acquired with such difficulty, and on which his affections were so ardently fixed, are slipping, like so much sand, out of his hands :—that fine reputation and illustrious name, on which he has so long prided himself, will not attend him to the tribunal of God, but will only serve to furnish an epitaph for his tomb. Ah ! with what anguish does he reflect, that he has toiled all his life-time in vain ; that he has endured mortifications without number, and advanced not a step towards heaven ; that, in short, like the fishermen of the Gospel, he has “labored all the night, and taken nothing.” (Luke 5 : 5.)

He foolishly supposed that the service of God was beyond his strength ; and, at the same time, he displayed the courage of a martyr in the pursuit of vanities which he is now obliged to quit. How bitterly does he lament his blindness and folly ! With what surprise does he view the immense void in his past life ! With what despair does he reflect that, out of so many actions, so many labors, there is not one that deserves to be recorded in the great Book of Eternity, and that it is too late now, alas ! to begin to live for God. O ! listen to his exclamations : “What !” he cries, with a faltering voice, “what ! have I hitherto lived only for vanity ? Could I not have done as much for God as I have done for the world ? Was it fitting that I should have struggled and suffered all my life long, only to lose my soul in the end ? I have endured more to gain hell, than would have been required to gain Heaven. I supposed that the life of the just man was wretched and insupportable, although his recompense was an eternal one ; and, behold, mine was infinitely more wretched and painful, and is entitled to no reward.”

Yes, my beloved brethren, at that awful moment we shall behold things in a very different light from what we do *now*. The illusion will then be removed ; the clouds will be dispersed, and we shall clearly see that the humblest works of piety and religion far outshine the most brilliant exploits of deluded worldlings. Not only will the dying sinner clearly recognize the vanity of his past labors, but he will be tortured, besides, with the re-

trospert of his former pleasures—pleasures which lasted, perhaps, but for a moment, and for which he has sacrificed his God and his all. Alas! he thought the term of his life too long to be wholly devoted to the service of God. He imagined that if he returned to his long-suffering Master and Father, in the supreme moment of death, there could be no doubt of his finding a ready asylum in his loving and all-merciful Heart. He now sees with astonishment, that the longest life is no more than an instant,—that it is only one step, as it were, from the cradle to the grave, and that, to devote any part of that short time to empty pleasure, is the height of folly.

This reflection, dear Christians, is accompanied by the excruciating remembrance of his crimes, the guilt of which will adhere to him forever. During the time of health, he had never accustomed himself to a serious examination of his conscience; but now, the light of Eternity shines with a fierce brightness into the depths of the dark abyss. The weakness of childhood, the licentiousness of youth, the corrupt passions of manhood, —all stare him in the face, and refuse to be palliated.

Neither is the vision of the present, my dear brethren, more consoling than the recollection of the past. The sinner always flatters himself that the day of the Lord will not come upon him suddenly. But, behold, he is already stretched upon the bed of death, loaded with the enormous burden of his sins; he is commanded to appear before the tribunal of God, and he has not even begun the preparation for his trial! What a terrible surprise! However, he endeavors to flatter himself with the hope that death is not as near as his friends and physicians think; and he deceives himself with the vain resolve of making his peace with God as soon as his disorder shall begin to abate. These hopes cause him to neglect even the brief opportunity afforded him by the mercy of the Lord, and he thus continues the victim of delusion to the last moment of his life. Yes, my God! thy Scriptures must be fulfilled. Thou hast said therein that the sinner should be surprised in his sins; and, behold! thy word cannot fail!

At length, the final moment arrives. Willingly or unwillingly, he must separate himself from everything most dear. The more closely he was attached to the world, to life, and to creatures, the more does he feel the smart. He must bid adieu to his riches and property. They already begin to slip out of his hands. He retains nothing but his fond affection for them, his reluctance to part with them, the innumerable crimes he committed in their acquisition. He must bid adieu to his beloved body, for whose gratification he has sacrificed his God and his all. He must bid adieu to his dear relations,—his wife,—his children,—his friends,—whose lamentations harrow up his very soul.

Now it is, my beloved brethren, that God appears overwhelmingly great and powerful to the dying sinner. In the days of his strength, he had frequently asked, in a strain of irony and impiety, how it was possible to entertain an ardent love for that God whom he could not see, how it was

possible not to love creatures whom he saw daily before his eyes, and whom nature herself so strongly prompted him to love? But now, he beholds God, alone, supreme, majestic, the Mighty One, unequalled and unrivalled. The invisible, alone, has become visible: while the visible, for *him*, has forever ceased to be.

O my God! what a complete change is this! In vain, he seeks on every side for some little source of consolation,—the frightful horrors of death encompass him. If he attempts to look forward to the state that awaits him, alas! a far more terrible spectacle presents itself! Willingly would he turn away his eyes from that dread prospect, but he cannot: he is forced, in spite of himself, to contemplate it; and the sight fills him with horror and dismay. The grave, that gloomy abode of corruption and worms, where his decaying corpse will soon be deposited: the incomprehensible eternity, already beginning to dawn upon him,—the first glimpse of which strikes him with terror,—above all, the awe-inspiring tribunal of his outraged Judge, before which he is about to appear, to give an account of his guilty life,—who can describe the agonizing emotions which accompany these several reflections? Ah! when he saw eternity only at a distance, he did not fear it: but now, that he is struck by the hand of God:—now, that he perceives the rapid approach of death: now, that he beholds the everlasting gates thrown open to receive him: now, that the moment has arrived when he must step into the dread darkness of an unknown future, alas! the sinner is appalled;—all along, he indulged his passions without restraint, and flattered himself that a death-bed conversion would be an easy thing,—that a flying act of contrition, at the last hour, would be amply sufficient to appease the wrath of God. Now he totally despairs of the divine mercy. In vain does the minister of the Lord, who is summoned to attend him, dilate upon the infinite treasures of that mercy and love reserved for repentant sinners: the dying man knows that he has rendered himself unworthy of them.—In vain does the priest exhort him to put his trust in God, and to hope for the pardon of his sins; a secret, but terrific voice, in the interior of his soul, declares that there is no salvation for the impious, no hope for the despairing sinner. In vain, my beloved brethren, is he encouraged to have recourse to the last remedies which religion prescribes to the dying: he has no more confidence in those spiritual panaceas, than he has in those desperate corporal remedies which are hazarded when all other hopes are abandoned, and which are administered more for the satisfaction of surviving friends, than for any benefit likely to accrue to the fast-sinking patient. The minister of God holds before him the image of his crucified Jesus; but that sight, calculated to inspire confidence and impart consolation at the death-bed of the just man, silently upbraids the dying sinner with ingratitude, and reproves him for the abuse of Christ's redeeming grace. Alas! the awful moment of dissolution approaches: no time is to be lost: the attendants

prostrate themselves at his bed-side, and the minister of the Lord, with a loud voice, commences the last prayer, or recommendation of the departing spirit: "*Go forth, Christian soul!*" he cries. The dying sinner may be a king or emperor, but the priest does not address him, then, by any of the pompous titles of the world. No—at that last moment, my dear brethren, all other titles, are merged and lost forever in that, alone, which he received in holy Baptism: "*Go forth, Christian soul.*" Alas! he has lived as if the body were the whole of his being: he has even attempted to persuade himself that the soul was of a little or no account, and that all spirit would be annihilated with the death of matter. Now, he is informed that his body is nothing but dust, which must speedily be dissolved; and that the immortal part of his existence is the soul—the image of the Divinity,—that sublime intelligence endowed with a capacity to know and love God, and which is now on the point of being separated from her earthly abode, and summoned to the presence of her Judge.—"*Go forth, Christian soul:*" the earth on which thou hast lived was only thy place of banishment; thy life was a state of probation, a short pilgrimage; but thou hast made it thy resting-place, the settled habitation of thy sensual pleasures and vanities. The Church expected that the tidings of thy approaching dissolution would have been to thee tidings of joy and gladness; she supposed that thou wouldst have lifted up thy head, and exulted, because the end of thy exile, the conclusion of thy miseries was at hand: but alas! she announces to thee tidings, the most dismal,—the most alarming: she announces to thee the near approach of everything that is terrible,—the beginning of everlasting pain and sorrow. "*Go forth, Christian soul:*" stamped with the seal of salvation, which thou hast despised; redeemed by the blood of Jesus, which thou hast trodden under foot; washed with the laver of regeneration, which thou hast defiled; enlightened by the light of faith, which thou hast disregarded; favored with the choicest blessings of heaven, which thou hast impiously profaned. "*Go forth, Christian soul:*" go, present thyself before the tribunal of Jesus with the august title, which should have been the pledge of thy salvation, but which thou hast made the seal of thine eternal damnation. "*Go forth, Christian soul.*"

O my beloved friends! what a situation is this! In the retrospective view of his past life, he discovers naught save motives for regret and remorse; in the view of the present, naught save objects of affliction and anguish; and in the contemplation of the future, an array of untold horrors which affright and appall him. O what a bitter draught! But will it not admit of one single drop of consolation? No; every source is dried up; the world is vanishing from his sight; man cannot free him from death; and God, into whose hands he is about to fall, is his declared enemy, from whom he can expect no mercy. He is agitated by the dismal terrors that surround him on every side; he renews his vain efforts to escape from death, or, at least,

to escape from himself; his melancholy groans render his broken, disjointed sentences unintelligible; and it is impossible to ascertain whether they proceed from repentance or from despair. His dying eyes appear gloomy and wild; he casts an inscrutable glance on the image of his crucified God; and his attendants are uncertain whether that gaze is prompted by hope or fear, by hatred or love. He becomes convulsed, but, whether on account of the last agony of the body, or the terrors of the soul, already anticipating the approach of its Judge, it would be impossible to say. He sends forth bitter groans; but God, alone, knows whether they are occasioned by the sorrowful remembrance of his past crimes, or by the dreadful vision of death and future judgment. At length, in the midst of those violent struggles, the eyes of the dying sinner become fixed,—his features change,—an ashen pallor overspreads his distorted countenance,—his livid mouth expands,—his body trembles, and, by one last supreme effort, his unhappy soul separates itself, with seeming regret, from its house of clay, falls into the hands of its Creator,—into the hands of the living God,—and, in an instant, is standing, unprotected and alone, before the terrible tribunal of his justice.

Thus, my beloved, do they die who forget God, during the days of their health and strength; and thus, too, will you, also, die, if you are surprised in your sins; for at that awful moment, everything around you will change; but you, yourselves, will not change. It is certain that you will die, and, moreover, that you will die as you have lived. God himself has declared it. Prevent, therefore, that greatest of all misfortunes, by timely repentance. Live the life of the just, and then your death, like unto theirs, will be accompanied with true peace and consolation; and through the gloomy portal of the grave, you will pass into the bright and blissful mansions of Eternal life,—the everlasting kingdom of delights,—which Christ, in the Gospel of this day, has promised to all who do the will of his Father who is in heaven. Amen.

Adapted from MASSILLON.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP.

“*Give an account of thy stewardship.*” Luke 16 : 2.

The Gospel of this Sunday brings home to each one of us, my beloved brethren, a truth of the most apposite and, (at the same time,) most awful import. Each one of us may easily regard himself as the chief actor in the parable, and may fancy he hears the words of my text addressed directly and personally to himself: “*Give an account of thy stewardship.*” Hearing those impressive words, my brethren, they cannot fail to recall to us our past infidelities, convince us of our present responsibilities, and thrill us with anticipations of future judgment, when Almighty God will demand of us an account of our stewardship, to the end that his justice may render to every man according to his works.

I have said,—and justly so,—that these words are of an awful import. But, if I present them to your consideration to-day, my beloved brethren, it is not to alarm you, but to awaken serious reflection, and urge you to resolve and act in accordance with the dictates of the fear and love of God. In other words, I do not purpose to excite your fears for the sake of fear itself, but shall endeavor to make you fear for the sake of heavenly wisdom: “The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom,” (Ps. 110 : 10); and as wisdom implies reflection, so reflection, in its turn, begets a prudent energy and activity. A fear, which leads only to despondency, is not the fear of God; it is a fear inspired by the devil, tending, like its cause, solely to despair and perdition.

I will now briefly state for you, my dear Christians, a few truths which, with the grace of God, will help you to acquit yourselves faithfully of the duties which constitute your stewardship, so that, at the hour of judgment, you may not fear the inspection of your accounts, but may be able to submit them to the Supreme Judge, with an humble and loving confidence.

I. You must never forget that you are *stewards of God*, placed here by him *in order to do his work*. We are all God’s creatures. “He made us, and not we ourselves.” (Ps. 99 : 31.) When an artist, or workman of any sort, makes an article, it is his own,—unless he has been engaged to make it for another. God has not been engaged to make us for another; he made us for himself alone. “Thou hast made us for thyself, O God!” exclaims St. Augustine, “and our hearts are ill at ease, until they rest in thee!” Everything we possess is from God, lent to us, and committed to

our care, rather than given to us, or left at our absolute disposal. "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. 4 : 7.) "Every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above." (James 1 : 17.)

God, my dear brethren, is not only our *Creator*, but he is also our *Law-giver*; and in various ways he presses upon us the knowledge of his laws and the necessity for observing them. Through the moral sense which he has implanted in every rational creature, he communicates to all a clear appreciation of the distinction between right and wrong. Speaking of the Gentiles, to whom this light had been given, St. Paul says: "They show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them." (Rom. 2 : 15.) For, in the quiet voice of conscience, there resounds a judgment as solemn as that of the Baptist, when he said, boldly, to the sensual and prevaricating king Herod: "*It is not lawful.*" (Matt. 14 : 4.) But, with regard to you, my dear Christian brethren, Almighty God has not contented himself to leave you under the guidance of this simple, natural law, but has revealed to you that divine law which he once thundered forth upon Mount Sinai, and which, through the teachings of the Church, has been repeatedly impressed upon your souls. He speaks to you continually by his consecrated ministers, whom he has appointed to be the exponents and the guardians of his Law. Remember, if these are checks upon you, they are salutary checks,—true friends, who aim to help you in the discharge of your stewardship; they are ever aiding you to secure caution, activity, and zeal, and ever warning you of that future account you must render in the day of the Lord. Again: in the supernatural system of grace, God's action upon your soul has always a reference to your Christian stewardship. He has given you much to do, it may be, but he helps you to do it. He has given you a great charge, but he himself assists you in acquitting yourself of it. He grants you light that you may know your duty, and strength that you may perform it. It is he who moves you to begin; he, who bears you up during the progress of your work; who guides you on to its perfect completion; and who, at last, crowns your labor with success. He shows you that, having made you for himself, he is an interested party in all that concerns you; and he wills not that you should fail in the noble destiny for which you have been created. And thus, my brethren, you are laboring hand in hand with your God, and the issue of your labor is that merit, which is the joint product of his grace and your co-operation. With St. Paul, you can say: "I have labored, . . . yet not I, but the grace of God with me." (1 Cor. 15 : 10.) And, in order that you may have an abundant supply of grace, see, in how many ways, and through how many channels, he communicates it to you. Not in the Sacraments only, through which, indeed, it streams so copiously upon us; not alone in prayer, which ever brings it down in showers, as the clouds pour forth

their rain upon the grateful earth to fertilize and enrich it; not alone in reward for our efforts of fidelity, when in time of trial, we remain steadfast to his law; but even in the performance of the simplest and the most indifferent actions, when done for his sake, and in union with his will. Nay, even when you are turning from him, allured by the attractions of the world or of self-love, behold, how he stands by your side, (O merciful condescension and love!) ready to assist, the moment you address yourselves to him; and exciting a speedy remorse whenever you have allowed yourselves to be overcome.

He has created you, then, my dear brethren; he watches over you; he legislates for you; he assists you, and labors with you, in your stewardship. But, more than this, he will have you ever remember, that the day will assuredly come when a reckoning is to be made, and you are to yield up your account. As your *Judge*, he will render to each one of you, my brethren, *according to your deserts*. This is repeatedly brought before you, because he does not wish you to be taken by surprise. Hearken to some of the declarations of the Inspired Text upon this point: "He will render to every one according to his works." (Rom. 2 : 6.) "We must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive what is due to him, according as he has done well or ill." (2 Cor. 5 : 10.) "Every one shall receive his reward according to his labor." (1 Cor. 3 : 8.) "What things a man shall sow, those, also, shall he reap." (Gal. 6 : 8.) If, then, Almighty God will thus have it brought repeatedly before you, that you are to be judged, and that your fate in eternity depends upon the result of that judgment, for what other purpose is it but that he would have you ever remember the responsibility of your stewardship,—that you are not independent of him, and at liberty to squander away what he has intrusted to you? He is still keeping a check upon you; he is asserting his jealous claim upon your service; he is reminding you that you are to be good stewards of the manifold graces and gifts of his bounty. Quickly, closely, and universally will the scrutiny be made. No man will escape it, and no action of man will be overlooked: "*It is appointed for men once to die, and, after this, the judgment.*" (Heb. 9 : 27.) And, since it is God who judges,—a God who knows, sees, remembers, and treasures up everything,—that judgment, my brethren, demands careful preparation: and its inevitable certainty, above all, should never be forgotten. Let us, then, prepare for it earnestly and perseveringly, and, even now, begin to make up our accounts, to set our house in order, that it may not fare ill with us in the Day of reckoning.

II. We are stewards, then; but of what are we stewards? I have already said, my brethren, that we are not independent of God; we are his creatures. To deny, or to act as if we ignored, this dependence, is to sin. The first question we should ask ourselves, now, and the one which will,

doubtless, be the first and most important question at our future judgment, is :

1. *Have I denied, or ignored, my dependence on God? Have I sinned?*

It is sin, alone, which will turn the balance of judgment against us, for sin is the destruction of grace,—it is the squandering away of the riches of God, leaving nothing to present to him in return. Every sin, then, will be strictly examined into ; and how, alas! shall we bear up against the sight of our grievous and multiplied iniquities? “What shall I do when God shall rise to judge? And when he shall examine, what shall I answer him?” (Job 31 : 14.) There will be *sins directly against God*; for, although all sin is against him, in one way or another, some sins will be manifested in that awful hour, having for their matter, duties which we owe immediately to God. Some of his commandments have been expressly promulgated to shield his own blessed honor and glory. If we have violated these, the blow has been aimed immediately against God.

There will be *sins against ourselves*. For God has imposed upon us a law of charity which we must fulfil towards our own souls. There will be sins of childhood, committed in the full possession of reason, and with a consent and malice clearly recognized at the time, though since forgotten, and never repented of. Sins of boyhood, into which we may have been led by bad example, and that human respect which so frequently tyrannizes over youth—sins, committed after a struggle, perhaps, but with the full knowledge that the bad habits we were forming concerned the interests of our whole future life. Does God forget them, my brethren, because *we* have forgotten them? or, will he not, upon that dread accounting Day, bring them out before us, one by one, with all the aggravating circumstances in which they were committed? Only by contrition and confession can they be forever blotted out ; only by a sincere and persevering repentance, can we induce him to listen to that pleading prayer, which we should offer up, again and again, from the very depths of our contrite hearts : “The sins of my youth and my ignorances do not remember.” (Ps. 24 : 7.)

There will be *sins against our neighbor*; for, not only does the divine Law ordain : “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy mind, and all thy strength;” but it adds, “and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;” and God, my brethren, will inquire rigorously into the observance of this commandment. We shall have to answer for all those sins of others, of which we may have been the wilful and deliberate occasion. Alas! there are many ways, my brethren, in which you can be accessory to another person’s sin. God makes you, oftentimes, your neighbor’s keeper, and, if you have caused the latter, spiritual danger or ruin, his blood will cry to heaven for vengeance

against you. Parents must answer for their children ; friends, for those whom they have influenced or invited to join in evil courses ; the sensual and pleasure-seeking worldlings, for those poor, wretched outcasts, whom they have encouraged to ply their shameful trade of misery and sin. All these, in that awful day of wrath, will find other accounts to be settled by them besides their own,—accounts of ruined souls, which, but for them, might have preserved their innocence, might have sinned less frequently, and less grievously, or might, at least, have found a way out of their iniquities, to penance and pardon. Think of this, my brethren, for it is a theme that calls for serious reflection,—calls for bitter tears. Nay, more, it calls for diligent labor, earnest caution, and persevering prayer, that you may never make yourselves responsible for the sins of others, whose future repentance may prove utterly beyond your control. You cannot do sufficient penance for your own sins, how, then, can you hope to atone for the sins of others, or win them to repentance? Through the mercy of God, you have not lost the knowledge of your duty ; you recognize the efficacy of prayer and the Sacraments, and by these helps and means at your disposal, you have been able to recover the grace of God after your sins. But, perhaps, those who have been your companions in iniquity, may know or practise none of these things, and how, then, are you to gain them back to God, after having once been the means of leading them away from him? A thought like this should make you tremble all your life. Pray, I beseech you, and labor as far as in you lies, for the conversion of sinners, that some restitution may be made to God for the glory of which you have robbed him. And, in your solicitude, pray, as did the great penitent of Israel : “From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord : and from those of others spare thy servant.” (Ps. 18 : 14.)

2. Besides these sins of others, my dear Christians, you will have to give an account of all the graces which God bestowed upon you, during life, or purposed to bestow, if you, on your part, had been faithful to him. Every grace will be brought forward, and he who judges justice, will examine whether each has produced its proper fruit within you. If sins represent the waste of your Master's goods, graces represent the wealth which he has committed to your care. O what a revelation will then be made of the riches of God's goodness and mercy ! What a revelation of your neglect and ingratitude, of your abuse of his blessings, of your want of correspondence to his graces ! The graces of the Sacraments, those seven abundant rivers flowing from the wounds of Jesus ; the graces of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, of public and private prayer, of sermons, of warning exhortations, of good example and pious books, of holy festivals, missions, retreats, and the multiplied devotions of the ecclesiastical year, —how searchingly will you not be examined as to every one of these

graces and blessings, the use you have made of them, the profit you have drawn from them !

3. Then, again, how rigorous will be the account demanded of the duties of one's state of life ! Parents and children, masters and servants, married and single, rich and poor, learned and illiterate,—our whole social state has implied a constant succession of duties, in the midst of which we have been habitually moving all through life. These will be found to have contributed immensely towards the question of our eternal salvation or our everlasting perdition.

In view, then, of that future accounting Day, on which so literally will be said to us : *Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer*, are we not awakened to a sense of our heavy responsibility, and forced to exclaim, in accents of fear and consternation : “ *What shall I do when God shall rise to judge ? And when he shall examine, what shall I answer him ?* ”

III. But, my brethren, shall this fear and consternation avail us nothing, or merely serve to drive us to despair ? Ah ! no ; on the contrary, let it incite us to a speedy reformation of life, and stimulate us to adopt such active measures as will secure for us a favorable judgment. What was the course pursued by the steward of the parable, when suddenly summoned by his master, to give an account of his stewardship ? Far from idly desponding, he gave himself up to grave deliberation, and at once fixed upon the best means to extricate himself from his alarming dilemma. He had a little time to prepare for the dreaded reckoning, and he made the most of that time. The measures he took for his own safety were most unjust, that cannot be denied ; but, still, he was praised by his master for his ingenuity,—a praise recorded in the Gospel, not to the end that we should imitate his injustice, but that we should be advised, in our turn, to make the most of this, our period of probation, and learn to do for our spiritual good what the guilty steward did for his temporal interest. He made provision for the future, and this is what we, my dear brethren, must do. We have to deal with a Master who cannot be deceived as to our guilt, but who, (thanks to his infinite mercy !) can be propitiated by such active and earnest measures as are within our reach.

We must *think*. We must convince ourselves of our duty, of our real and practical responsibility. We must cultivate a genuine horror of sin, the worst point in our indictment. We must learn to value, above all earthly possessions and blessings, the golden treasure of divine Grace, which our Master intrusts to us for the increase of his glory and for our own eternal salvation. We must profit diligently of all the means of grace, of prayer and the Sacraments, of the advantages secured to us through the ministry and supervision of the Church, whose children we are. We

must not only say within ourselves, as the steward did : “ *What shall I do ?* ” but say it with a determination of doing what a true Christian, in such circumstances, *ought* to do. Resolve to amend your life, and to be very circumspect for the future. Your time may not be long ; for you know not the day or the hour when your Master may break in upon you, and demand the account of your life. As St. Jerome kept always before his eyes the vision of the Last Day ; and, whether he ate or drank, or read, or prayed, heard always in his ears the sound of the final trump, proclaiming : “ Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment ! ” so we, my brethren, must, too, regard every act we perform as so much matter for our own accounting Day, remembering that our good deeds and our evil deeds must both be weighed in the balance of an incorruptible Judge.

We must *pray*. However alarming the prospect of our future account, prayer, my beloved brethren, is all-powerful in dispelling a weak despondency, and in filling us with hopeful resolves and generous, courageous sentiments. Our blessed Redeemer is not yet our Judge, and he will not be harsh with us, if we accustom ourselves to run to him with a confiding heart, declaring to him our sorrow for sin and our desire to make reparation for the past. He will at once forgive us our errors, and, upon our sincere promise of amendment, will bless us, and simply say, as he said of old, to the adulteress of the Gospel : “ Go, and sin no more.” Praying, my brethren, we do not pray alone. Saints and Angels join us with their fervent petitions. Mary, the Refuge of sinners, whom we so often implored to *pray for us now, and at the hour of our death*, will extend to us her powerful help, and confidence will be restored to us in the hour of death and judgment.

Like golden links in the precious chain of eternal salvation, let us never forget, my dear brethren, that holy fear, caution, obedience, and a faithful, persevering practice of virtue, can alone bind the Christian steward to the service of his heavenly Master ; for

Fear will make us cautious,
 Caution will secure obedience,
 Obedience will lead to practice,
 Practice will ensure success, and
 Success is identical with victory,

of which he that is to judge us has declared : “ To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with me in my throne.” (Apoc. 3 : 21.) “ Be *thou* faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life.” (Apoc. 2 : 10.) Amen.

Adapted from SWEENEY, O. S. B.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON RESTITUTION.

“What shall I do, for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship?”
Luke 16 : 3.

It is recorded in the Gospel of to-day, that when the unjust steward saw that he was about to be discharged by his master, and to lose his situation, (on account of his malfeasance,) he asked himself the question : “What shall I do, for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship?” Why, my dear brethren, does he ask this question? Does he, perhaps, repent of his dishonesty, and humbly manifest the will to repair it to the best of his ability? Ah! no; such a thought does not enter his mind; he casts about only for some means to extricate himself from his unpleasant predicament. Instead of striving to repair his past injustices, he commits fresh ones; he proceeds to make great and unlawful concessions to his master’s debtors, hoping, thereby, to win their gratitude, and induce them to provide for his future support.

Many Christians, alas! act like this unjust steward; they appropriate the property of others, by various dishonest measures, and commit many business frauds in general; but they hardly ever think of making restitution to their injured neighbor. It cannot, therefore, be superfluous for me to speak to you, to-day,

- I. *Of the necessity for restitution,*
- II. *Of the circumstances of restitution, and*
- III. *Of the motives for restitution.*

I. *Restitution is necessary.*

1. *Because it is grounded upon the natural law.* That law, which God has inscribed in the heart of every man, tells us : “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” We must deal with our neighbor according to this principle : We must restore to him what we have taken away from him unjustly, and repair the damage sustained by him. He who neglects or refuses to do this, sins against the natural law, which even the Gentiles observed, since they held theft to be a dishonorable vice, and obliged thieves to restitution.

2. *Because God expressly commands it.* “If any man steal an ox or a

sheep, and kill or sell it, he shall restore five oxen for one ox, and four sheep for one sheep." (Exodus 22 : 1.) We see here, dear brethren, that the law of Moses did not require merely a simple restitution of the object stolen, but, according to circumstances, a four or a five-fold reparation for the injury inflicted. In regard to indemnification, we read in the same Mosaic law : "If any man hurt a field or a vineyard, he shall restore the best of whatsoever he hath in his own field, or in his vineyard, according to the estimation of the damage." (Exodus 22 : 5.)

3. *Because without it, no forgiveness of sins is possible.* ST. ANTONINUS says : "He who is in possession of the property of another, and can restore it, but does not do so, can obtain no forgiveness, though he may perform all possible works of penance." Let him pray, fast, or give alms, — all these good works profit him nothing to salvation. No priest, no bishop, not even the Pope, has power to absolve him from his sins, so long as (being able to do so,) he fails to restore the property of another, or repair the damage he has done. The duty of restitution and indemnification never falls under the law of limitation. Let it be twenty, thirty, forty years, or longer, since you have stolen, cheated, or done damage, you are just as strictly bound to restitution, after the lapse of years, as if you had committed the injustice only yesterday or to-day.

Nothing but *impossibility* frees one from the obligation of restitution, and that, moreover, must not be a fancied, but a true and real impossibility. If, however, the injured party voluntarily relinquishes his claim, then, by *remission*, the sinner is released from the obligation of repairing the wrong he has committed.

II. *As to the circumstances of restitution*, we must here consider four questions, my dear brethren :

I. *Who must indemnify the injured party?*

(a) In the first place, *he who possesses the property of others or has caused them damage.* He is the author of the injustice, therefore, he is obliged to repair it. If he dies, without having satisfied his obligation, that obligation passes down to his heirs. Hence, if fathers or mothers commit injustice, their children, as inheritors of their temporal goods, must repair their parents' dishonesties. If they omit the duty of restitution, they are just as accountable before God as their parents, and, like them, will infallibly perish, if the damage in question be of serious consequence. How foolish, then, are those fathers and mothers who, for the love of their children, have recourse to dishonesty in their dealings!

(b) If he who has committed an injustice does not make restitution,

the duty devolves upon those who have co-operated in the injustice, or who have not hindered it, although they could have done so, and were obliged to do it. In other words, those who co-operate in the dishonesty, are more or less responsible for the injustice done to the neighbor; hence, they must make restitution, if the principal author of it neglects or refuses to do so. The same is to be said of those who did not prevent an injustice, although they could have hindered it, and by virtue of their office, or state of life, were obliged to hinder it. Thus, parents, my brethren, must repair the injustice of their children, when they had cognizance of it, and did not take measures to prevent it.

2. *In cases of restitution, to whom must reparation be made?* Most certainly to the owner, or proprietor, of the goods in question: or, if he is no longer living, to his heirs, because they inherit all the legal rights of the testator. Some imagine that they can rid themselves of the duty of restitution or indemnification, by giving alms, making pious foundations, or having Masses said. But this is a great error, my dear Christians. The dishonest man has not stolen from, or cheated, the poor; but this or that certain person has been wronged, and to *him*, and not to the poor, must full reparation be made. St. Chrysostom says: "If, having stolen one cent, you give an alms of a hundred pounds in gold, you have not yet restored the stolen cent." Only in two cases, my friends, can restitution be made, (and *must* be made,) to the poor, or applied to charitable objects; *first*, when there is question merely of a very insignificant amount, and restitution to the owner would be attended with great difficulty; *secondly*, when the owner is unknown, or so circumstanced as to render restitution impossible.

3. *How much must be restored?* This depends upon whether the person who is bound to restitution, has appropriated to himself, and possesses, the property of another, *willingly* and *knowingly*, or *unwillingly* and *unknowingly*.

(a) He who, with full and deliberate knowledge and will, appropriates or possesses the property of another, must indemnify the proprietor,—that is, he must reinstate him in his lawful rights. He is obliged, therefore, first to restore the goods of that person, or, if he no longer possesses them, he must indemnify him for their full value. Secondly, he must compensate the proprietor for all the gain of which he has deprived him; and, thirdly, repair all the damage which he has caused him. He is allowed to deduct only those expenses which the owner himself could not have possibly avoided, if he had remained, all along, in quiet possession of his property.

(b) He who, without knowledge and will, (and therefore, entirely guiltlessly,) appropriates or possesses the goods of another, is obliged, as soon as he finds out his error, to restore what he yet possesses of such property, with as much profit as he has acquired by it. Suppose, for example, my dear brethren, that a certain man had made you a present of fifty dollars which he had stolen from some other person; as soon as you discovered this fact, you would be obliged to restore the money to its rightful owner, and, if you had lent it out and received interest, you would be bound to restore, also, the interest which had accumulated thereon. But if, by some calamity, you should have lost the money, wholly or partially,—for instance, by fire or by theft,—you would be obliged to restore nothing, or only as much as you yet possessed of the original amount.

4. *When* must we make restitution or indemnification? It must be done, my dear Christians, as soon as possible. He who does not restore ill-gotten goods when the opportunity offers, has not an earnest will to make restitution; for that which one sincerely desires, he will accomplish as soon as he possibly can. Moreover, this duty of reparation becomes more difficult by delay, inasmuch as attachment to property is always on the increase, and the damage or loss which accrues to the neighbor becomes greater by postponement. Finally, no one should put off restitution and indemnification, since he exposes himself thereby to the danger of being overtaken by death without having fulfilled his obligation. In short, if one cannot make restitution at once, he must have, at any rate, the sincere will to do so as soon as possible; if he cannot repair the damage all at once, he must do so by little and little, and continue perseveringly, until he has restored the whole; and, if it is out of his power to make a full and entire reparation for the past, he must, at least, partially indemnify his neighbor's loss, as far as his circumstances permit.

III. We come now, my brethren, to the *motives* for restitution.

1. *Death will strip us, in the end, of all our ill-gotten goods and gains.* When Saladin, the renowned Sultan of Egypt, was lying on his death-bed, he ordered the winding-sheet, which had been prepared for his burial, to be hung upon a flag-staff, and displayed in the face of the whole army, with these significant words: "Behold, this is all that Saladin, the conqueror of the East, takes with him!" Every dying person may say 'the same, for though he possess, at that hour, all the riches of the universe, he cannot take a cent with him to the other world: "Only the grave remaineth for me." (Job 17: 1.) How infatuated, therefore, is the man who so attaches his heart to money and goods as to render himself guilty of many injustices! If he could retain those unjust gains for a long time, he might find some excuse for his sad delusion; but death does not tarry; before

the sinner is prepared for it, he finds himself standing at the gate of Eternity. How long can he expect to live, and enjoy his ill-gotten goods? Perhaps ten, twenty years, perhaps only one year, one month. How quickly will that time pass! And, on account of those perishable things which we can only possess, at the best, for so short a time, shall we burden our conscience with sin, and rush headlong into everlasting perdition? When death, at last, comes, into whose hands will those unjust possessions fall? Perhaps, my brethren, into the hands of ungrateful heirs, who impatiently await your death, who will dissipate and waste the painfully-acquired property, and, perhaps, will not say an "*Our Father*" for the repose of your poor soul. And will you consent to damn your immortal soul for the love of such unworthy relatives or friends?

2. *Unjust goods bring no luck or blessing, but, rather, mischief and ruin.*

(a) The Sacred Scriptures teach us that "He who soweth iniquity shall reap evils." (Prov. 22 : 8.) This truth is corroborated by many examples from Bible history. King Achab, at the instance of his wife, possessed himself, by force, of the vineyard of Naboth. He paid dearly for this injustice. He himself was wounded in battle, and died (as the prophet Elias had foretold), and the dogs licked up his blood. His impious wife, Jezebel, was hurled from a window of the palace, at the command of Jehu, and was dashed to pieces on the ground below. Finally, all the descendants of Achab, seventy-two in number, were beheaded in one day. So awfully did God avenge the robbery of Naboth's vineyard. His curse penetrated into the royal house of Achab, and remained there till its inmates were totally destroyed.

(b) *Experience teaches the same truth.* Many, even in our own experience, my dear brethren, have understood how to enrich themselves by unjust means; they have built magnificent houses, bought large estates, and established a lucrative business. They seemed, in fact, to have founded a fortune likely to endure for hundreds of years to come. But it was not so. Their lucky star soon set. God withdrew his blessing from them because of their injustices, and permitted different calamities to come upon them; so that, by degrees, they lost all their ill-gotten property, and were reduced to ruin and dishonor. And though it sometimes happens, my brethren, that, in the inscrutable designs of God, the unjust man prospers, and is spared the punishment of heaven here below, so much the surer will his children, and his children's children, suffer for his sins: "The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the teeth of the children are set on edge." (Jer. 31 : 29.) Unjust goods hardly ever pass down to the third generation.

3. *Nothing is more absurd than to lose heaven for the sake of a perishable good, and to plunge one's self into eternal damnation.* A certain rich man, who had acquired a great deal of property by unjust means, became dangerously ill. He knew that inflammation had already set in, and that he could not live, and yet he could not be prevailed upon to make restitution. His invariable answer to all entreaties on that point, was: "What will become of my children?" The priest, who had been called to administer to him the rites of the Church, devised a stratagem. He said to him: "There is one means to save your life. All that is necessary is to rub your wounds with the fat of a hale and vigorous man. If any one can be found who will hold his hand in the fire for a few minutes, as much grease will run off as will suffice." "Ah!" said the sick man, "you will find no one who will be willing to consent to that." "Have courage," replied the priest, "you do not know how devoted children are to a father who leaves them so much wealth. I understand that you have three sons; allow me to bring them all hither; one of them, at least, will gladly consent to make the desired sacrifice." The three sons were called, and the appeal was made to their filial affection, but all in vain; each, in turn, rejected the proposal. "Our father," they said, "should not think of such a thing," and they went away. The priest, turning to the sick man, said, with holy earnestness: "Behold, how your sons love you! I cannot comprehend how you can be willing to lose body and soul, and consent to be tortured forever in the fire of hell, for the sake of children who, in order to save your life, are not willing to hold their hands for a few minutes, in this petty fire of earth." These earnest words made the desired impression upon the dying penitent. Without having any more regard for his children, he made restitution, received the Holy Sacraments, and, soon after, died, as we may hope, in the grace and favor of his God.

O my dear brethren! if your conscience upbraids you now with any injustice, do speedily, in good time, what the sick man did so reluctantly on his death-bed. How can you be so senseless as to rob yourselves of heaven and plunge yourselves into the everlasting fire of hell, for the sake of goods which will not make you happy even here upon earth, and which death, after a short time, will take away from you forever! Reflect seriously, to-day, whether you have ever in your life, done any injury to the property of others. If you find yourselves guilty in this respect, delay not to make restitution, and for the future, dear friends, carefully refrain from the shadow of injustice to any man. Walk honestly and uprightly before the Lord, using the goods which God gives you for works of mercy, as well as for your lawful necessities, and thus make unto yourselves, in time, "friends of the mammon of iniquity, that, when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings." (Luke 16 : 9.)

Amen.

Adapted from ZOLLNER.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE RUIN OF THE SPIRITUAL JERUSALEM.

"Seeing the city, he wept over it." Luke 19 : 41.

It was the day of our divine Lord's short-lived, earthly triumph. Coming down the descent of Mount Olivet from Bethpage and Bethania, mounted on a colt, his disciples cast their garments in his way, and rent the air with their rapturous acclamations ; but Christ, beholding the city of Jerusalem, became sad and dejected, in the midst of all the joyful tumult, and broke forth, with tears, into those remarkable words : " If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace : but now they are hidden from thy eyes." Alas ! my brethren, terrible is the doom that hangs over that ill-starred city,—insensible as it is, at present, to its fate. Soon shall its enemies encompass and lay siege to it ; soon shall they break down its walls and fortifications, set the torch to its beautiful temple, and work within it such universal havoc and devastation, that not one single stone shall be left upon another. O, my beloved brethren, of what is this ruined city a striking symbol ? Of the soul of a Christian, whose enemy, the devil, lays siege to that mystical Jerusalem, breaks down its walls and fortifications, (the bulwarks of sanctifying grace,) and defiles and violates therein the hallowed temple of the Holy Ghost ! Though the coming destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the corporal extirpation of the Jewish nation deeply grieved in prospective, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, yet a thousand times more terrible and lamentable to him, my brethren, was the approaching destruction of their souls, and their eternal exclusion from the kingdom of heaven. Hence, you perceive, that it was the iniquity of mankind, the folly of sinners, the ruin, in short, of the spiritual Jerusalem, which caused Jesus to weep, even in the day of his joyous triumph.

The venerable John D'Avila has said, that, if things were arranged here below according to the requirements of reason and right faith, the world would be divided into two vast prisons ; the one for unbelievers and infidels, and the other for Christians who live in sin, and are utterly indifferent to the commands of their holy Mother, the Church. The latter dungeon, says D'Avila, should be called the *prison of fools*. Fools, indeed, are these miserable, imprudent men, whose greatest misfortune is, that they esteem themselves the wisest and most sagacious of mortals ; and, unfortunately, their number is exceedingly great, the Scriptures declaring that : " The number of fools is infinite." (Eccles. 15.) Some are made fools by the love of honors ; others by the love of pleasures ; others, again, by at-

tachment to the worthless goods of this world. Yet, great as is their folly, they have the temerity to call the Saints fools, because they despise the goods of this life, in order to gain heavenly treasures ; because they sacrifice all earthly creatures for the possession of God, the supreme and only source of all good and happiness. They deem it folly to pardon injuries, folly to abstain from sensual pleasures, and to practise mortification ; folly to renounce honors and riches, to love solitude, and an humble and hidden life. But they never reflect that the Lord has called their wisdom folly, "for," says the Apostle, "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." (1 Cor. 3 : 19.)

Ah ! with what bitterness and self-reproach will they, one day, acknowledge their folly ! But when ? When there shall be no longer any remedy for it. They will say, *then*, in despair : "We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honor. Behold, how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints. Therefore, we have erred from the way of truth ; and the light of justice hath not shined unto us." (Wisdom 5 : 4-6.) How great, then, the folly of sinners, who, for a vile pleasure, for a transient delight, forfeit the grace of God ! For a miserable gratification to lose God, the Supreme Good, to lose Paradise, to forego peace, even in this life, by yielding the soul to undying remorse which, like a poisonous serpent, shall fasten its cruel fangs in the heart of the sinner, inflicting upon it, during time, some of the torments that await it in eternity ! "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished." (Mark 9 : 43.) Would you indulge in that forbidden pleasure, if, in punishment thereof, your hands were to be burned from your body ; or, if you were to be shut up for a year in a loathsome prison ? Would you commit that sin if, after its commission, you knew you would be called upon to forfeit a hundred or a thousand dollars ? You believe that by yielding to sin, you lose Heaven and God ; that, for one mortal offence, you shall be condemned eternally to the flames of hell, and yet you commit it with full knowledge and deliberation. What incomparable folly !

Poor, deluded sinners ! You labor and toil for the perishable goods of this life, for the attainment of worldly wisdom, which shall profit you nothing for eternal salvation ; losing reason and understanding, you become, not only fools, but senseless beasts ; for you attend not to what is lawful or unlawful, but only follow the brutal instincts of your passions, and embrace what is pleasing to the flesh, regardless of the temporal and eternal ruin which you bring upon yourselves, and too often, alas ! upon all connected with you. To live in such a manner, is not to act like a man, but like a senseless brute. To be a man, my brethren, is to be rational,—that is, to act according to the dictates of reason, and not according to the sensual appetite. Were beasts to receive from God the use of reason, and were they to conscientiously follow its dictates, we would say that they acted

like men. On the other hand, when a man, created in the image and likeness of God, follows the impulse and appetite of the senses in contradiction to reason, must it not be truthfully said of him that he acts like a beast?

Oh! that sinners would become wise, and would understand to provide for their last end! He who acts according to the rules of prudence, looks to the future,—that is, to the destiny reserved for him at the end of his mortal life,—to Death and Judgment, Hell or Heaven. Oh! how much wiser is the peasant who saves his soul, than the king who allows his immortal spirit to rush madly to its own destruction! We read: “Better is a child that is poor and wise, than a king that is old and foolish, who knows not to foresee for hereafter.” (Eccles. 4 : 13.) Would not all pronounce that man to be a fool who, in order to gain a shilling, would risk his entire property? And shall he not be considered foolish who, for a momentary gratification, forfeits the grace of God and the grand, eternal kingdom of his glory?

Certainly, dear Christians, we were not placed in this world by our good Creator to become rich, or to acquire honors, or to indulge our senses, but to gain everlasting life. Nothing, then, save the attainment of this end, should be of any importance to us. One thing is necessary; but, alas! that one, supreme, all-important good is despised by sinners more than all else, here below,—they think only of the present; each day they draw nearer to their end; each day they approach more closely to the gates of eternity, and, all the while, they know not whither they are going. Oh! that they would frequently ask themselves: “Whither goest thou?” Tell me, my beloved brethren, what would you think of a pilot who, when asked where he was going, should answer that he did not know? Would not all cry out that he was bringing the ship to certain destruction? Now, such is the course of a man who walks not in the way of salvation. The wise of this world know how to acquire wealth, how to indulge in sensual pleasures, to gain posts of honor, and emolument, but they know not *how to save their souls*. *Dives*, the rich glutton of the Gospel, knew how to lay up treasures, and to feast sumptuously every day, but dying, he was buried in hell. *Alexander the Great* knew how to subdue the nations of the earth, and bring the whole world into subjection to his scepter, but, in a few years, he, too, died, and was, probably, damned forever. *Herod* knew how to serve the passions of the flesh, but he died, devoured by worms, and abandoned to the dreadful consequences of his sins. Henry the Eighth knew how to cast off the authority of the Church, that he might be at liberty to gratify his infamous lust and ambition, but seeing, at his dying hour, that he had lost his soul, he exclaimed: “We have lost all!” How many miserable sinners now weep and cry out in hell: “What have pride and vanity profited us? What has it availed us to have enjoyed the world and its pleasures? What, to have laid up vast riches, and acquired a

great name among men? All these things are passed away like a shadow, and nothing remains but misery and woe, eternal lamentations, and everlasting torments!"

"Before man is life and death, that which he shall choose shall be given him." Behold, my dear brethren, God places before you, in this world, life and death,—that is, the voluntary renunciation of forbidden pleasures, by which you can gain eternal life, or the wilful indulgence of them, according to your hearts' desires, by which you bring everlasting death upon your souls. What do you say? What choice do you make? Act in this vital matter, I beseech you, (for the love of yourselves, as well as for the love of God,) not like senseless beasts, but like men; act like *Christians* who believe in the Gospel, and profess themselves faithful followers of a Crucified Saviour. Hence, frequently and fervently repeat, especially in all dangers and temptations: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matt. 16 : 26.)

Let us be, indeed, persuaded that the truly wise are they who know how to acquire the immortal treasures of divine grace and the everlasting kingdom of heaven; and let us incessantly implore the Lord to give us this science of the saints. Oh! what a sublime science, whereby we learn how to love God and to save our souls! But remember, my brethren, that we can only acquire this precious science in the school of the divine commandments, and of the precepts and Sacraments of our holy Mother, the Church. I cannot repeat it too often: the affair of salvation is, of all affairs, the most necessary. If we know all things, and know not how to save our souls, our knowledge will be utterly unprofitable to us, and we shall be forever miserable; but, on the other hand, though we should be ignorant of all earthly science, we shall be happy for eternity, if we know how to love God.

St. Augustine says: "The unlearned rise, and bear away the kingdom of heaven." How many simple and illiterate Christians are there who, though unable even to read or write, know how to love God, and are eternally saved? And, alas! how many of the learned are damned! Even worldlings believe that true wisdom consists in despising the goods of this life; hence, they are often heard to say of those who give themselves to God: "Happy they who are truly wise, and know how to save their souls!" Go to the sepulchres of the dead, dear Christians, and learn wisdom. The grave is the school in which we may learn the vanity of earthly goods, and may, likewise, understand how truly wise they are who contemn them. "Tell me," says St. Chrysostom, speaking to you, as it were, from the grave-yard: "are you able to discover *here* who has been a prince or a beggar? A man of letters, or an *ignoramus*? For my part," adds the saint, "I see nothing but rotteness, worms, and bones." All is but a dream—a shadow; for, like a dream or a shadow, it passes swiftly away, leaving behind not a trace of its former existence.

But, my beloved brethren, if you wish to be truly wise, it is not enough to know your last end ; it is, also, necessary to adopt the means of attaining it. All desire to be saved, and to be saints ; but, because they do not employ the means thereto, they never acquire sanctity, and are eternally lost. It is necessary to fly from the occasions of sin, to frequent the Sacraments, to practice mental prayer ; and, above all, to impress indelibly on our hearts the following maxims of the Gospel : “ What does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? ” (Matt. 16 : 26.) “ He that loveth his life shall lose it ; ” (John 12 : 25.) and “ If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. ” (Matt. 8 : 34.) Never forget, dear brethren, that our salvation consists in doing the will of God in all things ; and thus, faithfully observing the divine will and commandments, you will give no occasion to our blessed Lord to weep over the ruined Jerusalem of your soul, but shall, rather, lead him to rejoice over it as over the New Jerusalem of God, the Golden City, of which it hath been said, that it “ needeth not sun, nor moon to shine in it : for the glory of God hath enlightened it ; and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. ” (Apoc. 21 : 22.) Amen.

O. S. B.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE DAY OF OUR VISITATION.

“*Seeing the city, he wept over it, saying : ‘If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace ; but now they are hidden from thy eyes.’” Luke 19 : 41, 42.*

The picture of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem presented to us, my beloved brethren, in this day’s Gospel, is truly a most beautiful and touching one. What can be more affecting than to see our divine Lord, the God of all majesty, shedding tears over that sinful city, like a fond parent, over the disorders of an only and beloved child? He was, indeed, a true Man, the Man of Sorrows, who had come for our sakes, not only to shed tears from his loving eyes, but even the last drop of blood from his adorable veins. And, on this occasion, he did something more than manifest the love and tenderness of his Sacred Heart by weeping over Jerusalem. When he gave utterance to his thoughts respecting it, his earnest and pathetic words contained a warning which every soul would do well to heed. Mark well those prophetic words, my brethren. Woe and desolation were to come upon the holy city ; but why? Because “*it knew not the day of its visitation!*” Alas! dear Christians, may we not find a striking parallel to this, in the history of our own souls? Have we not repeatedly forfeited by wilful blindness, the graces so mercifully bestowed upon us? And has not our divine Lord abundant reason to weep over *our* obduracy and cold rejection of his friendship, his counsels, and his sacred laws?—abundant cause to bewail the woe and desolation that will inevitably fall upon us? Let us, then, to-day, dear friends, apply ourselves to meditation upon the sacred tears of Jesus, to the end that his solemn words of warning may penetrate our souls, and his tenderness and sweetness towards Jerusalem, effectually win our hearts to his service.

I. Jesus was returning from Jericho to Jerusalem. It was his last visit to that unhappy city; for the day of his Crucifixion was now close at hand. From Mount Olivet he sent before him two of his disciples, that they might make preparations for his solemn entry. Great crowds gathered about him, and the multitude seemed to increase as he drew nigh to Jerusalem. It was his hour of triumph, and all around him rose shouts of jubilee and benediction. Yet, as the holy city came in sight, gazing on it, Jesus suddenly began to shed bitter tears. All that God had done for its favored but ungrateful inhabitants,—all that he himself had done in their behalf by

the unwearied zeal and constant affection of his missionary life,—a hundred piercing memories of their coldness and ingratitude rushed upon him, and overwhelmed him with grief. He well knew what great events were on the eve of accomplishment; that the songs of triumph then resounding in his ears would soon, alas! give place to curses and blasphemies, to ferocious cries for his innocent blood.

See him, then, like Jeremias of old, breathing forth his lamentations over unhappy Jerusalem, and calling upon it, even yet, though late, to arrest its iniquitous course, and be converted to the Lord. His own chosen metropolis,—there stood his holy temple, in which, alone upon earth, he recognized a form of worship after his own heart, and in which he received that acceptable tribute of sacrifice which his own law had ordained. To that city, he had sent prophet after prophet, either to announce messages of peace and blessing, or to proclaim warnings of future punishment and woe. Good reason had our Lord to weep when he thought of the past history of Jerusalem; but greater reason still, when he contemplated its future lot, and the awful doom that hung over it. This, indeed, he declares, (in to-day's Gospel,) the cause of his present sorrow. In St. Matthew's record of the same event, our dear Lord is represented as recounting the impious and ungrateful deeds of which his chosen city had been guilty in the past: "*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not.*" (Matt. 23 : 37.) But, because of her continued and aggravated ingratitude, and, especially, because of the awful crime of Deicide, which she was so soon to commit, the time of her tribulation drew nearer; and, thinking of it, Jesus wept. Already he seemed to hear the "*Hosannas*" of the multitude changing to the cruel shout: "Away with him! Crucify him, crucify him!"

Who that has ever read the history of that most memorable and calamitous siege,—the siege of Jerusalem under Titus, but must feel that our most compassionate Lord had good reason to weep, as he took his last view of that ill-fated and ungrateful city. Beginning at Easter, in the year of our Lord, 70, it lasted till the following August. The city, at that time, was full of pilgrims, who had come in for the Pasch. Many of the Christians escaped by following the command of our Lord, warning them to depart out of the midst of Judea, and flee to the mountains. The assailants literally verified the divine prophecy. They cast a trench about the city, and straitened her on every side. The number of inhabitants who were massacred, surpasses belief, although both Jewish and pagan historians certify, beyond doubt, that one million one hundred thousand persons were destroyed. The besiegers, in order to terrify the inhabitants into submission, crucified five hundred prisoners each day, until no more wood could be found for making crosses. A famine set in, and raged so fearfully that the

prophecy of Jeremias was literally fulfilled, and *mothers ate their own offspring*. The Temple was utterly destroyed by fire, never again to rise from its ashes; for when, at the instance of Julian, the Apostate, the Jews coming together from all quarters of the globe, undertook to rebuild the doomed edifice, the power of God visibly prevented their labors. Balls of fire issued from the ancient foundations, which burned and scorched the workmen; repeated shocks of earthquake leveled the work as quickly as they erected it, so that, at last, the Jews were forced to abandon their impious project.

II. But, apart from the graces and favors of the Old dispensation, let us consider, my brethren, what our divine Lord had done for Jerusalem in the days of his own public ministry. It is from this we can learn *our most instructive lesson*. Two things our Lord did for Jerusalem, and the same two things he does for every individual immortal soul. HE TAUGHT, AND HE WORKED WONDERS. *He taught in Jerusalem*, for he was the Word and the Wisdom of the Father, and he had come to make known the revelations of God. He came to utter things that were hidden from the foundation of the world, and he chose Jerusalem, by preference, as the school for his instructions. Even when a boy, he manifested what might be called, (humanly speaking,) signs of his future vocation, by teaching in the Temple of the holy city, being found there by his anxious parents, after the three days' loss, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions.

Retiring to Nazareth for some years, he suspends his work of teaching, grows in wisdom, age, and grace, and thus fits himself for his future office; for, when he again comes forth from his seclusion, my dear brethren, behold, he enters, with fresh energy and zeal, upon the duties of his sacred mission. Sometimes it is in the desert, sometimes by the side of the sea, sometimes in the neighboring towns and villages, that his voice is heard: but so frequently was it in Jerusalem, that the Evangelist does not hesitate to say: "*He was daily teaching in the Temple.*" (Luke 19:47.) And when he condescended to justify his conduct before those who came to seize him, at the beginning of his Passion, he said to them: "*I was daily with you in the Temple.*" (Luke 22:53.)

He had a great task before him, and it required constant teaching upon his part, to accomplish it. He had a new religion to propagate, not contrary to, but rather the perfection and development of, the old. He had new maxims to enforce which, until that time, had not been uttered by the mouth of any preacher; he had new revelations to make, new Sacraments and religious practices to institute; he had to form his Apostles for their mission, as the anointed teachers of all nations. And all this afforded opportunities to Jerusalem which no other city of the world had ever shared equally with her. She had been prepared by the graces and blessings of

the Old Law for the special favors and privileges of the New. And thus she became the grand center of the mission and ministry of the Redeemer of mankind. He taught personally in her Temple, and in her public streets ; it was within her walls that he said his first Mass, that he instituted the Sacraments, and empowered the Apostles and their lawful successors, to administer them ; that he promised *the descent of the Holy Ghost*, and, in due time, sent him, in the form of fiery tongues, upon the Sacred College. Jerusalem was, moreover, the first home of the Blessed Sacrament on earth. There, *by example, as well as by word*, Christ taught those high principles of charity, humility, and meekness, which were to be the distinguishing characteristics of his disciples.

But, besides all these marvellous teachings, (the sacred lessons which the Gospel has treasured up for us), our Blessed Lord wrought multiplied wonders in Jerusalem, which displayed his almighty power, as well as his tenderness and compassion. It was not only, nor chiefly, *by word*, but mainly by the testimony of *his works*, that he was to prove his Divinity, and exhibit his predilection for his chosen city. When he came forth from the retirement of Nazareth, and went about doing good, Jerusalem was the chief witness of his many gracious deeds and miracles. Look at one day's work, my brethren, as it is described for us in the first chapter of St. Mark's Gospel. True, it is in Capharnaum that this especial day is spent ; but the description of its labors applies with equal force to what was done even more frequently in Jerusalem. Early in the day, he teaches in the synagogue ; then, he is interrupted in his preaching by a request to cast out the evil spirit from a demoniac present ; next, he proceeds to the house of Simon and Andrew, where he performs another miraculous work in curing the former's mother-in-law ; in the evening, he is represented as blessing the little children who are brought to him ; as healing the sick and lepers, and casting out devils. Rising very early next morning, he commences the day by prayer in a desert place ; but even there he is disturbed, and when Simon and his disciples find him in his solitude, they tell him that every one is seeking for him.

His most striking works were his miracles, and of these Jerusalem was most frequently, the theater. They were such as ought certainly to have awed that faithless city into an acknowledgment of his Divinity. It was to this end that they were wrought, since our Lord himself declared : "The works which I do, they give testimony of me." (John 10 : 25.) And it was in Jerusalem, and of the people of Jerusalem, that he said, when speaking of these works : "If I had not done among them the works that no other man hath done, they would not have sin, but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father." (John 15 : 24.) Upon some, indeed, these works produced the desired effect, and Nicodemus expressed what many a disciple must have felt, when he said to Christ : "Rabbi, we know that thou art come a teacher from God ; for no man"

can do these miracles which thou doest, unless God was with him." (John 3 : 2.) And whole crowds were sometimes influenced, at least, for a time, by what they saw ; as, after he had restored to life the dead son of the widow of Naim, we hear them cry out in admiration : "A great prophet is risen up among us ; and God hath visited his people." (Luke 7 : 16.)

When St. John the Baptist sent his disciples to him, to question him if he were the Christ, it was to his miracles that he pointed as proof of his divinity, quoting to the messengers of John the prophesies of Isaias regarding those works. (Luke 7 : 22.) If, then, our Lord rebuked the other cities of Judea, declaring that Tyre and Sidon, and even Sodom, would have been moved to faith and repentance, if they had been blessed with the favors which the former had received, how much greater reason had he to weep over the blindness and incredulity of Jerusalem !

Alas ! she knew not the day of her visitation at any time. She knew it not, my brethren, when the prophets visited her as chosen ambassadors of God. She knew it not when the Son of God himself came, and taught and worked within her walls. Neither did she know it when the Church was founded in the midst of her, and the Apostles proclaimed the glory of his name, who had been crucified by her princes and priests. Therefore, the anger of God came upon her, and all her glories were buried in desolation.

III. In the history of that doomed and devastated city, recognize, my dear Christians, the history of many a privileged soul. The spiritual Jerusalem is the favored abode of God's power, and grace, and mercy ; and within its precincts, he has wrought multiplied miracles of the most generous love. But how have we corresponded to those manifestations of his divine bounty and tenderness ?

Have we, individually, appreciated what has been done for us ? Have we, in our turn, known the time and manner of our visitation ? Alas ! we may well blush at the shameful record of our coldness and ingratitude ! We condemn Jerusalem, and pretend to sympathize with our Lord as he sits weeping beside that heartless city, when, all the while, we perhaps, are giving him cause to shed bitter tears over our own guilty unthankfulness and insensibility.

To each one of us, my dear brethren, Jesus has imparted his sacred doctrine. He has taught, as it were, in the streets and temple of *our* Jerusalem. All his revelations have been communicated to us with as much truth and certainty as if we heard them from his own sacred lips. "He that heareth you, heareth me," are words that never fail. To doubt the Church which teaches us, would be to doubt him who teaches us through the Church. To disobey and reject the Church, would be to disobey and reject Christ himself. And this is to be admitted not only in matters of

faith, but likewise in matters of practice, because, in every true Christian, outward practice is an indication, or proof, of inward faith.

My dearly-beloved, let us further remark that, besides teaching in our spiritual Jerusalem, in our inward temple of the Holy Ghost, Jesus has done, and is still doing there, many admirable works. Divine grace is the work of God in our souls, and it is our duty to co-operate,—that is to say, to work with God in the use of that grace. Herein each soul most closely resembles the ancient Jerusalem, inasmuch as it is ever under the visitation of God. Which of us can recount all that our good God has thus so abundantly done for us? Has he not, in our creation, in his divine providence, in the priceless treasures of prayer, and the holy Sacraments, been manifesting, all our life long, his power and his love in our behalf? Did he ever do more for a single inhabitant of his chosen city than he has done for us? May we not even extend the argument and appeal of our Blessed Lord, and question, that, if in Jerusalem itself, he had done what he has done in *our* regard, that infatuated city would not have been moved to acknowledge, and profit by, the time of its visitation? The graces we enjoy as privileged children of the Church, are greater than those of the people of Jerusalem, and we should take to heart the admonition of St. Paul, on this head, when, speaking of the punishments which Almighty God, in the olden times, inflicted on the Israelites, he reminds us that: “All these things happened to them in figure, and are written for our correction.” And how are we to profit by the correction, except by being convinced that, since we are enjoying the reality of what was given only in figure to Jerusalem, we are required to manifest greater fidelity, lest our disobedience be punished by a far worse fate than that of the chosen city? Ah! let us never again, my brethren, give occasion to our dearest Lord to weep over our ingratitude, or rebuke us for failing to acknowledge the things that are for our peace. Let us lay to heart the solemn lesson of to-day’s Gospel, and be convinced that if we share in the unfaithfulness of Jerusalem, we shall share in her ruin; but that, if we heed the warning which is given to us through her, and are corrected by her example, we shall inherit peace and blessing, because have believed the saving words of our Blessed Redeemer, and have known, in time, the day of our visitation. Amen.

Adapted from SWEENEY, O. S. B.

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN INTO HEAVEN.

THE POWER AND MERCY OF MARY.

“I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus, and as a fair olive-tree in the plains.” Eccles. 18, 19.

When we meditate, my beloved brethren, upon the touching parable of the Prodigal Son, recorded in the Gospel of St. Luke, a certain conclusion forces itself irresistibly upon us, and that is, that the unfortunate youth must have been *motherless*. For, had it been otherwise, when he entered into himself, in a far-off land, and resolved to renounce his evil courses and return to his father's house, would he have experienced such difficulty in executing his resolve, and in throwing himself, as an humble penitent, at the feet of his outraged parent? I am fully persuaded that, were his mother alive at that time, he would have remembered her love amid all his perplexities and fears, and would thus have reasoned with himself, on his way home: “If my father, justly enraged at my disorderly and disgraceful conduct, refuses to receive me, I will approach him through my mother. Mothers are wont to be more tender-hearted towards their erring children, and *my* mother is no exception to the general rule. She has always loved me, and has, perhaps, shed many a bitter tear, from the moment that I first abandoned my father's house. Ah! on seeing me now in such a miserable state, she cannot help but be moved with sentiments of love and compassion for her unfortunate son! Yes, I will go first to my mother; she will shield me from the wrath of my father, and will never cease pleading with him until she appeases him, and obtains a thorough pardon for my offences.”

Thus, I fancy, dear Christians, that young man would have reasoned with himself on his way home; but, alas! unfortunately for him, there was no dear, forgiving mother waiting his arrival at the old homestead; and hence, he found it most difficult to return once more to his father's roof. But, my dear brethren, if this poor, heart-broken prodigal of the Gospel was motherless, we, at least, have a mother; and O, how amiable, how loving, and how compassionate is she, our good Mother Mary! Ah! sinners, oppressed by the heavy weight of your manifold sins, if you have not the courage to throw yourselves at the feet of your outraged heavenly Father, go to your Mother,—to Mary,—she, beholding you in such a miserable state, will be moved to compassion; for her heart is more loving, more tender, than the combined hearts of all earthly mothers. She will appease

your heavenly Father,—she will calm his anger, and render him propitious to you ; through her gracious mediation you will be received once more to his embrace,—will be admitted to the kiss of peace with as much warmth and affection as those who have never deviated from the paths of his commandments, or offended him by the commission of any grievous crime.

That such sentiments of hope may spring up and be increased within you, my dear brethren, let us further see on what motives your confidence in Mary's intercession should be grounded. A well-grounded hope, to be available, must necessarily suppose two qualities in the source whence it arises, viz., *power and mercy*. If the person in whom we confide, be possessed of these two qualities, then, indeed, may we hope to attain the end of our desires ; but, if the person be lacking in either of these qualities,—for instance, if he be able to assist us, but not willing ; or, on the other hand, if he be willing, but not able to assist us,—our hopes will, in either case, be utterly and most sadly frustrated. Behold ! my brethren, in what a sublime and grand degree are found in Mary these two qualities, the essential groundwork of all Christian hope ! She is so powerful before God, that any sinner for whom she intercedes,—no matter how great or enormous his sins may be,—can entertain a sure hope of pardon. Again, she is so merciful and compassionate towards us, that she will assuredly obtain for us all the graces we stand in need of, provided we have recourse to her with the proper dispositions. “Remember, O most compassionate Virgin Mary,” cries out her devoted servant, St. Bernard, “that no one ever had recourse to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy mediation, without obtaining relief !” And to the end that we, my dear brethren, may, like that holy saint, daily increase more and more in love and devotion to the Queen of Angels, and that, with full confidence, we may place all our hopes of eternal salvation in her gracious intercession, we will now proceed to consider, among many other admirable attributes, these two principal ones of

- I. *The power, and*
- II. *The mercy of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

O, loving Mother of God ! turn towards us, this day, thine eyes of tender clemency ; enlighten our understandings, inflame our wills, that, according to thy will and that of thy divine Son, we may gather from these considerations the fruits most necessary for the sanctification and salvation of our immortal souls ! Amen.

I. To form some imperfect idea, (for a perfect one is impossible to us here below,) of the great *power* of Mary with God, let us first reflect upon her immense grandeur, and the close relationship she holds with the adorable Trinity. In the Epistle of this holy festival, the Church applies to her the

words of Ecclesiastes, and puts into her mouth the triumphant declaration : "I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus,"—the cedar being the loftiest and the grandest tree of the forest.

Who, then, is Mary? She is that glorious woman, foretold by the prophets as the new Eve, the immaculate Virgin, whose heel should crush the infernal serpent's head. Expected by all the nations of the earth, eulogized by the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church, the delight, the joy, and the bulwark of the Church militant, Mary is that blessed woman raised by the Almighty to a dignity which, (according to the Angelic Doctor,) falls little short of infinity. Consequently, my beloved brethren, she holds the first place in the order of nature, of grace, and of glory.

1. In the order of *nature*, being chosen by the Most High to furnish from her immaculate flesh and blood, the sacred Humanity of the Incarnate Word, she is superior to all other creatures, terrestrial or celestial, that ever came forth from the Omnipotent hand of God.

2. She holds the first place in the order of *grace*, since she was not only conceived without the least stain of original sin, but during her whole mortal life, never committed even the least venial fault, arriving, by that means, at a degree of sanctity unequaled even by the greatest saints that ever lived on this earth.

3. Moreover, she holds the first place in the order of *glory*, since, as the immaculate Daughter of the Eternal Father, as the immaculate Mother of the Eternal Son, and as the immaculate Spouse of the Eternal Spirit, having been elevated to the sublimest dignity that has ever been enjoyed, or could ever be enjoyed, here below, she has, consequently, been elevated to a corresponding degree of glory in heaven. Yes, my brethren, seated on a resplendent throne of glory, at the right hand of her beloved Son, she has been crowned by him queen of heaven and earth;—queen of the Patriarchs, because her faith was more lively than theirs;—queen of the Prophets, because she bore in her chaste womb the great "I AM," with whom past, present, and future are as one;—queen of the Apostles, because her zeal was more ardent than theirs;—queen of Martyrs, because her sufferings exceeded all the martyrdoms of earth;—queen of Confessors, because she exercised more heroic virtues;—queen of Virgins, because of all virgins, she was the purest;—in a word, queen of all Saints and Angels, because she was holier and more perfect than them all. St. Peter Damian maintained that, between her and all the other Saints and Angels of God, there exists an almost infinite difference; and, with reason, has it further been said, that our Blessed Lady constitutes in heaven an order by herself, having nothing above her except God. Now, my beloved brethren, if Mary is thus so great, so holy, so favored,—if she has been elevated by

God to such a sublime and exceptional dignity—what is it that she will not be able to effect with her beloved Son? If St. Michael the Archangel was so powerful as to be able to overcome Lucifer and his host of apostate spirits, and precipitate them from the heights of Paradise into the profoundest depths of hell, what will not the Blessed Virgin, who is queen, not only of St. Michael, but of all the other saints and angels of God, be able to accomplish in heaven? Again, Moses, my brethren, was, as you know, most dear to God, so that, by his prayers, he prevailed upon him to spare the lives of three millions of men, and grant them pardon for that greatest of all crimes,—idolatry. Now, if the Almighty, at the instigation of that ancient patriarch, forgave his people such enormous excesses, will he not, also, at the prayer and instigation of the Blessed Virgin, (of whom Moses is only a servant,) pardon you your crimes, no matter how grievous and multiplied they may be? Let us suppose, for a moment, that there should appear, this very instant, in our midst an Angel sent by God, to deliver to us the following message: “Be of good heart, dear people; to-day all heaven is employed in your behalf. The Angels, the Archangels, the principalities, thrones, dominations, powers, cherubim, and seraphim; all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins,—in a word, all the inhabitants of the heavenly court are pleading your cause, and employing their utmost endeavors to the end that you may be, one day, their companions in that happy abode of everlasting delights!”

Oh! at such an announcement as this, what joy, what rapture would inflame your hearts! After such tidings, would any one, (no matter how enormous his sins may have been,) be so incredulous as to doubt concerning his eternal salvation? Allow me to assure you, dear brethren, that one prayer from the Mother of God is far more efficacious than the united prayers and supplications of all the heavenly choirs. Defended and patronized by *her*, we are far more secure than if the whole body of saints and angels were our advocates. And why? Because she is more powerful with her beloved Son than all the heavenly spirits united. She, our Blessed Lady, stands in the same relation to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as the best of mothers does to the child of her womb; and, now, in his glorified state, although the domestic subjection of Bethlehem, Egypt, and Nazareth, has forever passed away, he, who, (as he himself expressly declared,) came not to destroy the law but to fulfil it, can never forget that Mary is his mother. What, then, can a fond and dutiful child refuse to the best of Mothers? In the revelations of St. Bridget, it is recorded that that saint once, in a rapture, heard Jesus saying to his Blessed Mother: “Thou didst refuse me nothing on earth: I can refuse thee nothing in heaven!” What a consoling declaration!

Ah! with good reason, my brethren, did St. Peter Damian exclaim, that the Blessed Virgin goes before her beloved Son as a sovereign more than a subject,—less as a servant than as a mistress. Hence, at the command of

Mary, not only the heavens and the earth, not only men and angels obey, but, (O the power and glory of our humble Queen!) God himself is obedient to her commands. "A God obedient to Mary!" cries out St. Bernardine of Siena. The infinite, the immense, the Omnipotent God obedient to the work of his own hands? Yes; he has exalted her "like a cedar in Libanus;" and as he, the Mighty One, is omnipotent by nature, so he has made her, his beloved Mother, omnipotent by grace. Where, then, is the sinner so wretched, so abandoned, so desperate, as not to obtain pardon for his sins, if he have recourse to Mary? Why do you fear, why do you despond, O guilty man? Why do you still go about, bowed down to the earth by the enormous weight of your sins? Why not fly, at once, to the feet of this all-powerful Mother? "Ah!" (methinks I hear a poor sinner sorrowfully exclaim,) "I do not doubt the power of Mary,—I know that she is able to obtain mercy for me, and for the whole world; what I fear is that she is unwilling to help so great a sinner as I,—that she will close her heart against me, the cruel and impious traitor, who have again and again renewed her dolours, and crucified her beloved Son!" Answer me, poor, diffident, guilty soul! are you truly sorry for your sins,—do you wish to change your life, and make reparation for the past? If such be the case, take courage, approach Mary full of love and confidence. She is not only "the cedar in Libanus;" she is, also, "the fair olive-tree in the plains." I, the unworthy minister of her beloved Son, promise you, this day, on her part, that she will receive you with tenderness; she will embrace you as her child; she will effect for you a reconciliation with your offended Lord and God;—in a word, she will obtain for you grace to save your soul; since, (as we shall now proceed to consider,) she is as merciful and compassionate towards men, as she is all-powerful with God.

II. In order, my dear Christians, that you may all be persuaded of the truth of what I assert, and that you may not suspect me of exaggeration in this matter, I will implore you to penetrate with me into the inexhaustible treasury of Mary's piety and compassion for poor sinners. But, beloved brethren, I must confess the truth; here I am lost. I am confounded,—I know not whither to turn. I find myself in the position of an inexperienced pilot, who, finding himself in the midst of a vast ocean, where nothing meets the eye save the sky and sea, knows not in what direction to turn the prow of his vessel, in order to reach safely the wished-for haven. So am I confused and bewildered upon the wide, shoreless sea of Mary's mercy. I know not where or how to commence manifesting to you the many powerful motives that urge our Blessed Mother to love us and compassionate us, or how to lay before you the innumerable prodigies of that love and compassion for sinful man.

One of the most powerful motives that induces the Blessed Virgin to be

interested in our behalf, my brethren, is that her beloved Son constituted her our mother. Yes, when his terrible sufferings upon the Cross were almost at an end,—he did not wish to leave us orphans; he knew the dangerous snares, the fierce assaults to which we would be exposed; and that his bitter Passion and Death would be rendered fruitless in our regard, if we were left altogether to our own resources, hence, he bequeathed to us, on Calvary, a most loving and, at the same time, a most powerful advocate,—his own ever blessed Mother, Mary. Saying to St. John, and, in his person, to all Christians to the end of ages: “Behold thy Mother,” Jesus manifested, beyond the shadow of doubt, his immense love for us poor sinners. Can we doubt that that fond and loving Mother, who took part and co-operated in all that Jesus did and suffered for our salvation, from the Crib to the Cross,—can we, for a moment, doubt she will betray the trust that her beloved Son has reposed in her, or the sacred cause that he has committed to her hands? Ah! no; she is the fair olive-tree of the plains,—not enclosed in a private, high-walled garden, but out in the broad, free, untrammelled plains, easy of access to all, refusing her precious fruits to none, not even to the poorest vagrant or vagabond that seeks her refreshing shade. And, as from the fruit of the olive comes forth the precious, grateful oil, yielding light, and healing, and nourishment, to those who use it well and wisely, so does our Blessed Lady yield to her faithful clients the treasures of her mercy,—light in their doubts and difficulties, healing in their spiritual wounds, and nourishment for their hungry, thirsty souls! Can we doubt, dear brethren, that, at the moment Christ constituted Mary our Mother, he did not, also, communicate to her heart the true sentiments of a tender mother towards us? That he has done so is best proved by the many and signal evidences of her love and tenderness for mankind through all the ages of the world. Lift up your eyes to heaven, dear Christians, or cast them down upon the earth; turn to the annals of nations, or consult the history of saints and sinners,—everywhere, you will find miracles without number, wonderful prodigies, graces without measure, conferred upon mankind through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Put your trust, then, in that holy and immaculate Mother, who has been “made omnipotent by an omnipotent Son.” (Richard of St. Lawrence, *lib.* 4: *Deland. Virg.*); and, if the enormity of your sins should make you fear to approach her, dear brethren, recall to mind her own words to a sainted servant of God, and hear her saying to you, as she said to that holy soul: “However much a man may have sinned, if, out of a true desire of amendment, he turn to me, I am immediately ready to receive him; nor do I pay attention to the greatness of his sins, but to the will with which he comes; for I do not disdain to anoint and heal his wounds, because I am called, and really am, the Mother of Mercy!”

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ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE HEAVENLY QUEEN.

“Mary has chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.”
uke 10 : 42.

This festival day, my dearly-beloved, reminds us of two important events : the *Death* and the *Assumption* of the Blessed Virgin Mary. After the descent of the Holy Ghost, she remained in Jerusalem, under the care of St. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. But, after the martyrdom of St. Stephen, a heavy persecution arose against the primitive Church, and then, together with her dear, adopted son, the Mother of Jesus took up her abode in Ephesus. Hence, that city of Asia Minor became, (according to the statement of the Fathers of the Council of Ephesus, A. D. 431,) a place of fervent pilgrimage for all the faithful from all parts of the world. The various traditions of the Church agree in declaring that our Blessed Lady lived to an advanced age, and, finally, terminated her life by a glorious triumph. Let me, then, invite you, dear brethren, to consider with me, to-day, the threefold glory of that triumph in the circumstances which transpired

- I. *Before,*
- II. *During,* and
- III. *After* her assumption into heaven.

I. Mary, the Mother of God, died a painless death. She was consumed, in the end, by that ardent love which glowed, like an intense flame, within her immaculate heart.

1. “God made not death:” (Wisd. 1 : 13.) “By sin, death entered into this world.” (Rom. 5 : 12.) Now, my brethren, it is the doctrine of the Church that Mary was exempt from original sin, and was never contaminated by the least stain of actual sin. Consequently, she was not subject to the law of death. If God, nevertheless, decreed her dissolution, it was because of her conformity with her divine Son, whom she was to resemble in death as well as in life. But her death, not being caused by sin, was sweet and painless,—was a quiet, gentle slumber, whereby she passed into eternity. It was, in short, like the delicious repose the laborer longs for after the fatigues of the day. We are certainly justified in thus viewing her departure from this world, since a death, attended by the agonizing pains caused by sin, would be unbecoming the Mother of Life, conceived without stain of sin. Many, even of the greatest Saints, reflecting at the

hour of death, upon their past sins, have been filled with anguish of mind ; but no such suffering was the portion of the Sinless One ; nor did Satan dare to approach, in that supreme moment, the valiant Woman who had crushed his infernal head. We, my dear brethren, cannot, it is true, escape, like Mary, *the death caused by sin*, but we can, and must, escape that far worse evil, viz., *a death in the state of wilful sin*.

2. Mary died from excess of love for her Son and God. Neither sickness, nor weakness, nor age, nor infirmity, but *love*, alone, was the cause of her death. The love of God was the sword that not only pierced, but mortally wounded her holy, virginal heart. The heavenly fire of charity burned so intensely in her soul, that, by degrees, it consumed her life, her body being too frail to endure the action of that interior furnace of divine love. "My Beloved to me and I to him !" she might have exclaimed both day and night ; for the love wherewith she loved God and was loved by him in return, excelled, in an incomparably sublime manner, the love of all the choirs of Angels and Saints in heaven. Hence, divine love consumed her, at last, my brethren, as a holocaust of the sweetest odor ; and hence, she died in an ecstasy of love, soaring up, like a white-winged dove, to the loving embrace of her Son and Lord. Ah ! my dear brethren, if we cannot, like Mary, die *from* love of God, let us, at least, take care to die *in* the love of God. Death is but the echo of life. As a man lives, so he dies. Very few of those who live *in sin* will die in divine grace, *in the love of God*.

II. Mary's soul was immediately received into the heavenly realms. But what, my brethren, was the fate of her sacred body ? Was it given to corruption and worms, only to arise from the decay of the grave on the day of general resurrection ? God forbid that we should assert anything so derogatory to the honor of the Blessed Mother of God. It has ever been the pious tradition of the infallible Church, that her dead body at first was permitted by God to repose in the sepulchre, for the sake of her greater conformity with her Divine Son ; but that, after a short time, her soul was re-united to that virginal body, and then the Queen of Saints was received, both body and soul, into the celestial mansions. The reasons for this belief are so clear and cogent, that I have but to state them, in order to convince the most incredulous.

1. Neither the Latin or the Greek Christians ever boasted of possessing relics of the body of the Blessed Virgin, which, great as was their affection for the relics of the Saints, cannot be explained in any other way, save by the supposition that her body had disappeared from the grave.

2. The body of man is subject to corruption, in consequence of sin.

The Immaculate Virgin Mary, (as you well know, dear Christians,) was never defiled by the slightest stain of sin, and hence, her body could not be subject to corruption. Again, since God permitted Mary to die, so that thereby she might be more closely conformed to her divine Son, so he, likewise, permitted her to rise from the dead, after a few days, to the end that she might resemble Christ in the circumstances of his glorious Resurrection.

3. Tradition teaches the same. St. John Damascene relates an immemorial tradition, which asserts that, at the death of the Blessed Virgin, the Apostles, then widely separated by their mission and ministry, were carried, by the power of the Almighty, to Jerusalem. All, except St. Thomas, witnessed the happy death of the Blessed Mother, and saw her surrounded by the glory of God, whilst the angelic choirs encircled her, singing celestial canticles. After death, they laid her body in a grave at Gethsemane, and around her tomb they heard the songs of the Angels for three days. At the end of that time, they opened the grave, in order to allow St. Thomas, who had just arrived, to view her sacred remains. Behold! the blessed virginal body of the Mother of God was no longer to be found in the place where they had laid it; but an indescribably sweet odor came forth from the tomb. The Church has embodied this record in the office she prescribes for the fourth day of the Octave of the Assumption; and every one of the Fathers of the Church confirms this tradition.

Our bodies being sinful, beloved brethren, will be reduced, after death, to dust and ashes. On the Last Day, God will call them forth out of their graves, that they may receive either eternal torments for a brief, fleeting, sinful pleasure, or eternal happiness, in return for the few pains and trials of our short, earthly pilgrimage.

III. When Mary was received, body and soul, into the heavenly mansions, she was exalted above all the Angels and Saints, and placed at the right of her Son. "The queen stood on thy right hand, in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety." (Ps. 44 : 10.) This triumph is due to the Blessed Virgin, both *by reason of her dignity* and *her merits*.

1. It was due to her *by reason of her dignity*. No one doubts that the daughter of a king holds a higher rank than his servants. Mary is pre-eminently the daughter of the heavenly Father, the King of kings, the Lord of lords. Again: the spouse of the king ranks higher than his servants. Mary is the spouse of the Holy Ghost. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee; and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee." (Luke 1 : 35.) Mary is, in the strictest sense, the Mother of God: "The Holy which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." (Ibid.) Where is there a dignity to be compared to this? The Angels and Saints

are far more inferior to Mary than the royal servants are to the daughter, spouse, and mother of the king. "In the midst of her own people she shall be exalted, and shall be admired in the holy assembly. And in the multitude of the elect, she shall have praise, and among the blessed, she shall be blessed." (Ecclus. 24 : 3.)

2. This triumph was, also, due to her *by reason of her merits*. God, in crowning the Blessed Virgin on this day, regarded more her merits than her dignity. Faith teaches us that the rewards of the blessed are in the strictest proportion to their merits. "He who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly ; and he who soweth in blessings shall also reap of blessings." (2 Cor. 9 : 6.) Mary was incessantly occupied in loving and serving God with more and more fidelity. She never received any grace without co-operating with it. Thus, sanctifying grace increased in her soul to an incomprehensible degree. She excelled all the Saints and Angels in virtue, being the Queen of the Angels, the Queen of all the Saints. She was a model to those in the married state, as well as to her own chosen imitators,—the virgins. What wonder if the Church, to praise her virtue, selects figures and symbols from all that is most beautiful and perfect in nature, from the most splendid works of the Creator. "I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus, and as a cypress-tree on mount Sion. I was exalted like a palm-tree in Cades, and as a rose-plant in Jericho. As the vine, I have brought forth a pleasant odor, and my branches are of honor and grace." (Ecclus. 24 : 17-19, 23.) Since, then, she far excels all the Saints in virtue, she excels them, also, in glory. "As the splendor of the sun surpasses the splendor of all the stars, so the glory of the divine mother surpasses the glory of all the elect of God in heaven." (St. Basil.)

Strive, my beloved brethren, to share, to-day, in the happiness of your triumphant Queen. In Paradise there are no afflictions, no sorrows, no tears. "God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away." (Apoc. 21 : 4.) Here, on earth, we search in vain after true happiness. Heaven is, alone, the abode of infinite and unalterable joy. "The eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what things God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Cor. 2 : 9.) O Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, and our sweetest Mother! intercede for us, to-day, that we may worthily honor thy happy Assumption into heaven. Thy divine Son hath declared that he who humbleth himself shall be exalted ; and, since *thy* glorious exaltation is the triumph of thy deepest humility, obtain for us, we beseech thee, the grace to humble ourselves so profoundly and so sincerely in this life, as, hereafter, like thee, to be exalted like cedars in Libanus, like cypress-trees on Mount Sion, like palm-trees in Cades, forevermore. Amen.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

PRIDE.

“Every one that exalleth himself shall be humbled.” Luke 18 : 14.

Jesus Christ, in the Gospel of this day, my brethren, contrasts darkness with light, night with day, evil with good, and vice with virtue, in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. The Pharisee despises every one but himself; the publican despises no one but himself. The Pharisee speaks boastfully and vaingloriously of his virtues; the publican calls and confesses himself a sinner. The Pharisee, in his conceit, stands erect, in a conspicuous place in the Temple; the publican crouches afar off, in an obscure corner, and dares not raise his eyes from the ground. The Pharisee, as it were, demands of God the reward of his imaginary virtues; the poor publican only strikes his breast, and implores mercy and pardon. Which of these men is most pleasing to God, my brethren? Christ himself decides the question by saying of the publican: “This man went down to his house justified, rather than the other.” Behold, how highly God esteems the humble, and how contemptible the proud are in his sight!

Look at the proud Pharisee as Jesus describes him. With head erect, he stands before the altar, as if he would call God to an account. He is exceedingly well satisfied with himself; he boasts of his good works, and makes little of all other men, whom he classes as “extortioners, unjust, and adulterers.” “*Lord, I thank thee,*” he exclaims, “*that I am not like the rest of men.*” He glories, in particular, in his fulfilment of the letter of the Jewish law: “*I fast twice in the week, and give tithes of all that I possess.*” Alas! in his self-complacent contempt for and criticism of his neighbor, the Pharisee had many prototypes in the Old, as he has had many imitators in the New, Law. Let us turn to the pages of Holy Writ, my brethren, and we shall soon see how offensive to God, and how detrimental to the sinner, is this proud contempt of others, even in the natural order of things. Abimelech, although the son of Gideon, one of the ancient Judges of Israel, was the illegitimate offspring of a low-born mother. Seeing himself despised by his brethren, on account of his mother’s low extraction, he gathered around him a gang of loose and daring ruffians, by whose assistance he caused himself to be chosen and proclaimed king of Sichem. His unlawful elevation grieved Gaal, a nobleman of the realm, and he raised a sedition against Gideon’s illegitimate son.

“Who is Abimelech, and what is Sichem, that we should serve him? Do you not know the mother of Abimelech? If you follow me, I shall

snatch the sceptre from the hands of this beggar and usurper, and extinguish his pride with his life!" Thus spake Gaal, publicly and privately. But, behold, his contemptuous language reached the ears of Zebul, the general of the army, who was the bosom friend of Abimelech. By feigned proffers of friendship, he managed to circumvent the rebellious nobleman, and lure him to his own destruction. When Gaal saw himself in the hands of his enemies, he grew pale, trembled, and became dumb with fear. Zebul began to upbraid him for his boastful derision of Abimelech, and said: "Where is thy mouth, with which thou saidest: Who is Abimelech, that we should serve and obey him? Let us cast off his yoke." Thus Gaal's pride was condignly punished. To many scoffers, my brethren, the same will happen. Ye despisers of the poor, old, and feeble, behold yourselves, in spirit, in the valley of Josaphat; raise your eyes, and look upon those whom you have always scorned and slighted, but who are, in reality, the elect of God, destined by him for the glories of the heavenly mansions. See there, the poor widow, the desolate orphan, whom you have often harshly derided and abused,—a shining train of angels conduct them to Paradise, whilst the pearly gates are closed and barred forever against *your* entrance. O my beloved brethren, judge not, if you would not be judged!

We have another example in King David. In his youth, it appears, he stood in no great favor, or esteem, with any one, not even with his own father. When Samuel, by the command of God, asked a successor for Saul out of the house of Issai, the old man introduced his sons, one after the other, except his youngest son, David. Even when Samuel inquired if he had not another son, Issai carelessly answered, that it was true there was another, but that he was a small, insignificant fellow, who was watching the sheep in the field. That was all he had to say of him. David was, also, despised by his brethren, for when he afterwards came to the camp, in order to fight Goliath, his eldest brother addressed him harshly, in these words: "Why hast thou come? Why hast thou left the sheep in the desert? I know thy pride and the roguishness of thy heart, for thou hast come to see the strife." No less was he despised by Saul himself as a little dwarf, incapable of fighting Goliath, the giant. "You cannot oppose this Philistine; you are too young," said Saul. As to Goliath himself, he, too, ridiculed and derided David. What humiliation and contempt for the latter! But in proportion to that humiliation and abasement was his future exaltation and glory. By his own father he was degraded beneath all his brethren, and he alone of his family was chosen by God to wear a crown. He was despised on account of his youth and physical insignificance, and yet he, alone, was able to cope with and slay the proud and overbearing Goliath. From the moment he destroyed the giant, David pursued his brilliant course from victory to victory, from honor to honor;

he became the son-in-law of Saul, the commander-in-chief of the whole army, and, finally, king of Israel.

Joseph of Egypt, is another example of the same truth. What contempt and derision had not this innocent youth to endure from his wicked brothers! They mocked him with these words: "Behold, the dreamer comes!" They tore his clothes from his body, threw him into a cistern, and sold him into slavery. Joseph was taken away by his purchasers, and sold to Potiphar, an officer in the court of Egypt's king. Having been, afterwards, falsely accused by his master's adulterous wife, he was cast into a dismal prison. But his disgrace and multiplied misfortunes were about to have a glorious end. The marvellous interpretation of a dream opens for him the door of the prison, and brings him to the court of King Pharaoh. The piety, modesty, and prudence which he manifests in all his transactions, win for him, in a short time, the good-will of the king, and elevate him to the rank of chief favorite. He is given the title and power of royal governor over all the land and people of Egypt. Draw near, now, ye unnatural brothers, and fall on your knees before Joseph, the dreamer, whom you have despised! Do you know him in this, his hour of exaltation and triumph? He is clothed with purple, whom, not long ago, you despoiled of his poor little coat of many colors; he is seated on a throne, whom you cast, in his helpless boyhood, into a cistern; he is invested with royal power, whom you once so basely sold into foreign slavery! Look at him; it is Joseph, your despised brother. "I am Joseph, whom you have sold. I am Joseph; I can return evil for evil; I can retaliate,—can throw you into prison, and allow you to die of hunger, instead of giving you corn. I am Joseph; look at me well; do you know me?" But why should I linger, my brethren, depicting the wild fear and consternation of Joseph's brethren? I only beg of you to apply the moral of this Scripture-history to your own individual case. How often have not those been asked for help, or for a service, who were formerly derided and despised!

Look around you a little, and see if you do not discover many who, a few years ago, were, like Joseph's brethren, in easy, opulent circumstances, but who are now reduced to a mere subsistence,—perhaps, to actual poverty; whilst many a poor, down-trodden Joseph who, a few years ago, was needy and friendless, is now rich and prosperous. Ah! my dear Christians, it was the Eternal Truth himself who declared that the proud should be humbled, and the humble exalted! Apart from natural defects and short-comings, when we consider the moral deficiencies of others, we realize more fully the great presumption of the Pharisee in regarding all men, save himself, as extortioners, unjust, and adulterers. Is it wise or just, my brethren, to condemn even the worst of public sinners as the proud Pharisee condemned the publican? St. John says: "*My dear children, now we are children of God, but it is not yet manifest what*

we shall be." The greatest sinner may yet become a saint, even as his sanctimonious censor may yet become a great sinner. The publican, whom the Pharisee judged and despised, was justified before God, whilst the self-righteous, censorious Pharisee was rejected as unjust. Magdalen, Zachaeus, the Samaritan woman, the good thief, each, in turn, was derided and scorned as a sinner. But they are now in great honor with God, the princes and princesses of his glorious court in heaven. Many thousands have been sunk so deeply in vice, that they themselves imagined it impossible ever to break their fetters, or free themselves from the slavery of the devil, yet, by the grace of God and their own zealous co-operation, they became saints in the end. Wild birds of prey, as they were, they became the most beautiful birds of Paradise; weak as reeds, they became strong as the oak, firm and pure as the diamond. Think of St. Augustine, Mary of Egypt, Margaret of Cortona. On the other hand, Solomon, Joas, Saul, Roboam in the Old Law, Tertullian, Origen, and many others, in the New Law, utterly destroyed in their riper years, the golden promise of their youth. "He that stands, let him take heed lest he fall."

Who shall fathom God's designs over this or that sinful soul? In the work-shop of a sculptor we must not despise the rough block of marble, but wait till the hand and chisel of the master have done their work upon it. Perhaps, before long, the rude, misshapen stone will become a beautiful, snow-white statue. So it is, my brethren, with the soul of man. No one, save God, can declare or determine its ultimate end. Therefore, let us be humble, and neither judge nor despise any one.

The publican in the temple dared not, like the Pharisee, approach the altar, but stood afar off in a corner. He was dissatisfied with himself, and, with sorrow, struck his breast, saying: "God be merciful to me a sinner." What a difference between the proud Pharisee and the humble publican! We must imitate the latter, if with him we would wish to be justified; like him, we must despise ourselves, and confessing our sins, implore the mercy of God.

Do you wish to know, my brethren, what we must do, in order to acquire this most necessary humility? We must earnestly endeavor to know ourselves,—to know our own nothingness and corruption. Before beginning any action, we must abase ourselves before God, and ask the assistance of his grace; and, if it seems to us, afterwards, that we have accomplished something good, we must regard it as an alms from heaven, and thank God for it, saying, with his Blessed Mother: "He that is mighty hath done great things to me: and holy is his name." (Luke 1:49.) He who is received into another man's house as a guest, or who wears another man's clothes, as the object of his bounty, will not glory in those accessories or surroundings, no matter how fine the house may be, or how beautiful or costly the garments; if he has good sense, he will feel and acknowledge his poverty the more; since none, save a fool, will display an

empty, boastful pride in borrowed plumes. He who knows and acknowledges that he has everything from God, will not be proud of perishable adornments, but, because of his dependence and indigence, will abase himself to the very center of his nothingness.

“God be merciful to me a sinner!” cried out the humble publican and penitent of the Gospel, and, if we all have reason to despise ourselves on account of the sins we have committed, do not let us forget that every sin we have *not* committed, is a special grace from God, for which we have special cause to be grateful to God. If he who has epilepsy does not fall, it is because the strong hand of a friend upholds him when the fit comes on. If the blind man does not pitch headlong into the ditch and do himself a serious injury, it is because his guide directs his steps upon a sure and safe road. With regard to the sins that we *have* committed, every sin is a proof of our weakness, and hence, a reason to humble ourselves. Every grievous offence against God, deserves, as you well know, my brethren, everlasting shame and disgrace.

We sometimes think it strange that all honor is not given to us,—that all speak not well of us. We cannot brook the least contempt; we bitterly complain of the smallest insult or indignity. But would we dare to open our lips, if all the secret sins of our hearts and consciences were written plainly upon our foreheads? We wonder that people do not treat us with more affection; but we should rather be astonished that, after so many sins and outrages against our good God, we are not regarded as the very outcast and scum of creation. Exteriorly, we pretend to piety and virtue; but, if we look earnestly into the depths of our hearts, we cannot but confess that, in reality, we are utterly worthless, and deserving of all contempt. Thus, having exalted ourselves in the sinful past, we shall, at last, be truly humbled; thus, being humbled in the penitent present, we shall, by the grace of God, be gloriously exalted hereafter! Amen.

O. S. B.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

HUMILITY.

“The publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift his eyes towards heaven : but struck his breast, saying : O God, be merciful to me a sinner.” Luke 18 : 13.

No virtue is more necessary for a life pleasing to God than that of humility. I beg you to take notice, my dear brethren, that the Pharisee, in the Gospel of this day, was no extortioner, no unjust man, no adulterer ; but, on the contrary, that he fasted austere and conscientiously, gave tithes of all he possessed, and, in a word, scrupulously complied with all the requirements of the Law. Yet, although he carefully avoided evil, and diligently practised good, God was displeased with him, and dismissed him without pardon, for the simple reason that, with all his apparent show of sanctity, he was lacking in humility. Humility is the foundation of all justice, my brethren ; without it, no one can please God, even though he may possess and practise all other virtues. St. Gregory the Great enforces this truth in the clearest words : “ Though you practise divine virtues, but do not possess humility, they are vain. You may be chaste, you may pray, fast, give alms, and cultivate whatever virtue you will, all is in vain, when it is not done in humility.” How necessary, then, is humility to us, if we wish to be saved ! But, necessary as is this virtue, it is as rare as it is indispensable. In order to convince ourselves of this truth, *we will now proceed to consider the principal attributes of humility, and then examine briefly, but carefully, whether or not we possess them in ourselves.*

I. He who is truly humble, *entertains a low, mean opinion of himself ; he sincerely regards himself as poor and miserable, and sinful.*

1. Nothing is more just than that we, my brethren, should have a low opinion of ourselves. What rightful cause have *we* for pride ? Are we proud of our body ? In many respects, it is a burden to us ; some of the saints have compared it to a dunghill covered with snow ; and, no matter how handsome, shapely, or robust it may be, during life, it finally becomes the food of worms. Are we proud of our natural faculties and goods,—for example, of rank, beauty, money, real estate, understanding, and talents ? All these gifts and goods we have from God, not from ourselves. “ What hast thou that thou hast not received ? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it ? ” (1 Cor. 4 : 7.)

Regarding those natural goods in the serious light of eternity, we should fear, rather than glory, inasmuch as such possessions only serve to increase our accountability to God. Since much will be required of him to whom much has been given, the more talents we have received, the more we should tremble at the account which we will, one day, be obliged to give. Even our virtues and good works should furnish us no occasion for self-exaltation, for they are more the gifts of God than they are the fruit of our own individual efforts; and every one must say with St. Paul: "By the grace of God I am what I am." (1 Cor. 15: 10.) Our miseries and sins are all that we can justly call our own. The Saints acknowledged this; hence, they were far removed from all thoughts of self-complacency and pride. St. Francis of Assisium regarded himself as the greatest sinner in the world. St. Thomas of Villanova lived in continual fear of the account which he would be obliged to give of, (what, in his humility, he termed), his bad life. St. Gertrude considered it a miracle that the earth did not open under her feet and swallow her up, because of her sins.

2. Such, my dear brethren, was the experimental knowledge which the saints possessed of their own insignificance and unworthiness; is it also ours? Do we think meanly of ourselves? Do we sincerely regard ourselves as miserable and sinful? Ah, how few can answer these questions in the affirmative! Where are Christians to be found who are penetrated with this conviction of their own vileness and nothingness, and who really believe that they are deserving of naught save contempt? Many a one will say: "I am good for nothing; I am a great sinner." But if you at once accept the estimate he thus places upon himself, and agree with him, saying: "Yes, my friend, you are right; you are a worthless creature, a great sinner,"—is it not the general experience, my brethren, that your words are received with a very bad grace, and that the would-be publican ends by being highly offended? Ah! great, indeed, is our misery, since, even in our humility, a secret pride lies concealed; and, while we thus abase ourselves in words, we are, at the same time, entertaining in our hearts a very favorable opinion of our wretched selves. We are the dupes of a refined pride, which we artfully disguise under the cloak of apparent humility. We have the humility of the understanding, but not the humility of the will. It is not enough for us to know that we are poor, miserable sinners, and, hence, to despise ourselves; but we must, also, be willing to be despised by others, and that, too, from an intimate conviction that we are deserving of all contempt.

II. He who is truly humble, *prefers himself to no one, but considers himself inferior to all.*

1. Before whom should we prefer ourselves, dear brethren? Before

our superiors? This, manifestly, would be impudence. Before our equals? This, again, would be against equity; for equity requires that we do not exalt ourselves above our equals. Or is it before our inferiors? Neither in this case have we any cause to claim precedence, for if our inferiors are below us, it is by the accident of birth or station, of either natural or supernatural endowments. If our neighbor does not possess those natural goods which we possess,—for example, wealth, beauty, talents,—we certainly have no reason for exalting ourselves in consequence; since those goods are gifts of God, which he could have denied to us as readily as he has denied them to so many others. Neither do these goods increase, in the least, our moral worth. Much less must we think ourselves better than others because of supernatural goods or graces,—for instance, great piety or virtue. If God had given our neighbor as many graces as he has given us, perhaps he would be far better and more virtuous than we, who abuse or neglect numberless spiritual favors and opportunities of doing good. Again, a man who, to-day, is a great sinner, and manifestly the vilest of our inferiors, may, to-morrow, repent of his crimes, do penance, and be saved; whilst we, who may be, at present, the friends of God, have no assurance that we shall persevere in good to the end, and die the death of the just. Witness Judas, and the penitent thief. The one, after having been called to the Apostleship by our Lord, after having lived in the closest intimacy with his divine Master, betrayed him to his enemies through the sin of avarice, and died, in the end, the death of a miserable suicide; whilst the thief on the cross, after having led a life of lawless crime and disorder, repented at the eleventh hour, and, humbly confessing his sins, and acknowledging the justice of his sentence, was privileged to hear these words from the lips of the dying Redeemer: “This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” Hence, he who is truly humble, will not prefer himself before any one, but will rather rank himself cheerfully below his inferiors,—nay, even below the greatest sinners, as St. Francis of Assisium, St. Francis Borgia, St. Teresa, and many other of the Saints have done.

2. The more Christian souls advance in perfection, the more they are illuminated by the divine light, and the more they recognize their own misery and insignificance. Thus it comes that, regarding themselves as the greatest of sinners, the most ungrateful of creatures, they sincerely abase themselves before all men. Although humility in so high a degree is not absolutely necessary for salvation, my beloved brethren, we must, at least, possess it to such an extent as not to exalt ourselves inordinately above any one, nor to despise even the greatest sinner.

Alas! how many Christians lack this humility! They have two kinds of weights and measures. They overestimate the good they themselves possess (or imagine they possess,) but the good works or spiritual attain-

ments of others are as little or nothing in their eyes. If some poor publican have apparent faults and weaknesses, they look down upon him, like the Pharisee, with a shrug of the shoulders and a supercilious smile, and make him feel the withering lash of their contempt. If, in the course of conversation, they have occasion to speak of him, they express themselves with disdain ; and it is not difficult to see that they think themselves far better than the unfortunate subject of their criticism and censure. Thus, many Christians think and act, because they are not humble.

III. He who is truly humble, *does not seek human praise or applause, his final and highest aim being the honor of God.*

1. The lawful care for one's good reputation is compatible with humility, for honor and good name are more valuable than all other earthly possessions, and with them we can, if so disposed, do a great deal of good. But there is a vast difference between being legitimately careful of one's reputation, and inordinately seeking for empty honors. He who lawfully cares for the esteem of others, does so merely because he knows that honor and reputation, are, at times, excellent means for the promotion of the glory of God and the good of one's fellow-men. But he who inordinately seeks fame and glory, has only himself in view, and considers honor not as a means, but as an end ; he is ambitious to acquire influence with men through a selfish desire to be praised by them. This ambition, my brethren, is quite incompatible with humility. The ambitious man acts contrary to his destiny and to the divine will, for God has created us for his own honor and glory. It is not too much to say that such a man is a thief and a robber, inasmuch as he usurps to himself the honor which belongs to God alone.

2. Ambition, my dear brethren, is a sin which is very prevalent, and of which even pious Christians are not entirely innocent. With many, this vice of self-glorification is an idol to which they sacrifice everything. They resemble the miserable Pharisees of old, who, in the eyes of the world, led a blameless life, performed many good deeds, and surrounded themselves with a halo of apparent sanctity, so that the multitude entertained a high opinion of them, and spoke flatteringly of them. Many modern Pharisees are, indeed, a little less ambitious than the unhappy hypocrites of that ancient sect ; but, as yet, they are far removed from true humility of heart. If they were free from ambition, they would care little for the opinion of others ; they would not be filled with vain satisfaction at the praises and flatteries of a deceptive world ; nor would they grow irritated at an offensive or opprobrious word, or become furious or melancholy at a report injurious to their precious reputation. They pray daily : " My God, all for thy honor ; " but, if they wish to be candid and sincere, they should add :

“My God, do not forget *my* honor ; give *me* part of the praise, which I deserve for my works !”

IV. He who is truly humble *does not, without necessity, say anything that redounds to his own honor, and strives to banish all vain complacency in the praise that is bestowed on him.*

1. Christians who are sincerely humble, endeavor to conceal all the good they have or do, and thus faithfully comply with the injunction of Christ : “Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.” (Matt. 6 : 3.) If necessity compels them to say anything that redounds to their honor, they have not their own glory, but only God and higher interests in view. They do not love to speak of themselves ; they do not even mention their faults, weaknesses, and imperfections, because they are aware that pride frequently disguises itself under the mask of an apparent humility. Indeed, many deluded people thus depreciate and debase themselves for the express purpose of being contradicted and praised. If humble Christians, on the contrary, are extolled or applauded, they feel embarrassed ; for they carry within themselves the conviction, that they have nothing worthy of praise, and that all honor is due to God ; hence, they try, as much as possible, to evade the encomiums of others, and to turn the conversation, in a prudent manner, to another subject.

2. Where are the Christians who manifest their humility in this edifying manner ? Is there one in a hundred who habitually refrains from self-complacent speeches, or remarks redounding to his own honor ? Is it not a common thing for people, on every occasion, to parade their advantages before the world,—to boast of their knowledge, possessions, high rank, and magnificent achievements, sedulously concealing, at the same time, all those miserable deeds, those secrets of their native corruption, which they know to be so disgraceful and dishonorable ? Where is the man who does not love to listen to the sweet, seductive music of his own praise ? Indeed, true, genuine humility is a rare virtue, which may be said to bloom as seldom, (but as beautifully,) as the century-plant. The great mass of men aim habitually at being praised, and skilfully understand how to direct the conversation into selfish channels at all times and in all places, so that their light may shine without interruption or diminution before the whole assembled company. If, therefore, dear friends, we seek that humility which consists in the detestation and shunning of human praise, we find it, alas ! in the hearts, and words, and works of very few Christians.

V. Finally, he who is truly humble, *bears contumely, neglect, and contempt, if not with joy, at least with patience.*

1. It is not necessary always to be deaf and dumb to defamation and detraction; we are allowed to justify and defend ourselves, and even to demand restitution of honor by law. But this must be done without exasperation and hatred, and we must have before our eyes, in such cases, not so much the question of our own vindication, as the honor of God and the good of our fellow-men. But if, by an attack on our honor, neither the honor of God nor the welfare of our fellow-men be injured, it is conformable to humility to let the thing rest, and to keep silence. We must do the same when we have no means of recovering our honor innocently lost.

Thus St. Francis of Sales bore a base calumny for years with patience, till it pleased God, in his own good time, to manifest his innocence. Of many Saints, as, for example, the Apostles, we know that they bore contumely and defamation, not only with patience, but even with the greatest joy: "And they, indeed, went from the presence of the council rejoicing, that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." (Acts 5 : 41.)

2. How is it, dear brethren, with us? Do we not become indignant and angry when our honor and good name are assailed?—Nay, is not a little neglect, and frequently only an imaginary offence, capable of filling our hearts with rancor and bitterness? Do we not take it ill if every flattering attention is not paid to us? And why is this so, but because we have not yet learned what it is to be sincerely humble of heart?

We may well say, then, in conclusion, that humility is a rare virtue among Christians. Of course, I grant you, dear friends, that every fault against humility is not a mortal sin; but this much is certain, the least offence against this virtue displeases God, diminishes his graces, increases our difficulty in overcoming temptations, and jeopardizes our salvation more or less. From the want of humility, alas! many of our exercises of virtue, many of our good works and pious practices will profit us nothing for eternity. Let us, then, be solicitous henceforth, for nothing so much as for this blessed and most essential humility of heart. Let us acknowledge our insignificance and nothingness, and despise no one,—yea, not even the greatest sinner. Let us not seek human praise; for what does it profit us when men speak well of us, if God be displeased with us? Let us strive, with a holy emulation, to be the last, rather than the first, amongst men; and let us, in fine, deem ourselves happy to suffer contumely and ignominy for the love of Jesus.

When we have once learned the art of being truly humble,—when we have once mastered the practice of this royal virtue, we may rest assured that we are walking in the safe road to the heavenly Jerusalem, that our salvation is secured, and that the words of Christ will be gloriously verified in us, here and hereafter: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Amen.

J. E. Z.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE ABUSE OF SPEECH.

“And the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right.” Mark 7 : 35.

The Gospel of to-day, my beloved brethren, tells us of the cure of a man who was a hopeless deaf-mute ; but, reflecting seriously upon the fact that his tongue was loosed by the touch and spittle of our blessed Lord, we are led to observe that the general complaint of good Christians, at the present day, is not that the tongues of men are tied, as was this poor man's, in Decapolis, so as to hinder them from speaking, but it is that they speak too much, and without keeping within the proper bounds of holy charity. Who can reckon up the crimes that are daily committed, or caused to be committed, by the unrestrained use of an unbridled tongue? “Behold how a small fire kindleth a great wood The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity Every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of the rest, is tamed, and hath been tamed by mankind : but the tongue no man can tame ; a restless evil, full of deadly poison.” (St. James 3 : 5-8.)

Allow me then, my dear brethren, on this occasion, to warn you against a very common evil of our times,—namely, that criminal use of the tongue whereby we wound, or utterly destroy, our neighbor's character or reputation. Whence comes it, that people can scarcely ever meet together without making the conduct and faults of others the subject of their conversation? How is it that they are so inclined to blame and condemn their fellow-men for the slightest cause,—nay, frequently, without any cause at all? How is it that none can escape the venom of their tongues, whether high or lowly, rich or poor, saint or sinner? It is because they are deficient in that humility which ever prompts the true Christian to esteem others as better than himself. In their Pharisaical pride, they are prone to exclaim, with uplifted eyes : “O God, we give thee thanks that we are not as the rest of men ;” (Luke 18 : 11.) whereas, if they were truly humble, they would be moved to smite their breasts in heartfelt contrition and self-abasement, and cry out, each one of them, with the publican : “O God, be merciful to me a sinner !”

Even when you see others commit sins of which you are not guilty, my brethren, it would be a want of humility to esteem yourselves better on that account. If they have their faults, you know, (or you ought to know), that you have *yours* as well ; and if, (lacking the graces and helps God has gratuitously bestowed on you), you had been attacked by the same tempta-

tions, you would have fallen, perhaps, much lower than they. Notwithstanding their present sinful lives, for all you know they may yet be of the number of God's elect, whilst you, (who think yourself so safe,) may be of the number of the reprobate. "For we have seen," remarks St. Augustine, "even stars fall from heaven, struck down by the furious dragon; and those who have lain even in the dust of the earth, we have seen raised up to honor; we have seen the living sink into death, and the dead raised from death to life." "Many," says our Lord Jesus Christ, "shall come from the East and the West, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt. 8: 11-19.) Thus we see one Pharisee, who was condemned for his pride,—despising a poor publican, who, at that moment, was justified by his humility; and another Pharisee, in a like spirit of pride, denouncing Mary Magdalene, whose contrite humility, at that very time, had changed her from a sinner to a saint.

To speak ill of others is, also, a want of that charity which teaches us to love our neighbors as ourselves, and do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Is it not strange that a Christian should be habitually given to backbiting and detraction, when he knows all the while that he himself is inclined to, if not more or less guilty, of the very crimes he condemns in others? Since we are all children alike of the same heavenly Father, brethren in Jesus Christ, and redeemed by his blood, members of the same mystical body, and created to be companions in the enjoyment of the same eternal glory, is it not strange that any one should knowingly take a malignant pleasure in speaking ill of others, and in tearing their character to pieces?

A Greek philosopher, one day, sent his servant to the market, telling him to buy the very best thing he could find. He brought home a tongue. "Is this the best thing in the market?" questioned his master. "It is," replied the servant, "for with the tongue we praise and adore God, instruct the ignorant, give counsel and sound advice, edify our neighbor by good and pious conversation." A few days afterwards, the Greek sent his servant out again to the market, telling him to buy the worst and meanest thing he could see. Again, he brought home a tongue. "How is this?" said his master; "is this the worst thing you could find?" "Undoubtedly it is," said the servant; "although the tongue is but a small member of the human body, it causes more evil than all the other members together; for by it God is blasphemed and abused, the neighbor is reviled, slandered, and calumniated, virtue ridiculed, vice praised and commended, innocence betrayed and seduced, and numberless other sins committed."

Thus you see, my beloved brethren, the tongue is the best and the worst thing of all,—the best, if we make good use of it; but the worst, if we abuse and degrade it from its high destiny. "By it we bless God and the

Father : and by it we curse men, who are made after the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be." (St. James 3 : 10, 11.)

The abuse of speech is a source of incalculable evil, the tongue being auxiliary to all vices in general. The Holy Scriptures tell us to guard ourselves continually against bad tongues. They are called *open sepulchres*, always ready to bury the peace and reputation of families ; *venom* as mortal as that of the asp ; *sparks* that cause the greatest conflagrations ; *swords* that have made more wounds than iron and steel ; *poisoned arrows*, which pierce their victim at the greatest distance ; *iron yokes* that crush one down ; *bronze chains* that fetter the free ; *fires* that consume ; *lions* that devour ; *fevers* that inflame, and *plagues* that are worse than hell itself.

Of all the evils that afflict humanity, of all the faults that dishonor it, there are none so universally wide-spread as *detraction*, *slander*, *suspicion*, and *calumny*. This vice is everywhere ; in the privacy of families, as well as in the public streets ; in the palaces of the rich, as well as in the hovels of the poor ; in the city, as in the country. Indeed, my brethren, we might fancy the world one vast battle-field, where deadly shot and shell were continually flying here and there in all directions, aimed against the good name and reputation of both friend and foe.

Slander penetrates everywhere ; no one is proof against its sting. It seeks its victims on the throne, at the foot of the altar, in cloisters and convents ; it even penetrates into the tomb of the dead, to blacken their memories with its fatal venom. Where is the armor that can withstand these poisoned arrows ? "The venom of asps is under their lips ;" and where shall we find the man who has not dipped his tongue into that venom, to cast it forth afresh against his brother ? If any one chance to fall by weakness or imprudence, a thousand tongues are ready at once to publish the poor victim's shame. Detraction and calumny are the pastime of idleness, the point of malice, the excuse of vice, the arm of vengeance, the consolation of jealousy.

I regret to say, that they are the besetting sins of the female sex in particular. Women, as a rule, have not that inquisitiveness of mind which seeks to penetrate the depths of science, the secrets of nature, and the mysteries of God. The feminine mind has not, usually, the necessary strength and perseverance for such abstruse studies. It is totally averse to the profound theories and systems engendered by the pride of learned men. Alas ! the curiosity of women is directed into a different channel from that of men. The shoals and quicksands amid which *she* is lost, are not often those of science. She is inquisitive, it is true, but her curiosity too frequently runs riot among the affairs and secrets of her neighbors. She little cares what great laws rule the planets, what discoveries have enriched science or art, but she is deeply interested to know what So-and-So has said, what So-and-So has done, (which should not have been said or should

not have been done),—what, in short, is the latest piece of gossip and scandal

Do not think, dear brethren, that I mean to wound the feelings of any one of the gentler sex here present, when I say that a little slander is the spice of most women's conversation. I am sure that many of them do not reflect that inquisitiveness violates the sanctity of home, pierces into the very heart of domestic life, and seizes upon every idle and cruel report as it flies about through society ; for, if they did, they would not go on fattening, as vultures do on carrion, on the blackest and most perfidious insinuations and slanders. Some of these newsmongers spend their whole lives inquiring what others do and how they live. The purest reputation must fall a victim to their venomous tongues. They judge mostly from appearances ; hence, the judgment they form is often false, and without foundation. They do not examine into those actions that reflect honor upon their fellow-men, or spread abroad reports that redound to their credit. Their curiosity makes no effort to discover the means of warding off a groundless slander or defending an injured reputation ; but if blame is to be strengthened, calumny propagated, a whole town informed of an intrigue, they are eager, alas ! and ready for the work.

A petty spirit of rivalry is often the foundation of this combined malice and curiosity. These ill-natured slanderers suppose that the revelation of others' sins and shortcomings will make them personally appear to a greater advantage, and that the light of their own virtues will be more brilliant and apparent, if contrasted with the dark cloud of their neighbor's guilt. Their vengeance deals with such petty and such constantly-recurring occasions, that war is ever brewing, or already begun ; and they are ready for the conflict at the shortest notice. Such people are the justly-dreaded scourges of society, and sound wisdom and prudence, as well as great determination of character, are necessary to resist and counteract their pernicious example.

Speech is silver ; silence is golden. Therefore, blessed is the man who knows how to keep a guard upon his mouth, and a closed door upon his lips. Some people live to an advanced age without acquiring this precious art. Indeed, (sad to remark,) the older they grow, the looser their tongues become. Strive, then, my beloved brethren, to learn two important things : first, *when to keep silence* ; and second, *when you speak, to see that it be something to the glory of God and the good of your neighbor*, taking care, above all, not to violate the precept of fraternal charity, for charity covers a multitude of sins. "If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain ;" (St. James 1 : 26) for though he should speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, it shall profit him nothing." (1 Cor. 13 : 1.)

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

“He hath done all things well.” Mark 7 : 37.

Nothing is more common in life, my dear brethren, than to hear persons wishing each other “Good day!” and yet a moment’s reflection will convince us that the friend of God never has a bad day; he says with David: “Thine is the day, and thine is the night: thou hast made the morning—light and the sun.” (Ps. 73 : 16.) Since it is God who has made the day, it must be good, because God in his essence is good and perfect, therefore, “he hath done all things well;” or, (as is recorded in Genesis,) after the creation of the universe, regarding the works of his hand, he pronounced them all “very good.” (Gen. 1 : 31.)

The pious John Tauler, a very learned theologian of Cologne, had a great desire to become perfect. One morning, when he was praying more fervently than usual, he heard a voice, which said: “Go to the door of the church; there, you will find one who will teach you the best way to become holy.” He knew that this voice came from God, so he went to the church to find the person indicated. When he reached the sacred spot, he found no one but a poor old beggar, covered with rags. Tauler spoke kindly to him, and wished him a good morning. The beggar answered: “I do not remember ever to have had a bad morning.” “God be good to you,” said the theologian. “God is always good to me,” replied the poor stranger. “But,” said the learned man, “I cannot understand you; what do you mean?” “I will tell you,” returned the beggar. “You wished me a good morning, and I answered that I never had a bad morning, as I will now show you. If I am hungry, and can get nothing to eat, I say: ‘O my God, thy holy will be done!’ If I am cold, and there is no fire, I say: ‘O my God, thy holy will be done!’ If it rains or snows, I say again: ‘O my God, thy holy will be done!’ If I have to suffer sickness, or pain, or injury from others, I still say: ‘O my God, thy holy will be done!’ So I am always content, and always have good days. When you addressed me, saying, ‘God be good to you!’ I replied that God is always good to me;—and why? Because, whatever he sends me, whether it be joyful or painful, sweet or bitter, I know it is for the best. So I am always prosperous and happy.’

The good priest understood the lesson. From that time, he accustomed himself to take all things, auspicious as well as adverse, as coming from the hand of God; and consequently, he soon enjoyed a profound tran-

quillity of mind and great peace of heart, because his will was united to the holy will of God in all things. Let us go and do likewise, my dear brethren. In joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, in life and death, let your prayer ever be like the beggar's: "O my God, thy holy will be done!"

God does all things well; this is a consoling and encouraging truth which the worldling refuses to admit. I meet and accost him with the words: "Good-morning, sir." But he replies: "Alas! I have very few good mornings. I have lost my money by the breaking of the bank;" or: "My house has been burned down;" or, "Hailstones have destroyed my wheatfield;" or: "I was defeated at the last election. The devil has done it; may the devil take it; may he take everything, and me too! O, that I had never been born!" Just God, what blasphemous language! Are you, alone, the sufferer from the all-wise decrees of Providence? Are you, alone, tried and afflicted? Consider the sorrows and calamities that befell holy Job. He had seven sons and three daughters; he was the possessor of seven thousand sheep, three thousand asses, five thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and many servants. In one day, hurried messengers came to him, one after the other, announcing various shocking disasters to his flocks and herds; and even bringing him the sad news of the death of his children. How did the man of God act under the pressure of these numerous and grievous afflictions? He rose up and rent his garments, and, casting himself upon the ground, exclaimed: "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, as it hath pleased the Lord so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1.) He neither felt, nor showed any resentment, against God, or impatience at his will, but meekly submitted to every blow inflicted by the divine hand. It is true that his afflictions were caused by the malice of the devil, for we read in the Sacred Text that "from before the face of the Lord, Satan went out to tempt Job;" yet he attributes them not to the devil, but to the will and power of God, without whose permission, he well knew, Satan could not harm him. We should endeavor, my dear brethren, to imitate this holy man in his patience and resignation; and, like him, learn to bless God, both in prosperity and adversity. We should always remember that no evil can befall us which the divine Will does not permit, either in punishment of our sins, or in order, by trying and purifying us here, to increase our eternal reward hereafter.

Again Job says: "The hand of the Lord hath touched me." (Job 19:21.) When the hand of God is laid upon us in afflictions and calamities, how often do we not fail to recognize it, dear Christians! How often do we not look upon our misfortunes as the result of chance or accident; or ascribe them to the malice of our enemies, or to some other external cause! We are like the blind man, who, receiving a blow from some unseen hand, and being questioned: "Who struck you?" begins to guess and guess who the offender might possibly be. Here, for instance, is a man of the world,

so engrossed with earthly concerns, so blindfolded with the cares of business, that he has lost sight of all besides, and no longer sees or thinks of God. After a long period of prosperity, a sudden calamity befalls him, and, in a moment, the riches so dearly bought, are swept forever from his grasp. His friends and relatives ask him: "Who is it that struck you this blow?" He answers: "A wretch, who enjoyed my entire confidence, has defrauded me." He has guessed wrong. Another stroke from the hand of God,—his son, or his daughter, is taken sick and dies. Once more he is questioned by his sympathizing friends: "Who has inflicted this cruel blow? What has caused the beloved one's death?" But he retorts that it was the fault of the physician, who had not sufficient skill, or of the nurse, who failed to apply a proper remedy. So God must strike him again and again, until, at length, his eyes are opened, and he beholds the true origin and source of all his misfortunes. Perhaps this may not be, my brethren, until he is lying on his death-bed, and then, having entered into himself, he will be forced to exclaim: "It is the hand of the Lord that has touched me; it is God who has visited me!" Ah! yes, my dearly beloved, we are all "poor, and blind, and naked," like the Bishop of Laodicea (Apoc. 3 : 17); and all have need to follow the advice which St. John gave to *him* in his spiritual blindness: "Anoint thy eye with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." (Ibid. 18.) The Lord wounds and heals, chastises and rewards, exalts and humbles. Out of the dust, he raises up the needy and poor, that they may sit in the councils of princes; he puts down the mighty from their seats, and exalts the humble; he fills the hungry with good things, and the rich he sends empty away. Learn, therefore, to thank God for whatever he may send, whether good or evil fortune; carry in your hearts, and have always upon your lips, the words: "As God wills, so be it done!"

How admirable, in all events, is this holy Providence of God? Inspired David cries out: "Thy judgments, O Lord, are a deep abyss;" and the Apostle says: "Who has ever known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?" Strive not, therefore, to search into the inscrutable ways of God, my brethren, but wait in patience and submission, till he shall be pleased to reveal them to you. "It shall appear at the end, and shall not lie; if it make any delay, wait for it, for it shall surely come, and it shall not be slack." (Habac. 2 : 3.) Either before the curtain falls upon the stage of this lower life, or when it rises upon the grand drama of Eternity, the mysteries of God's all-wise dispensations shall be clearly revealed to the eyes of his faithful servants.

Foolishly does he talk who, understanding nothing of the arts or sciences, yet presumes to criticize or pass judgment upon painting, sculpture, music, or astronomy. Let a Rubens, an Angelo, a Mozart, a Newton speak upon these things; but, (as the old adage hath it,) "let not the shoemaker go beyond his last." And you who understand nothing of the

ways and designs of God, how can *you* pretend to pass judgment upon his all-wise and secret dispensations? Cease this unbecoming and foolish talk, and rather exclaim: "He hath done all things well!"

The records of history plainly teach how admirable are the ways of divine Providence. Looking abroad through the kingdom of the universe, we see a continual change of dynasties; sceptres pass from hand to hand; nations rise in power and grandeur, only to sink back again into obscurity and decay. God disposes of crowns and thrones with absolute authority, exalting or depressing the mighty ones of the earth, according to the dictates of his will; choosing and rejecting whomsoever he pleases; overturning with his all-powerful hand whatever opposes his designs; supporting his immortal work against all the efforts of hell,—proving, in a word, that it belongs to him alone, to root out or to plant, to build up or to destroy, to give life or death, as each seems good to his divine will. Holy Scripture teaches us the same. We see innocent Abel slain in the flower of his youth, and Cain, the fratricide, left to drag out the remnant of his wretched existence; Job sitting on a dunghill, and Achab enthroned in a palace; St. Paul in prison, and Nero on the throne. Sinners wallow in opulence, and saints are trodden under foot. Who can reconcile these mysteries? Who would have thought that Moses, the helpless, forlorn infant, rescued from a watery grave, upon the banks of the Nile, would tear the crown from the head of Pharaoh, lead the people of Israel out of bondage, and cause the ruin of Egypt?

Daily experience teaches the same, for the God of Israel ever watches; he slumbers not, though all the world may sleep. That all-seeing, all-powerful God proposes to himself certain ends which he is determined to attain, and which he, therefore, infallibly *does* attain, in spite of the opposition and perversity of men. Man proposes, but God disposes. The creatures of his hands may refuse to obey his commands, but they cannot withdraw themselves from the influence of his power; and, while their wickedness is all their own, he makes them, however unwillingly or unconsciously, on their part, the instruments with which to work out his sublime and stupendous ends. His mighty arm upholds the firmament, causes the planets to move in their orbits, rules the winds and storms; his merciful goodness provides food and raiment for his rational creatures, and cares for all the necessities of beasts as well as man. "Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them . . . Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they labor not, neither do they spin: and yet I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory, was arrayed as one of these." (Matt. 6: 26; 28: 29.) How wonderful is the providence of God towards his friends,—how admirable towards his enemies! Whatever happens in the world is either done or permitted by that adorable Ruler who governs the whole universe; there is no blind fate, as the pagans imagined. From God's governing will

come the good and evil of nature ; and no wrong or disaster can happen to us, save by his divine permission. Away, then, with those complaints that slander, fraud, reverses of fortune, calamities, and disgrace come from the perversity of man, and are not ordained by God. No ; it is God who strikes, and your enemies are only instruments in his hands. Return thanks to him, therefore, in adversity and prosperity alike, and have always in your heart and on your tongue : “As God wills, so be it done !” for he hath done all things well, and he only permits evil that good may come of it.

Let us not, however, be slothful, my brethren ; let us not be as those who make no exertions in their own behalf, but expect all to come from the providence of God. No ; we must, at all times, do what is in our power, and leave the result to God. We must pray, and struggle, and persevere in our efforts, and, ever distrusting ourselves, place all our trust in God. Truly, hope is the greatest support of a Christian in this life, but only that hope which is built upon God, for to trust in creatures is to lean upon a broken reed. Hence the prophets say : “Cursed is the man who trusts in kings and princes, (that is, in human aids,) but blessed is he who trusts in God.” Commit your ways to the Lord, dear brethren, and hope in him, and he will do all things well. Cry out to him, each one of you, continually, from your heart of hearts : “In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me not be confounded forever !”

When Louis, Duke of Parma, had erected a castle at Piacenza, and had sent a master-workman to see if it had been built well and strongly, and according to the rules of architecture, the messenger reported truly : “Your highness, the castle is strong and well built, but one thing is wanting, which is very necessary, namely, the inscription : ‘*If God is for us, who can be against us ?*’” Yes, my beloved brethren, unless the Lord build the house, the laborer toils in vain ; unless God guard the city, the watchman keeps vigil in vain. Therefore, soldiers of Jesus Christ, Christians, be brave, and falter not, for not from your own power or numbers, but from the strength of the God of battles, proceedeth the victory. Cry out to your enemy, the devil, as David cried to Goliath : “Thou comest to me with the sword, I come to thee with my God ; thou comest with thy spear, I come with my faith ; God’s is the battle, God’s will be the victory !” The time will come when, with Paul, also, you will be able, I trust, to exclaim : “Thanks be to God, who has given us the victory through Jesus Christ.” Therefore, fight, struggle, persevere to the end, placing your trust in God, for he, my brethren, will do all things well, and will so ordain it, in his mercy and love, that all things will work together unto salvation for those that love him. Amen.

O. S. B.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

TRUE MOTIVES FOR THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOR.

“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Luke 10 : 27.

The law of God enjoining us to love our neighbor, was considered binding by the Jews as well as by the Christians. But there was a dispute among the former as to what was to be understood by the word *neighbor*. Most of the Scribes asserted that only the Jews should be regarded as neighbors, and, consequently, that they alone were entitled to their love; whilst the Gentiles, and all who did not believe and practice the tenets of Judaism, were lawfully excluded from a share in their affections. Our Lord, however, took pains to refute this error, in the parable of the good Samaritan, in which he teaches that every man, be he Jew or Gentile, friend or enemy, is our neighbor, and, as such, that we are obliged to love and succor him in his need, as far as we are able. “Neighbor to you,” says St. Augustine, “is he who, like you, descends from Adam and Eve.” We are all neighbors on account of our origin, but much more so on account of our common hope in the heavenly inheritance. You must, therefore, my dear brethren, consider every one as your neighbor, even though he be not a Christian. Why must we love our neighbor? I purpose to answer this question, to-day, by explaining that we must love him,

- I. *Because Christ, our Lord, commands it;*
- II. *Because he teaches it by his example; and*
- III. *Because our neighbor has a just claim upon our love.*

I. 1. There is no commandment which the Lord inculcates so frequently, or so emphatically, as that of the love of our neighbor. In order to convince us of the importance of this precept, he places it side by side with the commandment to love God, saying: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. *And the second is like to this: THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF.*” The commandment to love our neighbor is like the commandment to love God, because the love of our neighbor is based upon the love of God. “On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets.” (Matt. 22 : 40.) He who truly keeps these two commandments, does everything that God requires, and walks in the way that leads to life everlasting. St. Augustine says very appropriately: “For walking you must have two feet, and,

if you desire to go to heaven, and come to God, you again need two feet. And what are they? The two feet of the love of God and of your neighbor. If one of these feet is wanting, you will limp, and not arrive at the end of your journey."

2. Christ calls the commandment of the love of our neighbor *his* commandment. "This is my commandment, that you love one another." Why does he call it *his* commandment? Because he has its observance especially at heart, and because he most strictly requires us to fulfil it. A spiritual writer says: "This mode of expression on the part of Jesus resembles that of a prince who, for instance, says: 'It is my glory to bestow graces and benefits; it is my joy to forgive injuries.'" He certainly does not mean to be understood as being personally neglectful of the other noble virtues of a prince, but only that to do good and to forgive injuries are his favorite virtues. In like manner our Lord, in these words, gives us to understand that, above all other commandments, he most values the love of our neighbor, and insists most particularly upon its observance.

3. Again, he says: "I give you a *new* commandment, that you love one another." (John 13:34.) God, my dear friends, from the beginning, had written the commandment to love our neighbor upon the heart of every man, and he gave it expressly to the Israelites, his chosen people. This commandment, therefore, is not new, but as old as the human race. Nevertheless, Jesus calls it a *new* commandment, because we, as Christians, have new motives for it, and must observe it in an entirely new and perfect manner. In the Old Testament, the people loved one another as creatures of God, or descendants of Adam; their love was limited, circumscribed, and imperfect; but we, followers of an Incarnate Redeemer, must love our neighbor as a child of God, as our brother in Christ, as our associate in the future glory of heaven; we must love him according to the pattern of Jesus, who offered himself up upon Mount Calvary as a victim for his salvation. In this sense, therefore, the commandment of Jesus to love our neighbor is a new commandment, and hence, also, a commandment to whose observance we are invited by new and powerful motives.

4. Again, Jesus declares the love of one's neighbor to be the distinctive mark of his disciples, saying: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." (John 13:35.) Here our Lord, humanly-speaking, has done something similar to what earthly princes and noblemen do. They give their servants a livery, that on every occasion they may be publicly recognized as their retainers. Thus Jesus wished the love of our neighbor to be *our* livery, dear Christians, the badge by which Jews and Gentiles, alike, might distinguish and recognize us as his disciples and servants. It was this love, in fact, which the ancient pa-

gans so much admired in the Christians. "Behold," they said, "how they love one another!" Indeed, in times of persecution, the faithful of Christ frequently betrayed themselves to their enemies by their works of charity. When the Gentiles beheld one who distinguished himself by deeds of mercy and self-sacrificing zeal, they said at once: "He must be a Christian, for our people do not manifest this charity." With justice, therefore, does St. Chrysostom say: "There are many marks of Christianity, but the principal and first one is mutual love."

5. Our Lord assures us that he will consider every kindness done to our neighbor as done to himself. "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it to me." (Matt. 25 : 40.) Commenting on this passage, St. Augustine beautifully says: "Let none of you say: 'Blessed are those who were deemed worthy to receive Jesus into their houses!' Complain not that you were born at a time when you could no longer behold the Lord in the flesh. He has not taken this grace away from you. 'Whatever you do to one of these, my least brethren, you do it to me.'" If you need an example, dear Christians, of this consoling truth, turn to the history of the great St. Martin, who, when a soldier, gave to a beggar (on one occasion) the half of his mantle, dividing the cloak with his sword. The same night he was privileged to behold, in sleep, an apparition of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, graciously showing him the half of the mantle which he had bestowed upon the beggar, said unto him: "With this mantle hath Martin clothed *me!*"

6. Let us take into consideration also, dear brethren, the time at which Jesus particularly inculcated this commandment. It was at the Last Supper, on the night of his Passion, shortly before his cruel death. The dying commands or advice of those who are dear to us, have always a peculiar, a most touching efficacy. For this reason, our Blessed Lord, not satisfied with having, during his life, recommended to his disciples, repeatedly and most urgently, that they should love one another, would make this love also, as it were, his last advice, his last commandment, his last testament. O, who is there among us, dear Christians, so callous and ungrateful as not to cheerfully comply with this last will of our beloved Jesus declared, as it was, at a most solemn and supreme moment? "Consider," says St. Augustine, "if the words of a father hastening to his grave are so sweet, so agreeable, and so valuable to his children, what impression must not the words of Christ produce upon *his* heirs!"

II. Christ enforces the commandment of the love of our neighbor by his own blessed example.

1. St. Peter says: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an exam-

ple, that you should follow his steps." (1 Peter 2 : 21.) Of what virtue has Jesus left us a more excellent example than that of love of our neighbor? Every page of the Gospel contains proofs of our Redeemer's excessive love for men. How he loved the poor! He fed the hungry, he healed the sick, and he cried out to all the wretched and afflicted of earth : "Come to me, all you that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." (Matt. 11 : 28.) He loved the ignorant, whom he instructed ; the weak, whom he supported and strengthened ; the sinners, whose sins he yearned to forgive. He loved even his enemies, whom he endeavored to save, and for whom he breathed forth his first prayer on the cross in all the fresh agony of his bleeding wounds. He loved all men, shedding his precious Blood for the redemption of all. In truth, if Jesus had never commanded us by word to love our neighbor, his self-sacrificing example, alone, would be more than sufficient to urge us to the observance of this commandment.

2. Jesus appeals to this, his own example, in order to admonish us to the love of our neighbor : "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another, *as I have loved you.*" (John 13 : 34.) You must take me for your pattern : "as I have loved you, so you also love one another." And when we consider, dear brethren, all the labors, fatigues, and deprivations, all the insults, outrages, and torments our Blessed Lord endured to prove his love for each and every one of us, we may well tremble to see how far we fall short of our divine Model in this holy exercise of fraternal charity.

3. The Apostle St. Paul, also, points to Christ as our example of the love of our neighbor, in these words : "Be ye, therefore, followers of God, as most dear children ; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." (Ephes. 5 : 1, 2.) The Saints and holy servants of God have always looked upon the example of Jesus as their strongest motive for the love of their neighbor. We have a notable instance of this recorded in the history of St. John Gaulbert, who, being a gentleman of the world, and meeting his enemy in a mountain-pass, near Florence, fell to fighting with him, and speedily reduced him to such straits, that his foe was forced to cry for mercy. It chanced to be on a Good Friday, and just as the victorious sword was about to complete its work, the fallen man begged Gaulbert, for the sake of Jesus, who, on that day, forgave his enemies on the cross, to pardon the past, and spare his vanquished foe. Moved by the memory of his merciful Lord, John renounced his revenge on the spot, and suffered his enemy to go unharmed. In reward for this heroic imitation of his crucified Redeemer, John Gaulbert eventually became a religious and a saint.

III. *Our neighbor has a rightful claim to our love. Why?*

1. Because he is *a child of God*. God has created us, dear brethren ; and, hence, he is our Father, and we are his children. Moses said to the chosen people of Israel : “ Is not he (God) thy father, that hath possessed thee, and made thee, and created thee ? ” (Deut. 32 : 6.) Through Jesus Christ we have become children of God, for he reconciled us with him, and recovered for us his love and grace, which we had forfeited by sin. Hence, the Apostle says : “ For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear ; but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry *Abba* (Father). ” (Rom. 8 : 15.) And Jesus himself teaches us to pray : “ Our Father, who art in heaven. ” Should not this high dignity to which God has raised all the sons and daughters of Adam, be a powerful motive to prompt us to the love of our neighbor ? Can we be so bold, so foolhardy, as to treat cruelly, disdainfully, or uncharitably, that favored creature whom the most high God, the King of heaven and earth, has adopted as his child ? Moreover, being children of God, and God being our Father, we are all brothers and sisters in the spirit. And what is more becoming in brothers and sisters than to love one another, and to dwell together in peaceful and affectionate harmony ?

2. Our neighbor is *the image of God*. Every man possesses understanding, free will, and an immortal spirit ; he is also capable of becoming good, holy, and blessed. In all this, he resembles God,—is the image of God. Now, my brethren, if we love God because he is the most perfect Good, we must also love our neighbor, because he has in himself, at least, in some measure, the perfections of God. The seal or signet of a king is always respected throughout the length and breadth of his dominions. Again, if a child loves his parents tenderly, he loves also their portrait, and keeps it in honor. If he should regard it as worthless,—if he should tear it up, trample it under his feet, or treat it with any other offensive mark of disrespect, it would be a sure sign that he did not love and honor his parents. The same holds good with the love of God, and of our neighbor ; hence, if we truly and sincerely love our good God, we must also love his image or portrait, which is our neighbor.

3. He is *redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and destined to eternal felicity*. Jesus Christ died for all men, and redeemed them, not with corruptible gold or silver, but with his own most precious blood. (1 Peter : 18, 19.) How inestimably precious must not even the poorest man be in the eyes of God, since Jesus paid such a high price for his redemption !

And should we not, then, love and value him also ? Since Christ has redeemed us all, we are all called to eternal happiness. “ God will have

all men to be saved." (1 Tim. 2 : 4.) Though many of our neighbors, on account of their forgetfulness of God, give us cause to fear that they will not be of the number of the elect, yet we have no assurance, my dear brethren, that they may not, sooner or later, change their sinful lives, and, by true repentance, save their immortal souls. St. Mary Magdalen, the penitent thief, St. Paul, and numberless other sinners, were converted into saints after years of sin and the criminal indulgence of their passions. St. Augustine, (who was himself a signal instance of the converting power of God,) says: "You do not know what your neighbor is in the sight of God, or what God intends to do with him. He who, to-day, stands among idolaters and adores images of stone, may yet be converted and adore the true God." Being all called to eternal happiness, and desiring nothing more ardently than to save our souls, how can we continue to live in discord and enmity upon earth? In truth, he who loves not his neighbor, is not fit for heaven, because in heaven the most perfect love reigns supreme.

Ah! no, my dear brethren, as St. Paul says: "Let us consider one another to provoke unto charity, and to good works." (Heb. 10 : 24.) We are Christians, and we have received from our Lord and Redeemer the commandment to love one another; we are Christians, and, as such, must follow the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, out of love for us, became man, suffered a countless variety of ignominies and tortures, and, at last, died for our redemption upon the cruel bed of the Cross. We are children and images of God, and are called by Him to the enjoyment of eternal happiness. How sweet and powerful are these motives which prompt us to the love of our neighbor! Far be it from us, then, to nourish aversions, anger, or hatred against our fellow-men, to offend them in word or deed, to treat them harshly or uncharitably. On the contrary, let us sincerely wish them all good; let us be patient with their faults, and, according to our ability, assist them in all their temporal and spiritual necessities, to the end that we may fulfil the great commandment of the law: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;" and that we may merit, at the hour of judgment, to hear from the lips of our divine Lord this consoling invitation: "'Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,' for, as long as you did these works of mercy 'unto the least of these my brethren,' ye did them unto me!"
Amen.

J. E. Z.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE LOVE OF OUR ENEMIES.

“Go, and do thou in like manner.” Luke 10 : 37.

No religious sects, my dear brethren, were ever more hostile to each other than the Jews and the Samaritans. The Jews, as the chosen people of God, avoided all intercourse with the Samaritans, whom they regarded as wretched schismatics, and they refused them, in consequence, every kind office of charity,—nay, they even went so far as to regard a good act done to a Samaritan as displeasing to God. This bigoted aversion on the part of the Jews, exasperated the Samaritans, (as well it might); and they, in turn, refused the Israelites their love, and sought by all means in their power, to render them evil for evil. Hence, we read in the Gospel of St. Luke that when our Lord was on his way to Jerusalem, the Samaritans opposed his entrance into their city, because they recognized him as a Jew; whereupon his disciples, James and John, became so irritated that they begged his permission to call down fire from heaven to consume those inhospitable people. (Luke 9 : 52, 53.) It is, then, with some surprise, dear Christians, that we read in the Gospel of to-day, that a certain man, (who was manifestly a Jew), having fallen among robbers, been stripped of his clothing, and wounded by them even unto death, a priest and a Levite of his own race and creed, passed him by upon the road without rendering him any assistance, whilst a certain Samaritan came to his relief, and, (in spite of all the ancient prejudices of his sect), tenderly dressed his wounds, and provided for all his pressing wants. We may well wonder, dear friends, at this heroic triumph over an hereditary and deep-rooted aversion. But we must understand that, by placing before us this example of a Samaritan who treated a poor, wounded Jew with such mercy and charity, adding, in conclusion, the words: “Go, and do thou in like manner,”—Christ Jesus our Lord takes occasion to teach us, in the familiar form of a parable, that we, also, according to our opportunities, must love and serve our enemies. Hence, I shall speak to you, to-day, my brethren, on *the love of our enemies*; and, for this purpose, shall answer the two following questions :

- I. WHY *must we love our enemies?* and
 - II. How *must we love our enemies?*
- I. *We must love our enemies.*

I. *Because God strictly commands it.*

(a) *In the Old Law.* Thus the Most High spoke in by-gone ages to the people of Israel: "Thou shalt not stand against the blood of thy neighbor; thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart. Seek not revenge, nor be mindful of the injury of thy citizens." (Levit. 19 : 16-18.) Everything contrary to charity is forbidden in these words,—that is, to take revenge on him who offends us, to hate him, or to kill him. Again he says: "If through hatred any one push a man, or fling anything at him with ill design; or, being his enemy, strike him with his hand, and he die, the striker shall be guilty of murder." (Num. 35 : 20, 21.) We read again: "Remember thy last things, and let enmity cease." (Eccles. 28 : 6.) "He that seeketh to revenge himself, shall find vengeance from the Lord; and he will surely keep his sins in remembrance. Forgive thy neighbor if he hateth thee, and then shall thy sins be forgiven to thee when thou prayest." (Eccles. 28 : 1, 2.) In the Proverbs, also, we read: "If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him water to drink: for thou shalt heap hot coals on his head; and the Lord will reward thee." (Prov. 25 : 21, 22.) Hence it was, that the faithful of the Old Law strictly fulfilled this commandment of the love of their enemies. The ancient Joseph requited the ill-treatment of his brethren with naught save tender affection and bounteous munificence; and the prophet David manifested like sentiments of heroic forgiveness for the injuries he had experienced at the hands of Saul and Semei.

(b) *In the New Law,* in particular, does Christ command this difficult precept, saying: "You have heard that it hath been said: Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy; but I say to you: Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you." (Matt. 5 : 43, 44.) Nay, more; our divine Lord makes the forgiveness of our personal sins literally depend upon the fulfilment of this commandment: "If you forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will also forgive you your offences; but if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your sins." (Matt. 6 : 14, 15.) Then again, dear brethren, Christ declares that without the love of our enemies, no prayer, no sacrifice, no good work is ever pleasing to God: "If thou offerest thy gift at the altar, and there shalt remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go to be reconciled to thy brother; and then come and offer thy gift." (Matt. 5 : 23, 24.) Finally, as may be seen from the parable of the unmerciful servant, who, though forgiven his own great debt by his master, was cruelly unwilling to remit the small debt which his fellow-servant owed him,—Christians who here refuse to be reconciled to their neighbors, and who

show themselves hostile towards them, must expect hereafter, a severe judgment and eternal damnation.

2. *Jesus presents us a most splendid example of the love of one's enemies, even*

(a) *In his childhood.* The cruel Herod seeks his life, and, although our Lord is infinitely powerful and could have annihilated his enemy by a single wish, he simply withdraws with Mary and Joseph, into Egypt. The blood-thirsty King determined, if possible, to destroy his supposed rival,—slaughters all the helpless children of Bethlehem and its vicinity; and, again, although the Incarnate God is all-seeing as well as all-powerful, he silently permits the massacre of the holy Innocents, without taking revenge upon their brutal murderer.

(b) *In his public life.* Despite the beauty and majesty of his works, our divine Lord is surrounded on all sides by enemies, who envy, hate and persecute him. They declare his miracles to be the result of collusion with the devil; they misrepresent his doctrine, and say that he seduces the people; they accuse him as a blasphemer, a friend and patron of abandoned sinners, and a lover of good cheer; and, blinded by their sacrilegious malice, they pursue him with stones, and strive to take his life. How does he conduct himself towards these vile and ungrateful creatures? Does he return evil for evil? No; his sublime example can be epitomized in these two touching expressions: he suffers and forgives.

(c) *In his Passion and Death.* He is betrayed, in the first place, by his chosen disciple, Judas, on whom he has heaped every imaginable favor; and all the return he makes his perfidious malice, whilst he permits him to kiss his Sacred Face with his treacherous lips, is to greet him with the gentle words: "Friend, whereto art thou come?" (Matt. 26: 50.) He is apprehended and bound as a malefactor deserving death; he is dragged with contumely and abuse from judge to judge, but he bears all these outrages with incomparable sweetness and silence. He is thrice denied by his beloved apostle, Peter; and his only revenge is to turn upon that cowardly disciple a look so full of tenderness, that it melts him to tears; and afterwards, he elects him Head of his Sacred College, and keeper of the keys of the heavenly kingdom. He is scourged; the soldiers thrust a crown of thorns upon his head, spit in his face, and pluck out his sacred beard; he is crucified between two thieves, and is mocked and blasphemed even in the awful agony of death. He silently and patiently endures it all, and dying, opens his mouth, not to complain, but to pray for his enemies and murderers, saying: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23: 34.) Contemplating this example of the meek and

patient Jesus, can we, my dear brethren, still entertain hatred and enmity towards our neighbors? Can we longer refuse to forgive from our hearts those who offend us?

3. *We are admonished to love our enemies by the example of all good Christians.*

(a) St. Paul writes of the first Christians: "We are reviled and we bless; we are persecuted, and we suffer it; we are ill spoken of, and we entreat." (1 Cor. 4: 12, 13.) St. Stephen, the Protomartyr, who was stoned to death for the faith of Jesus Christ, fell upon his knees at the final moment, and prayed thus for his persecutors: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." (Acts 7: 59.) St. James the Apostle, did the same. When he was cast down from the pinnacle of the Temple, the last effort of his remaining strength was a prayer imploring pardon for his murderers. During the bloody persecution which Maximilian inflicted on the early Christians, St. Sabinus, bishop of Aris, was tortured by the governor, Venustianus. The pure hands of the venerable prelate had already been cut off, and fresh torments were in preparation to test his invincible faith, when the governor was seized with awful pains in his eyes, and was grievously tormented thereby. Was the martyr rejoiced at this just judgment of God upon his enemy? Far from it; so fully, on the contrary, was he penetrated with the spirit of his divine Master, that he begged to be brought before the suffering judge, and then and there began to pray fervently for his relief. He had scarcely finished his magnanimous prayer, when the governor was relieved of his pains. Count Francis, of Guise, who waged war against the Protestants, was told that one of them was in the camp, seeking to kill him. He had him arrested. The Protestant, on being brought into the presence of Francis, openly avowed his guilty purpose. The Count asked him: "Have I ever done you any harm?" "No," he replied, "but I intended to kill you because you are the greatest enemy of my faith." Then the Count made answer with a heroism worthy a sincere follower of Christ: "If you wished to kill me on account of *your* faith, I will forgive you on account of *mine*;" and he dismissed him without punishment, permitting him to pass unmolested out of the camp. St. Francis of Sales used to say: "I do not know how God formed my heart. If he should command me to hate an enemy, I would not be able to do it; and if an enemy would pluck out one of my eyes, I would look at him kindly with the other."

(b) *Of many observers of the natural law.* A certain heathen philosopher received a heavy blow upon his head inflicted by a rude man. Far from flying into a passion, he merely said: "Had I known that this was to happen, I would have put on a helmet." Among the Turks those are

severely punished who will not renounce enmities, and forgive offences. They dare not appear in their churches for prayer at Easter, until they first become reconciled to their enemies. Ah! my dear brethren, since thus the better class of heathens and non-Christians suppress all desires of revenge, what a shame, what a scandal it is for us Christians to allow ourselves to cherish bitterness and resentment against our neighbors!

4. *The love of our enemies is the noblest of all virtues, and deserves the greatest reward.*

(a) To love one's friends is neither a very great nor a very meritorious act; our natural feelings impel us to such an affection. Hence, we see that all nations, even the most uncivilized, or destitute of religious belief, have practiced the love of friends. But Christ wished his followers to be more perfect than heathens and unbelievers,—“Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father,”—and, on that account, he was not content that we should practise the love of our friends alone, but he also commanded the love of our enemies, adding: “If you love those that love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? do not also the heathens the same?” (Matt. 5:46, 47.) Hence, Tertullian says: “We have the commandment to love our enemies, and this is a prerogative peculiar to us, for to love friends is common to all, but to love enemies is proper to Christians.”

(b) It is a universally acknowledged truth: The more difficult the work, the greater the reward. The love of friends causes us no inconvenience; it is perfectly natural to us all: but to love an enemy, we must do violence to ourselves and overcome ourselves. A sublime virtue always demands more or less effort on our part. But does not the kingdom of heaven suffer violence? Is it not gained only by heroic efforts? And does it not deserve every effort we can make, in order to gain it? Now, since the love of one's enemies is a supernatural virtue, and is attended ever with great exertions, hard struggles, and a magnanimous self-control, it possesses a claim to a great reward, which it shall assuredly obtain.

II. 1. We must love our enemies *from the heart*,—that is, we must be well disposed towards them. Sincerely wishing them every good, we must have compassion for them when an evil befalls them. Jesus requires this disposition, when he says: “Love your enemies;” for love, necessarily, presupposes kindness and benevolence, and, in fact, it is thus inculcated in the divine commandment: “If thou shalt remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, go first to be reconciled to thy brother.”

(Matt. 5 : 23, 24.) To reconcile one's self to an enemy is nothing else but to lay aside all hatred, malice, and uncharitableness.

It is not enough, then, my brethren, that we do no evil to our enemies, that we take no revenge on them, and that we leave them to themselves ; or, that we treat them with merely external friendliness, salute them, speak with them, and even do good to them, in outward act ; we must also do good to them interiorily,—in the heart, and entertain a benevolent feeling towards them. It is true we do not sin against the precept of the love of our enemies when the first emotions of anger and hatred sometimes arise involuntarily in our hearts, but we must fight against and suppress these emotions with all determination. It is not the feeling of anger and hatred, but the consent to it, that is sin. A beautiful example of generous love and benevolence towards our enemies is given to us by the Lord High-Chancellor of England, Sir Thomas More, who, on account of his fidelity to the faith, was arrested, condemned to the horrors of imprisonment, sentenced to death, and executed. When the judges entered his dungeon, and announced to him that the supreme moment had now arrived, they asked him if he had any further wish to express. The illustrious martyr replied, with gentle dignity and meekness : “Honorable judges, I have no further wish to express than this, that, as St. Paul who, on earth, consented to the murder of St. Stephen, is now forever united with him in heaven, I, also, whom you have condemned to death, here below, may, one day, meet you in heaven.” This was all the revenge of that noble man ; he sincerely wished to share the everlasting delights of heaven with those unjust judges who had sentenced him to a cruel and ignominious death. And this, in fine, is the course always pursued by the true Christian ; at any cost, he heroically imitates his divine Saviour, whose heart was always full of benevolence and love towards his persecutors and murderers.

2. *With the mouth.* This is done when you speak to your enemies and salute them amiably, just as you are accustomed to do in the case of persons who have never offended you. You, therefore, sin, my dear brethren, when you pass by a person who has offended you without saluting or addressing him ; or, when meeting him, you look another way, fix your eyes upon the ground, or pretend not to see him ; or, when you purposely shun him, and avoid those places where you might stand a chance of meeting him. These are evident signs that you still entertain enmity and uncharitable bitterness. But you will say : “If he speaks to me, I will speak to him.” That is just what your adversary thinks, and thus the one waits for the other to make the first advance, and your reconciliation will never be accomplished. Overcome yourself, then, and taking the initiative in speaking first, and pleasantly saluting your enemy, there will be peace between you. Others, again, may say : “I am the offended party, it is the duty of him who has offended me to make the first step towards recon-

ciliation ; he is bound to speak to *me*, not I to him." This is true, but when he who offends you does not do his duty, you must do what the love of enemies requires,—you must speak to him first, and salute him. Some say : " If I *do* speak to him, he will either give me no answer, or only an insulting one." But I reply to such : Fulfil your duty, and speak to him, whether he treats your advances with silent contempt, or even goes so far as to return you an insulting answer ; that is *his* affair, for which he will have to render a strict account at the judgment-seat of God. But you, my dear friend, will nobly overcome your natural resentment for the love of our Crucified Jesus, and will continue to speak to and salute the offender. This speaking and saluting must be continued as often as you meet him, and you may omit to do so only at such times as he may be so aggravated, (unhappy man,) by your kindly advances as to insult you or forbid you to speak to him ; but you must then declare to him that, in order to avoid unpleasant scenes, you will not salute him or speak to him for some time, but that, at heart, you will always insist on feeling kindly towards him. Make it your rule, then, dear Christians, to reconcile yourselves, both interiorly and exteriorly, with your enemy, and that, without delay, according to the admonition of St. Paul : " Let not the sun go down upon your anger." (Ephes. 4 : 26.)

3. *In deed.* This is done

(a) *By praying for them.* Our Lord Jesus Christ expressly commanded us to pray for our enemies : " Pray for them that persecute and calumniate you." (Matt. 5 : 44.) He himself, as you well know, prayed for his enemies, and that, too, when they had just inflicted unheard-of cruelties and outrages upon him : " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23 : 34.) We also know that St. Stephen, and many others of the Saints, prayed for their enemies. There is no special commandment to pray for enemies particularly ; to fulfil our duty, it suffices that we pray for our fellow-men in general, no matter whether they be friends or enemies. But it is strictly forbidden to purposely exclude our enemies from our prayer, for this would be directly against Christian charity, and would be a manifest sign that we still nourished hatred and enmity towards our neighbor. Temptations frequently arise from the consideration of the injuries we have suffered, and these, my brethren, disturb us and stimulate us afresh to hatred ; for this reason, it is expedient to pray expressly for our enemies, and to recommend them to the love and protection of God, since this is the best and easiest method of overcoming those troublesome temptations.

(b) *By doing good to them.* " Do good to them that hate you." St. Alphonsus says : " If thy brother does thee an injury purposely, revenge

thyself, but revenge thyself as the Saints revenged themselves." And wherein does the revenge of the Saints consist? In this, that they returned good for evil. Think, again, of the beautiful example of Jesus, who gave numberless proofs of his love to his enemies, and shed for them his precious blood upon the cross. It is our duty, as well, to exclude no one from our benefits because he is our enemy; so that, if we have done good to one before he offended us, we must also do good to him after the offence; we must assist our enemies in cases in which they need our help, if it can be done without great personal inconvenience; and, finally, we are bound to give them special proofs of our love when, by those means, we can once more restore peace and fraternal charity. Those Christians who say: "I do my enemies neither good nor evil," by no means comply with the precept of Christ; such a mode of speaking indicates only too plainly that enmity and bitterness are yet lurking in their unforgiving hearts.

Before you quit this church, to-day, my dear brethren,—before you depart from the Real Presence of our divine Lord, in the holy Sacrament of the Eucharist,—make the firm resolution henceforth to faithfully fulfil this important law of the love of enemies. Remember that the very word *Communion* means union with all; that, as the sacred Bread of the altar is composed of the flour of many grains of wheat, and the sacramental Wine of the juice of many grapes, so all who partake of that banquet of love must be blended and fused together by the union of a pure, supernatural, fraternal charity. Reflect that, without this universal charity, there is no forgiveness of sin, no grace, no salvation. If you live at enmity with your fellow-men, renounce your evil dispositions this very moment; forgive your enemy from your heart, and, at the first opportunity, extend to him the hand of reconciliation. Be at peace with every one. Even though you may be sometimes seriously offended, and wrong may be done you, give no place to anger on that account; suppress all hatred and rancor, and act as Christians, whose revenge is to suffer, to endure meekly and patiently, and to return good for evil. Thus will you heap coals of heavenly fire upon your enemies' heads, thus will you forgive your fellow-men, that God may forgive you your sins, and receive you all as his beloved children into the mansions of everlasting peace. Amen.

J. E. Z.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GENERAL CONFESSION.

“Go, show yourselves to the priests.” Luke 17 : 14.

In the Old Testament, all lepers who had been cleansed from their loathsome disease, either by natural or supernatural means, were examined by the priests, whose duty it was to declare them clean. Before this declaration was made by the proper authorities, such hapless persons were considered unclean, and were obliged to abstain from all intercourse with their fellow-men. In the New Testament, my dear brethren, those Christians who are contaminated with the spiritual leprosy of sin, are obliged, in like manner, to show themselves to the priests,—that is, they must confess their sins to the ministers of God, so that they may not only be declared clean, but that they may be really cleansed by the Sacrament of Penance. We may distinguish confession as ordinary and extraordinary. The ordinary confession consists in accusing ourselves of the sins committed since our last confession; the extraordinary confession is that which extends itself over the sins of a whole lifetime, or the greater part of it. As this extraordinary or general confession is very important, (eternal salvation, even, sometimes depending upon it,) I shall speak of it, my dear brethren, to-day, by asking and answering according to the mind of the Church, the three following questions :

- I. *To whom is a general confession necessary?*
- II. *To whom is it useful?*
- III. *When is a general confession necessary?*

I. There are six classes of persons to whom a general confession is necessary for salvation.

1. The *first* class comprises those who, *through shame or fear, conceal a sin which they know, or gravely doubt, to be mortal.* Every confession in which a mortal sin is knowingly and wilfully concealed is invalid. The same holds good of confessions in which the number of mortal sins is not truthfully given, or is purposely diminished, or in which the essential circumstances which change the nature of sin are deliberately omitted. He, for instance, confesses invalidly who says that he has fallen into the vice of impurity three times, knowing, at the same

time, that he has oftener than that committed sins against the Sixth or Ninth Commandment of God. If a married person has sinned carnally with a single person, and does not add that he or she is married, his or her confession is also invalid, provided he or she purposely conceals this circumstance. All those who have wilfully concealed anything that should have been confessed, have confessed invalidly; and, if they wish to save their souls, nothing remains but that they repeat those bad confessions, *i. e.*, make a general confession.

2. The second class comprises *those who omit in their confessions mortal sins or aggravating circumstances, or such as change the kind of sin, because they either do not examine their conscience at all, or, at best, examine it only superficially.* Every penitent must diligently examine his conscience before he ventures to approach the holy tribunal, and he must spend as much time in that examination as is required for the knowledge of the sins committed, together with their number and circumstances. He who, because of omitting a due examination of his interior, or by making it in a very careless and cursory manner, does not perceive what he is bound to confess, and, therefore, does not confess it,—he, my dear brethren, receives the Sacrament of Penance sacrilegiously, and his confession is as invalid as if he had knowingly concealed some grievous sin. For this reason, all those who confess only once a year, are in danger of making sacrilegious confessions. As they live, for the most part, in a habitual state of thoughtlessness and forgetfulness of the important affair of salvation, they ought, to examine their consciences very carefully when preparing for confession. But this, they frequently neglect to do; they think only superficially and hastily of their sins, and the whole business of ascertaining the number, and kind, and aggravating circumstances of their grievous offences against God, is crowded into a few, hasty, distracted minutes. How is it possible, in such a careless and hurried way, to discover all the sins a man has committed in the space of a year? Hence it is, that many confessions are invalid from the want of a proper examination of conscience. Now, all these invalid confessions must be repeated and rectified by a general confession.

3. The third class comprises *those who, at confession, have no true contrition for their sins.* Most of the bad confessions that are made, owe their invalidity, perhaps, to this want of a true and sincere contrition. Of all the requisites for a good confession, contrition is certainly the most essential and indispensable. Circumstances, such as loss of speech or unavoidable absence of the priest, may sometimes prevent the penitent from confessing his sins to Christ's minister, or performing a sacramental penance for them. In such cases, provided the penitent be truly contrite, the will and desire supply for the deed, and God forgives the sinner, although the two

otherwise essential elements of the Sacrament of Penance be lacking. *But, without contrition, no actual sin ever was or ever will be forgiven!* And yet how many are there *who are not at all sorry for having offended God.* They confess from habit ; they do not detest their sins in the least ; nor do they even strive to change the disposition of their mind. How many are there, again, whose contrition is *not universal?* They are infected with certain favorite sins, to which they cling with all their soul, and from which they will not detach themselves. They may accuse themselves at confession, say, of ten mortal sins ; yet, if they are truly sorry for having committed nine of them, and, at the same time, cherish a guilty affection for the tenth, their confession is null and void. How many more are there whose contrition is *not supernatural?* They are not grieved on account of their sins, but on account of temporal loss, temporal shame, or the punishment entailed by their crimes. The drunkard is sorry because, having spent all his money in drink, he is forced to suffer from the want of proper food, clothing, and shelter. The profligate is sorry, because he blushes to confess his loathsome crimes, which have brought upon him the most painful diseases. The thief is sorry, because he must suffer imprisonment, or fine, for his offences. All these confess invalidly, because they lack true contrition ; and, if they would be saved, they must, in due time, repair their bad confessions by a general confession.

4. The fourth class comprises those *who make no firm resolution of amendment.* This resolution is a necessary consequence of contrition, and is, therefore, absolutely essential for the forgiveness of sin. He who is not resolved, henceforth, never more to offend God, at least by mortal sin, confesses invalidly ; and, from the want of this firm resolution, many invalid confessions are made. If you manifest, dear brethren, no amendment of life,—if, shortly after confession, you fall back into your former vices of unchaste conversation, of fornication, of drunkenness, of cursing and swearing, and of deliberately missing Mass on Sundays and holydays, it is most assuredly a sign of your want of firm purpose of amendment.

5. The fifth class comprises those *who, after confession, are not willing to avoid the proximate occasion of sin, and who do not employ the necessary means of amendment.* Contrition and an earnest resolution are most assuredly wanting to such penitents ; for if they really hate and detest their sins, and are willing to amend their lives, they will gladly make use of the means which are required for that amendment, and which are a preventive against relapse. Some men know by bitter experience, that if they enter a saloon, they will infallibly become intoxicated before they quit it,—that if they drink one glass of liquor, they will be unable to restrain themselves from continuing to drink until they are beastly drunk, and have lost all control over their brutal passions ; and yet, after confession, such so-called

penitents will continue to frequent taverns and saloons. Another penitent acknowledges to the confessor that he or she has fallen repeatedly into sin with a person of the opposite sex living in the same house, and yet, after confession, he or she continues to live under the same roof with that partner in crime, although free to go elsewhere. It is in vain for such persons to say: "I am strengthened by the grace of a good confession; I do not fear temptation *now*." It is enough that our Lord has commanded: "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it away from thee." (Matt. 5 : 29.) Enough that his inspired word assures us that "he who loves the danger shall perish in it." (Eccles. 3 : 27.) In fine, my dear brethren, all those who make no use of the remedies prescribed by their confessor as absolutely necessary for an amendment of life, confess invalidly, and can find grace with God only by a general confession and amendment of life.

6. The sixth class comprises those *who make no restitution of ill-gotten goods, nor repair the damages inflicted on others; who practise injustices and impositions in business transactions, and continue them after confession; and, lastly, all those who, living in enmity, refuse to be reconciled with their neighbor.*

Now examine your conscience on these points, dear friends, and see if you do not find sufficient reason to doubt the validity of some of your past confessions. "Search Jerusalem with lamps," *i. e.*, penetrate into the most secret folds and windings of your interior, and there examine whether, in spite of frequent approach to the Sacraments, you are living in perfect peace with all mankind; whether you are retaining ill-gotten goods or money; whether you are fraudulent or unjust in your dealings with others; whether you have restored the good name of those whom you have deprived of that priceless treasure by your rash judgments or calumnies; and, if you find yourselves guilty of any, or all of these sins, go, show yourselves to the priests, and make, at once, a general confession.

II. *A general confession is useful and advisable to all those who have never made one.*

This is a rule admitting of but few exceptions.

1. General confession is one of the principal means to *obtain a true knowledge of the state of your soul*. "If you set a forest on fire on all sides," says Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice, "you will be surprised to see how great a multitude of wild beasts, wolves, bears, and foxes are hidden in its coverts." You witness a similar effect, my dear friends, when you make a general confession, by which you set your conscience on fire on all sides. How great will, doubtless, then appear the multitude of sins concealed in

your interior ! Many Christians who resolved to make a general confession only as an act of devotion, have avowed after its performance, that they discovered in themselves secret sins and evil tendencies of which they had no conception before.

2. By general confession, besides, the heart becomes more contrite. If we frequently approach the holy tribunal of Penance, our contrition in our ordinary confessions, is seldom very profound, because we do not have to accuse ourselves of many or grievous sins. But it is different in a general confession. Stripping the veil from the enormities of our past lives, we discover all those wild beasts, those monsters of iniquity, those grievous sins of our soul laid bare, as it were, from our childhood up to the present day. This bewildering sight urges us to sigh with King Esdras : " My God, I am confounded, and ashamed to lift up my face to thee, for our iniquities are multiplied over our heads, and our sins are grown up even unto heaven." (1 Esdras 9 : 6.) Now, it is an established fact, that the greater our contrition, the greater is our certainty of a worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance, and the more abundant are the sacramental graces we receive,—so that we may obtain, thereby, even the remission of all, or nearly all, the temporal punishments due to our past sins.

3. The result of a general confession is also, *that we make a firmer purpose of amendment* than is the case in ordinary confessions. By the very resolution to make a general confession, the penitent evinces an earnest will to amend his life, and shows that he is determined, henceforth, to be solicitous for the salvation of his soul. This resolution is still more strengthened when, in the course of the general confession, he comes to a clearer knowledge of his sins, and realizes how often and how grievously he has offended God ; how ungrateful he has been to him for all his graces and benefits, and in what imminent peril he has been of his eternal salvation. Receiving, with these dispositions, the priest's absolution for all the sins of his past life, shall not such a man be powerfully impelled, henceforth, to remain faithful to his promises ?

History and experience, alike, go to show that a general confession is one of the most effectual means for a thorough and permanent change of life. How many sinners are there who, after their ordinary confessions, have habitually relapsed into their former sins, but who have entirely amended their lives after one good general confession ! And how many of such penitents have afterwards, by their generous fervor, reached a high degree of holiness ! Even if some of them, after a general confession, were so unfortunate as to relapse into their old transgressions, was it not the case that they soon rose again after their fall, and pursued the way of penance with renewed zeal and energy ? Having once tasted the pure delights of the divine friendship, their consciences gave them no peace till they re-

solved, by a sincere confession, to be again reconciled with God. Hence it is, that most penitents date their conversion from the time of their general confession.

4. And from this it follows, my dear brethren, that a general confession is the *source of great inward peace*. William, Duke of Aquitaine, after he had made his general confession to St. Bernard, felt a sweet peace and heavenly joy, such as he had never before experienced in the midst of all the multiplied pomps and pleasures of the world. In like manner does every sinner, after a sincere general confession, experience that delight of heart which King David expressed after his conversion, when he exclaimed: "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. Better is one day in thy courts above thousands in the pleasures of the world." (Ps. 83 : 2-11.) Would it not, then, be criminal negligence for you to neglect the many opportunities which are afforded you for making a general confession, and, without such a confession, to pass into eternity? If there were a question of doubt as to the validity of certain documents in your possession which concerned all the temporal treasures of yourself and your family, how quickly, how earnestly would you set about proving your right and title to your possessions! And yet you will not hesitate to postpone those measures which may be necessary to secure your right and title to the treasures of the eternal kingdom!

III. *When is a general confession necessary?*

1. *It is necessary for every one who earnestly resolves to amend his life.* Without such a resolution no confession is valid, whether it be an ordinary or a general confession. He who makes a general confession must be determined, at any cost, to shun the occasions of sin, to put off sinful habits, and to lead a penitential life, because, otherwise, the general confession would be invalid. Every sinner has certain days and hours in which he clearly realizes the misery of his sins, and is interiorly urged to reform his life. These are the days and hours of grace, which our good God gives to man to enable him to save his soul. "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. 6 : 2.) The sinner must, then, make good use of these acceptable times of grace,—of these golden days of salvation; for, if he permits them to pass by without a thorough conversion and confession, he runs the risk of dying impenitently, and of being delivered by the outraged justice of God to eternal perdition.

2. *When one changes his state of life*, especially when persons are about to contract matrimony, they should make a general confession. Most young people called to live in the world, do not comply with the duties of

their state as they should ; they live heedlessly, yield to many excesses, and confess often invalidly, for the want of contrition or sincere resolution of amendment. How terrible, then, would be their lot, if they were to enter into matrimony without a general confession ! They would begin life in that state with a triple sacrilege, as the friends not of God, but of the devil. What could be expected from such an ill-starred union ? How could such unhappy couples, after being yoked together in sin, continue to live a joint life of contentment and happiness, fulfil their important duties, and endeavor to rear up their children in the fear and love of God ? “This is a great sacrament,” says St. Paul ; “I speak in Christ and in the Church.” (Ephes. 5 : 32.) It is, therefore, necessary for all those who contemplate entering the nuptial state, to make a general confession before they receive the Sacrament of Matrimony.

3. *When one retires from business to rest.* Many Christians, in their business life, think but little of God and of the salvation of their souls ; they accommodate themselves to the principles of the world, and burden their consciences with many sins ; what, then, can be more advisable for such persons, on retiring from active business-life, than to make a general confession, and, having set the affairs of their conscience in order, to devote that season of rest to atonement for their sins, and to preparation for a good death ?

4. *At the time of a mission or a Jubilee.* At such a time, many spiritual exercises are performed ; the word of God is preached frequently and forcibly, and the faithful are earnestly exhorted to renew themselves in spirit, and to bring forth fruits worthy of penance. The confessors then possess greater faculties than at other times ; they can especially absolve from all cases reserved to the Pope, with only a few exceptions. Moreover, God then imparts greater, and often very extraordinary graces, to sinners. “And we, helping, do exhort you, that you receive not the grace of God in vain.” (2 Cor. 6 : 1.) Hence, all who never made a general confession, should endeavor to make it during those seasons of spiritual renovation, and to set the business of their salvation in order. He who suffers such hours of grace to pass without profiting by them, exposes himself to the danger of persevering in sin and of dying a bad death. This is corroborated by history and experience.

5. *Finally, at the hour of death.* It is assuredly not wise, my brethren, to defer the general confession to the end of one’s life, for no one knows whether he will then be able to confess. Death may overtake him suddenly, or he may die at sea, or in a desert-place, far from a priest ; even in his own home, he may lose control of his senses or his speech, and confession would become impossible. Good Christians who are solicitous for

the salvation of their souls, do not defer their general confession to the last hour. If it should, however, be the case that one had never made a general confession in his life, he should do it, at least, on his death-bed. There are few adults who can afford to go out of this world without having attended to that important duty,—without having thoroughly made their peace with God.

You understand now, my dear brethren, why a general confession is necessary, useful, and advisable, and at what times such a confession should be made ; and I cannot better conclude my instruction than with the history of a certain nobleman who, after a careless and reckless youth, was given, in his riper years, the grace to make a spiritual retreat, which he concluded with a very good general confession. This confession was followed by such sweet peace and heavenly delight, that, as often as he thought of it, tears of joy trickled down his cheeks. After a few years of fervent penance, feeling the approach of death, he said to those who stood around his bed : “I would have perished eternally if I had not made a general confession. When I think of that confession, it appears to me to be a letter of introduction into heaven.” A quarter of an hour before he died, he requested one of his attendants to read for him the good resolutions which he had made at his general confession, and which he had afterwards written down. At the reading of each resolution, a celestial joy beamed from his face, for he had faithfully kept his promises ; and thus he died, giving evident signs of a death blessed in the sight of God and his angels. “Go and do likewise,” my dear friends ; make a good general confession whilst you have health and strength, and the grace to do so with proper dispositions ; keep the promises and resolutions which you make at that confession, saying often, with fervor and decision : “My heart hath heard and uttered a good word.” Henceforth, strive to serve God with true Christian fidelity, and, after a life of practical holiness, you will die the death of the just, and be privileged, like the faithful servant in the Gospel, to enter into the joy of the Lord. Amen.

Adapted from ST. LEONARDO A PORTU MAURICIO.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

WHAT IS SIN?

“As he entered into a certain town, there met him ten men that were lepers.”

Luke 17 : 12.

Sin is so great an evil, my beloved brethren, that no created intellect can ever properly conceive its enormity ; God, alone, can fully comprehend it. But, although we cannot understand the inherent malice of mortal sin, let us, at least, acquaint ourselves with what the Fathers of the Church and the Holy Ghost have made known respecting it. The holy Fathers frequently compare mortal sin to leprosy, that most frightful and loathsome disease. As leprosy disfigures the body, so does mortal sin disfigure the soul. Meditate well on this, my brethren, for it is a question of vital importance. So long as we do not endeavor to form some idea of the greatness and heinousness of sin, we will hardly resolve to renounce it. The celebrated doctor of the Church, St. Bernard, assists us on this head by defining the threefold relation of man to his Maker, and hence, denominating mortal sin as

- I. *A contempt of God ;*
- II. *A base ingratitude towards God ; and*
- III. *A rebellion against God.*

I. *Sin is a contempt of God.* In order to comprehend fully the significance of these words, my brethren, we must first consider the infinite distance between God and man. Who is this God to whom the insult of sin is offered? What is man who offers it? *God is the highest, the most independent of all beings, having no need of any other. God is eternal, unchangeable, infinite ; he is the King of time, who, as the Apostle says, has the keys of life and death in his hands, and whose garment is immortality. Man, on the other side, is weakness and frailty itself, corruption and decay, a weak reed, that is broken by the wind. God is wisdom and omniscience ; all things are naked and open to his eyes ; he is the discerner of spirits, the searcher of the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Man is ignorance and darkness, full of doubts, errors, and delusions, pride, and self-conceit. God is omnipotence ; heaven and earth tremble before his all-powerful presence. But man is nothingness and instability personified ; he is a worm, a handful of dust and ashes, here to-day, and away to-morrow. Complete these*

contrasts for yourselves, my beloved ; count all the perfections of God, and all the frailties of man, and be astonished, with the Apostle, that this all-wise and almighty God could call himself *our* God. Yet man ventures, in his pride and self-conceit, to oppose such a God ! Man dares to degrade God in such a manner as to prefer to him dust and ashes ! Is not this the nature of sin ? And is not this contempt as enormous as the distance between an infinite Being and utter nothingness ? I know very well that the sinner denies this in theory ; but what is the use of denying it in theory, if he acknowledges and follows it in practice ? Does he not thereby increase his guilt, and aggravate his contempt of God ? As often as you read in the Passion of Christ that Pilate dared to present both Jesus and Barabbas as malefactors to the people, a holy anger rises in your soul. And when you further read that the raging Jews petitioned for the life of Barabbas, rather than for the life of Jesus, a deadly horror seizes upon your heart. But tell me, my brethren, what difference is there between the contempt of God by our sins and the contempt with which Pilate and the bloody-minded Jews treated our Blessed Lord ? In both cases, the infinite holiness, infinite wisdom, infinite goodness of God is bartered for something unspeakably vile and low.

Sinner, you give your God away for nothing ; you give your God away, (as the prophet says,) for a handful of barley and a piece of bread ; you sell, your God as it were, for a momentary pleasure, for the gratification of your base passions, for something far less than the bribe of Judas. "Woe," says the prophet Jeremiah, "my people have done two evils ; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have dug to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." When we consider that sin is committed in the presence of the Most High, before his very eyes, we see that our contempt of God attains the superlative degree of unrestrained insolence. St. Augustine says : "If you *must* sin, seek, at least, a place where the eye of God does not see you ; there you may do what you please." And if you are not able to find such a place, and if, ascending into heaven or descending into hell, or taking wings early in the morning and dwelling in the uttermost parts of the sea, you are still before his eyes, where shall we find words in human language whereby to properly express such a gross contempt ? We blush to commit sin before the eyes of man, and we are not ashamed to perpetrate the foulest, most degrading acts in the presence of an infinite Purity !

II. Sin is not only the greatest contempt of God but is also *the greatest ingratitude against God*. The prophet Isaias says : "My beloved had a vineyard on a hill in a fruitful place, and he fenced it in, and picked the stones out of it, and planted it with the choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst thereof, and set up a wine-press therein, and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now,

O ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, ye men of Juda, judge between me and my vineyard, what is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard that I have not done to it? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes and that it brought forth wild grapes?" My brethren, what is there that God ought to do more for you that he has not done? Look around you, and contemplate all the different creatures God has created for your service and use; look up to the stars, the sun, and the moon; count all the wonders of the universe; consider the whole sum and dignity of the mental powers and faculties which God has bestowed upon you. O men! ye are the kings of this visible world; all other creatures obey you. Look into your physical construction,—the delicacy, the marvellous mechanism of your bodies; the surpassing beauties and resources of animated nature; and after considering all these things, tell me, my brethren, what is there that God ought to do more for you that he has not done?

"David, David, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee from the hand of Saul. I gave thee the house of Israel and Juda. Why, therefore, hast thou despised the word of God to do evil in my sight? And if these things were little, I could add far greater things unto thee."

Count, my brethren, these "far greater things;" count all the graces of God,—the graces of redemption and preservation, the means of salvation, all the treasures of the Church; reckon up the inspirations of God's mercy, all the long-suffering sweetness of his gracious delays, all the warnings and suggestions of his holy Spirit, all the manifold consolations in sufferings and afflictions,—weigh, one by one, all these multiplied blessings, and then, if you be able, cry out to your ungrateful soul: "What is there that God ought to do more for you that he has not done? David, David," etc. "Far greater things?" Yes, the greatest and most resplendent of all things. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for those that love him". "I," says the Lord, "I am your protector, and your reward exceeding great." Lift up your eyes towards heaven, and count all the palms of the saints, all the crowns that are prepared for victorious souls, all the thrones on which God's elect shall reign forever; count all the drops of that ocean of happiness in heaven; measure, if you can, the limitless,—reckon, if you can, the immeasurable, and then cry out, once more, to your ungrateful souls: "What is there that God ought to do more for you that he has not done?"

And what return have you made, my brethren, for this infinite love? Have you rendered love for love? "Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken: I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel hath not known me, and my people have not understood." Have you no gratitude for this incomprehensible love? Is your heart so stony and callous that it suffers itself to be fed without regarding the hand that feeds it? O yes; you have made a return for

this love, a return so strange, so atrocious, so horrible, that I shudder to record it. Alas! you have manifested your gratitude *by committing sin!* You have abused the many graces and benefits which God has bestowed upon you; you have wasted your life, prostituted the powers of your body and soul to gratify your passions, to outrage and insult your God! The great mass of men spend the days of their youth in rioting and foolishness, and, if they turn to God in their old age, they only quit the world because it has quitted them; they quit sin, because they are not able to commit it any more. Is not *this* the basest, blackest ingratitude to our good God in return for his incomprehensible love?

III. It is more than ingratitude, my brethren, it is also *a rebellion against God*. All creatures are subject to God; he is their Creator; they are dependent on him, and must do as he pleases. The irrational creatures move within their prescribed sphere without any freedom of volition; they have no choice but to obey. But the special prerogative of man is to obey God by the exercise of free will. Alas! that this enviable, glorious privilege should ever be abused. Alas! that the sinner should claim the deplorable, unhappy privilege of refusing obedience to the law of God! Yet this, my brethren, is the essence of mortal sin. *Rebellion against God*,—rebellion against his supremacy and his holy ordinances,—open resistance of his absolute majesty. Sin is high treason against the King of heaven, and a free and wilful violation of his commandments, a denial of his divine perfections, a destruction, so far as lies in man's power, of his adorable attributes.

Nothing but the power is wanting to sin to give the finishing stroke against God, to effect that another God, agreeing with its own foul desires, should govern the universe,—another God, who would love sin and hate virtue, instead of this infinitely pure and just God, who will reward the good and punish the wicked. The insulting ingratitude of the sinner thus attacks, as it were, the very life of God. This is the highest point human malice can attain, where, complete in itself, and clad in the robes of a hideous personality, it appears as a devil arrayed in all the horrors of hell. Can I add anything more to this awful picture, my brethren? Do you demand any further exterior proofs to convince you of the heinousness of mortal sin? What was it that changed the fairest and brightest angels into foul devils, and engulfed them in the lowest depths of the infernal abyss? What was it that urged the cherub with the fiery sword to scourge fallen man out of Eden into naked, joyless life? What was it that clothed Adam with the body of death? What was that voice of blood which, during four thousand years, cried to heaven for vengeance, and, at length, in the fulness of time, prompted the only-begotten Son of God to become incarnate for our salvation,—to nail to the Cross of Calvary the hand-writing of the universal curse? What was it that caused all the tortures and agonies of his Passion,

that bathed him in a bloody sweat in the Garden, scourged him at the pillory, crowned him with thorns in the Prætorium, goaded him along the rough road to Calvary, and made him expire, at last, upon the fatal Tree, in the profoundest abyss of suffering, humiliation, and poverty? What is it that even yet, still crucifies again to itself the Son of God, and makes a mockery of him?

O, my beloved brethren! it is Sin, accursed Sin! And shall we then take part with those miserable sinners and worldlings who, serving not Christ our Lord, but their own belly, seduce the hearts of the innocent by alluring invitations and false, flattering words? Shall we say with them, that sin is nothing, that impurity is a natural weakness, that drunkenness and gluttony are harmless enjoyments of the good things of life; that fraudulence, cheating, and deceit are necessary prudence; anger and revenge nothing but lawful aids to justice? *Approach the foot of the Cross, my brethren; look upon Jesus expiring in unspeakable torments, and let every one of his open wounds be to you as a mouth, an eloquent tongue, to tell you WHAT SIN is!* "How can I help but commit sin," cries out the sinner, "when I feel myself so strongly, so irresistably tempted to it?" Away with such false reasoning! Have we not an all-powerful God on our side, who only permits us to be tempted to the end that we may win our crown, who only needs to be appealed to in order to hasten to our assistance, and support us with his strengthening grace? O, let us make our abode, henceforth, on Calvary! There, let us strive by our reverential homage and devotion, to make amends for our past *contempt of God*; there, let us seek by fervent correspondence with grace, to repair our past *ingratitude to God*; there, by our loyal service, to disavow our past *rebellion against God*. And if the devil assault us with his cunning malice, if the world allure us with its pleasures and honors, the flesh seduce us with its corrupt suggestions and temptations, let us cast ourselves at the feet of our crucified Redeemer, and, taking refuge in his sacred wounds, (the strongholds of our defence), let us lift up our voices with the leper of to-day's Gospel, and cry out to him, with unwavering faith and confidence: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

O. S. B.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE SERVICE OF GOD AN EASY SERVICE.

“*No man can serve two masters.*” *Matt. 6: 24.*

St. Bernard once wrote to a virgin who had grown relaxed in her fervor: “You intended to live in a worldly way, but you could not accomplish what pleased you, and thus you have not rejected the world, but the world has rejected you. Because you have been divided between God and the world, you have fallen, as the saying is, between two chairs to the ground.” These words are applicable to every Christian who tries to serve God and the world at one and the same time; he nowhere finds a secure footing. If he obeys God, the world mocks him; if he obeys the world, his conscience torments him; and thus the saying of Jesus in the Gospel of this day, is verified: “*No man can serve two masters.*” Alas! there are many Christians who are so allured by the world that they do not even attempt to serve their true Master. They believe that the service of God is attended with such great difficulties, that it demands such frequent and great sacrifices, that the faithful servants of Christ can never properly enjoy life. Let me, then, refute this pernicious error, and to show you that *the service of God is an easy service*,—

- I. *As contrasted with the service of the world or of sin;*
- II. *Because of the interior peace and consolation which attend it; and*
- III. *Because of its great reward hereafter.*

I. Comparing the service of the world, or of sin, with the service of God, we find that the latter is far easier than the former.

I. What must you not endure, my brethren, in order to earn your daily living? In the winter mornings, long before it is light, you are at your work; in the summer, you labor for hours in the broiling heat. Be the weather, in short, hot or cold, wet or dry, you toil all day long until evening, encountering many trials and disagreeable things, and often, from morning till night,—nay, sometimes till far into the night,—having no rest for body or mind. So it goes on from week to week, from year to year. The hardened hands, the weary members, the tottering step, the bent form, the exhausted powers of the body, are undeniable witnesses of the pains and hardships which man must undergo in order to gain an

honest livelihood. And if so much toil and care are attendant on our ordinary employments, what must not the sinner endure, in order to gratify his passions! The avaricious man leads a wretched, penurious life; he fasts more austere than the ancient hermits in the Thebaid, not alas! like the latter to subdue his rebellious flesh, but, in order to add something to his hoard every year. The impure man watches whole nights, and faces the inclemency of the worst weather, in order to gratify his sinful lust. The proud, the envious, the malevolent, so embitter their lives with their restless, gnawing passions, that they find no relish in the most delicate meats or drinks; sleep flies their pillows, and they often wish themselves dead, through very disgust of life. In short, "the way of the transgressor is hard;" the paths in which the servants of the world and of sin walk, are rough, thorny paths, as they themselves acknowledge in the Book of Wisdom (5:7): "We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known." And the holy Spirit of God decrees: "As much as she hath glorified herself and hath been in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give unto her." (Apoc. 18:7.)

2. Does the service of God impose this galling yoke upon man? By no means, my brethren. You may eat, and drink, and take your lawful rest, only guarding yourselves against excess; you are allowed to acquire and possess temporal goods, but not to set your hearts and affections upon them; and of your abundance, you must give alms. You may be merry and enjoy yourselves, but always in the Lord; in a word, everything is permissible, except sin. Ah! if you endure in the service of your divine Master only the tenth part of what the worldling gladly suffers for the gratification of his passions, or what many must undergo in order to earn their daily bread, God will be satisfied with you here, and will give you, hereafter, the joys of heaven as your recompense!

But how great is the perversity of many deluded sinners! When they are called on to exert themselves for the attainment of worldly or criminal ends, nothing is too difficult or too painful; but if something is to be done for the salvation of the soul, their hands are paralyzed; they are lame; they have no interest or energy. When they are asked to offer up, at least, a short prayer at night, they say: "I cannot; I am too tired; sleep overpowers me." But they will play, sing, dance, or do worse, till long after midnight,—nay, even till morning, and they do not then talk about sleep, or complain of fatigue. When they are told to go to High Mass on Sundays and holydays; to hear a sermon, or to frequent the Sacraments,—they reply: "It is impossible; I have no time." But for vain diversions and entertainments, for the drinking-saloon, the theatre, or the billiard-room, they have time enough. When they are counseled to recollect themselves sometimes during the day, and think of God and eternity, they retort: "I

cannot do it ; I have too much to do,—I have other things to think of!" In the meantime, nothing hinders them from entertaining sinful thoughts for hours.

II. *The service of God is an easy service, on account of the interior peace and consolation with which it is attended.*

1. *The service of God, alone, procures true peace.*

(a) The Inspired Word convinces us of this. "Much peace have they that love thy law, and to them there is no stumbling-block." (Ps. 118 : 165.) "All thy children *shall be* taught of the Lord : and great shall be the peace of thy children." (Is. 54 : 13.) "Come to me, all you that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke upon you, and you shall find rest to your souls." (Matt. 11 : 28, 29.) And at the Last Supper, our dear Lord said to his disciples, (and, through them, to all who would come to believe in his name,) : "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you ; not as the world giveth, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled nor let it be afraid." (John 14 : 27.)

(b) The experience of all pious Christians convinces us of this. The divine Master whom they serve, fills them with heavenly consolation, and makes them experience even in this valley of tears, a foretaste of that felicity which awaits them in Paradise. This delicious consolation so sweetens their bitterest trials, that the days and hours in which they suffer most are to them days and hours of the most blessed joy. Consider the martyrdom of St. Lawrence. He is lying on a red-hot gridiron, and actually roasting alive. Who can comprehend the pain that he suffers? But he rejoices in the midst of the inhuman torture, and jestingly says to his tormenter : "You may turn me over now, for I am roasted enough on one side." Shortly after, he adds : "I am now sufficiently roasted ; you may take me up and eat me." We witness the same unearthly satisfaction in St. Francis Xavier, the Apostle of India and Japan. When many hundreds of miles distant from his native land, journeying along, destitute and abandoned, through an utterly unknown country, suffering from the want of meat and drink and the actual necessaries of life, and with death menacing him on all sides, such a joy and blessedness thrilled his heart, that he exclaimed : "Enough! O Lord, enough! Give me heaven only when I have finished my earthly pilgrimage." Thus the Lord rewards his servants even in advance ; he sweetens all their privations and sufferings with heavenly consolations. How true, therefore, my brethren, are the words of Christ : "My yoke is sweet, and my burden light," (Matt. 11 : 30); since he alone gives rest to faithful souls.

2. The service of the world and of sin is not an easy or consoling one. We are taught this

(a) *By the Sacred Scriptures:* "There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord." (Is. 48 : 22.) And the Apostle says: "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." (Rom. 2 : 9.) The heart of the sinner is like the restless sea, whose waters roll in upon the shore, wave upon wave, even in the greatest calm. Though the wicked man may possess everything that the world can give, though he may be in good health, rich, respected, and in the enjoyment of all possible pleasures, yet his heart remains void and empty; he is discontented and unhappy, and can never find what he seeks, *i. e.*, *true rest and contentment*. When King David languished in the miserable bondage of sin, he gave himself up to the pursuit of worldly delights; he strove to divert himself with hunting; he attended banquets and entertainments, but all these pleasures cried out to him: "David, you desire us to give you rest and peace, but ah! we cannot do it. Where is your God? Go and seek him; he, alone, can satisfy you." And, for this reason, the unhappy monarch, amid all the joys and pleasures of life, could never taste peace or satisfaction; he could do naught, save mourn and weep: "My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: Where is thy God?" (Ps. 41 : 4.)

(b) *By personal experience.* There may have been a time when some of you, my beloved brethren, gave free rein to your passions, participated in all attainable pleasures and entertainments, and, in the true sense of the word, lived the life of children of the world. Did you feel happy, my friends, in that frivolous, sinful career? By no means. You carried about in your soul a worm that gnawed at your rest and peace. You were deprived of God's blessing, without which no man can be happy. In the service of sin, men feel like Damocles at the royal banquet. Why was the latter so restless and full of anguish whilst partaking of the most precious viands, the costliest wines? Ah! the hapless glutton saw above his head, a sword hanging by a slender thread, and menacing his life. The thread might break at any moment, and the swift-descending weapon cause his death. Who could feel comfortable under such circumstances? What St. Chrysostom says of the sinner is then only too true: "He may go wherever he pleases, he always carries with him his conscience, that relentless accuser; he cannot find a moment's rest; in bed, at table, at home or abroad, by day and by night, and even in his dreams, his sin is always before him. He lives like Cain, moaning and trembling on the earth, and he carries unseen, a burning fire in his heart."

III. *The service of God is an easy service, on account of the reward which crowns it hereafter.*

1. In temporal concerns it is not of infrequent occurrence that our enterprises are unsuccessful, and we often labor, my dear brethren, without a

proper recompense. A farmer toils late and early, and ploughs and plants his field with the greatest diligence, in order to obtain a good return. But behold! the moment he is ready to apply the sickle to the ripe grain, a hail-storm destroys his whole crop, and all his labor and pains are lost. Parents economize strictly for years, and exhaust their powers by continual exertions, in order to provide for their children,—perhaps for an only child, who dies suddenly, and takes with him into the grave all the expectations of his doting and hard-working parents. Even if he live, perchance, (as it so frequently happens,) he becomes dissipated, and, in a short time, squanders the whole substance which his father and mother had amassed by years of hardship and economy. Men bear the heat and the burden of the day, and their reward falls into a sieve; they make plans, toil and sweat, and exert to the utmost their powers of body and mind, and, at last, all their labor is fruitless. They resemble senseless children who rush to gather the golden hues of the fading rainbow, but who, after running themselves out of breath, and being drenched with rain, must return home empty-handed.

2. Is it so with the service of God? No; in the service of God our hopes are not deceived,—we find there a sure reward. The Apostle writes: “I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. For the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just judge, will render to me at that day, and not to me only, but to them also who love his coming.” (2 Tim. 4 : 7, 8.) For all who fight a good fight like the valiant St. Paul, the crown of justice is laid up, which the Lord, the just judge, will place upon their heads. This is as certain as that there is a God, “*whose word is right, and whose works are done with faithfulness.*” (Ps. 32 : 4.)

3. And what crown is it that the faithful servants of God will receive? Perhaps a perishable crown, such as earthly kings and emperors wear? A crown which often burdens more than it adorns the head of him that wears it? Ah! no; the Christian’s crown is imperishable; it is the crown of everlasting glory. Take all that is good, beautiful, lovely, and desirable on earth, and, in comparison with the beatitude which the servants of God enjoy in heaven, it is as insignificant and valueless as a drop of water in comparison with the boundless and fathomless sea. St. Paul calls the felicity of the elect a superabundant, eternal glory; and in an ecstasy of joy, he exclaims: “The eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him.” (1 Cor. 2 : 9.) When we come to dwell in the kingdom of our Father in heaven, inexpressible delight will fill our hearts; we shall rejoice in the society of Angels and Saints; we shall possess all that our souls can crave; and all our hopes and desires shall be crowned with the most per-

fect fruition. And this felicity shall never end; it will go on increasing forever. It is this that makes the reward of the servants of God perfect. If there were anything under the sun that could satisfy us, the chief essential of happiness would be wanting to it so long as it lacked durability. The goods and joys of this world are fleeting; they end forever with death. But if we are so happy as to be once saved, we shall be saved forever. "The just shall go into life everlasting." (Matt. 25 : 46.)

Will not, then, the thought of the unspeakable and everlasting felicity of heaven render easy for you, my brethren, all the difficulties connected with the service of God? When the man of the world undergoes so many labors, and exposes himself to so many dangers, in order to acquire vain and perishable goods, shall we consider it hard and painful to serve our good God, who promises us the everlasting joys of heaven for comparatively slight exertions?

God is a tender Father who deals lovingly with his children; he does not impose upon them such heavy burdens as the world does on its votaries. He makes his service easy for us by giving us that peace which the world cannot give. And for this service, which, at most, will last only a few years, he promises the reward of an immeasurable and interminable felicity. Put your hands to the plough at once, and try, if only for one short year, to serve God zealously. I assure you, my brethren, that when the year is over, you will know the sweetness of divine things by experience, and full of determination and holy joy, you will say: "I shall never leave my Lord and my God, for he is a good Master: he demands little, and repays much. I will serve him all the days of my life, that I may hear from him the comforting words: 'Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'" (Matt. 25 : 23.)
Amen. J. E. Z.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

AVARICE.

“You cannot serve God and mammon.” Matt. 6 : 24.

God and Mammon are two masters, always at war with each other, the one directly antagonistic to the other. Mammon is nothing else but avarice, the idol of riches, the inordinate, tenacious desire for the goods of this world. The avaricious man always does the opposite of what Christ enjoins as a duty. He does not seek the kingdom of God and his justice; what he seeks and desires first and foremost is money and earthly goods; all else is of no consequence in his eyes. He violates Christian charity and justice; he sends away the needy unassisted; he oppresses the poor, the widow, and the orphan; and even does not stop at the perpetration of the cruelest wrongs, so long as he can gratify his avarice. With justice, therefore, the Prophet cries out: “Woe to the avaricious!” And with justice, also, the Apostle places avarice in the catalogue of the greatest crimes, and declares that those who are addicted to this vice cannot possess the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. 6 : 10.) Allow me, then, my dear brethren, to explain to you, to-day,

- I. *In what avarice consists, and*
- II. *What we must do in order to guard ourselves against it.*

I. First of all, I must remark that to be rich and to be avaricious are not one and the same thing. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, and David were rich, but not avaricious, for they were very holy men. There are many rich people who are quite detached from the good things of this world; and there are plenty of poor people, strange to say, who are very avaricious. Not every desire after money and goods is avarice. He who wishes to rise in the social scale, to better his situation, and to increase his substance, in order to provide for himself and his family in a becoming Christian manner, does not do wrong; prudent economy is not avarice. Wherein, then, you ask, does avarice consist? It consists in this:

I. That we seek and love money and other worldly goods passionately and inordinately. And this we do, my brethren,

- (a) *When we seek more than we need. Our desires, on this point, must*

correspond with our necessities. We are allowed, therefore, to desire and acquire as much temporal goods as may be requisite to enable us to live according to our state. Hence, the Apostle writes: "Having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content." (1 Tim. 6 : 8.) But many do not confine themselves to this rule. In striving after temporal possessions, the majority of men do not labor to meet their actual necessities, but solely to heap up riches; they never cease to save and economize, even long after they possess more than an ample sufficiency for themselves and their children. In short, they never have enough, but are like a bottomless vessel, which always remains empty, no matter how much you may pour into it.

(b) *When the seeking of money and goods is accompanied with too great anxiety and solicitude.* To be moderately concerned for our subsistence, and to study how we can carry on our business with advantage and make an honest profit, is prudence, and not avarice. But many far exceed the limits of this lawful solicitude. Our blessed Lord said expressly in the Sermon on the Mount: "Be not solicitous, therefore, saying: What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the heathen seek." (Matt. 6 : 31, 32.) But the covetous are always full of cares for temporal goods; the craving for money and earthly possessions occupies them day and night; they scarcely say an "*Our Father*" without being disquieted by worldly thoughts. When their affairs take a favorable turn, they are in good humor; but, if adversity threatens them, they are seized with great sadness; and, when they suffer any loss, they become utterly despondent and disconsolate. We have a striking example of this in the case of Achab, king of Israel, who wished to enlarge his royal gardens, and coveted the adjoining vineyard of his neighbor, Naboth. When the latter refused to part with his inheritance, Achab fell into such a bitter and sullen mood that he went to bed, and refused to eat his food. His wicked wife, Jezabel, connived, in consequence, at the death of Naboth, and, by her guilty efforts, secured the vineyard for her covetous husband, the king.

(c) *When we seek money and goods so earnestly that we neglect the duties of religion or commit injustice therefor.* The avaricious man is constantly occupied with temporal things; his inordinate concern for money, for real estate, for a brilliant success in business, prevent him from reflecting on the eternal truths; he has neither the time nor the desire to think of his salvation, or to fulfil his duties as a Christian. He habitually misses Mass on holydays, and frequently on Sundays; he makes no account of neglecting private prayer, public worship, the reception of the Sacraments,—in short, all the customary exercises of religion. So very elastic is his conscience that, in order to fill his coffers to overflowing, he does not scruple to have recourse

to various kinds of injustice. He is full of lying and deceit ; and he loses no opportunity of circumventing his neighbor in business transactions.

2. *We, furthermore, love money and other temporal goods inordinately*

(a) When we love them *for their own sakes*. There is a great difference between a proper and an inordinate love of money. He who loves it properly and lawfully, does not regard simply the money itself, but its use ; he would be quite indifferent to it if he could not make a good use of it. Money is to him what medicine is to the sick man. The latter loves medicine as a means to recover his health. So the Christian loves money because by dispensing it in alms, he can relieve the temporal miseries of his neighbor, and, at the same time, heal the spiritual miseries of his own soul. "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." On the contrary, he who loves money inordinately, has only the money, not the use of it, in view ; he loves it merely because it is money, and because the possession of it gives him a selfish pleasure. Such a wretched miser was that rich merchant, of whom Cæsarius relates, that his friends were obliged to promise him that, after death, they would bind a purse of gold upon his heart, and put it into the grave with him. Thus the Emperor Caligula loved money ; he often rolled around upon the masses of glittering coins with great satisfaction, as a beast wallows in the mire. Many Christians have not, indeed, a purse of money bound upon their hearts, nor do they actually roll themselves about upon their gold, but their hearts and souls cling to it nevertheless ; when they see a coin of precious metal, they gloat over it ; and they spend what they reckon the pleasantest hours of their lives in counting their money. This is what is called loving money inordinately.

(b) When, in order to amass riches, *we deprive ourselves, or others, of the necessaries of life*. Since the avaricious man loves his treasure so intensely that he cannot resolve to diminish it, his heart bleeds when he is obliged to spend the smallest sum. He suffers hunger and thirst in the midst of abundance ; he will eat the husks of swine sooner than buy himself the proper food which his wasted body requires ; he wears miserable clothing, deprives himself of the necessaries of life, and in sickness, will neither call in a physician, nor use medicine, because both cost money. If he is thus penurious towards himself, what wonder that he gives nothing to others ? He is hard-hearted, and his neighbor may languish in the greatest distress without moving him to pity. He gets angry when he sees a needy man approach him ; in order to get rid of him, he makes use of bland words or abusive epithets, and thus he frees himself from the pleading poor, whom he denominates as "troublesome beggars." He never has anything for a good purpose, or, if he has, it is so little that it is not

worthy of notice. Remember, my dear brethren, that when a man has reached such a point that considering money and worldly goods his chief end, he places his whole hope and salvation in them; when, for the acquisition of temporal goods, he is ready to commit grievous sins; or, when he refuses alms and assistance to his neighbor in extreme necessity, his avarice is clearly a mortal sin. But even in cases where it does not pass the limits of venial sin, it is a very dangerous fault, because it grows upon its victim and leads him, step by step, into the awful depths of mortal sin.

II. Hence, the question arises: What must we do in order to throw off the sin of avarice?

I. We must consider that *by this vice we render ourselves odious to God and man.*

(a) *To God.* God hates and detests those vices, upon which he pronounces woe. Behold, avarice is one of them. Thus the Lord says by his prophet: "Woe to you that join house to house, and lay field to field, even to the end of the place." (Is. 5:8.) "Woe to him that gathereth together an evil covetousness to his house." (Hab. 2:9.) And the Prophet of prophets, our divine Lord himself, says: "Woe to you that are rich; for you have your consolation." (Luke 6:24.) He who was infinite Riches, hath made himself poor for love of us, and shall we, his followers, cling to finite riches and despise his poverty? God so hates avarice, and pronounces woe upon it, because the avaricious disregard and, as it were, trample under foot the principal commandment of charity. They have not a particle of *the love of God* left within their souls; their hearts belong to their money; that is the god they adore, for whose service they live; and hence, the Apostle absolutely calls the practice of that and its kindred vices, idolatry. (Coloss. 3:5.) Neither have such misers a spark of *the love of their neighbor*; they care not in the least about the distress of their fellow-men, and they have no mercy or compassion for the wretched and miserable; on the contrary, they oppress them, and suck their very life's blood. We have an example of this in the unmerciful servant in the Gospel, who, although his master had forgiven him his great debt, cast his fellow-servant into prison because he owed him a small sum, and refused to release him, in spite of all his earnest entreaties.

(b) Avarice, also, renders us *odious to men.* The true miser is the laughing-stock of all; he is ridiculed everywhere. His neighbors look upon him with contempt; his relations are ashamed of him; the poor execrate him; laborers and artisans are afraid to work for him, because they know that, (as they term it), "he is bad pay." He is intolerable to the servants in the house, because he gives them insufficient and bad board, and seeks every excuse to deduct something from their wages. He is

hated even by his own wife and children, because they cannot obtain from him even the barest necessities of life. No one has compassion for him when he is visited by a calamity ; thieves think it no sin to steal from him ; he is compared to a hog, which is of no practical utility until it is slaughtered. Who, then, my dear brethren, would not detest and shun avarice, since, as you see, it is a vice hateful alike to God and man ?

2. Consider that *all earthly goods are vain and perishable.*

(a) *Vain.* This much is certain, that all the treasures of the earth are not able to fill and satisfy the human heart, for the simple reason that man was not created for them, but for God. "Our hearts are restless, O God !" cries St. Augustine, "and they cannot rest until they rest in thee!" Man was not created for worldly goods, but they were created for him ; therefore they are not his last end, and they cannot make him happy. Beasts are made for the earth ; there they find their happiness, and for this reason they constantly look down upon the earth. But man is made for heaven ; his head is erect, and his eyes look up towards heaven. Give a horse a bundle of hay, and a dog a piece of meat, and they are satisfied ; they wish for nothing more. The heart of man is created for love and union with God, and will never find rest in sensual enjoyments ; naught, save the possession of God, can perfectly satisfy its cravings. Solomon, the king, reveled in wealth and luxury, and in the possession of everything his heart desired, and yet he is recorded to have exclaimed in the midst of his royal delights : "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, save loving God and serving him alone!"

(b) *Perishable.* Whatever the earth gives is like itself, not durable. At any moment the richest man may lose all his substance by calamities or misfortunes, and be reduced to absolute beggary. But, even if he retain his treasure to the last hour of life, then must he inevitably face the grim miser, Death, inexorable Death, who always tears from his victim whatsoever he possesses. Suppose one has boxes full of gold, death will not leave him a cent ; suppose he owns houses and lands, and has a lucrative business, nothing remains for him but six feet of graveyard-earth and a narrow coffin, in which he must repose till his body moulders. The Emperor Constantine, one day, presented this truth to an officer of his court, in order to cure him of his inordinate love of money. He marked out with his sword, on the surface of the ground, a small rectangle, six feet long and two feet wide, and then he said to him : "This is all that remains for us, my friend ! Why should we labor so much to gather riches?" Do the same, Christian friend, when covetousness torments you and greedy avarice tries to nestle in your heart. Take a stick and draw a parallelogram on the earth, six feet long and two feet wide, and say to yourself : "This is all that will remain

to me in death. And 'what will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'"

3. Reflect that temporal goods *bring no blessing to the avaricious, either for time or for eternity.*

(a) *Not for time.* Goods which are acquired through injustice and the violation of Christian charity are not durable; they resemble an edifice without a solid foundation, which soon crumbles and falls. "He that heareth my words, and doeth them not," says Christ, "is like to a man building his house upon the earth, without a foundation; against which the stream beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great." (Luke 6 : 49.) And even though the avaricious man should enjoy his wealth during life, it generally melts away, after his death, in the hands of his profligate heirs. The words of the prophet are often verified: "The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the teeth of the children are set on edge." (Jer. 31 : 29.) How foolish, then, are parents who, from an inordinate solicitude for their offspring, allow themselves to be ruled by avarice! Instead of insuring the future prosperity of their children, they lay, alas! the foundations of their eventual impoverishment and perdition.

(b) *Nor for eternity.* What is the eternal destiny of avariciousness? An exclusion from heaven, and everlasting damnation. The Apostle assures us in plain words, that the covetous shall not possess the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. 6 : 10.) We are taught the same in the parable of Dives and Lazarus. The glutton who, in his days of luxurious wealth, allowed poor Lazarus to languish helplessly in his misery, died at last, and was buried in hell. Yea, buried *in hell*, although no other crime is recorded of him than that he neglected the poor, "was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day." For this, he was buried in hell,—shut out forever from the glorious vision of God, whilst the poor leprous beggar he had despised on earth, was carried by the Angels to repose in Abraham's bosom. From his dismal place of torments, Dives raises his voice in vain to Abraham, beseeching him to send Lazarus to him, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool his parched tongue. But, alas! the unmerciful rich man finds no mercy, and Abraham cries out to him in stern rebuke: "Remember that thou didst receive good things in thy life-time, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." (Luke 16 : 20-25.)

4. That nothing is more *in contradiction with the word and example of Jesus* than avarice.

(a) *With the words of Jesus.* He always teaches love and mercy towards all men, especially towards the needy and the afflicted. Thus he admonishes us: "Love ye your enemies: do good and lend, hoping for nothing thereby; and your reward shall be great." (Luke 6 : 35.) But the avaricious man is uncharitableness itself. Jesus calls the poor in spirit blessed; but the avaricious man places *his* blessedness in money and possessions. Jesus requires us to seek first the kingdom of God and his justice; but the avaricious man is entirely buried in temporal goods, neglecting the service of God and the business of his salvation.

(b) *With the example of Christ.* Consider that our Lord when he became man refused to possess riches which men so greedily desire. He chose to be born of a poor and lowly virgin, not of a rich and mighty princess. The only man who ever had a choice of how and where he should be born,—he came into the world not in a magnificent and luxurious palace, not on a couch of eider-down and satin, but in a ruined stable, his bed a hard, miserable manger, where the rough straw irritated and afflicted his tender body. His foster-father was a poor carpenter, in whose shop he toiled with his own divine hands. At last, in death, he hung naked upon the cross, deprived of food and drink, in such a state of utter destitution and poverty, that, although "the earth is his and the fulness thereof," (Ps. 23 : 1,) he did not possess even a grave to call his own, but was forced to find a resting-place for his sacred Body in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. How sadly is the order of things inverted, when a miserable man desires to possess those riches which the Lord of all created things despised and rejected for his sake! "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, being rich, he became poor for your sakes: that through his poverty you might be rich." (2 Cor. 8 : 9.)

Far from you, dear brethren, be this vice, so much hated by God and man. Moderate your desires for earthly goods, which, instead of making you happy, only excite your passions, and entangle you in many sorrows. You have no lasting city here below; of all temporal goods you can take nothing with you into the other world. Let the riches of time give way to the riches of eternity. Be charitable and have compassion on the poor. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Matt. 5 : 7.) Endeavor to be rich in virtues and good works; these are true treasures, far more precious than all the gold and silver of the world, for with them you can purchase for yourselves the everlasting joys of heaven. Never lose sight of your grand, immortal destiny; provide for the salvation of your soul, and so pass through the temporal that you may not lose what is eternal.

J. E. Z.

THIRD SUNDAY IN SEPTEMBER.

THE SEVEN DOLORS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

“O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.” Lament. 1 : 12.

The renowned, populous, and prosperous city of Jerusalem was once utterly destroyed by her enemies, the Babylonians. So great was the desolation and devastation thereof, my brethren, that the prophet Jeremias, in describing the great calamity which had been visited upon her, represents the city as sighing forth these most pathetic and mournful words : “O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow ; for he hath made a vintage of me, as the Lord spake in the day of his fierce anger.” (Lament. 1 : 12.) Behold, my dearly beloved, the Church of God, to-day, applies these words of Jeremias to the Blessed Virgin Mary. St. Anselm declares, with truth, that unless God had preserved the existence of that immaculate Mother by a special miracle, her sorrow alone would have destroyed her life at any moment. So great were her sufferings and sorrows, from the hour she became the Mother of God to the death of her divine Son on Calvary, that all comparison therewith falls infinitely short of the sad reality. She was not only

- I. *The Mother of Sorrows*, but
- II. *Her dolours exceeded all others in intensity and length of endurance.*

I. To be convinced of the bitterness of Mary's sorrows, we should consider, my brethren, that she suffered especially,

1. *In her soul,*
2. *As Mother of God,* and
3. *Without consolation.*

1. *Mary suffered in her soul.* Men sometimes suffer corporal pains and tortures, many and cruel. Who is not seized with horror when he hears or reads of the tortures which the holy martyrs sustained for the faith of Christ? But greater and far more painful, were the sufferings of Mary ; for the martyrs suffered only in their bodies, whilst the Queen of Martyrs was tormented and crucified in her soul. The sword of sorrow did not pierce her flesh, but her soul : “Thy own soul a sword shall pierce.”

(LUKE 2 : 35.) Now, there is no doubt that the soul, being of a nobler essence, can be tormented in a more intense and cruel manner than the body. Imagine, if you can, the anguish and sufferings of a criminal on his way to the place of execution! The human frame is not able to endure more than a certain degree of suffering; when this is exceeded, it becomes insensible, faints, and falls into the arms of death. The soul can neither faint nor die; it being spiritual, cannot lose consciousness even in an excess of pain and torment. If, then, my brethren, the grief of Mary's soul was greater than all the piercing bodily pains of suffering humanity, it must have been great as the sea and bitter as the waters thereof. Truly, the grief of our Blessed Mother surpassed all else that is painful and bitter, because it was a spiritual pain. Put together all bodily pains and torments which men have suffered from the beginning of the world until now, or shall suffer even unto the end of time, they are as nothing in comparison with the dolours of our sorrowful Queen.

2. *She suffered as the Mother of God.* A mother always shares the sufferings of her child, because she loves him; to touch her child, is to touch the apple of her eye. St. Augustine says of the mother of the Macchabees: "Seeing them, she suffered with them all. Since she loved all, she suffered in her heart whatever they suffered in their bodies." The same may be said, with even greater force, of Mary. She felt in her heart, in their whole bitterness, all the sufferings which Jesus physically endured. "The heart of Mary was a mirror, in which the stripes, wounds, and all the sufferings of Jesus were reflected," (St. Lawrence Justinian). Mary's martyrdom, in short, was in proportion to her love for her Son. Other mothers, it is true, love their children as themselves, and, sometimes, even more than themselves; but they love them only as children of men. Mary loved in a different manner; she loved her Son not only as her child, but as her God,—a love beyond measure greater than any mere human love could be. Now, if the mothers of earth declare themselves ready to take upon themselves all the pains and sufferings of their sons, Mary must have been willing to endure a thousand times the torments of her divine Son, inasmuch as she loved him infinitely more than any human mother loves her child.

3. *She suffered without consolation.* The holy martyrs were tormented most barbarously, yet their love for Jesus sustained them, so that in the very midst of their tortures they exhibited a courage and cheerfulness which amazed and confounded their executioners. They rejoiced to suffer for the faith of Christ. St. Boniface exclaimed, in the height of his cruel sufferings: "Lord Jesus, I thank thee!" St. Mark and St. Marcellinus suffered such intense pains, that even the inhuman judge was moved with compassion. But they answered him: "We never were so full of joy at the most exquisite banquet as now, when we endure such consoling tor-

ments for the love of Jesus." Roasted over a slow fire, St. Lawrence made sport of his pains: "I am done enough," he said; "eat, if you will." The more the martyrs loved Jesus, the less they felt their sufferings. Did Mary, then, experience a like consolation in her martyrdom at the foot of the cross? Ah! no; on the contrary, the more she loved her suffering and dying Jesus, the greater was her sorrow. That which assuaged the pains of the holy martyrs, only served to increase and aggravate *her* grief and inflict the deepest wounds upon her heart. "In the case of other martyrs, love lessened their pains, but the more Mary loved, the more she had to suffer,—the more painful was her martyrdom." (St. Bern.)

Mary was, in truth, the Mother of Sorrows. She suffered more than all creatures put together. We need not wonder at this. As she was destined to become the Queen of all the glorified Saints in heaven, she was likewise destined to become upon earth, the Queen of martyrs; she approached closest to her divine Son in his earthly sufferings, to the end that she might be nearest to him in glory. Have courage, O my suffering brethren, and follow in the footsteps of Jesus and Mary; and "think not strange the burning heat which is to try you, as if some new thing happened to you; but rejoice, being partakers of the sufferings of Christ; that when his glory shall be revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." (1 Pet. 4: 12, 13.) Neither should you lose patience when your sufferings are long-continued; for you must know that Mary was *always* the Mother of Sorrows.

II. The severest pains of the martyrs were of comparatively short duration. The whole life of Mary was an uninterrupted series of afflictions, a continuous martyrdom.

1. *Because the future sufferings of her blessed Son were ever before her eyes.* From the moment when she conceived the Incarnate Word in her virginal womb, Mary bore about with her continually the vision of that sorrow, which, as a sword, was to pierce her heart on Calvary's Mount. She understood more fully than any creature had ever done or could do, the sense of the prophecies concerning the Passion of Christ; and she was, no doubt, informed, by special revelation, of all the circumstances of his sacred life, Passion, and death. When she beheld his tender hands and feet, she saw in spirit, the nails that were to pierce them; when she pressed him close to her bosom, and felt the throbbings of his divine heart, she thought with anguish of the spear that was to cleave it in twain; when she bathed or kissed his adorable infant face, she seemed to see the crown of thorns plaited around his brow, and the blood-drops trickling down his bruised temples. The day, the hour, on which she was to contemplate her beloved Son suffering and dying on the cross was always present to her mind; whether she was alone or in the society of others, whether she

prayed, worked, or rested, her wounded, agonizing Son was always before her eyes. She could say, in the words of the Psalmist: "My life is wasted with grief, and my years in sighs." (Ps. 30:11.) "My sorrow is continually before me." (Ps. 37:18.) Time generally lessens grief, but in Mary's case, it only increased it. She learned every day more and more of the beauty and amiability of her beloved Son, and every day, alas! she knew that the hour of his torments was approaching nearer. An angel remarked to St. Bridget, that Mary grew up among sufferings, as a rose among thorns, and that as the thorns grow with the roses, this chosen Rose of the Lord, this true *Rosa Mystica*, was the more tormented with the thorns, the more she advanced in years. Even after the ascension of Jesus into heaven, Mary always had the bitter remembrance of his Passion before her eyes; and this remembrance, together with her separation from him, pierced her soul anew with the sword of sorrow, day and night, and consumed her with grief until the hour of her death.

2. *Because one sorrow succeeded another all through her maternal life.*

We must not forget that special afflictions marked all the earthly years of the Mother of God. How keen was her silent anguish when Joseph, not understanding the mystery of the Incarnation, was tempted to doubt her virtue; and when, as the time drew near for the birth of the Saviour,—(in obedience to a decree of Cæsar,) she was obliged to travel many a long and weary mile, from Nazareth to Bethlehem, to have her name enrolled with the rest of her people. In Bethlehem, she finds no room for herself or her spouse. She is forced to bring forth her divine Babe in a stable; she lays him, the Eternal Son of God, in a manger, between a couple of dumb beasts, a little hay and straw being his only substitute for a bed. Soon Herod seeks and threatens the life of the new-born king, and the afflicted mother flees into a foreign country. Who shall describe all the sufferings, humiliations, and deprivations of her seven years' sojourn in Egypt? When the divine Child was twelve years old, she lost him in Jerusalem, and when she found him in the Temple, after three days, instructing and questioning the doctors of the Law, she cried out: "Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." (Luke 2:48.) In the opinion of some spiritual writers, this last was the greatest of Mary's dolours, since, apart from the loss of her Beloved's presence,—the keenest trial a devout soul can experience,—she feared that she might have incurred his displeasure, that she might have committed some fault, on account of which he had withdrawn himself altogether from her.

Behold a few of the trials which attended the infancy and childhood of Jesus; and in his public life, "he is set for a sign which shall be contradicted." (Luke 2:34.) The prophecy of Simeon is literally fulfilled. He has scarcely begun his public ministry, teaching, healing, and working miracles, when he finds himself contradicted on all sides. He is con-

demned, calumniated, persecuted by the priests, the Pharisees, and many of the Jewish multitude. Once they took up stones to cast at him ; and again, at Nazareth, they attempted to cast him from the summit of a hill. They insulted him openly, and sought to ensnare him in his speech. How many burning tears must not this tenderest of mothers have shed, day and night, over the trials and privations of her adorable Son !

And, O my beloved, what shall I say of her feelings during the course of his Sacred Passion ! If the sun was darkened, the earth trembled, and the very rocks were rent, what must not the loving heart of the Mother of God have experienced ! If the women of Jerusalem who met Jesus carrying the cross wept bitterly, who shall describe the overwhelming agony of his own blessed Mother, when he was apprehended and treated as a malefactor, scourged, crowned with thorns, loaded with the heavy weight of the cross, and dragged violently to Mount Calvary. Who can depict her wordless grief when, standing under the cross, she heard her Son exclaim : “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ” (Matt. 27 : 46.)

Let us, then, have compassion, my brethren, upon Mary, the Mother of Sorrows. She is worthy of our sympathy, for she is the Queen of Martyrs, and her martyrdom was the longest-endured, the most intense that a human life has ever known. To her the words of the prophet are applicable : “ To what shall I compare thee, or to what shall I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem ? To what shall I equal thee, that I may comfort thee, O daughter of Sion ; for great as the sea is thy destruction, who shall heal thee ? ” (Lam. 2 : 13.) Let us learn from our Lady of Dolours to accept at the hands of God all the sufferings and afflictions he sees fit to send us, and to bear them patiently for love of him. Although the purest of all creatures, she has suffered more than all the children of Adam united. We, who are sinners, have then no reason to complain ; and as the good thief rebuked his reprobate companion on the cross, saying : “ And we, indeed, justly ; for we receive the due reward of our deeds ; but this man hath done no evil, ” (Luke 23 : 41) ; so, contemplating the immaculate Mother of Sorrows, supporting in silence and complete resignation, the multiplied sufferings which crushed her innocent, stainless heart, let us humble ourselves, my beloved brethren, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt us in the time of visitation.” (1 Pet. 5 : 6.) Amen.

Z.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE MIRACLE OF NAIM AND ITS LESSONS FOR CHRISTIAN SOULS.

“And when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold a dead man was carried out And he came near and touched the bier And he said : Young man, I say to thee arise. And he that was dead, sat up and began to speak.” Luke 7 : 12, 14, 15.

From Capharnaum, where he spent most of his time during his public life, and whence he made his missionary—journeys through Judea and Galilee, our Blessed Lord came, one day, to Naim, a small city in Galilee, situated at the foot of Mount Thabor. *Naim*, my brethren, means, in English, *beautiful, pleasant, cosy*; and the city owed its name to its beautiful location and picturesque surroundings. But no matter how pleasant or cosy a place may be, that fell destroyer, Death, cannot be excluded from it. He advances with unerring step, and knocks for admittance at the stately palaces of the rich, as well as at the lowly cottages of the poor. This unwelcome guest had found its way, on a certain occasion, into one of the households of the beautiful city of Naim; for when our Blessed Lord, accompanied by his disciples and a great multitude of people, “came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.” Let us, then, my brethren, make a brief meditation on the miraculous event recorded in this day’s Gospel, confining ourselves to the two following points :

I. A dead man is carried out of the city.

II. Christ raises the dead man to life again.

I. “And when Jesus came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and much people of the city was with her.”

1. Christ came to Naim just at the moment when the funeral of the widow’s son was in progress. This was surely a remarkable coincidence, not to be attributed to blind fate or mere chance, but to a divine arrangement. Jesus knew the hour when the dead man was to be carried out of the city of Naim; and he selected that hour to promote his own glory and that of his Eternal Father, by working a signal miracle on the dead. From this we may learn, my brethren,

(a) *That nothing in this life, however trivial or insignificant, is accidental, but is either willed or permitted by God.* Christ expressly says: "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." (Luke 12 : 6, 7.) In every one of the events of life, we must recognize God's all-ruling Providence. If something agreeable happens to us, let us return thanks to God with a grateful heart; and again, if something occurs which affects us most painfully, let us be patient under our affliction, and offer it up to God as a penance for our sins. Let us, in short, exclaim with Job, that model of cheerful resignation: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: . . . blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job. 1 : 21.)

(b) *That man's extremity is God's opportunity.* The widow's son was dead; there was no doubt whatever about that sad fact; his body was actually on its way to the grave. Who, then, could have reasonably hoped to see him restored to life? But, when all human help had failed, Jesus appeared on the scene, and lent his powerful aid. Let us, in our turn, stand firm with confidence in every trying emergency of life; for "our God is our refuge and strength, a helper in troubles." (Ps. 45 : 2.)

2. *A dead man was carried out.* This event is repeated every day, and in every quarter of the globe. Where is there a city, a town, a village, or a house, from which the dead are not, at some time, carried out? Man is born to die;—nay, more, the moment he is born, he begins to die, and he ceases to die only when he ceases to live. Life, at best, is but a lingering death. The day will assuredly come for each one of us, my brethren, when we shall die, and be carried out. "All things go to one place, of earth they are made, and into earth they return together." (Eccles. 3 : 20.) What an important thing it is to die! An eternity of happiness or an eternity of woe depends upon our dying moment. If we die a good death, we shall be saved forever; if we die a bad death, we shall be lost forever. What a serious reflection! And yet there are many who are concerned about every little passing trifle, and are utterly unconcerned about death. Their chief care, early and late, is how to make money, attain honors and dignities, or gratify their passions; they hardly ever think of what they must do in order to die well. What blindness, what infatuation! O that they would often meditate earnestly on those words of Christ: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Matt. 16 : 26.)

3. *The dead man was in the prime of his youth;* hence, to his relatives and friends, his death must have appeared the more bitter, the more cruel. Trust not in your youth, my dear young friends: "Be you also ready, for

at what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come." (Luke 12 : 40.) Count not your age by years, but by virtues. "The just man, if he be prevented with death, shall be in rest. For venerable age is not that of long time, nor counted by the number of years ; but the understanding of a man is gray hairs ; and a spotless life is old age." (Wisd. 4 : 7.)

4. "*The only son of his mother.*" If it is a great affliction for parents to lose a child by death, how much more so when it is their only child ! They weep, and are often almost inconsolable in their grief. Now, the question arises : "Why does God deprive parents of their children, and, sometimes, take away their only child ?" The ways of the Lord are inscrutable ; but this much we know, that he always does well and wisely when he decrees the death of a child. Many parents are inclined to ruin their children by over-indulgence ; and because of this blind love, an only child is almost sure to do much mischief in the world, and finally perish forever. To prevent such an evil, God calls the child to himself in its baptismal innocence. Christian parents should not, then, grieve immoderately at the death of their children. To lose a child is a great loss indeed. Yet therein God exercises his own good right, without infringing upon the rights of others. He has an absolute dominion over all his creatures ; as the supreme Giver of life, he has a right to take it away again at any moment. Who is the counselor of the Lord ? Whatever he does is well done. Gazing upon their dead child, cut down in his innocence and youth, Christian parents should regard him as a fair young flower transplanted unto Paradise to escape the sins and sorrows of earth. "He pleased God, and was beloved, and living among sinners, he was transplanted. He was taken away lest wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul." (Wisd. 4 : 10.)

5. "*And she was a widow.*" Misfortunes never come singly. This poor mother of the Gospel had already known one crushing sorrow. She had lost her husband ; and now she bewails the death of her only son, the comfort of her life, the sole support of her old age. Had she, perhaps, deserved the heavy trials that had come upon her ? Certainly not. For if she had not been a good, pious, God-fearing woman, Christ would not have shown himself so compassionate toward her, nor raised to life her only son. Here, again, we see, my brethren, that God often visits the just with crosses and afflictions. But he does it for their good, to free them more and more from their faults, to perfect their virtue, and, by giving them an opportunity of increasing their merits, to reward them hereafter with a greater crown of glory. "*She was a widow ;*" hence she was dear to the Heart of Jesus, since widows are always objects of special care and tenderness to the Lord. Witness the sacred texts : "The father of orphans, and the judge of widows, is God in his holy place." (Ps. 57 : 6.) "He will

not despise the prayers of the fatherless, nor the widow, when she pours out her complaint." (Ecclus. 35 : 17.) "Religion pure and unspotted with God and the Father is this : To visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation." (James 1 : 27,)

6. "*And much people of the city was with her.*" In these words, the Evangelist praises the charity of the citizens of Naim, who attended in a body the funeral of this deserving young man. To bury the dead or to attend their obsequies has ever been considered a work of Christian charity and of true friendship. No doubt these good people prayed for the eternal repose of the widow's son ; for prayers and sacrifices for the dead were prescribed among the Jews, as we read in the Book of Maccabees : "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins." (2 Mac. 12 : 46.) Attend the funerals of your deceased friends and acquaintances, my dear brethren, but in a way becoming a Christian. If you go to the grave with the dead, let it be to show your charity and friendship, and pray for the repose of their souls. Meditate there at the same time, on the frailty of human life and the uncertainty of the hour of death ; and make good resolutions so to live that you need not fear the approach of the destroying Angel. Funerals attended in such a manner, will prove profitable to you as well as to your departed relatives and friends.

II. *How did Jesus raise the dead young man to life?* The Evangelist relates the miracle in the following words :

1. "*And when the Lord saw her, (the mother of the young man,) he had compassion on her, and said to her : Weep not. And he came near and touched the bier. (And they that carried it, stood still). And he said : Young man, I say to thee, arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.*" As soon as Christ saw the deeply-afflicted mother following the corpse of her only son, he was moved to compassion. Nor was this the only time when he manifested the merciful tenderness of his divine Heart. He had compassion on the hungry multitude in the desert ; he wept at the grave of Lazarus ; and so profound a sorrow seized him at the sight of the doomed Jerusalem, that he burst into tears : "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace ; but now they are hidden from thy eyes." (Luke 19 : 42.) A tender, compassionate heart is regarded by some as an evidence of human weakness ; yet the example of our Lord teaches the contrary. The principal virtue of Christianity is Charity, and Compassion is the daughter of Charity. He who sincerely loves his neighbor, feels compassion when he sees him afflicted or suffering. Human society constitutes one body, and each individual is a member of this body. Now, as in a human body the pain of one member

is felt by all, so every man should feel for the sufferings of his fellowmen. But, alas! the evil passions of the heart, such as envy, hatred or avarice, sometimes strip us of all sympathy for the unfortunate and afflicted. Ah! let us remember that we are Christians, my brethren, and, as such, let us sympathize with others in their misery. St. Gregory says: "Compassion is a most precious alms; for by having compassion for the afflicted, we give them what they value most, our hearts; they are consoled when they see that we take a lively interest in their sufferings."

2. "*Weep not.*" He does not say this by way of reproach, or as if he would blame the poor widow for bewailing her great loss, but because he foresaw in his wisdom that the cause of her tears would soon be removed. We are not forbidden, dear brethren, to weep at the graves of our relatives and friends. Jesus himself shed tears at the sepulchre of Lazarus, his friend; and we read: "My son, shed tears over the dead; and begin to lament, as if thou hadst suffered some great harm." (Eccles. 38:16.) In the Acts of the Apostles we find it recorded, that "devout men took charge of Stephen's funeral, and made great mourning over him." Acts 8:2.) But this mourning over the dead must not be immoderate or unchristian, even as those who have no hope. The true Christian consoles himself at the death of his dear ones, bearing in mind that whatever God does is right, and that there will be a day of general resurrection from the dead, when he shall see his dear ones again, and be re-united to them forever.

3. "*And he came near and touched the bier. (And they that carried it stood still.) And he said: Young man, I say to thee, arise.*" Here Jesus manifests himself as the omnipotent God, to whom everything is subject, and whose word heaven and earth obey. The Apostles and many of the Saints worked miracles, it is true, but not by their own power. It was solely in the name and by the power of Jesus. The miracles of Christ and his Saints are, therefore, incontrovertible proofs of his Divinity. When he says: "*Young man, I say to thee, arise,*" Jesus is as omnipotent as God his Father, for "what things soever he (the Father) doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. . . . As the Father raiseth up the dead, and giveth life, so the Son also giveth life to whom he will." (John 5:19-21.) Let us give thanks to Jesus, my dear brethren, for having thus proved his Divinity so clearly and incontrovertibly. For there is nothing so consoling and encouraging in every situation of life as the belief that Jesus is truly God. For, if he is truly God, his doctrine is true and divine, and everything that he has done and suffered for us has an infinite and divine value; we are truly redeemed; we need not fear for the Church which he has promised to protect; we can, (if we serve him with a loving heart,) live peacefully and die happily.

“*I say to thee, arise.*” This is the continual warning of the Son of Man addressed to the heart of the sinner. Alas! while the heavenly hosts fulfil speedily the will of God, the sinner does not listen to his voice. Harken, dear Christians, to the complaint of God: “I have called, and there was none that would answer; I have spoken, and they heard not, and they have done evil in my eyes, and have chosen things that displease me.” (Is. 66 : 4.) “When sudden calamity shall fall on you, and destruction, as a tempest, shall be at hand, then shall you call upon me, and I will not hear.” (Prov. 1 : 27.) Let this invitation, then, be realized in you, dear brethren: “Rise, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten thee.” (Ephes. 5 : 14.)

4. “*And he that was dead, sat up, and began to speak.*” At the words, “Young man, I say to thee, arise,” the soul of the young man returns immediately from the spirit-world, and reanimates his body with new life; he sits up upon his bier, and as a sign that he is living and not dead,—he begins to speak. As Christ raised to life this young man of Naim, so will he raise all men from the dead on the last day. “The hour cometh, wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man. And they that have done good, shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.” (John 5 : 28, 29.) Let us, then, my brethren, walk in the fear of God, and especially keep our body in honor, never abusing it by sin, that we may have a joyful resurrection. “*He began to speak.*” What may we suppose were the first words of that risen youth? No doubt words of adoration, praise, and gratitude. When Jesus, in the Sacrament of Penance, raises you, dear Christians, from the death of sin to the life of grace, he bestows upon you a far greater blessing than he did on the young man of the Gospel. What is the life of the body compared to the life of the soul? You have far more reason to give thanks to Christ after every confession, than the young Jew had to thank him after his resurrection from the dead,—far more reason to make strong resolutions, henceforth, to serve him with signal fervor and constancy. If you have not done so in the past, resolve this day, my brethren, to do so for the future.

5. “*And he delivered him to his mother.*” Jesus could with justice have required the resuscitated youth to consecrate himself entirely to his service,—to quit all and follow him. But no; he made no such demand; he simply delivered him to his mother. Here our Blessed Lord gives us a beautiful example of unselfishness in the good we do our neighbor. By delivering the young man to his mother, he further intimated that she had power over him, and that he, as her child, was obliged to obey her in all just and lawful things. O my dear young people! how ready and willing you should be to obey those to whom you owe your very life! Alas! there are

many children who sin grievously by disobedience. The older they grow, the more stubborn they become towards their parents ; sons and daughters refuse to obey their widowed mother, and so embitter her life by disobedience and bad conduct, that she longs for the hour when she may follow her husband to the grave. Woe to such children! "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth the labor of his mother in bearing him, let the ravens of the brook pick it out, and the young eagles eat it." (Prov. 30 : 17.)

"And there came a fear on them all ; and they glorified God, saying : That a great prophet is risen among us, and God hath visited his people." We need not wonder that all who were witnesses of this marvel, and beheld the dead arise at the word of Jesus, should be filled with a holy fear. We should have been similarly affected, my brethren, had we witnessed that wonderful miracle. It is natural for fear and awe to take possession of man when God manifests himself in his infinite power. But what the people then did, when, full of enthusiasm, they praised and glorified God, we should do to-day, and every day of our lives. With a heart full of gratitude, we should praise and glorify God that he has raised up the great Prophet foretold by Moses, (Deut. 18 : 15) ; that he has sent his only-begotten Son to raise us from the grave of sin to a life of grace here below, and to lead us, by the final resurrection from the dead, to a life of glory hereafter, in the kingdom of everlasting peace and joy. Amen. Z.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE NECESSITY OF BEING ALWAYS PREPARED FOR DEATH.

“And when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was carried out.” Luke 7 : 12.

“A dead man was carried out.” These words, my dear brethren, taken from the Gospel of this day, record a simple, natural fact, which has been repeated numberless times since the creation of the world, and which will be repeated every day until its final destruction. Where is there a city, a village, or even a house out of which the inhabitants or inmates have not carried their dead? Since death has gained entrance into the world, dying is the order of the day, “for the wages of sin is death. (Rom. 6 : 23.) “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned.” (Rom. 5 : 12.) About thirty millions of people die annually; and in the light of that truth, my dear friends, it is well to reflect that *our* turn will come sooner or later. Like the young man of Naim, we, too, shall be carried out from our earthly homes; we, too, shall be borne in our coffins to the cemetery, and there our bodies shall find their resting-place until the day of the general Judgment. Nothing is more certain than death; yet nothing is more uncertain than its time and circumstances. From this certain uncertainty naturally follows our strict obligation of being always prepared for our last hour, since we do not know

- I. *When,*
- II. *Where, or*
- III. *How we shall die.*

I. We do not know *when we shall die.*

1. “Man knoweth not his end; but as fishes are taken with the hook, and as birds are caught with the snare, so men are taken in the evil time, when it shall suddenly come upon them.” (Eccles. 9 : 12.) Our Blessed Lord frequently repeats this truth, dear Christians, and brings it before us by many apt and striking parables. Thus in the similitude of the rich man, who had his barn pulled down, and a larger structure built to accommodate his overflowing harvest, (Luke 12 : 16-20)—Christ represents him as saying to himself: “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many

years, take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer," not knowing at the same time that the decree of God had gone forth: "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee." Again, in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, who, taking their lamps, went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride,—it is recorded of the five foolish virgins, that having neglected to provide oil for their lamps, they sought to borrow from their wiser companions. But the latter bade them buy for themselves, and while they went to buy, lo! "the bridegroom came, and they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage." The foolish virgins, coming later, found the door shut, and when they knocked, the bridegroom answering, said: "I know you not." And the parable closes with these significant words from the lips of Eternal Truth: "*Watch ye, therefore, because ye know not the day nor the hour.*" My brethren, if anything further were needed to impress upon the followers of Christ the vital necessity for vigilance in this important matter, we would find it in that other parable, wherein after our Lord has declared: "That if a master of a family did know at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch, and would not suffer his house to be broken open;" he adds the impressive warning which is calculated to strike terror into every heart: "Be you also ready; for at what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come." (Luke 12 : 40.)

The first family on the face of the earth, my brethren, consisted of four persons,—Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel. Who would have believed that Abel, the youngest member of the family, would be the first to die? Yet so it was. The people in Noe's time, as our Lord says, "were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark; and they knew not till the flood came, and took them all away." (Matt. 24 : 38, 39.) And when, centuries later, the Israelites were in battle with the Philistines, they sent for the Ark of the Covenant, that its presence might insure them victory; but, (as we know not the day nor the hour), the two sons of Heli, the high-priest, who guarded the sacred treasure, were killed, the Ark was taken, and Heli, on hearing the terrible news, fell from his seat and broke his neck. The history of Absalom, the son of David, is also another warning for us,—another incentive, my brethren, to ponder constantly those solemn words of the Gospel: "Watch ye, therefore, because ye know not the day nor the hour."

Ah! yes, we know not when we shall die. How often do the daily papers report sudden deaths! We read that some are killed by burglars and robbers; some fall from on high and break their necks; some are drowned; others lose their lives by explosions in mines, or by collisions on railroads. And are there not sudden deaths in our own parish every year? Have we not seen this or that person, in the circle of our acquaintances,—nay, perhaps of our own relatives, suddenly snatched away by sickness or accident, without having had time to receive the rites of the Church? Viewing these calamities, these daily shocking casualties, have we not, each one of us,

just reason to exclaim with David: "There is but one step between me and death"—? (1 Kings 20 : 3.)

2. Let us draw some practical fruit from all this, dear Christians. If you are so happy as to be in the state of grace, you must employ all diligence to persevere in it unto the end ; for "he that persevereth to the end, he shall be saved." If, on the other hand, you prove unfaithful to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit,—if you wilfully depart from the way of godliness, and enter upon the road which leads to perdition,—death may come suddenly upon you, and snatch you away without a moment's warning. From this follows one imperative necessity. If you have lost the grace of God by grievous sins, you must labor, without delay, to recover it by true repentance. Who would live on heedlessly in sin, when he is, at any moment, liable to sudden death? Count, if you can, all the unfortunate beings who, trusting to a delusive prospect of long life in which to amend their ways, were suddenly snatched away with all their crimes upon their heads, and in that state were judged and rejected forever! Well may the holy Church, in her solemn Litany, direct us to pray: "From a sudden and unprovided death, O Lord, deliver us!" And well may her children meditate daily upon the salutary counsel of the Wise Man: "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day; for his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee." (Eccles. 5 : 8, 9.)

II. We do not know *where we shall die.*

1. Death is active at all hours, and in all places; there is no time or spot in which it does not claim its victims. A Reaper, whose scythe is never idle; a Laborer, whose work is never done; a Conqueror, whose captives are always doomed to destruction,—Death penetrates into all places, no matter how hidden or obscure, no matter how lofty or well-defended. No walls, no locks, no bolts or bars can keep him out. People generally die when they least expect it. Death is almost always a surprise, or an accident. In proof of this, we may instance some of the most striking cases of sudden and violent death recorded in the Old Testament. At the invitation of his brother, the unsuspecting Abel goes out into the field; when lo! Cain, possessed with the spirit of envy and jealousy, falls suddenly upon him with murderous intent, and slays the gentle youth. Aman has a gallows erected for Mordochai; yet, a few days afterwards, he himself swings on that very same gallows. Holofernes lies down upon his couch in the midst of his camp, surrounded by armed soldiers, yet whilst he breathes heavily in his drunken sleep, the intrepid Judith cuts off his head with his own sword; and, in spite of all his safeguards, the powerful general of the Assyrians lies cold and dead before the gates of Bethulia.

Hence man, my brethren, is nowhere secure against death ; he can die anywhere.

2. And what lessons are we to learn from this? We must everywhere have God before our eyes, and avoid injustice and sin. Oh, how terrible would it be if death should overtake us in a place where we had just before grievously sinned ! Remember the fate of the Israelite and the unchaste woman, who were both killed by Phineas, in the chamber wherein they had committed a sin of impurity. (Num. 25 : 7, 8.) Remember, too, how the seven husbands of Sarah, the daughter of Raguel (as related in the Book of Tobias,) were all stricken dead upon the day of their respective marriages, because they entered upon that holy state with sinful dispositions. What happened to these miserable people and to numberless others, may happen to any one of us, my brethren. Therefore, be careful not to desecrate any place with sin or works of iniquity. Above all things, you should respect the couch on which you repose every night, bearing in mind whenever you stretch yourself upon it, that in all probability, it will one day be your death-bed. If your conscience should reproach you in your dying hour with the memory of the horrible sins you had committed with yourselves or others, on that very bed whence you are about to depart to the judgment-seat of God, will it not appear to you, then, a bed of burning coals? Be chaste and pious, if anywhere, in your bed ; and, if you should chance to awaken in the night and find yourself unable to sleep for some time, occupy yourselves, I beseech of you, dear friends, with continual prayer and pious thoughts of eternity. The very darkness and silence around you, at such seasons, should serve as feeling reminders of the night of death, in which you will inevitably repose when time, for *you*, shall be no more.

III. We do not know *how we shall die*.

1. The manner of the death's coming varies according to the will of God. Some are confined to bed a long time,—for weeks, months, and even years, and endure great sufferings in their last illness ; others are sick only a few days or hours,—and they are gone. With some, again, it is still more sudden ; they drop dead in the street, or at the table. Death, my brethren, has a thousand ways and means of coming to man, and snatching him away from amongst the living.

It matters little, however, whether we die quickly or slowly, whether suddenly or after a protracted illness, *provided we die in the grace of God!* We know that some of the Saints were called suddenly out of life ; others, after a long sickness. All the Apostles of our Lord died violent deaths in different forms of martyrdom, except St. John and St. Philip. St. Ludwina welcomed her last hour after an illness of thirty-eight years. St.

Francis of Sales was taken off by a sudden attack of apoplexy ; and that great and zealous lover of souls, St. Francis of Cordova, was found dead at his writing-desk, where he had just written the significant words : “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.” (Apoc. 14 : 13.)

2. Let us ponder, my dear brethren, these salutary truths. If it be the will of God that you should die suddenly and unexpectedly, you must be resigned to that holy and all-wise will. It is a very acceptable offering to God to make him cheerfully, in advance, that last and greatest of all sacrifices,—the sacrifice of our lives, and to leave entirely to his wisdom and goodness the time and place of our death. When a dangerous sickness befalls you, my brethren, do not delay to send for the priest, but purify and strengthen yourselves in good time with the holy Sacraments of the Church. Allow no unreasonable fears of death to postpone this important duty. Every delay is dangerous, and, alas ! many a procrastinating invalid has been obliged to go out of this world without the reception of the Sacraments. Some timid souls will urge : “If I bring in the priest, I will be sure to die.” Do you not know, my poor friends, that the Sacrament of Extreme Unction is, perhaps, your only chance of recovery? Do you not remember the words of St. James on this point? “Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord : and the prayer of faith shall save the sick man : and the Lord *shall raise him up* : and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him.” (Cath. Epist. 5 : 14, 15.) But since most of the sick do not know or realize their own danger, it is the bounden duty of their relatives and friends to remind them of it, (even at the risk of hastening their end,) and exhort them, before it be too late, to receive the last Sacraments.

“It is appointed for me once to die, but I know not *when*, nor *where*, nor *how* ; I only know that if I die in the state of mortal sin, I shall be lost forever!” Ponder seriously these solemn words, and often repeat them,—especially when you retire to your bed at night, and in all the temptations and trials of your lives. Be always prepared for death ; keep your conscience undefiled. If you should have the misfortune of falling into sin, endeavor to recover God’s grace at once by an act of perfect contrition, with the resolution of making a sincere confession as soon as possible ; and every time you approach the Sacraments, be careful to receive them as though it were for the last time in your life. Live in peace and harmony with all mankind ; conform yourselves continually to the dispensations of the divine will ; and thus, my beloved brethren, watching and praying against the coming of the heavenly Bridegroom, with your lamps well-trimmed and burning, you will merit to obtain from God that greatest and most desirable of all graces,—the blessing of a holy and a happy death. Amen.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE SANCTIFICATION OF SUNDAYS AND HOLYDAYS.

“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?” Luke 14 : 3.

The Scribes and Pharisees censured the Infinite Wisdom and Goodness for giving health to the sick,—for performing an act of charity on the Sabbath, whilst they themselves did not hesitate a moment to rescue their domestic animals from danger, on that day. “Which of you,” said Jesus to these censors, “which of you whose ass or ox shall fall into a pit, and will not immediately draw him out on the Sabbath day?—And they could not answer him to these things,” adds the Evangelist. Many of our modern Christians, on the contrary, go to the other extreme,—honoring the third commandment of God more (as has been pithily remarked) “in the breach than in the observance.” They work on Sundays and holydays without scruple,—nay, they even indulge in sinful pleasures, saying: “It is a holiday to-day; we may enjoy ourselves a little.” What a want of sense as well as of piety! As if it were lawful to do on Sundays and holydays what it would be sinful to do on week-days. To guard you, alike, against the error of the ancient Jews and the delusion of these modern Christians, I shall speak to-day of the sanctification of Sundays and holydays, and I shall endeavor to explain to you

- I. *What is to be avoided, and*
- II. *What is to be done on those days.*

- I. *On Sundays and holydays*

1. *All servile works are to be avoided.*

(a) Servile works are those laborious, corporal works which are usually done by servants, day-laborers, and artisans,—in a word, all those works which require the power of the body more than the faculties of the mind, or have for their object the temporal, not the eternal, welfare of man. The so-called fine arts, which occupy the mind more than the body, or which have the development of the understanding, or an innocent entertainment and mental relaxation for their object, are not servile works, and, consequently, are not forbidden on Sundays and holydays. Therefore, it is lawful on Sundays and holydays, to give instruction in art or science, to engage in study, or the arts of drawing, painting, or music, provided that

they do not captivate the mind too much, or do not hinder the performance of the Sunday duties.

There are, however, three cases in which even servile works are lawful on Sundays and holydays.

(b) *Where there is an absolute necessity.* Christ himself taught this; for when the Pharisees held their peace upon hearing the question: "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?" he said to them: "Which of you, whose ox or ass shall fall into a pit, and will not immediately draw him out on the Sabbath-day?" By these words, Jesus indicates that servile works done in case of urgent necessity, are not a profanation of the Sunday. Thus, it is lawful for the Fire Department to try to extinguish a fire if it should occur on that day. If there is a long spell of wet weather in harvest-time, the farmer is justified in gathering his crops whenever the weather is favorable, though it should be on a Sunday. A mother who has no time during the week, is allowed on Sunday to repair the clothing of the family, to knit, or even to weave "It is better to dig all day, than to dance all day on festivals." (St. Augustine.)

(c) *When the work is done for the honor of God.* To this class of works belong those which refer chiefly and immediately to the service of God, such as the ringing of the bells, the working of the bellows of the organ, the adorning of the church and altars. That such works do not violate the third commandment of God is evident from the words which Christ addressed to the Pharisees when they took scandal at his disciples because they plucked and ate corn on the Sabbath-day. "Have you not read in the law how that, on the Sabbath-days, the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are without blame?" For it was the office of the Jewish priests to slaughter the animals offered in sacrifice to the Lord. (Matt. 12 : 5.)

(d) *When the love of our neighbor obliges us.* "What man shall there be among you," saith our divine Lord, "that hath one sheep; and if the same fall into a pit on the Sabbath-day, will he not take hold on it, and lift it up? How much better is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do a good deed on the Sabbath-day." (Matt. 12 : 11, 12.) You are, therefore, allowed to assist the sick, even though you should be obliged, in so doing, to omit Mass, for the *natural* law takes precedence of the *ecclesiastical*. The service of the sick is the service of God; we must leave God for God; and he regards every attention which we lavish upon his sick and suffering members as though offered to himself. "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." (Matt. 25 : 40.)

In the absence of any of these three dispensations, you would sin griev-

ously if you performed servile works on Sundays and holidays. We can doubt this so much the less because God forbade servile works in the Old Law under the penalty of death. (Exodus 31 : 4. According to the opinion of most theologians, we commit a mortal sin when we work four hours on Sundays and holidays, because that number of hours is a considerable part of the day. It does not, however, depend so much upon the *time* as upon the *quality* of the work done, and upon the aggravating circumstances, *i. e.*, whether it be done in a quiet or a boisterous way, and whether scandal be given by it or not. Even the most insignificant labor done in contempt of the divine or the ecclesiastical commandment would be a mortal sin.

2. *All sinful works are to be avoided on Sundays and holidays.*

(a) That which is sacred must be kept sacred. Hence, we must avoid with special care, on Sundays and holidays, whatever is evidently sinful. Sin is not permissible on any day ; but it is more abominable when committed on Sundays, and therefore more culpable, and deserving of greater punishment. The reason of this greater culpability consists in the fact that Sundays being especially dedicated to the service and worship of God, we must avoid sin with greater care on those days, and endeavor to do good with greater fervor. "Is it not a great offence against God, and even a kind of sacrilege, to spend days particularly dedicated to the Lord, in the follies of the world and in vain pleasures?" (St. Cyril.) On this account, it is advisable that you mention in your confessions, the circumstance that you have sinned on Sundays and holidays ; for although the mentioning of it is not absolutely necessary, yet it is useful, that the confessor may better understand the grievousness of the sin, be able to enjoin a suitable penance, and prescribe the proper remedies.

(b) Alas ! it is on those days that most sins are committed. We may say, without the least exaggeration, that, in the whole six days of the week, there are not so many sins committed as on Sunday alone. To mention only a few sins, how many offend God by *pride* ! Many vain women go to church for no other purpose than to see and to be seen,—to display their fine clothes and elegant ornaments. They appear before the Blessed Sacrament, before the very altar of the Most High, arrayed in such brilliant,—nay, even bold and immodest attire, that it is evident they do not enter the church to adore God, but to gratify their passions. How many sin by *impurity* on the day of rest ! This abominable vice may be justly called (alas ! for the hateful truth !) a Sunday's child. The salutary restraints of hard work and every-day labor, are relaxed ; there are pleasure-parties for the young on land and water. Human nature is weak, and human passions, strong ; and hence it comes to pass that most of the unchaste familiarities and dangerous intimacies which disgrace Christians,

are indulged in on Sundays. How many sins are committed on those days against *fraternal charity!* People sit idly on their door-steps or lounge at the open windows, and gossiping with the passers-by, tear to pieces, like vultures, the good name and fame of their neighbors. Thus it is that the devil has a rich harvest on Sundays and holydays, and many souls then become his wretched slaves.

II. *What must we do on Sundays and holydays ?*

1. *We must attend Mass.* It is a strict precept of the Church to hear Mass on Sundays and holydays ; but, besides the precept of the Church, the natural law obliges us ; for we know by that law inscribed upon our hearts by the divine finger, that we should endeavor especially on the Lord's day, to honor God in the manner most pleasing to him. Now God, my dear brethren, is honored most perfectly by the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, for the Mass is the chief expression of our worship of God,—nay, the centre of the whole Christian religion. We must daily adore God, thank him for his benefits, ask his pardon for our sins, and petition for his graces and blessings. But where can we better comply with this duty than in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which is the only and most sublime sacrifice of praise, of thanksgiving, of propitiation, and of petition ?

In order, however, to satisfy the ecclesiastical law, we must be present with devotion.

(a) *At the whole Mass.* He who neglects, through his own fault, any part of the Mass, commits a mortal or a venial sin, according to the solemnity and importance of the part omitted. Some theologians declare it to be a mortal sin to come to a Mass of obligation after the *Offertory*, since the *Offertory* is one of the principal parts of the Mass. In like manner, some teach that he who departs from the holy Sacrifice before the communion of the priest, commits a mortal sin. Endeavor, therefore, always to be in time for Mass, and never leave the church until the priest has left the altar. According to an explanation of Pope Innocent XI., the obligation of hearing Mass on a Sunday or holyday is not fulfilled by him who hears two half-Masses of two different priests, no matter whether they are said simultaneously or consecutively.

(b) *We must assist with devotion at the holy Sacrifice.* In order to be made partakers of the fruits of grace, we must hear Mass devoutly. He who is indevout, although he may assist in person at the august Sacrifice, so far from obtaining grace, goes away empty-handed, and offends God. How unhappy, alas ! are those lukewarm Christians who, instead of devoutly praying at Mass, entertain various distracting thoughts about temporal and even sinful objects,—who gaze around, laugh and talk, give themselves

to slothful rest, or sit during the whole Mass, although healthy and strong. St. Chrysostom, with grief, complains of such unseemly behavior at the divine service: "I see some standing and talking whilst the prayers are being said; they talk even whilst the priest is consecrating. Audacity and impertinence! Is it not a wonder that lightning does not descend, not only upon them, but upon us all?"

2. *We must strive to hear with zeal the word of God on Sundays and holy-days.* Although the Church does not make the hearing of the word of God obligatory on her children on Sundays and holydays under pain of mortal sin,—although attendance at sermons and religious instructions is not a duty enforced as strictly as the hearing of Mass, no one should omit it through negligence, as the following reasons will convince you.

(a) Very few of the ordinary run of Christians possess so thorough a knowledge of their religion as to need no further instruction. A large proportion of Catholics, through poverty or adverse circumstances, have been neglected in their early training, and grow up to maturity wholly ignorant of the vital truths of faith. Even many of those who are counted among the learned, are often very shallow in their acquaintance with religious matters, and would be much embarrassed if they were obliged to answer even the simple questions of the Catechism. Some, again, through the influence of heretical or infidel associations, either consciously or unconsciously, hold erroneous opinions of which they will never be freed, unless they diligently listen to religious instructions.

(b) Since sermons have for their object not only to instruct, but also to amend and to perfect, all the faithful should make it a point to attend them, sinners as well as the just; the former, that they may amend their lives; the latter, that they may advance in virtue. And all should bring to the hearing of the Word of God such sincere and docile hearts that the parable of the seed that fell upon the good ground may be fully realized in them; for if their hearts be like the open wayside, the fowls of the air, *i. e.*, the devils, will come and devour the evangelical seed; and, if they be like the rock, it will have no roots, and in time of temptation, the believers will fall away; and if their hearts are filled with the thorns of this life's cares and riches, and pleasures, the Gospel seed will yield no fruit whatsoever. But the good and perfect heart, hearing the word, "shall keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience." (Luke 8 : 15.)

(c) Good example, also, comes into consideration, and superiors especially should edify their fellow-Christians, and, in a particular manner, their children and dependents, by the diligent and reverential hearing of

the Word of God; for what scandal would they not give by seldom or never appearing at Christian instructions!

3. *We must also strive to assist at the afternoon service.* Many believe that with the divine service in the morning all is over,—that they have complied with their duty, and that the afternoon is theirs, to be employed entirely in seeking their own pleasure. This, however, is an erroneous idea, and cannot be reconciled with a thorough and faithful observance of the Sunday. A master would not be satisfied with that servant who would work only in the forenoon, and then take the afternoon to himself. In like manner, God will not be satisfied with us, if we dedicate to him only the first half of the Sundays and holydays, and claim the rest for ourselves; it is his will that, with the exception of a few hours of needed recreation, we should spend the entire Sunday and holyday in his service. Hence, a good Christian, not satisfied with hearing Mass devoutly on the Lord's day, also visits the church in the afternoon, in order to assist at Vespers and the Benediction of the Most Holy Sacrament. If circumstances, however, should render this impossible, he supplies the involuntary omission by praying, and reading devotional books at home.

4. *It is advisable on those days to receive the holy Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist.* In the first centuries of the Church, it was the universal custom of the faithful to receive holy Communion on all Sundays during Mass. St. Justin, the martyr, tells us that holy Communion was sent to those Christians who, on account of sickness or some other obstacle, could not hear Mass. I do not, indeed, ask of you to go to confession and Communion on all Sundays and holydays, but I do exhort and advise you to go frequently during the year. It would not be too much for young people,—persons who are not married,—to go once a month; for married people equally as often, or at least every three months, viz. : four times a year. A frequent reception of the holy Sacraments would contribute materially to the sanctification of the Sundays and holydays, and would put a stop to many sins which, as you well know, are committed on those days.

5. *Lastly, to perform works of charity, especially the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.* “Although we are forbidden on festival days to perform servile works, yet we are commanded to perform charitable works,” says the holy St. Irenæus. Pharisees, and those who are animated with a Pharisaical spirit, are the only ones who do not acknowledge this obligation; they even consider the performance of such charitable deeds a profanation of the Sunday, although Christ and his Apostles performed their works of mercy especially on the Sabbath-day, as the holy Scripture informs us.

Many of you, during the week, have no time for the performance of works of charity, while Sundays and festival days afford much leisure for such works, by which the necessities of our neighbors are alleviated, and God is honored and glorified. Therefore St. James says : "Religion, pure and unspotted, with God and the Father, is this : to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep one's self undefiled from this world." (St. James 1 : 27.) In the primitive ages of Christianity, collections were made on Sundays for the relief of the poor and afflicted, and for many other charitable purposes. (1 Cor. 16 : 2.) These charitable collections, as you see, are of very ancient date ; they are as old as the Church. "The poor you will always have with you." Hence, do not complain of the number of collections, especially as we live in a country where the Church is entirely dependent on the contributions of the faithful. What you give to the Church and to the poor, you give to the Lord, and he is a rich rewarder. "Alms delivereth from death ; and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting." (Job 12 : 9.) The works of charity and mercy are a species of sacrifice which we offer to God, and by which we draw down upon us his favor and protection. For this reason, the Apostle writes : "Do not forget to do good, and to impart ; for by such sacrifices, God's favor is obtained." (Heb. 13 : 16.)

In conclusion, I exhort you most earnestly that, following the good example of the early Christians and practical Catholics of all times, you spend your Sundays and holydays in such a manner as to make them days of grace, blessing, and salvation. Shun the sins which are often committed on those days. Regularly attend the holy Mass in the morning, and Vespers and Benediction in the afternoon ; and always with attention and reverence. Hear the word of God with good and perfect hearts ; frequently during the year receive the holy Sacraments, read devotional books, shun worldly and sinful amusements, perform works of mercy and charity,—in short, observe the Sundays and festival days in such a manner that on your death-bed you can look back upon them with consolation, and may then hope to be called to the eternal joys of heaven, which they symbolize. So may be fulfilled in you the promise of the Lord : "Every one that keepeth the Sabbath from profaning it, and that holdeth fast my covenant, I will bring him into my holy mount." (Isaiah 56 : 6.) Amen.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

PRIDE.

“Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled.” Luke 14 : 11.

Our Blessed Lord having gone on one occasion into the house of a certain prince of the Pharisees to eat bread, there encountered a dropsical man, whom he healed of his malady. Noting, at the same time, that many of the invited guests at the feast chose the first seats at table, he strove to duplicate the cure of the dropsical man by healing the Pharisees of their ambition and pride,—those spiritual evils which, in their effect upon the soul, so closely resemble the effects of the dropsy upon the body. He, accordingly, instructed them, as was his wont, by a parable, teaching them that pride leads to humiliation and confusion. Alas! pride is one of the capital or deadly sins with which almost all men are more or less infected; even Christians who otherwise lead an exemplary and edifying life, are not entirely free from it. Yet it is certain that no other sin causes such universal disaster and destruction in the world as pride, it being *the origin of all vices, and the ruin of all virtues*. Moreover, it is a very hidden sin: it knows how to conceal itself in the most secret folds of the human heart,—to cover itself, as it were, even with the mantle of apparent virtue, so that the vast majority of those who are proud, are quite unconscious of the presence and the deformity of the monster which lurks in their interior. It will, therefore, without doubt, be very expedient for us to make pride the subject of our meditation, to-day, and to consider

- I. *How we sin by pride, and*
- II. *What measures we must take, in order to guard against pride.*

I. We sin by pride,

- (a) *When we deliberately exaggerate our own gifts or personal importance.*

To this class belong all those who attribute to themselves qualities and perfections, which either they do not possess at all, or in a very inferior degree. Thus, for instance, many an artist or artificer thinks and extols himself as a thorough expert in his work, whereas he is far from proficiency. Many a woman imagines herself to be a paragon of beauty, while the whole world laughs at her homeliness. Many devotees believe that they have reached a high degree of sanctity; they fancy that, like St. Paul,

they are worthy of being rapt into the third heaven, whilst all the time, perhaps, they are full of grave faults and imperfections.

(b) *When we wish to impose upon others by false appearances.* People, (especially women), in the lower grades of life, deck themselves out in fine clothing, and in fashions far beyond their means, assuming a style belonging neither to their station nor calling, so that they might be taken for the scions of some distinguished family. So also in their gait, manners, and deportment they assume such affected, haughty airs, that one would suppose they had discovered the philosopher's stone; yet, if the truth were told, they can scarcely read or write correctly. Some, again, when in public, talk so piously and pray so devoutly, that they appear to be saints, and a superficial observer might expect them, one day, to be canonized; yet their private life abounds with scandals or disedifying misdeeds.

(c) *When we desire honors which we cannot justly claim, or aspire to a position for which we are unfit.* Have we not all met with people, my brethren, who, like the Pharisees of old, wish to be preferred everywhere,—who, abroad as well as at home, desire to be saluted reverentially, and are not satisfied unless the first place be assigned them in society. They would fain become the oracles of their respective circles, and when they open their mouths, all others must at once submit to them their own private views and judgment. Regarding their superiors, too often, with envy and jealousy, and their inferiors with supreme contempt,—they long to be thought of more account than all their equals put together, and they regard it as a personal insult if their associates do not take their part on every occasion, and praise whatever they say and do. They consider themselves competent to fill every post of honor, and, failing to attain the lofty station they covet, they complain of injustice and the neglect of merit, and bear ill-feeling against their more fortunate rivals.

2. *When we refuse God the honor due him.* Who does this?

(a) *Those who attribute the good they do, not to God, but to themselves.* All the natural and supernatural goods which we possess are gifts of God; for "Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights." (St. James 1:17.) Hence, the Apostle says: "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. 4:7.) If any one ascribe to himself the good which he has, he is unjust towards God, and sins by pride. This kind of pride is very common. The general run of people credit everything to their own application,—to their own skill, energy, and dexterity; and altogether ignore their indebtedness to

God, hoping thereby to escape the obligation of giving thanks to God. The farmer says: "It is no wonder I have good crops. I see to it myself that my land is well-prepared for the seed. There is no mystery in *my* prosperity." The merchant or banker says, in his turn: "I understand and superintend every detail of my affairs; I am a shrewd business-man and a capital financier; I am at my office late and early. How, then, can I help but succeed?" The physician cures his patient of a dangerous malady, and takes credit to himself that he has done so by his own skill and medical science. The lawyer pleads his client's case, and, winning it, congratulates himself that success was due entirely to his own eloquent arguments and legal acumen. The commander-in-chief leads his troops to battle, defeats the enemy, and puts them to flight, and lo! all the glory, (*he* thinks,) is the result of his incomparable strategy and knowledge of tactics. These wiseacres do not consider that, with all their diligence and shrewdness in business, all their expertness and proficiency in their several professions, they could not accomplish the least thing if God did not give his assistance and blessing. "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it." (Ps. 106 : 1, 2.)

(b) *Those who, in their works and actions, do not seek the honor of God, but their own honor.* A spiritual writer calls attention to the fact that there are three things which belong to God by special prerogative, viz. : *Glory, vengeance, and judgment.* As it is of faith that the Father "hath committed all judgment to the Son." (John 5 : 22.) "I am the Judge;" and that no man is permitted to take revenge into his own hands,—*"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord,"* so it is equally certain that all honor and glory are due to God alone. He assures us, by the mouth of his prophet, that he will give his honor to no one, reserving it for himself alone: "I will not give my glory to another." (Is. 42 : 8.) Hence, St. Augustine thus apostrophizes the Most High: "He who desires to be praised for what is thy pure gift, and does not seek thy glory but his own, is a thief and a robber, and has a likeness to the devil, because he would rob thee of thy honor." In all good works we must distinguish two things,—*the fruit*, (or the utility,) and *the honor*. God has ordained, in his tender bounty, that the entire fruit of the good work should fall to the creature's share, but that the honor be the Creator's alone. He who seeks honor and praise from his fellows in his good works, inverts the order established by God, and does the latter a great injury and injustice. Let us, therefore, my dear brethren, guard against seeking our own honor in anything, but rather have God's honor in view in all our actions, according to the admonition of the Apostle: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all things for the glory of God." (1 Cor. 10 : 31.)

3. *When we despise our neighbor.*

(a) *The proud man has a very high opinion of himself.* He fancies that others have not the talents and good qualities which he fondly imagines he possesses ; he runs mad with the idea that he is better than his fellow-men, and that he accomplishes more than any other creature on the face of the earth. This exaggerated opinion of himself, this over-weening self-sufficiency and offensive egotism, carry him so far that he disregards others, and looks down upon them with contempt. Witness the proud Pharisee of the Gospel, whose haughty glance pierced even into a distant corner of the Temple, where the humble publican smote his breast in contrition ; and whose vainglorious heart gave vent to the daring words : “ O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, nor such as this publican.”

(b) If this contempt, like the Pharisee’s, is universal, it is obviously madness, for only a madman can imagine himself better than all other men. If it refer only to some, it militates against *charity and justice*. *Against charity*, which obliges us to respect every man, even the poorest and most miserable, and to honor in him the dignity of an immortal soul. *Against justice*, for although every man cannot claim honor and esteem as his lawful due, he has a right, at least, to demand that he should not be dishonored and despised. He who despises his neighbor, sins also against God, since all men are the creatures, the images, and the children of the Most High. Even the greatest sinner cannot be wilfully contemned, inasmuch as Jesus has shed for his salvation his own most precious Blood. Moreover, he who is now a scandalous sinner may, by the infinite mercy of God, be converted in a moment and become the holiest of saints ; whilst, on the other hand, no one, not even the most righteous, can be assured that he will not yet fall into sin and perish eternally. And now, my dear brethren, having recognized the enormity of the sins arising from this subtle vice, the question naturally presents itself : “ *What measures must we take in order to guard against pride ?* ”

II. In order to guard against this chief of the deadly sins, we should consider,

1. *That Almighty God hates and punishes no vice more severely than pride.*

(a) This may easily be inferred from the conduct of Christ towards the Scribes and Pharisees. He was all mildness towards even the greatest offenders ; he pardoned the public sinner, Mary Magdalen, the publican, Zacchaeus, the thief on the cross ; and he invited all miserable transgres-

sors to draw near to his sacred person, addressing to them these consoling words : "Come to me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." (Matt. 11 : 28.) But towards the Scribes and Pharisees, whose chief vice was pride, he conducted himself in an entirely different manner. Their vainglory and presumption seemed to embitter even the ineffable sweetness of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He showed them no mercy nor mildness ; he pronounced woe upon them repeatedly ; he reproached them as "hypocrites" and "whited sepulchres," and declared that eternal damnation would be their lot.

(b) *God punishes no vice so severely as pride.* As high edifices, steeples, and tall trees are in greater danger of being struck by lightning than low-built houses, huts, and little, insignificant plants, so God directs his strokes especially against those proud heads which lift themselves up disdainfully above their fellows. He cast the proud angels out of Paradise, and precipitated them into the lowest abyss of hell. "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble." (Luke 1 : 5, 2.) He drove our first parents out of the Garden of Eden, because they sinned through a proud desire to equal God in his knowledge and wisdom ; and he subjected them, in consequence of their transgression, to many miseries, unruly passions, and, finally, to death. Pharaoh of Egypt, full of overbearing haughtiness, opposed the passage of the chosen people out of his dominions, crying aloud : "Who is the Lord, that I should hear his voice, and let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." (Exod. 5 : 2.) Behold, my dear brethren, the terrible consequence of this presumptuous insolence ! The proud king, with his whole army, found a grave in the waters of the Red Sea. "He hath showed might in his arm," says the Blessed Virgin Mary, (our sweet model of humility), speaking of the infinite power of the Most High ; "he hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart." (Luke 1 : 51.) On account of his pride, Aman was hanged on the very gibbet which he had erected for the execution of Mordechai. Nabuchodonosor was also most severely punished on account of his pride ; he was forced to eat grass like an ox, and live among the beasts of the field. And the experience of those versed in the spiritual life, goes to show that God often permits the haughty and arrogant to fall into the most loathsome sins of the flesh, to the end that having refused, like Nabuchodonosor, to humble themselves voluntarily, they may be humbled, at last, by their foul crimes, and degraded beneath the level of the brute creation. If God thus severely punishes the proud upon earth, how much more severely, my brethren, will he not punish them hereafter in the everlasting flames of hell !

2. *Pride in itself makes man miserable.* It is the inherent quality of every vice that, in one way or another, it renders life bitter and miserable

to its victims, and this is particularly true of pride. St. Augustine says : "Pride brings forth envy as its legitimate offspring, and the bad mother is always accompanied by her bad child." From this, we may easily infer that pride is attended with much bitterness. Seeing others esteemed and himself slighted, anger and envy at once arise in the heart of the proud man ; he becomes excited ; peace departs from his soul, and he feels nothing but ill-humor and discontent. Witness the case of Aman, to whose melancholy end we have just alluded. The prime favorite of King Assuerus possessed an abundance of temporal goods, and all the people bent their knees to him ; yet he felt unhappy because of a fancied insult or disrespect from the humble Mordochai. "Whereas I have all things," he confessed himself, "I think I have nothing, so long as I see Mordochai the Jew, sitting before the king's gate." (Esth. 5 : 13.)

3. *Pride robs man of all merits for eternity.* Only those exercises of virtue,—those pious works which have the honor of God for their object,—are meritorious in his sight, and can claim an everlasting reward. On the contrary, whatever is done for one's own honor, is destitute of supernatural merit, and is valueless before God, no matter how grand or praiseworthy it may appear in the eyes of the world. The Scribes and Pharisees did much apparent good, but because they were filled with ambition and pride, Christ declared that they had already received their reward. No matter how many good works a man may have done, how many virtues he may have practised, if he takes pride in them, he becomes the most deplorable and miserable of men. St. Basil says : "Ambition does not indeed effect that we do not work at all, but waits till we have done the good works and have labored very hard, then it robs us of them, and snatches out of our hands the palm due to us." In short, my dear brethren, the spirit of pride resembles those pirates who lie in wait for a rich merchant-vessel returning from afar, inasmuch as it delights to fall upon the soul most advanced in virtue, and quickly strip it of all the precious treasures of its merits. O, how foolish is the proud man ! He pours water into a sieve ; he throws dust before the wind ; he deposits his gold and jewels in a bag full of holes. Well may the sorrowful indignation of the Lord over such souls, find voice in that remarkable simile : "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and they have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (Jer. 2 : 13.)

4. *As an antidote to this vice, let us consider that we are poor, miserable creatures.* St. Bernard says that, in order to defeat the spirit of pride, we must often ask ourselves the three following questions : "What were you ? What are you ? What will you be ?" "Remember whence you came, and be abashed." We all came from our mother's womb, weak, feeble creatures, "children of wrath," who would assuredly have perished, if others had not

cared for us. "I was conceived in iniquities," says the Psalmist; "and in sins did my mother conceive me." (Ps. 50 : 7.) Can we be proud of our origin? Thousands of years passed before we had even an existence, and we should still be in our original nothingness, if it had not pleased God to give us the being we now enjoy. "Remember where you are, and sigh." Where are our souls, dear brethren? Where, but in bodies which are subject to a thousand frailties and to the law of animal sensuality;—bodies which are so delicately put together that their fragile mechanism is the sport of every trivial accident,—their continual infirmity only one degree from putrefaction? And what, my friends, is the dwelling-place of this perishable body? It is the earth, which has been accursed of God;—this valley of tears, whence numberless sighs, and groans, and lamentations daily ascend to heaven. What can dust and ashes be proud of? *What are we?* Criminals, condemned to death. "Remember, O man, whither you go, and tremble." Whither goes your soul? To the place of execution. The sentence is already pronounced: "*You must die.*" You must appear before the divine Judge, who will demand an account even of every idle word. Whither goes your body? Into the grave, where it will moulder and return into its original dust. "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return." (Gen. 3 : 19.)

5. *Let us consider that Jesus was humble.* The Son of God chose for his mother a poor little maiden of Galilee; for his foster-father, a lowly artisan; for his palace, a wretched stable. For thirty years he was the reputed son of Joseph, the carpenter, toiling with him in the greatest obscurity. He associated himself constantly with the poor and the outcast, choosing humble, illiterate fishermen for the princes and pillars of his Church. His humility was foretold by the Prophets of the Old Law, and he was depicted as "a worm and no man,"—as one whose very look "was hidden and despised." He permitted his infinite power and wisdom to be insulted by the presumptuous censures, the impertinent questions of the Scribes and Pharisees,—yea, even by the rash familiarity of his own chosen followers. His whole Passion, from the Agony in the Garden to his death upon the Cross between two thieves, was one dread, protracted drama of unparalleled humiliation and self-abasement. The audacious kiss of Judas upon his divine face; the white robe wherewith Herod clothed him when he mocked him as a fool; the blows, the spittle, the plucking of his sacred beard; the crown of thorns and the scarlet mantle, whereby the rude soldiers satirized his royalty; the sacrilegious lottery over his venerable garments; his very burial, like a pauper, in another's tomb,—all are so many eloquent protests against pride which might suffice to melt the proudest heart to tears of humble repentance. He that was God became man, to teach *us*, my brethren, that we are but men. Could he have humbled himself more? Could he not, in truth, cry out to

us : "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart. (Matt. 11 : 29.) "Be ashamed, O man, to be proud, when God has humbled himself on your account." (St. Augustine.)

6. Let us remember, also, that *all the Saints were humble*. They served God with fidelity, practised all the virtues in an heroic degree, wrought the greatest miracles, and rendered the grandest services to men, yet they were little in their own eyes, and persistently crushed down all vain thoughts and self-complacency. Mary, the holy and immaculate Mother of God, the peerless Queen of heaven and earth, calls herself simply *the handmaid of the Lord*. St. John the Baptist, the greatest among those born of women, deems himself unworthy to loose the latchet of our Saviour's shoes. St. Paul, who was rapt to the third heaven, says of himself : "I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle." (1 Cor. 15 : 9.) St. Augustine, after his conversion, wrote a book of *Confessions*, in which he laid bare to the public all the humiliating sins of his past life. St. Benedict fled, like many other saints, from the pomps and honors of the world to bury himself in obscurity, in imitation of the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ. When the papal envoys brought to St. Bonaventure the insignia of Cardinal, they found him washing dishes in the kitchen of his monastery ; and it is recorded of St. Francis Borgia that he was accustomed to meditate two hours daily on his own nothingness. What examples of rare humility ! Contemplating such models, dear friends, are we not mad or fatally deluded, if we suffer pride to reign within us ?

In conclusion, attend, I beg of you, to the advice of old Tobias to his son : "Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, or in thy words ; for from it all perdition took its beginning." (Job 4 : 14.) Frequently reflect upon the awful consequences which pride draws after it ; daily consider your own misery, and with the example of Jesus and his Saints constantly before your eyes, learn of them to be meek and humble of heart. Suppress, at its rising, every vain, self-complacent thought, and never forget that all the good qualities of mind or body you may possess, are an unmerited gift of God, to whom alone all honor is due. Since much will be required of him to whom much has been given, the more graces and favors you have received, the more you should tremble at the thought of the rigorous account, one day, to be demanded of your stewardship. Never, without special reason, say of yourselves anything that may redound to your credit ; disregard the praise of men and the applause of the world, since they are vain and perishable as their origin ; but endeavor to merit God's praise by a holy, virtuous life, well knowing that the deeds done for his honor and glory, alone have weight and value in the unerring scales of eternity.

J. E. Z.

FIRST SUNDAY IN OCTOBER.

SOLEMNITY OF THE HOLY ROSARY.

“*The foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the wise, and the weak things of the world has God chosen, that he may confound the strong, and the mean things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, and things that are not, that he might destroy the things that are.*” 1 Cor. 1 : 27.

How different are the ways of God from the ways of man! If man wishes to perform any great action, he has recourse to great and important means to accomplish it; but if God wills to perform anything *unusually grand or sublime*, he makes use of *small and apparently contemptible instruments*. He used the *rod of Moses* to effect his great miracles, and help to deliver the Israelites from slavery. He chose a *shepherd-boy* to slay the mighty enemy of the same chosen people with a *sling and a pebble* taken from the brook. He bade Gideon select *three hundred warriors out of thirty-two thousand* to confound the power of the cruel Madianites. He chose *the Cross*, the once accursed tree and sign of ignominy, to be the means of our redemption. And to convert the universe, he sent forth *twelve poor, unlearned fishermen*.

The present festival, my beloved brethren, commemorates, also, an object small and contemptible in itself, which God has chosen for the performance of great things—THE HOLY ROSARY.

I. It has been an instrument in the hands of God in destroying infidelity and heresy *outside of the Church*.

II. It has been a blessed means of eradicating impiety, and of effecting many miraculous results *within the pale of the Church itself*.

I. What has it done, you ask, for those *outside the Church*?

1. To form an idea of what it has done, we must go back, my brethren, several hundred years, even to the time of the great St. Dominic. He was not, however, the inventor of the beads; they were in existence before his time, and were used by the pious hermit in the desert and by the monk in his cloister; but until St. Dominic's day, the Rosary was comparatively unknown to the great mass of Catholics.

2. Up to the twelfth century of the Christian era, many heresies had sprung up, causing ruin and havoc in the Church. The immaculate Spouse of Christ sat as one in mourning and desolation. Every day, she saw her children snatched from her bosom, infected with the plague-spot of heresy. There were thousands who still dared to call themselves Catholics, but who were as rotten branches, fit only to be cut off from the tree of life and cast into the fire. St. Bernard, and other zealous servants of God, bewailed the fatal schisms and scandals of their time, but still the evil went on increasing. The heresy of the Albigenses had carried along with it *whole nations*, with their sovereigns and rulers. Jesus Christ had been taken from his altar, and the idol Baal set thereon. The statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary had been trodden under foot by those who denied her glorious title of Mother of God, her spotless virginity, and all those other wonderful privileges conferred on her by the Almighty. But the time came when God had pity on his Church. The great St. Dominic had deplored the spread of evil, but found himself powerless to cope with it, until one day, inspired by the Holy Ghost, he contemplated the string of beads he was accustomed to use, and cried out: "*Behold the means by which the enemies of God are overcome!*" He meditated long on this incident, and the result was that he went forth *conquering and a conqueror*. His followers journeyed through Europe by his direction, and, passing from nation to nation, everywhere recommended the use of the Rosary to the people, instructing them how to practice that beautiful devotion. Blessed be the powerful intercession of the Mother of God!—the Church began to triumph.

It was no uncommon sight in those days, to see thousands casting themselves at the feet of the saint, and asking to be reinstated in their privileges as Christians. We are told that sometimes he would leave in their hands tens of thousands of rosaries, enjoining them to practice that beautiful devotion to the end, that heresy might be destroyed from the face of God's earth.

3. The age of St. Dominic passed away, my beloved brethren, but not the devotion to the Rosary. In the year 1571, when Christendom was threatened by the infidel, the holy Pope, Pius V., prayed fervently upon his beads, that the enemies of God might be scattered, and at the same moment the unbelieving host was destroyed at Lepanto, not so much by man as by God. Nearly two hundred years after, another holy Pontiff, Clement XII., caused the festival of the Rosary to be celebrated in all parts of the world, (as it is to-day, my brethren,) to commemorate the victory gained by a comparatively small army under Prince Eugene of Savoy, over the mighty forces of the Mahomedans, thus sanctioning what was then believed, (as it is, also, this day,) that the triumph was due to the prayers of the Rosary Confraternity at Rome. In

our own times, my beloved, you have all been witnesses of the extraordinary devotion of our illustrious Pontiff, Leo XIII., to the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, inasmuch as he has added to her Litany the invocation: "Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, pray for us!" and has counseled, for these past two years, the devout recital of the beads by all his faithful children, not only on Rosary Sunday, but on every day of the month of October, hoping thereby to again defeat the enemies of the Church. Ah! yes, my brethren, *God makes use of little things to accomplish great ends.*

How many would be outside of the true fold, this day, were it not for the devout Catholics who have prayed fervently, year after year, reciting the beads for the conversion of unbelievers! The Rosary of the Blessed Virgin has been called "*the increase of Christians,*" because it has been so efficacious in bringing back the wandering sheep of the fold to the feet of the Good Shepherd. Pope after pope, bishop after bishop, have united in sanctioning this beautiful devotion, which is at once so simple and so holy; and thus one of the *smallest of things* has become one of the *greatest instruments of God* for the conversion of heretics to the true faith.

II. But this is not all, my brethren. Apart from its wonderful effects upon those outside the fold, we should love the Rosary for what it has also done for those *within the Church.*

1. How many hapless sheep would wander astray, and be torn with the briars of sin, were it not for the prayers offered on the beads! I will give you one instance of the kind. St. Vincent Ferrer, whose heart was filled with love for poor sinners, heard of a wretched malefactor, condemned to suffer capital punishment, but who refused to confess his crime or make any preparation for death. St. Vincent went to him with two assistants, but, alas! that obdurate sinner still refused to speak to them. At last the Saint said: "Why will you persist in being damned forever, my poor man, when Jesus Christ wishes to save you? And the man answered: "I will be damned in spite of Jesus Christ!" Then said the Saint: "You will be saved in spite of yourself!" and, kneeling down with his assistants, he recited the Rosary. Before he had finished those prayers upon the beads, which the world despises so much, the man threw himself on his knees and implored him to hear his confession. This is only one instance out of thousands that could be mentioned, my dear brethren, showing how pleasing this devotion is in the sight of heaven, and how efficacious in drawing poor sinners to God.

2. And yet there are people, (alas! even among Catholics,) who despise it, and exclaim, with ill-concealed pride: "*This is not for me; I can read!*" Let me tell you, my disdainful friends, that there is scarcely a bishop or priest

in the universe, to say nothing of the Holy Father himself, who passes a day without reciting a portion of the Rosary. Those holy monks and nuns who have separated themselves from the world to serve God more perfectly, make it their most cherished devotion ; and the mightiest kings and princes of the earth have loved to say it, and meditate upon its mysteries. I will mention only two out of many examples. The great emperor, Charles V., never failed to recite the whole fifteen decades before engaging in any important enterprise. Philip II., King of Spain, when on his death-bed, called his son to him, and said : “ If you wish the kingdom which I leave to you, to be prosperous, never pass a day without reciting the Rosary.”

Again, my brethren, to come down to our own times, behold Daniel O’Connell, the celebrated Repealer and Liberator of Ireland, standing at the corner of the Parliament House, in London, with his beads in his hands, reciting the Rosary for the successful issue of that debate on which the fate of his country depended ! See with what confidence and earnestness he beseeches the intercession of Mary in behalf of his persecuted fatherland !

3. Ah ! what a consolation should not the Rosary be to us all, my beloved,—to rich and poor, high and lowly, learned and illiterate ! The beads should be in the hands of every Christian, and not a day should pass without reciting them, and gaining the indulgences attached thereto. You know how simple are those prayers, yet what can be more sublime than the “ *Our Father* ? ”—the prayer which fell from the lips of Jesus Christ, when his apostles said : “ Teach us how to pray,”—the prayer which contains a petition for everything we need for soul or body ! Again, what more beautiful or more salutary prayer than the “ *Hail Mary* ? ” But some may ask : “ Why recite the *Hail Mary* so often ? ” Ah ! the *Hail Mary* is not simply a greeting to the Immaculate Virgin, but rather a mingled ejaculation and prayer to God, passing through the hands of his Blessed Mother. It is like the repetition of the evangelical song : “ Holy, Holy, Holy Lord of Hosts ; ” and it is so short and simple, that it can be acquired by the most ignorant, and repeated without weariness by the most learned. These blessed *Hail Marys* are like so many drops of heavenly rain refreshing the thirsty soul,—like so many proverbial drops of water which, constantly falling, wear away the stones, *i. e.*, leave their impression upon the hardest of hearts.

4. Besides, my brethren, the Rosary does not consist merely of multiplied *Our Fathers* and *Hail Marys*. All the most beautiful mysteries of our holy religion are incorporated with those prayers. The Rosary is composed, as you know, of fifteen decades, namely—*five Joyful, five Sorrowful, and five Glorious* mysteries. There are many who know not how to read, but by reciting these beads and thinking on these mysteries, they be-

come more learned than the grandest philosophers and scientists of the age. What profounder art or science can we study than those Joyful mysteries, which tell us of the Annunciation of Mary, of the coming of the Redeemer, of his Birth and Childhood? What more do we need to know than those Sorrowful mysteries, which reveal to us that if we would reign hereafter with Christ in glory, we must first follow him, here below, in the thorny way of the Cross? What more sublime lessons can we learn than those of the Glorious mysteries of the Resurrection and triumphant Ascension of Christ into heaven; of the descent of the Holy Ghost, of the Assumption into heaven of the Blessed Mother of God, and her triumphant Coronation in the kingdom of her Son? The whole scheme of man's redemption, an epitome of the Gospel, in short, is contained in the fifteen mysteries of the holy Rosary. He who knows how to recite these properly, *knows enough for any man*; for he is told by them that *there is a heaven and a hell, that there is a Redeemer, Jesus Christ, who died for him, by the merits of whose death he cannot fall to be saved, if he will but remain faithful to him to the end!* And as the beads pass through the fingers, the *Our Father* and *Hail Mary* are recited, and meditation made on each mystery; which, if done devoutly, cannot fail to make the one who prays a saint. How beautiful and consoling is this devotion, my brethren, which has effected the conversion of so many sinners, and aided and comforted so many holy servants of God in their painful progress to perfection! How many are there in this country who live far away from church, and cannot hear Mass on Sundays, and who have found the Rosary their only support, under God, in their difficulties and trials! How many, lying on their sick-beds, have experienced consolation from merely touching the beads which hung around their necks!

The blessed John Berchmans used to say: "There are three things which I hope God will let me have at the hour of my death, *my crucifix, my beads, and my book of rules!*" Love your beads, dear children, carry them always with you; for you know not the moment death may come or temptation assail you. In a time of imminent peril, that blessed Rosary may protect you from many a danger. Suffer no day to pass without reciting at least a portion of it. By doing so, you may be sure that the holy Queen of the Rosary will bestow many blessings upon you and upon your families. Devotion to Mary is a sure sign of salvation, and can belong but to the true Church. Her intercession is so powerful, that no soul who appeals to her with the requisite faith, humility, and confidence, can long remain obstinate in error or vice. Pray, then, to her, my beloved brethren, and persevere in imploring her aid. Place all your trust and confidence in her loving and powerful intercession; recite the Rosary daily in her honor; and, above all, follow her hallowed example, and practice the virtues which adorned her character, especially her humility and chastity.

Do this, and she will obtain for you, by her intercession, assistance and consolation in this life, and eternal happiness in the next.

In conclusion, dear brethren, I leave you now before this altar of the God of mercy, begging him to inspire you by the light of his Holy Spirit, to put this devotion into practice. The day will come when, (if you have been faithful to the end,) you will thank God most fervently for every *Our Father* and *Hail Mary* he gave you grace to recite upon your beads; and then, dear Christians, in that solemn hour of death, with the Rosary around your neck, the crucifix in your hands, and the names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph on your lips, you may pass with confidence into the presence of God, to see him, love him, and possess him, to stand before his throne in company with all the Saints, and sing forever the praises of our blessed Mother, the glorious and most merciful Queen of the Holy Rosary.

Amen.

M. P. O'BRIEN.

FIRST SUNDAY IN OCTOBER.

SOLEMNITY OF THE HOLY ROSARY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

“*Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women.*”
Luke 1 : 28.

The festival of the Rosary was instituted, my beloved brethren, to implore the divine mercy in favor of the Church and of all the faithful, and to thank God for the protection he has afforded us, and the innumerable benefits he has conferred upon us through the patronage and intercession of his Blessed Mother; and, in particular, for his having delivered Christendom from the arms of the infidels in 1571, by the miraculous victory of Lepanto, implored with extraordinary fervor in the devotion of the Rosary. In thanksgiving for this great victory on the 7th of October, (the first Sunday of the month,) 1571, St. Pius V. instituted an annual commemoration under the title of St. Mary of Victories; but Gregory XIII., in 1573, changed this title to that of the Rosary.

I. The Rosary, as you know, is a devotional practice, in which the faithful, by the recitation of fifteen *Our Fathers* and one hundred and fifty *Hail Marys*, are taught to honor our divine Redeemer in fifteen principal mysteries of his sacred life, and that of his holy Mother. It is, therefore, an abridgment of the Gospel,—a summary of the joys, sufferings, and triumphs of Jesus Christ, and an epitome of his own, and his immaculate Mother's, earthly history. It ought, then, to be the most cherished devotion of every true Christian, whose delight it should be to meditate upon those holy mysteries, to praise and thank God for them continually, to implore his mercy through them, and to regulate his life and form his spirit by the holy impressions which they produce upon the soul. Most easy in itself, the Rosary is adapted to the most limited capacity; while, at the same time, it is capable of elevating the soul to the highest degree of contemplation.

1. What prayer, my brethren, can be more sublime than that which Christ himself vouchsafed to teach us, and which is called pre-eminently *the Lord's Prayer!* Pious persons who penetrate the spirit of each one of its holy petitions, are never weary of repeating them, but always recite them with fresh fervor, and more ardent sentiments of piety. To obtain mercy and all graces, no prayer, certainly, can be offered to God more effica-

cious or more pleasing than that which was composed and put into our hearts and mouths, by his own divine Son. It comprises all conceivable acts of humility, compunction, love, and praise. All other prayers are but paraphrases, or expositions of the *Our Father*. It is especially agreeable and honorable to God, and beneficial to us, when it is offered in commemoration of the holy mysteries of our Redemption, as an homage of thanksgiving for them, and to implore God's mercy through the same.

2. The *Hail Mary*, or Angelical Salutation, is often repeated in the Rosary, because, as it contains a form of praise for the Incarnation of our Lord, it best suits a devotion instituted to honor that great mystery. It is addressed to the Mother of God, it is true, invoking her powerful intercession, but it is chiefly an act of praise and thanksgiving to her divine Son for his mercy, most fully displayed in the mystery of the Incarnation. The Holy Ghost is the principal author of this beautiful prayer. The Archangel Gabriel, (the ambassador of the Blessed Trinity to Mary,) began it; St. Elizabeth, (another organ of the Holy Ghost,) continued it; and lastly, the Church finished it. In her general council of Ephesus, the latter bade us invoke Mary as the Mother of God, in condemnation of the blasphemous errors of the heresiarch, Nestorius.

3. We add to the angel's Salutation, the name of the holy Virgin, this being a name of sweetness and veneration to every devout Christian. The word *Mary* signifies *Lady*, (or *Sovereign*), a *star of the sea*, or a *bitter sea*. Both names, *Lady* and *Sea-star*, apply admirably to her who is, at once, the glorious queen of heaven, and our guiding star over the stormy sea of this world. And if we contemplate the deep ocean of her dolours, we see why the name of *Mary* means "a bitter sea." "O daughter of Sion!" cries the prophet *Jeremias*, "great as the sea is thy destruction, who shall heal thee?" (*Lam. 2 : 13.*) Hence, you see that we cannot pass over as insignificant those words of the Evangelist. "And the name of the virgin was *Mary*." For her name is a mystery in itself, and ought to be to us most amiable, sweet, and awful. "Of such virtue and excellence is this name, that the heavens exult, the earth rejoices, the Angels send forth hymns of praise when *Mary* is named." (*St. Bernard.*)

4. Next to this holy name, the words of the Salutation are to be considered. *Hail* is a word of congratulation and joy. The Archangel addressed it with profoundest awe to this incomparable Virgin. It was anciently an extraordinary thing if an angel appeared to one of the Patriarchs and Prophets; and, on such occasions, he was received with the highest veneration,—as a superior being, exalted above men both by nature and grace. But when the arch-angel Gabriel visited *Mary*, he was struck with her exalted dignity and pre-eminence, and approaching, sa-

luted her with admiration and respect. Though accustomed to the brilliant lustre of the heavenly spirits, yet he was dazzled at the surpassing glory of her whom he came to address as Mother of God. With what humility, then, ought we,—worms of the earth, and base sinners as we are,—to address the Queen of the holy Rosary in the same salutation !

5. With sentiments of profound respect, we style her with the angel : “*Full of grace.*” Though she is descended from the royal house of David, her illustrious pre-eminence is not derived from her birth, or any other accidental advantages ; but from that prerogative in which alone true excellence consists,—the grace of God, in which she surpassed all other creatures. God deals out portions of his grace to others in an inferior measure ; but Mary was destined to become the Mother of the Author of grace. To her, therefore, God gave every grace and every virtue in an eminent degree. “*Mary was filled with the ocean of the Holy Ghost poured upon her.*” (Ven. Bede.) It was just, that the nearer she approached to the fountain of grace, the more abundantly she should be enriched by it ; and, as God was pleased to make choice of her for his Mother, nothing less than a supereminent gift of grace could correspond with her transcendent dignity. The Church, therefore, applies to her that of the Canticles : “*Thou art all fair, O my love ; and there is not a spot in thee.*” (Cant. 4 : 7.)

6. “*The Lord is with thee.*” God, by his immensity or omnipotence, is with all creatures, since in him all things have their beginning. He is much more intimately with all the just, inasmuch as he dwells in them by his grace, and manifests in them the most gracious effects of his goodness and power ; but the Blessed Virgin Mary, being full of grace and agreeable in his eyes above all other mere creatures, having also the closest union with Christ as his Mother, and burning with more than seraphic charity,—is his most beloved tabernacle, and he favors her with the special effects of his extraordinary presence, displaying in her his boundless munificence, power, and love.

II. The following praise was given to her in the same words, both by the arch-angel Gabriel and St. Elizabeth.

1. “*Blessed art thou among women.*” Mary is truly called blessed above all other women, because she has been always preserved from the least stain of sin, and has been the happy instrument of God in converting into blessings the maledictions laid on all mankind. When Judith had delivered Bethulia from temporal destruction, Ozias, the prince of the people, said to her : “*Blessed art thou, O daughter, above all women upon the face of the earth.*” (Judith 13 : 23.) *The people all blessed her with one voice, say-*

ing : *Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people.*" (Judith 15 : 10.) How much more emphatically shall we from our hearts pronounce *Her* blessed above all women, who brought forth for us the Author of all spiritual and eternal blessings, and co-operated with him in the redemption of our race. She most justly said of herself, in the deepest sense of gratitude to the divine goodness : "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." (Luke 1 : 48.) By bestowing these praises on Mary, it is principally to God, (as we have said before,) that we offer our profound homage of praise for the great mystery of the Incarnation. The pious woman mentioned in the Gospel, who, upon hearing the doctrine of Christ, cried out : "Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and blessed are the breasts that gave thee suck," (Luke 11 : 27,) meant chiefly to commend our Lord himself. In like manner, the praises we address to Mary in the Angelical Salutation are reflected primarily on her divine Son, from whom and by whom alone she is entitled to them, since it is because of his gifts and graces, and for his sake, that we praise and honor her. Hence, the *Hail Mary* may be called, with truth, the doxology of the Incarnation ; for, having first styled the Mother blessed above all women, we pronounce the Son infinitely more blessed, by saying :

2. "*And blessed is the fruit of thy womb.*" In an infinitely higher sense of praise, love, and honor, and with a benediction infinitely superior to hers, we call Christ blessed forever by God, Angels and men ; *by God*, as his well-beloved Son, in his Divinity, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father ; *by the Angels*, as the author of their being, grace, and glory, inasmuch as he is their God ; and in his Incarnation, (as the repairer of their losses by men), their Redeemer. *By men*, because of the infinite evils from which he has delivered us, the pains and labors which he has sustained for us, the ransom which he has paid with his Precious Blood to redeem us, the everlasting and infinite advantages which he has purchased for us. Bearing all this in mind, ought we not, my brethren, in a spirit of love and praise, ever call her blessed through whom we have received this glorious Redeemer ; ever call him infinitely more blessed who is the God of sanctity, the inexhaustible Fountain whence all graces and blessings flow ?

3. "*And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.*" The name of Jesus is a name of unspeakable sweetness and grace, a name most delightful to every loving soul, terrible to the wicked spirits, and worthy of the respect and adoration of all creatures. At its very sound, every knee in heaven, earth, and hell shall bend, and every creature be filled with awe and gratitude.

III. The last part of this prayer : "*Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for*

us sinners now and at the hour of our death," is a supplication. The prayer of the blessed spirits in heaven, my dear Christians, consists chiefly in acts of adoration, love, praise, and thanksgiving. We, in this vale of tears, utter a prayer that is mingled with sighs over our miseries and afflictions; and as often as we kneel in adoration before God, we cry to him for help and deliverance. While we thus realize, as we should, our manifold needs, and implore the divine assistance, God, who has a perfect knowledge of our baseness and corruption, has compassion on us as a tender Father.

But our insensibility under our miseries often provokes his just indignation. He would have us feel and acknowledge the weight of our evils, our extreme spiritual poverty, and total insufficiency, the rigor of his judgments, of the frightful torments of an unhappy eternity which we deserve for our sins, and the manifold dangers which spring from ourselves and our invisible enemies. He requires that we confess the abyss of miseries in which we are sunk, and out of its depths raise our voice to him with tears and groans, owning our total dependence on him. If a beggar ask an alms of us, his wants make him eloquent; he sums them all up to move us to compassion; sickness, pains, hunger, anguish of mind, the distress of his whole family, and whatever else can set off his miseries in the most moving manner. In like manner, my brethren, when we pray, we must feel and lay open before our heavenly Father, the divine Alms-giver, our deep wounds, our universal indigence; and with all possible earnestness, implore his merciful succor. We must beg that God himself will be pleased to form in our hearts such continued sincere desires, as to inspire us with a deep sense of all our miseries, and teach us to display them before him, so as to move him to pity and relieve us. For this reason, we address ourselves, in the first place, to the Blessed Virgin, as the refuge of the afflicted, and especially of sinners. In this prayer we repeat her holy name, to excite ourselves to reverence and devotion. By calling her Mother of God, we express her most exalted dignity, and renew our confidence in her patronage. For what can she not obtain for us of a God who was pleased to be born of her? We, at the same time, remember that she is also spiritually our Mother; for, by adoption, we are brothers and co-heirs of Christ, who, in his dying moments on Calvary, committed us to her as her children, in the person of St. John. She is to us a Mother of more than maternal tenderness, incomparably more sensible of our miseries, and more ready to procure us deliverance from them than carnal mothers can be, as in charity she surpasses all other mere creatures. But to call her Mother, and to deserve her compassion, we must sincerely renounce those disorders by which we have so often trampled upon the blood of her Son.

These words: *Holy Mary, Mother of God*, are a kind of preface to our petition, in which we humbly entreat her to pray for us. We do not ask her to *give us grace*; we know that to be the most precious gift of God,

who alone can bestow it on us. We only desire her to *ask it for us of her divine Son*, and to join her powerful intercession to our unworthy prayers. We declare ourselves sinners, to humble ourselves in the deepest sentiments of compunction, and to excite her compassion by laying our extreme miseries and necessities before her. Mary, from her fuller and more distinct knowledge of the evil of sin, and the wretched state of a soul infected with it, forms a much more perfect idea of the abyss of our evils than we can possibly do, and in proportion to her knowledge, is the measure of her charity. But we must declare ourselves sinners with sincere sentiments of contrition and regret; for the will which still adheres to sin, provokes indignation, not compassion, in God, and in all the saints who love sovereignly his sanctity and justice. How dare impenitent sinners present themselves before God with their hands yet stained, as it were, with the adorable Blood of his Son which they have shed, and which they still continue, (in the language of St. Paul,) to trample upon? We must, therefore, confess our guilt with the most profound sentiments of compunction. In proportion to our sincerity and fervor, we shall excite God's pity, and the tender compassion of his Mother. Mary, having borne in her womb the Author of grace and mercy, has put on the bowels of the purest and most loving commiseration for sinners. By declaring ourselves sinners, we sufficiently express what it is that we beg of God,—namely, the *grace of a perfect repentance, the remission of all our sins, and strength to resist all temptations thereto*. We ask, also, for all graces and virtues, especially that of divine charity. All this is sufficiently understood by the very nature of our request, without being expressed; for what else ought we to ask of God through the intercession of her who is the Mother of grace? We beg this abundance of all graces, at present, because we stand in need of it every moment of our lives; and the grace of perseverance for the hour of our death, that great and most dreadful moment, whose eternal interests must be the principal object of all our prayers.

The whole life of a Christian should be nothing else but a constant preparation for that tremendous hour which will decide our everlasting lot. Then will the devil assail us with the utmost of his fury; then will our own weakness in mind and body, the lively remembrance of our past sins, and other alarming circumstances and difficulties, make us stand in need of the strongest succors of divine grace; and to this end, let us daily recite the Rosary for the grace of a happy death, remembering that the Blessed Alanus has said, (as St. Liguori cites), “Let it be to thee a most probable sign of eternal salvation, if thou dost perseveringly honor the Blessed Virgin by daily reciting her Rosary.”

B

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE ARGUMENT OF DIVINE LOVE.

“*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.*” *Matt. 22 : 37.*

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,” says our dear Redeemer, Jesus Christ. “I am the Lord thy God ; thou shalt not have strange gods before me,”—so said the Most High, in the Old Law, to his chosen people ; and thus we are taught the first and greatest command of the Law. The *first*, because it refers directly and absolutely to the Supreme Being,—to the Creator and Lord of all things ; the *greatest*, because, to some extent, all the other commandments are contained in this ; and, if we observe the first in all its requirements, we keep and observe all the rest.

Every rational creature, be he ever so far estranged from virtue,—be he ever so blinded by passion or hardened by crime,—every man, I say, so long as he admits that he is a creature of God, formed by his almighty hand and animated by his adorable breath, admits, at the same time, that he must love, obey, and serve his Creator and Supreme Lord. But, alas ! how many, even amongst Christians, seem practically to forget either that there is a God or that anything is required of them as the creatures of that God. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God” is virtually ignored by many. I trust, indeed, my dear brethren, that you are not amongst that unhappy number, still you will permit me to dwell a few moments upon these first words of my text, to the end that you may more fully understand the meaning of this commandment, and more perfectly comply with its requirements. Know, then, that it is *our strict obligation to love God*, because

I. He is the sovereign Master and Lord of all ; and St. Augustine says, the respect, homage, and submission which are his due, are all simply expressed by the word *love*. “In no other manner is God honored, except by loving him,” says that holy Father. The monarchs of this world are very often imperfect, and make themselves unworthy of the affections and love of their subjects. Not so with God who possesses all the essential qualities that can induce us to love him. He is all goodness and mercy towards his subjects,—yea, even when through forgetfulness or malice, they rise against him in an evil moment, and ungratefully rebel against his infinite Majesty. He awaits patiently the return of his prodigal son, and receives him once more with joy to his paternal embrace.

It is honorable, my brethren, to serve, to love a powerful earthly monarch; his servants glory in his friendship, and boast of his intimacy. Who, then, would not glory in serving and loving a Sovereign to whom "the earth and heavens belong," by whom kings and princes rule? "*Per me reges regnant.*" As a watchful sovereign, this good God of ours is concerned for the welfare of his subjects; with the strong, tender care of a kind father, he unites the affectionate, considerate, delicate love of a mother. Again, as supreme Lord and Master of all things, he has dominion over all created beings, and we belong to him in the strictest sense of the word. Hence, when he commands, we are unquestionably bound to obey; when he says: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," he does not leave us free to do, with impunity, as we please. He cries out, as it were, to each son of Adam: "O man, whosoever thou art, in whatsoever circumstances of life thou art placed, thou shalt love the Lord thy God!" The emperor upon his throne, as well as the lowest of his subjects, must bow down, must abase himself before this sovereign Lord, and exclaim: "Behold, O my God and my King! I love thee alone; I desire to serve thee faithfully. Speak, and I shall obey thee. Woe to me should I transgress thy command, since thou hast the power to chastise the monarch as well as the slave!" No plea of ignorance, of poverty, of suffering, or trials can exempt from his command, for the decree is universal, and admits of no exception. In many things, my brethren, we are left free to at least a great extent. We are at liberty to engage in one kind of business or in another; to employ our talents and natural gifts in whatever lawful pursuit or avocation our inclination may prompt us to embrace. But when there is question of loving God, the precept is positive,—so much so that, if we refuse, we shall be treated by our sovereign Master and Lord as rebellious subjects. The first reason, then, why we must love God is, because he is our Lord and Master, and, as such, has a perfect right to our sincere love and entire service.

II. That Sovereign Master and Lord is, moreover, our God, as is expressed in the command itself, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy *God.*" That sacred and sublime name presents to the Christian mind all that is great and perfect,—all that is praiseworthy, adorable, and deserving of affection and love. As God, he is our first beginning and last end; by his hands we are formed; by his almighty power we live, we move, we exist. "Let us turn ourselves," says the great St. Augustine, "in whatever direction we please, all is painful and hard, and no rest is found except in God." Having been created for God, our hearts can find neither happiness nor contentment, except in God. Hence, the same holy Father declares: "I have sought for rest, but the cravings of my heart could not be quieted, until I found rest in thee, O Lord!"

The infinite perfections or attributes of God should be, indeed, so all-

sufficient to force man to love God, that a command to love him might seem almost superfluous. In him alone, we find all that is perfect, amiable, and beautiful,—all, in fine, than can induce the rational creature to love. Do you seek power or greatness, my dear Christians? Behold! the depths of God's might and majesty cannot be fathomed,—no words can sufficiently express the omnipotent and infinite greatness of him whom heaven and earth, the sea, and the winds obey. Perhaps you admire kindness and mercy? Hear the prophet exclaim: "His mercies are above all his works." In a word, I repeat, (and cannot repeat too often,) that in God and in him alone we find, in the most perfect degree, all that is worthy of the love and devotion of the human heart, for,—blessed be his adorable attributes!—he is infinite in all his perfections, infinitely holy, wise, just, and amiable. The very idea of God as he is, should be to man more than sufficient to ravish his heart with the desire of loving him. Hence, we shall be prompted to love him, my brethren, in the same proportion as we increase in the knowledge of his supreme, incomparable loveliness; and, as his manifold perfections unfold themselves before our enraptured gaze, we shall be tempted to cry out with St. Augustine: "Too late have I known thee, O Lord; too late have I loved thee, O Beauty, ever ancient, ever new!" Oh! could we but form an adequate idea of God's infinite perfections! But, alas! this is impossible; the mind of man, his intellect, and understanding, necessarily finite and imperfect, can never fathom nor comprehend the Infinite and All-perfect. If, indeed, the whole world were one great book, if all the waters of the ocean were turned to ink, and all creatures were so many writers, the book would be filled, the seas emptied, and the writers exhausted, before even a single one of God's attributes could be fully explained, or expatiated upon. The Saints in heaven, who see God face to face, and know him as he is, find their only delight in loving him. But as for us, poor exiles in this world of trials, who see God only as through a glass darkly, we must acknowledge that the love of our heart is often divided between God and creatures. Need we wonder, then, when we read the lives of the Saints, that they ceased not to weep and lament, seeing God so worthy to be loved, yet loved so little even by those who know him. "Alas!" exclaims St. Teresa, in the bitterness of her soul, "*Love is not loved!*" What do you say, beloved Christians? Do you desire an object worthy of the love and affection of your heart, an object that can satiate the cravings of your soul? Turn yourself to God; love him on account of his own infinite perfections, and love him because he is, more-over, *your* Lord and *your* God.

III. If all men,—if all Christians especially,—should love God because he is the sovereign Master and Lord of all, because he is their Creator, who preserves them by his omnipotent hand and loving power, how much more should we give him the undivided love of our heart, when we reflect that

he is, in a special manner, *our* Lord and *our* God. To us, as Christians and Catholics, who have received, and still daily receive, particular tokens of God's tender care and watchfulness ; who have better opportunities than others of knowing God, and are continually encouraged by his many and various blessings, to us he says : "*Thou* shalt love the Lord *thy* God." We are, as it were, my brethren, that vineyard which he has planted with his own hands, which he has fertilized by the dew of his graces and favors, and around which he has placed a hedge, guarding it from the enemies who seek to lay it waste. Who shall enumerate or detail the blessings which, with a lavish hand, he has bestowed upon that vineyard of our souls? Shall I mention the sweat or the blood, the fatigue or the cross, the wounds or ignominious death of the Master to save the servant, of the Sovereign to save the subject? Or shall I speak of the silent inspirations and motions of divine grace calling us individually to his love and service? How often has he forgiven us our sins in the holy Sacrament of Penance when, sorrow-stricken, we asked for pardon! Have we not sat down again and again at his sacred banquet, and been fed and nourished with the Bread of Life,—the Body and Blood of a God-man? In vain would I attempt, even to sketch the divine solicitude and care manifested towards us, my brethren, and for which, in an especial manner, God is entitled to be called *our* Lord and *our* God. What have we given him in return, even until now? Alas! with shame and confusion let us acknowledge it; let us confess that we have but too often given the love of our heart, to a vile creature, the object of our inordinate passions, to false and deceitful pleasures,—instead of to God the infinite, the all-holy and amiable, who alone can satiate the heart of man, created to love and serve him! Reflect upon St. Francis of Assisi, spending whole nights in the constant repetition of the words: "*My* Lord and *my* God!"—and blush for your tepidity and cold indifference.

In conclusion, I exhort you, dear Christians, in the words of Joshua: "Above all things, take it to heart to love God." Say, in sincerity of soul, with the Royal Prophet: "I shall love thee, O Lord, thou who art my strength." Let us take courage, my brethren, and if heretofore you have thought it hard to love God, think so now no more; for God hath first loved *us*, says St. John, and he has loved us with a pure, unselfish love. What is more capable of inducing us to love others than the knowledge of being loved first and disinterestedly? True, we cannot love God as we ought of ourselves; we need his grace and assistance. Therefore, my dear brethren, let us, during the holy sacrifice of the Mass, implore his help through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, offered for us as a sacrifice of propitiation. Let us ask the Immaculate Mother to pray for us, that, henceforth, we may love God sincerely,—with our whole heart, our whole soul, and our whole mind. Amen.

Rev. L. B.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

CHRISTIAN SELF-LOVE.

“*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*” *Matt. 22 : 39.*

My beloved brethren, a Jewish doctor of the law once asked our Blessed Redeemer, tempting him : “Master, which is the great commandment in the law?” And Jesus answered him : “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like to this : Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” These words are addressed to us, my brethren, as well as to that ancient Pharisee. If we wish to be saved, we are all bound to observe this triple commandment, which enjoins on us the love of God, of our neighbor, and of ourselves. Frequently have you been exhorted to the love of God and of your neighbor ; but, besides God and our neighbor, every one is obliged *to love himself*. Many do not rightly understand what is meant by loving one’s-self, and do not know wherein *Christian self-love consists*, or what it requires. Let me, then, explain to you, to-day, the significance and duties of this third department of Christian charity, and endeavor to make clear to you that he who truly loves himself in a Christian manner must

- I. *Avoid sin ;*
- II. *Do penance, without delay, after sin ; and*
- III. *Perform good works.*

I. The lowest degree of love which we can practise towards our fellow-man consists in this,—that we do not injure him in any way ; that, as far as lies in our power, we avert from him every evil ; that we wish him no harm, and assist him in his necessities. He who cherishes not this sentiment towards his fellow-man, cannot be truly said to love him. The same holds good as to the proper love of one’s self. He who loves himself truly, will not injure, but will try to avert every evil from himself ; and, as man consists of body and soul, he who loves himself truly, my brethren, will strive by every possible means to defend himself from all evils, both of body and soul.

1. As to the body, he will avoid all those excesses which are known to injure health and shorten life. He will not indulge in intemperance,

which sends so many to an untimely grave ; he will avoid impurity and sensuality, which sap the very life-springs of the body ; he will control his anger, which, like a violent tempest, shakes and prostrates all the vital powers ; neither will he suffer himself to be consumed with business cares and anxieties ; nor debilitate his system by an avaricious niggardliness in food, clothing, or medicine. He who is insensible to these requirements, cannot be said to keep the commandment which, while it enjoins the love of one's self, teaches us that charity begins at home.

2. As to the soul, my beloved brethren,—that precious part of us which is of infinitely greater value than the body,—I need scarcely tell you that we are most especially bound to preserve it from injury. There is only one evil that *can* injure this immortal soul of ours, and render it miserable for all eternity. And that is—mortal sin. He, then, who loves himself truly, must avoid mortal sin, which inflicts incalculable evil on the entire being, both body and soul.

(a) In the first place, *it robs man of all graces and merits.* As a frost, in one night, destroys the buds and blossoms which promised most abundant fruits, so one mortal sin, as soon as it is committed, destroys all those beautiful merits which a Christian may have acquired, and for which a great reward was in store.

(b) *It deprives him of another invaluable treasure,—peace of conscience,* and subjects him to the bitterest of all torments,—the stings of remorse. It precipitates him into that place of everlasting darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth ; where everlasting horror dwells ; where the fire is never extinguished ; where the worm never dies ; and out of which there is no redemption.

(c) *It deprives him of eternal salvation and of the felicity of heaven,* and separates him forever from God, in whom alone the heart of man can find peace and repose. The human heart, (says St. Augustine), is created for God alone, and it finds no rest until it rests in him.

O, my brethren, since mortal sin thus works such havoc in the soul of man, and inflicts such great injuries upon him, tell me, is he rational, has he a spark of true love for himself who, in committing it, consents, knowingly and wilfully, to precipitate himself into temporal and eternal misery ? Ah ! far from properly loving himself, he is his own greatest enemy. If, therefore, you do not wish to be regarded as such,—to be, in short, most cruel and inhuman towards yourselves,—resolve, once and for all, to avoid mortal sin. Fear and hate nothing more than any deliberate grievous breach of the divine law.

II. But if you have had the misfortune to fall into mortal sin,

1. *You must do penance.* Christian self-love requires this. There are only two ways to heaven,—the way of innocence and the way of penance. If you have ever sinned mortally, the former is barred against you, and it is only by the latter that you can hope to enter Paradise. Hear what Christ, our Saviour, says: “Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish.” (Luke 13 : 5.) If you love yourself, you must do penance, be converted from your evil ways, wash away your sins by an humble and sincere confession, and begin a new life. Neglect these means of salvation, and you are your own worst enemy, the destroyer of that priceless treasure, your soul,—delivering it over to eternal perdition.

2. Nor can you afford to procrastinate in this matter, my brethren. *Immediately after you fall, you must arise without delay, and be converted to the Lord,* for time is not under your control. You must neither think nor say: “I will repent next week, next month, or, perhaps, next Easter?” Do you know with certainty that you will be living next week, next month, next Easter? We know neither the day nor the hour. Death may overtake us at any moment. How many die suddenly and unpreparedly? Do we not hear and read daily of sudden deaths, of fatal accidents? As a rule, death overtakes men when they least expect it. This is the teaching of our Lord himself: “Be you also ready: for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come.” (Luke 12 : 40.) Death is always a surprise or an accident. Is it not, then, the greatest folly, blindness, and presumption to put off our conversion and repentance from day to day? Should not a true Christian self-love prompt us to arise from sin and to do penance without delay, that we may secure our eternal salvation?

3. But very few Christians reason thus, and act accordingly. Satan deceives the wilful sinner, and buoys him up with false hopes of the future. In the Garden of Eden, he said to our first parents: “*Eat, you shall not die the death.*” (Gen. 3 : 4.) They believed the liar; they ate, and died. As he successfully seduced them, so he tries hard to seduce us, their children. True, he says to us no longer: “Eat, sin, you shall not die,” because no one would believe him; but he adds one little word to that first lie spoken in the primeval paradise, and whispers to the sinner: “One sin more or less does not matter; defer your conversion; you shall not die *yet.*” And because his unhappy victims think and believe that they will not die *yet,* they put off their conversion from day to day. All sinners intend to repent, but at some future time, not at present. The young man says to himself: “I am young and strong. I have many long years before me; I shall settle down into a good, steady life, when I have once sown my wild oats.” The old man thinks: “God will spare me a few years yet, and,

after that, I shall return and give myself entirely to him." The sinner, in the fulness of health, says in his heart: "I shall abandon my sins when I get sick,—when I am stretched upon my bed, and obliged to stay in the house,—I shall have plenty of time to attend to the affairs of my salvation." The sick man resolves in *his* turn: "I shall surely do better when I get well; I am too weak and too sick now to attend to anything." The rich man promises: "After I have enjoyed my wealth sufficiently, I will begin to think of God and my soul." The poor man will tell you: "I have to work hard, day and night; I have no time now for prayer or the Sacraments; but when I acquire a competency, I will make a thorough change of life." When you urge the married man to come to the holy tribunal, he retorts with his famous prototype of the Gospel: "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come!" While the single man will assure you: "Just wait till I get married, and you will see what an edifying, well-behaved Catholic I will be!" Thus, all intend to work out their salvation at some future period, but *not now*, when they have both the time and means to do so.

4. This is very much like the Gospel-parable of the man who said: "I will pull down my barns, and will build greater: and into them will I gather all things that are grown to me, and my goods. And I will say to my soul: Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thy rest, eat, drink, and make good cheer. But God said to him: Thou fool, this night they shall require thy soul of thee." (Luke 12: 18, 19.) He was so busy planning and building, and overseeing his vast possessions, that he postponed indefinitely the affairs of his soul. The result was, that he died at last without having secured his salvation. What happened to this man may easily happen to us, my dear brethren. The road to hell is paved with good intentions,—that is, hell is filled with souls who intended to repent, but who never in reality did so. If you wish to escape their unhappy fate, you must arise from your sins as soon as you have fallen, and earnestly do penance. Do not presume to live in sin a single day or hour, for just on that day, or in that hour, death may overtake you. Can he be said to love himself who lies down to sleep on the brink of a precipice,—who lives in continual danger of eternal damnation? No; he does not love himself; he loves danger, and "he that loveth danger shall perish in it." (Eccles. 3: 27.)

III. He who truly loves himself, must also perform *good works*.

1. If the soul were not an active principle, my brethren,—if our immortal spirit were like a precious stone which God had intrusted to our care, commanding us not to soil or lose it, it would be enough not to sin, for it is by sin the soul is stained and finally lost. In such case, we would

do our duty if we simply imitated the servant in the Gospel, who buried his talent, so as to be able to restore it whole and entire to his Lord on his return. But the soul is not an inanimate object, dear brethren ; it is a vital force,—a spiritual essence, which is always active ; hence, its activity must be directed towards that which is good and pleasing to God ; *it must bring forth fruit.* Holy Writ plainly teaches this. The servant in the Gospel had not squandered the talent intrusted to him ; on the contrary, he buried it in the earth for safe-keeping, and returned it to his Lord as he had received it. Yet, alas ! he was rejected. Like the other servants, he should have increased the treasure committed to his care, and, having neglected to do so, he was severely punished. The fig-tree was cursed by our Blessed Lord because it brought forth no fruit ; he himself said : “ Every tree that yieldeth not good fruit shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire.” (Matt. 7 : 19.) Our Christian life must not be a barren tree, no matter how green or flourishing it may appear ; it must bring forth good fruit, if it would escape the malediction of its Creator. The doing of good works is as necessary for salvation as the avoidance of evil, since, as the royal Prophet commands us, we must decline from evil, and do good. (Ps. 36 : 27.)

2. And is the performance of good works so very difficult? You labor early and late, my brethren, in the sweat of your brow. Every Christian must endure many hardships and sufferings, and support many a heavy burden. Now, if you do all and suffer all for the love of God and for his greater honor and glory, if you bear your crosses, hardships, and difficulties with patience and resignation to the divine will, you will lay up for yourselves a treasure of good works in heaven. God requires no more, and he is satisfied with no less. Alas ! in this respect many do great injury to themselves. All works performed in the state of mortal sin, all sufferings and afflictions endured in that melancholy condition, have no value before God, no merit for eternal life. Our Blessed Lord emphasizes this truth, saying : “ I am the vine ; you the branches : he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit ; for without me you can do nothing.” (John 15 : 5.) He who remains not in Christ, like a dead branch that is cut off from the living vine, must infallibly wither and die and be cast into the fire. Mortal sin is the knife that separates us from Christ, and, thus separated from him, man can no more bring forth fruit than the branch that is lopped from the vine. Alas ! how many Christians are there who for months and years live in mortal sin, and hence, do not acquire the least merit for heaven by all their labors and sufferings. If they had but a particle of proper self-love, surely they would not and could not continue in a state so injurious to their eternal interests.

Every good work worthy to be called such, must be done not only *in the state of grace*, but also *with a good intention*. Whatever we do and suffer,

my brethren, we must do and suffer for the love of God,—for his greater honor and glory, and for our own salvation. This it is that makes our works meritorious.

In conclusion, my beloved, let us sum up, in a few words, the duties and characteristics of Christian self-love. He who loves himself with a well-ordered love, must labor for the salvation of his soul. The salvation of the soul demands that we avoid sin ; or, if we have been so unfortunate as to commit mortal sin, that we do penance without delay, and perform good works. Avoid evil and do good ; embrace your daily labor for the love of God, and bear the crosses and hardships incident to your state of life with patience and resignation to the divine will. Have pity on yourselves, my dear brethren, I implore you ! What greater madness or cruelty can there be, than for a man to hate himself and plunge himself into endless misery ? What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? Be, then, a man (in the true sense of the word) ; avoid evil and do good, and you shall secure, in the end, the eternal salvation of your immortal soul. Amen.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE EVIL OF CONCEALING SINS IN CONFESSION.

“Son, be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee.” Matt. 9 : 2.

Our dissenting brethren reject the Sacrament of Penance, asserting that it is not in the power of man to forgive sins, and that God alone has that power. That no one but God can forgive sins is very true and sound Catholic doctrine ; but it is equally true that God can prescribe therefor whatever conditions he, in his wisdom, mercy, and justice, shall deem proper. Has God, then, conferred such power on men, my beloved brethren? Has he given this, his supreme power, to weak, sinful men as his delegates? Most assuredly, he has ; and Christ our Lord wrought a miracle to prove this very fact. St. Matthew relates in the Gospel of to-day : “And behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed. And Jesus seeing their faith, said to the man sick of the palsy : Son, be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee. And behold, some of the Scribes said within themselves : This man blasphemeth. And Jesus seeing their thoughts, said : Why do you think evil in your hearts? Which is easier to say : Thy sins are forgiven thee ; or to say : Rise up and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, then saith he to the man sick of the palsy : Rise up, take thy bed, and go into thy house. And he rose up, and went into his house. And the multitude seeing it, feared, and glorified God, who had given such power to men.” (Matt. 9 : 2-9.) We now and then meet with a glimpse of Protestantism in holy Scripture, my brethren. Behold, the Scribes in this passage are fitting prototypes of the followers of Luther ; for, like them, they say, with regard to the absolving power of Christ’s anointed minister : “He blasphemeth.”

Our Blessed Lord promised, at first, to confer this power of forgiving sin, with the plenitude of all jurisdiction, upon Peter alone, saying to him : “I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.” (Matt. 16 : 19.) Next, he gave it to all the Apostles in a body : “Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.” (Matt. 18 : 18.) At length he actually conferred that power upon them as fully as he had received it from the Eternal Father : “As the Father hath sent me, I also sent you. When he had said this, he breathed

on them, and he said to them : Receive ye the Holy Ghost : whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." (John 20 : 21-24.) It is evident from this very explicit text that Christ constituted his Apostles judges over the consciences of men. It is their right and privilege to determine whose sins to forgive and whose to retain. Now, as it is utterly impossible for the minister of Christ to determine the fitness of the penitent for absolution, without a candid confession on the part of the latter, it is clear that "*Confession is an accusation of all the sins one has committed to the priest as vicar of Christ, in order to receive absolution.*" In this definition, my brethren, we must particularize the word *accusation*, which signifies much, but is commonly little understood. Accusation does not mean that bare recital of sins, which some Christians falsely deem to be sufficient ; confessing their sins (as is their custom) as though they were relating a story. This word signifies quite another thing, and means a declaration which the true penitent makes to the priest, as a criminal to his judge, humbly acknowledging his guilt, and most earnestly suing for pardon ; at the same time, manifesting a genuine sorrow for the past, a firm purpose of amendment for the future, and a generous readiness to perform the penance enjoined.

It is rightly called an accusation, because our sins are not to be recounted in the holy tribunal as though we boasted of our wickedness, nor are they to be told as one tells a story for the amusement of some idle hearers. They are to be declared, as it were, in a self-revengeful spirit, accusing ourselves with the sentiments and disposition of a criminal before his judge. The Sacrament of Penance has, indeed, been instituted by the Son of God as a tribunal and a judgment, where the priest is the judge, and the penitent appearing before him as self-convicted, voluntarily discovers to him all his sins. The declaration, then, of one's sins should have every mark of an humble supplication for divine mercy.

Confession, being an accusation, must be entire. In order to obtain pardon, the penitent must accuse himself of all the evil he has done. Would that the evil of concealing grave sins in confession were as rare and unheard of as it is great in itself and dreadful in its results ! But, alas ! unhappily, this sacrilege is but too common among Catholics, and particularly among young people, since the latter do not sufficiently consider how grievous a sin it is, nor how fearful are the consequences which it entails.

1. You must know, my beloved brethren, that if you willingly conceal any mortal sin in confession, believing it to be such, you commit an additional mortal sin. Our Saviour, in giving to the Apostles and their successors the power to remit or retain sins, has, at the same time, obliged the faithful to confess all the grievous sins which they remember after a sufficient examination of conscience. To conceal a mortal sin in confession is,

therefore, a formal *disobedience* to the law of Jesus Christ in a matter of the highest concern, and is in itself a mortal sin.

2. The concealment of sins in confession is, further, a formal and positive *untruth*, told not to man, but to God, whose place the priest holds in confession. Now, to tell a lie to God, my brethren, is a monstrous crime. Remember the rigorous punishment which the Most High inflicted, by St. Peter, upon Ananias and his wife Saphira, for having told an untruth in a thing of less importance. They had sold a certain field, and by fraud kept back part of the price. Then they sought to deceive the apostles as to the real amount realized thereby. But St. Peter said to Ananias: "Thou hast not lied to men, but to God." (Acts 5 : 4.) And at these words, Ananias fell down dead at the apostle's feet;—his death being followed, in a few hours, by that of his guilty wife.

3. Not only is this sin a disobedience to the law of God, and a base lie, but also a *sacrilege*, and that of the first magnitude. Sacrilege is one of the most heinous crimes that can be committed; for it is an abuse and profanation of a sacred thing, or of something dedicated to God, and which partakes of his sanctity. As among holy things, dear Christians, there are some objects holier than others, so among sacrileges, (on account of the dignity of the thing profaned,) there are some greater and more enormous than others. The profanation of the Sacrament of Penance by him who conceals a mortal sin, is, in this way, not only the abuse of a holy thing, but of a thing superlatively holy. The Sacraments are not only exteriorly holy, like churches, altars, and sacred vessels, (which are so, because they are consecrated to holy uses,) but they contain holiness in themselves, inasmuch as they cause it and confer it upon men. If, then, it be an enormous sacrilege to profane a church, to overthrow an altar, or to defile a chalice, judge what it is to abuse or profane a Sacrament! O what detestation and horror, dear Christians, should we not entertain of such an abominable sacrilege!

4. Consider the evil the sinner commits in abusing this Sacrament in particular, since it was instituted to appease God's wrath and to reconcile to him his offending creatures. In making a false confession, my brethren, you provoke God by the very means he has appointed to propitiate him; you make him your enemy by the very act whereby you ostensibly seek his friendship; and you reverse the blessed effects of the Sacrament by changing its sentence of absolution into a sentence of condemnation.

5. Reflect, moreover, upon your wicked abuse thereby of the adorable blood of Jesus Christ. In the Sacrament of Penance, the merits of that precious Blood are applied to our souls for the remission of our sins; and

when the priest pronounces the sacred words of absolution, he pours upon us that sacred Blood, which "cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1 : 7.) But when you are so void of grace as to make a deceitful confession, and, having made it, permit the priest to give you absolution, you frustrate the effects of the Blood of the Son of God, which, falling upon your criminal and unworthy soul, is more profaned, contemned, and violated than when the Jews shed it upon the earth, and audaciously trampled it under their feet.

6. O my beloved Christians! why would you perpetrate such a crime? Why conceal your mortal sins in confession? Is it from fear or shame, those two inseparable companions of sin? As to fear, what is there that you need apprehend in the confessional? If you tremble for your good name, remember that you discover your sins to one man alone; hence, your reputation can suffer no harm. The priest, besides, is bound by all laws, divine and human, to eternal secrecy; he cannot violate the seal of the confessional without rendering himself worthy of death before God and man; hence, again, there is no danger of your honor. Are you afraid of being reprimanded by your ghostly father? O blind and foolish penitent! to commit so dreadful a sin through fear of so small an evil,—to be less apprehensive of the offence against God than of a salutary rebuke from your confessor, which is prompted solely by charity and a desire for your good! What is the passing reprimand of your spiritual Father compared to being reprehended and condemned by the Almighty God, to being scoffed at and upbraided by devils through all the long ages of eternity? The same is to be said of those who conceal their sins through fear of a heavy sacramental penance, which is a still more inexcusable folly; yet this, alas! too often happens among young and ignorant people.

A word now, my brethren, as to that false shame, which also prompts concealment of sins in the holy tribunal. It is, indeed, true, that sin should justly cover a Christian with shame and confusion; that the penitent who has not this shame, fully merits the reproach of God to the barefaced sinner: "Thou hast a harlot's forehead; thou wouldst not blush." (Jer. 3 : 3.) This shame, nevertheless, ought not to hinder him from discovering all his grave sins in confession; that which would withhold him from such a declaration, is not shame, but a weakness of mind, or, rather, a downright madness. Can there be a greater madness than to pretend to cure a mortal malady by implanting a dagger in the sick man's heart? To choose rather to damn one's soul forever, than to save it at the expense of a momentary confusion?

A poor peasant, having, by some good fortune, acquired the friendship of a wealthy and powerful prince, was loaded by him with riches, and raised to the highest honors of the realm; but, alas! instead of making such a return as gratitude required, the miserable wretch committed a most

enormous crime against his benefactor. The treason had not yet reached the public ear, but the prince was cognizant of it, and in virtue of his right to punish the guilty, pronounced sentence of death against the offender. The latter was immediately led to the place of execution; but lo! at the very moment when the sword of justice was suspended above his head, the cry of "A reprieve! a reprieve!" was echoed and re-echoed from every corner of the square in which the scaffold was erected. The poor wretch could scarcely believe his ears, but the messenger hurriedly approaching, cried out that his majesty was willing to pardon the criminal, provided he acknowledged his crime privately to one of his ministers, without omitting the least circumstance. "You can choose whomsoever you please," continued the messenger; "he shall be bound to perpetual secrecy, and if he do not preserve it, he shall be sentenced to undergo your punishment." What would you think of that criminal, my brethren, if he refused to accept the pardon of the king upon such simple and easy conditions? All men might justly pronounce him guilty of excessive madness, if he even hesitated in such circumstances, as to the choice of a confidant. Yet this is the case of him who conceals anything in confession. Blind that you are, who choose rather to perish eternally than confess your sins to the judge whom God has appointed to pardon them; who will rather hide the mortal wounds of your soul than expose them to the surgeon who possesses a certain remedy for them; who choose rather to be put to shame before God and his holy Mother, before a countless multitude of men and angels, than endure a little private confusion before one single man. When you conceal your sins from your confessor, do you think, by that means, to hide them from the sight of God? You tremble and blush before a poor, weak, mortal man; yet you are quite indifferent to the pure and piercing Eye of God! Is not this to contemn and insult the majesty of the Most High? O, my brethren! if you will but examine calmly into the matter, you will realize that this shame is not so painful or lasting as you imagine. The moment of confusion is soon over, and it is followed by great peace of mind and inexpressible comfort. But suppose the trial were even a thousand times greater, it would be nothing more than what you have deserved by your multiplied sins; and if you now refuse to undergo it, you must, one day, suffer much more at the day of judgment, when, after a public exposure before the whole world, your shame and confusion will pursue you to hell itself, and never have an end,—according to God's own word: "I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall never be forgotten." (Jer. 33 : 40.)

In conclusion, my beloved brethren, let me impress upon you one convincing argument which cannot be gainsaid. *It is impossible to be saved without confessing every one of your mortal sins.* Shame or no shame,—perform all the good works you please, devote yourselves to prayers, austeri-

ties, or alms-deeds,—yet, so long as you retain any mortal sin in your heart without declaring it in confession, there is no salvation for you ; if you die in that state, you are lost forever. Do not tell me that you will confess hereafter, but that for the present you cannot do it. Remember, that the longer you defer your accusation, the deeper will be your shame and confusion, the greater your aversion to disclosing your sin. But in waiting for that day to come, I ask you, my brethren, whether in the interim you will go to confession or not? If you do, then you commit so many sacrileges that you will become a thousand times more criminal in the sight of God, and draw down upon your head the divine anger and vengeance. If, on the other hand, you stay away from confession, in what disorder and confusion do you not leave your conscience,—to what danger do you not expose your eternal salvation! Who has told you that that day or hour which you propose to yourself in the future, will ever come? Who has assured you that you shall not die before it arrives, and *that* without confession ; since you would not confess when you had both time and opportunity to do so. If any one among you, my brethren, be in that lamentable state, I conjure him to look to himself,—to enter into himself, that he may discover the dangerous condition to which his salvation is exposed ; and opening his eyes, awake, at once, from that fatal lethargy. Consider that it is the devil who deceives you, and brings on you that eternal damnation which he has brought on thousands of others, and, despising all his snares and delusions, hasten, to-day, to show yourselves to the priest, (as did the hapless lepers of old,) and laying bare before him every secret wound and ulcer of your soul, hear him say to you with joy, in the person of Christ, as he imparts to you the saving absolution : “ Son, be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee ! ” Amen. G.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

BLASPHEMY.

"This man blasphemeth." Matt. 9 : 3.

On a certain occasion, mentioned in the Gospel of to-day, my beloved brethren, our Blessed Lord said to the man sick of the palsy : "Son, be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee." Some of the Scribes and Pharisees present, immediately said within themselves : "This man blasphemeth." Because in those words Jesus declared his power to forgive sins,—censorious hypocrites that they were,—they judged him at once to be guilty of blasphemy. They would have judged right, my brethren, if Christ had been merely an ordinary man, for God alone can forgive sins ; and if any one, (be he king, even, or emperor,) should arrogate the right to forgive sins by his own power, his attempt would be not only null and void, but blasphemous. Christ, however, was God as well as man, and by his fulfilment of the predictions of the Prophets and by the miracles which he wrought throughout Judea and Galilee, he gave the Jews abundant and solid reasons to know and acknowledge his Divinity, and, consequently, his power to forgive sins. It was wholly through their own fault that they did not come to this knowledge, and hence, in this denial of his divine power, it was they themselves that blasphemed. The stone which they had cast at Jesus, recoiling, struck themselves ; for in accusing him of blasphemy, they pronounced their own condemnation. They were simply anticipating the insults of his Passion ; for that which they afterwards did at the Crucifixion on Mount Calvary, they did on this occasion. O, how detestable is this false judgment of the blinded Jews ! Instead of falling down and adoring his omnipotence, praising his wisdom, they blasphemed him ! But why exclaim, my brethren, at the perverseness of this unhappy people ! Are we not as bad as, or even worse than the Jews ? Their sin, in fact, is less than ours ; for their guilt is palliated by the fact that they did not believe Jesus Christ to be truly the Son of God. But what shall I say of Christians, who believe that Christ is God, who have been baptized in his name, who receive him frequently in holy Communion, and who yet, alas ! blaspheme him. This is a sin which extorts from the Lord the touching complaint : "If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it, and if he that hated me had spoken great things against me, I would perhaps have hidden myself from him. But thou, a man of one mind, my guide, my familiar, who didst take sweet meats to-

gether with me ; in the house of God we walked with consent." (Ps. 54 : 13-15.) That you may conceive a true hatred for the sin of blasphemy, and abhor it as it deserves, I shall endeavor now to show you :

I. *Its gravity and guilt,* and

II. *Its dreadful temporal and eternal punishments.*

I. When the Redeemer of the world was hanging in his death-agony on the cross, "they that passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads, and saying : Vah, thou who destroyest the temple of God, and in three days buildest it up again, save thy own self : if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. In like manner also the chief priests with the Scribes and ancients, mocking, said : He saved others ; himself he cannot save. If he be the king of Israel, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God, let him deliver *him* now, if he will have him ; for he said : I am the Son of God." (Matt. 27 : 39-44.) How terrible, my brethren, were these blasphemies, uttered against a God expiring with love for sinners ! Yet how often Christians make use of similar expressions ! If God visits them with crosses and afflictions, in order, in his infinite mercy and goodness, to purify them and fit them for heaven, they accuse him of cruelty and tyranny. As the Jews in derision termed Christ, the *Gallean*, the *carpenter's son*, and other contemptuous names, so many so-called Christians deny his Divinity, and scoff at him as a wise man, as the philosopher of Nazareth,—nay, even as a cheat and an impostor. Not only do they blaspheme Christ, but his holy Church as well ; they declare that mighty Mother of love and light to be the intolerant promoter of ignorance, and the bitter enemy of science. Who can count all the calumnies and lies which are uttered, in these our days, against the sacrifice of the Mass and the Sacraments, against the Church, her institutions, and the sacred ceremonies of her public worship !

I. Blasphemy is *one of the greatest of sins*, because thereby God is personally and directly offended. It is true, his divine Majesty is dishonored also by theft, murder, impurity, and all other sins, but only indirectly,—inasmuch as it is then his law which is violated, or one of his creatures that is injured ; but by blasphemy, God is attacked personally and directly, and his honor is openly outraged. While other sinners hide themselves from God, the blasphemer thrusts himself, as it were, before the throne of the Most High, in order to heap reproach and insult upon his infinite majesty. Certain it is, he cannot actually reach or injure the person of God, but the perverse will is not wanting,—just as the thrust of the assassin's dagger against the king, is criminal, although the weapon rebounds harmlessly from his armor. In other sins, the perpetrator is seduced by some prospect of sen-

sual gratification or worldly profit ; but what gratification or gain can accrue to the blasphemer from the wicked words uttered against his good God ?

2. This sin appears still more enormous if we consider *who it is that commits it*. It is man who blasphemes God ; and what is man ? A miserable creature, absolutely dependent on God ; a wretched worm, utterly helpless in himself ; who lives, moves, and has his being only in God and from God ; a poor little atom which the omnipotent Hand can, at any moment, destroy. What is man ? The Sacred Scripture tells us : “Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return.” Yes, before long, my beloved Christians, our bodies will moulder in the grave, worms will consume our flesh, and our bones will become dust and ashes. Yet man, this miserable being,—this handful of dust,—dares to blaspheme his God !

3. Blasphemy has always been regarded as one of the greatest sins in the sight of God, because it is an insult offered to the Creator by his own creature. Nor is this all. Blasphemy is the basest, the blackest of ingratitude. Consider *the time and the circumstances wherein God is blasphemed by men*. God the Father, after having created us, continually preserves our life and being. For this purpose, he gives us food, raiment, and shelter. God the Son has redeemed us from sin and from eternal damnation by his Passion and Death on the cross ; he has prepared a place for us in heaven, where he is constantly our Mediator and Advocate. Here, on earth, he is our best friend and comforter,—nay, even the Food of our souls in the Sacrament of his love. God the Holy Ghost has sanctified us in Baptism, and continually assists us with his grace that we may lead a holy life, and attain eternal salvation. Daily and hourly, God showers upon us his graces and blessings, spiritual and temporal ; every moment of our life is a gift of God. And behold, at the very time when God thus favors and blesses him, man blasphemes his Benefactor, and instead of giving him thanks for his benefits, he insults and outrages him. What would we think of a child who spits in his mother’s face at the very moment she tenderly feeds him with the most delicious food ? Now more, infinitely more, than a human mother can love her only child does God love man ; what, then, are we to think, my brethren, of a man who insults and outrages his heavenly Father in return for the benefits which he bestows on him ? Under such circumstances, are not the blasphemies of men more horrible than those of the devils ? Blasphemers are worse than the damned, for the latter revile God because his justice has cast them into hell, whilst sinners on earth blaspheme him because he is good. He has spared them ; he has not punished them as they deserve, and they blaspheme him not because they suffer pains, but because they receive good things from him. Is not a blasphemer, then, worse than the devils and the damned ? Every sin compared to this is trifling. When a person blasphemes, his tongue

should be instantly torn out by the roots. St. Bernardine, full of holy indignation, cries out to such : "O devilish tongue, what can induce thee to utter curses and imprecations against him who has created thee ; who, by the blood of his Son, has redeemed thee ; and who, by the Holy Spirit, has made thee a member of his body?" St. Ephrem, again, addressing blasphemers, says : "Do you not fear that fire will come from heaven and consume you,—that the earth will open and swallow you? Be not deceived, O man, it is impossible for you to escape the justice of God!"

II. *The proper punishment of blasphemy is eternal damnation.*

1. Like every unatoned mortal sin, blasphemy will be punished with hell-fire. But as in heaven, "star differeth from star in glory," and among the Saints greater virtues and merits are rewarded with greater happiness and glory, so too in hell, blasphemy being the greatest of all mortal sins, shall be punished with the greatest and most extreme torments. God will render to every one according to the works which he has done in the flesh, whether good or evil. He who in this world speaks the language of devils, shall share the lot of devils in the world to come ; and whatever is bitter and painful in hell, shall be his portion forever. Even in this life, God often visits the perpetrators of this dreadful vice with the severest temporal punishments.

2. In the Old Law, the blasphemer was ordered to be stoned to death. "He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying, let him die ; all the multitude shall stone him, whether he be a native or a stranger." (Levit. 24 : 10-23.) The holy king Ezechias, who ruled over the kingdom of Judea, shortly before the time of the Babylonian captivity, was besieged in Jerusalem by the Assyrian general, Rabsaces, who had been sent by king Sennacherib to demand the surrender of the city. Rabsaces, in the name of his master, uttered horrible blasphemies against the God of heaven, who, he assured the Jews, would be no more able to protect his people, than the idol whom they worshipped had been able to protect the neighboring nations. Being compelled to abandon the siege in order to lead his army against the king of Ethiopia, he wrote a letter to Ezechias, in which he repeated his former blasphemies, and threatened, upon his return from his expedition, to destroy the holy city, if it did not meanwhile appease his master's anger by a timely submission. The pious Ezechias was struck with horror at the words of the letter, and carrying it into the temple of God, he there spread it open, and with many tears and fervent prayers, begged of God to avenge the insult offered to his divine majesty, on the head of the blasphemer. He then repaired for consolation and advice to the holy prophet Isaias, and was assured by him, on the part of God, that the blasphemies uttered against the Lord should not remain unpunished. "And it

came to pass that night, that an angel of the Lord came and slew in the camp of the Assyrians, one hundred and eighty-five thousand. And when he rose in the morning, he saw all the bodies of the dead. And Sennacherib departing, went away, and abode at Nineve. And as he was worshipping in the temple of Nesroch, his god, his sons slew him with the sword, and Asarhadden, his son, reigned in his stead." (4 Kings 18 : 19.)

3. We read in the second book of Maccabees that the impious Antiochus died a wretched death, his flesh wasting away, and worms issuing out of all parts of his body. "Thus the murderer and *blasphemer*, being grievously struck, died in a miserable state in a strange country." (2 Mach. 9 : 28.) When Benedab, king of the Syrians, was defeated in battle by the Israelites, his servants said to him : "The God of the Israelites is only a god of the hills, and not of the plains. It is on this account we have been defeated. It is therefore better for us to fight against the Israelites in the plains, and we shall overcome them. Thereupon a man of the Lord came to the king of Israel, and said to him : Thus saith the Lord : Because the Syrians have said the Lord is God of the hills, and not God of the valleys, I will deliver all the great multitude into thy hands, and you shall know that I am the Lord." (3 Kings 20.) What happened then, my brethren? God destroyed one hundred and twenty-seven thousand Syrians because they had blasphemed against his power.

4. Demetrius, king of Syria, being at war with the Jews, sent against them his general, Nicanor, their most implacable enemy. The latter did not spare them in any way, and prepared to attack them on the Sabbath-day. Some Israelites, whom the calamities of the time had kept in his army, represented to him that it was wrong for him to violate the Lord's day. "And who," he asked, "is this powerful God who commands the day to be respected?" "My Lord ; he is the living God, the Master of heaven." "Well, if the Master of heaven forbids you to fight, I, who am master here on earth, command you to take up arms, and march." What was the fate, dear Christians, of this presumptuous blasphemer? When he gave battle to the Jews, he was completely routed, perishing himself in the combat with thirty-five thousand of his army. (2 Mach. 15.)

5. Although the punishment of death which was inflicted on blasphemers by the Old Law does not still exist in the New, yet we sometimes hear, even in these days, of signal chastisements attending the violation of the Second Commandment. I shall mention the case of only one blasphemer, who was struck blind. A few years ago, the town of Nottingham, in England, was visited with an awful thunder-storm, the effects of which were most disastrous. The lower part of the town was flooded, and the poorer classes who inhabited cellars, as well as many shopkeepers, suf-

ferred severely. Among those who sought shelter from the pitiless storm in a public house, called the Millon's Head, was a young man, a lace-maker by trade. For some time, he amused himself in ridiculing the fears of the company, but his language, which was, from the first, light and unbecoming, at length grew imperious and profane. He used the holy Name of God in the most blasphemous manner, and, with bitter oaths, expressed a wish that a thunderbolt might descend, and strike the company blind. Then, rising, he looked through the skylight of the room, beneath which they were sitting, and with extravagant gestures, defied the lightning. At that moment, a vivid flash entered the room, and in an instant, he was lying speechless on the floor. He was taken up by the trembling bystanders, none of whom were injured, and laid upon a couch. The first words he uttered on recovering his speech, were: "God, forgive me!" He remained blind, however, and was removed to the general hospital.

Thus God often punishes the blasphemer here on earth, and not only him but whole families, states, nations, and countries, for permitting the outrage of his sin. The Sacred Scripture says: "On account of blasphemy, famines, earthquakes, and pestilence arise." St. Paul says: "Put away blasphemy out of your mouth." (Col. 3 : 8.) And the same great Apostle delivered Hymenæus and Alexander over to Satan "that they might learn not to blaspheme." (1 Tim. 1 : 20.) St. Louis, king of France, enacted a law which condemned all blasphemers to have their tongues pierced with a red-hot iron. And St. Chrysostom says, that when a person blasphemes, his mouth should instantly be broken to pieces: "Give him a stripe—break his mouth."

Since blasphemy is *one of the greatest of sins and draws the most dreadful punishments after it*, O, let us beware, my brethren, of defiling our lips with this abomination; neither let us suffer that God be blasphemed by others, but strive to suppress such outrages as far as lies in our power. Let us rather adore, praise, and glorify God here on earth that we may become worthy of praising and glorifying him with the choirs of the Angels and Saints in heaven, forever and ever. Amen.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE SMALL NUMBER OF THE ELECT.

“Many are called, but few are chosen.” Matt. 22 : 14.

It was only a few days before the commencement of his sacred Passion, my brethren, that our divine Lord narrated the parable of the marriage-supper. In it, he taught that the obstinate Jews had declined the invitation to a knowledge of the true faith, and that the Gentiles, in consequence, would be called in their stead. Further, that even of those who accept this call, whether Jews or Gentiles, all will not be admitted to the heavenly marriage-feast; since, (as St. Augustine says,) although all who decline the King's invitation are bad men, yet all who accept it are not necessarily good men; hence, it is clear, that “many are called, but few are chosen.” Twice our Lord gave utterance to these words; and this is their meaning, my brethren: Whilst God wills all men to be saved, and none to perish, sending his only-begotten Son for this purpose into the world, yet only a few profit by the doctrine, Passion, and Death of Christ; only a few live as true disciples and followers of Christ. Hence, the number of the elect is as small as the number of good Christians. Oh! that all who lead an unchristian life, and yet hope to be saved, would seriously reflect upon, and take to heart, these words of solemn warning! On what do such sinners base their false hopes of salvation? On what do they rely? Allow me, my brethren, to reply to these questions, to-day, by explaining that many, whilst leading a sinful life, rely:

- I. *Upon their fancied good works, or*
- II. *Upon their hopes of a death-bed repentance.*

I. Every sinner, my brethren,—yea, even the greatest,—hopes to be saved. Nor is his hope illy-grounded, if, with all his heart he turn to God and abandon his evil ways. There is no sin too great to be forgiven. But, alas! the greater part of men continue obstinately to live on in their evil habits and vices, and never think seriously of being converted.

1. On what, then, do such persons base their hopes, or rather, their presumption of salvation? *On their good works.* They look more to the good they do, than to the evil they commit. This is a great mistake. He who desires to be hereafter of the number of the elect, must begin here by

being of the number of the few true Christians and faithful followers of Christ; and to be a true Christian and follower of Christ, he must, first of all, and above all, *avoid evil*. "Behold, one came and said to Jesus: Good Master, what good shall I do, that I may have life everlasting? And he said to him: If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. And he sayeth to him: Which? And Jesus said: Thou shalt do no murder: Thou shalt not commit adultery: Thou shalt not steal: Thou shalt not bear false witness? Honor thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matt. 19: 16-20.)

2. *Avoid evil and do good*,—that, my brethren, is the sum and substance of the divine commandments. Decline from evil first, and then do good. He who does not avoid evil, derives no benefit from his good works and exercises of devotion; they are not meritorious for eternal life. Such a one may, indeed, obtain conversion by moving the heart of God to mercy in his behalf; but if he correspond not to that grace of conversion,—if he turn not from his evil ways,—all his good works are lost, and he will be lost with them, forever.

3. Do not imagine, deluded man, that before *the God of all holiness* you can set off a few good deeds against many wicked ones; that you can wipe away your sins by saying a Rosary, by giving an alms, by having a Mass offered, or by the performance of some other good work. Do not believe that you can bribe *the God of justice* by fulfilling *a few of your obligations*, whilst your chief duties as a Christian are neglected; or that you can *blindfold the omniscient God* by a sanctimonious, hypocritical exterior. God is displeased with the sinner; he hates sin, and to him, "the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike." (Wisd. 14: 9.) "Nothing that is defiled can enter heaven." (Apoc. 21: 27.) The Pharisees performed many good works, but since, on that account, they trusted in themselves as just, and were desirous of being praised and honored by others, our Blessed Lord was greatly displeased with them, and often foretold their perdition. With all their glittering show of good works, they were guilty of many evil deeds, and steeped in crimes. (Matt. 23: 2-33.) He once told them to their faces, that they were like whited sepulchres, fair and clean on the exterior, but filled within with dead men's bones, rottenness, and all corruption; and he predicted that the publicans and the harlots should go into the kingdom of heaven before them. (Matt. 21: 31.) The greatest sinners of those times, acknowledged their miserable condition, did penance, and were saved; but the Pharisees, not believing that they needed penance, trusted in their good works, and were eternally lost.

4. To the many Christians who imitate the fatal presumption of the latter, I must repeat the words of Christ to the Pharisees: "Unless you do

penance, you shall all likewise perish." Amend your sinful ways ; do penance while strength and life remain to you, my brethren, and be not of the number of those who, hoping to be saved in their dying hour, base all their hopes of salvation on a death-bed conversion.

II. When you hear of a sudden death among your friends or acquaintances, your first question is : " Was the priest with him ? Did he receive the Sacraments before he died ? " It is true, no one should neglect to receive the Sacraments when he is dangerously sick ; and it is advisable to be prepared in good season for that final moment on which so much depends. But, believe me, brethren, not all who confess and receive the Sacraments at the hour of death,—not all who *seem* to die well, really do so, and are saved. The devil has scarcely a more dangerous snare for souls than this. Many continue their criminal line of conduct all through life, expecting that at the last hour they will have time enough to confess their sins and receive the rites of the Church. For this very reason, are so many lost.

1. Men die suddenly,—by accident, without having been sick at all, or unexpectedly in the very beginning of what appears to be a light illness. No priest,—no Sacrament,—yet he who dies in mortal sin is lost forever. And even if an impenitent sinner,—one who has led a life of sin and vice, and whom approaching death finds still in the state of mortal sin, at enmity with his neighbor, in the possession of unjustly acquired goods, or sunk in impurity, intemperance, or other evil habits,—if such a one in slavish dread of God's justice and judgment wishes to confess his sins and receive the rites of the Church, how, I ask, will he then receive the holy Sacrament of Penance, the Viaticum, and extreme Unction ?

2. He who defers his conversion until he is dangerously sick, also puts off his confession until he is no longer able to make it with the proper dispositions. For the most part, the question of the Sacraments is not thought of until the sick man's mind has become confused, his senses dulled, or his tongue benumbed by the chill of death. The priest comes,—the sick man prepares to make his confession ; but, alas ! his life is fast ebbing away ; he confesses in the greatest haste, the greatest anguish and confusion. Have you ever been sick, very sick, my brethren ? Tell me, then, how did you feel when you lay upon your bed, consumed with fever, or racked with agonizing pains ? Were your thoughts turned towards God and the salvation of your soul ? " Ah ! " you will reply, " when I was sick, I could not say a single prayer with devotion. All I wanted was to be let alone ; everything fatigued me." Yes, when one is sick, he can do little else but suffer and moan. " Thou mayest do many good things whilst thou art well," says Thomas A. Kempis ; " but when thou art sick, I know not what thou wilt be able to do." (Lib. 1 : cap. 23.)

3. What sort of a confession can be made under such circumstances? Calmness of mind and a clear understanding are requisite for a careful examen of conscience, for contrition and a firm purpose of amendment,—but the fast-sinking sinner has only a few agitated moments remaining ; strength fails him ; he confesses wildly, incoherently, with doubtful signs and sighs,—he confesses, but does not know himself what he has confessed. I was, one day, called to a sick man, my brethren, who was very weak and confused in mind. I thought he would die. I did all I could. In the evening I visited him again; he had rallied a little. His first words, when he saw me were : “ I want to go to confession.” I told him that he had made his confession in the morning. “ Impossible,” said he ; “ I know nothing about it ! ” From *this*, you can judge what is to be thought of death-bed conversions.

4. The priest does all he can. To his earnest question : “ Are you sorry for your sins ? ”—the sick person, of course, replies : “ Yes.” Why should he not say yes? Every one says so. He is asked again “ Are you sorry for your sins out of love for God ? ” And again he replies “ Yes,” and heaves some heavy sighs ; but those sighs proceed not so much from sorrow for his sins as from the fear of the approaching judgment. Judas, also, confessed his guilt—*and hanged himself!* The priest does all he can. He asks the sick person : “ Are you resolved to sin no more ? ” And he answers : “ I am resolved never more to offend God.” But every one says the same. He says : “ I will sin no more ; ” and I believe that he *will sin no more* when he *can sin no more*,—that he will quit sin when sin quits him. He will not, indeed, commit it if he die, but if he recover, I greatly doubt whether he will keep his promise. I, for my part, with an experience of thirty-five years, know of *only one person* who, after a severe illness, really amended his life, and persevered in virtue until his death. And you, perhaps, my brethren, do not even know one. Most sinners, after reecovering from an illness, are the same as before. They return to their former carelessness and sloth in the service of God ; they are envious, vindictive, impure, and proud ; they curse, swear, and blaspheme, gamble, and get drunk,—in a word, they commit the same sins as before. Behold the resolution of the sick or dying sinner,—*to sin no more!* Out of a thousand who recover from a dangerous sickness, scarcely one will amend his life ; hence, their resolutions in a thousand cases are not true resolutions ; they are like the promises of the slave under the lash,—falsehoods told to God and his ministers.

5. And then as regards their *penance*. Besides the penance which the priest enjoins on every sinner, God and the sinners's own conscience demand that satisfaction be made for the past, that the damage caused by his sins be, (as much as possible,) repaired. Perhaps he lives in enmity with

his fellow-man ; perhaps he is in the possession of ill-gotten goods. He must be reconciled with his neighbor, make restitution,—repair a scandal given, or an injury done ; but he can no longer do any of these things ; he grows weaker and weaker ; he knows no longer what he says,—and thus, he dies. The priest who attends him has yet many things to tell him, but he hears no more ; in his agony, he turns from side to side ; he rises and falls upon his pillow ; his breath comes more and more slowly ; a struggle,—a feeble convulsion,—alas ! he is no more !

6. O that I might never again be under the necessity of assisting a man who has put off his conversion to his dying hour ! I would not know how to help him,—how to advise him or myself. I would have to refuse him the Sacraments, or expose him to the greatest risk of being abused or dishonored. After all this, my brethren, what do you think of a death-bed conversion ? After all this, shall I not leave it to yourselves to judge and decide how few is the number of the elect ? As few as is the number of true, practical Christians. And yet many who lead sinful lives, hope to be saved ! Is not this presumption ? Remember, dear Christians, that as a man lives, so will he die. Hence, if you wish to die well and be saved, keep the Commandments, decline from evil and do good ; if you wish to die well, endeavor now to *live* well, deferring not your conversion until your last hour, but making ready your wedding-garment in good season, so that when you are called to the marriage-feast of the Lamb, you may be of the blessed few chosen to sit down at that Banquet of delights and enjoy the society of the Eternal King, through all the long, bright ages of eternity. Amen.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON HELL.

“The king said to the waiters : Having bound his hands and feet, cast him into the exterior darkness : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matt. 22 : 13.

All the holy Fathers of the Church agree in saying, that the marriage-feast, mentioned in this day's Gospel, is the glory of heaven, where the elect, satiated by the riches of the house of God, will drink forever at the torrent of sweetest pleasures. The king who prepares this feast is God himself. The Son, who opens for us the gates of the banquet-hall, is Jesus Christ. We are all the invited guests. The nuptial robe of admittance is sanctifying grace. The excluded are those who depart this life in the state of mortal sin. Finally, the darkness into which the latter are cast, and where there is nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth, is hell,—a place where everlasting horror dwells,—a place of eternal torments !

The chief reason why the world is at present flooded with iniquity is, that men do not duly appreciate their eternal salvation, nor duly reflect on the eternal truths. Hence, I invite you on this day to consider briefly with me that great and awful truth which the latter part of this day's Gospel suggests to our consideration, namely—that *if we depart this life at enmity with God, we will have to undergo eternal punishments.* To the consideration of this great truth, I invite, in a special manner, all those amongst you who are living in mortal sin,—in the hope that if they be not drawn to a sense of their duty by the reflection that their sins have offended a God of infinite goodness, they may, at least, be drawn thereto from the consideration of those dreadful torments which await the reprobate in the other life. To such persons I will address the words of St. Bernard, and say with him : “In order not to be precipitated into hell after death, descend there while living.” Yes, descend there now, my brethren, and behold with the eye of faith, the dreadful torments which the damned are undergoing in that dismal abode. It was this consideration that caused numbers, in all ages, to abandon country, home, parents, and all that they held nearest and dearest in this world, and shut themselves up in monasteries, in order to secure their eternal salvation. It was this consideration that caused kings and queens to lay down their crowns, and cast aside all the insignia of royalty, to the end that, sequestered in some lonely cell, they might be the better able to attend to their eternal salvation. It was this

consideration, in fine, that filled the deserts with anchorets and penitential orders of the most austere rule, who deprived themselves of all in this world, in order to gain all in the next. Let it, brethren, in God's name, have the like effect upon us, and although we may not be called by God to practise the terrible austerities of a Jerome or a Benedict, a St. Mary of Egypt, or a Pelagia, or be required to abandon parents, friends, country, and all that we hold dear, like an Augustine, a Bernard, an Ignatius of Loyola, or a Francis of Assisi,—let us, at least, abandon sin and all the occasions thereof, and turn to God with our whole hearts and souls.

The punishment of the damned is twofold, namely,—*the pain of loss, and the pain of sense*. The pain of loss consists in being deprived forever of the Beatific Vision,—but on this point I shall not enlarge at present, confining myself, to-day, to the consideration of the pain of sense alone,—a theme, alas! which generally makes greater impression on carnal minds, and awakens a more salutary fear in carnal hearts, than any threat of being deprived of our highest Good.

Blinded by their passions, and carried away by their brutal pleasures, wicked men have often, but vainly, endeavored to persuade themselves that they can sin freely in this life, without having to suffer any chastisements in the next. But the revelations of God, as well as the dictates of reason, are sufficient to convince us that, as mortal sin is an infinite and incomprehensible evil, so its chastisement is so great and so terrible that the human mind can form no adequate idea of its duration or intensity. No; as St. Augustine says, we can neither express by word, nor realize by thought, all that is endured by the damned souls. Nevertheless, my brethren, we must endeavor to form some faint conception of that dread reality; and, in order to kindle in our souls the fear of God and a sovereign horror of sin, we will call to our aid the testimony of Holy Writ and the revelations of the saints.

Divine faith assures us that the reprobate are plunged into an ocean of fire, which always burns, yet never consumes them. Miserable that we are, we cry aloud if a single spark of fire but scorch our little finger; we shudder at the bare thought of the sufferings and torments endured by the glorious martyr St. Lawrence, who was roasted alive on a gridiron. How, then, will we be able to represent to ourselves the tortures, the agonies, which the damned endure, dwelling in a boundless sea of fire and brimstone,—in those dreadful flames which enter through their mouths, through their ears, through their noses, through all parts of their bodies, and penetrating into their heart and bowels, make the very blood to boil in their veins, the brains in their heads, the very marrow in their bones. O, my beloved! what sort of fire must not the fire of hell be,—how active, how irresistible, how penetrating! The fire of earth has been ordained by God for the use and benefit of man; and the holy Fathers tell us that it is

no more than a shadow or a picture, compared to the fire of hell. Yet our earthly fire, as you know, has such force and activity that it melts the hardest metals like wax, reduces whole cities to ashes in a few moments, and penetrates the strongest barriers. How great, then, must be the force, the activity of the fire of hell, created by God for the express purpose of punishing those who, during life, have abused his mercy and defied his laws! "Which of you," cries out the prophet, "can dwell with devouring fire?" (Is. 33 : 14.) How shall the luxurious, the effeminate, the delicate lovers of self and of the world,—how shall *they*, my brethren, be able to dwell forever amid those greedy, torturing flames!

When we read or hear of the cruelties inflicted on the martyrs by the tyrants of old, we are filled with horror, and the blood seems to freeze in our veins; yet all those torments were limited in their kind and nature by the finite intelligence which conceived them. The damned, on the contrary, suffer griefs and sufferings of all sorts, of all species,—torments designed by an all-wise, an all-powerful God, for the express purpose of punishing his rebellious creatures. Alas! it is impossible to comprehend the pains of hell, since they are worse than anything the human imagination can conceive. Let it not be supposed that I am exaggerating when I venture to enter into details on this point; for I am supported by the testimony and authority of the Holy Fathers, deduced from the Inspired Word of God. Know, then, my beloved, that the damned are tormented in the *sense of sight*, since in that dreadful prison they behold naught, save loathsome objects of terror and dread, barbarous instruments of torture, legions of demons, horrid monsters, destined to unceasingly insult and maltreat their unfortunate victims. Behold, how the immodest and unchaste liberty which sinners allow their eyes in this life, will one day receive its everlasting punishment! O, my brethren, take warning in time, and repent! Great heavens! if the sight of a serpent, a tiger, or a roaring lion, fills us with inexpressible fear, even when we view them from a distance, or behind the strong bars of an iron cage, what shall we say of the damned who, through the smoke of that raging fire, behold continually, on every side, fiery monsters which press closely upon them, and tear them with their dreadful fangs! St. Frances of Rome and St. Catharine of Sienna, having, at one time, seen a demon in all his native deformity, the one said that, to escape that vision, she would rather be cast alive into a burning furnace; and the other, that she would prefer walking barefoot over burning coals to the day of judgment, rather than longer endure the sight of so hideous an object.

The damned are tormented, also, in the *sense of hearing*, inasmuch as they hear nothing else in that dismal region save the clanking of chains, the most execrable maledictions and blasphemies, shrieks and lamentations of despair. Behold, how those will one day suffer, who now take pleasure in hearing immodest discourses, or listen with complacency to backbiting, detraction, and calumny! Ah! if the cries and lamentations of a sick

person are often sufficient to disturb the peace of an entire household, how will it be in hell, where the foul air is rent forever with shrieks of despair, curses, angry howlings, and the most unheard-of blasphemies?

Nor is the *sense of smell* without its peculiar torment in that dreadful prison. Being filled with all sorts of uncleanness,—being the Gehenna, in short, into which pours, without intermission, all the filth and offal of earth,—its inmates inhale nothing else save the most intolerable odors and stench. Go, if you will, my brethren, and ask all those luxurious sinners who now indulge their sense of smell with the most fragrant perfumes, how they can expect to support the foul, sickening, overpowering stench of hell, to which, if unrepentant, they will be condemned for all eternity. The Prophet Isaias says, that the bodies of the damned send forth so loathsome a stench, that if but a single one of them appeared on the earth, his presence would be sufficient to spread a plague throughout the entire universe. How dreadful, then, must it not be to be hopelessly confined in that sealed prison of hell, in closest contact with millions upon millions of those corrupt, decaying bodies, from which so pestilential an odor proceeds!

They are tormented, also, in the *sense of taste*. Gnawed continually by a most ravenous hunger, they find nothing to assuage it but the bitter gall of the dragon; parched in their dreadful fiery fever with the most unquenchable thirst, they find naught to allay it but poisonous sulphur and liquefied metal. Let the drunkards, and gluttons, and epicures of earth, approaching in spirit to the brink of hell, behold their old boon-companions in that fiery pit,—and tremble! Oh! here, my beloved, I appeal in a special manner to those amongst you, who may be addicted to the horrid vice of Intemperance. It is to *you*, O base drunkards,—to you, who disgrace humanity by those filthy abominations which degrade you beneath the level of the brutes; it is to you that I address myself to-day, and warn you from this sacred pulpit to give up your vicious courses in time, lest you be condemned by the inexorable justice of God to bewail your intemperance for all eternity in hell!

The damned are finally tormented in the *sense of touch*,—that is, in all parts of the body, especially those members with which most sins have been committed. Behold, then, how those who now indulge in all sorts of immodesty and unlawful carnal pleasures, will one day suffer for them!

But, at least, you may say, amid such horrible tortures and torments, the damned experience, sooner or later, some little consolation? No, my brethren, as long as God shall be God, they are condemned to suffer all kinds of punishments without a moment's reprieve or comfort. In this life, even in the depths of our greatest tribulations and sufferings, we enjoy at intervals some brief consolation. A kind word of condolence from a friend, a temporary cessation of pain, relieves for a few moments, at least, the pressure of our affliction; but in hell there is none of this. In that prison-house of woe, the reprobate, far from feeling or manifesting any

sympathy for the sufferings around them, entertain, on the contrary, the most deadly hatred for one another; the father curses and rages against the son, and the son against the father—the husband against the wife, and the wife, in her turn, against the husband,—and soon with all those whose sins or neglect have caused the damnation of others. O, how deplorable, then, is the error of those who, without a moment's reflection, say: "Well, if I am damned in the end, I will not be alone in hell; I'll have plenty of company *there!*" To such persons, I will cry out with St. Thomas: "Ah! fools and madmen, do you not know that the more companions you have in hell, the more you will be condemned to suffer?" Since no charity exists amongst the damned, the greater the multitude in that abominable abode, the greater the number of infuriated enemies, which will there insult and curse, maltreat and torment you. O, what an additional torture will it not be for one who has led a scandalous life, to find himself, or herself, (as the case may be), in hell, surrounded by souls which have been damned through his or her scandals, evil counsels, or bad example! What an additional torture for fathers or mothers to find themselves in that abode of misery, in company with their sons and daughters who have been eternally lost through their criminal indulgence and neglect! Oh! how they will be enraged with each other when they remember how they pampered their children's bodies and neglected their immortal souls! How they will malign and curse each other, and incite the demons to inflict the severest torments upon their unhappy partners!

Take care, then, I will say to all here present whom God may have called to the marriage state and blessed with children,—take heed, I say, and do not abuse the gifts of God, but bring up your children in his fear and love, as well by example, as by word.

II. Have I exhausted the category of horrors, my brethren, when I have thus described in detail the tortures of the damned? No; the worst still remains to be told. Not only are the reprobate condemned to suffer all those multiplied and most exquisite torments of body and soul, but they are destined to endure those dreadful punishments for all eternity. *For all eternity?* Good God! is it possible that, after millions of years,—nay, millions and billions of ages,—will have rolled by, the punishment of the damned will not have ceased for a moment, but will only be, as it were, at its beginning? Is it possible that those devouring flames, kindled by the wrath of God, will not, sooner or later, reduce to ashes the unfortunate victims of his justice? No; the torments of hell will never end, nor will the reprobate ever be consumed by its fires. It is true, alas! that they will long for nothing more ardently than that they might be consumed by those flames,—that they might be annihilated, in short, if so be it they might thereby be released from their intolerable pains; but all in vain! They are doomed to eternal tortures, according to the decree of God, con-

firmed by the words of our divine Lord himself: "They shall go," says he, "into everlasting punishment." (Matt. 25 : 46.)

Though eighteen hundred years have now passed away since Judas was condemned to hell, what does it avail him to have already undergone all those ages of agony? Not the least; his torments are not diminished thereby even in the slightest degree, nor will they be, as long as God shall be God. O, how terrible is the bare thought of eternity! Always in torments, always in an all-pervading atmosphere of pain, without being ever able to escape, even for a moment, from our prison-house of woe! Ever, ever, ever to suffer,—never, never, never to be released! Oh! more than awful words, which will resound forever in the ears of the damned, and will cause them more torture than all their other pains put together! Ah! I will cry out to you with St. Bonaventure: "Who will not tremble from head to foot at considering seriously the pains of hell,—not only intolerable in their cruelty, but interminable in their eternity!"

This consideration filled St. Augustine with such a salutary fear, that he earnestly besought God, night and day, imploring him with a strong cry and tears: "Here cut, here burn, but spare me, O Lord! for eternity!" Some of us, my dearly beloved, may have imitated St. Augustine in his sins, but not in his conversion and repentance; will we, then, with these things before our eyes, still persevere in this state of lukewarmness and tepidity? Can any one amongst you whose conscience is stained with mortal sin, repose tranquilly on his bed this night, and not be afraid that, before the morning's dawn, a sudden death may condemn him to the eternal torments of hell? Ah! tremble, tremble, sinner! for you are now already on the brink of hell; nothing prevents your falling into the dark abyss save the slender thread of life, which a sudden and unforeseen accident may, at any moment, sever. Your life is, indeed, at the disposal of your Creator; but remember, that if he is an all-merciful Father, he is, at the same time, an all-just Judge.

O God! for myself, I tremble; and let each one of you, my brethren, ask his own conscience what would be the result of a sudden death—this day, this hour? Let us ever keep before our eyes the shining scales of the divine mercy and justice, lest we presume too much on the bounty of the one, or sink into abject despair before the terrors of the other. Alas! which of us can say that we have not abused the divine mercy? O, if you value your eternal salvation, beware, then, my brethren, of trifling any longer with that adorable mercy. The appeal which he makes to you, today, from this sacred pulpit, imploring you to return to him with your whole hearts, may be the last grace he wills to confer upon you. Let not, then, his tender pleadings pass unheeded like those of the past, but reflect seriously on the awful punishments that await you in hell, if, abusing the mercy of God, you die in your sins. If neither this consideration nor the thought of our ingratitude to the best of Benefactors, can induce us to

abandon our evil ways and return heart and soul to God, what other consideration, then, can we propose to ourselves to secure this desired effect? Our case is a desperate one; and crying out to you with the royal Prophet, I beseech you, my dearly beloved: "Understand these things, you that forget God, lest he snatch you *away*, and there be none to deliver you." (Ps. 49 : 22.) But it will not do for us merely to understand these truths as they are explained to us by God's ministers, but, in order to gather fruit from them, we must reflect seriously and frequently upon them, and earnestly apply them to our own individual case. "*I am that person,*" I must say to myself, "who must live as a true priest of God, as a true minister of the Gospel; for if I do not discharge all the duties of my holy state in a conscientious and edifying manner, I shall be plunged, (and perhaps at no very distant day), into the insupportable torments of hell!" "*I am that person,*" the drunkard or the glutton must say to himself, "who, if I do not here renounce my sinful habits of intemperance, and mortify my bestial appetite, must hereafter endure the intolerable thirst and hunger of hell!" "*I am that person,*" should exclaim the victim of the abominable vice of lust, "who, if I persevere in this vicious habit, in this most degrading crime, must one day be salted with fire, and tormented from head to foot in the everlasting tortures prepared for the impure and the unchaste!" "*I am that person,*" the unjust man must say, "who, if I do not desist from my dishonesties, and make restitution to my injured neighbor as far as I am-able, must one day expiate my injustice in the eternal fires of hell!" "*I am that person,*" every sinner should finally say to himself, "who, if I do not amend my life in good earnest, and fly, in future, at any cost, from sin and all its occasions, will be banished forever from the face of God, and plunged into the everlasting flames of hell!"

Ah! if we reflected seriously on these terrible truths,—if each man made this particular application of my words to his own case, it is certain that we would leave nothing undone to escape those eternal torments. No longer abusing the Divine mercy by deferring our repentance from day to day, it is certain that we would thoroughly reform our lives, and never again expose ourselves to the danger of being eternally lost by committing one deliberate mortal sin. An infallible prediction of the Holy Spirit it is, that whoever reflects on these and the other eternal truths will never sin: "Remember the last things, and thou shalt never sin." That you may be the better able to effect your purpose, recur to the intercession of the immaculate Mother of God and our Mother also, and rest assured that she, who is the refuge of sinners, and our only hope after God, will lovingly assist you. No matter how grievous your sins may be, provided you be sincerely sorry for them, and are firmly resolved to amend your lives, she will recommend you to her beloved Son, and obtain for you the grace of becoming truly reconciled to him. Oh! yes, my dear brethren, it is not possible

that that fond Mother who takes so deep an interest in the cause of her divine Son, and in our salvation, will abandon us, provided we recur to her with the proper dispositions. Fly, then, dear Christians, with confidence to Mary, and beg of her to obtain for you the grace of a true repentance, and of final perseverance in the grace of God and her own holy service. Recommend yourselves, also, beloved brethren, to her chaste spouse, St. Joseph, and to all the saints of heaven, especially your patrons in the celestial choirs of Paradise. Beg of them, my brethren, and of all the saints and angels of God to intercede for you, and obtain for you all the graces and blessings you stand in need of, especially the gift of final perseverance in the love and service of God. Thus may you happily escape the everlasting torments of hell, and clothed in the wedding-garment of the elect, numbered not only amongst the many who are called, but the few who are chosen, you may merit that crown of eternal happiness which God reserves for his chosen ones in the life to come, and may hear from his own divine lips those consoling words of approval: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Amen. (Matt. 25 : 23.)

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TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE TRUE RULE OF FAITH.

“*The man believed the word which Jesus said to him.*” *John 4 : 50.*

My anticipations as to the presence of large numbers of non-Catholics being fully realized, I shall lecture, to-day, on the “Rule of Faith,” or, on what is our authority for what we must believe and do to enter life everlasting.

On this question, Catholics and non-Catholics are divided. With non-Catholics the “Rule of Faith” is the Scripture as interpreted by each person’s private judgment, or, as many express themselves, “the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible.” “The Bible alone,” then, is the non-Catholic rule of faith.

On the other hand, Catholics maintain that the Church established by Christ is the divinely-constituted teacher in matters of faith and morals. Hence, they say : “I believe in the holy Catholic Church.”

If the Bible, then, is the “Rule of Faith” for Protestants, and the Church for Catholics, either non-Catholics must be right, and Catholics wrong ; or *vice versa*. When two parties contradict each other, both may be in error, but one must necessarily be so. For instance, two boys write a composition on a certain colt. One says : It is as black as pitch ; and the other : It is as white as snow. Evidently, one of the boys must be badly mistaken,—the colt cannot be white and black at the same time. In like manner, there being no third rule, either Catholics or non-Catholics must be mistaken.

But, I think I can prove beyond a reasonable doubt, that the preponderance of evidence is on our side of the house. In doing so, I shall quote from the Bible freely, not because we consider the Bible above the Church, the latter being older than the Bible, but because I wish to prove by the Bible itself (the great and undisputed authority among non-Catholics themselves,) that the Bible is not even in its own favor as a “Rule of Faith ;” on the contrary, that it is in favor of the Catholic rule alone.

I. Was the Bible the “Rule of Faith” *in the days of our Divine Saviour* ? No. Why not ? Simply because, as we have it to-day, it had then no existence. Was it possible, I ask, for the early Christians of our Saviour’s day, to get instructions from a book which did not exist ? Did Christ write anything himself ? No. Oh ! I am mistaken,—he did, on a certain occasion,

write on the sand,—but I presume there is no record of that writing,—the winds soon effaced it. Did he commission the Apostles to write? I defy you to prove it. If the Bible was to be the sole rule of faith, why did not the Saviour write a copy? Why did he not multiply it, as he multiplied the loaves and the fishes? No. He might have invented a press, it is true, opened a printing-office, appointed St. John type-setter, St. Matthew proof-reader, St. Peter book-binder, and all the other Apostles, Bible agents. He might have invented a reading machine, because in those days, reading was a luxury; and on Main street, in the city of Jerusalem, he might have hung out his sign with the grand inscription: *Bible Printing Office! Don't join your religion to the coat-tail of any preacher. Read and think for yourselves unto the consummation of the world!*

Would not this have been a Yankee trick,—and a smart one too,—and a paying one besides? But Christ said and did nothing of the kind. On the contrary, take your own authority, the “Bible alone,”—take one Evangelist after the other,—and see what he *did* say:

“Go ye, therefore, and *teach* all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; *teaching* them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you [teaching successors] all days, even to the consummation of the world.” (Matt. 28 : 19, 20.)

Again, says the same Evangelist: “And if he will not *hear the Church*, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican.” (18 : 17.)

“Go ye into the whole world, and *preach* the Gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16 : 15.)

“He that *heareth* you, *heareth* me; and he that *despiseth* you, *despiseth* me; and he that *despiseth* me, *despiseth* him that sent me.” (Luke 10 : 16.)

“These things have I *spoken* to you, remaining with you. But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will *teach* you all things, and *bring all things to your mind*, whatsoever I shall have *said* to you.” (John 14 : 25, 26.)

Suppose you had an important law-suit, and four of your own most important witnesses were to swear against you, would you not feel blue? And don't you see that the Evangelists, your four principal witnesses, not to speak of other sacred writers, (whom, in the meanwhile, I am keeping in the rear, and whom I shall soon call on the witness stand), are swearing against you and your “Rule of Faith?”

But listen! Here comes an objection. Christ said: “*Search the Scriptures.*”

I admit it,—Christ said so. However, what does that prove? Which Testament has a special reference to us Christians,—the Old or the New? The New. Was it written when Christ said: “*Search the Scriptures?*” Not a word of it. Well, then, how can I read what does not exist? How can I “*search*” a book which I do not possess?

Suppose, however, for the sake of argument, the New Testament had then existed,—would the words “*Search the Scriptures,*” prove that the Bible and “the Bible alone” is our teacher in matters of faith and morals? Suppose, for example, I were to say to a young man, questioning me about the life of Abraham Lincoln: “Search the history of the United States;” would my advice infer that history alone could answer the questions proposed? Why, I can go out, any day, on our railroad, the Airline, to Lincoln City, and the grandmothers there, though they have not received from Christ a special commission to teach, can tell me a thousand things about Abraham Lincoln, not found in the histories of the United States.

Ah! no; when Christ said: “Search the Scriptures,” *this* is what he meant: “If you do not believe my words, if you have no confidence in my works, wonderful as they are,—if you think more of the Old Testament than you do of *me*, go and search that sacred Book, and you shall find that I am the Messiah, promised by God in the Garden of Eden, longed after by the Patriarchs, foretold and described by the prophets.” But did they, the Jews, recognize the Saviour after searching the Scripture? No; they sacrificed him as a malefactor. Hence, the Bible was a very unreliable teacher. Consequently, the Bible was not the “Rule of Faith” in the days of Christ.

II. Was it the Rule of Faith *in the days of the Apostles?* In the first place, the Apostles never saw the Bible. An Italian theologian has remarked that when the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles on Pentecost, he came not in the form of *pens* of fire wherewith to *write* the Gospel, but of *tongues* of fire wherewith to *preach* it. You will admit that St. John closed the sacred volume on the island of Patmos, at the end of his life, when the other eleven were dead and buried. In all probability, St. John himself never saw the Scriptures. They had been written at different times by different men, and sent to different nations: Romans, Hebrews, Galatians, Corinthians; nations, hundreds of miles apart,—at a time when there were no telegraph wires, no telephone lines, no railroads, no steamboats.

If the Bible was to be the Rule of Faith, St. John should have collected the various Epistles and Gospels, bound them together, and written in a postscript, thus: “We do hold and declare that this book is, and shall be, the teacher of all nations until the consummation of the world. Witness my hand and seal,” etc. But did he do this? No. On the contrary, he and the other Apostles follow the example of the Saviour, and say, that the Bible is *not* the “Rule of Faith.”

Non-Catholics say: “It is all in the Bible.” But St. John denies it flatly: “There are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written.” (21:25.)

Again : "Having more things to write to you, I would not by paper and ink : for I hope, that I shall be with you, and *speak face to face* ; that your joy may be full." (2 John 1 : 12.)

Non-Catholics say : "Do not believe in traditions, take the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible." But St. Paul says just the contrary : "Brethren, stand *firm*, and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by epistle." (2 Thess. 2 : 14.)

Again : "The things which thou hast *heard* from me before many witnesses, the same commend to faithful men, who shall be fit to *teach* others also." (2 Tim. 2 : 2.)

Non-Catholics say : "Do not pin your religion to the coat-tail of any minister,—read, and judge for yourselves." St. Paul says, on the contrary : "Obey your prelates, and be subject to them, for they watch as being to render an account of your souls." (Heb. 13 : 17.)

Again : "How shall they believe him of whom they have not *heard*? And how shall they *hear* without a *preacher*? And how can they *preach* unless they be sent?" (Rom. 10 : 14, 15.)

In the Acts, we read : "The Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops to *rule* the Church of God." (20 : 28.) St. Paul was not told to go and read, but : "Arise, and go into the city ; and there it shall be *told thee* what thou must do." (Acts 9 : 7.)

When Philip found the Ethiopian sitting in his chariot, and reading the prophet Isaias, he said to him : "Thinkest thou that thou understandest what thou readeest? (and) he said : How can I, unless some one *show me*." (Acts 8 : 30, 31.) Philip instructed him, and he was baptized. Consequently, in the days of the Apostles, the Bible was not the "Rule of Faith."

III. Was the Bible the "Rule of Faith" within *four hundred years after Christ*?

No. Why not? In the first place, the Bible, as we have it to-day, had no existence at that time. Its various parts had not been collected. In the second place, in those days there were shams and humbugs as well as now,—men sailed under false colors. In the names of the Apostles, false Gospels and false Epistles made their appearance. Breckinridge, in his great debate with Archbishop Hughes, admits that spurious scriptures were out as late as A. D. 364. If I am not mistaken, the matter was brought before Council of Carthage, A. D. 397. The various books claiming inspection, were collected, fanned, and sifted ; the chaff was separated from the wheat,—false Gospels and spurious Epistles were thrown overboard. In short, there and then it was decided, which books were inspired, and which were not.

St. Irenæus, a disciple of St. Polycarp, (in *his* turn a disciple of St. John,) says : "Supposing the Apostles had not left us the Scriptures, ought we

not still to have followed the ordinance of tradition which they consigned to those to whom they committed the churches? It is this ordinance of tradition, which many nations of barbarians believing in Christ, follow without the use of letters and ink." (*Iren. adv. Ibaeres. LIV. 6 : 64.*) In his book of Prescription, pp. 36, 37, Tertullian substantially uses the same language. Consequently, the Bible was not the "Rule of Faith" during the first 400 years after Christ.

IV. Was the Bible the rule of faith from A. D. 400 to *the time when the art of printing was invented?*

Think of all the people living during those centuries; think of the many languages spoken; think of what a task it must have been to write the whole Bible with a pen! The labor entailed must have been immense. The cost of a Bible was from one to three thousand dollars. Consequently, during the first 1400 or 1500 years, Bible-reading was quite a luxury,—a luxury which the wealthiest only could enjoy. A grand, first-class teacher may reside in the city of New York, but what good does he do *me*, if he does not come to me, and if I cannot go to him? Is it reasonable to suppose that God would appoint a teacher who did not, and would not, visit his pupils for a space of 1500 years?

V. Is the "Bible alone" a good rule of faith at *the present day?*

Evidently, in the first place, that sacred volume was not intended for a Catechism, or a book of instructions. Among the various writers of it, there was no concert of action. Many wrote for a particular class of people, and when circumstances seemed to demand it. Grotius, a celebrated Protestant writer, says in his 582d letter: "The Apostles had no intention of giving in their Epistles a lengthy exposition of the doctrines necessary to salvation; they wrote as the occasion arose, to answer propounded questions."

In the second place, how many are there, to-day, even in our own country,—a country which lavishly spends millions and millions in favor of education, a country which raises a school-house in sight of every citizen,—tell me, how many are there in our own country that can read?

In the third place, how many are there who understand what they read? "Oh! the Bible is so plain," you say, "that fools can comprehend it." But, my friend, St. Peter does not agree with you. Speaking of the writings of St. Paul, he says: "In which are some things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as also the other Scriptures, to their own perdition." (2 Peter 3 : 16.) Luther, the father of Protestantism, confirms this: "It is impossible to fathom the Scriptures; we can only skip over their surface; to understand their sense would be a wonder." (*Audin's Life of Luther, Book ii.*)

Finally, what does *your own experience* teach? Look around you, and

see the many churches teaching conflicting doctrines. Not only Catholics and non-Catholics disagree, but non-Catholics disagree among themselves, —though all found their religion upon the Bible. The Lutheran proves by the Bible that baptism is essential to salvation; whereas, the Methodist holds just the reverse. The Presbyterian discipline favors infant baptism; but Baptists brand it as a humbug. The United Brethren believe in everlasting punishment; but the Universalist believes in the salvation of all mankind.

The Deist proves by the Bible that Jesus Christ was only a man, though above the general average; that to worship him is idolatry. The Mormon, (with the Bible under his arm, probably,) walks into the halls of Congress, and proves that he has a divine right to marry as many wives as he can support. Yes, in the hands of Ingersoll, the Bible is a “pack of lies;” and stigmatizing it thus, he has the satisfaction of eliciting rounds of applause from thousands of American citizens. Will any sane man say, that these conflicting doctrines are all true? Somebody *must* be mistaken. Black is not white, and white is not black. And will you tell me, in the face of all these stubborn facts, that the Bible is a plain book? Do not these facts prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, that the Bible contains a dead letter, which must have an interpreter as well as the statute-book of the State of Indiana?

Consequently, even in our own day, in the day of telegraphs and telephones, in the day of railroads and steamboats, the “Bible alone,” dividing the human family into a thousand religious splinters, must be, indeed, if at all, a very poor rule of faith. Yet non-Catholics insist, that it is our only teacher in matters of faith and morals. Listen to a conversation between a non-Catholic and his Bible. The Protestant says: “Look here, Bible! you are our ‘Rule of Faith.’” “No, I am not.” “Yes, you are.” “Christ does not say so.” “It matters not.” “The Apostles deny it.” “Be still!” “Experience proves the contrary.” “Hush! You are our sole rule of faith, and if you don’t want to be, we will *make* you.”

And now, my dissenting friends, since I have answered some of your objections, please answer a few of mine.

First objection,—*How do you know that you HAVE the Bible?* You are surely aware that the various Bibles are in conflict. Which Bible is true, —the Catholic or the Protestant? Both cannot be true, when they contradict each other. “The Protestant, of course.” How do you know? Does the “Bible alone” tell you so, or do you accept it on some other authority? But that is placing some one above the Bible. Furthermore, which one of the Protestant Bibles is true? Luther, the father of the Reformation, did not recognize the Epistle of St. James. Read Ward’s *Errata*, and you will be astonished to see what a difference there is in the various editions. You may read the Bible from Genesis to the Apocalypse, without finding an answer to this objection.

Second objection,—*How do you know the Bible is an inspired book?* Suppose you had never heard of the inspiration of the Bible, would you, by reading it, come to the conclusion that it must be inspired? The book itself does not prove it. On the contrary, there are a thousand things in the Bible which bring the blush of shame to the cheeks of the most hardened sinner. “But my mother and my grandmother said so,—in fact, the world says so.” Stop, my friend, you are standing on Catholic ground,—you are proving the inspiration of the Bible by outside authority,—by tradition,—just what we Catholics have always done, and still do. You have no right to appeal to Catholic judges,—take the Bible and the “Bible alone,” and tell me whether it is inspired or not.

Third objection,—But suppose you *have* the true Bible,—suppose, furthermore, it is inspired,—are you infallibly certain that your explanation of it is correct? If not, your faith is wrapped up in doubt. Let us suppose you are mistaken,—which is possible, since others, just as smart as you, hold just the reverse,—what excuse will you offer on the day of retribution? A Catholic can say to the great Judge: You have appointed a ministry,—you commanded them to preach and teach to the end of the world,—you promised to be with them all days. You commanded me to obey them under the penalty of being “a heathen and a publican,”—under the penalty of despising him that sent them,—I obeyed, relying on your promises. *If* they taught false doctrines, *I* am not responsible,—what right had I to believe that “the gates of hell prevailed against your Church,” when you positively said they should not do so?

Again: what excuse will you offer, after following your own private opinion? If the “Bible alone” is our “Rule of Faith,” many things should be done which are now set aside,—we should put on the apron and wash our neighbor’s feet, because Christ insists on it,—we should keep the Saturday instead of the Sunday, because Christ did it, (Luke 4 : 16), and because the disciples imitated their divine Master, (Luke 23 : 56), we should refrain from eating blood, because the Apostles positively forbade it. (Acts 15 : 20.) But where is the Protestant who scruples at eating—“pudding made of blood?”

How do we know that all these things have been changed? Certainly, not from the Bible, but from tradition.

Practically, non-Catholics themselves do not believe that the “Bible alone” is their only teacher in matters of faith.

If I am not mistaken, there are nine Protestant churches in this town, though two, being of a respectable size, would supply all wants. Every church is entitled to a preacher,—every preacher to a wife,—every wife to two hats,—one for spring and one for fall. But, where there is a man and a wife, there ought to be some children,—at the average, say, only three. Hence, we have nine ministers, nine ladies, and 27 children,—45 persons, all told,—a standing army kept up by non-Catholics. Why? Because the

“Bible alone” does not satisfy them. Would the people of Rockport go to all this expense, if 50 cents worth of Bible could satisfy all their spiritual wants? Indeed not,—they are too intelligent. Practically, our dissenting brethren believe, as well as we do, in the words of the Saviour, pronounced over 1800 years ago: “Go ye and *teach*,” etc.

In short, the Bible is positively opposed to private judgment in matters of faith and morals: “Understanding this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is made by private interpretation.” (2 Peter 1:20.) Furthermore, it is ruinous to the human family, since it gives Tom, Dick, or Harry the right to start a new church every morning before breakfast.

Suppose every man had a right to explain for himself the Constitution of the United States, what would become of our model government? It would soon be torn into a thousand shreds. To protect it, we have judges and Supreme Courts. In like manner, certain guards must be thrown around the Bible, which contains the sacred word of God, and which we should read on our knees. It is protected by the Catholic Church, the divine Spouse of Christ, who cries out to the Mormons, Ingersolls, and libertines of all ages: You must not use the Bible to shield your wickedness and rascality. Show, at least, as much respect for the Bible as for the law of the State of Indiana, by submitting yourself to the proper judges. If you find something that you do not understand, come for explanation to me, the authorized teacher of all nations, whose unalterable commission is the command of Christ to his Apostles: “Go ye, therefore, and *teach all nations*; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.” (Matt. 28:20.) Amen.

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TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE REASON OF OUR FAITH.

“*Unless you see signs and wonders, you believe not.*” *John 4 : 48.*

As no one can behold the sun in yonder heavens without the light of the sun, so no, one can see God, or things supernatural, without the light of faith, which proceeds from God. As a man must have eyes in order to see the light, and as the blind are in darkness in the very midst of light, so this interior eye of faith is necessary to discern divine things; without it, man remains in darkness as to all those splendid truths which belong to another world. Without faith, we are of the earth, earthy; we act only on earthly motives; we prize only this world and its false goods. Faith translates us to a new life, directs our hearts and affections to new and nobler objects, and makes all our works supernatural, heavenly,—in short, agreeable sacrifices to God. Hence, though an infidel may perform some morally good actions, such as an alms given out of fraternal compassion, or for God as the Author of nature,—*without faith*, he can do nothing available to eternal life. “He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be condemned.” (Mark 16 : 16.) “Without faith, it is impossible to please God.” (Heb. 11 : 6.) “He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder to them that seek him.”

I. Faith is *the first step to salvation*; for as the first step by which man fell from his original innocence was a proud affectation of unlawful knowledge, so, in like manner, the first step we must take to arise from sin and turn to God, is to dislodge the idol of pride and self-conceit from our intellect, subject our reason and senses to the word of God, and captivate our understanding in obedience to Christ. We must humbly acknowledge our weakness and insufficiency, sacrifice the (so-called) right of private judgment, and pay due homage to God’s wisdom and veracity, by firmly believing all the sacred truths he has revealed, though we neither see nor comprehend them. It is in thus humbling our natural pride, my dear brethren, in thus preferring the divine revelation to anything our own weak reason and senses can suggest, that the merit of our faith consists. This is what renders it so acceptable to God, and preserves it free from all the illusions and specious arguments of the human spirit. The Sacred Scriptures assure us that there is but one true faith. As there is but one true Gospel, one baptism, one Shepherd, one house of God, one true Church,

so there is but one true faith whereby men can be saved. During the past three or four centuries, (to say nothing of the heresies and schisms of earlier times), the world has been overrun with a multitude of contradictory sects and denominations, into which the masses are unhappily divided and subdivided. Now, so far from these sectaries being in possession of the one, true, saving faith, they are all at variance, (as we have seen,) with each other, and, in some cases, bitterly antagonistic to their dissenting brethren. It is highly incumbent on us, therefore, dear Christians, to be well-instructed in the nature of divine Faith, and to know with certainty where, and by whom, it is possessed and preserved in all its pristine purity and entirety. I shall endeavor, to-day, with the help of God, my brethren, to elucidate this point for your instruction and edification, so that, according to the advice of St. Peter, you may be "always ready to satisfy every one that asketh you a reason of that hope which is in you." (1 Pet. 3 : 15.)

Faith is that divine gift by which man firmly believes all that God has revealed, as well as all that he proposes by his Church to be believed, whether written or unwritten. It is a *gift of God*, for, as St. Paul says : "*By grace you are saved through faith, and this not of yourselves ; for it is the gift of God,* (Ephes. 2 : 8) ; and since it is the divine will that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, God does not refuse to bestow this gift on those who seek it in the sincerity of their hearts, and use their best endeavors to obtain it. If he does not grant it to some, it is either because they do not seek it with a sincere and upright heart, or because natural obstinacy, prejudice of education, worldly interest, human respect, or some such consideration, prevents their understanding from seeing the truth, and averts their will from embracing it. Our Blessed Lord assures us that his heavenly Father hides the secrets of his divine wisdom from the wise and prudent, and reveals them to the little ones. Hence, the Apostle in his Epistle to the Hebrews, calls divine faith "*the substance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things that appear not.*" (Heb. 11 : 1.) The sacred truths it proposes to be believed, do not appear to us clear and evident in themselves, but rather obscure and impenetrable ; they are mysteries incomprehensible to us, and above our reason, though, at the same time, never contrary to reason. That which we hope for must necessarily be unseen ; for how can a man hope for that which he already sees before him, or grasps in his hand ? If God had not been pleased to reveal his sacred mysteries to us, it would be impossible for all the researches of human intellect to come to the knowledge of them. And nothing is more just than that we should bow down our finite understanding before the wonders of divine revelation. This is the sublime sacrifice to the Creator of that which is most noble in the creature,—confessing that *our* light is all darkness. This is that supreme act of humiliation which is

the greatest and most acceptable homage man can pay to God. "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed." (John 20 : 29.)

But, my brethren, incomprehensible to sense and reason, obscure and impenetrable, as are the mysteries of faith, there is yet an evidence which renders them credible beyond all doubt. *God himself is our guarantee* ; our faith is built upon his veracity, grounded immediately upon his infallible authority, having his infinite wisdom for its support. Here, there is no question of natural knowledge, of the erring and unreliable evidence of our senses, or of the testimony of fallible men. Our trust is based upon the word of God himself, who cannot deceive, because he is infinitely good, and who cannot be deceived, because he is infinitely wise. This is what gives a certain conviction, a solid peace and comfort, to all believers. With the help of divine grace, the lowest capacity is as capable of believing the sublime truths of faith as is the grand intellect of the most learned divine. The same motive for belief influences both,—namely, the authority of God. It is both just and reasonable that we should believe what God proposes to our belief. Since *he* has revealed it, it is our duty to submit to him our understanding and our judgment, without any further argument or cavil. We are allowed, indeed, to make use of our reason and judgment to inform ourselves about the matter,—to ascertain, for instance, whether certain truths have actually been revealed or not, but *when once we know that God has spoken*, then, instead of searching and inquiring how far his heavenly truths are conformable to the dictates of human reason, we should follow blindly in the footsteps of Abraham, who believed in hope even against hope.

A full, firm, and absolute consent must be given *to all things revealed by God*, whether we understand them or not, whether they be written or unwritten. All the truths of divine faith are based upon the same testimony, are equally grounded upon the authority of God, who is as infallible in the revelation of one mystery as in that of another. To suspect his authority and testimony of being false in any one point, would be to demolish it on all points, and destroy the very foundation of faith. It would be to reduce that sublime gift of God to a mere human faith, belief, or opinion, as St. Augustine formerly remarked to the unbelievers of his day, who made their own private judgment the rule of their belief. "*You*," says this holy doctor, "*who believe what you please, and reject what you do not comprehend, who admit some articles of faith, and disbelieve others,—you believe yourselves, and not the Gospel. You who divide the faith, have no divine faith, for divine faith is one, entire, and indivisible.*"

That same divine faith comprises the whole doctrine of Jesus Christ without exception, and requires us to believe not only in the divinity of his Person, but also to believe, without hesitation, all that he has taught. Whoever discredits his authority in any one single article, or refuses to believe what he says in the Gospel, dishonors him exceedingly, and cannot be truly said

to believe him to be God. Such a one, by questioning the veracity of Christ and discrediting his word, impiously charges him with being either ignorant of the truth or guilty of telling a lie, both of which are impossible to God. "He that believeth not the Son, maketh him a liar : because he believeth not in the testimony which God hath testified of his Son." (1 John 5 : 10.) This Gospel, or doctrine of Jesus Christ, has been preached by his Apostles, and propagated by them to the remotest parts of the known world. He commissioned them to teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, with the solemn assurance that "he who believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ; he that believeth not, shall be condemned." (Mark 16 : 16.) For upwards of nineteen hundred years, my brethren, this same glorious faith has been transmitted to us, pure and unaltered ; and an untainted and uninterrupted tradition will undoubtedly continue to hand it down to the end of time. It is the doctrine of a God whose word shall never pass away, though heaven and earth should pass away. (Matt. 24 : 35.)

II. But *by what means* has this faith of Jesus Christ and his Apostles been preserved and conveyed to us, dear Christians, entire and unchanged? *By what rule or standard* do we know to a certainty that we are in actual possession of it?

I. The Founder and Author of our faith requires of us a firm belief in mysteries above our comprehension ; but he would not abandon us altogether to the weakness of our own reason,—exposed to the uncertainty of our own private judgment, and in manifest danger of being misled by our own fallible opinions. In his great mercy and goodness, he has taken care to provide for our salvation in an easier, simpler, and more certain manner, giving, in short, a plain, fixed, and universal *rule of faith*, adapted to all capacities. This rule of faith which his divine wisdom has been pleased to appoint for us is the testimony and authority of the Holy Roman Catholic Church which we profess in the Creed, and which is under the special protection of heaven, and the guidance of the Holy Ghost. From this Church, founded by Christ for the instruction and salvation of all, spread for that purpose throughout all nations, and *continued through all ages*, every one may easily learn what he is to believe and to do in order to be saved. It is this rule that cements union in faith, that prevents those dissensions and innovations observable among non-Catholics, who, having no bond of union or fixed standard of belief, are, therefore, miserably divided among themselves, and constantly splitting up into a strange variety of new sects. By adhering to the true rule of faith, all the members of the Roman Catholic Church, though widely differing in language, in manners, in customs, in government, and all other possible respects, believe the same religious truths, profess the same doctrine, preach the same Gos-

pel, hold the same principles, receive the same Sacraments, and concur in one and the same divine worship. The writings of Christians of all past ages, and of all the different nations of the world, plainly declare that the Catholics of this nineteenth century believe precisely what was believed by the faithful in the days of Christ and the Apostles.

2. After the lapse of eighteen hundred years of vigorous existence, it is absurd to say that the Catholic Church has fallen into error. If such a blasphemy could be true, then, my brethren, there would be no more certainty in the most important affairs of life, and believers would be at the mercy of every itinerant preacher and fanatical charlatan. To-day, I would be forced to become a Methodist, because the disciples of John Wesley tell me that the Methodist church is the only true Church. To-morrow, I should have to become a Presbyterian, because the followers of Calvin or Knox put in *their* claims as possessors of "the pillar and the ground of truth." In short, instead of believing in the Infallibility of *one* Pope, the Vicar of Christ, and the Head of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, we should be reduced to the lamentable extremity of believing in as many Popes as there are Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Universalists, Unitarians,—yea, and Mormons, in the world!

Instead of being thus tossed to and fro, like straws, my brethren, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, we are to believe God alone, who has spoken to us by his divine Son. Jesus Christ has established a Church: he has built it upon a rock, and promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. He commanded all men to hear, believe, and obey that Church, under the penalty of eternal damnation. "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican." (Matt. 18 : 17.) The Apostle of the Gentiles declares that the Church is "the house of God, the pillar and ground of truth." (Tim. 3 : 15.) Now, in the days of St. Paul there was no other church but the Catholic Church, and hence, it is to the Catholic Church that he applies the titles of "the house of God, the pillar and ground of truth." If, then, that holy Roman Catholic Church, that house of God, that pillar and ground of truth, has failed and fallen into error, then we may rest assured, my brethren, that there is no more a true Church upon the face of the earth, and that the eternal God of truth, (O horrible blasphemy of Protestant logic!) has broken his promise: "Behold, I am with you all days, *even to the consummation of the world.*" (Matt. 28 : 20.) God is not like man; he is ever faithful to his promises. "God is not like man that he should lie." His Church, therefore, has never erred, and never *can* err, in matters of faith. To the Catholic Church alone, he said with his own divine lips; "*Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world;*" for at the time he made that promise there was no other Church in existence. But there are other words of Christ which concern all heretical conventicles: "It must needs be that scandals

come : nevertheless, woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh." (Matt. 18 : 7.)

The Catholic Church,—and not our own private judgment,—is the rule and standard of our belief, dear Christians. We cannot go astray in following so sure a guide ; in hearing her, we hear and obey Christ himself. However, whilst we glory in the profession of the ancient faith of Christ, and return thanks to the infinite goodness of God for the grace of our vocation, we should beware of flattering ourselves into a false security, or of imagining that a mere speculative faith will save us. No, though our faith should be strong enough to remove mountains, yet it will avail us nothing to life everlasting, unless it be animated by charity, and accompanied with the practice of good works. He who has said, that it is impossible to please God without faith, has also said : "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matt. 19 : 17.) "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead." (James 2 : 26.) We must not only believe well, but also live well. We must show forth the purity of our faith by the purity of our morals, and let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and praise and glorify God, the Author, Preserver, and Finisher of our Faith. (Matt. 5 : 16.) Amen.

ALL SAINTS' DAY.

THE VIRTUES OF THE ELECT.

“I saw a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. Apoc. 7 : 9.

As the shepherd knows his sheep, so God knows his chosen ones, not indeed by outward signs or marks, but by the dispositions of their hearts,—by their interior purity. Every master knows his own work ; and since God has made and animated the human heart, he must be perfectly acquainted with all its secret workings and inclinations. It is he who gives it strength, courage, and grace to live piously, and grow rich in virtue. Why should he not know what he himself effects, since all things are naked and open to his eyes? Blessed are the clean of heart, for with such is the cherished abiding-place of the Holy Ghost. In their souls and with their faithful co-operation, he brings forth all those good works, those blossoms and fruits of a living faith, those excellent virtues which render us fit to receive the crown of eternal life, and which may truly be called signs of election ; Christ mentions eight such signs, or, as they are familiarly called : *Beatitudes*.

I. *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*
(Matt. 5 : 3.)

Rare are the examples which Christ our Lord has given of the virtue of poverty in all the stages of his human life. He chose for his mother a poor and humble virgin ; for his foster-father, a poor carpenter. He chose to be born in a poor country, in a miserable stable,—cradled, as it were, in poverty ; and when he was presented in the Temple, his blessed Mother could offer only the gift of the poor and indigent. In his youth, he exercised a poor and despised trade, obtaining a livelihood by the hard labor of his hands. When he went about preaching his sacred doctrine, he lived on the alms bestowed upon him by devout women ; his food was barley bread, or the raw corn from the unshocked field. The foxes had their holes, and the birds of the air their nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay his head. The disciples whom he chose for the pillars of his church were poor fishermen. He loved to converse with

humble, common people; he loved the poor and the outcast, and fled from honors and dignities. At his death, his poverty was so extreme, that he hung upon the cross, deprived of home, friends, bed, food, drink,—yea, stripped even of his last poor garment, on which the soldiers cast lots. To manifest to all generations his love and esteem for poverty, he made it in the sermon of this day's Gospel, (which is generally called the Sermon on the Mount,) the foundation of his Gospel, and the door by which he would have us enter his school of perfection. Thus we are to understand those other words of his: "Every one of you that doth not renounce, (at least in affection,) all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14 : 33.) To the poor in spirit, Christ promises the kingdom of heaven. He pronounces them "blessed;" and so they are, since, even in this life, they already possess the kingdom of God, which St. Paul calls justice and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost,—the blessed portion of those who mortify their covetousness, and restrain the worldly desires of their hearts. Thrice blessed, indeed, with the hope, the assurance, (based on the word of a God,) of possessing the glorious and eternal kingdom of heaven. So certain a hope, that Christ did not say: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs *shall be* the kingdom of heaven;" but: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven."

But who, my brethren, are these blessed ones, described as poor in spirit? The ragged outcast, the destitute "tramp," the simple, the ignorant, or the unlearned? Are these called blessed, simply because they are penniless or illiterate? Alas! no; experience teaches us that multitudes who are poor in fact, the homeless, ignorant, starved, and brutalized outcasts of the world, are utterly void of *poverty of spirit*. Poor in spirit, rather, is he who, whether in a hovel or a palace, remains interiorly detached from the things of this world; who possesses them as though he possessed them not; who regards himself only as the steward of his divine Master, and therefore humiliates himself before God and man, returning thanks every day to the Giver of all good gifts for whatever he possesses. Poor in spirit is he, who being adorned with many virtues and talents, or possessed of a great store of knowledge, regards himself as ignorant and undeserving; and realizes that all that he knows or can know, is but a trifle compared with what he does not know; that all his mental or spiritual gifts are an unmerited loan from heaven; and who, therefore, is not puffed up, but remains humble and lowly-minded, simple, in the best sense of the word. Poor in spirit, finally, my dear brethren, is that wretched outcast, that ragged, homeless, starved, and half-naked tramp, provided he unites his enforced poverty and misery to the voluntary poverty and abjection of his Crucified Lord, and cheerfully embraces that state in submission to the adorable Will of God. Ah! the humble man is the only one who is truly poor in spirit. To the humble, grace is promised and given by the Lord, and by grace, through faith, they are blessed and saved.

II. "*Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.*" He who is poor in spirit and humble of heart, is also meek. Virtues, as well as vices, are like the links in an unbroken chain. The humble man, having a true self-knowledge, is fully aware of the bad inclinations and unruly passions of his heart, and labors constantly to subdue and conquer them. Master of himself, with the help of God's grace, he represses the risings of anger, and all the other vexations and inquietudes of the heart, and is ever peaceful and serene,—the inward tranquillity of his soul being clearly mirrored in his countenance. Affable to all, his speech is pleasing, gracious, and charitable, wounding neither the feelings nor the reputation of others. He is never known to engage in strife or contention. Far from revenging injuries, or returning evil for evil, he does not even resist him that injures him ; he supports abuse with serenity ; offers, if need be, the right cheek to him that has smitten him on the left, returns good for evil, excuses wrongs, and prays to God for all who wound or offend him.

Our Blessed Lord so valued this virtue of meekness, that he made it one of the chief reasons why we should consider him our Model, saying : "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." (Matt. 11 : 29.) Indeed, long before his entrance into the world, the Prophets foretold his meekness : "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, behold, thy King cometh to thee *meek*, and sitting upon an ass." (Matt. 21 : 5.) They further declared that the Saviour, the Meek and the Just, should not be obstinate or contentious ; that his voice should not be heard abroad ; that he would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. In his sacred Passion, my brethren, did he not demonstrate, above all, a most rare meekness, even so much as to pray for his persecutors? Those who imitate him in this beautiful virtue, shall have for their reward the inheritance of the earth ; for they are the lords of the earth, of their own hearts and passions. They always possess their souls securely, together with their Lord and their God, who dwells within them, and with whom they are in close communion and intimacy. Besides enjoying the earth of their own hearts, they shall gain the hearts of their neighbors ; for, doing their works with perfect meekness, they are beloved "above the glory of men," (Eccles. 3 : 19) ; and ultimately they shall possess the land of the living,—that celestial country where *he* shall be their inheritance and patrimony, who delights to repose and dwell among the meek, and to people with them his house in heaven. (Ps. 36.) In truth, tell me, my brethren, after humility or poverty of spirit, where is there a virtue so lovely or so winning as meekness? Two amiable daughters are they of the same sweet mother,—Charity.

III. *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.* Whence do all the sorrow and mourning of the earth proceed? From the loss of worldly goods, such as money, health, honor, friends, pleasures,—in a word, from all those things which are commonly looked upon as evils. Yet these so-called

evils are always blessings in disguise; and they often, (blessed be God!) remove from us an occasion of sin or a cause of future damnation. The excessive tears shed over these fancied sorrows, do not render a soul blessed; a true Christian should never give way to inordinate grief for any earthly affliction. The mourning which the Lord calls blessed, is that which leads us to weep for *our sins*, not so much because of their temporal punishment, as of the offence offered to Almighty God. Such was the sorrow of David and of St. Peter. A blessed mourning is that, also, which weeps for the sins of others, bewailing their blindness and perdition, and the injury thereby done to God, lamenting how ill he is served, and with what great ingratitude he is treated. Thus Jeremias sorrowed over his perverse countrymen, when he desired that his eyes might be converted into fountains of tears, that he might deplore their miseries, night and day. (Jer. 9 : 1.)

We do not read that Christ ever smiled or laughed, but we know that he often wept,—as in the manger, at the death of Lazarus, when he mourned over Jerusalem, and when he shed most tender tears upon the Cross. The Apostle says: “In the days of his flesh, (that is, in the days of his mortality), he prayed oftentimes with tears;” and in the Garden of Gethsemane, when he knelt in agonizing prayer and desolation, the terrible sweat which trickled down from every pore of his sacred body, was the testimony of the Man of Sorrows that he did not shrink from shedding, for our sakes, even tears of blood.

Tears, in the opinion of the world, are signs of misery, but in the judgment of Christ, they are signs of true felicity: Blessed are they that weep, for they shall be comforted. If Christian mourners shed tears of contrition for their sins, they shall receive comfort in the remission thereof; if they weep with compassion for the sins of others, or lament their own separation and exile from God, sighing to enjoy his holy presence, he will turn their mourning into joy,—“with hope that all their sorrow will have an end, and that everlasting consolations will quickly follow,—our tender Lord wiping away the tears from their eyes, and causing their mourning to have an end.”

Do not forget the warning of Christ: “Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep,” (Luke 6 : 25); and remember, that if we now give ourselves to vain amusements and foolish merriment,—if we permit our hearts to become infatuated with false, earthly joys and pleasures,—the time will inevitably come when bitter remorse shall reduce us here to that state of anguish when mourning shall take hold of the end of joy, (Prov. 7 : 17); or condemn us, hereafter, to that awful abode of eternal sorrow, where our Saviour says: “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

IV. *“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled.”*

The whole life of a Christian, says St. Augustine, is one holy desire, one sincere wish, to do the will of God in all things. This fervent desire is

nothing else but to hunger and thirst after justice ; or, in other words, to avoid evil and do good. Cast a glance at the lives of the Saints, those glorious models of which our lives should be a faithful copy. With all their energy, sustained by God's grace, they unceasingly labored to free themselves from wilful sin. Whatever they found in their hearts displeasing to God, they tore up by the roots and cast from them ; and by watchfulness and prayer, by flight from all sinful occasions, and by a frequent and devout use of the Sacraments, they preserved their souls pure and innocent. Yet all this did not content them. A violent hunger is not satisfied with a few crumbs of bread ; a vehement thirst is not quenched by a few drops of water. He that is holy, let him be more holy ; and he that is perfect, let him be more perfect ; there must be no stand-still in the life of a true Christian ; his watchword is *Excelsior!*—onward and upward. Hence, the Saints were not content with the mere fulfilment of the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church ; they aspired to a high holiness, and did violence to themselves without ceasing. The sole object of their desires was the kingdom of God, the immortal and incorruptible crown which the Most High has prepared for those that truly love him. Having attained it, they are inebriated with the plenty of his house, they are filled with the delights of his everlasting presence. In the same manner, we, too, my brethren, must hunger and thirst after justice,—that is, we must be solicitous to become holy and remain holy ; we must endeavor to persevere in declining from evil and doing good ; and, one day, we shall be united forever to our God, and filled with the substantial food and delicious drink which forever satiate his elect.

V. *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

“Judgment without mercy,” says the Inspired Word, “to him that hath not done mercy.” Hence, my brethren, judgment *with* mercy to him that hath done mercy. The merciful man lends to God at a high rate of interest ; for God regards as done to himself whatever we do to our neighbor. On the last great Day of Reckoning, the reward of the good and the condemnation of the wicked will depend, alike, on the works of mercy they have done or omitted. The fourteen spiritual and corporal works of mercy are, therefore, a favorable contract, by which we buy cheaply and sell dearly. We give little, and receive much in return. For these few perishable, temporal things which you give, you receive in exchange vast supernatural, eternal treasures. Who would not be willing to make such a bargain ? To enjoy its benefits, you are not even obliged, in some cases, to part with a single penny. Forgive your neighbor the wrongs he has done you, withdraw him from his sinful career, check his downward course, teach him the way of truth and virtue, counsel him, pray for him,—and lo ! you have done mercy, which shall obtain mercy. Christ our Lord made so great account of this virtue, that he said to those who would

not practice it: "Go, then, and learn what this meaneth: I will have mercy and not sacrifice." (Matt. 9:13). He wishes to teach us thereby that this virtue is more pleasing in the eyes of God than any other; and that it is more acceptable to him than the most costly sacrifice. Nay, more, that he rejects altogether the sacrifice of the unmerciful man. "If thou offerest thy gift at the altar, and there shalt remember," etc. The merciful shall obtain mercy from Almighty God, who will deliver them from all their miseries, if not wholly in this life, at least, perfectly and completely in the life to come. Since we are loaded, my brethren, with so many pressing miseries from which God alone can free us, how can we more easily or readily merit the divine love and favor than by showing mercy to others? Miserable shall be our own lot, if we persist in our hard, exacting, cruel dispositions, for our Lord will deal with us as rigorously as we deal with others, and will condemn us to the fate of that wicked servant who had no compassion on his fellow-debtor.

VI. "*Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.*" Who are the clean of heart? They, alone, who are free from all sin,—not only from mortal sin, but also from all affection to deliberate venial sin. How excellent an example does not our blessed Lord give us of this cleanness of heart! He sinned not, neither was it in his power to sin,—the prince of this world could find nothing in him of his, nor could his enemies convince him of sin. His whole life was adorned with the purest, holiest, and most perfect works, in which he sought nothing else save the glory of his Eternal Father. So great was his hatred of all hypocrisy, or counterfeit piety, that when he found it existing among the Pharisees and princes of the nation, he did not hesitate to rebuke it severely, saying: "Woe to you, hypocrites; because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within you are full of extortion and uncleanness." (Matt. 23:25.) Blind Pharisees, first make clean the inside that thence the cleanness of the outside may follow; because from the interior cleanliness of the heart proceeds the purity of the exterior works. No matter how clean a vessel may be on the outside,—if it be filthy within, no one is willing to eat or drink from it; so, Jesus Christ is not satisfied with a purity which extends only to outward acts and practices, while the soul is defiled with hidden vices and the corruption of grievous sins.

Who, then, shall be saved? St. John says, that he who declares he hath not sin, "is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Who, then, shall see God? He who sincerely repents of his sins, does perfect penance for them, and sins no more. By penance, the soul is washed, the heart is purified, and the whole man made capable of seeing God face to face. If we have not preserved our baptismal innocence, my brethren, let us, at least, hasten to recover it by sincere contrition in the Sacrament of Penance; and with David, Magdalen, Peter, and a host of other holy penitents, we shall see God

in his glory, and rejoice forever in the beatitude of his adorable presence.

VII. "*Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.*" Where charity is, there is peace, for "Charity is patient, is kind : charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil ; . . . beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." (1 Cor. 13 : 4, 8). Prepared for every sacrifice, offending not, yet knowing how to forgive every offence,—these are the qualities which produce and preserve holy peace. Hence, as I have said, where there is charity, there is also peace. The example of Abraham and Lot, when their servants quarreled as to the place of pasturage for their cattle, is well worthy our earnest imitation. The primitive Christians were all of one heart and one soul. A perfect charity animated them ; hence, the sweet and holy peace which reigned in their hearts, could not be disturbed even by persecution, torments, and death. If it be beautiful in the sight of man to behold brethren living together in peace and harmony ; how much more pleasing must it be in the sight of our Lord, who is the God and Prince of Peace, who brought that sweet peace with him from heaven, and bequeathed it, at his departure from earth, as a most precious legacy to his children. "Peace I leave with you ; my peace I give to you." (John 14 : 27.) "Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." (Luke 2 : 14.) The good enjoy a continual peace, the sure presage of their election ; but for the wicked there is no peace,—their souls are harassed and disturbed by a ceaseless tumult, which is a certain sign and mark of their eternal reprobation.

VIII. *Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*"

What are the persecutions of the just ? All sorts of injuries and afflictions in goods, honor, health,—yea, even life itself ; since, as the great Apostle of the Gentiles declares : "All who will live piously in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3 : 12.) These persecutions which we are to suffer, are either from the devils or from men ; from the devils, who vent on us their inveterate hatred of Almighty God and his elect ; from men, who are the instruments of Satan, persecuting us as open enemies, or striving secretly to work our ruin under the mask of friendship. Not unfrequently they may come from our very parents and brethren, our kinsmen and friends,—as Christ himself warns us : "A man's enemies are those of his own household." That they may be worthy the blessing of God, *these persecutions must not be the result of our own sins and vices.* They must be endured for *justice' sake*,—that is, in defence of our faith, for the performance of those good works to which we are obliged ; for the reprehension of vice, the fulfilment of our duty, or the following of

a vocation to a higher and more perfect state of life. In such cases, we must suffer persecution with great patience and inward joy, reputed it an especial favor from Almighty God to be allowed to suffer for his sake.

Our reward, besides, is an eternal one,—*the kingdom of heaven*. Christ our Lord promised to all those who sacrifice themselves and their earthly interests for his love, that he will give them a hundred-fold requital even in this life—and in the next, life everlasting. Hear his own tender and encouraging words upon this subject: “Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, because your reward is very great in heaven.” (Matt. 5 : 11, 12.) As if he would say: “The reward is so great, that the hope of it alone is sufficient to cause you to rejoice in the midst of your persecutions; and that, in such a way, that your joy shall far surpass whatever pains you may have to endure.”

Finally, let us consider the malediction pronounced by our divine Lord upon those false Christians who, instead of meeting with persecution and ill-treatment from men, receive, instead, their flatteries and vain applause: “Woe to you when men shall bless you.” By thus denouncing woe upon them, he gives us to understand how great an evil it is, in reality, to be on terms of friendship with the world, and how unfortunate is the future lot of those who enjoy its good will and approbation. Suffering themselves to be deluded by the syren music of those fatal benedictions, the source of their grievous errors and sins,—being blessed and extolled by the wicked, they do not hesitate to imitate them in their abominable courses, and thus they share in the woe and maledictions which shall be their portion for all eternity. Let us prove ourselves, to-day, my dear brethren,—examining carefully whether we are poor in spirit, meek, merciful, chaste, peaceful, and just, and if we discover not in ourselves these blessed signs of election, let us make haste to redeem the past, and tread henceforth in the pathway of the Saints. Behold! they stand already “before the throne and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands,”—the “great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues;” and praising God, they cry out evermore to us their brethren, here below, in this valley of tears: “Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb; that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city.” (Apoc. 22 : 14.) Amen.

FESTIVAL OF ALL SAINTS.

THE IMITATION AND INVOCATION OF THE SAINTS.

“Honor to whom honor is due.” Rom. 13 : 7.

We are assembled here, to-day, my brethren, to remind ourselves of all the Saints who now reign with Christ triumphantly in heaven ; and to invoke their intercession. Catholics alone celebrate this festival ; and the invocation of Saints has brought against them the charge of idolatry,—a charge employed chiefly by Protestants to kindle sectarian hatred, and to furnish some pretext for the apostacy and separation of their pretended church from the great Mother of all truth. They contend, and repeat it a hundred times, that, like the pagans, we are gross and carnal idolaters,—that we make the creature equal to God, the Creator. But this foul calumny carries with it its own refutation. For who ever took it into his head to equalize by his worship things between which he acknowledges an infinite difference, or to pay divine honor to that which he does not believe to be God? Why should Catholics alone in the world, and throughout all ages, be accused of such a folly—to believe only in one true and sovereign God, yet pay an equal worship and honor to a multitude of other inferior beings? What stupidity! what madness! But, apart from the absurdity of this unjust accusation, we are ready to demonstrate its fallacy to every unbiased mind. Idolatry consists in paying undue homage to the creature,—in transferring to the creature, in short, the worship which is due only to the Creator. This, Catholics never do. This, according to our principles, we cannot do. Not, certainly, by the invocation of Saints. The proof is easy. In invoking the Saints, we ask them to pray for us, in order to obtain the grace of God, through his Son, Jesus Christ, who alone is our Saviour and Redeemer. Now, this is so far from paying a divine honor to the Saints that, on the contrary, it necessarily implies in the latter the essential condition of a creature,—namely, dependence. None but creatures can pray, ask, obtain graces, and that even through another, (through Jesus Christ,) as the Saints do. In other words, intercession,—which is absolutely inconsistent with the divine nature,—can be attributed to no other than a creature ; hence, to invoke the intercession of the Saints cannot be an act of idolatry.

The Church on this great festival, honors all the Saints reigning together in glory :

- I. *To give thanks to God for all the gifts and graces of his elect.*
- II. *To excite ourselves to a fervent imitation of their virtues.*

I. In this, and all other festivals of the Saints, *God is the only object of supreme worship*, and the whole of that inferior honor and veneration which is paid to his servants, is directed to give sovereign honor to him alone. Their graces are his gifts ; and our addresses to them are only petitions to holy fellow-creatures, begging them to aid us by their prayers to God. When, therefore, we honor the Saints, in them and through them, we honor God and Christ, the Saviour of mankind, the source of all their sanctity and glory. In his blood, they have washed their robes, and from him they derive all their purity and splendor.

On all the feasts of Saints, especially on this solemn festival of All Saints, it is our first and most important duty to praise and thank God for the infinite goodness he has displayed in favor of his elect. The most indispensable homage we owe God is that of praise, the first act of love, and of complacency in God and his adorable perfections. Hence, the Psalms, the most perfect and inspired model of devotion, repeat no sentiments so frequently, or with so much ardor, as those of adoration and praise. This is the uninterrupted, sweet employment of the Blessed in heaven for all eternity. A multitude of holy men and women, in this life, have renounced the world and all its pleasures, to devote themselves wholly to the mixed exercises of praise and love, of compunction and humble supplication. In these, all the servants of God find their spiritual strength, refreshment, delight, and joy. If they are not able here below to praise God incessantly with their voices or the actual affections of their hearts, they study to do it always by desire ; and strive by all their actions to make the whole tenor of their life an uninterrupted homage of praise to God. It is true, possessing in himself infinite greatness and infinite happiness, he stands not in need of our goods ; and our homages cannot increase that intrinsic glory in which consists his sovereign bliss. But there is an external glory to which the obedience and praise of his creatures contribute, which, though it increase not his happiness, is, nevertheless, his indispensable due,—an extrinsic homage, wherewith all beings are bound to sound forth his sovereign power and sanctity. Nor do we owe him this solely for his own greatness and glory which he possesses in himself, but also for the goodness, justice, wisdom, and power which he manifests in all his works.

God is wonderful in his Saints above all his other works. For them he framed this world ; for their sake, he preserves and governs it. By the secret, unerring order of his most tender and all-wise Providence, *all things work together for good to them*. For their sake, God will shorten the evil days in the last period of the world. For the sanctification of one chosen soul, he often conducts innumerable second causes and hidden springs. For his elect, his co-eternal Son was born and died,—wrought so many

miracles, instituted so many great Sacraments, and established his Church on earth. The justification of a sinner, the sanctification of a soul, is the fruit of numberless stupendous works, the most wonderful exertion of infinite mercy and goodness, and of almighty power. The creation of the world out of nothing is a work which can bear no comparison with the salvation of a soul through the redemption of Christ. And with what infinite condescension and tenderness does the Lord of all things watch over every one of his elect! With what unspeakable, invisible gifts does he adorn them! To how sublime and astonishing a dignity does he exalt them, making them companions of his blessed Angels, and co-heirs with his divine Son! Weak and frail men, plunged in the gulf of sin, he, by his mercy, has rescued them from the slavery of the devil and the jaws of hell, has cleansed them from all stains, and, by the ornaments of his grace, has rendered them most beautiful and glorious. And with what honor has he not crowned them; to what an immense height of immortal glory has he not raised them! And by what means? His grace conducted them from the cross to the crown, from ignominies, torments, sorrows, mortifications, and temptations, to joy and bliss, by the sure, safe way of humility, patience, charity, and penance. Lazarus, who, here below, was covered with ulcers, and denied the crumbs of bread which fell from the rich man's table, is now seated on a throne of glory, and replenished with delights, which neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man conceived. Poor fishermen, here the outcast of the world, are made the companions of Christ, judging the world at the Last Day: placed on thrones at his right hand, and bearing testimony to the equity of the sentence which he will pronounce against the wicked.

“Thy friends are exceedingly honored, O God.” (Ps. 138 : 16.) These glorious citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem have been chosen by the Most High out of all the tribes of the children of Israel, and out of all nations, without any distinction of color or race,—persons of all ages, of all states and conditions; kings and beggars, soldiers and monks, seculars and religious, married and single, freemen and slaves. In a word, what state is there that has not been honored with its Saints? And they were all made Saints by fulfilling perfectly the duties of their several states—by the ordinary occurrences of life, prosperity and adversity, health and sickness, honor and contempt, riches and poverty, all of which they made the means of their sanctification, by the constant exercise of patience, humility, meekness, charity, resignation, and devotion. How these happy souls praise the goodness of God without ceasing! And we, my brethren, are called upon, with the whole Church Militant on earth, to join the Church Triumphant in heaven, in praising and thanking our most merciful God for the graces and glory he has bestowed upon his Saints.

II. Nothing can more powerfully incite us to aspire with all our

strength to the incomparable happiness of the Saints, *than their example*. Nor can anything more strongly inflame us with holy emulation than constant meditation on that glory of which they are even now possessed, and which they earnestly desire to share with us. Their immortality inspires us with a contempt for the false, unstable, and perishable honors of this world. The unspeakable joy of that state which satisfies all desires, and fills the whole capacity of the heart, makes us despise the empty and sensual pleasures of this life, and trample under our feet, the threats and persecutions of a deluded world. We should burn, my brethren, with a holy desire of being admitted into the society of the friends of God, there to be crowned by him with eternal joy and glory. But however exalted and immense are that joy and glory, it is God who invites us to participate in it. He is our light and our strength: by his grace, which can never fail us but through our own fault, we are sure to attain to that state of bliss which shall never have an end. Behold the many happy Saints who have already arrived there! By their example, they happily point out the way to us. We have but to tread in their footsteps. *They* were once what *we* now are,—travellers on earth; tried by the same weaknesses which afflict us: “Elias was a man subject to the same infirmities as we are.” (St. James 5: 17.) We have difficulties to encounter: so had all the Saints. Many of them had far greater trials than ours, yet they bravely surmounted all their difficulties by means of their virtue and sanctity, making their crosses the instruments of victory and triumph over the enemies of their salvation.

Do we complain of our frailty? The Saints were flesh and blood as well as we. But being sensible of their weakness, they were careful to re-trench all incentives to their passions, to shun all dangerous occasions of sin, to ground themselves in the most profound humility, and strengthen themselves by the devout use of the Sacraments and prayer. It was by the strength which they received from above, not by their own, that they triumphed over their enemies. We have the same succors by which they were made victorious. The blood of Christ was shed for us, as well as for them; the all-powerful grace of our Redeemer is not wanting to us, but, alas! the failure is in ourselves. If difficulties start up, if temptations affright us, if enemies stand in our way like monsters and giants, apparently ready to devour us, let us not lose courage, but redouble our earnestness, crying out with Josue: “The Lord is with us. Why do we fear?” (Num. 14: 9.)

“Canst not thou do what other persons of both sexes have done?” said St. Augustine to himself. To set before our eyes a perfect model of the practice of true virtue, the Son of God became man, and dwelt among us. That we may not say the example of a God-Man is too exalted for us, we have that of innumerable Saints who, each in his turn, inviting us to take up the sweet yoke of the Lord, says to us with St. Paul: “Be you imitators of me, even as I am of Christ.” (1 Cor. 11: 1.) The

Saints were men in all respects like ourselves, so that our sloth and cowardice can plead no excuse. They form a cloud of witnesses, demonstrating to us, from their own experience, that the practice of Christian perfection is easy and sweet. Let us say to ourselves: "These Saints were once mortal, weak men, subject in their day, as we are now, to human passions and miseries; and if we are faithful to our sacred engagements, we shall very shortly be made companions of their glory, and sharers of their eternal bliss." But for this, we must walk in their steps,—that is to say, we must, with them, take up our cross, renounce the world and ourselves, and make our lives a continual exercise of labor, prayer, and penance. We are lost if we seek any other path. We must either renounce sin with the Saints, or renounce heaven with the damned.

There is but one Gospel, but one Redeemer and divine Law-giver, Jesus Christ,—but one heaven. No other road can lead us thither but that which he has traced out for us: the rule of salvation laid down by him is immutable. False and highly pernicious is that persuasion, that Christians in the world are not bound to aspire to perfection; or that they may be saved by a different Gospel from that of the Saints. The bad example of the multitude imperceptibly instils this error into the minds of the present generation. The world proposes to them a kind of middle-way of going to heaven; and under this notion, since they have not the courage to live up to the Gospel, they bring the Gospel down to their own low level. It is not by the standard of the world that we are to measure Christianity, but by the pure maxims of the Gospel. All Christians are commanded to become holy and perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect. We are obliged by the law of the Gospel, to die to ourselves by the extinction of inordinate self-love in our hearts, by the crucifixion of the old man, and the mastery and regulation of our passions. We, no less than the Saints, must be animated with, and live by, the spirit of Christ,—that is, the spirit of humility, charity, patience, and all other divine virtues. These are the conditions under which Christ makes us his promises, as is manifest from all the instructions which he has given us in the Gospel. There is no distinction made between religious and secular persons. The former, indeed, take upon themselves certain stricter obligations as a means of accomplishing more easily and more perfectly the lessons of Christ, but the law of sanctity and of detachment from the world, is general, and binds all the followers of the Crucified Redeemer. Now, in the lives of most Christians, what marks do we find, my brethren, of this crucifixion of the passions, of the spirit of Christ reigning supreme in their hearts and actions? Or will you say that seculars can be excused from the obligation of subduing their passions, avoiding sin, and aiming at perfection? Are they not bound to save their souls,—that is, to become Saints? God does not require that men should abandon their occupations in the world, but that by a sincere disengagement of heart and purity of intention, they sanctify their daily avocations.

Thus every lawful station in the world has been adorned with Saints. The tradesman is bound to attend to his shop, the husbandman to his farm, the professional man to his duties, the servant to his work, the master to the care of his household. These are essential obligations which men owe to God, to the public, to themselves, and to their children and families,—a neglect of which, whatever else they do, will suffice to damn them. But then, they must always reserve to themselves sufficient leisure for their spiritual and religious duties; they must sanctify all the duties of their profession. This is to be done by a good intention. It is the motive of our actions upon which, in a moral and Christian sense, our eternal merit depends. This is the soul of our actions; this determines them, forms their character, and makes them virtues or vices. The Christian who would please God, must carefully exclude from his actions all selfish and mercenary views, and direct all that he does to the glory of God, desiring only to accomplish his holy will in the most perfect manner.

Slothful Christians allege the difficulty of self-denial; they urge that to die perfectly to themselves is a severe injunction. God forbid that any one should widen the path, which the Saviour of the world has declared to be so narrow! The work of the true Christian *is* difficult, and requires both resolution and courage. What man can think that heaven, which cost the Saints so much, will cost him nothing? Even temporal advantages are not gained without pains and trouble. “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence; and the violent alone bear it away.” (Matt. 11 : 12.) Great are the difficulties of perseverance; yet, “He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved.” (Matt. 10 : 22.) Can not you do what thousands of your own age, sex condition, and race have done? They could not do it of themselves, but only by the grace of God: “I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me.” God refuses his grace to none,—therefore “ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.” Let no difficulty deter you from working out your salvation and becoming Saints; but in the midst of the manifold humiliations and trials which beset your daily path, “rejoice and be exceeding glad, because your reward is very great in heaven.” (Matt. 5 : 12.)

Abridged from BUTLER.

COMMEMORATION OF ALL SOULS.

THE DOCTRINE OF PURGATORY.

“The sting of death is sin ; and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 1 Cor. 15 : 56, 57.

On the question of Purgatory, dear Christians, our separated brethren entertain some very unreal and highly-warped notions. They brand it as unscriptural, unreasonable, and ridiculous in the extreme.

Before I give a definition of Purgatory, permit me to show :

1. That there is a difference in sin,—in other words, that *some sins are greater than others* ; and
2. That to sin is always attached *a temporal punishment*.

(1) Some sins are greater than others. This is scriptural and reasonable. Some sins are compared to a mote, and others to a beam in the eye. (Matt. 7 : 3.) Certainly, there is a considerable difference between a mote and a beam. Again, no one will say that a gnat is as large as a camel ; yet in the Scriptures, some sins are compared to a camel, and others to a gnat. (Matt. 23 : 24.) Read 1 Cor., 3 chap., 12–16 verses, and you will find mention made of substances hard as wood, and others as light and combustible as straw and stubble. Drunkards and fornicators are abominable in the sight of God,—they shall be excluded from the kingdom of heaven. Consequently, the sins of drunkenness and fornication are greater than others. In St. John we read : “There is a sin which is unto death, and there is a sin which is not unto death.” (5 : 16.) “A just man shall fall seven times.” (Prov. 24 : 16.) “He that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come.” (Matt. 12 : 32.) Hence, this sin must be more grievous than others. According to the Jewish law, the criminal met with a punishment in proportion to his crime. This presupposes a difference in the magnitude of sin. Our own laws are based upon the very same principle. Some law-breakers are sent to jail, whereas others are sent to the penitentiary. Again, some are sent to the penitentiary for two years, others for life. A child telling a little “white lie” is certainly not as wicked as the man who whets his razor to cut the throat of the mother that bore him. Suppose the case of two thieves : One steals a \$150 mule ; the other, a good-for-nothing old

rooster, whose days have been numbered. Both thieves are on trial before our circuit court, and the judge sends the one as well as the other to the penitentiary *for twenty-one years!* Would you vote for that judge at our next election? Indeed not. His sense of justice would be below par,—he would be too narrow-minded for our liberal American people. Consequently, my dear brethren, there is a difference in sin.

(2) A temporal punishment is due to sin. This is also undeniable. An immoderate use of pound-cake produces dullness, yes, sickness at the stomach. Delirium tremens is a consequence of the excessive use of intoxicating spirits. If medical science is not at fault, we must believe that self-abuse is frequently followed by insanity; and that, among the descendants of a drunkard, the first generation are generally epileptics, and the second, maniacs or idiots. Ask the inmates of the hospital, of the penitentiary, and if they tell the truth, they will attribute all their present sufferings to sin and crime. Deny sin, and there is no reasonable solution to the ills of this life.

Nay, more,—even after the sin itself has been forgiven, its temporal punishment still remains to be suffered. After the cure is effected, you must satisfy the doctor by paying the bill. There is no satisfaction until this is done. In like manner, God demands satisfaction of his creatures after sin and its eternal punishments have been remitted. Take, for instance, our first parents, Adam and Eve. They ate of the forbidden fruit. The sin was mortal. “For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.” (Gen. 2 : 17.) But the mercy of God forgave that sin, and remitted the eternal punishment thereof; temporal punishment, however, still remained due. A satisfaction had to be made,—after the cure, the doctor’s bill had to be paid. To the woman, God said: “I will multiply thy sorrow and thy conceptions; in sorrow, shalt thou bring forth children, and thou shalt be under thy husband’s power, and he shall have dominion over thee.” (Gen. 3 : 16.) Quite a punishment, even after the sin itself had been forgiven. Adam fared no better. “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken; for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return.” (Gen. 3 : 18.) Look at the long train of evils, trials, and hardships, cold and heat, hunger and thirst, sickness and death,—consequences of a sin already forgiven. What a severe temporal punishment.

The Lord said to Moses, concerning the murmuring people: “I have forgiven according to thy word. . . . But yet all the men that have seen my majesty, and the signs that I have done in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now ten times, and have not obeyed my voice, shall not see the land for which I swore to their fathers.” [Numbers 14 : 20–23.] Here we have another temporal punishment attached to the pardoned sin, viz., exclusion from the Promised Land.

David furnishes us a proof also. The prophet Nathan says to him : "The Lord also hath taken away thy sin : thou shalt not die. Nevertheless, because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, for this thing, the child that is born to thee shall surely die." In punishment, the child *did* die.

But I hear the objection : We grant you that all this is true of the Old Law; not so of the New. Christ's satisfaction is so complete, that we have nothing to do but believe.

That is going to heaven in a "hand-basket." Why, then, are we told to take the cross upon ourselves? Why do the Scriptures insist so much on penance and good works? "Faith without good works is dead." Why did the apostles fast, and why should *we* fast? "Thy Father, who seeth in secret, will reward thee." (Matt. 6 : 18.) It would be a loss of time to show that in the first ages of the Church, great and long (not to speak of public) temporal punishments were undergone for sins committed. The student who has only a smattering of history, is well aware of this fact. Experience, also, proves, in its turn, that the very thought and fear of punishment is a powerful restraint upon the human passions. Let me, then, recapitulate : (1) There is a difference in sin ; some are mortal, and others are venial. (2) There is a temporal punishment due to sin,—a punishment which must be undergone to satisfy the justice of God.

These premises carefully considered, we come at last to Purgatory proper. My introduction, long as it is, is necessary, in order to make what follows plain and easily understood.

What is Purgatory? It is a place of purgation for the souls of the faithful departed, who have died either in the state of venial sin, or without having fully satisfied God's justice for mortal sins committed during life.

The definition may be thus simplified : Purgatory is the temporary abode of all those souls who are not good enough for heaven, and yet not bad enough for hell.

Protestants deny the existence of an intermediate state. Consequently, they acknowledge future dwelling-places for the perfect and for the wicked, but none for that other vast body of imperfect Christians, whose sanctity during life, was by no means of the heroic type.

To come to the point. In the Scriptures we find explicit proofs of the doctrine of Purgatory.

"And making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection . . . and because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness, had great grace laid up for them. It is therefore a *holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins.*" (2 Machabees, 12 chap., 43 and following verses.

Tell me, would it not be ridiculous to pray for the dead, if there were no

intermediate state? The inhabitants of the kingdom of heaven need no prayers,—they are perfectly happy; and the inmates of hell are beyond redemption. Hence, praying for the dead presupposes a Purgatory, or cleansing place.

Hearken to the objection: The Book of Machabees belongs to the "Apocrypha." *Ergo*, it proves nothing. According to Webster, *Apocrypha* means "books of doubtful authority." Consequently, my Protestant friend, I have as much right to the benefit of the doubt as you have,—nay, I have more right to it than you, because the Councils and the Fathers of the Church declare that the Book of Machabees is inspired. Among others, the councils of Carthage, Florence, and Trent, speak unequivocally on this point; and the Fathers of the Church are no less clear. See St. Clement Alexandrinus, lib. i. Stromat; St. Cyprian, lib. i.; Epistolarum, Ep. iii. ad Cornelium, lib. iv.; St. Isidorus, lib. xvi., c. 1. The great doctor, St. Augustine, in lib. ii., c. 8. *De Doctrina Christiana*, et lib. 18 c. 36. *De Civ. Dei*, most clearly avows that, "notwithstanding the Jews deny these books, the Church holds them canonical." Furthermore, if the Bible was false for 1,500 years, what assurance have we now as to its veracity? None whatever. In fact, Protestants admit this in action, if not in word, since they change or revise their Bibles from time to time. But for the sake of argument, and (*only* for the sake of argument), let us suppose that the book in question is not inspired. Is it not as good as any other historical work? Does it not prove that the Jews prayed, and offered sacrifices, for the dead? Must not the practice have been general, when such a large collection was made and sent to Jerusalem? Yes, at this present day, the Jews pray for the dead. In our own town, two intelligent men of that persuasion told me so. Just after Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, a Jewish synagogue in one of our Eastern states, called a meeting of its members to offer prayers for the repose for the dead President's soul. For stronger proof, send for the Jewish prayer-book, published by Stole & Money, Philadelphia. But if there is no intermediate state, should not Christ, who is "the Way and the Truth," have said to the Jews: Stop your praying for the dead; stop offering up your sacrifices; save that trouble, and save that expense. After this life, there is no Purgatory; there is but one alternative,—either heaven or hell? The Saviour of the world said nothing of the kind. On the contrary, in the New Testament, he implicitly confirms our doctrine. In Matthew, we read: "Amen, I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from hence (prison) till thou pay the last farthing." (5: 26.) Evidently, Christ locates that prison beyond this life. It is not heaven, because in heaven there are no farthings to be paid. It is not hell, because in hell the last farthing will *never* be paid. Consequently, there must be a middle state, called a prison. Again: "He that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come." (Matt. 12: 32.)

If that particular sin cannot be forgiven in the "world to come," it logically follows that others *can*,—not in heaven, however, because "there shall not enter into it anything defiled," (Apoc. 21 : 27,)—nor in hell, because out of hell there is no redemption. Hence, there must be a middle state. St. Augustine (De Civ. l. xxi. c. 13) and St. Gregory (Dialog. iv. c. 39) draw the same conclusion.

St. Paul says : "The fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is . . . If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss ; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." (1 Cor. 3 : 13-15.)

This, my brethren, cannot be the fire of tribulation in this world, since the Apostle declares that it shall burn in "the day of the Lord,"—that is, —on the day of judgment (v. 13). Neither is it the fire of trial before the Judge, because loss is suffered (v. 15) by the burning;—nor the fire of hell, because, (as the same Apostle expressly states), in spite of this temporary loss of the Beatific Vision which is entailed upon the suffering debtor to God's justice, "he himself shall be saved, yet *so as by fire*." (v. 15.) Can any one doubt, after all this, that there is a Purgatory,—a cleansing place for the faithful departed ?

In support of the Catholic doctrine, let me quote the Fathers of the Church.

St. Augustine, of the fifth century, says : "Through the prayers and sacrifices of the Church, and alms-deeds, God deals more mercifully with the departed than their sins deserve." (Serm. 172. Enchirid, cap. 109, 110.)

Listen to the dying request of St. Monica, the mother of that great and holy doctor : "Lay this body anywhere : let not its care in any way disturb you. This, only, I request of you,—that you would remember me at the altar of the Lord, wherever you be." And St. Augustine tells us in his *Confessions* that, (respecting the request of a dying mother,) he did so "to obtain the pardon of her sins." (Confess. L. ix., c. 13.)

Eusebius, in the fourth century, says : "That the body of the blessed prince, (Constantine the Great,) was placed on a lofty bier, and the ministers of God and the multitude of people, with tears and much lamentation, offered up prayers and sacrifice for the repose of his soul."—L. iv., c. 71.

St. Chrysostom, within 300 years of the Apostles, says : "It is not without good reason, *ordained by the Apostles*, that mention should be made of the dead in the tremendous Mysteries, because they knew well that these would receive great benefit from it." (In cap. I Philip, Hom. 3.)

But let us go back still further. The closer we conform to the Apostles, the better it is. Tertullian, who lived in an age next to the chosen Twelve, says : "Among the apostolical traditions received from our fathers, we have oblations for the dead on their anniversary day." (De Corona. Abilitum, p. 209.)

Again : "She prays for the soul of her husband, and begs refreshment for him." (L. De Monogam, c. 10.)

Hence, history proves that the doctrine of Purgatory dates back to the Apostles.

If there be no Purgatory, Reason tells us that there should be one. I believe it is generally admitted, that "nothing defiled" shall enter the kingdom of heaven. Christ says: "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment." (Matt. 12 : 36.) Consequently, even an "idle word" would defile a man. Suppose, now, I were a thief, a robber, and a cut-throat,—suppose I had washed my hands in the blood of my mother,—whilst you, on the other hand, were guilty only of little imperfections, human frailties, such as "idle words." A sudden death, for instance, apoplexy, (we will suppose again,) takes us both out of life the same day, without the least warning,—without sorrow, without having satisfied the justice of God for our respective sins,—would it not be unreasonable, not to say cruel, on the part of God, to cast *you*, in punishment for your "idle words," into the same pit of everlasting woe and misery, in which I, the thief, the robber, and the cut-throat, am condemned to burn forever? Indeed it would. Hence, Reason, alone, demands Purgatory.

This belief in a middle state, my beloved brethren, is a very consoling one. Yes, it is natural to pray for the dead. Even Protestants unconsciously pray for them. Tell me, have you never heard them say at the grave of a Catholic friend: "Lord, have mercy on his poor soul?" Is not that a sweet, little prayer? But why pray, if there is no Purgatory? If the dead are in heaven, they are safe; if in hell, there is no redemption. A Lutheran preacher, (whose name I can give,) once said to me: "I have said at the grave: 'May the soul be recommended to the mercy of God.'" Here we have another sweet prayer, entirely out of place, if there be no Purgatory. Another preacher once told me that, every night, before he retired, he prayed for his departed wife. Just think of it! A preacher, (not a Catholic priest,) praying, (not for a living,) but for a dead wife. What caused him to do it? Was it his faith? Indeed not. It was his heart that prompted the prayer,—and a large and a warm heart it must have been.

Suppose two married couples, living side by side, in the same street;—one is a Catholic and the other, a non-Catholic. The ladies visit each other daily. They are good, yet, like most people, they have their faults,—their imperfections,—they talk about Tom, Dick, and Harry, Susan, Kate, and Betsy,—in short, their tongues are sharp at both ends,—every one within a radius of five miles, comes in for his share of tongue-lashing. It is true, no particular harm is intended, but, to say the least, it is very uncharitable. One evening, especially, these ladies are hard at work,—they are in the height of their glory,—snipping, snarling, canvassing, criticising,—when, (say in the midst of a thunder-storm,) without a moment's warning, both are struck dead. The Protestant buries his wife in the city

grave-yard ; the other takes his to the Catholic cemetery, just opposite,—on the other side of the street. On the Sunday following, the two neighbors come to the conclusion to visit the graves of their respective wives. Their language, their looks, their walk, their actions, all indicate a deep and heartfelt grief. See them at the grave. Who can describe their feelings? What thoughts are passing through their minds? The non-Catholic says to himself: “It is true my wife was a good wife, a noble woman ; but, though she was not as bad as many others, she, like most women, had her faults and imperfections. There is no disguising the fact that she died without preparation ; and since there is no middle state, no purgatory, and since “nothing defiled” can enter heaven, it is likely (God forbid!) that I shall be separated from my beloved wife, my noble companion, forever and ever !”

On the other hand, the Catholic says to himself: “My wife, too, was a noble woman ; it is true, she had faults, but since I believe in Purgatory, where souls that die in the state of grace are cleansed and purified from all the dross of imperfection and defilement,—I shall do all in my power to free my faithful companion from that fiery prison, where, doubtless, she is now detained, and help her to reach that brighter Land, the kingdom of God’s eternal glory.” And off goes his hat, down he falls on his knees, and up he sends to the Father of mercies a fervent prayer for the repose of the soul of his devoted wife.

Both men leave the grave,—they meet on the street,—they go home : one with feelings of hope ; the other with feelings of despondency. Yes, the non-Catholic doctrine is not only unreasonable, but unnatural, heart-rending, a doctrine of despair,—a cut-throat doctrine.

“It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins.” (Machabees 11 : 12.)

Rev. J. W. Book.

COMMEMORATION OF ALL SOULS.

CHARITY FOR THE SOULS OF THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED.

"Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me." Job 19 : 21.

To assist by our prayers and other good works the souls of our departed brethren, has ever been ranked among the most sublime offices of Christian charity. The unerring scythe of the great Reaper, Death, has indeed cut them off from our society in this land of exile, but it has not broken the links which bound us closely to them. Though inhabitants of another world, they are still our dear brethren,—still the afflicted children of the same Eternal Father; and if the charity of the true Christian tenderly compassionates the miseries of every suffering brother here below, how sincere should be our pity for, how zealous our desire to aid, those poor souls who pine amid the torments of purgatory, languishing under the chastising hand of Divine Justice, until the last farthing of their debt shall have been discharged. But, alas! the pains of these sufferers, not coming within reach of our senses, too often fail to move us to compassion. Well may the prophet pronounce the realm of Death a land of forgetfulness; for is it not our daily experience that the memory of the dead,—yea, even of our very dearest friends and companions,—soon fades away from the minds of the living? Day after day, the recollections of the departed grow fainter and fainter, until, at no distant period, like the memory of a troubled dream, they vanish altogether. Even if they still continue to make some feeble impression on the mind, the regret they awaken is too often a selfish one, more the result of the personal loss entailed upon the survivors, than of an anxious apprehension, lest the dear, departed ones be buried, at that moment, in the terrible torments of purgatory. To arouse us from this shameful neglect of the dead, my dear Christians, to remind us of their sufferings, to animate us to zeal for their relief, and to procure suffrages for those poor, unknown, or abandoned spirits who have none to pray for their eternal repose,—the Church, like a true Mother, (ever solicitous for the welfare of her children, until she sees them in the secure possession of eternal bliss), has instituted the festival which we celebrate to-day, and which is called "the solemn Commemoration of all the faithful departed." On this occasion, my brethren, she invites her children throughout the length and breadth of Christendom, to unite their prayers, their tears, and their pious works, in order to appease the justice of Almighty God, liberate all

poor, suffering souls from the prison of fire in which they are detained, and dispatch them to enjoy their God in never-ending happiness. Entering then, brethren, into the views of the Church in the institution of this great solemnity, let us, on this occasion, devote a few moments to the consideration of the pains of purgatory, and the claims which the faithful departed have upon our charity, inasmuch as they, on their part, can do nothing towards satisfying the Divine Justice for their sins. Oh! may the Father of lights and Giver of all good gifts, enlighten our understandings and inflame our wills, that we may generously respond to the appeal which the Church makes to us, to-day, in behalf of every one of her departed children, crying out to us: "Have pity on me, have pity," etc., etc.

I. How can we ever sufficiently thank the Almighty God for having called us, my brethren, to a religion whose charity and zeal extend themselves beyond the limits of our mortal life;—for having made us members of that Church which, after anointing and closing her children's eyes, here below, does not intermit her sighs and supplications for them until they are secure in the bosom of their God. Alas! non-Catholics do not possess these advantages. Embracing the doctrines of their false teachers, they deny the existence of a middle state, where some souls must suffer for a time before they can enter heaven,—in other words, they deny the existence of Purgatory. Reason, as well as the express word of God, clearly condemn this fatal error. From the moment we admit, on the one hand, the infinite justice and sanctity of God, and, on the other, our innate misery and frailty, we cannot but admit the existence of a middle state, where departed spirits must be purified before they can enter heaven. Human nature, wounded and corrupted in all its powers and faculties by the sin of our first parents, is so prone to evil, that no man is free from offence. The word of God declares that he who says he has no sin, the same "is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Now, it is an undeniable fact that souls in the state of venial sin are being summoned every day, every hour, every instant, before the tribunal of God. Faith assures us that venial sin does not forfeit the birthright of an immortal spirit, does not deprive it of the precious treasure of divine grace. Yet, my brethren, unless we admit the existence of a middle state, such as purgatory, we must conclude that a soul departing this life in the state of venial sin, will be immediately condemned to hell. God himself assures us that nothing defiled can enter his heavenly kingdom, (Apoc. 21 : 27) ; and if there be not a middle state wherein souls may expiate the temporal punishments of their sins, both mortal and venial, what is left for them but to share the eternal torments of the damned in hell? Both in the Old and New Testaments, however, my beloved, the Word of God is clear and explicit as to the existence of a middle state. To produce one testimony alone from the Old Testament, allow me to remind you of that well-known passage from the second Book

of Mach., chapter 12, which informs us that Judas Machabeus, the veteran high-priest, and chief commander of the Jewish republic, inspired with sentiments of sincere devotion, sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem, to procure that sacrifice be offered up in the Temple for the souls of the soldiers who had been slain in battle,—being convinced, as the Scripture says, that “*It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins.*” As regards the New Testament, my brethren, we find therein various texts proving the existence of Purgatory. For example, St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, and speaking of those Christians of his time whose works were imperfect and defective, expressly says, “that they shall be saved, *yet so as by fire.*” Does it not follow from this, my beloved, that such souls cannot enter immediately after death into the joys of the Lord, but must first pass through a temporary state of purgation, or (as the Apostle terms it), “a fiery trial?” It is evident that no one can ever be saved who suffers hell-fire, since “out of hell there is no redemption.” Whether, then, we view the matter through the light of reason, or as clearly proved by the express word of God, we see how grievously mistaken are those who deny the existence of Purgatory.

II. As to *the particular place of punishment* in which the justice of God detains the souls of the faithful departed; or as to *the kind, quality, or duration of their torments*, the Church has defined nothing! However, it is certain that the human mind can form no conception of the greatness, the intensity of purgatorial pains. St. Augustine, and other learned and holy doctors of the Church who flourished upwards of a thousand years before the so-called Reformation, are of opinion that the holy souls suffer a real, material, (though not eternal,) fire like that of hell, which, being created as an instrument of the divine vengeance, and blown up by the breath of an angry God, has the wonderful virtue of tormenting spirits with the most piercing activity, and causes far more intense, more acute, more violent pains than any we can endure on earth. Our natural fire, compared to the fire of purgatory, is, according to St. Augustine, no more than a painted fire. St. Thomas of Aquin also teaches, that the purgatorial fire is the same as the fire of hell, only limited in its duration; and further, that the least pain in purgatory exceeds, by many degrees, the greatest in this life. Represent, therefore, to yourselves, my brethren, the racks, the plummets, the iron combs, the gibbets, the boiling caldrons, the scorpions, the glowing gridirons of the holy martyrs, added to all the other cruel torments invented by the most ingenious tyrants of earth; and remember that they are all light and tolerable,—in fact, a mere nothing, compared to the fire of purgatory! The holy Fathers give us thus a vivid picture of the pains which poor souls suffer in purgatory, in reparation for venial sin, and God alone knows how long they have to endure them! The judgments of God are hidden and inscrutable: “It is a fearful thing,” says St. Paul, “to fall into the hands

of the living God." (Heb. 10 : 31.) The divine justice searches Jerusalem with a lantern,—it discovers blemishes and defects even in the elect, and exacts satisfaction even to the very last farthing. The souls of the holy patriarchs and prophets of the Old Law were confined in the prison called Limbo, some thousands of years ; and we know how inexorable the Lord was in chastising his faithful servant Moses for one slight offence, how inflexible with regard to the temporal punishment of David and other penitents, and how rigorous his justice in the case of his own divine Son, whom he did not spare, but delivered up to the most ignominious and most painful death of the cross.

All this should be a warning to us, my dear brethren, to expiate all our sins, both mortal and venial, and cancel the debts we owe God's justice by fasting, prayers, alms-deeds, and other satisfactory works, whilst it is yet in our power to do so ; for remember that the day will come when, (as the Apostle says), "no man can work." Be warned in time, and consider venial sin no longer as a matter of trivial importance, since it must be expiated in those dreadful flames akin to the fires of hell. Henceforth, make it your constant study to guard against the commission of even the slightest fault ; by the continual practice of penitential works, endeavor to make atonement in this life for your past sins ; that thus, in the hour of death, you may hope to pass out of this temporal state into the immediate possession of the eternal joys of paradise.

III. What renders the situation of the souls in Purgatory peculiarly distressing is, that they are utterly unable to alleviate or shorten their own sufferings. If one tiny drop of water would avail to extinguish the flames in which they are tormented, that drop, small as it is, they have not the power to procure for themselves. No more will they move the sovereign Judge to pity ; no more will their prayers or lamentations find their way to the open ear of divine mercy. Time of repentance, as well as that of sinning, for *them*, is past, and no further reparation can be made for the frailties of life but to suffer patiently until the last farthing shall be satisfied for. In this heart-rending situation, the holy souls thirst most ardently for the joys of heaven,—they long impetuously for that happy moment which will unite them closely to their Lord, and associate them with the choirs of Angels and Saints. Alas ! they are bound with chains which they are utterly unable to break ; they are burning in flames which they are utterly powerless to extinguish ! From the midst of those scorching flames and waves of fire, they cry out to you for help,—they beseech you to comfort them in their affliction, to succor them in their distress, to relieve them in their extreme necessity, and release them from that painful captivity which prevents their being united with him who is the sole object of their desires. Oh ! give ear to their sighs and moans, which seem to pierce the very bowels of the earth ! Listen to the mournful entreaties whereby each suf-

fering spouse of Christ implores your charitable assistance : "Have pity on me, have pity," etc. Oh! how can you be deaf to their cries, my brethren? How can you be unmoved by their tremendous sufferings? Shall those affecting entreaties, issuing from that lake of fire, die away unheeded! Remember that the hard heart, (as the Scripture declares), shall fare ill on the last day. What heart can be harder than that which is not melted to compassion by such unparalleled distress? Oh! if those prison-gates were once thrown open to our view, with what anguish would we there behold our brethren in Christ, (brethren whom we are bound to love as we do ourselves), tortured beyond conception, without a single moment's intermission or repose, and bound hand and foot in helpless abandonment and desolation! Would not their piercing cries of agony cover us with confusion, especially if we recognized therein (as in all probability we would), the accents of a beloved parent, or once dear spouse, a fond brother or sister, a cherished child or friend, reproaching us for our unfeeling indifference to their excessive miseries? "Is it thus," they cry out to us, "that you abandon us in our present distress? *You*, who professed such affection for us during life, and whom we loved so tenderly in return? *You*, for whose happiness we have so often made in the past the most painful sacrifices,—can you now behold us, unmoved, in the midst of these fiery torments? Will you refuse to drop a tear over our miseries, or stretch forth a hand to afford us relief? Oh! were you to share with us the torture of this indescribable flame, what would you not give to be relieved from its fury, even for a single moment? Give us, at least, that relief you yourselves would reasonably expect from us, if our present positions were reversed. If we have no other claim on your compassion, we have, at least, the common claims of fraternal charity,—we are your brethren, and we are in extreme distress. Show to us that mercy which you, in your turn, would wish to receive, and our God will requite you in the hour of judgment. You can rescue us from these devouring flames by such easy means,—by applying to our relief at least a portion of the indulgences you gain, by offering in our behalf some of your devotions and penitential works, and by paying into the hands of the poor all those alms which will be the golden price of our ransom!"

Yes, by alms-deeds and fasting, by sacrifices and prayerful suffrages, the living can discharge the debts of the dead; and God, in his mercy, will have regard to the communion of Saints. Shall we, my brethren, who often boast of our humane associations for the benefit and protection of even the irrational animals, remain indifferent to the extraordinary sufferings of those dear, immortal souls? Gratitude, alone, should arouse us from our shameful lethargy; for many of these departed spirits were our loyal friends and benefactors in the past.

Let us, then, brethren, in God's name, immediately set about aiding the suffering spouses of Christ. Let us, henceforward, do all that we can to

assist them by our prayers, alms-deeds, and other works of love ; and never allow a day of our lives to pass without some charitable remembrance of their sufferings. On this holy Commemoration of All Souls, thronging around the black-robed altar, join with God's minister in offering up the divine Victim in their behalf, and unite your fervent communions with his, for their eternal repose. Every morning during the coming Octave, assist devoutly at the Holy Sacrifice to the same end. Of all the means calculated to alleviate and shorten the sufferings of the souls in purgatory, the Holy Mass is the most efficacious. So wonderful, in fact, is its efficacy, that the offering up of one Mass is more than sufficient to redeem ten thousand worlds. In conclusion, remember, my beloved, that if the holy souls are utterly unable to help themselves, it is the pious belief of the Church that their prayers are wonderfully potent in behalf of those who beg their intercession. Make friends, then, my dear brethren, for yourselves in the glorious courts of heaven ; for every one of the faithful departed whom you assist to enter those mansions of bliss, will become a powerful pleader for you before the throne of God. Strengthened by the graces obtained for us by those grateful spirits, we shall be enabled to overcome all the attacks of our infernal enemies here below, and one day be admitted into the Golden City of our God, where we shall sing with them the praises of his infinite mercy throughout the blissful ages of eternity. O Mary! immaculate Queen of Purgatory, blessed Mother of God, to thee, we commend this day, the interests of these holy, suffering souls! Descend, we beseech thee, into that fiery abyss of pain and longing expectation, and having freed Christ's chosen ones from the fetters of his Eternal Father's justice, conduct them in triumph to the mansions of everlasting peace and joy! Amen.

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TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT.

“The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who would take an account of his servants.” Matt. 18 : 23.

As servants of the heavenly King, my dear brethren, we have all an account to render to our divine Master, our Lord and our God. He has various times and places for settling this account. During life, he permits us to adjust it with his chosen representative, the priest of his holy Catholic Church. As often as we have contracted a debt to divine justice, as often as we have committed deliberate sin, either mortal or venial, the priest has power, in the name of God, to cancel our debts, and square up our account with our divine Creditor. After death, however, there is a direct personal settlement with the latter, which no man can hope to escape. In that general account of our whole life, there is no question of a divine agent or delegate. God himself takes the account. All compromises and adjustments are then at an end. Mercy, like time, shall be no more; and everything must be paid, even to the last farthing. You know what is meant by this general account, my brethren? It is the Judgment; a two-fold judgment, which determines a double account. The first account is that which each man must render individually to Christ, immediately after death; and the other, that which concerns the accounts of all mankind, when sinners and the elect shall be gathered for the final judgment in the valley of Jehosaphat. To-day, however, I shall confine myself to the particular account which we must each of us, in turn, my brethren, render to our divine Master; and shall endeavor to satisfy the doubts of those among you who may see fit to propose the following questions:

- I. *How do you prove that there will be a Particular Judgment immediately after death?*
- II. *Where, and how, does this Judgment take place?*
- III. *How should we prepare ourselves for it?*

I. If all men, without exception, shall be judged at the Last Day, why, you may ask, should there be a particular judgment immediately after each individual's death? It may not seem necessary, yet the Catholic Church grounds her doctrine of the Particular Judgment upon the unerring testimony of the Inspired Word: “It is easy before God, in the day of

death, to reward every one according to his ways . . . in the end of a man is the disclosing of his works." (Ecclus 11 : 28, 29.) Here, the Scripture speaks plainly of a judgment,—of a revelation of the good or evil of a man's life immediately after his death, on which depends his future reward or punishment. St. Paul also says : "It is appointed for men once to die, and after this the judgment." (Heb, 9 : 27.) Our Saviour, in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, (Luke 16 : 22,) says that the beggar, having died, was carried by the Angels into Abraham's bosom, whilst the rich man, at *his* death, was buried in hell. This immediate reward of Lazarus and punishment of Dives presuppose a private and particular judgment just after death. The same doctrine may be inferred from the words addressed by our divine Lord to the penitent thief on the cross : "Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise." (Luke 23 : 43.)

When a man dies, my brethren, whither does his soul go? Does it stand to reason that the souls of the good and the wicked,—the soul of the murderer and the soul of the good religious,—pass alike into one abode, and share the same fate until the end of the world? Impossible. The Catholic Church teaches the doctrine of the Particular Judgment explicitly by her daily preaching, and implicitly by her doctrine of Purgatory. It is of faith that, after her departure from the body, the soul will be instantly judged; and that upon *that* judgment shall depend the question of her immediate admittance into Purgatory, heaven, or hell.

II. *Where, and how, will this Judgment take place?*

1. A Particular Judgment then will take place. But *where, and how?* As all theologians agree that this judgment will transpire immediately after death, so they also agree that it will take place in the spot where death shall surprise the soul. The very moment the soul enters into eternity, she receives what she has deserved in this life, be it good or evil. How, then, could a just God bestow reward or inflict punishment upon his creatures, without having first decided their fate by a particular judgment? Fancy yourself, my dear Christian, in your last agony. Your relations, your friends and acquaintances, kneel or stand around your bed, weeping and praying. You breathe your last breath; and in that very moment,—in that very place where death overtakes you,—in your room, in your shop, abroad in the fields, or woods, or on the wide, lonely sea,—the judgment-seat is erected, and your cause is instantly tried. By his immensity, our Judge is everywhere. While your silent corpse yet lies warm upon your bed, and your friends, perhaps, are already whispering among themselves the arrangements for your funeral, the awful unseen reckoning between you and your Judge is actually taking place, and your irrevocable sentence being decided.

2. *The soul before the judgment-seat* will appear separated from her body, stripped of all earthly goods, such as wealth, honors, dignities; face to face with her God,—yea, (even though she may have been the soul of an emperor,) forsaken by all men, alone and unattended, except by her good or evil works. King Ezechias, being informed that he should die, exclaimed: “I shall behold man no more, nor the inhabitant of rest.” (Is. 38 : 11.)

3. Jesus Christ will be *your Judge*. “Neither doth the Father judge any man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son.” (John 5 : 22.) The just will behold that glorious God-Man with joy, the sinner with terror. The torment of being arraigned before that offended and outraged Judge will be more painful than all the other tortures of hell. When Philip II., King of Spain, having detected one of his courtiers in a lie, reproached him, saying: “What! Could you dare thus to impose upon me?”—the poor wretch died soon after from shame and consternation. When Joseph declared to his brethren in Egypt: “I am Joseph!”—as if to say: Behold in me the helpless little brother whom you cruelly injured and sold into slavery,—his brethren could not answer him, being struck with exceeding great fear. What, then, will the sinner answer when, seeing Jesus before him, he hears him say: “Behold, I am thy Brother, thy Saviour, whom thou hast despised and crucified afresh?”

4. As to *how* this judgment takes place, my brethren, the first thing in order is *the accusation*. And who are the accusers? They are

(a) *Satan*, whom St. John calls: “The accuser of our brethren, . . . who accused them before God day and night.” (Apoc. 12 : 10.) With hatred and fury, he will present his infamous charges against the soul, which, perchance, may have been the victim of his snares and delusions during life.

(b) *Conscience*, also, will urge every man to make known his crimes: “Their conscience bearing witness to them, . . . in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel.” (Rom. 2 : 15, 16.)

(c) *The sins committed during life*. “Their iniquities shall stand against them to convict them.” (Wisd. 4 : 20.) “The sins will say: Villain! do you know us? We are your doings; we shall never leave you!”

(d) *The Guardian Angel*, whose advice and inspirations the soul has obstinately slighted and resisted.

5. The second point in the proceedings is *the examination*. "We all must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil." (2 Cor. 5 : 10.) Attend, if you please, my brethren, to those last two words,—*good or evil*. The examination, you see, will extend not only to the evil deeds we have done, but to the *good works* which we may have performed or omitted. "When I shall take a time, I will judge justices." (Ps. 14 : 3. That is, (says Christ,) I will judge even such actions as have the appearance of being just. He will discover blemishes even in the Saints. Then shall we be called to render an account of all the benefits received from God, temporal gifts and blessings, such as wealth, honor, health, beauty, powers of body and soul; spiritual gifts and blessings, such as graces, inspirations, instructions imparted to us by sermons or books, the holy Sacraments, the sacrifice of the Mass, and all the numberless devotions and privileges of the Church. When the examination turns upon *the evil* we may have committed ourselves, or caused others to commit, we must give an account, my brethren, of all our past sins, of our thoughts, words, and deeds,—mortal or venial, secret or public. "Inquisition shall be made *into the thoughts* of the ungodly." (Wisd. 1 : 9.) "I say unto you, that *every idle word* that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment." (Matt. 12 : 26.) "I will judge thee according to *thy ways*, and I will set all *thy abominations* against thee." (Ezek. 7 : 3.) "Judge not before the time : until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." (1 Cor. 4 : 5.) "And all things that are done, God will bring into judgment for every error." (Ecclus. 12 : 14.)

6. *The sentence and its execution*. When the examination has been completed, the sentence will be pronounced. A sentence infinitely *gratifying to the just*. "Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of the Lord." (Matt. 25 : 23.) A sentence, infinitely terrifying to the reprobate: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." (Matt. 25 : 41.) "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." (Luke 13 : 27.) Then the just soul, (provided there remain no purgatorial debts to be canceled,) will be led to heaven by jubilant choirs of Angels, whilst the soul of the sinner will be dragged by cursing devils into the fiery depths of hell. "And this shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting." (Matt. 25 : 46.)

III. *How should we prepare ourselves for the judgment?* In order to escape the dreadful consequences of the Particular Judgment, my brethren, say frequently with St. Bernard : "As one who is already judged, I will be set before the face of wrath." For this purpose :

1. Often reflect on the account you will have to render after death : "In all thy works, remember thy last end ; and thou shalt never sin." (Ecclus. 7 : 40.) Judge all things by the light of the last candle ; act and live always in view of immediate death. Confess in all humility that, heretofore, you have been bad or negligent stewards of the goods intrusted to your care. Nor is this confession *without foundation*. By reflecting seriously on your own sinfulness and on the severity of the Judge before whom you must appear, you will soon be convinced of the terrible risks involved. When St. Arsenius felt the approach of death, he began to weep bitterly. He was a holy anchorite, in the 120th year of his age, and had lived a life of austere penance ; hence, those who stood around him questioned him, saying : "Do you, too, fear to appear before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ?" "Indeed," he replied, "I fear to-day just as much as on the day when I first commenced my life of penance." If the just man shall scarcely be saved, my brethren, where shall the sinner and the wicked appear? Ah! this fear of the judgment is a very salutary one, and thousands upon thousands have been protected by it against sin, and inflamed with zeal in the performance of good works. St. Augustine acknowledges that nothing more powerfully armed him against the insidious assaults of sensuality than the fear of death and future judgment. He who says to himself with serious earnestness : You must die ; you must appear before God immediately after death, to give an account of your whole life,—will not readily attach himself to earthly riches, or give himself up to the pursuit of unlawful pleasures or honors.

2. Make friends *now* with the Mother of God and the Saints, that they may be your champions and intercessors in that dreadful hour on which your eternity depends. "Stretch out thy hand to the poor, that thy expiation and thy blessing may be effected ;" and by a living faith, a firm confidence, and a true and sincere amendment of life, court, in advance, the favor of your divine Judge. Walking in the light of the Sun of Justice, the way leading to forgiveness is open to you. Enter upon it. And I assure you that, after having detached your hearts from all earthly things, and frequently settled your accounts in the tribunal of Penance by a good confession, you will meet death undisturbed and with the greatest tranquillity ; and will, at last, fearlessly render an account of your stewardship to your divine Master. "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." (1 Cor. 11 : 31.) Amen. W. S.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE SINNER'S ABUSE OF THE MERCY OF GOD.

“Laying hold on him, he throttled him, saying : Pay what thou owest.”
Matt. 18 : 28.

“What a cruel wretch !” we exclaim, my dear brethren, when we read in to-day’s Gospel the history of the ungrateful servant,—who, after having been excused by his master from the payment of his own heavy debt, violently assaulted his fellow-servant, demanding the immediate settlement of a comparatively small account. Could he not have said gently to the latter : “Friend, my creditors are demanding payment from me, and hence, I very much need the money I lent you some time ago. You know I helped you out of a great difficulty by letting you have it in your hour of need ; now you would do me a like favor if you would return it to me.” But no, my brethren, instead of speaking in this friendly manner,—instead of treating his fellow-servant with kindness and forbearance,—he caught him rudely by the throat, and, shaking him fiercely, demanded payment on the spot, crying out : “Pay what thou owest.”

There would have been some excuse for his conduct, if his master had just treated him with a like want of forbearance ; he could then have said, with truth : “I cannot help being hard on you, for my chief creditor is equally hard on me ; he will give me no time ; he demands payment without delay.” But alas ! the same hands that have just been raised in supplication to their generous master, now lay hold of a defenceless fellow-servant ; the same eyes that have just been lifted pleadingly to their good master’s face, or have just bathed his feet with tears, now flash with indignation or glitter with revengeful rage. Why this strange conduct, my brethren ? What is it that renders that wicked servant so arrogant ? Nothing but the merciful forbearance of his master. He reasons thus : “My master is good and kind ; he forgave me all my debt the moment I asked him. Even if I am now acting cruelly towards my fellow-man, my master is merciful, and I have nothing to fear !”

Such exactly is the reasoning of the sinner. God is good and merciful ; hence, I may sin as much as I please, may follow my evil inclinations, and gratify my passions, without fear. This conclusion, however, dear Christians, is false ; it is against sound reason, against the duty of gratitude, the desire of eternal salvation, or, to speak more plainly, it is

- I. *The reasoning of a fool who has lost his senses,*
- II. *The reasoning of an ungrateful soul which abuses the mercy of God.*
- III. *The reasoning of a reckless sinner who rushes headlong to perdition.*

I. None but a fool could draw such an inference as this: *God is good, therefore I may sin.* If a servant complain of his master's severity or cruelty, we pity and sympathize with him; but if he complain of his master's kindness and generosity, if he slander and calumniate him in the midst of his benefits, and leave the service of that good master without any cause, what can we say but that he has lost his senses? This is an imperfect figure of the sinner who dares to offend God because he is good and merciful. Knowing that he has to deal with a Master who is kind and long-suffering, patient, and rich in mercy, the audacious sinner, from this, takes courage to neglect his benefactor's service, to break his commandments, to despise and offend him in a thousand different ways. I certainly do not exaggerate, my brethren, when I maintain that such a person has lost his senses. Perhaps you will tell me that, suffering himself to deviate from the right road, the sinner has by no means the deliberate intention of offending the goodness of God; but, putting his confidence in it, sins only so far as he hopes to obtain forgiveness. This, however, is but fallacious reasoning, and amounts to nothing more than a defence of presumption, under the guise of confidence in God's mercy.

The folly of such as reason thus, can be condemned out of their own mouths. You give full scope to your passions because God is good and ready to forgive. St. Augustine calls this the reasoning of a mad man. Senseless wretch! what are you saying? I will inflict a deadly wound upon myself; I will expose myself deliberately to the small-pox or the yellow-fever; and then I shall call in a physician to heal me. Might it not come to pass that your physician, (skilful and experienced though he be,) would not be able to cure you? And is it not possible that God might be no longer disposed to bear with your offences or restrain his vengeance? God is good and merciful, yet he has inflicted everlasting punishment on those grand choirs of angels who rebelled against him in heaven. God is good and merciful, yet did he not cast our first parents forever out of the Garden of Eden in punishment of a single, and (what we would count,) a trifling act of disobedience? God is good and merciful, yet, because of their debaucheries and sinful excesses, he condemned the whole human race to be swept away by a general deluge. God is good and merciful, yet has he not filled the holy Book with the most dreadful threats? Has he not, at all times, poured forth the vials of his wrath upon the guilty heads of sinners?

Descend, in thought, my brethren, into hell, and there behold all those miserable souls, and (O God, how great is their number!) who, in tears and despair, are there burning, and shall continue to burn, for a never-end-

ing eternity! Who, I ask you, has plunged those wretches into that dismal prison, whence there is no hope of ever being released? That good and merciful God, who, notwithstanding his goodness and his mercy, has punished sin, and still continues to punish it, with the severest rigor. How, then, O sinner, can you be so foolish as to persuade yourself that he will not punish *you* for your sins? Why should he make an exception in *your* regard? Will, perhaps, the presumption with which you abuse his goodness merit for you a continuance of its gracious effects? Ah! if passion has not totally blinded you, and deprived you altogether of your reason and senses, take to heart and consider that God is not only infinitely good, but also, infinitely just.

Sinners, as a general thing, do not take God as he is, but they make to themselves a God according to their own fancy or imagination. They read these words in the Book of Numbers: "The Lord is patient and full of mercy;" but they seem not to observe the context thereof: "Leaving no man clear," (that is, who deserves punishment); "who visiteth the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." (Num. 14 : 18.) They read in the Psalms: "Thou, O Lord, *art* a God of compassion, and merciful and patient, and of much mercy, and true." (Ps. 85 : 15); but they seem to forget that in the same Psalms are to be found the words: "God is a *just judge*. Except you will be converted, he will brandish his sword." (Ps. 7 : 12, 13.) Again, we read: "Forasmuch as the Lord is patient, let us be penitent for this same thing; and with many tears, let us beg his pardon." (Judith 8 : 14.) In most of the passages of Holy Writ, where the mercy and goodness of God are spoken of, his justice is also mentioned.

If sinners would seriously reflect on this, they would not only say: God is good and merciful,—therefore, he will bear with me and spare me; but, also, God is just,—therefore, he will and must punish me if I commit sin; for he will and must render to every man according to his works. Reasoning of this kind would be of great profit to the soul, inasmuch as it would preserve it from the two extremes,—presumption and despair. According to the Fathers of the Church, the justice of God has damned more souls than his mercy has saved; let us not, therefore, say: "I have sinned yesterday, and God has borne with me; I may sin to-day, and God will have patience with me; or, I shall sin to-morrow, and God will spare me." Let us not reason thus, for nothing is more wicked than to make use of the mercy and compassion of God only to offend and insult him the more freely. Let us reason like men of sense and understanding; let us say as Judith said to her fellow-citizens: "For as much as the Lord is patient, let us be penitent for this same thing, and with many tears, let us beg his pardon." (Judith 8 : 14.) God is patient and merciful, therefore, let us return to him; let us love him with all our hearts, and serve him with renewed fervor and fidelity.

II. *God is good, therefore I may offend him*, is the language of a heart full of *the basest ingratitude*. What viler ingratitude can there be than to return evil for good? Yet every one is guilty of it who, trusting in the goodness of God, dares to heap sin upon sin. "I have sinned," cries aloud the audacious and ungrateful sinner. "I have sinned, and what harm has befallen me?" I have sinned, yet God has not visited me or my family with afflictions; on the contrary, he sends me riches and prosperity. I am honored and respected by my fellow-citizens; I am much more favored by fortune than those who live up strictly to the laws of God and the rules of the Church, What do you mean by this language? Do you mean to say that you may offend God with freedom, because he does not chastise you at once for your sins? O ingratitude! God is so good as to give you life and health, and all the manifold blessings you possess,—must you, therefore, be ungrateful, and return evil for good?

Why, then, you ask, does God sometimes send riches and prosperity to these wicked people who abuse his mercy? His intention is to invite them to repentance; for the Apostle says: "*Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance?*" (Rom. 2 : 4.) You ought to admire and praise his goodness,—you ought to prostrate yourself to the very dust, exclaiming: "If God had not shown mercy to me, I should now be in hell, suffering the penalty of my iniquities! How many souls has he not snatched away suddenly and buried in hell, for fewer and less grievous sins than those I have been guilty of? Blessed be the long-suffering patience of God in my regard! Henceforth, I am resolved, by the help of his grace, never again to offend him." Thus the repentant sinner should speak; but the ungrateful wretch, on the contrary, declares, (in action, if not in word): "I have deserved hell a thousand times for my wicked deeds, but God's infinite mercy has preserved me from it; he loves me, and he will not condemn me to everlasting torments. I feel sure he will not send me a sudden and unprovided death; though I may sin as much as I please, I rely upon his mercy for the grace of a death-bed conversion."

A public sinner was once heard to say: "Give me ten minutes, a priest, and a clear head, and I will make it all right at the hour of death!" What blindness and infatuation! *The sinner makes a weapon of the benefits of God whereby to wound and insult him*; he wages war against God, who desires to make peace; he despises God, who never ceases to bestow his benefits upon him. What boldness, what perversity, what malice! God gives the sinner time and means to work out his salvation, but he abuses them to his own perdition; and it is this abuse of God's mercy and goodness which makes him both ungrateful and cruel. Tell me, my brethren, have you never heard people say: "Let us enjoy the pleasures of this life as much and as long as we can; God is good and merciful; he well knows what poor, frail creatures we are. Christ has not redeemed us to condemn us again; God has not made heaven for cows and horses, but for men?" If such language means

anything, it means this : " If God were a swift avenger of evil, we would be forced to abstain from our sinful pleasures and abominations ; but since he is good and long-suffering, we may give full scope to our passions. He will be glad to receive us, whenever we return to him ! "

Ah ! yes, my brethren, if divine justice punished severely, and on the instant, any violation of the divine law, think you that sinners would be as bold as they are in committing sin ? Would they relapse after confession, as quickly as they do, into their former sins ? Woe, woe, to the audacious and ungrateful sinner ! The time shall come when God will call them to a strict account ; the time shall come, (yea, it may even now be at the doors,) when justice will sit upon its throne, and fulfil its part with the utmost rigor and impartiality. Therefore, my brethren, let us never presume on God's mercy to commit sin. Contemplate and adore the infinite goodness of that loving God. He has shed the last drop of his adorable Blood to redeem and save us from sin and hell ; he has laid down his life for us. What, then, does gratitude demand ? Does it tell us that we should smite again his sacred face, crown him with thorns, scourge, and crucify him anew, and trample under foot his precious Blood ? Oh ! no, dear Christians, God is good, therefore let *us* be good, and live to him and for him alone ; for everything else is vanity and vexation of spirit. " O vanity of vanities, all is vanity, besides loving God and serving him alone. "

III. *God is good, therefore I may commit sin ;* this is the language of a man who, with open eyes, *rushes headlong to perdition*, wilfully designing to damn his immortal soul. The rebellion of Lucifer and his associates proceeded from an overweening confidence, from a proud presumption on God's mercy and goodness. Satan said within himself : " Will this great, all-wise God destroy his own work ? " By the same specious stratagem he led Adam and Eve astray, and still endeavors to ensnare their hapless descendants. The devil hates God ; yet, when it suits his vile purposes, he praises the divine mercy and goodness, saying to the sinner : " Fear not ; your heavenly Father is not cruel ; he is most loving and long-suffering. Having compassion for your frailty, he will be ready at any time to forgive you your sins ; " and the sinner, believing the suggestions of the evil spirit, gives way to his passions, and stops at no crime, however enormous. He even considers himself a good Christian, since, (as he will insolently tell you) ; he puts his trust in God's mercy. Alas ! my brethren, the confidence which degenerates into presumption, is a sure mark of reprobation ; for he who abuses the mercy of God, which longs to make him forever happy, deserves, without mercy, the justice of God, which will make him forever unhappy.

The continual alternations of the habitual offender from sin to confession, and from confession to sin, may serve as a proof of what I say. Such

an abominable series of transgressions and pardons will, doubtless, be ended by a death in unpardoned sin. We read in the book of Deuteronomy: "I am the Lord thy God, a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon their children unto the third and fourth generation to them that hate me, and showing mercy unto many thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments." (Deut. 5 : 9, 10.) To whom does this jealous God show mercy? To them that love him and keep his commandments. And the Blessed Virgin has said: "His mercy is from generation to generation to them that fear him." (Luke 1 : 50.) My brethren, you cannot find a single passage in the Sacred Scripture wherein God has engaged his word to be merciful to those who rely on his goodness in order to offend him; but there are numberless passages wherein he expressly declares that he will show no mercy to those that hate and offend him. The Holy Ghost says: "Say not the mercy of God is great: he will have mercy on the multitude of my sins; for mercy and wrath quickly come from him, and his wrath looketh on sinners." (Ecclus. 5 : 6, 7.)

O ye, who are puffed up with presumption and pride, what will you say to those words, or to these of Abulensis: "He who offends against justice, may have recourse to mercy; but he who offends against mercy itself, to whom can *he* have recourse? I deny not that God is merciful, and that he has borne patiently with you, O sinner, through long years, perhaps, of grievous offences against his law, but, "Say not," says the Wise Man, "I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me? for the Most High is a patient rewarder." (Ecclus 5 : 4.) Do you imagine a presumptuous sinner will be granted a grace which the just man only obtains by working out his salvation in fear and trembling? "O be not deceived," cries out the Apostle St. Paul: "God is not mocked." (Gal. 6 : 7.) For, as St. Liguori remarks, it would certainly be mocking God to offend him as we please, and when we please, and then to expect heaven. Let, then, the patience and long-sufferance of our good God incite us to love and serve him more faithfully in the future, rather than lead us to persevere in habits of sin or spiritual neglect; for presumption on God's mercy and goodness is that deadly sin against the Holy Ghost which shall not be forgiven, either in this world or in the world to come.

B.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

CHRISTIAN MANHOOD AND ITS DUTIES.

“Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” Matt. 22 : 21.

The Pharisees were the bitter, unrelenting enemies of our Blessed Saviour. Perceiving that, notwithstanding all their malicious efforts, the divine mission of Christ was becoming more and more recognized, more and more sincerely acknowledged by the Jewish people, (because of the wonderful miracles, which he performed, and the more than human wisdom that inspired his discourses), they were determined upon ensnaring him in his speech. To carry out their design, they prompted the Herodians to ask him a certain question which it would be difficult for him to answer without incurring the ill-will of some portion of his audience. With all hypocrisy imaginable, they say to him: “Master, we know that thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth: neither carest thou for any man, for thou dost not regard the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what dost thou think,—is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?”

But the all-seeing eye of the Redeemer pierced into their secret hearts, and read there the corruption of their most hidden thoughts. Rebuking their wickedness, he said: “Why tempt me, ye hypocrites?” The Pharisees were well aware that if Christ declared that tribute should be paid to Cæsar, he would thereby incur the hatred of the Jewish people, who felt degraded in being subject to a foreign power, and groaned under the yoke of the Roman Empire. On the other hand, if our Lord replied that tribute should *not* be paid, then he would be denounced to the Roman Governor, and declared guilty of treason to Cæsar. Therefore Christ’s enemies displayed wonderful astuteness in proposing such a subtle question; but never was hypocrisy more completely unveiled, human ingenuity more quickly confounded, or a grave difficulty more successfully solved, than by that admirable response of our Divine Master: “Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (Matt. 22 : 21.)

In these few solemn, strikingly-impressive words, my dear brethren, we find the sum total of all our obligations to God and man, all our duties, social, political, moral, and religious. This sacred utterance of our Saviour was not merely intended for the personal confusion of the Pharisees or

for the general instruction of the Jews, but as a rule of life and grand principle of action for all generations to come.

“Give unto Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar.” This authoritatively declares, my brethren, that we should be obedient to the laws of the country, respect the administrators of justice, the protectors of order, and the representatives of government. We should really love our country,—the country to which we owe allegiance,—take a deep interest in its welfare and that of our fellow-citizens, and give our moral, as well as material, support to all its just and beneficent undertakings.

We are bound to do this in any country, and under any legitimate form of government ; but it holds good more especially in a great Republic like this, where we have still stronger reasons for being faithful. Even were we quite indifferent to the obligations of strict duty, gratitude alone should cause us to be law-abiding citizens ; for *here*, every man, without distinction of race, color, or creed, is free and independent, and is able,—humanly speaking,—to carve out his own destiny. Every citizen is, in a certain sense, a sovereign, since he has part in the making of the laws by which he himself is governed. What a great, what a fearful responsibility must then rest upon the citizens of this glorious Republic ! But, alas ! how many prove recreant to that responsibility !

There is no sadder sight in the whole world than that of a magnificent nation like this,—the grandest, noblest, and freest that men have ever beheld,—becoming gradually undermined by its own favored citizens. Ah, my brethren, if this great Republic should fail, the hopes of unborn millions would perish with it. The welfare, the liberty, the happiness of succeeding generations, depend on our present fulfilment of our duty, on the fidelity with which we guard, the vigilance with which we defend the sacred trusts confided to our care. You have no right to charge your rulers with corruption, if you yourselves be corrupt. If you, as voters, do your duty as you should, nobly and conscientiously, your rulers will be worthy of you, and of the country they represent. Any man who sells his vote, is a traitor to his country, and deserves to be disfranchised.

It is not the duty of priests to tell you for whom you should vote ; but it is their duty to tell you to vote honestly, fearlessly, conscientiously, for those that will, in your calm, unbiased judgment, best subserve the interests of the nation. Do your duty as faithful, incorruptible citizens, and you will thus be rendering “to Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar.”

We should, moreover, look upon ourselves as belonging to the universal brotherhood of humanity ; all are the descendants of the same primitive parents, having been created by the same Lord and Master of the universe, endowed with the same nature, and redeemed by the infinitely precious blood of Jesus Christ. Thus, regarding all men as our brethren, harboring no ill-will, envy, or jealousy, we should injure no one in person, property or character, scrupulously avoiding all injustice, deception, and overreach-

ing. In one word, my beloved, we should do unto others what we might reasonably expect they would do unto us in like circumstances.

If we would "render to Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar," we must pay our just debts, and repair, to the fullest extent possible, any injury we may have done our neighbors in goods or reputation.

How many there are, (alas! their number is known only to God!) who jeopardize their eternal interests, and, in fact, place themselves out of the way of salvation, by failing to fulfil their duty in this respect. Where reparation is possible, salvation cannot be attained unless we make good whatever wrongs we may have inflicted on others. Hence, arises the strict obligation of restitution, without which we cannot expect forgiveness from God.

If you approach the holy tribunal of penance with proper dispositions,—sincere sorrow for the past, and a firm purpose of amendment for the future,—you will be freed by the power of God and priestly absolution, from all censures of the Church, and be cleansed from all your iniquities; yet there is *one* thing no priest, not even the Pope himself, can do,—that is,—dispense any man from the obligation of restitution,—so long as it is at all possible.

These various and grave obligations are the natural outcome of that great principle laid down by our Saviour: "Give to Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar." But we have but to look around us, my brethren, to see how frequently both principle and obligations are lost sight of in this busy world of ours. Selfishness seems to reign supreme. The vast majority of the human race seek their happiness in the miserable goods of this life, striving to hoard up riches, no matter by what base or questionable means,—by fraud, deceit, theft, and rascality. It is quite easy, indeed, to become rich in such dishonorable ways; but it is by no means easy to make restitution. Yet, unless ill-gotten goods be restored, no hope of pardon exists.

Injured reputations, furthermore, must be repaired,—all damages, in short, made good, if we desire to obtain the forgiveness of God. No sacraments, howsoever holy or productive of grace, can supply the place of restitution, which is one of the most essential conditions for their worthy reception. No position in the world, no station, howsoever elevated, no desire of family aggrandizement, can exempt a man from fulfilling this obligation. "Render," therefore, "to Cæsar, the things that are Cæsar's, and to God, the things that are God's."

In that last clause, my brethren, "*and to God the things that are God's,*" is comprised all our religious duties, which being, by far, the most necessary and important, should, consequently, take precedence of all others. We owe to God,—our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer,—the worship and service of our whole being,—our bodies with all their powers, our minds with all their faculties, our hearts with all their affections. We should submit our body to his holy laws, keep it under constant subjection, con-

quer its passions, overcome its vicious inclinations, and bend it to the yoke of Christ. Our intellect should unite with our will in the humble and reverential homage we pay to God,—the intellect by cheerfully accepting the truths he has revealed, without presuming to doubt or dispute them ; and the will, by submissively and faithfully obeying his commandments. All the affections of our soul should center in, and be entirely absorbed with, God himself and his divine love, his uncreated beauty, his boundless power, his infinite goodness, and absolute perfections. Body and soul should contribute alike to his worship. Not only with our lips, but also with our hearts, should we praise him, giving him full possession of our souls, and begging him to reign therein as absolute Master, by the blessed operations of his grace.

The grand aim of our lives, my brethren, the great end of our creation, always to be kept most prominently in view, is, that whilst thus cheerfully and readily giving unto Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar, we never lose sight of the still graver obligation of giving to God what belongs to God, by leading good, honest, conscientious, edifying Christian lives before God and men.

Let us never be unmindful of this sublime principle and golden rule of our Lord. Let us exemplify it in all our words and actions, ever directing them to the greater glory of God, our country's welfare, and our soul's salvation. Were this the guiding rule of all who profess to be Christians, what a different aspect this world would present ! How many evils would be continually averted from the human family,—how much peace and happiness would now exist where naught save discord and disorder reigns. Let us, at least, begin to do *our* part, and cherishing this loving command of our dear Saviour in our inmost hearts, and faithfully fulfilling all the duties devolving on us here below, we may hope, in the mercy of God, to be blessed hereafter with an abundant and everlasting reward. Amen.

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TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FINAL PERSEVERANCE.

“He who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus.” Philip. 1 : 6.

In his tender love for the Philippians, my brethren, St. Paul breaks forth in the Epistle of to-day, into fervent expressions of joy and thanksgiving, declaring his confidence that Almighty God would bestow upon them the most important, and most ardently to be desired, of all blessings,—that of *final perseverance*. Upon that precious gift everything depends; our eternal destiny is not decided by our present possession of the grace of God, but by the condition of our souls at the end of our lives. Our present justice will not serve us if we are not found, at the moment of death, in the grace and favor of God. One may lead the life of a Saint, but if he die the death of a sinner, all his past virtues and good works will profit him nothing in eternity. Let us, then, study this vital question of *final perseverance*, in order that we may be thoroughly convinced of its necessity and importance.

I. What is meant, my brethren, by *final perseverance*? A continuance in the state of divine grace to the very last moment of life. The Church is careful to remind us that we cannot merit this grace for ourselves. God alone can grant it to us, and we must have the fullest confidence that he will never refuse this greatest of all his favors to those who are faithful and constant in asking it of him. Hence, we may echo in our own regard, St. Paul's hopeful words to the Philippians, and humbly trust that God, who has begun the good work of our salvation by calling us to the Faith, and making us partakers of the Sacraments, will continue to bless us, and, (in answer to our unceasing prayers), will perfect our sanctification even unto the end.

The Sacred Scriptures abound with assurances that God is faithful and abundant in blessing those who put their trust in him, yet they do not fail to warn us against presuming too much upon the grace of final perseverance. St. Paul himself does not hesitate, when expedient, to inculcate the necessity of a continual caution and self-distrust. *“He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall.”* (1 Cor. 10 : 12.) And even to the Philippians, to whom he addresses the encouraging words of my text, he says : *“With fear and trembling work out your salvation.”* (Phil. 2 : 12.)

Nay, more, although he declares his fixed determination to be devoted to his duty, and nobly defies crosses and persecutions of every sort to separate him from his allegiance to Jesus Christ, yet behold how timidly he seems to speak when there is question of his own final perseverance in grace. "*I run not as at an uncertainty,*" he says, when he is contemplating his future reward, "*but I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway.*" (1 Cor. 9 : 26, 27.) A like fear of himself made him yearn for the end of life's struggle, lest its longer extension might endanger his perseverance: "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ."

It is because of this ever-present danger of sin that Christ so continually impresses on us the necessity for vigilance: "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." What I say to you I say to all,—watch. Like good soldiers, we must never be off our guard; for attack and defeat may come at the first unguarded moment. "Be sober and watch, for your adversary, the devil, goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. 5 : 8.) And it is with reference to the awful consequences of self-trust and presumption that the Watchman of Israel was commissioned to give this solemn warning: "*If I say to the just that he shall surely live, and he trusting in his justice, commit iniquity, all his justice shall be forgotten, and in his iniquity which he has committed, in the same he shall die.*" (Ezech. 33 : 13.) See, my beloved, the dreadful consequences of not persevering! The merits of a long career of fidelity all melt away, and are forgotten by God, on whatsoever day the just man presumptuously falls from divine grace.

Look at the contrast between Judas and St. Paul. What native advantages had not the Hebrew apostle over the Roman, yet, alas! how different were their ends! Judas must have had a true vocation to the apostolate, else our Lord would never have named him as one of the chosen Twelve. And at first he was faithful to the call. He, as well as Peter, left all things to follow Christ, and was, in return, receiving here below a portion of the hundredfold which had been promised to him in common with the others. Was it not worth more than a hundred times all that he had given up, to enjoy the continual presence of Jesus, to be privileged to converse with him, to listen to his instructions, and to witness his miracles? What an honor to be declared by the lips of Eternal Truth, a share in the God-Man's plenitude of power over the sick and suffering, and a future possessor of his still greater power of absolving from sin! To be seated near Jesus at the Last Supper, to receive the Blessed Eucharist from his own divine hand at the time of its institution,—were not these honors and privileges so sublime as to excite, (if possible,) even the envy of Angels. Yet, because the wretched Iscariot did not persevere in God's grace, those dreadful words had to be spoken of him: "*It were better for him if that man had never been born.*" (Matt. 26 : 24.) Better not to be born than to be a follower of Christ? Better not to be born than to have been ordained as one of the first founders of

the Church? Better not to have been born than to have the power of miracles? Yes, my dear brethren, far better not to have been born than to have failed in final perseverance.

On the other hand, look at St. Paul. His first introduction to us in the Inspired Word of God is certainly most unpromising. He took an active part in the murder of St. Stephen, and afterwards went forth to Damascus, breathing rage and vengeance against the Church for which our Blessed Lord had suffered and shed his precious blood upon the cross. But, lo! a converting grace is suddenly and mysteriously given to him; and henceforth, we hear no more of his falling away from the divine favor. He endeavors, by untiring labors, to make amends for his past sins and shortcomings. By his earnest and unflagging zeal for souls, he makes restitution to God and to his Church for his former blind and cruel opposition to the truth. Judas began most promisingly, my brethren, but ended most miserably, simply because he did not persevere. St. Paul, from being a persecutor, is changed by God's powerful grace into an Apostle; and persevering in his acquired justice, is exalted even beyond the other Apostles, so as to be associated with St. Peter in the primal establishment of the Church.

Our Blessed Lord, in his love for his disciples, is especially solicitous for their perseverance. He twice reminds them that perseverance is essential to salvation, saying: "He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved." Saddened by the fall of Judas, (as we may well conceive his divine heart would have been,) he prays, after his Last Supper, that the same misfortune may not befall any other of his followers: "Holy Father," he pleads in that solemn hour, "Holy Father, keep them in thy name whom thou hast given me. . . . Those whom thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them hath perished but the son of perdition. . . . I do not ask that thou take them, (my disciples,) away out of the world, but that thou preserve them from evil." (John 17: 11, 12, 15). The fortitude manifested by the Apostles in their subsequent labors, and their constant fidelity, even unto the shedding their blood for the sake of the Gospel, prove that this prayer of their divine Master was heard and granted.

In how many ways, my beloved brethren, does not our divine Lord manifest his interest in *our* behalf, and his willingness to bestow on us this gift of final perseverance! But to that end, *we must do all that is in our power to comply with his conditions*. What an immense power is placed at our disposal in the exercise of prayer alone! We have the solemn promise of a God that, whatever we pray for, will be granted to us, provided we pray as we ought, with perseverance, and with confidence in the Holy Name of Jesus. Certainly, then, this *most important of all gifts will not be refused*. *Perseverance in prayer* is the fitting prelude to *perseverance in grace*. Again; our blessed Lord has given us another forcible aid to perseverance when he instituted, in his mercy, the Holy Sacraments of the

Church. He has placed the rich treasures of their graces entirely at our disposal. They are intimately connected with our salvation, and hence, with our perseverance. Between the hour of Baptism and that of Extreme Unction, to how many spiritual dangers is not a Christian exposed? How many corresponding helps does he not receive through those sacred channels of divine grace? They are, indeed, the veritable fountains of our Saviour's love and power, from which we are commanded to draw waters with an abundance of confidence and joy. What anxiety, then, can they be said to manifest for their perseverance, who are wilfully neglectful of prayer and the Sacraments?

II. As a further help to the attainment of final perseverance, my brethren, there are some practical truths which we must bear constantly in mind, the remembrance of which will certainly defend us from many dangers and temptations. First of all, we must not forget *that it is difficult to persevere*. Difficult? Yes, and *very difficult* at that. But this is precisely what we should expect when we come to consider the necessary and immediate result of perseverance,—namely, eternal salvation. Those who persevere to the end are saved; it is difficult to be saved, therefore it must be difficult to persevere. Heaven is the necessary reward of perseverance; but, since heaven suffers violence, perseverance necessarily demands violence also. It is difficult to be constantly making efforts. It is difficult to be continually on our guard against the world, the flesh, and the devil. There are truces in the spiritual warfare, but there is never an established peace this side of the grave. Our weakness is so great, and our enemies so powerful, that there is always a danger of their victory and of our defeat. Add to all this, my brethren, *the length of time* allotted to the battle. If we were assured that it would end in one day, and that all depended on the success of that one day's labor, then we might brace ourselves up and nobly face all the difficulties of those eventful twenty-four hours. But the terrible combat may last for years. As a spiritual writer has remarked: "The school of Christ breaks up but once, and the holiday is eternal." How can we go on for years steadily and faithfully humbling, and denying, and detaching ourselves from all things? In view of this stern and unavoidable difficulty, may we not exclaim with the holy impatience of St. Paul, when he, too, felt within himself the struggle between the law of duty and the law of sin: "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

But if it is difficult, my brethren, remember, at the same time, that it is *not impossible to persevere*. Almighty God commands us to persevere, and since he never commands impossibilities, it is of faith that we *can* persevere. This agreeable knowledge, as you will perceive, at once diminishes the difficulty. Others have done it, (you will say to yourself,) and therefore *I* can do it. Others have persevered, because they knew that they had some-

thing difficult to do, and that very difficulty made them cautious, and that very caution saved them. Suppose two men have to journey through a forest infested with robbers. One of them is aware of the danger, and procures a body-guard to protect him. The other knows nothing of the risk he runs, and walks heedlessly along. Which of the two is most likely to share the fate of the traveller from Jerusalem to Jericho, who fell among robbers and was brought to grief and damage? To be forewarned is to be forearmed, and the knowledge of a danger is the first step toward security against it. Therefore, admitting that there is danger and difficulty in persevering to the end, let us not be dismayed at the prospect, but console ourselves with the reflection that perseverance, although difficult, is certainly quite possible.

Now what would you say, my brethren, if I were to assure you that, all circumstances considered, perseverance is even of easy attainment. Would you say: "Here is a consistent preacher who flatly contradicts himself in one and the same breath"—? One moment he tells us that perseverance is difficult, and the next, that perseverance is easy. No, my beloved, there is no contradiction. Both statements are true. Perseverance is difficult in one sense, yet easy in another. It is difficult, when you consider your own weakness and instability, and the multitude, power, and obstinacy of your enemies. But it is easy when you consider that you do not fight alone. There are more on your side than against you. When the servant of the prophet Eliseus once beheld his master surrounded by the armed forces of his enemies, he cried out in alarm: "Alas! alas! alas! my lord! what shall we do?" But Eliseus prayed that his eyes might be opened, and the servant then saw that the mountain on which they stood was full of horses, and that there were chariots of fire round about the prophet; and he realized the truth of his master's words: "Fear not, for there are more with us than with them." So in *our* case, my brethren, the legions of the heavenly forces are deputed by God to do battle in the cause of his faithful servants. Why, then, should we be faint-hearted? If God be for us, who is against us?

Nay, more, having once begun to speak of the possibility and the easiness of perseverance, I will make bold to add that, if we *will* it, our perseverance is even *certain*. My first reason for this assertion may be found in the words of my text. It is not I, but St. Paul, or rather it is Almighty God himself, who, through St. Paul, says to us: "*I am confident of this very thing*, that he who has begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus." And, in spite of his humble apprehension of a possible fall from grace, St. Paul elsewhere asserts: "I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that he is able to keep that which I have intrusted to him against that day." A little further on he adds: "As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord the just will render me in that day." When you feel confident of performing a

certain work, my brethren, you do not fail in your attempt. The man who hesitates is the one who always comes off the worst in the battle. You remember the beautiful instance of the devout woman going to visit the tomb of their Crucified Lord on the day of his Resurrection. They start forth provided with all the appliances necessary to anoint his sacred body ; and although there is a great and seemingly insurmountable barrier in the way, they go bravely forward, merely mentioning the difficulty to each other, but full of confidence withal, that they will not be disappointed in the object of their pilgrimage. "Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" (Mark 16 : 3). What was the result? "Looking, they saw the stone rolled back," and not only was their faith rewarded by the removal of every obstacle, but they were privileged to behold the Angel in the tomb, and learn from him the glad tidings of the Resurrection. If, with a like confidence, my brethren, we, too, push forward in our journey to the tomb, God and his holy Angels will be with us on our way, and every obstacle to our final perseverance will be wonderfully and happily removed.

That beautiful and practical book, *The Following of Christ*, tells us of a certain person who, oftentimes doubting whether or not he were in the state of grace, once fell prostrate before the altar, lamenting thus : "O that I might know whether I should persevere in virtue to the end of my life!" And straightway he heard interiorly the answer of our Lord, saying : "What wouldst thou do if thou knewest thou shouldst persevere? Do now what thou wouldst then do, and thou shalt be safe." Immediately he was comforted, and all his doubtful wavering ceased. This is exactly what *we* should do, dear brethren. We must go forward with the fullest confidence that Almighty God, who has made us in order that we might be saved, and who grants salvation to those only who persevere, will himself enable us to attain to the reward which he has prepared for us. There are more souls lost through despondency than through presumption. While we must be careful not to presume, because of the knowledge of our own weakness, we must be equally careful not to despair, since we know the power of him who labors with us. Firmly believing that heaven can be ours and *must* be ours, we shall live in a manner worthy of our inheritance ; and with our affections raised above all earthly things, my brethren, we shall move on securely towards our true Home, hearing ever in our ears that promise of final perseverance which St. Peter invokes upon all faithful Christians : "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little, will himself perfect you, and confirm you, and establish you : to him be glory and empire for ever and ever." (1 Pet. 5 : 10). Amen. SWEENEY.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON DEATH.

“ *Our conversation is in heaven ; from whence also we wait for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Phil. 3 : 20.

We must die ! How awful is the decree : we must *all* die ! No man need flatter himself that he can escape the universal sentence. Everything else is uncertain ; death alone is certain. Each instant we approach closer to our last end ; every step we take brings us nearer to the grave. Life, at best, is but a span ; and our mortal frame is of such frail and perishable material, that it is constantly inclining towards corruption and dissolution. Criminals, as we are, my beloved brethren, the execution of our sentence is only deferred for a short time ; our reprieve, in fine, may be much shorter than we imagine. Yet, although we are convinced that all men must die, —the saint as well as the sinner, the rich as well as the poor,—where, I pray, is our preparation for that solemn event ? Can we, indeed, by forgetting death, cause death to forget *us* ? If we could, then there might be some small excuse for our negligence ; but we know by bitter experience, that death forgets no man,—that it steals upon us all unforeseen, and that thousands are snatched away at the very time they flatter themselves with the hope of many years’ enjoyment. In order to prevent the horrors of an unhappy death, and dispose our souls for a happy eternity, we should frequently make death the subject of our most serious consideration. Tell me, then, my brethren, are you prepared *just now* to die ? “ Well, no, Father,” some of you may reply ; “ I am not ready to die at present.” And if you are not prepared *to-day*, how shall you be *to-morrow* ? As Christians, we should be ready to answer the call of our divine Master at any moment ; our conversation should be continually in heaven, “ from whence, also, we wait for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Our only care and business should be to learn the science of DYING WELL, and that WITHOUT ANY DELAY. We know neither the day nor the hour, when the Angel of Death may visit us.

I. If there were, indeed, some exceptions to the universal law, then, you and I, my brethren, might say to ourselves, with some faint shadow of hope : “ Perhaps *I*, at least, may not die !” But, as the grand old monarch, David, asks in his 88th Psalm : “ Who is the man that shall live and

not see death? Who is he, that from the sunshine of this life has not to go down into the awful darkness of death? Who is he that can promise himself an everlasting habitation upon earth? Who is he? And the the Wise Man answers: *There is no man that lives always or that hopes for this.*" (Ecc. 9 : 4.) No man yet has ever freed himself from the ultimate dominion of death, or withdrawn his head from the mortal blow of its skeleton hand. The doom is irrevocable; we must all die. "It is appointed for all men once to die." Nature may revolt against it with all its power; death is inevitable; its consequences, eternal and irreparable. Must we not, then, be void of both reason and religion, if we do not think seriously of our last end? Since we *must* die, why not endeavor to learn the science of dying well? Does not the soldier drill and exercise continually, even in time of peace, since he knows to a certainty that he cannot escape the coming battle with the enemy? Does not the student devote himself to his books with the greatest diligence, when he fears that, at any moment, he may be called upon to stand a public examination? And shall the Christian, who is assured that he must die, neglect that heavenly science which alone can secure him a happy death?

Ah! if we frequently considered this important truth, our lives would soon undergo a great change, such as that which once befell a certain worldling of by-gone times. One day, he opened the Bible at random, and his eye falling upon the 5th chapter of the Book of Genesis, he read: "*Adam* lived 930 years, and he died. *Seth* lived 912 years, and he died. *Enos* lived 905 years, and he died. *Malaleel* lived 895 years, and he died. *Jared* lived 962 years, and he died. *Lamech* lived 777 years, and he died." It struck our worldly friend that every sentence concluded with the same solemn words: "*And he died.*" Becoming very serious and full of fear, he asked himself: "Do you understand what you have read? '*And he died.*' Do you know what *that* means? Seven, eight,—yea, even nine, hundred years of life must come to an end. All must die. Some day people will say also of you as they said of these ancient patriarchs: 'This man lived so many years, *and he died.*' And you think so little little about death? Your only care is to scrape together some money, to gain the applause of the world, to enjoy a few miserable, filthy pleasures. Ah! you will soon be gone hence,—you have no lasting city here. Knowing for certain that you must die, what a fool you are that you do not flee away to some holy school where you can learn to die well!" With these thoughts, our converted worldling took leave of all earthly things, and retired into a Dominican monastery, in order to learn there the science of the Saints,—the sublime science of a happy death. Every one, of course, cannot make or execute a like magnanimous resolution; but, thanks be to God, (who has ordained and blessed all lawful states of life), the art of dying well is not confined entirely to monasteries and convents; you may learn it in your own homes; and to that end, my brethren, you may open

a school in your own hearts. Often fancy yourselves in your coffins, and imagine you hear the people say, as they read your death in the paper : "That man lived seventy or eighty years, and he died." "That woman lived twenty, thirty, forty years, and *she* died." This imagination will detach your hearts from the world ; and a thorough detachment from the world, my brethren, let me tell you, will fill your last hours with sweetness. The continual thought of death will teach you to root up all bad habits and resist all temptations ; it will strengthen your faith, enliven your hope, and kindle your charity ; in a word, it will teach you how to make a holy and a happy end.

"But," you will perhaps say, "if I am studying all the time how to prepare for death, I will be oppressed with a constant gloom and sadness !" Far from it. There is no science productive of such pure happiness as the science of dying well. How can it be otherwise, since it is a knowledge which quiets and calms the heart ; which cools its violent passions, and discovers to it the vanity of this delusive and deceitful world. In this science lies the secret, the sum of all imaginable felicity. O timid and cowardly souls, trembling and shuddering if but the name of death be mentioned, would you free yourselves forever from this false and unchristian fear ? Go, at once, into the school of the Saints, and there learn the art of a happy death. I assure you, your fears will soon vanish, since one never fears to do what he has once learned to do well. Will you talk, after this, about grief and trouble ? Ah ! no ; a prudent preparation for death will console you in this life ; it will inspire you with courage as your last hour approaches, and will be the pledge of your eternal salvation.

How, then, will he excuse himself who has not, as yet, learned even the rudiments of so necessary a science, or who takes no pains at all to learn them ? *To live as if you never had to die*,—Christians, where is your understanding, if you have faith ; or, if you have understanding, where is your faith ? You do everything to promote your temporal happiness ; you rush headlong into the midst of perils ; you toil, you study, you waste yourselves with midnight vigils, provided you can gain a few miserable dollars in the end ; yet, you know to a certainty that you have to die, and you do nothing to learn the art of dying well ! O blindness ! O madness ! You may hire a man to do your work ; you may employ a lawyer to plead your cause, but *no one can die for you* ; you yourselves have to take that step alone. O let us reason, my brethren, like wise Christians : "I must die ; how, then, can I find time for everything except for preparation for death ? Can I embark on such a perilous enterprise without learning the means of making it a success ?" We came into this world for nothing else but to provide for a happy eternity by loving and serving the Lord our God ; hence, we came into the world for nothing else but to learn to die well,—a good and happy death being the only way to a happy eternity.

II. *The art of dying well must be learned as soon as possible.* Nothing is more certain than death. Yet nothing is more uncertain than the *hour and manner of our death*. The day will infallibly come, (and God only knows how soon!) when we shall never see the night; or the night will come when we shall never see the dawn. It is true, death may be far off from us at present, my brethren; but then, again, it may be very near. Perhaps we may be able, in our turn, to foresee its approach; perhaps, on the other hand, it may strike us down suddenly, without a shadow of warning. If the latter be the case, *where, how, and when* shall we learn the art of dying well? How can one learn in a moment what he has neglected to acquire during his whole lifetime? Are not these terrible risks sufficiently pressing to urge us to this important study without any delay? Does not the steward, who knows that he may be called on any moment to give an account of his stewardship, keep his books in good order? And we, who have to deal with a Master infinitely just, who has plainly warned us that his coming to the reckoning shall be sudden and silent as that of a thief in the night, *we*, my brethren, are bold enough to postpone from year to year the balancing of our spiritual accounts!

Even granting that we shall not die suddenly, that God will send us a tedious and painful illness as his messenger of death, and that we shall be reminded of its approach by pious friends or charitable confessors, think you there will be any excuse for our negligence, if we fail to learn in time the art of dying well? Do not deceive yourselves, my beloved; awful and irreparable is a mistake in this important matter. A violent headache or toothache is sufficient to prevent you from attending properly to your business. How, then, will it be when you are afflicted with a mortal sickness,—when the mind is weakened and confused, and all your vital forces rapidly failing you? How will you be able to set your conscience in order,—to think of your eternal salvation,—in short, under such distressing circumstances, to learn an art which must satisfy for the past, regulate the present, and carefully provide for the future? Ah! do you not see, beloved, that your corporal pains will engross you to the exclusion of everything else?

A burning fever, an alarming suffocation, grief at the thought of separation from friends and the world, and sometimes, alas! the mere hurry to settle temporal affairs, render the sick man incapable of a single pious thought. Usually, he flatters himself as long as possible with a delusive hope of life. His friends maintain a mournful silence, for fear of alarming him. For the same reason, the physicians make it a study to feed him with vain hopes of his recovery. Thus he goes on, being himself, as it were, desirous of being deceived. Even the last efforts of nature,—the last flaring up of the candle, so to speak,—are often interpreted as favorable symptoms. The fatal cough, perhaps, has ceased, the bright hectic burns upon the cheek, the eye shines with a preternatural lustre. “O, he is *so* much better!” the

doting friends exclaim ; “he will soon be quite himself again !”—and it is only when the poor deluded patient falls into his agony that the danger is openly apprehended. Then the house is in an uproar ; all cry out : “He is dying ! he is dying !” A priest is sent for ; he comes ; what can he do ? Is he expected to work a miracle ? He has not the key to the sinner’s heart ; and how can he move to contrition a man who is speechless, senseless, or stupified with narcotics ? Do not doctors often give medicines, (and reprehensibly so,) which produce insensibility and stupor in the dying ? And even if the patient be perfectly conscious, and in possession of all his faculties, who can say that it may not be with him as it was with that unfortunate sinner of whom Lignori relates that, being urged by the priest to make a fervent act of contrition, the dying man fixedly regarded the speaker, saying slowly : “The loaf is too hard ; the knife will not cut !”—and so expired with evident signs of damnation. As a man lives, so shall he die. Having never learned the language of salvation, what the sinner hears of it at the hour of death, appears quite strange and unfamiliar to him ; and even if he should repeat some pious words with his tongue, his heart does not accompany the prayer. O, my brethren, let us not deceive ourselves to our own disadvantage ; for *he must die ill who only in his last hour begins to learn the art of dying well.* Therefore, apply yourselves with earnest devotion to mastering in time this difficult and important art. A proficient in so blessed a science need not fear death, no matter when, where, or how it may assail him. It will be a happy death if it steals upon us suddenly, because we are already prepared for its approach ; it will be a happy death, if we die by a lingering disease, because a long sickness will give us time to exercise ourselves more thoroughly in those virtues and pious works which frequent practice makes sweet and easy. But woe to me and woe to you, if we suffer our days to glide away without preparing ourselves for our last end ! Woe to me and woe to you, if death cuts us off before we have graduated in the art of dying well !

May our good God protect us from such pernicious neglect and ignorance ! Do penance whilst you are well, my brethren, for when you are sick, I know not what you shall be able to do. And as he may be assured of a happy death, who, whilst in health, prepares himself for it, let us make ready, in good time, for this most important event in the career of a Christian. Let us frequently commend our spirit into the hands of God ; and having our conversation entirely in heaven, let us wait confidently and joyfully for the coming of the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

O. S. B.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

“What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul.”
Matt. 16 : 26.

Everything *in this world of matter* is frail and perishable. All things follow one and the same law; all have their beginning, their prime, their decay. The only difference is, my brethren, that in some cases, this process is slow, in others more rapid. The flowers, which seem to bloom but to fade, are the fitting emblems of earth's ephemeral creatures and pleasures. The trees are only long-lived plants. The mountains, rocks, and rivers manifest in their turn the corroding action of time, and tend gradually, but surely, to decay. As the ages roll away, the earth is said to alter her position in the solar system, as if slowly preparing for her approaching dissolution. Even the planets change, and now and then a star disappears from the sky. In like manner, man, the so-called lord of creation, has his childhood, his prime, his old age, and, at last, his decay and death. The descendants of Adam, from the beginning to the end, are like the rank and file of a vast army marching onward to the grave.

One thing, alone, suffers no decay, undergoes no dissolution, knows no end. *One thing only is immortal,—the human soul.* There are many, my brethren, who affect to disbelieve the immortality of the soul,—there are many who believe it but disregard the lessons that it teaches,—and for the sake of both these classes, I propose to-day to prove this fundamental and important truth, as well as to show the practical consequences that flow therefrom.

I. The immortality of the soul is by no means an exclusively Christian doctrine. Accepted alike in every age and place, by both false and true religionists, it is one of those truths which must either be *inborn in the human soul* or, at any rate, *in happy accord with the dictates of natural reason.* I will not enlarge here, my brethren, upon the supposition that it was made manifest by God in one of his primitive revelations to his creatures, in the infancy of earth, before the language of men was divided, or their children dispersed into every part of the habitable globe. It is a truth naturally *so difficult to disbelieve*, that we might fancy none save those whose minds are *depraved by passion* or *bewildered by wilful sophistry*, could be brought to deny it. But, apart from the general consent of mankind, let us examine the convincing proofs of this doctrine which are furnished

us alike by reason and revelation. Our own native reason tells us *that the soul will never die*. In order to die, my brethren, (as you are well aware,) a thing must perish either by *decay* or by *annihilation*.

1. The soul of man cannot be destroyed *by decay*, since it has no parts, which can be decomposed. Dissolution implies component parts or particles of matter. The soul is a simple substance, having no parts really distinct, hence, it cannot be separated into halves or quarters. It has no right, no left, no inside, no outside, no length, no breadth, no shape, no form. It cannot, therefore, fall apart or decay. If it perish at all, it must be *by annihilation*. It must, so to speak, be altogether blotted out of existence, leaving behind it not even the faintest trace of its former being. This, however, is a work as difficult as its first creation, and can be effected only by the omnipotent power of God, its Creator.

2. But why should God annihilate the soul of man? Has he not most clearly manifested his will, that it should live forever? Assuredly he has. This, his will is revealed to us, first, by *the voice of Nature*. Consider, for a moment, my brethren, the instincts of the lower animals. See how they are impelled by a certain irresistible impulse towards the end for which they were created. This desire is, alone, a proof of the will of God in their regard. Would it not seem cruel if their Creator gave them a strong desire for food without any means of obtaining it, parental instinct, with no means of perpetuating their race, a longing to float or swim, with no water to satisfy their desires? Imagine for instance an uncaged bird, whose instincts ever prompt it to soar upward through the higher realms of air, but for which God has provided no wings. Can we reconcile such a contradiction with the ever-just and consistent goodness of God?

So in man there is a certain *appetite for immortality*, which is something above, and apart from, the ordinary repugnance to death, since it is found even, (yea, I may say, and most markedly of all,) in those who have no fear whatever of dissolution. There is a certain longing after supreme felicity, a craving after a higher and unchanging happiness, which the ephemeral success, the mutable prosperity of this world can never satisfy. Nor is this an accidental desire, possessed by some, and unknown to others, prevalent in one age and forgotten in another, the result of education and refinement in civilized quarters, but a dead letter to the untutored savage. No, my brethren, it is an indefectible element of the human heart,—the unvarying and universal aspiration of mankind.

The great God has not implanted this longing in our breasts without a purpose. It is the voice of Eternal Truth whispering in the depths our being. It is the echo of the everlasting life of God resounding through our hearts, and inviting us to share his eternal kingdom. There is a void in the human soul, which nothing save eternity can fill; and since God is

neither false nor cruel, he cannot refuse to satisfy the sublime desires he himself has created.

3. Another voice there is, my brethren, that assures us of our immortality, *the voice of conscience*. Ah! yes, that inward monitor stands sentinel over all our thoughts, words, and deeds, pointing out to us always the eternal consequences of our every act. What clearer proof can there be than *this* of the immortality of the soul? He who declares that the soul of a man dies when his body dies, has destroyed by those words, the very end and need of a conscience. That moral faculty becomes at once useless and powerless; it can neither threaten the wicked with punishment, nor encourage the good with the hope of reward. For conscience does not promise us worldly satisfactions, nor warn us alone of the retributive justice of men. No, like a stern, uncompromising preacher, she discourses mainly of God and Eternity. Her constant theme is the immortality of the soul, and her voice is loudest when the criminal is alone, as it were, on a desert island; her power greatest, when he is passing from time into the dread abyss of eternity. Her text is always the same: "It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death,"—what? Eternal silence? Everlasting sleep? Dust, ashes, nothingness? No, after death,—"*the judgment!*" Ah yes, sinner, when a priest, a pious friend, or a spiritual book, remind you of the immortality of your soul, you may laugh the speakers to scorn, you may close the book and cast it from your hand,—but when conscience upbraids, you cannot shame her into silence, you cannot cast away her solemn evidence of an immortal life beyond the grave. To the sinner, in *the moment of temptation*, she secretly whispers: "Sin not, for your soul is immortal; it cannot die!" Writhing within him *after* he has sinned, she cries in agony: "Do penance, for your soul is immortal; it cannot die!" And when, at last, with the quenchless fire and the undying worm, he is imprisoned in the awful abyss of *hell*, her piercing shriek is heard above all the din and clamor of the damned: "Sinner, despair,—for your soul is immortal,—it can never, never, never, never, die!"

Such are the proofs, my brethren, furnished us by our own natural reason alone. But God has left us for our guidance more than the light of that poor, flickering taper. The immortality of the soul is a matter of divine faith, revealed to us by Jesus Christ, the voice or Word of the Most High. In his description of the Last Day,—the Day of wrath,—our blessed Lord depicts the wicked as standing on the left, and the just on the right, of the judgment-seat. "And these," he says, (speaking of the former,) "shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting." (Matt. 25:46.) And again, in another place: "Fear not those that kill the body and cannot kill the soul, but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matt. 10:28.) *Hell is eternal*. Hence, my brethren, the *soul*, which is the victim of Hell, must be in itself, *eternal, immortal*.

II. Having thus proved my point by reason and revelation alike, we will now proceed to consider those practical and useful reflections which it naturally engenders.

1. *A long, long life awaits us in the world to come.* An immense, boundless prospect lies before us. An immortal soul belongs to an infinite eternity. In the ceaseless, endless march of the spirits of men, Death, the triumphant conqueror of all else beside, is powerless to arrest or destroy even one immortal being. These bodies of ours will die and decay, my brethren; these eyes will corrupt and moulder away in their sockets: these arms and feet will rot and fall to pieces; this very tongue wherewith I address you to-day, will decompose and crumble into dust; but neither decay nor death can touch the soul that animates this tenement of clay. A pin in the hands of a child might pierce your heart, and destroy the life of your body; but all the armies of the world might assail you, all the engines of death ever invented be planted against your bosom, they could not reach the soul. Your body might be torn or blown into atoms,—the soul would remain unhurt. Yes, my brethren, you have a long, long life before you,—an eternal life. Reflect for a moment. All things else will pass away. Your business, your trade, your labors and pleasures, alike, will soon be over. You yourself will pass away out of this world, and others will take your vacant place in the shop, in the office,—yea, even in that dear, familiar spot you now call Home. By and by, your grave will be trodden level with the surrounding earth; the letters on your tombstone will be worn smooth by the friction of time, and at last your very name will be effaced and forgotten. But *your soul?* Ah! your soul, my beloved, will be still living, thinking, acting in another world. The day of judgment will come and go, but your immortal essence will outlive “The crush of matter and the wreck of worlds.”

How and where will you live, O immortal soul? How? In a fixed and changeless state; in an everlasting Heaven, or in an eternal Hell. For millions and billions of ages the waters will glide along in the sweet rivers of Paradise,—yet you will still live. Millions and billions of ages will leave their rust on the iron gate of Hell,—and still you will live. *Where will you live?* That question is one you are yet at liberty to determine. It is an affair of your own; it depends on your own free will. Two pathways lie before you,—both end in an eternity; choose for yourself the one wherein you will walk. Ah! you are busy about many things here below, yet only *one thing* is necessary. It is our Lord who says so, not I. (Luke 10:42). Your other affairs will soon come to an end, but your salvation is an affair of eternity. Yes, your true and only business is *to escape* from an everlasting misfortune,—to make terms against an eternal bankruptcy. Your true and only business is *to provide* for yourself a never-ending establishment in a realm of eternal joys,—to secure imperishable riches, not for a corruptible body, but for an immortal soul.

2. Your true and only business, in fine, is *to do penance* for the past, improve the present moment of grace, and prepare in time for the dreadful judgment to come. And O, my beloved, *what time* have we for all this? Long is the life before us in eternity; but, alas! (as the Apostle warns us,) short is the time given us to prepare for it. This life is like a passing vapor, a fading flower, a summer cloud: "like the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow, is cut down and cast into the oven." Your life, O sinner, is like the fig-tree, which was cursed by Christ, because it bore no fruit. By and by, your companions will stand mournfully beside your grave, and say wonderingly like the disciples of our Lord: "How soon hath the fig-tree withered away!" It matters not *how young you are*. The young die as well as the old, and no one can assure you that your time will not be short. The fig-tree met the malediction of our Lord even before its fruit-bearing season had come. It was cursed because it bore no blossoms.

Behold how rapidly the years of our life run away! Look back upon the past. Where are the years of your infancy, your childhood, your youth, perchance, your manhood? They are gone like a dream, like a tale already told, like a river that flows swiftly to the sea. Quickly have they fled, bearing with them their record of graces and of sins! The past seems now like a single moment. And the future? What shall we say of it? Perhaps but little time remains for us. Perhaps, the half of our days are already numbered. God knows if we are not even now close to the solemn end! The only thing we are certain of is the present, and that is only a moment, a breath. It passes while I speak. It is already gone. What follows from all this? What, O my beloved, but that we let these passing affairs go by with the passing time, whilst we fix our hearts and hopes upon eternity alone! Listen to the Apostle: "This therefore I say, the time is short; it remaineth that they also who have wives, be as if they had none, and they that weep, as though they wept not and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not, and they that use this world, as if they used it not, for the fashion of this world passeth away." (1. Cor. 7:29—31).

Yes, the time is short; there is no need to waste its precious moments in undue care of your property, your family; in perfecting your successes in business, in bewailing your misfortunes and humiliations. "The fashion of this world passeth away." None of these things will profit you when the hour of death is at hand. Much less time, O sinner, have *you*, to persevere in your unlawful pleasures, your neglect of your duties, and your vices and your sins. Eternity is close at hand. One step more, perhaps, will precipitate you into an open grave. One step more may bring you to the judgment-seat of Christ, where angels and demons will unite in crying aloud to your affrighted, immortal spirit: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" B.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

“They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and majesty.” Matt. 24 : 30.

The General Judgment, my dear Christians, is one of those stern, yet saving, truths of the Gospel which, in our days, are much controverted, or, at least, doubted. There are to be found plenty of gross materialists, who, degrading the image of God to the level of the beasts, do not hesitate to declare that everything ends with death,—that judgment, heaven, and hell are exploded myths, unworthy even the credence granted to old women’s tales. But, thanks be to God! there are many others, noble souls, divinely-enlightened intellects, Christians in name and in deed, who, backed by the testimony of millions of holy martyrs and Saints, profess their belief in a General Judgment, and, consequently, would suffer every torment,—yea, even death itself,—rather than commit one mortal sin. With whom do *you* side, my dear brethren? With those perverse and wicked people who deny the truth of the Judgment because they so greatly fear it? Or with the martyrs and Saints of Christ who believed in it, and attested their belief by the shedding of their blood? Ah! even the impious, in spite of themselves, give testimony to this incontrovertible truth. Let but a dangerous sickness befall them, let but some imminent peril threaten their life, and how quickly and gladly do they not call upon the ministers of God to absolve them from their sins. A tempest of lightning and thunder, an earthquake or cyclone, a shipwreck or a railroad accident, sometimes elicits a profession of faith from these cowardly, would-be unbelievers which is so ludicrously spontaneous that it would be laughable, were the subject a less serious one, or its contingencies less momentous. They well know that if there is a just God, there must be a Judgment, in which the good are rewarded, and the wicked punished. The Apostles’ Creed teaches us this in those simple and explicit words: “From thence he (Christ,) shall come to judge the living and the dead.” *The living*,—that is, those who have always preserved, or, at least, recovered by true repentance, the supernatural life of their souls,—sanctifying grace; *the dead*,—that is, those who, having wilfully deprived themselves of God’s friendship, departed this life in the state of mortal sin. Let me lay before you, to-day, my dear brethren, what our holy faith teaches with regard to this Judgment, which is called the General Judgment, because it concerns all man-

kind,—the Last Judgment, because it will be followed by no other ;—and let me make as clear to you as I can,

- I. *When,*
- II. *How,* and
- III. *Why the LAST AND GENERAL JUDGMENT shall take place.*

I. Jesus Christ will come again, at the end of the world, to judge all men. This, dear brethren, is an article of faith clearly expressed and confirmed by the testimony of the Sacred Scriptures. Christ says, “The Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his Angels; and then will he render to every man according to his works.” (Matt. 16 : 27.) In the Acts of the Apostles we also read: “He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is he who hath been appointed by God to be the judge of the living and the dead.” (Acts 10 : 42.) But although it is certain that Jesus Christ will come again as Judge of the living and the dead, the time of his second coming is altogether uncertain. True, from the very beginning of Christianity, there have not been wanting many and presumptuous prophets who have affected to foretell definitely the end of the world and the date of the Last Judgment. But although these predictions have all been proven false, (and in many cases have covered their authors with ridicule and disgrace,)—nevertheless, the time of the General Judgment may be approximately determined by the occurrence of certain events specially foretold by our divine Lord or his Prophets.

1. The first of these, my dearly beloved, is *the universal preaching of the Gospel*. Our divine Saviour himself says: “This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations: and then shall the consummation come.” (Matt. 24 : 14.) Hence, so long as there remain any unevangelized nations upon the face of the earth, so long shall the last judgment be deferred. Now, as there are still many nations upon the globe to whom the Gospel has not yet been preached, it is impossible to precisely determine that day and hour, which Christ declares that “no one knoweth, no, not the Angels of heaven.” (Matt. 24 : 36.) The light of the Gospel is spreading farther every day, however; and hence, it is certain, that we are approaching the end of the world and, consequently, the General Judgment.

2. Two other events which shall precede the Day of Wrath, are *the reign of Antichrist, and a widespread defection from the true faith*. That Antichrist, the adversary and enemy of Christ, is a definite personage is evident from several passages of the Sacred Scripture. St. Paul calls him “*the man of sin, the son of perdition, . . . who opposeth, and is lifted up above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he sitteth in the temple*

of God, showing himself as if he were God." (2 Thess. 2 : 3, 4.) St. John says: "As you have heard that Antichrist cometh, even now there are many Antichrists: whereby we know that it is the last hour." (1 John 2 : 18.) The Antichrist, therefore, who is to come at the end of the world, will have his forerunners, namely false teachers and seducers; as our blessed Lord has also declared: "There will rise up false Christs and false prophets; and they shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect." (Mark 13 : 22.)

During the short reign of the final Antichrist upon earth, my brethren, there shall be great defections from the faith, a wide-spread apostasy of which the Apostle says: "Let no man deceive you by any means, (that the end of the world is nigh), unless there come a revolt." (2 Thess. 2 : 3.) During the progress of the last eighteen hundred years, there have been many and great defections from the true Church, but numerous and pernicious as have been those heresies and schisms of past and present times, they are still nothing more than types and precursors of that grand and universal apostasy which shall occur before the end the world. The Catholic Church, my beloved, is immortal, like her Founder; and the gates of hell, (as he has declared,) can never prevail against her; nevertheless, we have his word for it that the number of her children will so decrease before his second glorious advent, that they will appear but a remnant in comparison with the mighty multitude of apostates and heretics that shall overrun the globe in the days of its consummation. "When the Son of Man cometh," saith he, "think you he will find faith upon the earth?" Nor will this apostasy regard faith alone, my brethren, but also, morals. Mankind will then throw off all fear of God, give full scope to their passions, and heap sin upon sin. Alas! our own times manifest many signs of this general depravity and corruption of morals; and faith declines more and more among the unhappy children of men. Modern Christianity has become almost an empty, meaningless name. The gross materialism of the age has substituted for the spiritual treasures of the Unseen world, the vile goods and filthy pleasures of this lower sphere. Infidelity, impurity, injustice,—perjury, rapine, murder, and suicide,—vices and crimes of the most shocking and loathsome description, are the order of the day. If this wide-spread corruption continue to progress in the same ratio as it has done in the past, may we not be tempted to believe, dear Christians, that the reign of Antichrist and its grand attendant apostasy,—in short, the end of the world and the Last Judgment,—are near, yea, even at the doors?

3. Another event which shall precede the day of General Judgment is *the conversion of the Jews in great numbers, as foretold by the prophet Osee.* "The children of Israel shall sit many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without altar. And after this, the children of Israel shall return; and shall seek the Lord their God, and David

their King," (that is, Christ, who is of the house of David): "and they shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the last days." (Osee. 3 : 4, 5.)

4. Finally, before the end of the world, there shall be great tribulations. "*For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom ; and there shall be pestilence, and famines, and earthquakes in places. Now all these are the beginnings of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall put you to death ; and you shall be hated by all nations for my name's sake.*" (Matt. 24 : 7-9. Not only on earth, but also in the heavens, shall dreadful events occur : "*And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened ; and the moon shall not give her light ; and the stars shall fall from heaven ; and the powers of heaven shall be moved.*" (Matt. 24 : 29.) And lo! the abomination of desolation (foretold by the Prophet) shall reign upon the whole earth ; the raging sea shall overflow its shores, solid mountain-ranges shall burst asunder, populous cities shall sink into ruins, and numberless people perish. O, my dearly beloved, may the serious consideration of all these terrible signs and events, warn us to enter at once into ourselves, so that, by renewing our spirit and life before it be too late, by a thorough repentance, we may be able to look forward to the second coming of Christ with true Christian consolation and confidence.

II. *How, or in what manner, will the General Judgment take place?*

1. Christ says in the Gospel of this day: "*Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven ; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn.*" (Matt. 24 : 30.) What is this sign of the Son of Man, my brethren? The holy Cross,—as is attested not only by the Fathers, but by the Church, when she sings on the festival of the Finding of the True Cross: "This sign shall be in the heavens when the Lord shall come to judge."

At the sight of that brilliantly-shining Cross, the tribes of the earth shall mourn,—that is, the *wicked*, the earthly-minded, shall lament, To such, the Cross of Christ announces naught save malediction and damnation. But the *just* shall exult and joyfully exclaim: "Hail, O Cross! Thou art the sign of our redemption, the instrument of our salvation, the anchor of our hope, and the key of heaven!"

2. Immediately after the appearance of the Cross, "*They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven.*" (Matt. 24:30.) O my brethren, what a difference between the first and second coming of Christ! The first time, he came in poverty and loneliness, in the form of a weak, helpless babe ; the second time, he shall come, (as he himself declares,) "with great power and majesty." The first time, he came to redeem us, with a heart overflowing with mildness, and meekness, love and mercy ; the second, he shall come as a just Judge, having power and will to render to

every man according to his works. Neither shall he come alone, but surrounded by legions of Angels. On that day, the whole multitude of blessed spirits will leave their thrones in heaven, to accompany the Son of Man, and assist him in executing judgment. The words of the Sacred Scripture will then be fulfilled: "Behold, the Lord cometh with thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to reprove all the impious of all the works of their impiety, whereby they have done impiously, and of all the hard things which impious sinners have spoken against God." (Jude 14 : 15.)

3. "*When the Son of Man shall come in his majesty, and all the Angels with him, then shall he sit upon the seat of his majesty. And all nations shall be gathered together before him.*" (Matt. 25 : 31, 32.) All human beings, from the first to the last,—the king and the subject, the young and the old, the believer and the infidel, the sinner and the just man—yea, even the Angels, faithful and fallen spirits alike,—shall appear that hour before their divine Judge. We, too, all now assembled in this church,—I your pastor, and you, my people,—shall be gathered before the judgment seat of Christ. Alas! with what different feelings will the good and the wicked approach that dread tribunal! The words of the Angel: "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!" whilst they fill the just with joy and peace, will paralyze the wicked with anguish, fear, and consternation. Like criminals sentenced to death, the latter will grow pale and tremble. Far more terrible will it be for them to appear before their angry Judge, than to go from his presence into everlasting torments. O, think well on this subject, my brethren, before it be too late!

4. "*And he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left.*" (Matt. 25 : 32, 33.) In this dreadful separation of the good from the bad, no account will be made of birth, dignity, or rank. The king will be separated from the subject, the rich from the poor, the cockle from the wheat, vessels of honor from vessels of dishonor, the sheep from the goats. No attention will be paid to mental endowments, to erudition or genius, only so far as they have been aids to virtue and holiness. The poets, philosophers, and scientists of all ages, men whose names have been made illustrious by their profound or brilliant works, and upon whom the world's honors and riches have been lavished abundantly, there, shall we behold them, standing at the left hand of the Judge, covered with the rags of their fictitious fame, and overwhelmed with shame and disgrace; whilst some poor peasant who toiled in their fields, some half-starved scullion who cooked in their kitchens, some illiterate slave, who in *this* world was the object of their unmitigated contempt and scorn, shall stand upon the right hand, crowned with glory and resplendent with celestial

loveliness. Father shall be separated from son, mother from daughter, brother from sister, husband from wife, and neighbor from neighbor, some on the right, others on the left, supremely happy or intensely miserable, according as their works in life have been good or evil. This separation, moreover, is an eternal one; those on the right, can never pass to the left, nor those on the left, to the right. O, what shrieks of anguish and despair shall peal forth from the reprobate, when the full horror of that everlasting separation breaks upon them!

5. The court being arranged to the satisfaction of the Judge, *the solemn trial at last begins*. Each man's life will be examined, and a severe scrutiny instituted as to all his thoughts, desires, words, actions, and omissions. O what a multitude and variety of sins shall then come to light! How extreme will be the surprise and confusion of those hypocrites and false Christians, whose secret vices and hidden abominations shall be laid bare, that hour, before the whole world! How many will be condemned solely on account of their sinful thoughts and desires! "The Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." (1 Cor. 4 : 5.) But our words will, also, be strictly investigated, my brethren. "Every idle word that men shall speak," says Christ, "they shall render an account for it on the day of judgment." (Matt. 12 : 36.) All the words we have spoken, written, heard, or read, must be submitted to the scrutiny of the Judge. He will examine rigorously into every one of our good, bad, indifferent, or useless words and discourses, from our childhood up to the last moment of our life. Great God, what an account *that*, alone, will be! How many will not be able to stand before the judgment-seat of God on account of their sins of the tongue! Then will be presented for his sentence all our public and private works, all those sinful acts committed alone, or in the society of others, by day or by night, in our youth, in our mature, or declining years. "All things that are done, God will bring into judgment for every error, (hidden or secret thing,) whether it be good or evil." (Eccles. 12 : 14.)

Again, there are the particular duties of one's vocation or state of life, of which each man must render an account on the day of judgment. Temporal and spiritual superiors, fathers and mothers, masters and mistresses, children, servants, merchants, mechanics, laborers, the single and the married, the rich and the poor, the healthy and the sick,—all have particular duties which will help to decide the question of their eternal destiny. Then, as to the graces we have received to enable us to work out our salvation,—every interior inspiration, every good example given us, every admonition to virtue, every sermon we have heard, every spiritual book we have read, each reception of the holy Sacraments, every Mass at which we assisted, all the joyful and sad events of our life, shall form a

part of our rigorous account, and add to our guilt and confusion, if we have neglected or abused those means of grace. Oh! bitter, indeed, shall be the lot of those Christians who make no use of the graces which God bestows so abundantly upon them! They shall share the fate of the unprofitable servant, who buried his talent in the earth.

Lastly, the Judge will examine *our virtues* and investigate if we have performed *our good works, in the state of grace, with fervor, and with a pure intention.* Considering all these things, we have reason, daily, to sigh with David: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight, no man living shall be justified." (Ps. 142 : 2.) Much of what men do, here below, remains hidden; thoughts, desires, and intentions, are matters of the interior; and some men have not a clear knowledge even of their own hearts. Many actions, good as well as evil, are wrongly judged by our fellow-men. But in the day of General Judgment, the Sun of Justice shall arise in all his glory, and in the splendor of *his* light, all things shall be seen, not as they appear, but as they really are. The final sentence shall be pronounced publicly; hence, the evil that each man has done, all his thoughts, words, and deeds, shall be unveiled, and every creature, being convinced of the justice of his Judge, cannot help but loudly confess: "Thou art just, O Lord, and all thy judgments are just." (Tobias 3 : 2.) Full of confusion and despair, the sinner shall then cry out to the hills and mountains to fall upon him, and hide him and his iniquities alike from the piercing gaze of the Judge, and of all those terrible witnesses. On the contrary, who can describe the consolation and joy of the just, when all their hidden virtues, the pious works they did in secret, shall be manifested in their native splendor before the gaze of the astonished multitude. Crowned with honor, and overflowing with delights, they will praise God with a loud voice for thus glorifying his Saints.

6. *And then shall the divine Judge proceed to pronounce sentence.* To the good he will say: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt. 25 : 34.) O, how the just will exult at hearing these words! As captives to liberty, as exiles to their home, as children to their mother, so will they hasten to Jesus, and, full of rapture, exclaim: "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord; they shall praise thee forever and ever." (Ps. 83 : 5.) Then, turning to the left, he shall say to the wicked, with a wrathful countenance: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. 25 : 41.) Terrible crushing words! "*Depart from me.*" You would not know me in time, now I know you not in eternity. You shall have no part with me in my kingdom. You rejected me; I, in turn, reject you. "*Ye cursed.*" I have often offered you blessing and grace; you despised my benediction, and abused and profaned my graces; bear now, and forevermore, my well-merited malediction. "*Into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil*

and his angels." It was not for you that I created hell, but for Satan and his foul, rebellious crew ; since, however, you served under the banner of that Archfiend, and did the works of his followers, share also his and their eternal damnation ! The fire of hell, burning night and day, shall be your everlasting punishment.

O how terrible the fate of those miserable wretches ! It would have been better for them had they never been born, better for them had they been but beasts, whose irrational and irresponsible existence ends forever with death !

Alas ! the sentence of the Judge suffers no delay ! No appeal is possible,—no respite or reprieve can be expected. As the decree is fulminated, so it remains. Christ has scarcely pronounced the sentence, before the wicked with the velocity of lightning sink into the burning prison-house of the damned. Groaning and roaring as it swallows up its prey,—its gates will be closed upon them, never more to open. There, shall they weep and gnash their teeth as long as God shall be God.

Meanwhile, the just, clothed with the nuptial robes of innocence or penance : palms in their hands, and a glorious cortege of Angels attending on their steps, shall follow the Lamb into the heavenly Jerusalem, amid a rapturous outburst of applause, and songs of joy and triumph.

Ponder well, my brethren, this Last and General Judgment which awaits us all ; and, with fervor and perseverance, strive to work out your salvation, that you may, one day, be of the happy number of the elect.

III. *Why will there be a General Judgment ?* For three reasons :

- I. *That God's wisdom, which often sends riches and prosperity to the wicked, and sufferings and adversity to the good, may be made manifest to all men ;*
- II. *That Jesus Christ may be glorified before the whole world.*
- III. *That the just may receive the honor and reward due to them, and that the wicked may receive the dishonor and punishment which they have deserved*

1. Many things happen in this world, which we short-sighted mortals cannot reconcile with the wisdom of God. The wicked are frequently loaded with honors and wealth, they live apparently content and happy, while pious Christians spend their days in poverty, humiliations, and afflictions. How often do we see drunkards, libertines, or dishonest wretches,—worthless, degraded men—live to a green, old age, although their death would be a relief to their families and a blessing to their fellow-creatures in general ; whilst others, the mainstay of their households, yea, sometimes the bright, honorable hope of a whole nation, sink into an early grave. The pernicious projects of evil-doers are frequently crowned with

success, whilst the best efforts of the good for the honor of God and the salvation of their fellow-men, are thwarted and frustrated. These, and many other cases, in which disorder seems to triumph over order, falsehood over truth, injustice over probity, vice over virtue, are a stumbling block and a cause of wonder and dissatisfaction to the multitude. Sinners take advantage of this inexplicably-mysterious conduct of God to substantiate their unbelief, blasphemously crying out: "There is no God, or if there *is*, he does not care for his creatures; he lets things take their course. See, all ye good people, how ye suffer and are sorely afflicted, whilst we, who do as we please, revel in riches, and honors, and innumerable delights!"

Now, God owes it to himself, in a certain measure, to appoint a day wherein he will make manifest to all these men, the fallacy and perversity of their judgments. Then, will he make clear that every event, both private and public, was ordained and regulated by his inscrutable Will or adorable permission, and that, from its very foundation, he had governed the world with the highest wisdom and most perfect justice. All riddles shall then be solved, all mysteries made plain, and the sinner and the saint shall alike confess: "Thou art just, O Lord; and all thy judgments are just, and all thy ways mercy, and truth, and judgment." (Tobias 3 : 2.) "The heavens shall declare his justice, for God is judge." (Ps. 49 : 6.)

2. A General Judgment must take place in order that *Jesus Christ may be glorified before the whole world*. For centuries, the world looked forward to the advent of its Messiah, its Redeemer, but when, in the fulness of time, he came, even his own chosen people would not acknowledge him; they rejected him, they blasphemed and persecuted him, and finally, they nailed him as a malefactor to the cruel tree of the cross. The Jews of to-day repeat the blasphemies of their fathers; and, if it were in their power, they would again crucify the Anointed of the Lord. And are not some of the fairest domains of Christendom overrun this day with infidelity and paganism? How many tribes and nations are still buried in the shadow of death; how many millions live and die without pronouncing the sweet and adorable name of Jesus! Even within the pale of the true Church there are many so-called "liberal Catholics," who do not hesitate to rob Jesus of the full honor due him. With shameless effrontery, they mock and sneer at the most venerable mysteries of our holy religion, deny the prerogatives of Christ's Vicar on earth, and walk as enemies of the Cross. Many may not yet have suffered total shipwreck of their faith, yet they blaspheme Jesus all the same by the gross scandal of an unchristian life.

Shall it be so for ever? Shall Christ always be disavowed, despised, and rejected by the majority of mankind? Impossible, for he is the Eternal Word of the Father, true God as well as true Man, and worthy of supreme honor and homage as the Second Person of the ever-adorable Trinity. A

day must assuredly come, wherein he shall appear in his power, glory, and majesty, that all creatures, men and Angels, may openly worship and adore him. That day is the day of the General Judgment. Then shall the God-Man come in the splendor of his divinity, manifesting himself as the only begotten of the Father, as the Redeemer of the world, as the Judge of the living and the dead; and "every tongue shall confess that the Lord Jesus is in the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2 : 11)

3. Then, also, shall *the good receive the honor and the recompense they have so well merited, and the wicked the disgrace and punishment they have so richly deserved.* Here below, my brethren, virtue seldom receives its just reward. The chosen children of God abide, for the most part, in obscure corners of the earth, leading a hidden life in the world, or dwelling in the holy retirement of monasteries and convents. Little or nothing is known of that heroic abnegation by which the world is crucified to them, and they to the world; their humility causes them to conceal from the eyes of men their works of zeal and charity: and even if their virtue should chance to become known, they are far more likely to win hatred and persecution than honor and praise. The world is the enemy of God and of all that is good, hence it will not do them justice, nay, it often persecutes them, and robs them of their good name, of public esteem, of liberty and life. Witness the Prophets, the Apostles, and martyrs, nay, our Lord Jesus Christ himself. Their faith, their virtue and holiness, were looked upon as crimes deserving of the cruelest persecution. They were grievously maltreated and put to death, according to the teaching of the Apostle: "All who will live piously in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3 : 12.) Behold, how different is the temporal lot of the wicked! Full of the prudence of the flesh, and silencing the voice of conscience, they know how to accommodate themselves to circumstances, and to succeed in all their projects; they understand the art of playing the hypocrite; and with all their corruption and depravity, they appear to their fellows under the charming mask of honest, upright men. Being of the world, the world loves and esteems them; they hold places of honor and trust; they are given, as it were, the first seats in the synagogue and at the nation's feasts; and when their spirits are supposed to be wafted on high by an imaginary apotheosis, magnificent monuments are erected over their ashes.

Now, I ask again, my brethren: Shall this be so forevermore? Shall virtue be always hidden? Shall the elect of God always be disregarded and despised, the wicked always honored, praised, and preferred? Would this be right and just? No: a day must come when every one shall receive the reward of his works. On that day, the just will be honored as they deserve; appearing, for the first time, in the full splendor of their virtues, crowned with glory, and triumphant over their enemies. Then, shall the wicked stand forth in all their native and loathsome deformity,

the foul secrets of their iniquity and malice fully exposed to view. With bitterest anguish, they will be heard to exclaim: "These are they, (the just,) whom we had sometime in derision and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honor. Behold, how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the Saints." (Wisd. 5 : 3-5.)

My beloved brethren, that you may not be compelled, one day, to speak this language of despair with the reprobate, fly now from their pernicious society; and beware of following their evil example. Walk in the footsteps of the true servants of God, and imitate their virtues. Often think of the General Judgment, and live in such a manner that you need not fear its terrors. Considering that you must appear before a Judge who will demand a strict account of your stewardship, carefully avoid every sin. Do nothing bad in secret, suppress all sinful thoughts and desires; for the Last Day will bring all hidden things to light. If you have sinned, be reconciled with God by a speedy repentance, and walk in godliness with fear and perseverance. Then, indeed, dear Christians, may you look forward to the day of Judgment, as to a day of consolation and joy, for you may humbly hope to hear the Judge address you then with these encouraging words: "Come ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Amen

B.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE CROSS ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

“Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven.” Matt. 24 : 30.

On one occasion, not very long before his Passion and Death, our divine Lord, having come out of the Temple, was accosted by his disciples, who directed his attention to the buildings which surrounded that grand edifice of worship at Jerusalem. But he answering, said : “Do you see all these things? Amen, I say to you, there shall not be left here a stone upon a stone, that shall not be thrown down.” (Matt. 24 : 1, 9.) Full of consternation at these words, the disciples said : “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the consummation of the world?” (Ibid. 3.) And forthwith, our Lord began to unfold before their eyes those frightful signs which should precede the destruction of the Temple and the end of the world, as we read in this day’s Gospel.

Need I tell you, my brethren, that the words of Eternal Truth regarding the first-named calamity, have been fulfilled to the very letter? Less than forty years after they were spoken, in the reign of the Roman emperor, Nero, a war broke out in Judea and Syria,—the Jews of those times warring against the Romans and the Greeks. The former sent a large army against Jerusalem, under the command of the famous general, Titus. Partisans arose on all sides, who incited to seditions the inhabitants of the various cities. Flavius Josephus relates : “Impostors and magicians, of that time, drew multitudes after them into the deserts, under the pretence that they would show them apparent miracles.” From the time of our Lord’s Ascension until the fulfilment of his prophecy, the land was made desolate with famines, earthquakes, and tribulations of all kinds, so that even the very heathens expected the immediate end of the world. Tacitus, the Roman historian, relates : “Armies were seen in the heavens marching towards each other in glittering armor ; the Temple was lighted up by a mysterious fire from the clouds ; and its doors suddenly opening, a superhuman voice was heard announcing the departure of the gods from their doomed and devoted shrine. At the same time, the noise of a great commotion or tumult was heard, which was supposed to be the unseen spirits making their exit in confusion.” Hist. lib. 5.)

Besides predicting these signs which were to precede the destruction of Jerusalem, our divine Lord prophesied to his disciples, on the same occa-

sion, the more remote but still more dreadful signs which shall come to pass before the destruction of the entire universe. Well might the fate of Jerusalem, my dear brethren, foreshadow that of the whole world. A thousand years before God, are but as a single day : and the predicted ruin of the Holy City was only a mere figure to our Lord of that greater ruin and desolation which were to mark the end of time. There is, indeed, a striking parallel between the two events. From Jerusalem the light of Christianity spread itself over all the earth,—from its Temple, with its symbolical worship, and from Golgotha's height, on which the Lamb of God was slain for our sins. From Jerusalem, the Apostles went forth to teach all nations, after the descent of the Holy Ghost. From Jerusalem, therefore, the judgment should fittingly come forth. Its devastation was but the beginning of that doom which was to be continued through all time, and consummated in all those nations which, like that unhappy city, reject salvation, until the Lord shall come to complete his judgment.

Hence, all the prognostics of the ruin of Jerusalem will be multiplied and exaggerated to a terrific degree in the awful days which shall precede the Last Judgment. Then shall be wars, and rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines, plagues, and other tribulations, all over the face of the globe. False Messiahs shall arise to seduce the people, and Antichrist will come. There shall be signs in the heavens, and the Gospel shall then have completed at last its victorious march among all nations.

Of all these tokens of the General Judgment which the Church presents to our consideration to-day, my dear brethren, I select but one for your present instruction,—the sign of the Son of Man which shall appear in the heavens, on the Last great Day. That Holy Cross shall then be made manifest, in order :

- I. *To glorify Jesus Christ ; and*
- II. *To judge mankind.*

I. “Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven.” Neither the Father nor the Holy Ghost, my brethren, will come to judge us at the Last Day. All judgment is committed to the Son, for he himself assures us, “Neither doth the Father judge any man ; but hath committed all judgment to the Son : that all men may honor the Son, as they honor the Father. And he hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.” (John 5 : 22 : 23, 27.) Our Saviour has purchased the world by his Precious Blood, and redeemed it by his death. It is his own property ; and hence, God the Father has surrendered to him his eternal right to it ; he alone may balance the accounts of those graces which he has won for men at so dear a rate, and presented to them with such infinite love and mercy.

All the Fathers of the Church unanimously agree in saying that the sign

of the Son of Man, of which the Gospel speaks, is the Holy Cross. Through that Holy Cross, the world has been redeemed. From it, flowed forth the streams of divine grace and mercy for the salvation of mankind. By this sign, then, the world shall be judged; and from it shall flash forth the lightnings of divine justice. "Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and majesty." Blazing forth amid the darkness of the Last Day as a prominent feature of the God-Man's second advent, the sign of the Cross shall be not only the symbol of his judgment, but also the standard of his glory. For the universal judgment, like all the works of God, has for its especial aim, the honor of God and of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The appearance of the Cross at the Last Day shall promote the glory of Christ, more particularly for the following reasons:

1. The Cross was the instrument of our Saviour's deepest earthly humiliation. Therefore, the Cross must, at last, restore to him the exterior honor of which it once so cruelly robbed him. If, through this sign, he was abased and degraded, opposed and persecuted,—through this same sign must he be raised up and glorified; through it, must he conquer and triumph. His life upon earth was a continual cross. In the beggar's robe of sinful humanity he appeared amongst us. Born in a miserable stable and wrapped in swaddling-clothes, his father and mother were among the poorest of the poor. He humbly submitted himself to the law of circumcision; and allowed himself to be offered up in the Temple, by his mother, like any ordinary child. As an infant, he was persecuted by his enemies, who sought his life, and compelled to flee into a strange land. Contemplate the years of his youth, which he spent in the quiet house at Nazareth; or, look at the latter days of his life, in which he was hated and persecuted by his kinsfolk and the whole Jewish people, (with but few exceptions,) and see if his existence upon earth was not an unbroken scene of humiliation and abasement. But all the outrages and insults inflicted on the Son of God culminated upon the Cross. Only slaves and the vilest criminals were condemned to be crucified. Yet this shameful and most painful of all tortures was inflicted upon the Only-begotten Son of God! His hands and feet pierced by gross nails,—he hung upon the cross between two criminals, being reputed as one of them. The most fearful torments racked all the members of his body, and all the faculties of his soul. Rejected by earth and abandoned by heaven, our Saviour hung for three hours upon the ignominious wood until, with a loud cry, he breathed forth his soul.

2. Since that hour, all hell has been arrayed against the Cross of Christ. St. Paul revealed the mystery of that terrific struggle in these remarkable

words: "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles, foolishness; but to them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Cor. 23:24.) To the Jews, the Cross was a stumbling-block, because they would not believe that their Messiah and King could die the ignominious death of Calvary. The Gentiles laughed to scorn the faith of the Christians, because they professed to adore a God who breathed forth his spirit upon the cursed tree. The Crescent warred fiercely against the Cross; and heretics cast out that sign of salvation from their tenets, and declared human reason to be the judge of faith. They denied and rejected the Cross by rejecting the necessity for penance and mortification, by foreswearing the Commandments and counsels of Christ and his Church. In our own days, my brethren, we see the vast majority of unbelievers and non-Catholics openly deny the divinity and doctrines of their crucified Redeemer! Like a light-house planted upon a firm, unyielding rock, the Cross stands forth unharmed amid the raging billows of the seas of Time.

Every sin we commit is a fresh assault upon the holy Cross of our Lord. Not only is mortal sin a renewal of the crucifixion of Jesus, but he who commits it, thereby asserts himself the enemy of the Cross, as well as of the doctrines and commandments which flow therefrom. Pride, avarice, intemperance, envy, impurity, and all other grievous sins, carry with them a direct denial of the Cross. He who sins rejects the spirit of Jesus Christ and follows his own spirit, or that of the devil, who is the implacable enemy of the Cross. It may be safely said that the struggle of a nation in its good or bad works, is (like the struggle of an individual), either for or against the cross. And that sign of the Son of Man shall be at the Last Day, the scale by which individuals and nations will alike be judged, the glory of the Crucified being thus openly manifested before heaven and earth.

Even in this life, my brethren, the triumph of the Cross is assured unto the end of time. It is honored in all places throughout the Christian world. It is erected upon highways and bye-ways. It shines upon the crowns of kings, and decorates the breasts of heroes. It sparkles upon the towers and altars of our churches. It pervades the length and breadth of Christendom. Every child of God who signs himself with the Cross, or contemplates it with loving confidence, contributes towards its triumph. And wherever it glitters and receives honor, there Christ is glorified.

But, however great is this honor of our Saviour, however pleasing this homage in his sight, it is not sufficient to wipe away from his brow all the insults which he received on and by the Cross. Nothing can restore to him the glory of which sinners have robbed him, save the retributive manifestations of the day of General Judgment, when the sign of the Son of man shall appear in the heavens, and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn. High in the clouds, the Cross will appear; and the eyes of the whole world will be directed to it, and to him who hung upon it for our salva-

tion. On that day, darkness will cover the earth ; for sun, moon, and stars shall be extinguished. The Cross will then shine forth, (as it really is,) the only light of the world, illuminating with its resplendent rays the horrors of destruction. Therefore, the Lord says : "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and appeareth even unto the west : so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." (Matt. 24 : 27.) And those other words of our Saviour : "I am the light of the world !" (John 8 : 12.) will then be completely fulfilled.

Surrounded by blessed Spirits, the great sign will descend upon earth. The Angels will carry it, and the heavenly choirs, in countless myriads, will follow in its wake. All the Saints, who have washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb, and who have been saved through the holy Cross, will, for its greater honor, surround it at that hour. They will be the precious jewels with which the holy Cross will be adorned. The ignominious wood of Calvary will be adored and praised. That which was a folly and a stumbling block to the wicked, will be the wisdom and the glory of the elect. The sign which was contradicted, and against which infidels raged, will be honored ; and that which was hated and despised by the sinful world, will be praised by the Saints. Then, from the Cross, will Christ exercise his power over all creatures : "For he must reign, until he hath put all enemies under his feet." (1 Cor. 15 : 25.)

All mankind, both good and bad, will lie trembling before him. "Behold, he cometh with the clouds : and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth shall bewail themselves because of him." (7 Apoc. 1 : 7.) Even the reprobate, who during life hated and repudiated the Cross, will not be able in that hour to turn their gaze from it. And they shall no longer cry out : "If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." (Matt. 27 : 42.) The words of unbelief will die upon their lips, or be turned into groans and shrieks of despairing anguish. At the same time, the chained spirits of the abyss will lie prone and crushed before the Cross, which has overcome their infernal power.

The mission of Jesus Christ, will thus be, at last, fulfilled. In order to lay the world prostrate at the feet of his Father, and subject it entirely to his sovereignty, he, the Eternal Word, quitted his throne of glory in heaven. On the day of Judgment, the world will lie before him, adoring the sign of salvation ; and then he will surrender it in triumph to his heavenly Father ; as St. Paul says : "Afterwards the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father, when he shall have abolished all principality, and authority, and power. For he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet. And the enemy death shall be destroyed last : for he hath put all things under his feet. And whereas he saith, all things are put under him ; undoubtedly, **he is excepted**, who put all things under him. And when all things shall

be subdued unto him, then the Son also himself shall be subject to him, who subjected all things to himself, that God may be all in all." (1 Cor. 15 : 24-28.) "And I," said the Lord, "if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself." (John 12 : 32.)

II. The holy Cross will also appear on the Last Day *to judge the world.*

"And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne ; and the books were opened : and another book was opened, which is the book of life ; and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works." (Apoc. 20 : 12.) The books, according to which the world shall be judged, are those of Faith and the Commandments. But by the Book of Life, (of which St. John speaks), we may understand not only that especial book in which all our actions are recorded, but also the book of the Holy Cross. In it are contained, in a compendious form, all the doctrines of our holy religion, and all the duties arising therefrom. It is the Book of books, as the Saints have called it. It will, therefore, have most to do in determining our eternal destiny. Through the Cross of Jesus Christ will the fate of the wicked, as well as of the just, be decided. It will be, in short the measure of their judgment.

1. The reprobate will read therein, *the sentence of their eternal damnation.*

(a) "Behold what I have done and suffered for you !" will Jesus exclaim to those upon his left hand. "For you, I left the kingdom of my Father, and renounced my splendor and glory. For you, I came down upon the earth, and concealed my divinity under the humble garb of human nature. For you, I suffered or labored for thirty-three years. For you, I endured every species of insult and persecution. For you, I was condemned to the shameful death of a malefactor. For you, I bore the Cross upon my wounded shoulders, and dragged it painfully through the streets of Jerusalem, and up the height of Calvary. For you, I allowed myself to be nailed to it, and there hung upon it for three long and weary hours. For you, I shed the last drop of my precious Blood. I wished to save and redeem you ; but all my love and my sufferings in your behalf have been in vain. You did not believe in me ; you scorned my sacred Passion, and rejected and despised my Cross. You have even refused to acknowledge a God who died upon a Cross. Like my faithless people of old, you have searched for strange gods, who might accord with the foul, carnal desires of your guilty hearts. You went so far in the pride of your hearts as to hate me and my Cross. Now bear, forevermore, the terrible consequence of your infidelity."

(b) The Holy Cross will be a reproach, not only to the infidel, but to every sinner. Sin, in its essence, is a contradiction and rebellion against the Cross of Christ. The carnal man despises the way of humility, poverty, and mortification. He flies from the royal highway of the Cross, and wilfully walks in the path of lust. He wanders in the crooked ways of pride and ambition, leaving his Saviour to travel alone the straight, narrow path of humiliation and suffering. He clings to the goods and pleasures of the earth, and is puffed up with bitter anger and revenge; while the sovereign Lord of all riches hangs naked upon the Cross, and practises meekness towards his bitterest foes. Every mortal sin is a contempt of the Cross, and a denial of the spirit of Christ. Therefore, at the Last Day, will the Crucified Judge cry out to the reprobate from the glittering throne of his Cross; "Behold the road which I have traveled, and that which *you* have deliberately chosen! Your lives have been a direct contradiction of me and my Cross. Do you dare to call yourselves my disciples and my followers? 'Depart from me, ye cursed,'—I know you not!"

(c) The Cross of Christ will, at the same time, reproach the reprobate for the abuse of all those graces which flowed from that tree of life. The doctrine of the Holy Catholic Church is the doctrine of the Crucified; all the holy Sacraments are administered to us, dear Christians, with the sign of the Cross. With the same saving sign, the waters of Baptism are poured upon our heads; with it, our brows are anointed with holy oil in Confirmation. Through it, our sins are remitted; and the body of Christ our Saviour administered to us. With this sign, we receive the grace of Extreme Unction. All these mercies will be represented by the Holy Cross before the eyes of the reprobate on the Day of Judgment. And the very fruitlessness or abuse of those graces will but add to the terrors of that dreadful spectacle.

Jesus will then wrathfully judge and reject the wicked. "He shall thunder with the voice of his majesty." (Job 37 : 4.) "Then shall he speak to them in his anger, and trouble them in his rage." (Ps. 2 : 5.) As Joseph's brethren were terrified when he said to them: "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt," (Gen. 45 : 4,) so will the reprobate tremble and shudder before their Judge whom they have denied by word and deed. When the servants of the high-priests, coming to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Olives, heard him exclaim: "*I am he* whom you seek,"—they fell backward to the ground; even so, shall the sinner fall crushed to the earth when he hears that same divine Voice issuing, as it were, from the central splendors of the Judgment-Cross, and crying aloud: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels!" (Matt. 25 : 41.)

2. Then, shall appear the consolation of the just. "Look up, and lift up

your heads ; because your redemption is at hand." (Luke 21 : 28.) Thus, will the Lord, on the Day of Judgment, address his elect ; and, with joyous faces, they will gaze at the sign of the Son of Man resplendent in the heavens. To them, the Cross is the pledge of their salvation, the emblem of their faith, the symbol of their hope, the groundwork of their charity.

(a) When they behold the Cross, and him who hung upon it, descending in glory from the clouds, they shall cry out to him with their glorified tongues : "O Crucified Redeemer ! our belief in thee was no mad or foolish faith ! No vain dream was *that* to which we consecrated our lives ! All doubts and struggles are over, and every temptation to unbelief is at an end ! The Cross triumphs over all its enemies, and we share in its victory ! Hail ! O sign of salvation ! hail, for all eternity !"

(b) "Look up, and lift up your heads ; because your redemption is at hand !" —and at these words of the Lord to his elect, they shall look up to behold the Cross shining with indescribable splendor in the heavens, Lo ! it was once their tree of life in a desert of death. It was their staff in the weary road of their earthly pilgrimage. In it, they found pardon and remission of their sins, and all those graces which their Crucified Redeemer won for them upon Calvary's height. Now, at the sound of the trumpet of doom, they have awakened, and come forth from their graves with glorified bodies. The resplendent robes they wear were woven for them in the loom of the Cross. They behold their souls and bodies purified with the blood of the Lamb. Now, do they hear with jubilant hearts ; "I have healed your wounds ; I have forgiven you every debt. I have witnessed your contrition, and received your prayers and tears. 'Look up, and lift up your heads ; because your redemption is at hand !'"

(c) Now, has the hour come, my brethren, when he who appears in triumph with his Cross, shall abundantly reward the just for all that they have done and suffered out of love for him. O, how are they inebriated with rapture, when they hear once more his sweet voice calling : "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt. 25 : 34.) And, with joy and jubilation, they hasten to place themselves under the standard of the Cross. Like Thomas, they will fall down before him whom they now see face to face, and exclaim : "My Lord and my God !" (John 20 : 28.) They will enter with him into his glory, and remain united to him in everlasting bliss.

Love, then, the Cross, my dearest brethren ; it shall bring you eternal salvation. He who wishes for a favorable judgment, can only hope to obtain it through this holy sign ; and he who desires to enter into heaven, must walk perseveringly in the way of the Cross. The more we do and suffer out of love for him who was crucified, the greater will be our reward

in heaven. But he who flies from this royal highway of the King, seeking only earthly pleasures, robs himself of the pure and true happiness of eternal life.

O Holy Cross, on which the Lamb of God bled for our sins, we salute thee, on this last Sunday of the ecclesiastical year, with redoubled fervor of heart. Be thou our strength and guide in life ; be thou our light in the dark hour of death, and O, above all, be thou our glory and delight in the eternal kingdom of our Crucified King ! Amen.

BISHOP EHRLER.

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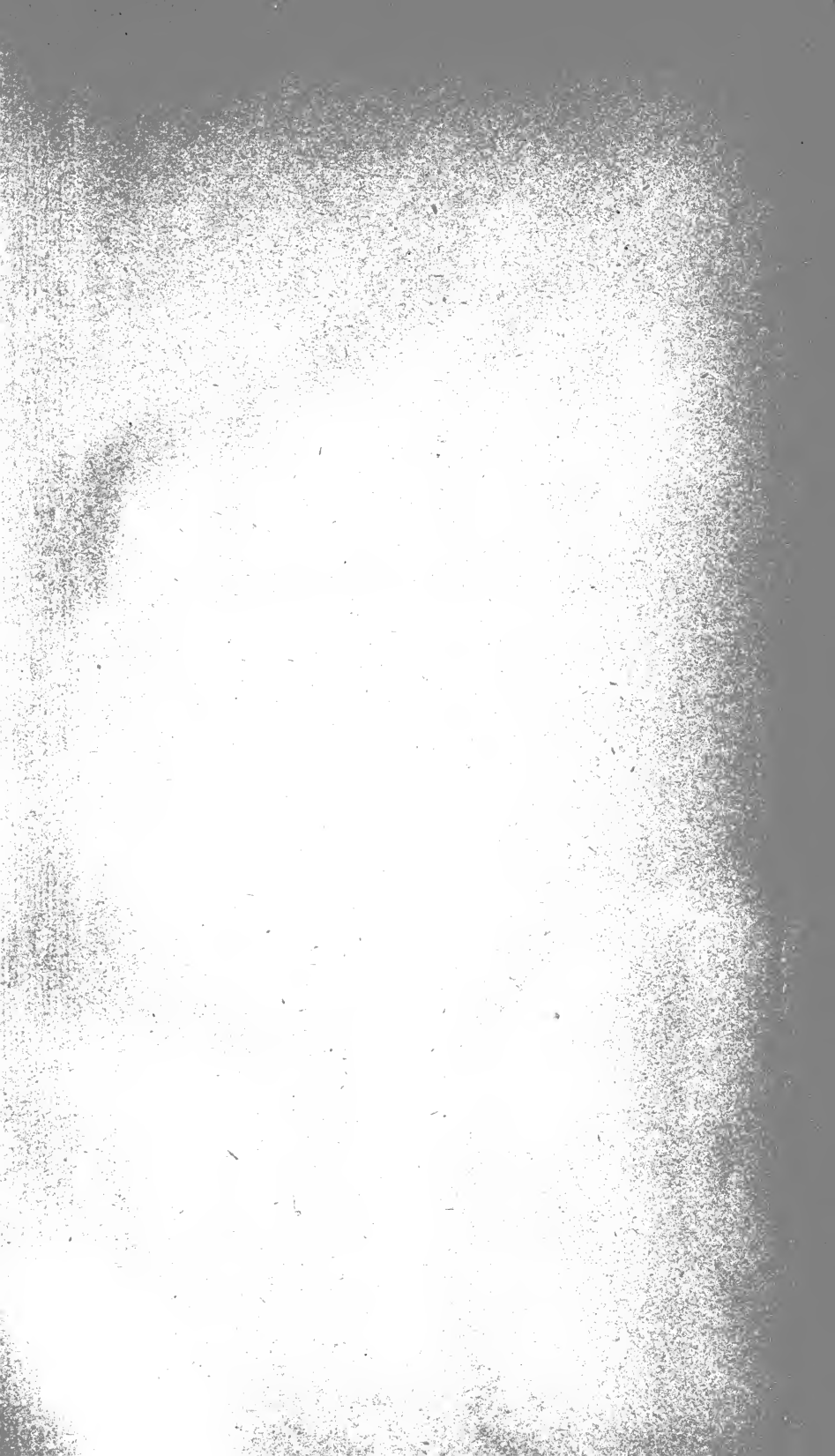
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