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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.



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ST. MARY'S ABBEY,

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REV. AUGUSTINE WIRTH, O.S.B.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

THE TWO CLASSES OF PEOPLE WHO WILL NOT BE JUDGED AT THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

“He that believeth in the Son of God is not judged ; but he that doth not believe is already judged.” (John 3 : 18.)

At the beginning, and again at the end, of the Ecclesiastical year, the Catholic Church ordains the reading of the Gospel on the Last and General Judgment. Her intention thereby is, no doubt, to remind us of this serious truth : that our aim at the beginning, and the end of all our thoughts, words, actions, and endeavors should be to prepare for the Last Day, and the coming of Jesus to judgment, by true penance and amendment of life, by self-denial and mortification. To this, we are also exhorted by St. Paul in the Epistle of this day, wherein he says to us : “Now is the hour for us to rise from sleep. . . . Let us cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light.” Finally, we are also invited and urged by the Church to repentance, and consequently to a worthy preparation for the coming of Jesus for our redemption on Christmas-day (as well as for his coming to judgment at the Last Day), by the fast-days prescribed during Advent, and by the penitential color of the purple vestments, in which the priest celebrates the holy Mass.

Let us not be deaf to these earnest and impressive admonitions and invitations of our holy mother, the Church. Let us prepare ourselves for the solemnity of Christmas, for the coming of our Infant Redeemer, by penance and mortification, that his coming, at last, to judgment, may not be for us an occasion of terror. O, how solemn is this earnest truth that we must all die and appear before the judgment-seat of God ; and that, if we judge ourselves now in life, we shall not be judged by Christ after death ! It is indeed a very consoling truth, that faithful Christians shall not be judged at the bar of Christ ; while, on the other hand, it is a very awful truth that the wicked, also, shall not be judged at the Last Day, because they are already judged. It is not I who pronounce these two truths, but Christ himself who gives utterance to them when he says : “He that believeth in the Son of God is not judged ; but

he that doth not believe is already judged." Hence, there are two classes of people who shall not be judged on the Last Day ; viz.—

I. *All true believers ; and*

II. *All real unbelievers.*

1. *All true believers are free from the judgment of God.* To these, most certainly, belong not all those who are baptized in the name of Jesus, and outwardly profess the Christian faith. Many people appear to have the faith, while they lack the *spirit of faith*: "This people honor-eth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Great is the number of those who seem to have the faith, but they are destitute of *the obedience of faith*. They say, indeed : "Lord ! Lord !" but they refuse to do the will of the Father who is in heaven. A large majority seem to have the faith, but the *works of the faith* are wanting to them. The profession of faith in the mouths of all these Christians is a mean, damnable lie ; they are those hateful and detestable people of whom the Apostle says, that "they confess that they know God, but in their deeds they deny him" (Tit. 1 : 6); and upon all these, the judgment of God will be passed in its utmost severity.

Those truly believe, whose sentiments and deeds are in harmony with their confession of faith ; who think and feel as Christians, speak and act as Christians ; who carry a holy love in their hearts and upon every occasion manifest it in their deeds. Thus, the Sacred Scripture says : "In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor incircumcision ; but *faith that worketh by charity*." (Gal. 5 : 6.) "Faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself." (St. James 2 : 17.) As our body, of itself, without the soul, is not a perfect man, so belief alone, without charity, is not a true and perfect faith. Only of those Christians, whose faith is so perfect, that it brings forth works of perfect love of God and the neighbor, can it be asserted that they are free from the judgment of God.

2. What proof have we for this assertion ? The words of the Saviour himself: "He that believeth in the Son of God, is not judged." In another passage, he confirms this assertion even with the strong solemnity of an oath : "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.) And in order to banish all doubt as to what kind of faith is meant here, St. James says : "Mercy (faith that worketh by charity) exalteth itself above judgment." (James 2 : 13.)

3. What is meant by this : *All true believers are exempt from the judgment?* It means : When such Christians at the moment of death appear before Christ, their past career is not subjected by him to a special trial ; they need not, in fear and trembling, stand before the Judge, and, in dread uncertainty as to the future lot, await his final decision. From a distance, he says to such a Christian : "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." (Matt. 25 : 21.)

Surely, why should there be a judgment for souls whose account is in perfect order ? They have no sin nor crime upon their conscience, for perfect charity, proceeding from faith, banishes sin ; and where there is no crime, there is no judgment. Moreover, such souls have ceased, long ago, to be servants ; they have proved themselves tried friends and obedient children of God. Why, then, should they be called to an account ?

II. But *infidels* and *real unbelievers* shall also be exempt from the judgment of God at the Last Day.

1. Who are they whom we call *real unbelievers* ? Certainly not born pagans, infidels, Mahomedans, Jews or heretics who live and die without having been illuminated by the light of Christianity or the Catholic religion. Real unbelievers are those who well know Jesus Christ, his miracles, his life, his teachings, but who refuse to adore him as the Son of God, or to receive his doctrine. Real unbelievers are those who cannot reasonably deny, or doubt the Church established by Christ, and yet will not learn from her, nor belong to her. Real unbelievers, finally, are those who obstinately reject one or the other truth revealed by Christ and taught by his Church, because they cannot comprehend it with their limited understandings or because it does not please their unclean hearts.

2. Whence do we know that such infidels are exempt from judgment ? We know this, again, from the lips of Christ : "He that doth not believe in the Son of God is *already judged*." (John 3 : 18.) In the same sense, he says immediately before his Ascension : "He that believeth not, shall be condemned." (Mark 16 : 16.) Now, when our Lord says : *He is already judged*, he indicated that every infidel who remains obstinate in the moment of death, has already the full certainty of his eternal damnation, and needs not the further assurance of a special judgment.

3. *But why are these infidels not judged?* Because a judgment of

them is not necessary, even scarcely possible, for their account is also in order, but, alas! in very sad order. They bring nothing into eternity,— nothing good or pleasing to God. The Sacred Scripture expressly teaches: "Behold, he that is unbelieving, his soul shall not be right in himself." (Heb. 2 : 4.) And again: "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." (Heb. 11 : 6.) Hence, he that has not the faith, is not capable of performing, even if he would, the least work that might be pleasing to God. The infidel brings into eternity naught save sins, sins without number, sins of the worst kind; for not only has he given full vent to his passions and lived altogether to the flesh, but also, by his conduct he has openly given the lie to Christ (John 5 : 10) as one whose word should be despised, and as an impostor whose miracles were nothing but illusions. Can you think of any sin more abominable than this? Does not unbelief make man more diabolical than the devil himself, since the latter, at least, has kept the faith. (James 2 : 19.) It is easy to see from all this, that our Lord considers it, in a certain sense, beneath his dignity to enter into a particular judgment with an infidel; and this so much the more, as God has already sworn that unbelievers shall not enter into his rest. (Heb. 3 : 18.)

He that believes, enters not into judgment, but he that does not believe is already judged. This is an incontrovertible truth. Now, to which of these two classes do we belong? Are we true believers or are we real unbelievers? Probably, we belong wholly to neither. We halt midway between the two camps! We are so far believing that we recognize a holy, divine truth in the words of Jesus; but we are so far unbelieving that the word of God in many ways exercises no influence upon our sentiments and actions. Faith and charity with us do not always go hand in hand, and for this reason, a severe judgment awaits us.—

O, let us endeavor to establish a greater, better, and more perfect harmony between our belief and our life! "What shall it profit, my brethren," exclaims St. James, "if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him?" (James 2 : 14.) An everlasting life of happiness is what we all wish for; and this our wish shall certainly be realized, if our faith is always animated by a living, effectual charity. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

CHRISTIAN ZEAL FOR PENANCE.

“Do penance; for the kingdom of God is at hand.”

The first exhortation of our holy Church, on this first Sunday of a new ecclesiastical year, is an earnest invitation to do penance. For this purpose she tells us, in the Gospel of to-day, of the strange signs in the heavenly bodies, and of the distress of nations on our terrestrial globe, which will precede the day of judgment. These signs, which are daily approaching nearer to their fulfilment, should inspire us with a holy earnestness, and with sincere sentiments of penance, and should incite us to corresponding actions. Who can hear, or read in this Gospel, of the events preceding and accompanying the Last Judgment, without being alarmed, without promising God an amendment of life?

Of penance, we are reminded by the Epistle: “The night is passed, and the day is at hand. Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light.” (Rom: 13: 12.) Penance is also typified by the violet color of the priest’s vestments, as well as by the omission from the Mass of the joyful *Gloria*. Again, the Fridays of Advent are all fast-days. Marriages cannot be solemnized in that holy season, and the whole life of Christians at that time, should bear the imprint of earnestness. St. John the Precursor is introduced to us as preaching the baptism of penance. Ah! this word: *Penance*, which is written over the entrance of the Ecclesiastical Year, is far from being agreeable to sensual man. There is a great contrast between its signification and the desires and sentiments of the generality of men. The world loves only pleasure and lust. It hates earnestness and serious things; much more pain, humiliation, deprivation. The human heart greedily drains the cup of earthly joy; and to thousands, life is void and stale, in short, not worth the living, if the future does not entice, and beckon them on, to some new pleasure. No drop of sensual gratification must be suffered to escape them, and they will continue to drink the poisoned draught until it destroys them, body and soul.

Into this pleasure-seeking and pleasure-loving world, the Church sends forth her stern call to penance. She is bound to re-echo to all nations and generations, the loud cry of St. John: “Do penance; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;” and those words of the Saviour himself: “Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish.” (Luke 13: 3.)

That we may comply with this demand of our Lord, and fulfil the wishes of his Church, let us meditate on the motives which are apt to awaken and strengthen in our hearts a *Christian zeal for penance*. We will lift up our heads, as St. Paul says, and consider

- I. *Our Christian vocation*; and
- II. *Our sinful life*.

I. No other admonition is so often, so expressly and urgently addressed to us by Christ and his Apostles, as "*Do penance!*" It is repeated in the Gospel in a great variety of forms, to show that nothing is more necessary for a Christian than penance.

1. This is the teaching of holy Scripture: "From the days of St. John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent bear it away." (Matt. 11: 12.) "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." (Matt. 16: 24.) "Bring forth worthy fruits of penance." (Luke 3: 8.) "They who are Christ's, have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences." (Gal. 5: 24.) As the cross crowns our altars and church-steeple, as the sign of the cross is used in the administration of the Sacraments, as everything in our Church begins and ends with the sign of the cross, as most of our churches are built in the form of the cross, and we ourselves are made in the shape of the cross, as you will perceive when you stretch forth your arms—so the necessity of carrying the cross, of performing works of penance, is inculcated throughout all the exhortations of Christ and his Apostles. And whosoever makes no effort to comply with this demand of the Gospel in its whole vigor, is not worthy of the name of a Christian.

2. For *what is it to be a Christian?* It is to receive the spirit of Jesus Christ into one's self, and to manifest it in one's life; it is to follow him by imitating his life. "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also." (John 13: 15.) St. Paul, who, "with Christ was nailed to the cross," could say: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. 2: 20.) Was not the life of our Saviour a life of penance for our sins, from his birth in the stable at Bethlehem, until, on the Cross, he exclaimed: "It is consummated"? All his disciples followed him in his life of penance. We know even of tender virgins whose lives were a continuous warfare against human passion.

3. *What is it to be a Christian, and to lead a Christian life?* It is to guard the supernatural life implanted in our souls by Jesus Christ. To

free man from sin, and to sanctify him, our Lord became man, suffered, and died for us on the Cross. He has broken the force of sin, and redeemed us from the servitude of the devil. But evil is not entirely destroyed in our sin-corrupted nature ; its consequences still remain. Our bodies are subject to sickness, infirmity, and death ; our understanding to darkness and ignorance ; our will to weakness in well-doing ; and these evils will remain in us until death. Hence arises the necessity of waging a continual war against our passions. And what is such a war but penance? Only by continual struggle, by never-ending penance and self-denial, can we preserve the supernatural life of grace in our souls. In whatsoever heart the desires of the flesh prevail and are gratified, there, the higher, supernatural life must perish ; it has no place there, as the dove, which Noe sent forth from the Ark, could find no place in the slime of the earth whereon to rest its foot.—Hence St. John says : “Love not the world, nor those things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof. But he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever.” (I. John 2: 15-17.) And the Saviour himself says : “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away.” (Matt. 11: 12.)

The fundamental character of Christianity is both austere and painful. It recognizes sin in its true and terrible reality ; and its sublime destiny is to overcome and banish evil. Our Christian faith is born of the bloody atonement of the Son of God for the sins of the world. Therefore, the struggle against evil, self-denial and renunciation of our sensual lusts, the victory over a will innately inclined to evil, is the foundation of the Christian life, as well as the pure source, whence it must spring forth. The longing of the majority of men to have a good time of it, and enjoy as much pleasure as is possible in this life, and after death to be rewarded besides with all the joys of heaven, is wholly incompatible with the character of Christianity. With such a desire was the heathen filled who, in the blindness of his heart, knew nothing of the power and strength of evil in this world, or of a manly struggle against it, and therefore demanded of his deities only lust, pleasure, and joy. But through the Gospel, Christ has made known to us, that the sin of our first parents, and the evil originating therefrom, poisoned the whole earth and all the being of man, and made it impossible for us to obtain heavenly felicity save by resistance to, and victory over, this hurtful, soul-destroying power. The earth has been cursed of God, and as long as we live in it, or tread its soil, it is folly to wish for a merry and happy life, free from all pain and sufferings.

The world may ridicule the duty of penance, and revile it as the production of an extravagant and misdirected asceticism ; it shows by such words that it no longer acknowledges the necessity of that fundamental pillar upon which the Saviour has built his holy kingdom. By such views, it denies the very first law of the Christian religion. But we, as true believers, if we desire to attain our high, eternal destiny, must not hesitate to fulfil these words of our Lord and Master : "If thy hand or foot scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee. It is better for thee to enter into life maimed or lame, than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee. It is better for thee with one eye to enter into life, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hellfire." (Matt. 18 : 8, 9.)

II. But there is also a personal motive which urges us to enter into the new ecclesiastical year, with sentiments of penance, namely : *the sinfulness of our lives.*

1. We all have heaped up mountains of sins and faults before the face of God. Evil is a power, an awful reality in the world ; and alas ! it sends forth its shoots into the heart of every man. Is not our present way of life filled with failures ? Does not our past reproach us with multiplied trespasses ? A true self-knowledge is very rare ; and an impartial judgment of one's own words and actions is to be found with very few. It is not necessary, however, to search all the folds of the heart, in order to know the sinfulness of our lives. Every one who casts only a superficial glance at his past and present life must blush, strike his breast, and apply to himself the words of St. John : "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us . . . If we say that we have not sinned, we make him (God) a liar ; and his word is not in us." (I. John 1 : 10.)

2. Call to your mind the trespasses of your childhood, the indulgence of the burning passions of your youth, and the many injustices and follies of your mature and declining age. Remember, if you can, all the sins committed through your eyes, ears, hands, and feet, the sins of the faculties of your soul ; and you will exclaim with the Psalmist : "Evils without number have surrounded me, and I was not able to see. They are multiplied above the hairs of my head ; and my heart hath forsaken me." (Ps. 39 : 13.)

3. If you examine your conscience according to the ten commandments, from the first to the last, are you not bound to say with the royal Prophet : "Who can understand sins ? from my secret ones,

cleanse me, O Lord ; and from those of others spare thy servant"? (Ps. 18 : 13.)

4. Perhaps, you place your confidence in the virtues you have practised, in good works you have performed ? But how many of your so-called good works have been performed in the state of grace ? Where are the virtues unadulterated by the alloy of pride, ambition, or self-love ? How few the works which we may present to God as pure gold ! "Thy own mouth shall condemn thee, and not I, says the Lord ; and thy own lips shall answer thee." (Job 15 : 6.)

5. Must we not confess that our present lives are invaded as by a muddy, resistless flood, by most of the sinful habits of our past ? I will grant, that you no longer walk as boldly as of yore in the broad road of the passion ; that, of later years, much of their fierce impetuosity has disappeared from your life. But is there not something in you yet that disquiets, grieves, and heavily presses upon you ? Are you really so pure and perfect as to be worthy to enter into the joy of the Lord, if you should die this moment ? Will you be bold enough to challenge our Lord to call you at this moment before his judgment seat ? Or must you not say : "There is no peace in my bones, because of my sins. For my iniquities are gone over my head ; and as a heavy burden have become heavy upon me." (Ps. 37 : 4, 5.)

6. These and similar reflections must convince you of the necessity of doing penance. If you have sinned, you must do penance. If we desire to enter into the glory of our Lord, we must be either innocent or penitent ; we must carry in our hands either the white lily of purity, or the palm of penance. If we come empty-handed, we shall be rejected ; and heaven is forever closed against a guilt-stained heart. If you offend a mighty personage, you are not at rest until, by your tears and entreaties, you obtain his pardon. Should we not act in like manner when we have enkindled the wrath of our God ? (St. Chrysostom.)

7. Whosoever has sinned, must do penance, not only in order to reconcile himself with his offended God and to be freed from the punishment of his sins, but also, in order to guard against a relapse. When evil has once been awakened in us, the bridle of penance must curb and restrain it continually that it may not work greater havoc and ruin. Penance must build its walls around the soul, that it may be secure from fresh assaults of the enemy ; it must strengthen the weakness of the heart, and break the power of sinful habits. Penance, then, is an in-

dispensable prerogative against future sins. Without penance, we are certain to succumb to the violence of our passions.

O how foolish we are ! We think not of our past sins, and are careless in diminishing their punishments. Much less are we solicitous, by penance, to guard our souls against relapsing into them again. How slothful we are in performing the works of penance prescribed by the Church—and more slothful still in the practice of voluntary and self-inflicted mortifications. The precept of fasting and abstinence is too hard, the divine service is too long, and there are a thousand excuses framed for the observance of every other precept of the Church. We lament over the sufferings of life, and impatiently bear the burden of our state of life. How shall we justify ourselves before God ! Blame not the Church, then, when, on this day, she waves before us her standard of Penance, and exhorts us to begin well this new ecclesiastical year. Since we have all sinned, it behoves us all to do penance, and the more frequent and grievous our sins the greater and more persistent must be our penance.

BISHOP EHRLER.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

THE CAUSES OF RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENTISM.

“Let not them that are my enemies, wrongfully rejoice over me, who have hated me without cause.” (Ps. 34 : 19.)

In the fulness of time, Christ came to redeem man from sin and hell ; to establish his Church for all nations, and for all ages to come. Judea was filled with his miracles. He made the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear ; the lepers were cleansed, and the poor had the Gospel preached to them. Disciples gathered around him from all sides adoring him as the God of their hearts, and looking up to him with reverence and love. But the great mass of the Jews remained indifferent to him,—their indifference gradually changing into infidelity and hatred. Christ’s miracles, and the testimony of all the witnesses thereof, made no salutary impression upon their souls.

In like manner, multitudes of men at the present time are estranged from, and even opposed to, the Church of Christ ; and all the miracles which she performs, all the witnesses which raise their voices in testimony of her truth, make no impression upon their criminally-indifferent hearts. What wrong has the Church done, that countless numbers, indifferent to their highest and holiest interests, like the Prodigal Son, should say to her : “Give me my portion ! I want no more of thy grace, love, or blessing ; I can live and act without thee”?

Beholding the multitude of his enemies, the Psalmist mournfully exclaims to God : “Let not them that are my enemies, wrongfully rejoice over me, who have hated me without cause” ; and our holy Mother the Church, seeing on all sides of her the mighty hosts who are maliciously indifferent to her and her graces, may cry out in similar terms : “These men are wrongfully my enemies ; they hate me without cause.” To-day, I propose to consider with you, my beloved brethren, the causes of religious indifferentism, which are chiefly three :

I. *A weakness of the understanding*, which does not recognize the worth and beauty of Religion ;

II. *A weakness of the heart*, which will not surrender itself to its attractions ; and

III. *A weakness of the will*, which refuses to comply with all its requirements.

I. True and constant love is not possible unless it be founded upon respect. The beloved object must possess superior attributes in the eyes of the lover. A love without respect is a dim light which goes out as soon as it is kindled. Hence, if a man would have a true and constant love for his holy Religion, he must know and acknowledge its value and importance, as well as its beauty and splendor. The more his soul is filled with this deep and perfect knowledge, so much the greater will be his love for it.

1. *The first cause of indifference to Religion is weakness, which prevents the understanding from learning its innate worth and beauty.* "If thou didst know the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink; thou perhaps wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." (John 4 : 10.) Thus spake the Lord Jesus to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, who regarded him merely with an eye of curiosity; and thus might he say at the present time to the vast multitudes who are indifferent to him and his holy Church. If men really recognized all the beauty and splendor, the depth and sublimity, the worth and necessity of divine truths, they would be filled with reverence and love for them. But their dim, irrational gaze is fixed exclusively upon things material and sensible, and for these things, alone, have they sense and understanding. The simplest doctrines of faith are riddles to them. They fail to comprehend the important bearing of Religion upon human life, upon man's destiny for time and eternity.

2. *What is to enlighten their darkness and aid them to come to the knowledge of the truth?* The hearing of a sermon, the reading of a pious book, is too onerous a task for the great majority of men. These methods of increasing their stock of spiritual knowledge are denounced as useless. The study of the Catechism in childhood, the early and half-forgotten instructions of youth, must suffice for a whole life-time. In fact, the disorder has even gone so far that many think they have satisfied all their religious obligations by merely hearing a Mass on Sundays. Religion is treated by them as was Christ by Pilate and Herod. He taught and worked miracles throughout all Judea and Galilee, but they did not think it worth while to go to see or hear him; and when the Jews brought the great Wonder-worker before them, all they did was to mock him or ask him inquisitive questions. Instead of investigating whether he taught the truth, and whether they were obliged to accept and practise his doctrine, they said to the Jews :

"Take him you, and judge him according to your law." (John 18 : 31.) Thus, also, Religion is thrust aside by men from motives of idleness or indifference, and is condemned without being heard or examined.

3. *Do they not often say to our Mother the Church what the Jews cried out to our Saviour, when they left him : "THIS SAYING IS HARD, AND WHO CAN HEAR IT ?"* (John 6 : 61.) Hard, indeed, are the sayings of Christ and his Church to many sensual and sinful men. Such persons turn aside from the Sun of Truth, lest its splendor bring to light, and condemn, their impure lives.

4. *What will be the inevitable result of all this ?* Sinking lower and lower in the scale of religious knowledge, man will naturally become more and more indifferent to the Church ; he will lend a willing ear to the sophistries of infidelity, and soon begin to speak its language.

II. Another cause of indifference to Religion is *that weakness of the heart, which will not surrender itself to its attractions.*

1. *Religion demands a strong and generous heart.* Man must love God ardently and undividedly in order to fulfil the first and greatest commandment : "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind." (Matt. 22 : 37.) Every other flame of our hearts must be enkindled at this furnace of love, must draw its support and power from this high and all-mastering fire. The Religion, therefore, which teaches us this pure love of God, should be the highest object of our solicitude. No earthly concern should be permitted to jeopardize the interests of faith, in our souls. Everything must obey and be subservient to the one King of our hearts, if we would be safe and happy.

2. Unconsciously *the child*, in the earliest dawn of reason, *comprehends that the happiness of its life lies in the love and service of God.* Devoutly clasping its little hands in prayer, and raising its innocent eyes to heaven, the flowers of holy faith already begin to germinate in its heart, and to unfold themselves therein in charming beauty. Do you remember the piety of your happy childhood ? Then your soul was filled with a living and active faith, a tender and holy love of God, your Father in heaven. Must you not confess, *now*, with shame and grief, that you have departed from that first holy enthusiasm ? Tepidity and coldness in prayer, sloth in the service of God, neglect of the holy Communion, may well cause the Angels to repeat over more than one unhappy soul, the lamentation of the prophet over Jerusalem :

“From the daughter of Sion, all her beauty is departed.” (Lam. 1 : 6.)
And with her love of God have vanished all her peace and happiness.

III. The Catholic Religion is not merely *a system of truths revealed to man* so that his reason may comprehend them. *No, these truths must permeate his entire life and living.* It is their office to captivate his heart and will. All the truths and doctrines of faith, all its commandments and precepts, all its graces and blessings, its whole divine service, down to the least and most insignificant ceremony,—contain admonitions and directions for our will and our whole moral life. Hence, true religious life cannot be imagined unless man humbly submits his reason and understanding to the teachings of faith, surrenders his heart to its attractions, and his will to an eager performance of all its requirements. *Religion is life*, and therefore must produce *living* works. But if a man’s will no longer fulfils the will of God, he becomes more and more indifferent to the things of God.

1. Religion imposes upon man *a series of commandments and precepts.* He must make many sacrifices for his faith—he must manifest his self-denying fidelity. He must perform works of piety and prayer, assist at the service of the Church, practise certain devotions, receive the holy Sacraments at stated times, and take upon himself many austere, and (for the carnal man) almost impossible practices, such as fasting and confession. These external exercises are not merely the visible proof of love, but they are actually the nourishment and strength of our holy faith. They are the secret roots which support and strengthen the tree of religious life. Hence, he who no longer complies with the requirements of Religion, has deprived himself of its sap and nourishment. He has withdrawn himself from those abundant streams of grace which would have fertilized his soul. His faith grows sickly, and dies of a sort of spiritual marasmus. An indolent will, which neglects and shuns its religious duties, is the cause of infidelity in the hearts of millions. They are too lazy to say their prayers; attendance at the services of the Church, and the reception of the Sacraments, are too burdensome for them; every sacrifice for the love of God is to their carnal will, too hard and intolerable; and Religion which formerly glowed in their souls like a mighty flame and enkindled in them an ardent enthusiasm for great things, expires gradually amid the ashes, because fresh fuel is wanting to the fire.

2. Thus THE IDLE WILL of man, by little and little, becomes a SINFUL WILL; and the *sinful will rapidly progresses to indifference and unbelief.* Faith which, to the uncorrupted heart, means peace, contentment, and

joy in the Lord, is to the sinner, a source of pain and torment. God, who is enthroned as the King of Love in the heart of the faithful Christian, stands before the soul of the evil-doer as an avenging Judge, waving the flaming sword of retribution. To escape the torments of fear and remorse, and to stifle the terrible anticipations of many future vengeance, sinners endeavor to persuade themselves, that all the teachings of Religion concerning sin, resurrection, judgment, and hell, are merely a myth, or fable. Purity of faith and purity of morals are twin-sisters, whose hands are joined in a holy league in order to assist man on his journey to heaven ; but laxity of faith and laxity of morals will infallibly lead him down the broad road to hell.

3. *There is one sin in particular, which destroys faith in the soul of man ; one vice, which, as St. Paul says, should not even be named among Christians: IMPURITY.* This sin burrows like a gnawing worm, at the root of faith. It is like a poisonous mildew, spreading itself over the soul, and destroying its life. He who feeds on the husks of swine will experience a loathing and disgust for the heavenly manna, and will cry out, at last with the carnal-minded Jews : "Our soul now loatheth this very light food." (Num. 21: 5.) Experience teaches that nine-tenths of those who are indifferent to religion, have become so through sins of impurity.

Let us, therefore, cultivate in ourselves a pious, and especially, a pure and chaste, will. He who practices his religion in his daily life, and fulfils its precepts, will never experience the least contradiction between its mandates and his wishes. Religion will satisfy all the desires of the human heart, or control them for man's happiness. It will strengthen his will so that he may be enabled to fulfil all the precepts of Faith, subject his passions to the control of reason, and grant him a rich virtue, holiness, and happiness.

O my dearly beloved, let Religion be the queen of your hearts ! Let every thought of your minds, every affection of your hearts, and every motion of your will, be consecrated to her sweet and gracious power ! May she bind together all the days of our life with her mysterious, heavenly chain, and finally lead us by those golden links, into the presence of the Founder and Author of our holy Faith, to dwell forevermore in the delights of his celestial kingdom. Amen.

J. EHRLER.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE POOR.

"The poor have the Gospel preached to them." (Matt. 11 : 5.)

When the disciples of John questioned our Lord: "Art thou he that art to come, or do we look for another?"—it is but natural that he should have replied: "Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen: The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again;" for by these splendid miracles, Jesus incontrovertibly proved that he was the promised and long-expected Messiah. But why, after the enumeration of all these marvels, did he add the words: "*And the poor have the Gospel preached to them*"? There are various reasons, but I shall adduce only one. By what Jesus has done for the poor, and by that alleviation of their lot which his holy Church is continually effecting, he has proved most strikingly that he is the promised Redeemer, who came to take away not only sin but also those miseries which are a consequence of sin. Nowadays, however, this truth is often overlooked and disregarded. Nay, more, men have gone so far in untruth and malice, as to say, that through Christ and Christianity, human misery has been increased and aggravated; and that if the poor are to be helped, and poverty banished from the world, Christ and his doctrines must be altogether renounced. Hence, it is not unnecessary for us to consider what Christ and Christianity have done for the poor, and to this end, I shall briefly show you:

I. *What the lot of the poor was before Christ, and*

II. *What Christ has done for the alleviation of poverty.*

I. The Gentiles knew nothing of the one and only true God. They believed in a multiplicity of deities. Each nation had its own gods. Those who belonged to a foreign nation, for instance, to the Greeks, were by no means fellow-men, whom they were to love as brothers, but barbarians, savages, and mostly enemies. Even his fellow-heathens, the pagan loved only in so far, as they loved him in return, or as they held forth to him a prospect of personal enjoyment or profit. Of a universal love for men, as brothers and sisters, children of one and the same heavenly Father, he had not the slightest conception.

1. For this very reason he had no idea of the high dignity and destiny of man. He could not even imagine that every man is equal before God, that every one is a child of God, and called to eternal life, that every one is free, and has certain holy rights which none can infringe upon without crime. If you had said to a Gentile : "This poor man, this servant, this slave, is your brother, he has rights before God as well as you," he would have thought you mad. Juvenal, a Roman poet, writes : "You certainly will not be so foolish as to consider a servant or a slave a man." And Cato, who, among all the Romans, was the most severe and moral, used to say that slaves are only living instruments ; that, although they are more useful than the lower animals, they are only distinguished from the latter by the gift of reason, and could be punished for disobedience and chastised for wrong-doing. Hence, the maxim prevailed which the renowned philosopher, Seneca, expressed in these words : "Towards slaves, everything is allowed." Every master could do as he pleased with his servants or slaves (for the terms were synonymous); he was at liberty to sell, punish, torment, mutilate, or kill them. They were generally treated very cruelly. During the day, they had to work very hard, and were punished with the whips for the slightest fault or neglect ; and at night, their feet were chained, and they were locked up in subterranean vaults for fear of escape. It is recorded that one cruel master had his cook roasted alive, because he had not prepared a certain dish according to his taste. Another had a slave crucified for killing his favorite bird. A third one fed the fish in his pond with the flesh of his slaves. Dozens, and even hundreds, of slaves, or poor captives, in order to please their masters, were forced to fight with wild animals, or become the fierce gladiators of the arena. And when these unhappy slaves got sick, or disabled, they were simply cast adrift upon the world, or, worse still, huddled together in some out of the way place where they miserably perished with hunger and want. If you consider the vast number of slaves at that period, how some rich Romans had thousands of them, and how in Attica, a Roman province, there were twenty times more slaves than free citizens—you may form an idea, in what a terrible state the greater part of mankind languished at the coming of Christ.

2. Apart from the slaves, all the poor of those days had a very hard lot. The state of their souls was worse than their bodily condition, inasmuch as they were sunk in spiritual darkness, and in the misery of sin, with every prospect of a terrible eternity. The rich Gentiles despised the poor ; it was looked upon as a disgrace to be a tradesman or laborer. No free and respected Greek, Roman, or Teuton tilled his own field or worked at a trade. This was left to the slaves and women.

He who did not live by arms, or traffic, or on his own abundant means, was despised. The wealthy Romans were often guilty of the most senseless extravagance. Many expended for one supper as much as would support thirty poor people for a whole year. Suppers were given which, according to our money, amounted to fifty thousand dollars. The emperor Caligula once gave a dinner, the cost of which amounted to over a million of dollars ; and his baths alone cost 3000 dollars apiece.

3. In the midst of all this colossal wealth and senseless extravagance, none of the Gentiles ever once thought it a duty to support the poor or alleviate their misery. They fancied themselves sovereign masters of their own money, in no way obliged to account for their goods either to gods or men. It was even looked upon as a disgrace to have any intercourse with a poor man or beggar. Hence, if a good-natured pagan gave an alms, he threw it to the poor man from a distance and with contempt, taking good care not to come in contact with the object of his bounty. The renowned orator, Quintilian, asks the question : "Could you so far demean yourself as not to repulse a poor man with disgust?" And another, called Plautus, says : "No one should give an alms to a poor man ; for he who does so, injures both himself and the man ; himself, because he will have less afterwards than he had before ; and the poor man, because he helps to prolong his miserable life." It would, therefore, be better (this heathen philosopher concludes) to let the poor die of hunger. One of the wisest pagans, Plato, writes : "If a poor man gets sick, let him die—the physician should not trouble himself about him."

Now, picture to yourselves the miserable life of the poor in pagan times : Forced to behold the rich wasting thousands in base gluttony and the vilest of luxury, the poor man languished in the utmost need, despised and abandoned by all. And of a Father in heaven, who loved him, of another Life, where all sufferings borne for God's sake are superabundantly rewarded, he knew nothing. What was there to lift him up—what to comfort him in his supreme distress ? O sad and terrible fate ! how would *you* feel if you had to pass a few years in such degradation and slavery ? Now you will comprehend more fully what our divine Lord meant when he said to the disciples of the Baptist : "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." Truly, to the poor the Gospel of Jesus Christ was happy tidings, for

II. *Through Christianity, the lot of the poor was wholly transformed.*

1. It protected the poor man in his dignity ;
2. It supported him in his need, and
3. It consoled him in his misery.

1. Jesus Christ taught us the knowledge of the one God, the Creator and Father of all men, with whom there is no respect of persons, who loves all men as his children. The poorest beggar, as well as the richest potentate, is the child and image of God, ransomed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and destined for the inheritance of heaven. The poor man is the brother of the rich man ; and, as brothers do not despise, but love and assist each other, so the rich Christian must not despise the poor man, but love him as his brother, and help him in his necessity. No commandment after that of the love of God is holier and more important than this : "Thou shalt love thy neighbor (even the poorest and the lowliest) as thyself."

But, because it lies in our corrupt nature, and was so deeply rooted in the Gentiles, to estimate man according to his possessions, and to despise the poor, the Son of God chose poverty and lowliness as his portion. Thus he sought to abash our pride and thoroughly heal our chronic disorder. Poorer than the poorest beggar child, he wished to be born in a stable ; he chose a poor virgin for his mother, a poor carpenter for his foster-father, poor fishermen for his companions, his disciples, the princes of his kingdom, the Church. Because men despised poverty and labor, he himself would walk in the form of a servant, and for many years, earn his bread as a poor workman. What Christian after *that*, would dare to despise a poor man on account of his poverty, and his lowly state, knowing that he despises in him the image of God, the child of God, yea, even the Son of God himself. Thus the poor man far from being inferior to the rich man in the kingdom of God, he excels him, on the contrary, in many things. Whilst it is hard for a rich man to enter into heaven, the poor man has a sure claim to that holy kingdom : "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5: 3.) Those who choose the state of perfection, must embrace voluntary poverty, and walk poor after the poor God-Man in the way of the cross, of renunciation, self-abnegation, and mortification.

2. As Christ guarded for the poor man his dignity as a child of God, as he highly honored and exalted poverty, so he has, also, provided by his doctrine that the poor man be not destitute of the necessaries of life. For Christianity teaches that all temporal goods come from God, and have their true worth in this : that they are for us the means to our true end, heaven. The rich man has a just right to his own property, and no one can deprive him of it, or hinder him in the disposal of it. But it is not his property in the sense that he can do as he pleases with it. No, he is only the steward of God, who has placed temporal goods in his hands to be employed by him according to his holy will ; and he must, one day, give a strict account of his stewardship. And what is

the will of God in this regard? He must not increase his substance by injustice, fraud, or any other illicit means. He must not oppress the poor, not abuse the necessity of his poor fellow-man, nor try by usury to enrich himself—for upon all such doings, rests the curse of God. Neither must he abuse justly-acquired goods to voluptuousness, luxury, or dissipation. A certain amount is necessary for the support of himself and family according to their state of life, as well as for provision for his posterity, but what is over and above he should spend for the honor of God and the alleviation of the necessities of the poor. Failing to do this, if he waste and dissipate his superfluous substance, he is an unjust steward; he withdraws from the poor that which, according to the will of God, should belong to them. Mind well, I do not say, that the poor have a right to ask, much less, take by force, a part of the rich man's goods, saying: "That which you do not need is mine!" God forbid! The poor have no right to it; God alone has the right to impose this duty upon the rich, and if the latter do not fulfil it, they commit no wrong before human courts, and no one can compel them to it,—but God will call them to a strict account for it. God wills that the rich help the poor, not from compulsion, but voluntarily, out of love. Surely, God could help the poor, or could so bring it to pass that there should be no poor, but this he does not will. Whatever he wishes to give to the poor, he wishes to give them through the hands of the rich, that thereby the rich and the poor may be united in brotherly love as children of one Father, and thus mutually help each other into heaven.

How powerfully does not the Redeemer of men urge upon the rich the fulfilment of this duty of charity! Earthly goods, he says, can profit you nothing; in a short time, you must leave them behind you. But if you apply them to alms and charitable works, you will lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where rust and moth do not consume nor thieves dig through and steal. For that trifling share of earthly goods, which they agree to renounce, he promises them an infinitely glorious reward, eternal joys and treasures. He threatens them if they be unmerciful, if they hoard up, or squander, their money, with the eternal torments of hell. Example: Dives. He does not hesitate to cry out to them: "What you do to the least of these my brethren, you do it unto me. You shall be my representatives in giving, the poor, in receiving!"

And though many of the rich do not do their duty, though many of the poor people languish in want and distress—the latter are infinitely better off than were the poor before the coming of Christ. He has prepared for them the best consolation: He says to each of them as it were: "Have patience, my child, if you only love me, and are faithful

to me, and contentedly bear your lot, you will be far happier than most rich people. The Father in heaven is your Father also ; he loves you, and out of love, for your good, has sent you poverty, though, at present, you do not know or understand it. Without his will, not a hair will fall from your head ; and if you love him, all things must turn out for the best. Pray to him daily for your daily bread ; work industriously ; he will take care of you. And though you be poor, behold you are not by far as poor as I, your Lord and Saviour, have been. As I bore poverty for the love of you, so bear you, also, poverty for love of me. Be conscientious and honest. Envy not the rich. You have less responsibility, you can easier avoid sin, easier be saved. And after bearing your poverty with patience, for a short time, for my sake, the inexpressible joys, the immense riches, of heaven, shall be yours forever !”

3. Thus you see how Christ, by his doctrine, provided for the dignity, the protection and the consolation of the poor. And the fruits of this doctrine soon became manifest, when Christianity entered into the world, and began its victorious course.—Already in the first Christian congregations, the love for the poor was so great, that, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, there were no poor and needy among the early Christians. “For neither was there any one among them that wanted. For as many as were owners of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the price of the things they sold, and laid it down before the feet of the Apostles. And distribution was made to every man according as he had need.” (Acts 4 : 34-36.) From the Apostolic times, the poor were always the favorites of the Church, the object of her particular solicitude. Of the ecclesiastical revenues, a great part was distributed to the poor ; and deacons, in the name of the bishop, were entrusted with the care of the poor. In short, wherever the Church was planted, tender care was had for the poor, and their lot alleviated. Rich people, who before their conversion to Christianity had spent enormous sums in luxury, afterwards distributed their colossal wealth among the poor. Still more, they themselves devoted their strength, health, and life to the service of the poor and the sick. Already in the first centuries, countless hospitals and charitable institutions were founded, such as orphanages, houses for the lepers, for the old and infirm, and for the harboring of strangers. Numberless orders and communities arose whose members devoted themselves entirely to the service of the poor and sick ; and with joy made a sacrifice of their life in this vocation. I say with joy, because they beheld in the poor and sick, not only their brethren and sisters, but Christ himself. And whilst, in epidemics, the Gentiles drove their nearest and dearest out of the house, as soon as traces

of the sickness appeared, or even cast them yet living upon the heaps of the dead,—the Christians nursed the infected, cared for entire strangers, with all the tenderness of heavenly love, and as fast as one of the nurses fell a victim to the malady, another was ready to take his place, and to share the same heroic fate.

I would never come to an end, were I to tell you all that our monasteries have done for the alleviation of the poorer classes ; how they fed and supported thousands and millions ; how they fostered agriculture, trades, arts and sciences ; and secured a decent subsistence to a vast multitude who, otherwise, would have languished in abject and vicious poverty. Suffice it to say, that wherever the Catholic Church had her due influence, and could penetrate the masses with her spirit, the poor were protected and taken care of.

In conclusion, allow me to add : Ye that are rich, set not your hearts upon your riches, but make them give way to the riches of eternity. Be charitable to God's poor. Remember that you are but stewards of what you possess. Succor the poor with what is superfluous to your wants. God is a rich rewarder. It is Advent ; and the time of Christmas is near at hand. Make Christmas-presents to your Jesus in the person of the poor, and you will hear him saying to you : "What you do to the least of my brethren, you do it unto me." As for you that are poor, thank God for your poverty. Do not think that you are step-children of the heavenly Father. No, you are his favorite children ; and only in the other world, will you learn how well he meant with you. Envy not the rich ; much less seek by injustice to ameliorate your lot. Pray, work, be content and saving, and trust in God. He will not forsake you. Bear your poverty with patience and submission to his holy will. And when your burden presses too hard upon you, go to the Crib of the Babe of Bethlehem, and, considering how poor the infinitely rich God has become for your sake, say to him : "O Jesus, who hast so willingly and patiently endured poverty for my sake, I will also bear my poverty willingly and patiently for thy sake !"

If you thus, both rich and poor, each in your state and attendant circumstances, fulfil the ordinances and the will of God, you shall obtain the treasures of his grace here, and eternal glory hereafter. Amen.

BISHOP EHRLER.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

MARY, THE FIRST AND ONLY VIRGIN.

"Thou art all fair, and there is no spot in thee." (Cant. 4 : 7.)

Who shall describe the beauty and glory of virginal purity? It is more precious than gold and diamonds, more precious than the riches and treasures of the world. Virginitv aspires not to carnal things, but to the possession and enjoyment of God himself. "The virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord" (I. Cor. 7 : 34); hence she is nearest to the heart of God. Virginal purity is an inexhaustible treasure and a never-fading crown; it is the temple of God and the abode of the Holy Ghost; it conquers death and hell; is the life of the Angels, and the crown of the Saints. Virginitv is the imperishable glory of the world; a glory which, to this very day, shines forth from the city of Rome through her holy virgin Agnes, from the isle of Sicily through her St. Agatha, from Alexandria through her St. Catharine, from England through her St. Ursula, from Nicomedia through her St. Barbara, from Spain through her St. Teresa. Yet, all these are excelled in glory and splendor by that Virgin of virgins of whom it is written: "Thou art all fair, and there is no spot in thee"—Mary, the Immaculate Queen, who is the joy and honor not only of Nazareth and Bethlehem, but of the whole world.

This is the day on which her spotless virginitv began to illumine and rejoice the whole world, the day of her Immaculate Conception; and nothing surely is more in harmony with this festival, than a meditation on the virginal purity of Mary, the Mother of God. Consequently, we shall now consider,

- I. *That Mary is the first of virgins, and*
- II. *That Mary is the Virgin of virgins.*

O Mary, immaculate Mother, help me to announce thy praise, help me to convince my hearers, that thou alone art the Virgin without spot, who without prejudice to thy virginitv hast brought forth the Light of the World

I. *Mary is the first of virgins*, that is, Mary, from the beginning of the world, was the first who, for the sake of virginitv, out of love for God, voluntarily elected to lead a virginal life.

1. The ancient world neither knew nor practised the virtue of virginity. Such continency as was practised, was observed more through compulsion than free will, through the illusion of the devil, and in support of superstition,—as was the case with the vestal virgins of ancient Rome. These maidens did not serve the true God, but the pagan goddess Vesta ; and their service to her was not a voluntary one. For thirty years they led a retired community life in what was virtually a prison ; and, far from offering up the free sacrifice of a virginal heart, they were merely the victims of violence, ambition, and superstition. Rome was the capital of Paganism, and virginity and paganism were as opposed to each other as night is to day, heaven to hell. In Paganism there were no virgins.

2. Neither did the Jewish people understand the beauty of a virginal life, though it was chosen to preserve the knowledge of the true God. The Jewish maiden who was obliged to remain unmarried, shed abundant tears over her hard fate. We know this from the history of Jephthe's daughter. Her father, one of the judges of Israel, made a vow to the Lord, saying : "If thou wilt deliver the children of Ammon into my hands, whosoever shall first come forth out of the door of my house, and shall meet me when I return in peace, the same I will offer a holocaust to the Lord. And when Jephthe returned to his house, his only daughter met him ; for he had no other children. And when he saw her, he rent his garments. And she said to him : Do unto me whatsoever thou hast promised. Grant me only this which I desire : Let me go, that I may go about the mountains for two months, and may bewail my virginity, because I must die young and without the honor of being mother. And he did to her as he had vowed : and she knew no man. From thence, came a fashion in Israel, and a custom hath been kept, that from year to year, the daughters of Israel assemble together and lament the daughter of Jephthe the Galaadite for four days." (Judges 11: 30-40.) The most renowned, the holiest women of the Jewish people were not virgins. Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Anna, Susanna, Judith, were all married women, and, most of them, mothers.

3. Four thousand years after the creation of the world came the first voluntary virgin among all the daughters of Eve. Mary was the first who, *of her own free will, for the sake of virginity*, and out of love for God, vowed herself to a virginal life. "The Archangel Gabriel was right in saying : 'Hail full of grace,' since it was granted to her by God to be the first among all of her sex who offered to God the most glorious gift of virginity." (Ven. Bede.) *Of her own free will*, in the very first instant of her immaculate conception, with full consciousness

and by divine illumination she vowed to God the sacrifice of her virginal life. She offered it *for the sake of virginity*, for she wished to be and remain a pure virgin, because of the high prerogative and beauty of this virtue. She would even have relinquished the dignity of Mother of God, if her virginity had thereby to be violated, and she offered it *out of love for God*, in order to be able to serve him better and more fervently in the virginal state. This she did without regard to the prevailing ideas and prejudices of her people, who honored only the nuptial state, and lamented and despised virginity. Therefore, she was the first virgin in every respect ; the first, according to time ; the first, according to condition ; and the first, according to her purpose. To her, in a special manner, the words of St. Paul are applicable : "The virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord."

11. Mary is also *the Virgin of virgins*, as the Church terms her. She is truly the *virgo singularis*, the special virgin.

1. *On account of her Immaculate Conception.* Thereby she was, as we Catholics know and believe, already in her mother's womb so sanctified by God, that she was free from every stain of original sin. Unlike all the other children of Adam,—as soon as her most pure soul was created, in that very moment, the Angels in heaven celebrated the feast of her Immaculate Conception. That was a blessed moment, that was the golden moment of the world ; and great were the graces which God thereby showered upon Mary. She was conceived without sin ; sin never had any power over her ; she was not the slave of the devil even for a moment. She never incurred the wrath of God for a single instant. Not subject to eternal death, she was free from every propensity to evil and from all concupiscence from the first to the last moment of her life.

She, alone, among all human beings, was conceived immaculate, and without the stain of original sin. She could say with the messenger who brought to Job the unhappy tidings, that his flocks had been stolen, that his house had been destroyed, and that his children had been killed : "*I alone have escaped.*" It was hers to exclaim : "*I have never languished under the yoke of the evil spirit ; I have never been a daughter of wrath. On me, alone, hell has not imprinted its infernal brand. I alone have escaped from the universal curse and perdition !*" Yes, Mary is "the lily among the thorns," and in this sense, she is the *only virgin*.

For, although the Catholic Church numbers among her children many holy virgins ; and although many virginal souls shine in the multitude of the elect in heaven—yet they were all conceived in original sin. At

one time, they were all children of wrath, and slaves of the devil, retaining even after Baptism, the propensity to sin, and the other sad effects of evil concupiscence, against which they were forced to fight in order to preserve their virginity. St. Paul was a virginal soul, yet he was obliged to cry out: "There was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me." (2. Cor. 12 : 7.) How many holy souls had to say with St. Augustine: "I have groaned, for I was bound not to iron chains, but to my hard, unbending will, which the hellish fiend had and held in his hands." A virginal soul was St. Benedict; yet to what temptations against holy purity was he not exposed? He could only escape sin by throwing himself naked into a bed of sharp thorns, quenching by streams of his own blood the impure flames of concupiscence.

All the Saints had to fight in like manner. Mary, alone, the devil of lustful temptation dared not approach; through her Immaculate Conception, she had crushed his head;—she therefore was *the* only virgin, *the Virgin of virgins*.

2. She was also the *only virgin by reason of that wonderful prerogative, granted to her above all of her sex: she became mother, yet still remained a virgin*. "A virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a son." (Is. 7: 14.) The name of this Son is Emmanuel, is Jesus Christ. She has brought him forth, she has become Mother without ceasing to be Virgin. Of her it is written: "I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus, and as a cypress-tree on mount Sion" (Ecclus. 24: 17); and by these words St. Ambrose testifies that Mary has always remained a pure virgin, since no tempest, no matter how furious, can strip the cypress of its foliage, or deprive it of its fair green garment.

Mary, alone among all of her sex, can say: "I have conceived and brought forth a son, and still I am the Virgin, the only virgin, the Virgin of virgins—*virgo singularis!* Justly may the Church and the Holy Fathers style her: "A blessed earth without a curse," "a paradise without a serpent," "a fertile field without weeds," "a precious fruit without a worm," "a book (of the birth of Christ) without an error," "a rose without thorns," "a mirror without stain," "a serene heaven without a cloud," "a star of the sea that never sets," "the fairest creature of all, whose purity is the greatest after that of God." "Thou art all fair, and there is no spot in thee." Mary is the first among virgins,—she is the only virgin who never was subject to sin.

Let us rejoice with the Mother of God, because God has glorified her through this first and only virginity; but let us also rejoice on account of ourselves; for her virginity has brought forth the most beautiful fruits. She was prefigured in the Old Law, and foretold by the Proph-

ets as the virgin who would become the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of all men from the curse of original sin. For this reason, the Church calls her *the cause of our salvation*. St. Augustine says : "Eve, the mother of men, brought punishment into the world ; Mary, the Mother of Jesus, brought salvation to the world ; with the former, sin began, with the latter, merit ; the one brought us death, the other, life ; the one wounded us, the other healed us." But since, even after the redemption—the inclination to evil still dwells within us, and we are constantly in danger to yielding to it, and thus losing our eternal salvation by sin,—upon whom, after Christ, can we rely with greater confidence, than upon Mary, whom Jesus Christ has given us for a Mother, and who is so solicitous that none of her children may perish ? Ah ! let us have recourse to her with great confidence, especially in all temptations to the sin of impurity, and let us invoke her help and intercession. Above all, let us constantly keep her example before our eyes and strive to imitate it. Although we can never hope to attain her height of immaculate purity, yet we must observe the purity of our state of life, whether we be married or unmarried. We must avoid all sins contrary to, or in the least opposed to, this holy chastity, to-day and all the days of our life. Amen.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

OUR BEST MEANS OF SHARING IN THE PURITY OF MARY.

"Blessed are they that keep my ways, blessed is the man that heareth me, and treasureth up in his heart the precepts and examples of virtue which I have given." (Prov. 8.)

Our holy Mother the Church by applying these words to the Blessed Virgin Mary, exhorts us to study, and endeavor to imitate, her admirable life. Truly happy is he who imitates Mary, since by so doing he imitates Jesus, the King and Model, of all virtues. The life of this incomparable Virgin affords a universal lesson: she teaches us how to demean ourselves in prosperity and adversity, in prayer and exterior occupations, in honors and humiliations. True, we can never attain the perfection with which she performed all her actions; but the closer we imitate her, the greater the perfection of our lives; and there is no one who may not, with the divine assistance, follow her example in the practice of virtue.

We celebrate, to-day, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is an article of faith that Mary was conceived without the stain of original sin. God always adapts the means to the end; and accordingly he prepared the Mother of his Son for her high destiny by granting her extraordinary privileges. Never for a single instant, was she the object of the divine wrath; never for a single instant, the slave of the devil. Hence, the Church, guided as she is by the Spirit of Truth, applies to Mary the words addressed to the spouse in the Canticles: "Thou art all fair, my love, and there is no spot in thee." (Cant. 4: 7.) An abundance of grace was given her to overcome sin in every respect, because she merited to conceive and bring forth him who knew not sin. St. Irenæus, who lived in the second century, says: "It is just that the God of all purity should come forth from the greatest purity, from the purest of all bosoms."

How (you may ask,) can we, in our measure, share in the spotless purity of our immaculate Mother? I answer:

- I. *By the Sacrament of Baptism; and*
- II. *By the Sacrament of Penance.*

1. If St. John was sanctified in his mother's womb, when visited by

Christ and his holy Mother, because he was to go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways, what shall we say of her who was connected with the same Lord by the closest and tenderest tie that can bind a creature to the Creator, and whose perfect holiness seems so necessary a consequence of this mysterious relation. True, as a child of Adam, Mary was either included in the decree, by which death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned, or she was especially exempted by God from the consequences of Adam's guilt; but, in either supposition, she was preserved from ever actually incurring original sin by the application of the Redeemer's merits whom she was to bring forth. God, with whom no work is impossible, could as easily have prevented her incurring the guilt of original sin, as free her from it, after she had incurred it. He would not permit the temple in which he chose to dwell to be defiled by the least blemish; the honor of the Son required, that his Mother should not, even for an instant, be the slave of the devil. The short, but pithy, argument of St. Anselm upon this point, cannot but produce conviction: "*Such a privilege,*" says the saint, "*was suitable to her (Mary's) dignity; it was possible for God to confer it; hence, he conferred it.*"

As for us, we are all, at our very entrance into the world, children of wrath, enemies of God, slaves of the devil, with a corrupt nature that urges us on to all kinds of sin. "Behold," says David, "I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother conceive me." (Ps. 50 : 7.) "As by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death, so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned,"—except Mary. We are born sinners, void of the grace and friendship of God. The only present remedy to take away the guilt of our sin is that which our Redeemer left us in *Baptism*, wherein the merits of his blood are applied to our souls. At Baptism, sanctifying grace was given us, which Mary received at the very instant of her conception. Through this grace we have acquired a right to call God our Father, Jesus Christ our Brother; thereby we were made children of God, disciples of Christ, and heirs of his eternal kingdom, from the right and hope whereof, we had fallen forever. But Jesus Christ frees us in Baptism from original sin and the eternal punishment thereof, yet its penalties which afflicted Adam, the first sinner, still remain to all his posterity, and will continue to remain until the end of time. Our bodies are subject to all kinds of infirmities and death; our souls are subject to ignorance of what is right, to weakness in doing good and resisting evil, to concupiscence which inclines us to evil, or to malice and perverseness of will; and hence proceed all our disorders.

We have been washed and cleansed in the blood of the Lamb, we have been cleansed and purified from original sin by Baptism,—but

how few correspond to that magnificent grace ! How few endeavor by the sanctity of their lives to support the dignity to which they have been exalted, how few to preserve unspotted the robe of innocence wherewith they were clothed at the baptismal font, that brilliant symbol of the purity which should characterize the children of God. Behold, the profession of a Christian obliges you to live in innocence, flying sin more sedulously than the infection of any deadly pestilence, and practising all Christian virtues. To admonish you of this obligation, the priest after having baptized you, lays upon you a white stole, saying : *“Receive this white garment, and see thou carry it without stain before the judgment-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have eternal life,”* thus urging you to preserve unspotted the interior beauty and whiteness which is the special grace of Baptism. O meditate well upon those words, and consider what will befall you at the judgment-seat of God, if you defile your innocence by a life of sin. Your baptismal robe will condemn you on that dreadful day, the priest that baptized you will rise up against you, and demand God's vengeance upon you for abusing the grace of your Baptism !

We should remember that our bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost, and that every principle of reason and Religion imposes on us the obligation of keeping them pure and undefiled. “If any man,” says the Apostle, “violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which you are.” But, alas, how often have we been faithless to our solemn baptismal vows ! We eagerly pursue that which may promote our worldly advantage, but, through an unaccountable infatuation, we neglect to cultivate the grace received at Baptism, which, properly speaking, alone deserves our esteem. We boast of our independence, yet we are not afraid or ashamed to become by sin the wretched slaves of the devil, to relapse, once more, into that degrading bondage in which we had the misfortune to be born, and whence the grace of Baptism has rescued us. We seek with avidity the possession of earthly goods and transitory riches, but the eternal possession of the kingdom of heaven we neglect, nay even despise. Can that man be said to value the grace of Baptism who does not hesitate to exchange it for a filthy momentary pleasure, who deliberately exposes himself to the danger of losing it, who persists in seeking occasions of sin, occasions in which he has already frequently lost it ?

II. A second Baptism still remains, wherein, if you are so unhappy as to have lost it, you may again recover the grace of adoption. It is *the Baptism of Penance*. Have recourse to it with sincerity and confidence. Your heavenly Father ardently wishes to restore you to his friendship ; avail yourselves of the present time ; for, perhaps, time

will soon be no more for you. Though Mary was conceived in the grace of God, without the least stain of sin or the least propensity to evil yet she continually watched over all the motions of her heart, as if her affections, also, were in danger of being seduced by the love of creatures ; she vigilantly guarded her tongue, lest any imprudent expression should escape her mouth. Although the Mother of innocence, she chose to live in the perpetual exercise of penance.

And what do *we* do ? Surrounded by seductive and deceitful enemies, who are incessantly availing ourselves of our natural weakness, we live quite unconcerned, and in the greatest tranquillity. We feel and acknowledge that we are weakness itself, nevertheless we frequently expose ourselves to dangerous occasions. We carry the treasure of grace in an earthen vessel, which may be broken to pieces at the moment we least expect it. How many enemies seek to deprive us of this treasure ! Enemies *within us*, our passions which are never entirely subdued ; enemies *without us*, the spirits of darkness ; enemies *around us*, the allurements of a wicked world. Had we with St. Paul been elevated to the third heaven, still we have every reason to fear being hurled down to the lowest abyss of hell. In vain do we congratulate ourselves on our good dispositions, and on the fervor of our excellent resolutions. One unfortunate moment is sufficient to ruin us for ever. In the practice of virtue, we can never say with certainty that we shall be faithful to-morrow, because we have been faithful to-day. For want of vigilance and co-operation with the grace of God, a soul which has been the object of his choicest favors, may notwithstanding be lost in the end. He who, relying on his former dispositions, does not vigilantly watch over his conduct, will soon relapse into sin. It is hard, I acknowledge, to pass our whole life in watching over our inclinations, in order to fight against them. But no one ever became a saint without vigilance and labor. The salvation of man depends on his correspondence with divine grace, and on his own personal vigilance. Christ tells us in the Gospel that he will come like a thief in the night, at an hour when he is not looked for,—and that, as we know neither the day nor the hour, we should at all times hold ourselves prepared to die. It is necessary to be always in the state of grace, always to be ready to meet the divine Bride-groom whenever he sees fit to come to us.

How often have you resolved to die a thousand times rather than offend God by sin ! How many times have you promised in confession to God and all his saints, to amend your lives, and avoid the occasion of sin—yet have failed to do it ! How often has your confessor exhorted you to listen to the voice of your conscience ? How often have you been told that it is impossible to serve two masters, Christ and the world, Christ and the devil, Christ and the flesh !

How often have you received our Lord in holy Communion, how often has he visited you, and whilst he still remained in your heart, how often have you gone out of church to betray, and crucify him afresh ! Ah ! remember that God is not only a God of mercy ; he is also a God of justice ; and if we abandon him he will abandon us to our own confusion. The Lord will come at an hour when he is not looked for. We must die ; and everything depends upon our last hour. How can we die well, if we do not live well ?—how can we die in the state of grace, if we do not live in the state of grace ? “It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. If the just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the sinner and the wicked appear ?” O how many Christians who think themselves good and just, will be surprised on the day of judgment, to find themselves loaded with heavy debts to the divine justice, because they did not make a profitable use of the means God gave them to become Saints !

Many delay their repentance until their death-bed. Mary and all the Saints experienced how advantageous it is to have borne from one’s youth, the yoke of the Lord. Tell me, is it treating God as God, to reserve for him only the wretched remains of a life which he only bestowed on you, in order that it might be dedicated entirely to his service ? What an insult do we not offer to God when we delay enlisting under his banners until old age has exhausted our strength and disappointment thwarted all our worldly designs ! Did he not resent of old the offering of a diseased or mutilated victim ?

When you promise to give yourselves to God later on, how do you know that you will ever attain that devout old age on which you build your hopes ? Even should you live to grow old, it is much to be feared that you will then carry with impatience the yoke of the Lord, since you take it up at a time when you will be worn out in the service of the world. We learn by the experience of centuries that if with old age, worldlings became better-informed, they seldom become wiser or holier !— “ Lord ! Lord !” said the foolish virgins ; but in vain they knocked at the door ; the terrible voice on the other side cried out to them : “ *Too late ! Too late !*”

A. W. O.S.B.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

THE DIGNITY AND DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN.

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." (John 1: 23.)

After St. John had prepared himself for his great and holy office, by a life of singular austerity, he appeared among the Jews in his thirtieth year, preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins, and baptizing all that came to him for that purpose. Struck with his extraordinary sanctity, the Jews began to think him the long-promised Messiah, or at least his precursors, Elias or Jeremias,—believing that one or other of those ancient Prophets would appear once more on earth before the coming of the expected Redeemer. They, therefore, sent messengers to John who asked him: "Who art thou?" The saint answered: "I am neither Christ, nor Elias, nor one of the Prophets; I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Prepare ye the way of the Lord" (Luke 3: 4); as if he would say: I am the forerunner of the Messiah for whom (since he is soon to appear among you), I am to prepare the way.

How great was the dignity of St. John—to be the Precursor of Christ! In effect, so great was his dignity, that Christ himself says of him: "Amen, I say to you, there hath not risen among them that are born of women, greater than John the Baptist." (Matt. 11: 11.)

We, beloved brethren, have a similar dignity; we, as Christians, have the high dignity of followers of Christ. As St. Chrysostom says: "As Christians, we have a name that is greater than all other names." O that we might never forget this, our especial dignity, and always lead a life worthy of it. In order to move you to this, I shall answer the following questions:

- I. *What dignity have we as Christians? and*
- II. *How must we live according to our dignity as Christians?*

I. Up to the appearance of Jesus Christ among men the Jews were the chosen people of God. By them, the knowledge of the truth was spread throughout the whole human race; from them, the pagans were to learn to adore and serve the true God. To this end, the Lord gave the Israelites his commandments; to this end he raised up amongst

them, from time to time, certain holy Prophets whom he enlightened as to his will, requiring them to announce it again and again to the chosen people. He gave the latter a temple, a sanctuary, in which he wished to dwell to be adored and venerated. When the Redeemer was promised in Paradise, it was decreed that he should be born of the Jews (John 4: 22); and when he came upon earth, he preached first to them the Gospel of his heavenly Father, that, through faith in him and his doctrine they might be made the children of his Father. God wished to be the God of the Jewish people—what a happiness, what a grace !

1. But, when the Jews refused to receive Christ and his doctrine, when they rejected him as the Redeemer of the world, even persecuting him and nailing him to the cross, the threat which Jesus had pronounced was executed: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." (Matt. 21 : 43.) From the Israelites were taken, what St. Paul calls, "the adoption of children, and the glory, and the covenant, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises" (Rom. 9 : 4); all of which was given to those,—whether among Jews, or Gentiles, whom the Apostles converted to a faith in Jesus Christ and his holy Gospel; and who having been received into the Church established by Christ, served God therein, according to the will of his heavenly Father. Yes, my dearly beloved, to Catholic Christians was given the portion of the Jews,—to us, the chosen people, the true children of God, the true followers of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is given the kingdom of faith which the Israelites rejected. What a happiness, what a blessing for us !

2. Of us Catholics, therefore, St. Paul writes: "You are the called of Jesus Christ." (Rom. 1 : 6.) "You are a chosen generation, a holy nation, a purchased people, you are the people of God." (1. Pet. 2 : 9, 10.) Truly, great was the divine love for us, of which St. John says: "Behold, what manner of charity God hath bestowed upon us, that we should be named and should be the sons of God." (1. John 3 : 1.) St. Paul calls upon us to thank God for this great grace, saying: "Give thanks to God the Father, who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints." (Col. 1 : 12.) There is no greater name, than the name of Christian. St. Chrysostom says: "We have a name that is greater than all other names, we are called 'Christians'; we are named, and are, children and friends of God." And St. Maximus says: "Consider your state, O Christian, and recognize how great you are." For this reason, the holy martyrs in the first ages of Christianity, held it to be the greatest honor to be able to glory in the name of Christian. A

certain martyr, being asked by the pagan tyrant : "What is your name ?" replied simply : "I am a Christian !" "Where were you born ?" the tyrant continued to ask ; and the martyr again replied : "I am a Christian !" Thus, to every question he gave the same answer, thinking, no doubt, that there was no greater honor for him than to be able to call himself a Christian, a name derived from Christ. (Euseb. i. 4. c. i. hist. eccles.)

3. In order still more to comprehend the grandeur of a Christian, let us ask ourselves : Whom do we serve, as Christians ? We serve no earthly lord, but the Lord of heaven and earth ; we serve no earthly king, but the King of kings ; we bend our knee not before a mighty potentate of this world, but before the Almighty God in heaven. We stand side by side with the Angels, exclaiming with them : "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty," "heaven and earth are full of thy glory." (Apoc. 4 : 8.) If we were not Christians, we would not adore God, the only true God, but idols of wood and stone. How great, how exalted are we, therefore, above all the people of the earth who know not God, nor him whom he hath sent, Jesus Christ !

4. In order to further understand how great we are as Christians, let us ask what we, as God's chosen and highly-favored ones, have to expect here in his kingdom, the Church, and hereafter in the kingdom of heaven. We are the children of God, who partake of all the graces of the Church for the obtaining of life everlasting, especially of the sacred Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and who, if we are faithful, shall enjoy, beyond the grave, the happiness of eternal life, the full vision and blissful possession of God in heaven. For this grace Jesus Christ himself prayed to his heavenly Father, in these words : "Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me, may be with me, that they may see my glory." (John. 17 : 24.) The world calls the first-born of a king or emperor great, because he is entitled by his birthright, one day to occupy the throne of his father ; but we, as Christians, are greater, because we are destined to occupy a throne in heaven, in the Kingdom of our Father, the Almighty King of kings.

5. If great was St. John the Baptist, because he was the precursor of Christ, great, also, are we, because we are the followers of Christ. Let us then give thanks to God for this great grace—for having chosen us to be members of his Church and followers of his divine Son. A greater grace than this, he could not have given us, even if he should have raised us to the highest honors and dignities of this world.

To be a Christian is more than to be a king or an emperor. The pious king, Alphonsus of Castile, was used upon every occasion to show to the world how immeasurably higher than his royal crown, he appreciated the grace of being a Christian. Not seldom at the consideration of that grace, he burst into tears, saying : "Unceasingly I give thanks to God, not for being a king, but for being a Christian !"

II. But this dignity and grace will profit us nothing, unless we labor to make ourselves worthy of it by a life becoming the children of God. Our divine Saviour, one day, said to his Apostles : "You are my friends, if you do the things that I command you." (John 15 : 14.) These words are addressed to us as well ; we are friends, children, and followers of Christ, if we do what he has commanded us, if we fulfil the obligations to which the name and state of a Christian oblige us. "If you be the children of Abraham," said our Lord to the Jews, "do the works of Abraham." (John 8 : 39.) "Wherefore, brethren," further says St. Peter, "labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your vocation and election." (2. Pet. 1 : 10.) St. Augustine also says : "The name of a Christian does not constitute his dignity ; it profits him nothing to be called a Christian unless he shows by works that he *is* a Christian." But to what does the profession of a Christian oblige us ? No more, and no less than that he who bears his name, should obey the doctrine, and follow the example, of Jesus.

1. He must obey the teaching of Jesus. He must believe all that God has revealed and proposes to our faith by the Church, for "without faith it is impossible to please God." (Hebr. 11 : 6.) Jesus emphatically requires this faith, when he says : "He that believeth, shall be saved." (Mark 16 : 16.) But if the Christian believes in Jesus Christ, he must not, as the Apostle says (Tit. 1 : 16), deny him in his deeds ; or, in other words, he must do the work which his faith commands. He must lead a moral, good, and chaste life,—for, blessed are the clean of heart ; he must live in peace with all, for, blessed are the peacemakers. He must practise the virtue of mercy ; for, blessed are the merciful (Matt. 5 : 6, 7, 8) ; he must banish all envy and hatred out of his heart ; for, thus reads the doctrine of Jesus : "As you would that men should do to you, do you also to them in like manner." (Luke 6 : 31.) He must practise the virtue of temperance, to which Jesus admonishes us in these words : "Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness." (Luke 21 : 34.) In a word, as a Christian, he must fulfil the commandments and doctrines of Christ, in order not to dishonor him whose name he bears, as the Apostle says : "Thou that makest thy boast of the law, by the

transgression of the law, dishonorest God." (Rom. 2: 23.) Alexander the Great said once to one of his soldiers, who also bore the name of Alexander, but disgraced it by his cowardice : "Change either your name or your conduct." Christ says the same to those nominal Christians who do not live according to their belief : "Change either your name or your conduct."

2. Those who bear the name of Christian, must moreover, follow the example of Christ. "I have given you an example," says the divine Redeemer himself, "that as I have done to you, so you do also." (John 13: 15.) Christ must, as it were, live in his followers ; the life of a Christian must be a reflection of the life of Christ, it must be conformable to the life of Christ. The Christian must be able to say of himself, with St. Paul : "I live, now not I ; but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. 2: 20.) No one can justly be called a Christian who does not as far as in him lies, become conformable to Christ. We must become conformable to him in all virtues ;—in the virtue of charity, wherewith he embraced all, the good as well as the bad ; wherewith he loved even his enemies, and did good to those who did evil to him ; in the virtue of meekness and patience, wherewith he bore all contumely and injury, yea, even the rudest insults and outrages of his enemies without contradiction ; in the virtue of humility, which led him, the highest in heaven, to assume the form of a servant, and humble himself to the most ignominious death of the cross. We must become conformable to him in that purity of heart which enabled him to cry out to the Jews: "Which of you shall convince me of sin ?" The example of his virtues should be continually before our eyes, should be the model of our lives, to the likeness of which we should faithfully regulate all our thoughts, words, and deeds. If thus we faithfully imitate our great Prototype, Jesus,—if we live altogether according to his doctrine and the prescriptions of his Gospel, then we shall indeed be true Christians, true children and followers of Christ, and as such after death, shall rival, in our measure, the greatness of St. John the Baptist, in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

HUMILITY.

“*Who art Thou ?*” (John 1 : 19.)

There were many great saints and prophets in the Old Law,—such as Abraham, Moses, Elias, and thousands of others ; yet the Son of God declared that there had not been a greater among those born of women, than John the Baptist. His life was one continued miracle. His birth was foretold by an angel ; his name was given him from heaven. He was miraculously conceived of parents far advanced in years, and sanctified in his mother’s womb. Whilst yet unborn, he adored the world’s Redeemer ; at his birth, he filled all with spiritual joy, and restored speech to his father. Retiring in his early youth into a desert, he there led an angelic life of seclusion and prayer. He preached the baptism of penance, was sent to prepare the world to receive its Redeemer ; he was deputed to baptize him, and to point out to others the Holy One whom the Prophets had only foretold at a distance. Thus, he was “a prophet, and more than a prophet.”

Now, if we inquire what was the distinguishing virtue of this great saint, we shall find that it was his great humility. Of this, the Gospel gives us a signal example. The Jews seeing his miraculous life and eminent sanctity, sent to him a solemn embassy to know if he was the Messiah, who, according to the Prophets, was expected about that time, to appear in the world. John confessed in all humility that he was not the Christ. He told them the real Messiah was in their midst, and that he himself was unworthy to untie the latchet of his shoe. When they asked him if he were not Elias or, at least, a prophet, he again replied in the negative ; and finally, being pressed by the deputies for a definite reply to those that sent them, he made answer : “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord.” (John 1 : 23.) Nothing but a voice, a breath, an empty sound, a mere nothing,—and he, according to the testimony of Christ himself, the greatest among all born of women !

Miserable creatures that we are, how can our hearts be so full of pride. We think ourselves to be something, whereas we are really nothing. Would that we had but a tittle of John’s humility ! Without it, we cannot make one step towards perfection ; with it, we can attain a perfect mas-

tery of our passions, and thoroughly sanctify our souls ; for, of all virtues, Humility is

I. *The most acceptable to Almighty God, and*

II. *The surest ground-work of all spiritual progress.*

I. Humility is, of all virtues, the most pleasing to God. Pride is the greatest of sins ; it is the vice of devils, and is directly opposed to the majesty of the Most High. Other sinners seek to hide themselves from God ; the proud openly oppose and insult him. They wish to glorify themselves at his expense ; they would fain be honored in their wickedness, and esteemed wise in their folly. Pride is the most pernicious of sins. Oftentimes, it perverts even the most advanced in virtue whom no other vice could overcome ; it has ruined by discord and factions, the most flourishing societies, families, and kingdoms. Wherever this vice predominates, it is a sign of reprobation, as in Lucifer, who is the king of the children of pride ; it is, in fact, the special characteristic of all reprobate souls ; and is odious to God, who resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Pride is said to be the root and origin of all other sins ; it was the first sin committed above—in heaven ; and the first below—on earth—bad angels and ambitious men alike, aspiring to be as God. Hence, the Lord thunders forth from every part of holy Writ, the most dreadful curses against this vice ; he says that the proud are an abomination to him ; he declares that he hates and abhors them. But, as he detests and abhors pride as his capital enemy, so he loves and cherishes above all things Humility. It is to the humble he promises all his favors ; he solemnly engages his word always to hear their prayers : “The prayer of him that humbleth himself penetrateth the clouds, and returneth not back till the Most High regard it.” The publican was a sinner when he went up into the Temple to pray, but, striking his breast in humble contrition and repentance, his prayer pierced the clouds, and he went down to his house justified, whilst the prayer of the proud Pharisee was rejected.

Having true humility, God will deny us nothing ; heaven is at the command of humble souls, and all its treasures are reserved for the lowly. Christ tells us that unless we become as little children,—that is, full of humble, self-distrustful simplicity,—we shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is in proportion to our humility, that God bestows his graces upon us. He usually prepares men for extraordinary graces by greater humiliation, as he did with regard to the Chanaanite woman ; first making her compare herself to a whelp, that licks up the crumbs from the master’s table, and then granting her request, and openly eulogizing her extraordinary faith.

Mankind's inheritance from its great progenitor, Adam, was a cursed spirit of pride. Human nature was wounded and diseased to its very core by this terrible vice. To heal so deep a wound, to cure so inveterate a distemper, the Son of God humbled himself so far as to become man, to be born in extreme poverty, to live in the utmost contempt and want, to die on an ignominious cross, so mangled and outraged as to lack almost the semblance of humanity: "I am a worm, not a man, the outcast of men, and despised by the people."

Can we pretend, whilst filled with vain conceit of ourselves, ever to be members of so humble a Head, ever to be enrolled among the disciples of Christ and the heirs of his heavenly kingdom? No, certainly. He strictly enjoins on all his followers to imitate his example. Having waited on his disciples at supper and washed their feet, he tells them: "I have given you an example, that as I have done, you do also." Unless we imitate our divine Master in this heavenly virtue, unless we become like children by humility, we can never hope to be pleasing in his sight or become sharers of his eternal Kingdom.

II. But humility is not only the most acceptable virtue in the sight of God, it is the ground-work and foundation of all Christian perfection; without it there can be no true virtue.

The Holy Ghost assures us that pride is the beginning of all sin. There is no vice which does not owe its rise to pride; for this is not merely a distinctly capital sin, it is also a general vice, attendant upon all others. Other vices are directly opposed and directly destructive to but one virtue, but pride opposes and destroys at once all virtues. This tyrant of passions has no sooner seized upon a soul than it delivers her over to all other sins, as its cruel ministers and agents, to be laid waste by them. Nay, it is often an effect of God's mercy to permit the proud soul to fall into some palpably gross sin, that she may be brought to open her eyes. Instance David, Peter, and St. Mary Magdalen.

But, as pride is the fortress of the devil, and the root and source of all sin, so has Christ given us a proper remedy against it, by making humility the foundation of all virtue, without which no structure of piety is well grounded. Humility is furthermore the guardian as well as the ground-work of all virtues; without its vigilant care, all the treasures of the soul are liable to be stolen away by the devil. St. Anthony, in a vision, saw the entire universe set in snares and dangers, and having asked in a fright, who could escape such perils, he heard a voice saying: "Humility shall defend us."

Humility is the foundation of virtue, because without it there can be

no true virtue. All the virtues that the heathen philosophers possessed were false and counterfeit ; and accordingly they vanished like smoke in the moment of trial. He who attempts to acquire any virtue without humility, does but scatter dust before the wind, pour water through a sieve, cast his treasures into a bag full of holes.

Humility is the foundation of virtue, because without it we can neither begin nor persevere steadfastly in virtue. Hence, St. Augustine says : " The first disposition to a virtuous life is humility, the second is humility, the third is humility ; and, as often as you ask me, so often I shall answer the same : Humility." It is by humility alone, that we can ever hope to make the first step towards acquiring any virtue ; and it is by humility alone, that we can preserve what we have acquired, or make further progress in virtue.

Take away pride, and you will purge the world from all sins. Were we as humble as St. John the Baptist, we should likewise be as free from sin, have as complete a mastery over our passions, and be as much enriched with all excellent virtues. If we desire to be great, we must begin by being little. The higher the edifice we desire to raise, the deeper must be the foundation ; the greater the degree of perfection we aim at, the greater must be our humility. As a tree grows and flourishes the more, the deeper its roots shoot into the earth, so the greater your humility, the higher will be your virtue.

St. Simon Stylites, when he first consecrated himself to a more perfect life, had a mysterious vision. He seemed to himself to be digging the foundations of a very high edifice, and being weary and spent with labor, he heard a voice saying to him three times : "*Dig deeper, dig deeper, dig deeper !*"—by which he understood that he could never labor too much to acquire a sufficiently perfect humility to serve as a solid foundation for the edifice of Christian perfection.

Praise and thanksgiving be forever to the infinite goodness of God, who has made our perfection consist in a thing so easy, so proportioned to every one's capacity ! Had he commanded us as earthly kings their generals, to fight bloody battles, to take cities, subjugate entire nations, many might justly complain that they possess not the ability and prowess for such magnificent undertakings. But God requires neither strength nor strategy, neither genius nor extraordinary qualification—he only commands us to humble ourselves.

Let us then endeavor to the utmost of our power to acquire the virtue of humility ; to banish from our hearts that accursed pride which is the spring of all other passions, and which too often, alas ! infects the best of our actions.—Such foolish self-sufficiency can never find its fixed abode in the heart of him that knows himself, his beginning and his end, what he was, what he is, what he is to be ; what he has, and what

he has not ; for the humble man is well aware that sin and corruption, weakness and frailty, misery and decay, are the inalienable portion of every child of Adam. Reflecting well upon these points, you will see that you have no reason to glorify yourselves in anything ; and, far from preferring yourselves to the lowliest, you will learn to despise no one more than yourselves. The contemplation of the immense greatness and majesty of God cannot but crush the least uprising of vain-glory, presumption, or ambition. Oh blindness of man ! why will you not practise what is most essential to a happy life and a happy death—humility ? Why refuse to bear the most distinguishing characteristic of a Christian, that beautiful virtue taught by the example of the only-begotten Son of the Most High, who being God, took upon himself the humiliating form of a servant ? Remember, humility is the only virtue that will exalt you before God and man ; for Mary, the Queen of the humble, proclaims to us that “he hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble” (Luke 1 : 52); and the tongue of divine Truth confirms his blessed Mother’s words, saying : “Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled ; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” (Luke 14 : 11.)

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

PENANCE AND GOOD WORKS.

"All flesh shall see the salvation of God." (Luke 3: 6.)

We celebrate to-day, my beloved Christians, the last Sunday of Advent, the last Sunday of that holy season, which the Church in her wisdom has set apart as a time of preparation for the solemnity of our Saviour's birth. By her prayers and canticles during these days, she reminds us of the longing of the Fathers of the Old Law for the coming of the Redeemer. Hence she cries out in the Introit of the Mass: "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just: let the earth be opened, and bud forth a Saviour." (Is. 45: 8.)

The time having arrived when their desire was to be gratified, we behold the Virgin Mother of the royal house of David, bearing in her arms the divine Babe of Bethlehem. The sceptre is taken away from Juda—swords are turned into plow-shares—spears into sickles,—the temple of Janus is closed,—the whole world reposes in security and peace, under the wings of Rome's unconquered eagles. Everything announces that the Prince of peace is born, whom the prophets had foretold, the Desired of all nations, the Expectation of the people.

For three Sundays the Church addresses to us the cry of St. John the Baptist: "Do penance, for the kingdom of God is at hand. Prepare ye the ways of the Lord, make straight his paths!" Let us attentively consider these words, for they contain a sublime lesson for us, and they teach us how we are to prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus into our hearts, for a worthy celebration of our Saviour's natal day. This we can do

I. *By bringing forth worthy fruits of penance; and*

II. *By practising works of mercy to the poor.*

1. On the banks of the river Jordan, we behold a man attired in a garment of camel's hair with a leathern girdle about his loins; he cries out to the multitudes: "Do penance, for the kingdom of God is at hand. Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths; every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, the

crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways plain, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

This extraordinary man, St. John the Baptist, is preaching the baptism of penance unto the remission of sin. What else does he say but : Prepare yourselves for the reception of the King of kings—? He is holy (he says), nothing unholy or defiled can stand before him. Therefore, turn from your evil ways, do penance, and "be converted to the Lord with all your heart in fasting, weeping, and mourning." Humble yourselves before God. Change your way of thinking and acting. Amend your lives. Endeavor to do that which is right, just, and well-pleasing to God.

This man on the banks of the Jordan says to you : "There are within you the deep voids, or valleys, of a want of faith, want of piety, want of love and confidence in God. Fill up these valleys, if you desire the Lord to come to you." He says to you : "Behold in your souls the mountains of pride, the hills of self-love, of selfishness, of bold self-trust and self-sufficiency ! Down with them—level them flat—if you desire Christ to make his abode with you !" "Behold, again," he says, "these crooked ways of false maxims and principles, wrong, unjust purposes, sinuous, perverse actions, double-dealing and uncharitableness in your judgments. Make straight what is crooked, avoid the serpentine course of lust, the crooked ways of deceit, and cunning of slander and detraction, of calumny, and hypocrisy ; and walk in the straight, open paths of virtue, justice and sincerity towards God, towards yourself, and towards your neighbor. There is a great deal of unevenness, roughness and hardness in and about you ; you are governed by an unbridled passion ; you are choleric, obstinate, irritable ; you have so little love, so little amiability and gentleness. Remove all these stumbling blocks. Be your own severe task-master ; put on the virtues of patience, meekness and modesty ; have good-will, and peace with all men. Make plain what is rough,—make smooth what is uneven.

The man on the banks of the river Jordan, in his garment of camel's hair, and his leathern girdle, says : You are too extravagant, too fond of dress and luxury ; you are too full of vanity and pride ! When the heart clings to dress, and show, and the like toys, it has no room for the poor crib of Jesus. We are too much given to study our own pleasure and ease. Life was not meant to be a path of flowers ; the kingdom of Christ does not consist in vanity, parties, theatres, concerts, dances, diversions, idleness. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." (Matt. 11: 12.) The soul enslaved to the riches and pleasures of this world has no desire to go to Bethlehem and kneel in prostrate adoration before an humble, incarnate God.

"The axe," cries out the Baptist, "is laid to the root of the trees.

Every tree, therefore, that yieldeth not good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire . . . He who is to come after me, is stronger than I . . .” With the fan “in his hand, . . . he will thoroughly cleanse his flour, and gather his wheat into the barn ; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” (Matt 3 : 10, 12.) Learn from this, that a thorough change of mind and a true conversion is required. As the people in the days of John, could not prepare the way of the Lord, and render themselves worthy of his grace, except by sincere repentance, so it is certain that we must rend our hearts and not our garments, and be converted to the Lord ; we must totally die to what we are, and be transformed into new beings, for “the grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men, instructing us, that renouncing impiety, and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and piously in this world.” (Tit. 2 : 11, 12.)

Our divine Lord’s advent is a cause of joy to the just and innocent. Pure and innocent were the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, to whom an angel brought the happy tidings : “I announce to you great joy. This day is born to you a Saviour, Christ the Lord.” “Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will !” Consequently, we must be of good will, if we wish the birth of Christ to be a joyful event for us. If we be not of good will, we should, after a sufficient examination of our conscience, approach the sacred tribunal of Penance, and humbly and contritely confess our sins, that we may be worthy to receive pardon from him who came “to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19 : 10.) And thus, clothed with the nuptial garment of divine grace, adorned with the pearls of justice and holiness, we should approach the table of the Lord, and receive him into our hearts. We are all invited to this great Supper. Let us not come to it without the requisite wedding garment, lest the Lord becoming angry should order his servants to cast us out into exterior darkness. Let us spend some considerable time in the purification of our souls, that the Lord may find nothing unclean therein ; for we are invited to a table where no common food, but the Bread of Heaven, having the sweetness of every taste, is set before us.

What a happiness is ours ! We are not only allowed with the shepherds and the Magi to adore our Infant Redeemer ; more highly favored still, we are allowed to receive him into our hearts in holy Communion. Now, perhaps, you better understand the words of our Saviour, that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the greatest in the Old Law ? (Matt. 11 : 11.) The shepherds and the Wise Men were only allowed to worship him ; St. John the Baptist, the greatest among all born of women, was only permitted to point him out to the multitude, but we Christians enjoy the privilege of receiving him into our hearts and of being closely united to him. Receive

him, then, worthily at Christmas ; prepare yourselves to become, and to remain, the living temples of the Most High God.

II. That we may worthily celebrate Christmas, besides bringing forth worthy fruits of penance, we must make sure our vocation and election by good works (1. Pet. 1 : 10) ; "for charity (to the poor) covereth a multitude of sins." Let that which inordinate pleasures and extravagance in dress would squander, be given to the poor and the needy ; for it is not just that some should wallow in luxuries, while others are in danger of starvation. We are all children of the same Father, heirs of the same kingdom, brothers and sisters, who have been purchased with the same ransom by the same Jesus Christ ; we all came into this world in one and the same way, and we shall leave it equals, entitled only to a shroud and a coffin. If you had been an inhabitant of Bethlehem on the first Christmas eve, you would certainly have received the Holy Family into your house ; instead of refusing them shelter, you would have welcomed them with open arms, and considered nothing too good for them. Why do you not do now, what you would then have done ? Is it really in your power to do it ? Listen to the words of Christ : "As long as you did it to the least of my brethren, you did it to me." (Matt. 25 : 40.) Whatsoever you do to a poor child, Christ who by his Incarnation became our brother, looks upon it as done to himself. There is a fine opportunity given to you, almost every day, to show your love and gratitude to your Redeemer. Be a friend to the widow, be a father to the orphan ; clothe the freezing pauper, feed the hungry, instruct the ignorant, defend the oppressed, protect the abandoned and persecuted, and you will be a foster-father of Jesus, who has said : "As long as you did it to the least of my brethren, you did it to me."

Beautiful and praiseworthy is the custom of making presents to the children on Christmas day ; for it is in a special manner the festival of the children. Jesus was once a little child, Jesus tenderly loved little children and delighted to gather them about him. Now, if, while the children are rejoicing over the gifts which they see with their eyes and hold in their hands, we remind them not to forget that gift of the heavenly Father, which the eyes do not see, nor the hands hold, viz: the gift of the only begotten Son of God, their brother, friend, and Saviour,—if this true significance of Christmas-presents were thus explained to the children, who would not praise this custom ? Again, if instead of giving so many and such costly presents to the little ones, as is the custom in these days,—presents which give only a short-lived joy and are soon broken or forgotten,—would it not be well for parents and friends to say to them : " Dear children, let us clothe the infant

Jesus ; let us feed Christ ; let us receive him into our house ;" and then, show them how to clothe a poor child with the money that would have been squandered upon useless toys. Provide a needy family with the necessaries of life, pay their house rent, that they may not fear to be without shelter, at the same time inculcating on your children's minds the words of the Gospel : "As long as you did it to the least of my brethren, you did it to me,"—truly, that would be celebration of Christmas in a really Christian sense.

Prepare, my beloved, for a worthy celebration of that great feast by hearing and obeying the voice that calls us to repentance, making ready in our hearts, a fit dwelling-place for our Lord, and removing therefrom all that is displeasing to him. If Christ be born a thousand times in Bethlehem, but not in your hearts, it will avail you nothing. To this end, the Church is, as it were, in labor, during the holy season of Advent. She cries out to us in the words of St. Paul : "My little children, I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you." (Gal. 4 : 19.) Christ is formed in us, if his spirit be formed in us, if we walk as blameless and sincere children of God, without reproof, in the midst of a depraved and perverse generation. (Phil. 2 : 15.) Our holy Mother, therefore, invites us to a worthy reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist, and exhorts us to banish the old leaven of sin and vice from our hearts and celebrate the festival of the Nativity in innocence and purity of heart.

Let us, then, hasten with the shepherds to the holy place, the house of God, where, as at Bethlehem, we shall hear the celestial melody : "Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will," and the happy tidings : "This day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord ;" and looking at the altar where Jesus is present in the Blessed Eucharist, we shall rejoice at the words of the credo : Christ came from heaven, assumed flesh in the chaste womb of the Virgin Mary, by the agency of the holy Ghost—became man for us sinners, to redeem and save us from sin and hell. As the shepherds prostrated themselves before the crib of the Infant Jesus, so let us reverently kneel before the altar, and offer to him the sacrifice of our praises, the undivided affection of our hearts, devoutly meditating the while on the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and thanksgiving for ever. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

NOT ONLY FRUITS OF PENANCE, BUT WORTHY FRUITS OF PENANCE.

"Bring forth fruit worthy of penance." (Luke 3 : 8.)

By divine decree, St. John was sent before the advent of the Messiah, in order to prepare the way for him. And this he did, by calling all without exception to the practice of penance. The Gospel of this day says : "He came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins. Prepare ye the way of the Lord : make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low : and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways plain." The Baptist explains to us the real meaning of these figurative expressions by his after-words to the multitude, when he said to them : "Bring forth, therefore, fruit worthy of penance. For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree, therefore, that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire."

His stern call is to penance. To this he invites the people, assuring them they must one and all do penance, if they expect to profit by the coming of the long-desired Redeemer.

Now, as we, too, shall shortly celebrate once more the birthday of the Lord, the Church, during the whole season of Advent, causes the above-mentioned words of the Baptist to resound in our ears. By nothing can we better prepare ourselves for the great solemnity of Christmas, than by following St. John's salutary admonitions to penance. And for this reason, I shall speak to you, to-day, on *Penance*, and explain to you, as the holy Precursor again and again explained to the people of his time, that we must not only bring forth

I. *Fruits of penance*, but furthermore

II. *Worthy fruits of penance*.

I. "*Bring forth fruits of penance*," St. John repeatedly cried out to the Jewish people. His words are equally as well addressed to us. We, too, must bring forth fruits of penance.—First of all, you must know what is to be understood by works, by fruits, of penance. As often as

one denies to himself some lawful gratification, either in satisfaction for past sins, or as a preventive against future ones; so often does he do a work of penance, so often does he bring forth a fruit of penance. A few examples will illustrate this. Every man is allowed to eat and drink, as much as his natural necessity requires. Now, if one deny himself something in food or drink, because in the past he was given to eating or drinking too much, he brings forth fruit of penance. Another could enjoy some innocent pleasure,—some beautiful sight, some sweet music, some delightful companionship; but he denies it to himself, fearing that he might thereby be drawn into sin, as many others have been before him. He, too, brings forth fruit of penance. But the intentions of all such works must be supernatural. If a man deny himself this or that dish, this or that liquor, this or that amusement, because it is forbidden by his physician, or would be detrimental to his bodily health, he brings forth thereby no fruit of penance. In order to bear fruit, a work of penance must be done (as I have already said), to make reparation for past sins, or serve as a preventive of future ones.

To all men are the words of St. John addressed: "Bring forth fruits of penance." It is clear that *we* must bring forth such fruits.

1. *Because we have often sinned, and*
2. *Because we are always in danger of sinning.*

1. You have often sinned. Many times you have done what it was not lawful for you to do. It is to be hoped that you have repented of your sins, and sincerely confessed them; and that God, according to his great mercy, has had regard to your sorrowful contrition and your firm purpose of amendment, and has completely forgiven them. In the holy Sacrament of Penance he has remitted to you the guilt of sin and the eternal punishment of hell; but alas! the temporal punishment still remains. This is an article of faith; that only a portion of one's temporal punishment is remitted in the Sacrament of Penance, although the guilt of sin and the eternal punishment due it are entirely remitted. What remains of temporal punishment, man himself must either cancel here below, or hereafter in purgatory. In the Sacrament of Baptism, God remits all punishments, temporal as well as eternal. But with those who sin again after Baptism, God deals as a father deals with his children. The latter willingly pardons his child a first fault, only admonishing it not to repeat the offence. But if the child commits the same fault again and again, the father no longer takes it so easy. Though he forgive the young offender, though he does not cast him off altogether, he still imposes a punishment upon him. So with our heavenly Father. The first time in Baptism, he forgives us all guilt and punishment. But if,

afterwards, we sin again and again, whilst he does not reject the truly repentant sinner, he yet imposes upon him temporal punishments. And these he does not remit entirely in the holy tribunal, but we can cancel them by fruits of penance,—that is, by denying ourselves something licit or innocent as in satisfaction for past offences. Thus, you perceive how necessary it is that we do penance or bring forth fruits of penance.

All the Saints of the Old and the New Testament have brought forth such fruits of penance. Look at David, the pious king of Israel. He had, as you know, grievously sinned against God. He bitterly bewailed, and repented of, his sin, and the prophet Nathan announced to him in the name of God that it was remitted and its guilt forgiven. Nevertheless, David during his whole remaining life continued to mortify himself and to do penance for that sin. Since we too have sinned, since we have often done unlawful and forbidden things, nothing remains for us now but to deny ourselves lawful and innocent things, and to practise good works of supererogation, if we would pay the debt of divine justice for our sins. But, "Suppose," you say, "I have committed no grievous sin after Baptism?" Even then you are not exempt from the obligation of performing works of penance, for we must do penance, not only because we have sinned in the past, but also, —

2. That we may be preserved from sin in the future. He who never restrains himself, who never denies himself what is lawful, will soon fall into unlawful and sinful actions. Most young people hold the frequenting of ball-rooms to be something lawful, and avail themselves of every opportunity of participating in the dance. The result is that very many lose their virtue and innocence. Because they refuse to deny themselves foolish dances, they are carried away into dangerous occasions and fall into manifest sins. Certain kinds of dances may be indifferent and allowable (St. Francis de Sales once said that the best of them are good for nothing); still if young people would not run the risk of falling into sin, they must give up going to balls. As often as they stay away from the ball-room with this intention, and deny themselves an innocent dance, they perform a work of penance, bring forth fruits of penance.

Such fruits of penance you perceive in St. John the Baptist. He not only preached, but also practised, penance. He lived in the wilderness; his food consisted of wild honey and locusts; his drink, of fresh water; his clothing, of a garment of camel's hair. Why did he live so austere-ly? To atone for his past sins and iniquities? O no, he was holy and innocent, he was sanctified even in his mother's womb. He denied himself all the conveniences of life, in order to avoid the sins of the

people of his time, who lived in luxury and abundance. He left the world and its joys, in order not to fall into the sins of the children of the world. And, by practising so severe a penance, he became so great a saint. All the saints, without exception, held it to be necessary to fly even from lawful pleasures, to refrain from unforbidden gratifications, in order to preserve virtue and innocence. How much more is this necessary for us who are so weak and frail? It is just because people do no penance, do not impose any mortification on themselves, or practise any restraint or self denial, that virtue, innocence, and holiness of life are so rare among us.

Not only, however, must we do penance in general, but as St. John admonishes us, we must bring forth worthy fruits of penance.

II. The fruits of penance are worthy, if they are proportioned :

1. *To the number,*
2. *To the grievousness, and*
3. *To the kind of sins committed.*

1. The oftener one has sinned, the more fruits of penance he must bring forth. The oftener he has done unlawful things, the oftener he must deny himself lawful things. If one who has often and grievously sinned should do only as much penance as another who has sinned only once against the divine law, he would, indeed, bring forth fruits, but not worthy fruits of penance, because his penitential works would be in no proportion to the number of his sins. Mary of Egypt lived for seventeen years in the world as a public sinner. After that, being converted by the grace of God, she spent forty years in the desert in constant prayer, fasting, and mortification. That is what is called bringing forth worthy fruits of penance.

How foolish, then, are those who say : "I have sinned once ; it does not, therefore, matter if I repeat this sin ten, twenty, or a hundred times. It all amounts to the same thing : it is settled in one confession !" Not merely have such persons no conception of the Sacrament of Penance ; but, as long as they think and speak thus, they are utterly unworthy of absolution. Not to speak of the habit of sin contracted by frequent relapses, or of the risk the habitual sinner runs of never being converted ;—it is not all the same whether you sin once or ten times. True, you may obtain absolution for a number of sins, by one confession ; but, if you have sinned ten or twenty times, you will have to practise much harder and longer penance, than if you had sinned only once. And if you neglect to cancel these debts of temporal punishment here,

below, you must atone for them hereafter in that purgatorial prison whence no one shall be released till he has paid the last farthing.

2. What has been said of the number of sins, holds good also of their grievousness. The more grievous the sin, the more austere and persevering the penance. In the first ages of Christianity, penances for sin were appointed and regulated by ecclesiastical canons. According to these, a much harder and longer punishment was imposed upon the adulterer and the apostate, than upon another who had told a lie or been guilty of a trifling disobedience. So, even in our own days, the penance must be proportioned to the magnitude of the sin

3. Finally, to bring forth worthy fruits of penance, our satisfaction must correspond to the nature of the sin. The divine law is but one ; yet it may be violated in a variety of ways. He who has sinned by pride, must do penance by voluntary humiliation. He who has sinned by avarice or injustice, must do penance not only by restoring unjustly-acquired goods, but also by doing works of mercy and charity. Zacchæus was ready to bring forth such worthy fruits of penance. He said to the Lord : " If I have wronged any one, I restore four-fold." He was prepared not only to restore his unjust possessions, but, as it were, to pay compound interest to his creditors. The same applies to all cases. He who has sinned by intemperance, let him do penance by fasting ; he who has sinned by sloth in the service of God, let him redouble now his fervor in prayer and meditation ; he who has sinned by talkativeness, cursing, swearing, slander, detraction, calumny, let him do penance by silence, bridling his tongue, and refraining from talkative society.

You will now sufficiently comprehend what you have to understand by fruits of penance, and by worthy fruits of penance. You also comprehend how necessary it is that all without exception—the just as well as the unjust—should bring forth worthy fruits of penance. " Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire." Necessary, however, as these works of penance are, they are almost entirely neglected in these self-indulgent days of ours. The sense of these holy exercises has been almost wholly lost to the Christians of modern times. They will not perceive the obligation of doing penance for their sins. They confess their sins, and leave the rest to God, who (they tell you), will make it all right. The legitimate result of all this is, that sin is not feared, because the bitter fruits of evil-doing is often not tasted for a long time to come and sinners do not feel at once the punishments which are an inseparable concomitant of sin. If after every sin we imposed upon ourselves and resolutely performed a

certain corresponding penance, the inclination to sin would soon abate, and we would become better, and more pious, Christians. However, though we may postpone, we cannot escape these penitential works. If we do not now cancel our debts by voluntary penances, we shall be obliged to atone for them hereafter. In the world to come, inexorable Justice, not gentle Mercy, sits upon the bench. Think well on this ; and henceforth be fervent in the practice of penitential works, fulfilling constantly the injunction of the Holy Writ : " Bring forth worthy fruits of penance."

CHRISTMAS DAY.

THE ATTENDANT CIRCUMSTANCES OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY.

"This day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ our Lord." (Luke 2 : 11.)

Adam and Eve having by sin lost their original justice and holiness, man became miserable above all other creatures. But he was not to remain in this unhappy state ; what had been forfeited was to be restored ; man was to be re-instated in his original dignity : "Mercy and Truth have met each other ; Justice and Peace have kissed." (Ps. 84 : 11.) Satisfaction having been made to truth and justice, peace and mercy were to return to earth once more. But how could this be done ? By the blessed advent of the Son of God upon earth. This is the day of his birth. And for this reason, our joy is exceeding great ; "for a child is born to us, a son is given to us, upon whose shoulders is government, and whose name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace." (Is 9 : 6.) For this reason, the heavenly hosts sang in that holy night: "Glory to God in the highest ; and on earth, peace to men of good will." (Luke 2 : 14.)

Let us occupy ourselves, to-day, with this blessed birth of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and the better to excite our attention, and inflame our love, let us carefully consider

- I. *Whence,*
- II. *Why,*
- III. *How,* and
- IV. *When and where,* the God-Man came into the world ?

I. "Thou shalt bring forth a Son," said the Angel to Mary, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High." (Luke 1 : 31, 32.) Great, indeed, is he who is called the Son of the Most High, who "thought it no robbery himself to be equal to God." (Phil. 2 : 6.) And whose kingdom shall endure for ever and ever. O mystery of mysteries ! The infinite God, he whom heaven and earth cannot contain, who by His all-powerful word created all things,—to-day enters the world as a simple little babe,

divested of all his glory and majesty. Behold him in the crib, a weeping child, poor and helpless, and yet, your God, your Saviour, your All. *Whence* does he come ?

He comes from the heart of God the Father into the virginal womb of Mary ; he comes from the heights of heaven into the depths of this valley of tears, from riches into poverty, from heavenly perfection into earthly human weakness, from the glory of heaven into the misery of this earth. O what an exchange ! What an infinite distance !

II. And why does he come down from his throne of glory into this miserable world ? Ah ! in order to seek the lost sheep that had strayed away from the ninety and nine faithful ones ; for our sake he came ; in order to make the misery of this world endurable ; to show us the way to heaven, yea, to give us heaven itself through his holy Passion and death. The sentence had already been pronounced upon us poor, insolvent debtors ; we were to be lost for ever. Full of compassion the Son of God leaves his throne in heaven ; he descends into the dark, dismal dungeon of human misery, breaks our chains ; and, since the Father's justice demands punishment and satisfaction, he, the Innocent One, accepts our fetters, takes all our punishment upon his own shoulders. "He hath borne our iniquities, he hath carried our shame." O infinite love of our God ! He stood not in need of us, we could give him nothing ; moreover, we had offended him often and grievously—but, behold, he comes himself to forgive us, to help us, to give us all, even himself ! O my dearly beloved, recognize this love, at least, to-day, when you stand before the crib, and behold him who for your sake became so little and so poor. "I should despair upon this earth," exclaims St. Bernard, "if thou, O Jesus, hadst not come ; but now, since thou art here, I have everything, and nothing is wanting to me. What have I in heaven, and what do I love upon earth, besides thee ?"

Usually the poor are forced to seek a benefactor ; but Jesus did not wait till we sought him. In his infinite love, of his own accord, he went to seek us. He did not wait until we asked him for help ; he rather asks us to accept his help. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." (Luke 19 : 10.) We were the certain victims of sin and death. Jesus came to conquer both. Already, in his birth, he begins his battle against sin—being born sinless of an immaculate Mother. Against sin, he battles all his mortal life, being able to say of himself even to his enemies : "Which of you shall convince me of sin ?" (John 8 : 46.) Finally, by his sufferings he forever fetters sin ; and dying, he conquers death ; because by his own power he arose from the dead. For the unbeliever and the worldling, there is nothing more terrible than death. Death, to them, is either the end of all, or the **begin-**

ning of a terrible, because hopeless, eternity. But if you are united to Christ, if you allow yourself to be saved, death will have no terrors for you. The disciple of Jesus only dies in order to live eternally.

III. How does Christ come? Does he come as a mighty king, or a victorious captain, with chariots and horses, at the head of a splendid retinue? O no, when the shepherds "came with haste," they found—as the Gospel says: "the infant lying in a manger." (Luke 2: 16.) How, then, does he come? He comes poor and helpless, he comes as a little babe, destitute of all things. And why? As an example for your imitation. Already, as a child, he teaches the lesson which, later on, he so often inculcated: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." (Matt. 11: 29.) O wretched child of clay, learn at the crib of the divine Child, that true meekness and humility of heart, which is the corner-stone and guardian of every other virtue. For what is more unbecoming, more blameworthy, more wicked, than to be proud and self-conceited, after seeing your God become little and abject for love of you? What more intolerable than that a worm should swell with self importance, and tyrannically repulse a fellow-creature, when Jesus, having divested himself of all glory and majesty, comes into the world for no other reason than to inspire the most timid with courage, and attract the most wretched to approach him with joy and confidence? A child harms no one, threatens no one, terrifies no one, its whole appearance excites love and sympathy, rather than fear and terror. Why should you fear the Infant Jesus in the crib? Behold, from the very fact of his becoming a child, you should learn that he did not come to destroy, but to save you,—not to bind, but to free you. Had he come into the world in the splendor of human greatness, the poor and lowly might have dreaded to approach him; but because the divine Infant's poverty and abandonment are greater than their own, even the poorest, the most abandoned, the most miserable, may hope, and, with joyful confidence, approach this destitute, yet most gracious, Child.

IV. When and where did Christ come? He is born in the depth of winter,—a time of the year which for a new-born babe, and especially for one born amidst such utter poverty, must have been most trying. Are we allowed to believe that it happened by chance that he in whose hands are winter and summer, day and night, was born in such a severe season and in the darkness of night? No, far from it. The Eternal Wisdom and Power chose for his advent just that time of the year which brings with it the severest hardships, just that hour of the day which is enveloped in the deepest gloom. He who can not

err, chooses that which is most painful to flesh and blood, and this, therefore, is the best, the most salutary. Hence, all the saints, according to the example of Jesus, have preferred what was painful to what was agreeable,—tribulation, crosses, sufferings, to the happiness, the amenities and joys of this world. He who thinks and acts otherwise, has not the spirit of Christ, and is not his disciple. “The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.” (1 Cor. 3 . 19.)

Christ would be born at midnight. The night hides from the eyes of the world that which is deformed, as well as that which is beautiful. Unknown and unnoticed by the multitude, the Son of God wished to make his entrance into this world. With infallible certainty, he chooses the better and more salutary part. And you, what do you do? You love to be seen and honored by as many as possible. You love to draw the eyes of all upon your real or imaginary perfections; and thus, you give the preference to that which Jesus rejects. Who is right? Whose judgment is the more correct? Whose opinion is the more reasonable? Christ chooses to be born in the silence of midnight. He himself is silent; he does not exalt himself, he seeks not his own glory, he speaks not of his perfections, nor of his power and splendor. And behold, an angel announces his birth, heavenly hosts praise him, and a marvelous light transforms the darkness of the night into the brightness of day. Hence, if you wish to follow Christ, hide the treasure which you have found. Cultivate the virtue of silence. The mouth of others must praise you. Love to be unknown; shrink from public notice; and God himself will exalt and glorify you. Jesus was born at midnight, and a heavenly light glorified his birth. Night, dark night, lay upon the world. Ignorance, superstition, ungodliness, and all the abominations of paganism, like an inky pall, covered all the nations of the earth. But behold, Christ, the Sun of Justice, appears, and the darkness vanishes, the rosy morn of a new era dawns, the sunny aurora of joy, of peace, and of salvation,—“a light unto the enlightenment of the Gentiles,” and for the glory of his people, Israel.

Again, *where* was Christ born?

The heirs of the Greek emperors were called *porphyro-geniti*, that is, “born in the purple.” Although they came into the world like all other children of men, the high prerogative of their imperial parents seemed to justify this proud title. Shall it be said of the Lord of lords, of the only-begotten Son of the King of kings, that he was “born in the purple”? By no means. Upon his shoulder is government; he is the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty, the Prince of Peace. But, instead of finding him wrapped in the purple, or seated upon a throne,

you find him clothed in swaddling-clothes, lying in a stable, in a miserable manger. Why has the King of kings chosen a stable for the place of his birth, a rough crib for his couch, and unsightly rags for his covering? In order to condemn the pomp of the world, the pride and vanity of men. Though his infant tongue is silent, everything about him preaches. The tender scantily-clad limbs, the hard bed, the manger, the stable, the presence of the ox and the ass, everything speaks the most eloquent language, everything condemns the maxims of the world, everything rebukes your inordinate love of riches, honors, and pleasures. Christ in the stable preaches poverty, humiliation, and self-denial.

O how many of the nobly-born, how many of the mighty, rich, and wise according to human judgment, reposed that night on their luxurious couches, yet none of them were found worthy of seeing the miraculous light, of hearing the angelic canticle of praise: "*Gloria in excelsis.*" The poor shepherds, keeping their lowly, laborious night-watches over their flocks, were of more account before God, were deemed more worthy of participation in the ineffable mysteries of heaven, than all the kings and princes and philosophers of the world.

How true it is, as the Apostle says: that there are "Not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, but the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the wise." (Cor 1: 26.)

At the sight of the holy crib in and around which pleasure and pain, infinite joy and tender sadness, splendor and poverty, divine greatness and human lowliness, incomprehensible condescension of God, and gracious elevation of man, so marvelously meet and mingle, what should be our thoughts and resolutions? What else, but to renounce the world with all its pride and its pomp; the devil with all his malice and infernal works; the flesh with all its lusts and concupiscences? What else, but to praise the lovely Babe of Bethlehem with the Angels, to adore him with the shepherds, to love him with Mary and Joseph, and to give to him our hearts, our bodies, our souls, our whole being? "For the grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men, instructing us, that renouncing impiety, and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and piously in this world, waiting for the blessed hope, and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2: 11-13), who then shall exalt and glorify those who, here below, out of love have humbled themselves with him,—Jesus Christ, blessed now and for ever more! Amen.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

MERRY CHRISTMAS.

“And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us : and we saw his glory.” (John 1: 14.)

Why is it that Christmas is such a merry day? Why are all hearts so happy, all faces so smiling on Christmas morning? Is it because this feast speaks to us so clearly, so forcibly, of redemption, of salvation? I think not. There are other festival days, pregnant with a like mysterious meaning. Easter Sunday—the day of our Redeemer’s victory over death and the grave, sin and hell—is a great and joyous day; also the Ascension and Whit-Sunday. The devout Christian feels happy on all these great festivals. Nevertheless, there is something peculiarly cheerful about Christmas. Its joy is the joy of childhood. No one is allowed to be grave or solemn on this day. Old age must lay aside its weary burden, middle age, its cares; and we must all be children together. We cannot think of Christmas being kept in any other way; no, not even in heaven. Our imagination makes all merry there too, with the joy of the cherubs and the baptized babes. Nor is this feeling the result of any arbitrary custom. It is so, because it must be so. To-day the Lord of heaven and earth has laid aside all show of dignity, and majesty, to become a little child, and we must become children too, if we would share in the graces and blessings of his birth-day.

I. There is always great rejoicing and merriment in a kingdom at the birth of the crown prince. Sympathy makes even the gray-haired subject child-like in his delight. Such is our joy on Christmas, as we stand about the cradle of our Prince. Our hearts are filled with merry music; and that ancient Christmas carol first sung by the prophet Isaiah, rises to our lips: “A Child is born to us, and a son is given to us; and the government is upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called the Prince of peace.” (Is. 9: 6.)

1. The Infant Jesus is a true king. We have his own word for it. When Pilate said to him: “Art thou a king then? Jesus answered: Thou sayest, I am a king.” (John 18: 37.) But he was not an earthly

monarch, a king of the ordinary type ; "My kingdom is not of this world," so he explained to Pilate. No ; our Christmas Babe does not belong to the mimic royalty of this world. He is a divine Prince. He is the Son of God ; he is himself God. It is our Lord and Creator that lies in the cradle to-day. The throne which he is heir to, is "the throne of the universe."

But this is not the only throne to which this Blessed Babe is heir. Within his domain is embraced the kingdom of grace. In holy Scripture, it is sometimes called the kingdom of heaven ; and sometimes called the kingdom of the Saints ; and it is, in fact, nothing else than the great Catholic Church. It was to establish this kingdom, that God the Father sent the divine Babe into the world ; and this it is which makes that royal Infant's birth so full of special interest to us. For to that kingdom we Christians belong. It is our true Fatherland. All our hopes for eternity are bound up in it ; and, therefore, we hail our Prince with acclamation ; and, although he comes to us not with princely pomp, but in the silence of the night, announcing his presence only by a feeble wail, yet we make merry over it, and keep festival ; for we know that he is born to rule. The reins of government are placed in those tiny, dimpled hands ; and whatever he shall do, shall prosper. He shall ride on from conquest to conquest. Death and Hell, his foes and ours, shall yield to him ; all things shall be put under his feet, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Such is the burden of our Christmas song. "For a child is born to us, and a son is given to us ; and the government is upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called,—Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace. His empire shall be multiplied ; and there shall be no end of peace : he shall sit upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom ; to establish it and strengthen it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth and for ever. (Is. 9 : 6, 7.)

What makes our joy greater, he is our king ; I mean, that he is a king taken from among ourselves. He is no stranger, no foreigner coming to rule over us, bringing with him foreign prejudices and foreign sympathies ; but a man like ourselves, one who loves us not merely because we belong to him, but because he belongs to us ; one who loves us by force of nature, according to the universal rule, that "like loves like." Now, in this respect, we are favored far above the Angels. He is their king and ours, but he is not an angel. As the Apostle tells us : "He did not take upon him the nature of Angels, but that of the seed of Abraham." (Hebr. 2 : 16.) The Angels hover about and gaze upon that divine Child, but they cannot approach him as closely as we can. They adore him with us ; for he is their Master and ours. They love him ; for he is infinitely lovely and amiable, he is the fountain-head of

all their bliss ; but they cannot love him as one of their kind. He is not a prince of their race. The very loftiness of their nature as bodiless spirits, keeps them at a certain distance from him who is flesh and blood. They cannot press their lips to his, as Mary and Joseph did. They cannot kiss his feet with the shepherds and the three kings. They are subjects of his, but not kinsmen and clansmen as *we* are.

O sweet thought ! He is one of ourselves ! All royal, omnipotent, and divine, as he is, he is one of us ! We claim this royal Prince of Bethlehem for our country-man, born as he was in our world, and of a woman of our own race. He is one of us ! Our nature is in him, and in him will remain forever. Time has not tides strong enough, nor eternity floods deep enough, to wash it out. He is one of us ! Human life animates that body of his, and human sympathies are knocking at his heart's door. No wonder then, that gathering, as we do, to-day, around the Christmas crib, we are not afraid of the Messiah who lies therein. We know very well that he is God, but that does not impose any check upon our cheerfulness ; for we know that he is one of ourselves, and a little Babe at that. His divinity, far from overawing us, is the very secret of our joy ; for we remember with a thrill of delight that our government, that our judgment, has been committed to such gentle hands. It makes us merry to think of his greatness. "Behold," we say, "a Child is born to us, and a son is given to us ; and the government is upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace. His empire shall be multiplied ; and there shall be no end of peace : he shall sit upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it and strengthen it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth and for ever."

The royal Infant born to-day is of our own blood. When I say that the Infant Jesus is of the same nature with us, I do not mean merely that he has adopted a soul and body resembling ours, I mean that he is of the same family. I mean that he and we are really and strictly of one and the same stock,—that the blood of a common ancestor runs through his veins and ours. What does St. Paul mean, if not this, when he says : "He who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all from one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebr. 2 : 11)—?

Now, in order to establish this brother-hood, this consanguinity, it was necessary for our Lord to become a babe, to be born of a woman, a daughter of Adam, taking flesh and blood from her. Yes, we owe it to that manger, that straw, that lonely cave, and oh ! above all, to that dear Maiden Mother that bore him, and whose fond kiss was his first welcome to this world—to them and to her, we owe it that we may call him by the tender name of Brother. I suppose he might have redeem-

ed us without this, but without this we would not be his brethren, for he would not then be (strictly speaking) of the same family with ourselves. He would not be a prince of our own blood, and this blood-relationship of ours to the divine Infant, constitutes no small part of our Christmas joy.

I do not know if I have quite succeeded in answering the question with which I set out. The reasons I have given show most certainly why Christmas is a happy day, but, perhaps, do not precisely account for its being a merry one. Merriment is a peculiar kind of joy, a mirthful joy; and, where young people are concerned, a somewhat noisy joy. It supposes a heart that is not only beating lightly and quickly, but that is absolutely dancing behind the breast-works that confine it. It supposes not only a smiling face, but a face that is ready at any moment to break into a laugh. A school-mistress once said to a merry little child: "How dare you laugh, sir?" "I didn't do it on purpose, ma'am," said he, "it laughed itself." A merry heart, like a spirited horse, is always ready to break into a canter, and this is very much the way we feel on Christmas day. Our joy is free, lighthearted, and lively, like the joy of childhood. The reason is obvious. It is the Infant Jesus that makes us merry, and we cannot help it. To see him—sweet, holy Babe—smiling upon us from his cradle—the manger! To see him there, so little, so gentle, so feeble; and to think that he is a king, a divine Babe, a Boy-God. To think that those little hands uphold the whole world, and are the same dear, sacred hands by which the work of our Redemption is wrought. Surely, such thoughts as these must need beguile us into an innocent and sacred merriment. Why should we not be merry? We need not be overawed. He does not come as a little babe to overawe us, but to attach us, and to make us feel familiar with him.

It is a time-honored custom for Christians to greet each other, on this holy festival, with smiles and kind wishes. Here, therefore, assembled as we are before the altar of our Lord, I wish ye all, young and old, rich and poor, a very merry Christmas!

A merry Christmas to the old! It should be so to them. Childhood is peculiarly attractive to old people. The older we grow, the more our hearts turn back fondly to the joyous days of childhood. No one watches the sports of little children with more interest than grand-papa and grandmamma; and I cannot conceive of any to whom it should give greater pleasure to remember, to-day, how our dear Lord was once a little child.

A merry Christmas to every father and mother! The hearts of parents are bound up in their children, especially those who are young and tender and who most need their loving solicitude. Who, like them, can sym-

pathize with Joseph and Mary on a day like this? Who can better understand their breathless interest and holy joy? And with what confidence, too, they can recommend the welfare of their own babes and little ones to this holy Babe, to this Virgin Mother, and to his holy foster-father!

A merry Christmas to all the children, to all young people. I need not give the children any reason why they should be merry to-day. I fear it would be of no use to give them reasons why they should not be noisy. Christmas is their own day. What sort of manacles or fetters could keep their hands and feet still, or their little tongues silent during Christmas-tide? I feel it my duty to say in behalf of the children, that I think they have a right to their Christmas presents on our Lord's birthday; and I charge it upon the consciences of parents, and others who may be responsible in the matter, that if Santa-Klaus has not yet come, they see to it, that he comes before the day is over. But, I entreat you, dear children, do not forget in the midst of your joys, who it is that makes every heart glad to-day; but once, at least, before night comes, bend your knees and fold your hands to pray to that dear Infant Saviour, to the holy Child Jesus, that he will not only make your youth happy, but your lives holy; and that he will call you to his happy home in heaven when your time of trial shall be over here below.

A merry Christmas to the poor! To-day is the poor man's feast. Our Lord came poor into this world, and remained poor until he left it. What poor man's shanty is more wretched and comfortless than the cold stable of Bethlehem where Christ was born! May he remember the poor this day with a Christmas blessing, and may they, in their poverty, remember him! Ye rich ones, remember both; and be sure of this, "No man can have part with Christ, who has no pity for Christ's poor."

I charge you all, on this day (which is, of all the year, the holiest and the dearest), for the sake of that amiable Redeemer who became man out of pure love for us—I charge you open the door of your hearts to all. Have an alms ready for such of the poor as God shall send to your portal or place in your pathway; a kind service ready for any and every neighbor; a kind word and smile for all you meet, even those that have grieved and offended you; and oh! above all, lift upward, from time to time, a grateful thought and prayer of praise to that God of love who sent his only-begotten Son into the world at this holy season, and with that Son, all the rich gifts of his grace. In his holy name, I wish you all, "A merry Christmas!"

PAULISTS.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

HOW MUCH IS CONTAINED IN THE COMMON-PLACE GREETING : "A
HAPPY NEW YEAR !"

"The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men." (Tit. 2: 11.)

Truly, this is a day on which the grace of God our Saviour has visibly appeared to all men ! To-day is the Octave of the Nativity of our dear new-born Saviour. To-day, the Church in her prayers directs our attention to Mary, who, by bringing forth the Saviour, became our intercessor and Mother. To-day, the mystery of the circumcision of our Lord is brought before our eyes, a mystery in which humility, obedience, and love of suffering so beautifully manifested itself in Jesus. To-day, the name of Jesus, the name above all other names, the sweetest, most powerful, and holiest of names, is given to the God-Man. And on this day, our New Year begins with a beautiful and most blessed feast. Truly, "the grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men," on *this* day in particular. This grace I wish to you, to-day, with these words : "A happy New Year !"—words which contain (as I shall proceed to explain), a very precious and beautiful significance.

I. *A year.*

1. A year, one year, is a considerable period of human life. "All our days are spent ; and in thy wrath, we have fainted away. Our years shall be considered as a spider, the days of our years in them are three-score and ten years. But if in the strong, they be fourscore years : and what is more of them is labor and sorrow." (Ps. 89: 9, 10.) What changes take place in communities, in individuals, within a year ! God alone remains unchangeable. It is just that the Church should remind us on this day of the immutability of God : "Thou art always the self-same, and thy years shall not fail." (Ps. 101: 28.)

2. Life is but a span ; the things of time "flee as a shadow, and never continue in the same state." (Job. 14: 2.) Therefore, give thanks to God that he has prolonged the number of our days and opened for us a new year. Like the ancient king Ezechias, whose life was

prolonged in suffering and affliction, let us pray : " I will recount to thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul. The living, the living, he shall give praise to thee, as I do this day. O Lord, save me and we will sing out psalms all the days of our life." (Is. 38: 15, 19, 20.) Let us make good use of this additional time. "See, therefore, brethren," says the Apostle, "how you walk circumspectly : not as unwise, but as wise ; redeeming the time, for the days are evil." (Ephes. 5: 15, 16.) Perhaps, this is our last season of grace. Let us firmly believe it to be so ; and let us act accordingly, and we shall never regret it.

II. *A new year.*

1. We have had innumerable graces in the past. The year which begins to-day, is a new, fresh grace. It comes from God, who says : "Behold, I make all things new." (Apoc. 21 : 5.) Yes, God's goodness is always new, but our guilt is always old. With every morning, especially with every new year, God's ancient, eternal love for us is, as it were, renewed. How friendly is the aspect with which the Lord comes to meet us to-day ! How amiably he offers his grace to us !

2. But is the year, which we begin with God, really a *new* one for us ? Can we truly say : "Old things are passed away ; behold, all things are made new" ? (2 Cor. 5 : 27.) Now is the time to make a good resolution. The old guilt, and the misery resulting therefrom, we will, with God's help, leave behind us. O God, we thank thee for the year that is past and for all graces received in it. We shall now begin to walk in new and better ways. May our faith, hope, and love be newly enlivened ; may we take part with new courage in the battle of life ; and with renewed fidelity, make use of God's grace ! May God grant us new contrition for our old sins ; may he impart to us his ever ancient, yet ever new, grace, that we may work our salvation, this year, with fear and trembling !

3. Happy are we that we can begin anew ! Many have gone hence to their dread account, who, in the last year, might have finished their life-work satisfactorily to God and to themselves. But, thinking that they had many years before them, they neglected the business of salvation ; and when they least expected it, were hurried away unprepared for the great ordeal of eternity. Therefore, do not put off until to-morrow that which can be done to-day. God who has given you to-day has not promised you to-morrow. To-morrow you may be in eternity. Work whilst you have time, redeem the time. Certain it is that this new year will never become old for some of us. It may slide out of

our hands at any moment. Perhaps, we are only allowed, like Moses, to look from Mount Nebo into the Promised Land. Hence, let us make good use of every moment, let us show to God and to the world that we are no longer the same creatures as of old, but that we "walk in the newness of life." (Rom. 6 : 4.) Let us obey the words of the Apostle : "Strip yourselves of the old man with his deeds, and put on the new, him who is renewed unto knowledge, according to the image of him who created him." (Col. 3 : 9, 10.) In the new year we must all become new men.

III. A *Happy* New Year.

1. It will be a happy year to every one who will make it such ; for it is a good gift of the good God ; it is a year of salvation, dating from the gracious birth of our Lord and Saviour. It begins with the day on which the dear, new-born Babe took the sweet name of Jesus, that is, of Saviour, of Redeemer. Begin the New Year in the name of Jesus.

2. Let us make it a happy year for ourselves ; let us make good use of the precious time. Let us adhere to Jesus, and say not only to-day, but very often : "Jesus, to thee I live ; Jesus, to thee I die ; Jesus, I am thine in life and death." Let us avoid sin, and do good ; then, the year upon which we have entered to-day, will surely be a happy year for us. We will not wish ourselves, "A happy New Year," in the sense in which the world uses that beautiful greeting. For what the world esteems as happiness, is a mere outward appearance, which vanishes like smoke. Only that happiness which consists in doing the will of God, will last for ever. Therefore, the will of God be done in us, and through us, throughout the whole coming year ! If God give us his love and his grace, and we co-operate therewith, we shall be truly happy during the year. For the rest, let us say : "Do with me, O Lord, as thou pleasest. Thy will be done !"

In this Christian sense, I wish you all a happy New Year. Let the New Year be sealed for us with the sweet name, and the precious blood, of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom be praise, and honor, and glory, now, and for ever more ! Amen.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

HOW WE SHOULD BEGIN, AND END, THE NEW YEAR.

“Renouncing impiety and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and piously.” (Tit. 2 : 12.)

With the twelfth stroke of the clock, last night, the New Year began, and with the twelfth stroke of the clock, after three hundred and sixty-five days, it will end. The first and last hours of the year are serious hours, its first and last days, serious days. What shall those unknown hours and days bring forth? and shall we live to see them all? Will not death, during the course of the year, claim many a victim from our midst? And will those whom he calls away be prepared to go? Health and sickness, joy and grief, abundance and need, blessing and curse,—all lie hidden in the impenetrable mist of the year that stretches out before us. God's mercy has closely veiled the future; we peer into its shadows; and anxiously, timidly, await the days that are to come. One thing only we know, and this gives consolation and comfort to the true Christian; “That to them that love God, all things work together unto good.” (Rom. 8 : 28.) O my dearly beloved! if you desire in this New Year to devote yourself to the divine service, and lead a life pleasing in the sight of heaven, I exhort you, above all else,

- I. *To begin with God; and*
- II. *To end with God.*

I. *Why must we begin the New Year with God?* Because God cries out to us: “Without me, you can do nothing.” (John 15 : 5.) Is there one among you who doubts this truth? What can you do without God? Can you move your hand, can you move even a single finger? No. Can you, without God, take a single step forward? Can you preserve your health, your life? If sickness or death approaches your house, can you drive it off? Or can you so handle the horn of fortune that it will pour forth naught save blessings, riches, and honors upon you? Again and again—no! Behold there is One above, who

can take away your blessings at will,—who can change your fortune into misfortune, who can put poverty and need in the place of abundance. And if, before, you would not say : “The Lord gave,” you will be obliged, afterwards to say : “The Lord hath taken away.” (Job 1 : 21.) Acknowledge that these words : “Without me you can do nothing” are the gravest of truths, and exclaim with the Psalmist : “Lord, thou art my God ; my lots are in thy hands, save me in thy mercy, let me not be confounded, O Lord.” (Ps. 30 : 15, 17.) Begin the New Year with God, prosecute it with God, and end it with God.

1. Let *the sinner* begin the New Year with God ; let him begin with crying out : “ O Lord, rebuke me not in thy indignation, nor chastise me in thy wrath. Have mercy on me, for I am weak. O Lord, save me for thy mercy’s sake.” (Ps. 5 : 2.) In other words, begin to-day, to repent of your past sins, which have called down the wrath of God upon you. Make the firm purpose of amendment. Be converted from your sins, in order to avert from you the divine vengeance and recover once more the divine friendship. “Return to me,” says the Lord, “and I will return to you.” But return (as I have said) *at once*, now, on this first day of the year. Do not postpone your conversion to the second, tenth or hundredth day. The sword of divine wrath hangs over your head, suspended by the slender thread of life ;—it may fall at any moment, and eternal death will be the consequence. 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.” (Ecclus. 5 : 8, 9.) Delay not, O *proud* sinner ! for it is written that “God will destroy the proud ;” and that “pride goeth before destruction.” (Prov. 16 : 18.) Delay not, O *unjust* sinner ! delay not to repair your injustice, for woe to him that gathereth together unjust goods ! (Hab. 2 : 9.) Bewail, to-day, your past cruelty and hard-heartedness to the poor and needy. Consider that God will not forget the cry of the poor. Delay not to be converted, O *licentious profligate* ! for the impure shall God judge, and they shall have no share in the kingdom of Christ, and of God. (Ephes. 5 : 5.) Delay not to be converted, O *drunkard* ! Listen to the warning words of our divine Lord himself : “Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and that day (of judgment) come upon you suddenly.” (Luke 21 : 34.) Yes, delay not to be converted, all ye wretched sinners. The Apostle cries out to you one and all : “It is now the hour to rise from sleep.” (Rom. 13 : 11.) Now, to-day—at the beginning of this New Year. Begin with God. Delay not. “Now is the acceptable time ! Now are the days of salvation.” Perhaps, this hour—this day—this year, may be the last of your life.

2. The *lukewarm Christian* should, also, begin the New Year with God. He should lament and bewail his tepidity in the service of God, and in the acquisition of merits for eternity ; he should begin with fervor and perseverance to do good works for heaven. Alas ! how vast is the multitude of tepid Christians!—empty-handed, slothful men, who, if they think at all of heaven, console themselves with the delusive hope : “ There is time enough yet ; life is long ; even in old age one may save his soul ! ” Listen to what St. Augustine says to such Christians : “ He who has given you to-day, has not promised you to-morrow. ” Will you still promise yourself a long life ? Have you forgotten that Jesus has said : “ Watch ye, therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour ” (Matt. 25 : 13) when the Son of man shall come.—If you delay your good purpose, if you postpone your conversion for another twelve-month, refusing to follow the Master into his vineyard, you cannot expect the wages of eternal life. Begin, at least, to-day, to work for heaven ; with the beginning of the year, make, also, the beginning of your conversion. Perhaps the warning of the Judge applies directly to you : “ Behold, I come quickly : and my reward is with me, to render to every one according to his works. ” (Apoc. 22 : 12.) Do you not know that “ the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, ” and that none save the violent bear it away ? O how much good you might do, how many merits you may lay up for heaven before the end of the year, if you only begin to-day, and continue to do some good work every day ! The bee that gathers no honey in summer, dies in winter ; and the man who, during his life, acquires no merits for heaven, will die the eternal death of the damned. “ The tree that yieldeth not good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire. ” (Matt. 3 : 10.)

3. Even *the just man* must commence the New Year well. Happy are you, pious Christians, if you can say to-day : “ We served God faithfully last year, and diligently obeyed his holy will in all things ; ” but happier still will you be, if you begin the New Year also with God, and continue to serve him therein. Do I hear you say : “ We have already done enough for heaven—we have acquired sufficient merits in the past ” — ? Say not so ; one can never do enough for heaven ; the heavenly crown is of infinite value, hence, it demands an infinite price. “ Your reward is great in heaven ” (Matt. 5 : 18) says our Lord ; and this great reward implies a proportionately great labor. Consider it well ; the more you do for heaven, the more beautiful will be your heavenly crown, the higher will be your heavenly throne. “ He will render to every one according to his works. ” (Matt. 16 : 27.) “ He who soweth in blessings, shall also reap in blessings. ” (2 Cor. 9 : 6.) Therefore, do not stand still in well-doing. Not to go forward is to go back.

“He that is just, let him be justified still : and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still.” (Apoc. 22 : 11.)

It is not enough, however, to begin this first day of the New Year with God ; if we desire to make progress in good, we must begin every one of its days, every one of its works, with God. Yea, begin every day, begin every work with holy prayer. Sinner, pray every morning, that God may forgive you your sins, and preserve you, during the day, from every relapse. Slothful Christian, pray that God may give you a holy fervor in his service. Faithful and devout souls, pray that your zeal in doing good may not grow cold. “Without me,” says Christ, “you can do nothing.” Without the grace of God, the sinner cannot become better, the tepid cannot become more fervent, and the good cannot persevere in justice and holiness. Begin all things with the intention of pleasing God, of doing his will, of advancing his honor and glory. “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do ; do all things for the glory of God.” (1 Cor. 11 : 31.) “Whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Col. 3 : 17.)

II. It does not suffice to begin well. We must, also, end well. *Finis coronat opus.* Salvation depends upon the end, more than upon the beginning. Judas, Tertullian, Origen, all began well, but ended ill. If we begin with God, we must be still more anxious *to end with God.* We must begin the New Year in well-doing, prosecute it in well-doing, and end it in well-doing. Here is a man, who commenced the past year with a clean conscience, with a seemingly true repentance ; he walked for a while in the ways of divine grace, then relapsed into sin, and ended the year an enemy to God. He began with God, but he did not end with God. Here is another who, at the beginning of last year aroused himself perhaps, from an habitual lethargy, and manifested a truly Christian zeal ; he served God with fervor for a few months, and then relapsed into his former tepidity and sloth. Can such a one be said to have ended his year with God ? No : for all those days of tepid self-indulgence were empty and profitless for eternity.

Between the prosperous beginning of a great journey and its end, may occur many serious accidents and mishaps,—which would certainly prevent the traveler from pronouncing it a successful journey ; so, a year which begins well, but proceeds and ends badly, cannot be called a happy year. A business man may make good profits at the beginning of the year, but, further on, may sustain serious losses far exceeding his gains. Could he call such a year a prosperous one for business ? Certainly not ; and the once-fervent Christian who meets with sad spiritual losses daily in the year cannot help but lament in his turn the untoward end of that luckless period.

Sinner, apply this truth to yourself with regard to this new-born year. Drunkard, see that you renounce your vile passion thoroughly and perseveringly ; not living soberly for the coming three months, and then, relapsing miserably, for the remaining nine. Profligate, though you execute your resolution to avoid carnal sins for some time, but, after a few months begin again your vicious life,—for *you* this year cannot be said to end with God. Blasphemers, detractors, calumniators, unjust men, yea, all ye sinners, who, after having once renounced your sins, return like the dog to his vomit, remember that divine Truth hath said : “He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved.” (Matt. 10 : 22.) And “No man putting his hand to plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9 : 62.)

With God begin, and with God end, the New Year. O what joy will be ours, if we fulfil these words, and at the end of the year can truly say to ourselves : “We have lived the whole year with God !” What a consolation for us, if, at the end of the year we are able to say : “During this year we have done much good and no evil ; and have laid up a great store of merits for ourselves in heaven !” And should the rapid course of the coming twelve months leave us upon our deathbed, how blessed shall we be, if we can then exclaim : O happy year, Eighteen hundred and eighty-nine ! in your hallowed hours, by a pious God-fearing life, we have merited heaven and eternal possession of our God. Amen.

SUNDAY AFTER NEW YEAR'S DAY.

TIME IS VERY SHORT AND VERY PRECIOUS.

"This, therefore, I say, brethren: The time is short." (I. Cor. 7 : 29.)

To-day is the first Sunday of the New Year. We have scarcely made a few, uncertain steps into the newly opened time of grace, ere I feel moved to call your attention once more to the precious, yet so seldom rightly-valued, gift of time. God, the Father of time, according to the testimony of the Gospel of to-day, has revealed his eternal wisdom especially in the right choice of the right time. He is, thus, himself an example and pattern to us of the right use of time. To-day's Gospel further reminds us of the changes and vicissitudes which time brings about; viz: the death of the cruel Herod (the mortal enemy of our dear new-born Saviour); his own perdition and that of his favorite minions; and the change of government in Judea—all these facts tell us, in fine, as the Apostle told the believers of his day:

I. *That time is short*; and

II. *That time is precious.*

I. Time is short.—What is time? No man can give an intelligible definition of time. It is, as it were, so short-lived, that, before we can describe it, it is gone. Nevertheless, we will hold to the fact that there is a present, past, and future time. Let us consider for a moment these three constituent parts of time. The future approaches us slowly; the present disappears while I speak of it; the past, alone, stands for all eternity.

1. *The future.* It is not yet. It comes slowly. Whether it shall ever come to us, we know not. Whether we shall live, for instance, to the end of this year, upon which we entered a few days ago, we do not know. Some of this congregation, (their number and names are, of course, unknown to us,) shall surely not live to see this year out. What, then, is the future? It is an uncertain good, upon which we can take no mortgage. It is an unborn possibility, which, for us, may never

prove a reality. Do not, therefore, place your hopes upon a time which is not yet, which does not belong to you, and which, perhaps, will never belong to you. In the morning, presume not to promise yourself the evening; and when evening comes, presume not to promise yourself the next morning. Hence, never put off to the uncertain tomorrow, that which you can and should do to-day. Above all, do not put off your conversion to a future time, which may never come for you. Otherwise these words might be applicable to you: "Thou fool, this night they shall require thy soul of thee." (Luke 12 : 20.)

2. *The present.* "Time passeth like a shadow." (Eccles. 7 : 1.) "It is like a ship that passeth through the waves; whereof, when it is gone by, the trace cannot be found, nor the path of its keel in the waters; like a bird, that flies through the air, or like an arrow that is shot at a mark." (Wisd. 5 : 8-13.) These are all admirable figures of the quickly-passing moment. It is gone whilst we speak of it. And yet the present is all that we can claim or employ as our own! Ah! how important should every moment be to us! *Ennuï*, pastime,—what kind of words are these? Truly, the fleeting moment is short enough. Brief is the span of man. Hence, the Apostle admonishes us "to redeem the time." (Ephes. 5 : 15.) Hence, the Church admonishes us to sanctify every moment by prayer, and to beseech the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, imploring her: "Pray for us now, and at the hour of our death."

3. *The past.* How old are you? Twenty years? The fourth part of your life is gone. How old are you? Forty years? The half of your life is gone. How old are you? Sixty years? The greater part of your time is gone. And how old are you? Eighty years? Well, you may go to-day, and order your shroud and your coffin. "The time of our years is fourscore years, and what is more of them is labor and sorrow." (Ps. 89 : 10.) The past? It is no more. No power can bring back the hours that have gone down into the ocean of eternity. Thus, the past year is no longer ours. It will meet us, one day, as a quiet, unapproachable witness at the judgment-seat of Christ; and in its book we shall then find written down all the good, all the evil, of the years. Soon, very soon, our last year, our last hour, shall flow down into the Dead Sea of the past. Then, the shadow of our life will have fled away. (Job 14 : 2.) Even the strongest man is snatched away by death after seventy, or, at most, eighty years. Yonder, in the graveyard, it will soon be very still and quiet over our tombs. How short appears, at death, the longest life of man!

II. *Time is very precious.* Although time is a mere breath, although the future is not yet, the past is no more, and the present belongs to

us only for the moment, yet time is a very precious good. No earthly treasure outweighs the value of a moment of well-employed time ; and this is because :

1. In a short life-time one can gather imperishable treasures ; one can secure a happy eternity. What the field is to the husbandman, time is to the earthly pilgrim. It is our field. In its furrow we may sow the good seed of an everlasting flower and fruit. Sow then this year the good seed ; till well your field of time. As the beginning of life is the beginning of death, so death after a good life is the beginning of a happy deathless life. Let not a moment of the present glide from you unappreciated. Zealously avail yourself of every opportunity for your salvation, as the wicked do for their damnation. For in an instant we can merit the full measure of divine wrath for the day of vengeance. The majority of people, alas ! labor in time only for a miserable eternity. Make, then, good resolutions for the future,—full of life and activity. This year, perhaps, may be your last. For another year the heavenly Gardener will allow the unfruitful tree to stand. (Luke. 13 : 6). Make good use of the respite. Bewail the past which has not been employed for your salvation. Tears of repentance redeem lost time. Tears which should be checked in all other trying circumstances, should be freely indulged in at the remembrance of our past sins and iniquities.

2. A short life-time may suffice to procure for us the eternal possession of God, our only inestimable Good. In one sense, time is as valuable as God, for God is acquired by well-employed time. What can we say more ? Time affords us an opportunity to gain God himself ; and if God is gained, all is gained. He himself will be the exceeding great reward of well-spent time. Who is like God ? What inheritance can compare with his glorious Kingdom ? “The eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, what great things God hath prepared for them that love him.” Behold ! our precious New Year's gift ! What use will we make of it ? You have time enough to save your soul, but none to spare. Onward, and upward ; “What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ?” (Matt. 16 : 26.)

These are the days of salvation. Let us make good use of them, and of all the graces they offer to us. “The time will come when thou wilt wish for one day or hour to amend, and I know not whether you shall obtain it.” (Thom. à Kempis 1. 23.) Now is an acceptable time, now is the time of salvation.” (2. Cor. 6 : 2.) It is greatly to be lamented, that you do not spend the present more profitably since in it and by it you may acquire everlasting life. (Thom. à Kempis.) A

dying courtier begged his king for time, and found, to his anguish, that the monarch could not add a single moment to his life. No man can give us one minute of time. Time comes from God, and we must employ it for God, if we hope to come to God, and be happy in the possession and enjoyment of God for ever and ever. Amen.

O. A., O.S.B.

SUNDAY AFTER NEW YEAR'S DAY.

THE FLIGHT INTO, AND THE RETURN FROM, EGYPT.

"Rise, and take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel."
(Matt. 2 : 20.)

The last time we contemplated the events of our Lord's infancy, a terrible slaughter, a bloody scene was brought before our eyes. The furious Herod, misled by his foolish fears for his throne, and utterly misconceiving the designs of the new-born Messiah, ordered the massacre of all the male children in Bethlehem and its environs, from two years old and under. By these cruel, and seemingly certain, means, the brutal tyrant hoped to destroy in his cradle the infant King of the Jews; for without the special intervention of the Most High, the blood of Jesus would naturally have been mingled with the blood of the Holy Innocents. "But there is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel, against the Lord." (Pro. 21 : 30.) God decreed that all the plans and projects of the wicked Herod should be thoroughly confounded and frustrated :

- I. *By the flight of the child Jesus into Egypt ; and*
- II. *By his return into Judea.*

I. Come with me in spirit into Bethlehem, and behold the Holy Family at that moment when the Sages from the East, having quitted the Crib, were on their way back to their own country. The purest joy filled the hearts of Mary and Joseph. The rosy morn of salvation had risen at last, not only for the Jewish shepherds, but also for the Gentiles. Already, in the far East, the name of the Redeemer had become known; and the Virgin Mother and her chaste spouse looked forward with delight to the happy time when the whole world, illumined by the light of truth, would pay homage to their divine Son. Full of unspeakable joy, the hours following the departure of the Magi passed away for the holy couple in innocent, quiet and blissful security. They knew not that a most terrible storm was gathering over their heads, that the murderous weapon for the destruction of their child had already been sharpened. But, that same night: "An angel of the Lord appeared

in sleep to Joseph, saying : Arise, and take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt ; and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy him.

What a severe trial for the faith and obedience of Joseph and his virginal bride ! How easy it was for them to doubt the divine promises ! Shortly before, an angel had declared that this Child was the Son of the Most High, that he would redeem his people, and found an eternal kingdom ; and now it is said, that he must fly from the power of a man, that he shall find his safety only in flight. And with how many difficulties and dangers was such a flight beset ! In the darkness of the night, to fly with a weak woman and babe, through the midst of Judea, at the risk of being caught by the minions of the king ; to fly without any preparation, without means wherewith to travel, without knowledge of the way, in pressing dread and danger of robbers and wild beasts ; over hills and valleys, sloughs and desert places, to flee into a foreign, unknown, heathenish country. For Egypt lies far from Judea,—even in another continent. How many reasons to complain, to excuse one's self, to ask questions and to make objections, or, at least, to tarry for a while, and to fear to go.

Not so the spouse of Mary. With the simple faith of a child, Joseph immediately arose ; and that very night (for poor people are soon prepared for a journey), retired into Egypt. True, an angel of the Lord was invisibly at their side ; he guided their steps, he conducted them safely through all perils and difficulties to the end of their journey. How they journeyed along, what happened to them on the road, where they settled down in Egypt,—of all this, the Sacred Scripture says nothing.

2. What have we to learn from this flight of the Holy Family into Egypt ? First of all, that consoling and long-established truth, that God watches over his faithful servants. Yes, the providence of God often permits the plans of the wicked to apparently triumph ; he often permits good, holy men, without any fault of theirs, to be pursued and oppressed by an adverse fate or by bad people, and to come to the very brink of temporal ruin. But where man's necessity is greatest, God's help is nearest ; in our direst perils, in our most desolate situations, God sends his saving angel to conduct the just man out of all danger and tribulation, and put to naught all the machinations of the wicked. We perceive this in the Holy Family. According to human calculation, the new-born Saviour must inevitably fall into the hands of Herod ; but lo ! an angel appears—he counsels immediate flight to a distant land—and the holy Child is safe. What consolation for those who suffer, or are persecuted, unjustly ! Yet the Lord em-

ployed only natural circumstances and human means for the rescue of his Son. He could easily have exerted his omnipotence, and made Herod die a sudden death; but no, he employed a natural means of safety—flight. Thereby, Jesus, as a child, already teaches the needy, oppressed and persecuted that they are not to await their ruin in inconsolable inactivity, but that they should avail themselves of those natural ways and means, which Christian prudence counsels, in order to get out of the way of their enemies and deprive them of the opportunity of hurting them, or in order to extricate themselves from some other sore need and trouble; and that they can, and should, expect divine help, but no miracle; for God does not work miracles without necessity. He has means enough to help and save us, without having recourse to extraordinary measures and palpable marvels.

This event in the life of Jesus is a great fountain of consolation for those who through untoward circumstances, unmerited poverty, human malice, or for religion and justice' sake, are compelled to exile themselves from the paternal roof and home, in order to earn their bread among strangers. If they contemplate the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt; and consider that these first favorites of God were abandoned by their friends and relations, driven out of their own country, to seek a habitation in a foreign land—that Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, wandered about himself as a homeless child, O then, they will find their own situation tolerable, and meekly resign themselves to the care of him who protected the Holy Family in an idolatrous land, and, finally, conducted them safely back to their home.

II. How long the sojourn of the Holy Family lasted in Egypt, the Sacred Scripture does not tell us. Just as little do we know with certainty, what happened to them during their sojourn there. We need not doubt, however, that they had to endure a variety of sufferings and hardships.

1. Mary and Joseph quietly waited and trusted the word of the angel who had said: "Be there, until I shall tell thee." At length the danger of persecution was passed. Herod, defiled with much innocent blood, died without having discovered the much feared King of the Jews. Once more, the angel appeared unto Joseph in sleep, saying: "Rise, and take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead, who sought the life of the child." We may easily imagine that this message: "The persecutors and enemies of the divine Child are no more; the danger is over; the way to your country is open!"—was received with great joy. And immediately, the holy Foster-father arose, took the child, and his mother, and came

into the land of Israel. But, hearing that Archelaus reigned in Judea in the room of Herod, his father, he was afraid to go thither : and being warned in sleep, he retired into the parts of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth. Yes, Herod had left three sons : Archelaus, Herod-Antipas, and Philip, who, at his death, divided the kingdom among them ; Archelaus receiving Judea ; Herod-Antipas, Galilee ; and Philip, Ituræa. As it was known to Joseph, that Archelaus had inherited the cruel nature of his father and with it, no doubt, also his hatred against the divine Child, he justly hesitated to go into his territory, fearing to expose himself and his heavenly charge to new dangers. He concluded, therefore, to retire again from the confines of Judea and to choose another, safer region for the sojourn of his family. Whither should he turn ? In his perplexity, he received again his information from above ; he was directed to retire into Galilee.

2. On this occasion, yea, in the whole history of the flight into, and the return from, Egypt, Joseph made himself conspicuous by two virtues, which are worthy of our consideration ; two virtues which seem to contradict each other, and which, afterwards, Christ himself recommended not only to the Apostles, but to all Christians ; viz: the simplicity of the dove, and the prudence of the serpent. Joseph manifested his dove-like simplicity in his obedience to the will of God, by resigning himself entirely to the divine guidance in all the accidents of his life without delay, without hesitation, without asking questions or studying the results, he subjected himself to the divine decrees,—even in the midst of dangers and hardships, losing nothing of his interior calmness, composure, and confidence. And this beautiful virtue was richly rewarded. For, as he, like an obedient child, committed himself and his entirely to the guidance and disposition of the Lord, he made himself also the favorite of divine Providence, and, as it were, the apple of God's eye. Day and night the Lord watched over him, warning him of every impending danger, and placing even an angel at his disposal to entertain him with familiar converse and direct all his steps and movements. But the childlike simplicity of St. Joseph did not degenerate into indiscretion or presumption ; it was safely united to the prudence of the serpent. This showed itself particularly in his return from Egypt, and in the choice of his future dwelling-place. He did not run blindly and thoughtlessly into dangers ; but weighed well all the circumstances of time, place, and persons ; and where danger was to be feared, he chose the place which he considered the safest.

No doubt, you have often read this portion of the life of Christ, his flight into Egypt and his return therefrom, but perhaps you have never

pondered the instructive lesson it contains. Imprint, therefore, this meditation we have made together deeply upon your heart and memory. Draw from it, especially, new confidence in the ever-wonderful providence of God. But endeavor, also, by childlike obedience, like Mary and Joseph, to render yourself worthy of its guidance. Oppose not its sway by stubborn self-will, or short-sighted perversity. Listen to the voice and will of God, and hasten to perform it as his obedient children, even though it be against your own judgment and inclinations. Learn also from Mary and Joseph to secure to yourself the possession of Jesus with pain and solicitude. No land was too distant for them, no flight too perilous, no difficulty, no sacrifice, too great, if it preserved them from losing their only treasure. In like manner you must fear nothing more than to lose your God and Redeemer by sin; and being in the state of grace, you must be always ready to say: I have found him whom my soul loveth; I will hold him, and I will never let him go." (Cant : 3. 4.) Amen.

O. A., O.S.B.

EPIPHANY.

OUR THREEFOLD SACRIFICE.

“And opening their treasures, they offered him gold, frankincense and myrrh.” (Matt. 2 : 11.)

Jesus Christ is a king of such sublime dignity, that all the princes of the world are subject to him,—“the King of kings, the Lord of lords.” (1. Tim. 6 : 15.) He is an all-powerful king ; his sceptre reaches over all nations ; “a great king over all the earth.” (Ps. 46 : 3.) His kingdom is so firmly established, that the storms and convulsions of centuries fail to shake his throne ; “Of his kingdom there shall be no end.” (Luke 1 : 33.) He is a king of such majesty, that all the heavenly hosts lie at his feet, and in adoration exclaim : “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts ; all the earth is full of his glory.” (Is. 6 : 3.) We are the subjects of this infinitely sublime and powerful King. Hence it is just that, with the sages from the East, we offer him our gifts. They offered him gold, frankincense, and myrrh ; of us he requires instead,

- I. *Belief in his words ;*
- II. *Obedience to his law ; and*
- III. *Conformity to his example.*

I. Christ, our King, requires of us :

1. *Belief in his Gospel.* “God hath spoken to us through his Son.” (Hebr. 1 : 1.) From the bosom of his Father, the King of Angels, he who has “the words of eternal life” (John 6 : 69), came down upon the earth, and announced his heavenly Gospel to men. Through a series of miracles, it comes down to us pure and unadulterated, as it came from the mouth of Christ. He demands of us a firm and unalterable belief in his revelation. “He that believeth not, shall be condemned.” (Mark 16 : 16.) True, the subjection of the understanding to things which we do not comprehend, is by no means easy. Christ,

however, as our Sovereign Lord, can demand this sacrifice ; and if we refuse it, we are guilty of a crime and outrage against his sovereignty, deserving of eternal punishment. The nations to whom the Apostles first preached the Gospel, comprehended this very well. Not only the poor and lowly, but also, men of the highest rank and most profound learning, renowned orators, eloquent statesmen, famous generals, and powerful princes, humbly bowed their heads to the yoke of Christ. Hence, St. Paul writes : “ We bring into captivity every understanding to the obedience of Christ.” (2. Cor. 10 : 5.) Let us, therefore, be willing and joyful captives to the Gospel. “ I believe, because Christ has said it !” must be our constant watchword. If we hear blasphemies against the divine revelation, or if doubts arise in our own hearts, let us always say : “ I believe, because Christ has said it !”

2. *Belief in his Church.* “ He hath purchased the church with his own blood” (Acts 20 : 28) ; and set her, “as a pillar and ground of truth”, in the midst of the fluctuating billows of human doubt. He bears her in his heart, he defends her with his right hand ; his word is her word, his doctrine, her doctrine. “ Whosoever will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican. Let us, then, make the sacrifice of our understanding, and humbly believe all that the Church teaches.

II. Christ, our King, demands of us *obedience to his law.*

1. This is the special prerogative of a king—Obedience. Hence, St. Peter admonishes us : “ Be subject . . . whether it be to the king . . . or to governors.” Christ, as our sovereign Lord, could exercise unlimited power over us, and command us to renounce everything beautiful, precious, and agreeable that we possess. But he does not deal thus with us. Of his law, he says : “ My yoke is sweet, and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11 : 30.) He commands, it is true, but he only commands that which is salutary for us ; and when he forbids, he forbids only that which is injurious to us. A certain passion will precipitate us into the bottomless abyss,—he commands us to curb it. Is that an unreasonable command ? That bad habit paves the way for you to hell,—he commands you to give it up. Could he (loving you as he does) command less ? That house, that person, that society, exposes your eternal salvation to danger,—he commands you to go there no more. Does he ask too much of you ? Prayer, chastity, humility, self-denial, mortification, lead you to the nameless delights of heaven,—is he then a hard Master when he commands you to practise these virtues ?

2. We have solemnly sworn to keep the law of our king. In Baptism, we promised to our divine Redeemer, inviolable fidelity,—we vowed not only to believe in him, but to obey him. Those solemn renunciations which we uttered by our own lips or those of our sponsors, what else were they but so many promises and oaths that we would be subject to none save Christ. Consider what questions you were asked at the sacred font, and what were your answers in return. You promised to renounce the devil with all his works, and all his pride. At that moment you abjured for ever the law of the devil and of the world ; you became subject to the law of Christ, and enrolled yourself under his standard. Heaven and earth have been witnesses of this compact. The solemn words have been spoken in the presence of the Angels of God—it is impossible for you ever after to falsify or to deny them. And yet how many frame a thousand excuses in order to withdraw themselves from the law of their Lord and King ! If he forbids all thought of revenge and commands one to live in peace with his neighbor, he replies : “ My honor does not allow it ! ” If, to another, he forbids dangerous friendship and enjoins him to refuse entrance to evil inclinations, he retorts : “ This is impossible for people living in the world ! ” Works of mercy, acts of penance for the atonement of sin, reparation of injuries and scandals, restoration of ill-gotten goods or the character of a calumniated neighbor—if all these are commanded by God, the sinner replies : “ Such things cannot be done without the greatest injury to my interests ; it is asking too much ! ” In a word, if the commandments of the Lord be in any way difficult to men, they think and say : “ I cannot do it ! ” But the Eternal King will, one day, sit in judgment upon the sinner ; and terrible will be his sentence upon those who withdraw themselves from his obedience, and neglect to fulfil his law. This was long since announced through Moses : “ Behold, I set forth in your sight a blessing and a curse.” (Deut. 11 : 26.) This curse will be pronounced on the great day of retribution : “ Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.” (Matt. 25 : 41.) O my dearly beloved, be not as unwise, but as wise, and take upon yourselves, in time, the yoke and burden of the Lord. Fulfil the law of our heavenly King with fidelity, that you may escape his curse, and receive his rich, abundant blessing : “ Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you.” (Matt. 25 : 34.)

III. Christ, our King, requires of us *conformity with his example.*

1. He is a Model which we all are obliged to imitate. We can say with all justice, that Christ assumed human nature in order to found a kingdom, in which king and subjects alike entertain the same opin-

ions, wear the same robes, and walk the same paths. He decreed that the holiness of the king be reproduced in his subjects, and that what was said of the ancient people may be fulfilled in the new: "Be holy, because I the Lord am holy." (Leo. 20: 26) Hence, it follows that Christ's thirty-three years in the world became a pattern and example for his followers in all succeeding ages, obliging all who will be saved to walk in the footprints of the Lord.

2. Add to this, the plain utterances of the Sacred Scripture which oblige us to the imitation of Christ. Our divine King has said: "If any man minister to me, let him follow me." (John 12: 26.) An express command, therefore, obliges to his imitation all who wish to be Christ's servants. He threatens with rejection those who refuse to walk in the way in which our despised, blasphemed, and suffering Redeemer went before us. "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me." (Matt. 10: 38.) St. Paul, also, is very explicit on this point. He writes to the Christians of Rome, that they should consider themselves as men, who having died to sin, must lead no other life than that which Christ led. "So do you reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6: 11): and that it might be plain to all what death and what life he herein meant, he adds: "Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting or drunkenness, nor in chambering and impurities, nor in contention and envy, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom 13: 13, 14.) Do you perceive how strictly we are obliged to become conformable to this our most sublime and holy pattern? Away then with dissipation and scandals, away with enmity, envy, and jealousy! Christ, alone, must manifest himself in our life. Let his humility be your adornment, his mildness the honey of your tongue, his mortification the chaste rule of your senses, his love the love of your hearts; in short, "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and follow him whithersoever he goeth. (Matt. 8: 19.)

A. W., O. S. B.

THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL BLESSING OF CERTAIN PERSONS AND THINGS, AND THE PROPER USE OF THE LATTER.

“Into whatsoever house you enter, first say : Peace be to this house : and if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him : but if not, it shall return to you.” (Luke 10 : 5, 6.)

Yesterday, in some parts of Christendom, the priest came forth in festive robes, to bless, with solemn ceremonies and prayers, the water, salt, chalk, and incense. In a short time, when we shall celebrate the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, the Church will also bless the candles, as she blesses the ashes on Ash Wednesday, the palms on Palm Sunday, and the fire on Holy Saturday. You attend devoutly at these ceremonies, and in every case, except the last-named, you take the articles that are blessed to your own homes, and preserve them carefully. But, my dear friends, do you comprehend the importance and meaning of these several benedictions? Do you use these blessed articles with the intention which the Church has in view when she places them in your hands? Are you of the number of those children of peace of whom the Lord spoke to his Apostles? “Into whatsoever house you enter, first say : Peace be to this house : and if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him : but if not, it shall return to you.” These things I know not ; yet, nevertheless, I think I shall give general satisfaction to-day, by speaking of the blessings used in the Catholic Church, and explaining

- I. *The causes of their institution ;*
- II. *Their accompanying ceremonies ; and*
- III. *The proper use of blessed articles.*

I. 1. Jesus Christ opened to us the treasures of divine grace in instituting the holy Sacraments, in order to support us in the most trying and decisive moments of our lives. But, St. Paul says : “Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do ; do all things for the glory of God.” (1. Cor. 10 : 31.) Thus, we should perform even the most

trifling actions in a pious and holy manner. But the same Apostle tells us : "No man can say, the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost" (1. Cor. 12 : 3) ; thus giving us to understand that we cannot perform the most insignificant act in an acceptable manner, without the grace of God. This is the first reason why the Church blesses certain things :—

(a) That the faithful, through her intercession, may obtain the divine help in all their actions, so that all may conduce to God's honor, and the salvation of souls. Certainly, every Christian should supplicate God's aid for his individual soul ; but St. Ambrose calls our attention to the fact that the prayer of the Church, the supplication of the spotless spouse of Christ, must have a greater value than that of any of her children ; and that God will grant us through her intercession, all that he would be disposed to refuse us on account of our sins.

(b) Thus the Church blesses certain persons in order to implore for them, in special relations, and in extraordinary circumstances (particularly in the assuming of important offices), God's help and grace, the remission of sin and the punishment due to it, through the merits of Jesus Christ. Some of these blessings accompany the reception of the Sacraments ; others are given without them. During the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism, she blesses the faithful who are admitted to the Church ; during that of Holy Orders, she blesses the Levites for the service of the altar ; and during that of Matrimony, she blesses the couple who are prepared to enter upon the holy state of Christian wedlock. Outside of the Sacraments, she blesses Bishops, Abbots, Kings, and Emperors. To this class belongs, also, the blessing which pious Christian mothers receive after child-birth, for the corporal and spiritual benefit of themselves and their offspring.

(c) Besides persons, the Church also blesses objects which we use in our daily life, such as water, wine, food, oil, candles, clothing, &c., in order, on the one hand, to show the pious uses to which we should apply these things, and, through the blessing, to preserve us from misusing them ; and, on the other hand, that those who use these objects with a pious intention, may be blessed by him "who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ." (Ephes. 1 : 3.)

2. The second reason of ecclesiastical blessings, may be found in the consequences of the first sin. Man, and with him all other creatures, fell under the dominion of Satan through that first offense : "For we know that every creature groaneth, and is in labor even till now." (Rom. 8 : 22.) It is, indeed, true that Jesus Christ, who came in

order to crush the serpent's head, wrested from Satan his dominion and satisfied for the eternal punishment of sin ; but, the temporal penalties still remain—woe and misery, tribulations and misfortunes, the inclination to sin, arising from the rebellion of our own flesh, which is not subject to the law of God" (Rom. 8 · 7), as well as from the continual warfare of the devil, who, "as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." (1. Pet. 5 : 8.) In order to assist us in these difficulties, and especially to protect us against the attacks of Satan, the Church blesses persons and things in the name of Jesus Christ. This blessing of the Church also removes the curse which the Lord pronounced upon the earth, when he said : "Cursed is the earth in thy work : with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life." (Gen. 3 : 17.) Thus, the power of these ecclesiastical blessings tends to the complete purification of the earth.

3. The third reason for the blessings pronounced by the Church is to be found in her system of symbolic teaching. In blessing candles, for instance, the Church intends to typify Christ, who is the Light that enlighteneth the darkness of sin and the shadows of eternal death. Thereby she teaches us that it is our duty to follow the injunction of Jesus, who said : "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 5 : 16.) At the beginning of Lent she blesses the ashes to remind us of the sentence of the Lord : "Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return" (Gen. 3 : 19), and to keep before our eyes the frail and transitory nature of our existence. Ashes also are the emblem of penitence, public sinners often strewing them upon their heads before the altar, as a token of their contrition. Hence the sight of the blessed ashes should move us to penance and sorrow for sin. The palms, which are blessed on Palm Sunday, are emblems of victory and peace, and they seem to say to us, at the same time : "Persevere in the conflict against sin, if you would one day enter with Christ into the dwellings of everlasting peace, and join the throng of "all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and in the sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands . . . saying : Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.'" (Apoc. 7 : 9, 10.)

II. Let us now examine *the ceremonies which accompany these blessings*, and we shall learn from them the most important spiritual lessons. In almost every case, the person, or thing, to be blessed, is sprinkled with holy water—as an indication that the faithful should cleanse themselves from all defilements of sin, and that the objects blessed should

be preserved from all sinfulness. In other cases, the blessing is preceded by the burning of incense, to typify the desires and supplications of the faithful ascending before the throne of God as a sweet-smelling odor. The sign of the cross is repeated frequently during the ceremonies, in order to teach us that our prayers can be granted only through the merits of Christ's death upon the cross. That holy sign should moreover inspire us with renewed hope and confidence in him, who is the fountain of all blessings, and the source of all grace, as well as our protection against all the snares of Satan.—In other blessings, salt is used. As salt preserves from corruption, so, also, should the blessing of the priest preserve us from the interior corruption of sin. Sometimes, again, the person or object is anointed with holy oil, the healing property of the oil being a symbol of the healing power of the ecclesiastical blessing attached to certain objects, in relieving those hidden wounds of the soul, which are caused by sin. The properties of oil are soothing and gentle,—so, also, the grace of the Holy Ghost penetrates sweetly into the hearts of the faithful through the blessings invoked by the Church of God.

III. These are the causes, the intentions, and the meaning of blessings in the Catholic Church; her meaning is sublime, her intentions are holy, and, in order to derive benefit from her institutions, it is necessary that we make *proper use both of the blessing and the things blessed*. Every blessing of the Church is a supplication to God. If this be directed to the salvation of our soul, we may confidently hope that our prayer will be granted; but if the object of our petition be some temporal good, such as bodily health, fruitful crops, or other worldly advantages, we shall certainly receive the object of our prayer, if it be for our spiritual benefit. But, in either case, we must have confidence, and do what in us lies to strive after sanctity. "Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God, and his justice," says our Lord; "and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6 : 33); otherwise there will be fulfilled in us the prediction of St. James: "You ask, and receive not; because you ask amiss." (James 4 : 3.) On the other hand, if you depend wholly upon God, and do nothing to help yourselves, you are like the slothful servant who buried his talent, and neglected the interests of his master. Remember, however, that he received in the end his well-merited punishment.

A special wisdom and discernment are necessary in the use of blessed objects. Too often it happens that badly-instructed Christians misunderstand or exaggerate the efficacy of such things. Of themselves, these blessed articles cannot afford us the slightest assistance.

It is only the blessing of the Church and the confidence we have in her intercession,—the union of our prayer with hers,—that can obtain for us the granting of our petitions, according to the divine will. The receiving and keeping of such articles should serve to remind us of the blessings of the Church, and animate us to a lively confidence in God. In order to receive grace and salvation by means of these blessed objects, the Christian who makes use of them must possess a pure, or, at least, a contrite, heart, and must direct his prayers chiefly to the gaining of the kingdom of God and his justice. The welfare of the soul must come first; then that of the body. Prayers for all such things as concern the eternal salvation of our souls will certainly be granted by God; but temporal goods will be accorded to us only so far as they are conducive to our everlasting welfare. We must, also, remember in using these blessed articles, that the benediction of the Church has removed their primeval curse; and that we should be careful not to call down again upon us the anger of God, through the misuse of these holy objects; that we must follow the teachings which the Church, (through sensible signs, ceremonies, and prayers,) gives us; and that she always invites us, through them, to make zealous efforts for the greater purification of our souls.

Doing all this, we may rest assured that we shall obtain that peace of God which Christ has promised to all those who, with a pious intention, receive the blessing of his priests. For he says: "Into whatsoever house you enter, first say: Peace be to this house: and if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him." This interior peace is granted us in the blessing of the Church, by the pardon of venial sins, and the remission of temporal punishment, by preventing grace, and the restraining of Satan's power. Even our temporal interests will be advanced by the proper use of blessed objects, as the five loaves and two fishes were so wonderfully multiplied by the blessing of Jesus Christ. But the pious Catholic, while he does not despise the blessings of the Church, on the other hand, does not superstitiously over-estimate or abuse them. The holy intentions of the Church are ever present to his mind, and thus every blessing and every blessed object becomes to him a fountain of salvation, for time and for eternity. Amen.

A. W., O.S.B.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

CHRIST, THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me." (John 14 : 6.)

To-day, when I behold the divine Child Jesus in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, who regard him with awe and astonishment; when I perceive the various ways in which men view our Saviour and his work; and the happy or miserable results which flow to them therefrom, I ask myself the questions: With what eyes should we look upon Jesus Christ? With what sentiments should the contemplation of him fill our hearts? These are highly important questions; for in their solution is included all that our holy faith and its Founder, Jesus Christ, are, and should be, to us. Our Lord himself has given us the right answer to these questions when he says: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me." Christ, then, is for us

- I. *The Way which we must go;*
- II. *The Truth which we must follow;* and
- III. *The Life which we must live.*

I. Christ is our Way, our only way to salvation.

1. From the very beginning, God in his love for mankind, vouchsafed to show them the way to eternal happiness. He walked and conversed with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Taught by that divine Teacher, and illumined by the undimmed light of reason, our first parents could easily have walked in the way of righteousness unto the kingdom of eternal light;—but, seduced by the devil, they rose in disobedience against God, and went the way of sin together with their posterity. When, at the building of the tower of Babel, the language of men became confused, and they were scattered all over the world, they went a thousand different ways, save the right one—each after the desires of his own heart. The world withdrew more and more from the way of God and its true happiness. "They are all gone aside, there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Ps. 13 : 3.)

2. God, compassionating his erring creatures, wished to conduct them back to the way of salvation. Having spoken to them at divers times, and in various ways, by the Prophets,—in the fulness of time, his only-begotten Son appeared in order to show them the way to heaven, crying out to them : “ I am the way, the truth, and the life.’ If you turn to me, if you listen to my words, and follow me, you cannot go astray !”

What do we require of a way that it may deserve to be called the right way ? What qualities must it have that we may gladly and joyfully, with full and calm confidence, select it ?

First of all, the true way must be the right and direct one to our destination. It must offer us a sure guarantee that, following it, we shall not go astray. What traveler journeying to his home, would deliberately take a road, of which he does not know whether it be the right or wrong one ? Christ is the right and only true way to our last end. He is the only-begotten Son of God, the infallible Truth. He can neither deceive nor be deceived. He has created human nature, and knows our inborn essence ; therefore, he also knows the best way whereby to reach our destination. The right way to a place must lie before one clearly and distinctly. The path must be so straight, that we shall not hesitate to take it. Has not Christ clearly and plainly taught us the way to heaven,—so clearly, that it is impossible for us to miss it ? Yes ; he has pointed it out to us by his teachings and example,—nay, more, he has marked it out for us by the indelible traces of his precious Blood.

3. Do you prefer a road that is even, smooth, and shady,—protected from a multitude of annoyances ? Behold the delightful way that Jesus has opened to us by his cross ! It is a steep ascent, it is the road that leads over Calvary, but our dear Lord sustains and supports us by his grace and his promises of reward. Every step we take according to his will, has its own peculiar joy and bliss, which sweetens all the hardships of the road. Whoever travels this way, enjoys peace of mind, and is calm and happy even in the greatest afflictions. Why not be willing to go this pleasant way ?

Many are the pilgrims that have trodden it before us, and thereby secured for themselves life everlasting. The number may, indeed, seem small compared with the great number who go on the road of sin and perdition ; but it is the noblest and the best of mankind that have followed Jesus. The great misfortune of our days is, that Jesus Christ is no longer the way of the majority. The multitude wander about in the desert of life, each following his own judgment, conceits, and desires, each searching for himself a way to heaven, each only to deviate daily more and more, from the way which Jesus Christ has taught and showed us. They are all gone aside, they are become unprofitable to-

gether, there is none that doeth good, no, not one. They have renounced the authority of God, and of his Church, and like the clouds of heaven, which are driven in all directions by the winds, they go the ways of their own choosing.

Let us, at least, my beloved, follow him who is truly the way, the truth, and the life. He has declared of himself : "No man cometh to the Father, but by me." I am the light of the world, he that followeth me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life. (John 8 : 12.) Let us cry out to him with St. Peter : "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." (John. 6 ; 59.) Outside of thee, there is for us no way to heaven, no path to everlasting salvation !

II. I am *the Truth*. After the right way is re-opened to us, all we have to do, is to enter upon it, and go forward to the end. If we believe, and receive into our hearts, the words and lessons of Christ ; if we follow his example and walk in his footsteps, keeping the commandments and making proper use of all the means of grace, we shall not miss the end of our creation.

1. But we are poor, fallen creatures, of a weak, frail nature. How many dangers surround us on all sides and at all times ! How many wrong paths open before us ! Our sensual nature shrinks from the steep and thorny way of Calvary, and is tempted to walk in the broad, flowery road of perdition. And, then, the life of Christ appears to worldlings as so divine and heavenly, so heroic and sublime, that we look up timidly, shading our eyes from the brilliant radiance thereof, and doubting if it will ever be possible for us to imitate such a grand and incomparable exemplar ! Even after having travelled in the right road for a long time, how easy it is to be beguiled into crooked paths and lose one's self in a labyrinth of evil !

2. Has our Saviour merely shown us the true way ? Has he done nothing to help us persevere in it ? He well knew our frailty and imperfection ; and therefore he was not content with teaching us by his example how to walk in the right way to heaven. In his love and mercy, he left with us a mighty leader and guardian, who points out to us at every moment the true way and always keeps us in it. In his wisdom, he has made provision that the way opened by him might not be closed, or obstructed, by the malice of the world.

He has established HIS CHURCH, and on her, our true and only guide upon earth, he has bestowed all those gifts which he brought down from heaven. Following her, we cannot err. She is the One, Holy, Apostolic, Catholic, indestructible Church. *One* in the mirac-

ulous unity of her doctrines, her life, and her institutions, she is destined to unite mankind, separated from God by sin, into one great household of faith. She is the one Ark of the New Law, whose inmates shall be carried safely and securely over the stormy sea of the world unto the peaceful shores of eternity. She is the one sheepfold of Jesus Christ, into which all the nations of the earth shall be gathered, and in which all the believers in Christ shall assemble. Blessed are you if you believe in her and obey her! You cannot go astray. You shall surely be saved.

She is the *Holy Church*, cemented with the blood of the God-Man. The mystical body of Christ. She is his peerless Bride, whom he won by delivering himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, and present her gloriously, without spot or wrinkle, holy and undefiled, to his Eternal Father. By the truths which she teaches, by the commandments which she enjoins, and by the graces she dispenses, she is the school of holiness, and the fruitful mother of numberless holy children. Blessed are you if you be the holy offspring of this spotless Bride of Christ!

She is the *Apostolic Church* built upon the foundation of the Prophets and the Apostles, Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. She carries power and grace within her for the salvation of the world. Whoever is united with her is also united with Christ. Blessed are you if you hold fast to this Apostolic foundation! No storm shall be able to shake you.

She is the *Catholic Church*; her arches span all parts of the world; her boundaries extend over the whole world. All nations assemble round her altars. The whole of Christendom lives and feeds upon her graces and blessings. Blessed are you if you kneel within her sacred precincts!

She is *indestructible*, built upon a rock which all the powers of earth and hell cannot destroy. She has withstood all the storms which have arisen for eighteen hundred years; and she shall be impregnable to all assaults to the end of time. Through her, the truth and grace of Jesus Christ are guaranteed to mankind for all time to come. By his assistance and that of the Holy Ghost, the way to heaven can never be lost again. Blessed are you if, in inviolable fidelity, you remain children of the Church! Your strength lies in her might and your eternal salvation in her indestructibility.

This great Church is the *Epiphany of Christ*;—she is his manifestation and the continuation of his life. In her, Jesus himself lives in every century of the world. She is to his children as the shining cloud and the pillar of fire which went before the Israelites in their march through the desert, and conducted them into the land of prom-

ise. In her, the way to heaven appears daily to our eyes. She goes before us hourly, to warn, to advise and to counsel. She offers to us all the graces which our Lord deposited in her for the salvation of the world ; and she sweetly leads us on to the fulfilment of our eternal destiny. We must have her for our mother, if we expect to have God for our Father.

Is it not doubly necessary in these days of ours, to recall this truth to our minds? I have told you that it is now the misfortune of innumerable souls to have lost the way indicated to us by Christ, and to follow the road of their own perverted judgments, of their own sinful desires. But if we ask another question ; Why is it, and how does it come, that the way of our Saviour has been so universally abandoned? —the answer is no other than this :—Because mankind no longer give ear to the Church of Christ. Many want Christ, but not the Christ of the Church ; they want Christianity, they love it, as they say, but they do not want the Church of the Apostolic age, the Church of Peter, the visible congregation of all the faithful under its Christ-appointed Head, the Roman Pontiff, and the bishops subject to, and in union with, him. Hence, the countless hydra-headed religious creeds which have sprung up throughout the world, each claiming to be the Church established by Christ, and each professing to teach the way of salvation.

Whoever wishes to go to heaven by the sure way of Christ, must allow himself to be led, and guided by the Church. He must be within her pale, he must be one of her members. Otherwise, Christ is to him neither the way nor the truth. There is no Christ, no Christianity, without the Church. “There is a way which seemeth just to a man, but the ends thereof lead to death.” (Prov. 14: 12.)

III. I am *the Life*. No man cometh to the Father but by me. These words indicate a still closer relation between Christ and his followers. He must be to us not only our way and our truth, but also our life, that through him we may come to the eternal Father

1. Of ourselves, we cannot be saved. The bliss of heaven, as our Saviour has said, does not consist merely in the enjoyment of a perfect felicity, but in a most intimate and indissoluble union with God, the beatific vision of the Most High from everlasting to everlasting. Who is able of his own power to rise to this high destiny, or of his own nature to reach this sublime goal? We are sinful creatures ; the weight of primeval guilt weighs us down, even if that first burden be not increased by that of countless actual, personal sins. The gate of heaven is closed against every man who commits sin ; he is unworthy of approaching to, and communing with God.

2. Another life must, therefore, be infused into us if we would be cleansed from every stain of sin, and elevated to the supernatural order. Christ our Redeemer has done this.—In the beginning of time, at the creation of the first man, Almighty God breathed the breath of life into him, in order to sanctify him, and to make him and all his posterity worthy of the unspeakable bliss of heaven. But, by sin our first parents lost this high and supernatural life; they became fallen, sinful creatures, in whom dwelt only an earthly, perishable life. They were excluded from heaven. Our Saviour having compassion on mankind, assumed human nature, became like one of ourselves in all things save in sin, in order to infuse into us once more that heavenly and supernatural life that had been forfeited. This is the great and special blessing of the Redemption: That Christ has made us new creatures in God, and has communicated to us his divine, immortal life.

I am the life. Is Christ really our life? He is the life of the world; he has given his life for us. He shed his blood on the cross, in order to wash away our sins, to cleanse our souls, and to deliver us from eternal death. He established his Church, and gave to her all the graces which he acquired on the cross, that his life might be shared by all men to the end of time. In her, his Sacred Heart is opened, and by means of the Sacraments, the streams of his grace continue to flow, to sanctify every soul that comes into the world. In all important moments, here below, this life of sacramental grace is conveyed to our souls, or abundantly increased therein.

4. Christ is the life of the world. Has he not instituted the most holy Sacrament of the Altar in order to come to us, and replenish us with his life? Can you doubt that he is your life, when you receive him upon your tongues, and hide him within your hearts? May not each devout soul that has been fed with the Body and Blood of Christ, say with the Apostle: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me"—"If I live now in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and delivered himself for me"—?

5. Christ is the life of the world. He will awaken us to eternal life on the Last Day. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and they that hear shall live." (John 5: 25.)

Christ is the life of the world. He has pervaded and consecrated all the circles of this natural life with his spirit and blessing. He reformed the world, and elevated it by his teaching and grace, to a new and better life. He has instructed us in all virtues, both by word and

example, and he enables us by his grace to practise them. He has formed the family-life in its beauty and holiness. He joins together the Christian spouses as children of God, and unites them in a holy union for a supernatural end. Conjugal love and fidelity are his commands. He teaches parents their great duties to their children, and gives them the graces necessary to fulfil them. He confers a sacred dignity on the father and mother, as heads of the family, and commands the children to obey their parents. He is the life of the world ; and he has prepared a remedy for every ill in the great body of human society.

How much happier is the world, since Christ has become its life ! It is true, every period of time has its own needs and troubles. A perfect Utopia has never yet been since the fall of Adam, nor will it ever be. We are living upon an earth cursed by sin, and we journey through the trials of life towards our eternal goal. And though our Saviour has become our life, and redeemed us from sin and hell, he has not freed us from those consequences of sin which must be patiently borne for the sanctification of our souls. But those earthly needs and miseries have been multiplied a millionfold since men have become blinded to the light and life of the world. A thousand deadly wounds open in every direction;—they are bleeding, they are ulcerated,—and earth has no remedy whereby to close or heal them. Mankind has become weak and wretched, sick, faint, and miserable, since the spirit of Christ has fled from among the vast majority of the nations. “I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me.” “There is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4 : 12), save the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May he, then, always continue to be our life during our sojourn here on earth ! May every action of our lives be grounded and rooted in him, and may he grant us imperishable life for all eternity ! Whenever we raise our eyes to him, may we be able to say : “Thou art the Way I go ; thou art the Truth I follow ; thou art the Life that replenishest me in time and eternity. Guide me, and conduct me to the eternal Father in heaven !” Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE GRAND LESSON OF THE HIDDEN LIFE OF CHRIST.

"He was subject to them." (Luke 2 : 51.)

The Gospel of to-day records the only event, which is known of the youth of Christ up to his thirtieth year. All the other circumstances, all the other doings and sayings of our Lord's hidden life at Nazareth, are veiled in a sacred obscurity, until the period when, three years before his sacred Passion and Death, he began his public ministry.

We know not why the Sacred Text records merely the going up of the Divine Child with his parents to Jerusalem, at the age of twelve years, and passes over everything else in silence. But as God does all things well and wisely, we may believe that he had a good reason for so doing. Besides, the narration of this one event indemnifies us for everything else, for it is so replete with salutary and edifying lessons, that it would furnish inexhaustible matter for endless discourses. In this brief narrative of the relations which existed between the Child Jesus and his holy parents, may be found the most valuable instructions and suggestions for all Christian parents and children, as well as an abridgment of what is requisite for a truly good and Christian education.

I. Remark then, dear parents, that as soon as our Blessed Lord was old enough to make the prescribed journey to Jerusalem, Mary and Joseph took him along with them, in order to celebrate the feast of Easter in the Temple. In your turn, be careful to take your children to church,—to Mass and sermon, Catechism and Vespers. Be not content, however, that they are merely present there in the body, but see to it that they take part in the services with attention and devotion. To drive children to all the public devotions of the Church without seeing that they behave themselves properly thereat, is to do them more harm than good. Indeed, it often destroys their reverence for holy things during their whole after-life, making them habitually careless and distracted before the Blessed Sacrament. Often speak with them seriously and piously at your own fireside, instructing them in the love of God for man, the love of Jesus for the little ones, of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Eucharist, of the Church as the house of God. Once in the church, keeping them beside you in your own pew, have

a watchful eye over them, and severely reprimand and punish them, if they do not behave with propriety and devotion.

On this account, it is advisable not to take or send children to church until they have come to the use of reason. A child under five years of age has no business there, for the church must not be made a nursery. An infant of three or four years cannot be expected to pray,—therefore, it must play. On such, the house of God makes no holy impression; and the boy or girl who began by making the church a play-house, will continue in later years to treat it in a like frivolous and distracted manner. The day on which a child is taken to church for the first time, should be a solemn day for its parents as well as for itself. Only after they have taught it the first rudiments of religion, and beheld it attracted to God and Jesus with a clinging, childlike affection,—only then should the father and mother say to it: “My child, you may go to church with us, to-day, for the first time. Remember that it is the house of God, a house of prayer. God is present there; therefore, behave well, and say your prayers with devotion and attention.” With words of this kind, they should introduce the child into the church,—and believe me, it will behave better there in its adult years, than many carelessly-trained young people now do in that holy place.

This day, on which Mary and Joseph first took the little twelve year-old Jesus with them into the Temple, was a very important day for them; and all Christian parents should imitate their holy example in this respect.

If you wish to raise your children well, and in a Christian manner, my advice to you is: Do not let them from under your eye; keep them as much as possible near and around you, and under your control. The parents of Christ did this; he was always near them, always before their eyes. They were anxious to know where he was, and what he was doing. And when he remained at Jerusalem, and they could not find him at once,—alas! what sorrow and anguish filled their hearts! They spared no pains to find him. How unlike these holy parents, are many fathers and mothers of the present day! They can be quite calm and unconcerned for a whole day and, worse still, for a whole night, although they know not where their children are. Indeed, many parents are glad to be rid of them for a while. “Begone!” they say. “Out of the house, and give me some rest and peace!” O careless parents! are you not ashamed, when you consider, to-day, the example of Mary and Joseph? If it is not possible to keep your children constantly under your eye, at least acquaint yourself as to where, in what house, and in whose company they are. You should know what they are doing, and what society they keep. There are good houses, where your children are well taken care of; but there are also houses where

the reverse is the case. There are good, pious, well-behaved children with whom you may allow your children to play and associate, without risk to their morals ; but there are also bad, corrupt companions from whom your children can learn nothing but evil.—Do you think you deserve the name of good parents, when you expose your children so carelessly to the danger of losing their innocence ? Of those bodily risks to which you expose your children, when you permit them to roam about without control, I do not speak at all, I mean the risks to their poor immortal souls. A single unguarded moment may rob your children of their innocence and virtue, and cause you afterwards many sufferings, many heart-burnings and tears.

Parents, govern your children, not with an iron rule, but with *mildness, patience, and affection*, as the parents of Jesus did : “ Son, why hast thou done so to us ? thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.” How affectionately does Mary speak to her Son ! Who can read this mild, maternal reproof, without emotion ! A kind word always has a good effect, especially with children. Imprudent parents who use the rod too often, do more harm than good. Some are so rude, so cruel, and unmerciful, that they never punish their children, except in anger. They curse, blaspheme, and call their children the worst kind of names ; in their mad rage, they strike them not only with the rod, but with whatever they get hold of, without looking where the blow falls. Thus, children have frequently been crippled by their cruel parents. How severe will be the punishment of such men and women ! Remember what St. Paul says : “ Parents, do not provoke your children.” Do not tantalize and scold and punish your children, from morning till night. Surely, they are not always doing wrong. Why not praise them sometimes ?

If obliged in conscience to punish them, do so moderately and prudently, and never in anger or spleen. Distinguish between light and grave faults. Youthful levity should never be punished as severely as wilful malice. Children that are whipped and punished unreasonably, become hardened, sullen, embittered. Remember that you once were children yourselves, and that you once had need, in your turn, of the patience of your parents. Three things are required for the education of children : The first is patience, the second is patience, the third is patience. “ It is my delight to be with the children of men,” said the Lord. . . “ Suffer the little ones to come to me, and forbid them not, for, of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus caressed and blessed the little ones. Every child has an angel, who stands before the throne of God. Brutal parents, who so often, and without reason, curse, abuse, and maltreat your children, remember that their angels will accuse you, one day, before the tribunal of God, and demand vengeance

upon you. You call your children "little devils" and "imps of hell,"—tell me what are *you*, if your children are truly what you say?

Parents must give their children a good example; they must have God before their eyes, and be on their guard not to do anything wrong in the presence of their children; otherwise, *all exhortation and advice is useless*; what they build up with one hand, they tear down with the other. Children pay more attention to what they *see*, than to what they *hear* from their parents. Be careful, then, that your children see and learn nothing from you that is sinful or unbecoming for them to see or know. Do not trust to their tender years. Say not: "They do not notice—they do not understand!" Children are keenly observant and inquisitive; they see and understand more than you think. What they see in their infancy, is imprinted on their tender souls as on soft wax, never again to be obliterated during their whole after-life. Many parents are very imprudent, and are the cause of the spiritual ruin and destruction of their children; but, woe to him through whom the scandal cometh! It were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea! Those who give a natural life to their children, often rob them of their spiritual life. If your children are damned, parents, it is your own fault; they are the talents entrusted to your care by God; and if they are lost, how can *you* be saved? You shall be lost with them; their souls will be demanded at your hands; their sins will be laid to your charge; their blood will be upon your unhappy heads.

II. And now, I come to say a few words to you, children. If you wish to profit by the education your parents give you, you must co-operate with their efforts; you must allow yourselves to be educated. You must behave towards your parents, as Jesus behaved towards his.

First of all, if you wish to please God and man, and to become good and useful members of society, you must *be obedient* to your parents. Do willingly and cheerfully whatever they command you, and avoid what they forbid you, no matter how dear or delightful it may otherwise seem to you. Remember, that your parents are anxious for your good; they know and understand things better than you; they have experience, which you have not. Be obedient to your parents, not only in your infancy and childhood, but also when you are grown up. Christ has given you an example—imitate him. He was subject to his parents; be you also subject to yours. Your parents deserve to be obeyed; for, after God, they are your greatest benefactors. They hold for you the place of God;—hearing them, you hear God; despising them, you despise God.

Embrace every opportunity to do good. Even in your earliest years,

you must be about your heavenly Father's business. Church and school must be dear to you, because there you are made acquainted with God, your Father in heaven. Behave well in church, where Christ is really present in the Blessed Eucharist. Do not laugh or talk ; do not gaze around in that holy place, but have your eyes turned towards the altar, and there adore God, and pray to him. Love to go to school ; be obedient to your teachers, and try to learn all you can. The time will come when you will bless the memory of your dead parents, because they made you go to school and church. Then, you will bitterly regret having neglected a single opportunity of learning something good and useful.

“ And Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace, with God and men.” He advanced *in wisdom and age*. Children, what a shame for you, if you become older and bigger, but not better. Jesus advanced *in grace with God*. Endeavor, from day to day, to become dearer and more acceptable to God, by piety, virtue, and innocence. Jesus advanced *in grace with men*. Good and well-behaved children are loved by all. Conduct yourselves well every where,—at church, at school, in the streets, at home. Be kind and obliging to every one, especially to aged persons. Imitate your Model, Jesus, and you will truly be good, children, an object of complacency and joy to God and men.

O, that all parents would resemble Mary and Joseph ! O, that all children would be like the holy Child Jesus ! Then, indeed, both parents and children might cherish the assured hope of meeting again after this miserable life is past, and enjoying together the blissful reward of the Almighty Father in heaven. Amen.

FEAST OF THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS.

THE VICTORY OF THE HOLY NAME.

“Nor is there salvation in any other. For, there is no other name under heaven (but that of Jesus) given to men, whereby we must be saved.”
(Acts 4 : 12.)

The sacred name, *Jesus*, expresses all that Jesus became for us,—the Author of our salvation. As St. Peter most forcibly declares : “There is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved.” Holy name, which has conquered the world, which has penetrated to every part of it, and has called men of every language to salvation ! That the name of Jesus, which was once so despised, should have so quickly subjugated the world to God, is a great miracle, a striking proof of the truth of the Christian religion. It behooves all Catholics to ponder seriously upon this fact, in order to strengthen their faith ; therefore, to-day, I will speak on THE VICTORY OF THE NAME OF JESUS, or, on the causes of the rapid spread of Christianity throughout the world, which are shown.

- I. *In the doctrines of Christianity ;*
- II. *In the lives of all good Christians.*

I. When Jesus was sending forth his disciples to preach the Gospel of the kingdom of God, among other things, he said to them : “Do not think that I am come to send peace upon earth : I came not to send peace, but the sword.” (Matt. 10 : 34.) From that moment the fulfilment of these words began ; for, as unbelief and malice towards Jesus raged, and would be satisfied with nothing less than his blood, in like manner, his Apostles and their successors found themselves, from the beginning of their mission, surrounded on all sides by persecutions, tortures, and death. Under such trying circumstances, Christianity entered the world. Humanly speaking, its dissemination seemed vain and impracticable, whilst the death of its Founder appeared to render its gradual extinction a matter of certainty. But the enemies of Christ deceived themselves with such hopes. “The blood of the martyrs,” as Tertullian says, “became the seed of the Church.” In the

midst of inhuman persecutions, the number of Christians increased daily. Where must we look for the cause of all this? Before answering this question, it is first to be remarked that, in the course of time, faith and morals among both the Jews and the pagans had fallen into great disorder. There were still many among them, however, who recognized their unhappy condition; but, where could they turn for deliverance from their many pressing miseries? Christianity was the sole remedy for their ills—a remedy which all the learning of paganism failed to supply. Christianity, alone, proposed to man, not divinities personifying every human weakness and passion, but a one, triune God, holy, all-powerful, wise, and good; a God, whose paternal providence watches over all his creatures; whose justice rewards the good, and punishes the wicked; whose mercy to sinful man caused him to send even his only-begotten Son, that he might be a Mediator between God and man. The Christian religion, alone, could solve the questions concerning the destiny of man, the origin of evil, the immortality of the soul, and the future life beyond the grave. To such a blissful source of consolation, hastened crowds of the better-disposed, who,—being enlightened to see the vain and transitory nature of all earthly things, and that (as the Apostle says), all the sufferings of this world bear no comparison to the glories of the next, (Rom. 8)—were ready to sacrifice even life itself, for their faith and hope. They believed the words of Jesus, and trusted in his promise that: “He that shall lose his life, for my sake, shall find it” (Matt. 10 : 39), in everlasting joy and salvation.

II. The heroic courage of the Christian martyrs led many to reflect upon the doctrines of Christianity, and, by the grace of God, to embrace them. Yea, the chief virtues, displayed in the ordinary life of the first Christians, formed a shining model for the imitation of all whose hearts were not dead to every germ of truth and goodness. St. Luke describes the characteristic of the first Christian communities, in the following words: “The multitude of the believers had but one heart and one soul. And all they that believed were together, and had all things common. They sold their possessions and goods, and divided them to all, according as every one had need. And continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart: praising God together, and having favor with all the people.” (Acts 4 : 32 ; 2 : 44-47.)

Charity, which Jesus himself pronounced to be the greatest commandment of his divine religion, animated more and more the hearts of the first believers. One of the pagan writers tells us: “The Christians love one another before they know each other;” and Tertullian says, that

the pagans, filled with astonishment at what they saw, exclaimed : " See how these Christians love one another, and are ready to die for each other ! "

When men saw their contempt of the world, and its sinful pleasures, their benevolence and meekness, their forgiveness of their enemies, their faithfulness to duty,—in short, the sanctity of their whole lives,—they were involuntarily compelled to confess that such a religion contained a superhuman, if not a divine, principle, and were forced to respond to its invitation to join its ranks, which embraced all mankind. Of this conversion, Origen writes : " The work of Christ is manifested in the whole human race ; where Christian communities have been established, their members have been converted from a thousand vices ; and already, the name of Jesus produces a wonderful meekness, charity, and mildness in the hearts of those who have accepted the doctrines of Christ, not hypocritically, for the sake of earthly gains, but with an upright intention."

Thus, dearly beloved, we see how the sanctity and consoling nature of the Christian religion, the steadfastness of the martyrs, and the holy lives of the early Christians, under the protection of Divine Providence, were the means of disseminating the doctrines and teachings of the Church. Let us not be astonished at such great success, but let us learn something from it. Yes, let the consideration and profession of the truths of our religion always tend to inspire us with greater admiration for their nobility and beauty, and with a stronger desire to advance in Christian perfection. To this end, remember the words of the Apostle : " Christ, in you the hope of glory, whom we preach, admonishing every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." (Col. 1 : 28.)

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE ONLY MEANS OF SECURING A HAPPY MARRIAGE.

“Jesus also was invited, and his disciples, to the marriage.” (John 2 : 2.)

How happy must the newly-wedded couple have been, mentioned in the Gospel of this day, at whose marriage-feast Jesus vouchsafed to be a guest ! The gracious Dispenser of all good gifts,—his first miracle by which he changed water into wine, in favor of the newly-married couple, does not permit us to doubt for a moment, that he conferred on them also greater and more precious (because spiritual), favors and blessings. Even in our days, Christians might enjoy this very same happiness, if they would but invite Jesus to their wedding-feasts. He will come, if he be invited, but only on certain conditions. And what are these conditions ? Listen with attention—you, especially, who are not yet married, but who, sooner or later, will present yourselves for the reception of the Sacrament of Matrimony. These conditions shall be the subject of our meditation to-day. If you wish Jesus to come as a guest to your wedding-feast, bringing with him the fulness of his graces and blessings, you must enter into the state of matrimony :

- I. *With a clean conscience,* and
- II. *With a pure intention.*

Matrimony is a holy and honorable union, raised by Christ above the natural order. “Remember,” says St. Paul, “that matrimony is honorable in all things.” Yes, it is holy and honorable in every respect ; holy and honorable in *its Founder, God himself*, the Holy of Holies ; holy and honorable in *its signification*, the union of Christ with the Church ; holy and honorable in *its effects*, the increase of sanctifying grace and the reception of actual graces ; and lastly, holy and honorable in *its purpose*, the propagation of mankind and the education of children for eternal life. Great and strong arguments, indeed, for the sanctity of the marriage state ! What follows therefrom ? That those who wish to enter into this holy state, should do so with a clear and good conscience. Holy things are to be treated holily. And, as

Matrimony is a great and holy Sacrament, it can, on no condition whatsoever, be received in any other state, than in the state of grace. Whoever receives it in the state of sin, receives it unworthily, adding the guilt of sacrilege to his other sins, by profaning and abusing so holy a Sacrament. Shudder and tremble at this thought! No real happiness can result from an impious and sacrilegious marriage.

Alas! if one could look into the interior of those who are about to enter into this holy state, how often would he find them utterly lacking this most necessary purity of heart! How is this sacrament regarded by the generality of young people? In the other Sacraments, the spiritual is looked upon as the main point, and some preparation is made for them; but, in the Sacrament of Matrimony, the spiritual is a secondary matter. I will not say, that the bride has made her choice without God, and without the consent and blessing of her parents; that she prepares to give her heart and hand to her bridegroom without any reference to God,—but, what are the first and last thoughts of the betrothed couple for days beforehand? What do they constantly speak of? Of the ring, the dress, the guests, the wedding-feast, the marriage-settlements, and many other foolish and unnecessary things. The most important things,—Confession and Communion,—are seldom thought of, seldom mentioned. The question about the wedding-dress, bridal-day, ring, and guests, being settled, they imagine that all is in order as far as they are concerned. As to what is to be done in the Church, all that will come of itself; it is, as they say, a ceremony, to which one must submit with decorum, but which signifies no more than that the betrothed are declared husband and wife. Most young people pay little or no attention to the interior graces, which the Sacrament produces in the soul, when worthily received. On the contrary, they go to the altar, laden with new sins.

How many marriages are the fruit of impurity? Numbers of young men and women think, that when engaged, they are allowed to do anything and everything they please. Without fear, before the omnipresent Eye of the infinitely pure God, they meet secretly, and—but it profits not, and is not expedient, to speak plainer. O terrible day of judgment! how many grievous sins of thought, word, and deed wilt thou reveal to the public gaze, with which this or that couple stained themselves before marriage, instead of striving to make themselves partakers of the graces of that holy Sacrament! Know it, all whom it may concern, that those who are simply engaged to be married, have no more liberty than other single people. It is only the nuptial benediction that makes them husband and wife.

Prepare yourselves, then, for the worthy reception of this Sacrament, by a good confession and worthy Communion. Otherwise, you will draw

down upon your heads, God's just anger and indignation; nay, you will make the hour of your marriage the blackest and most horrible of your whole life. Confess your sins in such a way, that you may be truly absolved from them. The purer your conscience, the more susceptible you will be of the divine grace, of which you will stand so much in need in your new state of life. Let purity be your brightest adornment, and the sanctification of your interior, your greatest care and principal business on your wedding-day.

II. It is, however, not enough for you to cleanse yourselves from sin before your marriage; you must also examine yourselves as to the intention and dispositions, with which you enter into that holy state.

Tobias and his bride teach you this by their example. Tobias prayed thus to God: "Lord, thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust do I take a wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be praised." And Sarah prayed in her turn: "Lord, thou knowest, that I never coveted a husband, and have kept my soul clean from all lust; but a husband I consented to take with thy fear, not with my lust." Behold the sentiments with which young people should enter into the holy state of matrimony!

The principal object for which God instituted marriage, and raised it in the New Law to the dignity of a Sacrament, was, and is, the propagation of the human family, the increase of Christians upon earth, and of the elect in heaven. Young people about to enter into this holy state, should then be able to pray in the spirit of Tobias and Sarah: "Lord, I have asked for light, and have done what reason and religion advise, not to miss my vocation. I hope, therefore, that our union shall be acceptable to thee. Bless us, O Father of mercies, for it shall ever be our first wish and desire to praise thy holy name. If thou, O Lord, wilt bless our union with children, from the first moment of their existence, they shall be thine, and we shall raise them in thy fear and love, for heaven!"

But who thinks of these things now-a-days? What young man about to marry, can truly say with Tobias: "Lord, thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust do I take a wife; thou knowest that I do it only, because I believe it to be thy holy will, and my vocation, and because it is conducive to my own eternal welfare"?—What young woman can say with Sarah: "Lord, thou knowest that I never coveted a husband, and have kept my soul clean from all lust; but a husband I consented to take with thy fear, not with my lust"? What is it, but lust, with which the thoughts of most young people that are engaged, are occupied in these degenerate days? Yet they profess to be Christians, and Tobias and Sarah were Jews. *How did the latter celebrate their nuptials?* Tobias exhorted the virgin, saying to her: "Sarah, arise, and let us pray to God,

to-day, and to-morrow, and the next day ; for we are children of the Saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens, that know not God." And they arose, the Scripture tells us, and prayed earnestly to God to bless their union. They also celebrated a marriage-feast, but (as the same sacred text says), with the fear of the Lord. Alas ! holy fear of the Lord, where art thou when Christians of our days celebrate their nuptials ? On such occasions, to enjoy one's self in the company of friends and relations, is, indeed, not prohibited ; but, who would believe, from the conduct of our modern marriage-feasts, that Jesus was one of the guests ? How could the Infinite Holiness be present at such immodest discourses and dances, listen to such shameless songs, take part in such gross intemperance in eating and drinking ? Truly, many wedding-feasts do not differ much from the bacchanalian orgies of the ancient heathens !

Is it any wonder that there are so many unhappy marriages,—unhappy in their perpetual strife, discord, and quarrels—unhappy in their jealousies and suspicions—unhappy in their offspring of feeble, sickly, still-born, stubborn, or bad children—unhappy in sickness, poverty, and every kind of bad luck—unhappy in discontent, sadness, and despair—unhappy for time and, worst of all, unhappy for eternity ? The holy state of matrimony has been entered into with guilty consciences, with improper dispositions, and equally improper intentions. Not only have the betrothed ones refused to invite Jesus to preside at their wedding-feast, but they drove him far away from them, by their abominable sins. They did not ask him to direct them in their choice ; they have only consulted and followed their blind passions. Hence, when they celebrated their nuptials, the devil rejoiced, the angels wept. But now, they have to suffer for it ; now, they have to drink the bitter cup to its very dregs ! Well for them yet, if they endure their misfortunes patiently ; if, with a contrite heart, and perfect resignation to the will of God, they cry out with David : " 'Lord, thou art just, and just are thy judgments !' We have deserved all we suffer, for entering into the holy state of matrimony so carelessly and criminally ! "

With such sentiments, they may rest assured that God, who does not despise an humble and contrite heart, will not leave them without consolation and help in their misery ; but will give them strength to bear up under the heavy cross they have laid on their own shoulders.

You that are yet unmarried, treasure up these lessons in your hearts, and put them into practice in good season. Prepare yourselves well for this important Sacrament. Your marriage will be one of the most eventful eras in your life, and one most intimately connected with your own eternal welfare. Prepare yourselves for it by *prayer*, and by a *worthy Confession and Communion*. Above all, lead a chaste life ; allow each

other no indecent familiarities. Do nothing when alone, which you would blush to do in the presence of others. Resist all temptations, firmly and constantly, in the beginning ; and strive to enter into the wedded state with a clean and good conscience, with proper dispositions, and a good intention. Humbly invite Jesus to preside at your marriage-feast ; and, as he changed water into wine at the marriage of Cana in Galilee, so he will also change your after-troubles and afflictions into joy and consolation ; he will give you a store of healing grace here, and the reward of everlasting glory hereafter. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE THREE BEAUTIFUL VIRTUES OF THE CENTURION.

"There came to him a centurion, beseeching him." (Matt. 8 : 5.)

As often as I read the Gospel of this day, I am always edified by the beautiful example of this pagan Centurion. First, I admire in him his love and tenderness for his servant ; then, his firm faith in the omnipotence, and consequently, in the divinity of Jesus ; and finally, his great humility, in considering himself unworthy that the Lord should enter into his house. It will, no doubt, be of great benefit to us to consider a little closer, to-day, these three beautiful virtues of the Centurion, in order to imitate them in our own lives. Therefore, I earnestly beg you, to reflect :

- I. *Upon the Centurion's goodness of heart ;*
- II. *Upon his faith ; and*
- III. *Upon his humility.*

I. What love, what goodness of heart, does not this man of high position show towards his servant ! He sees him sick ; he sees him suffering great pain ; he considers how he may best alleviate his grievous malady. All of a sudden, he recollects the great wonder-worker, Jesus of Nazareth. Already, many afflicted ones have been cured by him. The resolution of the Centurion is quickly taken. "This Jesus will also help my servant," he says to himself ; "he will deliver him from his sufferings, and restore him to health." What does he next do ? Does he despatch another servant, or one of his soldiers, to Jesus ? No, he goes himself, fearing lest a messenger might not represent the case urgently enough, and his petition remain ungranted. He goes himself, in the hope of obtaining immediate relief for his greatly-afflicted servant. Does not this prove how great and noble was the heart of the Centurion —how tenderly he loved his servant, and how much he was interested in seeing the latter delivered from his illness ?

Where will you, now-a-days, find a master or a mistress so solicitous as this ? And yet, all who employ help should treat them with great

charity, and with solicitude for both their temporal and spiritual welfare. They should be mindful of the words of St. Paul : " If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1. Tim. 5 : 8.) All superiors should tremble at the words of the prophet : " A most severe judgment shall be for them that bear rule." (Wisd. 6 : 6.)

Besides the Centurion's beautiful goodness of heart towards his servant, we find in that noble soul, *a firm faith in Christ*, united with a trusting confidence in his assistance.

II The Centurion, having heard, no doubt, of the miracles which Jesus had wrought upon the sick, and even upon the dead, had concluded therefrom, that Jesus was not an ordinary man, but the Messias promised by God to the Jews. This faith, he manifested publicly, and with emphatic words ; for, when Jesus said to him : " I will come, and heal him," he replied : " Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof !"—as though he would say : " I recognize in thee the Son of God ; thou proclaimest thyself such by thy divine works : I am not worthy that the great Messias should enter into my humble house. Thou art the almighty God ; a single word from thee, even at a distance, will suffice to entirely heal my servant of his mortal malady." Behold the firm faith of the Centurion, which Jesus commends in these startling words : " Amen, I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel" !

My beloved brethren, are we not all well aware of those remarkable miracles which convinced the pagan Centurion of the divinity of Christ ? Do we not all know, that Jesus made the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the lame to walk, that he cleansed the lepers, and even raised the dead to life with a single word ? Are we not familiar with the many other wonderful works which Jesus did ? Know we not that, at the hour of his death on the Cross, all nature gave testimony to his being the Son of God ? That he rose from the dead by his own power, and by his own power, ascended into heaven ? Did not Jesus expressly appeal to these, his miracles, as so many proofs of his divinity, when he said to the Jews (as well as to the men of all times) : " If you do not believe my words, believe for the works themselves" ? (John 14 : 11.) And yet, there are many men—many millions of Jews, many millions of Christian heathens, who do not believe in the Son of God ! The pagan Centurion will condemn them on the day of judgment, because they have not believed so many incontrovertible testimonies, and have rejected Christ, their God and their Redeemer.

Behold, how firm was the confidence of that same noble Roman, that Jesus would lovingly and readily comply with his request ! Might he not

have naturally feared and doubted a little, knowing that he was a heathen, and that Jesus was born among the Jews, and that his doctrine was announced, and his miracles wrought, among the Jewish people? O no! he believes in the divinity of Jesus, and therefore, he has a firm confidence that he will help him, even as he had helped so many before him. Well might our Lord say to him: "Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee!" That is: As thou hast hoped and expected this thing from me, thou shalt not be disappointed. Thy servant shall live!

Learn from the Centurion, (as well as from the leper mentioned in to-day's Gospel,) in every need and necessity to put your whole confidence in Christ, your Saviour and your God, and make your first petition and complaint to him alone. He, only, has the power and the will, to deliver us from every evil. "Be not solicitous about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, let your petitions be made known to God." (Phil. 4: 6.) And St. Peter says: "Cast all your solicitude upon the Lord; for he hath care of you!" (1. Pet. 5: 7.)

There remains to briefly consider the third virtue which the Centurion teaches us by his example; viz., his *humility*.

III. The humility of the Centurion is clearly manifested in his reply to Jesus. When that divine Saviour said to him: "I will come and heal thy servant," the good Centurion was alarmed and abashed. He was, indeed, a man of high position and authority,—but he doubtless thought: "Jesus is the Son of God, the Holy of Holies, and I am a sinner. No, I am not worthy to be honored with his presence!" Hence, he replied: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof!" He had no less humility than Peter, who, after the miraculous draught of fishes, fell down at the feet of Jesus, and humbly exclaimed: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Luke 5: 8.)

How much more admirable is this beautiful virtue in the Centurion, since it is so seldom found among the great and powerful ones of this world! And may we not believe that the sight of such lowliness of spirit strongly moved our divine Lord to give ear to the Centurion's request? Most assuredly; because humble prayer is very acceptable to God. "The prayer of the humble hath always pleased thee." (Judith 9: 16.) "An humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Ps. 50: 19.) If, therefore, in all our troubles and difficulties, we seek help from God, not only with firm confidence in his goodness and mercy, but more especially, with deep humility and a lively consciousness of our guilt, our prayer shall be speedily and graciously heard by our merciful Lord. If we seek the forgiveness of our sins, let us seek it, also, in humility, and we shall obtain it. Loaded with sin, the good thief on the cross, full of

humility, implored the mercy of Jesus ; and the divine Saviour forgave him the greatest crimes, and admitted him into Paradise. Loaded with sin, the publican in the temple, full of humility, asked for grace and mercy ; and he went down to his house justified. Burdened with sin, let us in humility repent of all our offenses, and God, who gives grace to the humble (James 4 : 6), will impart to us the grace of forgiveness. May humility fill our hearts, especially, when our good Jesus comes to us in the Holy Communion. Let us then say from the depth of our hearts, with the humble Centurion : “ Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof !”

Behold the three beautiful virtues of the Centurion, which, as I said in the beginning, deeply edify me as often as I read and consider the Gospel of this day ! Let us imitate first, his love and goodness of heart manifested towards his suffering servant, and strive to assist all the afflicted and needy in their temporal wants and spiritual needs, being especially mindful of those under our immediate charge. Next, let us follow him in his firm faith and unwavering confidence in God, being trustfully assured that the Lord will hear and help us, when we implore his help in need. Finally, in imitation of his great humility, let us humble ourselves before God on account of our many sins, and say : “ Lord, we are not worthy to find grace with thee ; but for thy mercy’s sake, help us, save us, poor creatures, and have mercy on us in our troubles and difficulties, even as thou hadst mercy on the poor servant of the Centurion, at the intercession of his humble master !” Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE REASONABLENESS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

“Jesus said to the centurion, Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And the servant was healed at the same hour.” (Matt. 8 : 13.)

What the Gospel relates to us, is a corroboration of that important and consoling truth, that sound reason and the natural inclination of the heart both incline us to believe in Jesus Christ and his revelation. The Lord has made the Christian faith so strong and attractive in its truths, as to captivate the human will, and help grace to accomplish its glorious victory. I might cite various examples to this effect. I might speak of the wonderful growth of the kingdom of Christ, although established on hostile ground, in opposition to all the powers of earth and hell ; or, of those inestimable blessings which holy faith has poured abroad over all parts of the universe. I might speak of its interior consolations to the believing heart ; of the beauty and magnificence of our worship, which so perfectly corresponds to the innate longings of man ; or, I might remind you of the number and essence of the seven holy Sacraments, which, in a wonderful order, sanctify the whole human life at all times, and in its most important moments. Each one of these qualities might be called a victorious one, and could, with God’s grace, move us to a living faith in Jesus Christ and his holy revelation.

But what I always admire most is the testimony which our reason bears to the doctrines of our holy Faith. He who, with the eyes of his natural reason, considers the truths of the Christian religion, and compares or contrasts them with the opinions of unbelief, must acknowledge that what our holy Faith teaches, is, in every case, surer and safer, more convincing and consoling, than all the miserable fallacies of infidelity.

Let us, to-day, examine these points more carefully, and compare the wavering opinions of unbelief,

- I. *With the object of faith ; and*
- II. *With the motive of faith.*

I. What is the object of Faith ? Which are its doctrines and truths, that are more reasonable, more convincing, and, at the same time, more consoling, than the opposite opinions of unbelief ? You know the

object of our Faith. It is contained in the *Apostles' Creed*, which you have repeated numberless times with heart and mouth. Examine all the truths of this rule of faith, and all that is included in them, and see if they are not more according to reason than the teachings of unbelief. At the first glance, you will be able to distinguish the truth of the one from falsehood of the other.

There are three things on which human reason desires information. First, it looks up to heaven, and yearns to hear something of the essence of God. Then it looks into itself, and longs to fathom its own essence, its component parts, and the end for which it was created and destined. Lastly, it naturally desires to know the way and the means which lead man to that end or destiny. Listen to what holy Faith teaches in regard to these three things :

1. Instructed by Faith, we confess and pray : *I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son, our Lord ; and we add : I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, and life everlasting.* Holy Faith teaches us, that there is a God who created heaven and earth ; that this one God bears in himself the fulness of life ; that there are three Persons in one God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It reveals to us the attributes and perfections of the Deity, and teaches, that God, out of love, made heaven and earth, and all things, out of nothing ; and that he has imprinted upon every one of his creatures, a part of his own infinite perfections

Now, what does unbelief say of the essence of God ? It says : There is no God ; the world, with all its creatures, originated by accident, or was produced by chance. Or, it says : The world, the multiplicity of earthly things, is God himself. Every being, from the grain of sand up to man, carries in itself a part of divine essence, and comes to the consciousness and perfection of its own being through the higher development of life.

Is this reasonable ? How is it possible, exclaims Reason, that the world could originate by accident or chance ? Everything must have a cause ; the smallest atom does not come of itself. Can the wonderful beauty, order, and regularity, visible in every part of the universe, be the work of chance ? Could an accident have appointed to the stars their courses, produced the four seasons of the year, or given to animals the sure instinct and various faculties they possess for the preservation of their life ?

Again : How can it be conceived that the world is God ; that everything on earth bears a part of the divine essence in itself ; that the war of the elements, the contradictory phenomena in nature, the sins and vices of

men, not only have God himself for their Author, but are even manifestations of his life? How can it be conceived that the divine essence slumbers, as it were, and only gradually comes to self-consciousness through the life of the world?

2. Faith teaches that we, as well as all other creatures, were created by God, but that we are the highest order of creatures, composed of a body and a soul; that our soul is made in the image and likeness of God; and that, after the brief probation of life, we are destined to enter into eternal life, and find our happiness in the possession and enjoyment of God. Faith, at the same time, teaches us that we are fallen creatures, and that the taint of an hereditary sin rests upon us. It points out to us the weakness of our understanding, the perverseness of our will, and the vehement war between good and evil, which constantly rages within us. It calls our attention to the sufferings and miseries of life, and to the inexorable law of death, to which innocent and guilty, alike, are subject. And it tells us that we bear the consequences of the sins of others.

What does unbelief say of the nature and destiny of man? It says that we have no spirit, no immortal soul; that there is no after-life—no eternity. It teaches that man is an animal,—evolved from some inferior creature, possibly an ape,—who has elevated himself to a higher form of life. As to the end of our creation, infidelity teaches, that we are born only for earth, and to enjoy earthly goods; for, after this life, we shall be as if we had not been.

Reason tells us: It is not true that we are mere animals; we have self-consciousness. We think and feel what an animal can either not at all, or only very imperfectly. We can speak and express our thoughts and feelings; animals can not. It is not true that we have been evolved from an inferior animal; a spirit can never be formed of matter; the lower and imperfect never become something higher and more perfect. If the human race originated in a lower order of animals, why should this evolution have ceased all at once? As long as mankind has known their own history, no animal has ever made an attempt to elevate himself into man.

Reason also tells us: It is not true that we are only made for the enjoyment of earthly goods, and that all ends with death. Even the greatest possessions, the most unlimited enjoyments, do not give us true peace and happiness of soul. If there be no eternity, no human accountability, or a divine retribution, then vice is king of the world, and the world is a den of thieves!

3. Reason acknowledges that, of itself, without revelation, it can net-

ther know nor find the way to its eternal destiny ; that, of itself, without higher strength and grace, it cannot reach it. And if reason seeks this light and help, faith comes, and teaches us to pray : *I believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered and died for us. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.*

Faith tells us that the only-begotten Son of God descended from heaven to earth, and assumed human flesh ; that he became man in order to show us again the lost pathway to heaven, to atone for our guilt by his death on the cross, and to redeem us from sin and hell ; that he established his Church in order to deposit in her all grace and truth, which he brought from heaven, that all men might be saved through her ; that the Holy Ghost governs the Church, and that the Sanctifier infuses the graces of redemption into our hearts ; that, through the Church, and through the forgiveness of sin and the justification imparted to us by her, we obtain life everlasting. Human reason subscribes to all this.

But what do infidelity and heresy say of this way to eternal salvation, and especially, of Jesus Christ, and the Church governed by the Holy Ghost ? Though infidelity grants that the destiny of man lies in the other world, it denies the necessity of grace, that we may attain this end. It rejects the belief in the divinity of Christ, and declares that the only-begotten Son of God was merely a good man who distinguished himself above all his contemporaries by his great spiritual endowments and surpassing virtues. Heresy rejects the Church as the only way to salvation ; it denies the one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, the infallible and indestructible Church, guided by the Holy Ghost,—and asserts that every religious denomination has an equal claim to divine truth. It is willing to admit that our Catholic Church was once the true Church, but falsely declares that, in the course of time, she fell away from the spirit of the Lord, and became grievously corrupted in her doctrine and practices. In short, it agrees with infidelity, that the mediation of a visible agency is not needed for the forgiveness of sins.

Is it reasonable to know one's self to be a weak and sinful being and to deny the necessity of divine grace, or proudly to thrust away from one's self every help from above ? Is it reasonable to doubt the divinity of Christ, when, by his life, by the words of his mouth, by his miracles and prophecies, by his death and resurrection, he gave most incontrovertible proofs that he is the Son of God ? There is no other alternative but to accept his divine dignity, or to declare him a cheat and an impostor ! Is it reasonable to impugn the Church in its truth and legitimacy, when, according to the plain words of the Sacred Scripture, Christ established but one Church, and when our Church

nas all those marks which prove her to be the Church established by Christ? Is it reasonable to say that the Church became unfaithful to her Founder, and departed from his spirit, when the Lord promised that he would be with her all days, even to the consummation of the world, and that the Holy Ghost would abide with her for ever? Is it reasonable to wish for forgiveness of sins, without having recourse to the ministry of the Church of Christ, to whom he has given the power to bind and to loose?

II. But the victorious qualities of our holy Faith will become still more clear, if we consider the motives on which it is based. We believe, because God has revealed himself to us, and because he announces to us the holy faith by his own word, and by that of his infallible Church. With the suppositions, surmises, and opinions of men, we have nothing to do; it is the infallible word of God himself upon which our faith is grounded. Human reason cannot ask for a greater guarantee, and divine wisdom cannot give a stronger. The least fear of deception is excluded here.

Fallible human reason frequently offers to our understanding a welcome support of faith, and of our convictions. Pupils swear by the words of their teacher, and subject their intellect to him. And shall we hesitate to believe the infallible word of God? We build upon the knowledge of our senses, those frail instruments of perception, and we refuse to trust the intelligence of the Infinite Spirit! More certain than the observations of our senses, more luminous than the lights of our reason, and more immovable than the wisdom of all the learned, is that which faith teaches.

But what is the foundation upon which infidelity and heresy build their opinions? What are the guarantees which they offer to their adherents to guard them against error and deception? There is no other foundation than either their own lights, or the word of other fallible men. And does not the history of all heresies teach us that, in most cases, they were begotten of gross passions and a vicious life? This, we would be sure of, if we could read the heart of every infidel, as it is disclosed before the omniscient eye of God!

Now, I ask, is it reasonable for man to build his faith upon so weak and insecure a foundation? Is it reasonable to intrust his soul, his eternal salvation, to the hands of a man infected with error, and subject to guilty passions? Has not experience taught us a hundred times that doctrines long held as a fixed truth by half the world, and seeming to rest upon the strongest foundation, were found at last to be nothing but error and deception? Who has not had to change his own opinions, when new experiences told him, that they were wrong? What are human wisdom and learning? They are wavering and insecure, like all earthly

things. And what is truth in the mouth of man? How shamelessly and ignominiously has it not been abused in the service of falsehood and passion! The least breath of passion has often been sufficient to knock down the strongest pillars of faith, and destroy its entire edifice in many a heart. Truth, in the hand of man, is unprotected. He makes of it what he likes.

What guarantees have we for our faith? We believe the word of God, and of his infallible Church. Like a wonderful structure, our holy faith stands before us. The hand of God laid its foundations, and every people and every time have contributed towards its erection! The walls thereof have gradually risen higher and higher: and the Lord in heaven watches over the building, and directs the work. Divine revelation flows blissfully through the world, like a mighty river. Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost preserve it in the right bed, and suffer no troubled waters of heresy or unbelief to mix with its clear currents, or darken the purity of its source.

Which is more reasonable,—to dwell in the beautiful house, built by the hand of God, or to wander about in the desert, led into wrong roads by the opinions of men? Which, more reasonable,—to draw sweet waters from the fountain of truth, or bitter dregs from cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water? What can infidelity adduce for the proof and confirmation of its opinions, except its own blinded judgment? What has heaven done to make the opinions of such men credible? Have they been confirmed by miracles, or by great and wonderful works? Alas! they can produce nothing, save empty talk, gross misrepresentations, and open falsehoods. Not a single great deed, or heroic action, has ever been called forth by the teachings of unbelief. It has indeed produced criminals, and monsters of human society. Wherever its opinions prevail, all order, morals, and justice are abolished from the earth. Is it difficult to choose between the doctrines of faith and such human infidel opinions?

From the beginning, the world, in general, has been a believing world. We may say, that the majority of the inhabitants of the earth from the most ancient times down to our days, have adhered to the principles of faith. What are a few unbelievers compared to millions of believers? Which side do you choose? Is it more reasonable to follow Christ, or with his adversaries to wage war against him? Is it not more reasonable to follow Sts. Peter and Paul, than a Voltaire and a Tom Paine? It is not reason, but passion, that teaches man unbelief; and it is not reason, but passion, that supports it. Infidelity is want of reason, and, in most cases, the expression and evidence of a bad conscience; but faith is the undying voice of reason and of a good heart. To this voice, let us listen, like the Centurion in the Gospel; may it draw us close to the heart of Jesus, and keep us ever there! BISHOP EHRLER.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

TEMPORAL AND SPIRITUAL TEMPESTS.

"Lord, save us, we perish." (Matt. 8 : 25.)

A violent tempest arose and raged furiously against the ship in which Jesus and his disciples were about setting forth across the sea of Galilee. Wave rose upon wave ; the bark was tossed to and fro, and finally, shipped so much water that it threatened to founder. While all this was going on, Jesus slept ; he rested apart, from the labors of the day. When the need was greatest, the disciples awakened him, crying : " Lord, save us, we perish !" And rising up, he commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm." In the life of the Christian, also, great tempests and storms frequently arise. These sometimes threaten the life of the body—sometimes, the life of the soul. The conduct of the disciples of Jesus teaches us how we are to demean ourselves, and where we are to seek help and salvation,

- I. *In the storms of temporal sufferings ; and*
- II. *In the storms of spiritual temptations.*

I. The sufferings and tribulations of this life may be truthfully compared to the stormy billows which assailed the bark of the disciples on the sea of Galilee. How often does not some great calamity break in upon a certain man, plunging him into profound misery ! This or that unhappy individual is assailed by some sore tribulation, or need, from which he knows not how to extricate himself. Many suffer bitter grief from loss of honor or reputation, the result of some malicious calumny ; others, again, are innocently condemned ; or undeservedly bear the disastrous consequences of an unjust lawsuit. An earthquake, a conflagration, a cyclone, a blizzard, sickness of cattle, business misfortunes, annually reduce thousands to the greatest poverty and distress. Terrible epidemics frequently snatch away the father or the mother of a household—a grown son or daughter, the main support and bread-winner of the family. And, like the waves of the sea, one tribulation often follows another, one cross, another, until the sufferer, like a swimmer in a stormy ocean, is quite exhausted, if not destroyed, by the afflictions

which rapidly succeed each other. With many, these tempests of suffering continue,—yes, to the very hour of their death!

What shall we poor mortals do, when such stormy billows arise against us, giving us reason every moment to fear, (as did the disciples of Jesus in the tempest,) that we shall be overwhelmed in the end, and sunk into the very depths of the sea? Ah! we well know to whom we must then turn for help and safety,—viz. : to Jesus, to God, to our most amiable and Almighty Father in heaven, who can calm all tempests, and command all tribulations and sufferings to depart from us. To Jesus and to his heavenly Father, we must turn, and cry aloud : “ Lord, save us, we perish !” To him, we must apply with the confidence of the afflicted David, and say to him : “ Thou art my refuge from the trouble which hath encompassed me · my joy, deliver me from them that surround me.” (Ps. 31 : 6, 7.) And believe me, my beloved, we shall not pray in vain.

Jesus slept whilst the storm raged, and the billows arose against the ship of his disciples ; he slept—as if he had no care for their safety. He waited until the necessity of his distressed followers was at its height—until they wildly implored him for help. Behold, man’s necessity is God’s opportunity : He seems, as it were, to sleep, whilst we wrestle with misery and dangers ; he waits till our confidence in him ceases to waver—he waits till we cry out to him : “ Lord, save us, we perish !” Then he rises up, and commands the tempest of our tribulation : “ Peace, be still :” Do not say, therefore, that God does not heed our necessities, or listen to our prayers. The longer he delays to grant our petitions, the more urgently and fervently he would have us repeat them. He, who has said : “ Call upon me in the day of trouble : I will deliver thee” (Ps 49 : 15) ; he, who says through his prophet : “ He shall cry to me, and I will hear him : I am with him in tribulation : I will deliver him” (Ps 90 : 15) : he, who has promised us through his Son : “ Ask, and you shall receive,”—cannot leave his word unfulfilled,—as he has shown to his disciples in the Gospel of this day, and to numberless sufferers at all times and in all places.

Sarah, Raguel’s daughter, prayed to God with many tears, saying : “ Blessed is thy name, O God of our fathers, who wilt show mercy. To thee, O Lord, I turn my face ; to thee, I direct my eyes. I beg, O Lord, that thou loose me from the bond of this reproach.” (Tob. 3 : 11–15.) In the need of the newly-married couple at Cana in Galilee, Mary turned to Jesus, and implored his help. In sickness, the blind man of Jericho called out : “ Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me !” The leper said : “ Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean ;” and the Centurion asked him to heal his servant. In imminent danger of being drowned, Peter cried out : “ Lord, save us, we perish !” Behold our models of prayer, of faith, and holy confidence !

In every necessity, seek help and relief from God, and invoke him with unwavering confidence. The Lord will hear us in our miseries and needs, as he heard the disciples in theirs.

But it is not only exterior necessities that violently assail us. The worst and most dangerous of all storms are those which menace our souls.

II. St. Augustine calls the world "a tempestuous sea," not on account of the storms which so often sweep over it with terrible vehemence and power, but because of the manifold temptations which arise against every man, in order to plunge his soul into sin and eternal ruin. These tempests proceed from three mighty enemies. The first to plunge the soul into temptation, is :

1. *The devil*, the inveterate adversary of men. Even in the Garden of Paradise, he raised a storm against our first parents ; four thousand years later, he attempted a three-fold assault on the Son of God himself : and he continues, every day, to assail all men with furious machinations, so that St. Peter writes : "He goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1. Pet. 5 : 6.) He lays countless snares before our feet ; he strives to entangle us in his own, special illusions of pride and falsehood. He awakens in some, the envy and angry passion of Cain ; in others, the avarice and treachery of a Judas, in a word, he tempts every man to the sin most in accordance with his natural inclinations.

How shall we frustrate and baffle these temptations, these fierce storms, whereby Satan seeks to drown us in an ocean of sin ? By crying out with the disciples of Jesus : "Lord, save us, we perish !" or, in other words, by invoking the assistance of God. "This kind," says our Lord himself, "can go out by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." (Mark 9 : 28.) "Our prayer," says St. Jerome, "is our weapon against the devil."

2. The second enemy which tempts and assaults our soul, in order to plunge it into sin, is *the world*—the wicked, seductive world, which lays for us no less dangerous snares, and prepares for us no less numerous temptations than the devil. Wicked people, indeed, are the latter's best auxiliaries and tempters. Now, they preach infidelity, in order to rob us of that faith upon which our salvation is grounded ; now, they entice and allure us to enjoy the pleasures and joys of the world, in order to turn us from God and his holy service ; again, they make assaults upon our innocence and purity of heart. In such temptations of a wicked world, we must direct our hearts and eyes to God, and cry out again,

with the disciples of Jesus : " Lord, save us, we perish ! " Only with the help of God's grace, can we resist the myriad storms and temptations whereby the wicked world assails our sinking souls.

III. The third enemy which tempts our soul, is *our own flesh*, the confederate of Satan, always watching to betray us into his hands. This enemy fights against us with various and most dangerous temptations ; now, with impure thoughts, now, with unclean representations and images ; again, with impure desires : and how often does it not happen that it incites the carnal-minded man to shameless words and deeds ! How shall the Christian avert these foul and fleshly temptations ? How shall he effectually combat them ? How render them harmless—yea, even meritorious ?

Again, I repeat, he must turn to God in prayer, and cry out : " Lord, save us, we perish ! " The prophet says : " As I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it I went to the Lord, and besought him." (Wisd. 8 : 21.) St. Jerome exhorts us : " As soon as the concupiscence arises, as soon as the attractions and charms of lust operate upon us, let us at once cry out to God : ' Lord, be my helper ! ' " As a thief, as soon as he hears the voice, or still more, the cry of the inmates of a house, quickly runs for the door, and takes to flight ; so the devil of the flesh, with all its temptations, is driven out from us by the voice of prayer ; and angels hasten to help and minister unto us. Take, for example, St. Paul, who, when he felt the sting of the flesh, the buffeting of the angel of Satan, (as he calls it,) prayed not once, but seven times, to the Lord, that he might be freed from it. In like manner, let us imitate the example of St. Thomas of Aquin, who, in a great temptation of a like nature, fell on his knees and prayed to God : " O Jesus, my Lord ! and thou, O holy Virgin, my Mother ! permit me not to be defiled with so grievous a sin ! "

Let us, then, like these holy saints, in all the storms of our life, whether they menace our soul or our body, imitate the example of the disciples of Jesus, and pray to God for help and assistance in these words : " Lord, save us, we perish ! " And the Lord who saved them from all dangers, will also mercifully cause us to come forth unharmed from the dangers which threaten us in body and soul. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

SLEEPING SENTINELS.

“*But Jesus was asleep.*” (Matt. 8 : 24.

A storm on the sea is something terrific. When the waves, mountain-high, break in upon the ship, when the wind rages and howls, when the ship creaks, as if, at every moment, it would be rent apart, and sink down into the boiling deep,—the heart of even the most courageous is overwhelmed with fear and anguish. “*But Jesus was asleep.*” What repose of the soul, what peace of heart, are required, in order to sleep during such a storm ! This is the sleep, the calmness, the peace, of a good conscience, of a firm confidence in God. But there is also a false sleep, an apparent calm, which has not its origin in God, but in wilful carelessness and downright laziness. If a shepherd sleep while wolves are close to the fold,—if a sentinel slumber at his post when the enemy is approaching the encampment—such sleep is unlawful, sinful, extremely dangerous. Alas ! there are many God-appointed sentinels who, instead of keeping vigilant guard against Satan and his emissaries, carelessly sleep at their posts, and slothfully suffer the enemy to rob them of the souls committed to their care, and plunge them into perdition. Let us, to-day, visit two such posts, inspect them, and if possible, arouse their sentinels from their fatal slumber. They are :

- I. *The conscience ; and*
- II. *Christian parents.*

1. The first sentinel, which God has given us to guard us from sin, is *the conscience*. But what is conscience ? Listen. Here is a child who has never been expressly instructed by his parents as to the nature or species of sin. A companion entices him secretly to steal, or to commit some other evil deed ; and at the very instant of the temptation, the child knows : *This is not right ; it is a sin*. Who tells him this ? A voice in his heart—a voice, which God has given him : his conscience. Conscience, then, tells us what is sin ; it warns us against it ; and if the devil, our own evil concupiscence, or bad people, entice us to sin, conscience says : “*You must not do it—this or that is a sin !*” But con-

science does still more. A young man, or a young woman, has not obeyed the voice of conscience. Following the sinful inclinations of the flesh, he, or she, has committed a sin,—perhaps, for the first time,—a grievous sin against holy purity. How does he, or she, feel? Oh, how terribly miserable is the state of such a soul! It is tormented with anguish, like a mother sitting at the corpse of her only child. Something within the heart sternly reproaches it for the cruel loss of its innocence. What is this stern monitor? It is the conscience. It not only warns us before sin: *This is not right; that is sin*; but it also cries out after the sin: *You have done evil!*—and thus, torments the sinner, urging him to repent, to do penance, and to amend his life. This is the sentinel of the soul, appointed by God himself.

The devil acts like a cunning thief. If the latter wish to break into a house where there is a fierce watch-dog, he first seeks to get rid of the animal: he either gives him something to eat, in order to buy his silence, or else, he kills him outright. In like manner, the devil first silences the watch-dog of the soul, that it may no longer warn the Christian against sin, nor reproach him with it after its commission. And with many, he has succeeded splendidly. There are Christians who sin without noticing it; their consciences are as dead as the watch-dog that the thief has slain. One curses and blasphemes—he hardly knows he does it; it gives him no uneasiness. Another carries on shameless discourses; he regards it as nothing. There are even those who commit the most grievous sins against holy purity, who regard it as only a human weakness, and say that it cannot be helped. Very many carry on uncharitable, slanderous discourses about their fellow-men, without the least scruple; therein, they frequently commit even mortal sins, but they think it all right and just. The devil not only lulls some consciences to sleep, but even induces them to do his own infernal work. When they take advantage of others and cheat them, they call it prudence; when they are covetous and avaricious, they call it economy, and solicitude for the interests of their families; and when they are revengeful and hostile, they call it justice and self-defense.

When things have once come to this pass, the enemy easily gets within such souls; they sin constantly, and without concern. They drink in iniquity like water; they heap sin upon sin, making light of them. Penance and amendment are out of the question, never thought of, and thus, these sinners expose themselves to the danger of dying in final impenitence. I once read of a woman in a certain city, who was very evil and malicious, and with an extremely bad tongue. She suddenly fell sick, and lost consciousness, so that in this state, absolution and Extreme Unction were administered to her. Strange to say, she did not die after all, and on recovering her senses, hearing what had been done to her, she

said : " It was not necessary ; I have no sin—except this, that I am too good to the people who persecute me " Behold, how hardened and insensible the conscience becomes when the devil succeeds in lulling it to sleep !

How do matters stand with *your* conscience ? Have you gone so far as to commit sins without noticing them, and without suffering thereafter the reproaches of your conscience ? When you have not been to the Sacraments for six months, or a whole year, are you heard to declare that you have no matter for confession ? Why, you found much more to confess when you were a child ! Are you holier and more innocent now than *then* ? Take care ; though your conscience may not be asleep, it is not fully awake. Rouse it, that it may watch, that it may fulfil its duty, and warn you against sin. Read good books, hear sermons, examine your conscience every evening, and often receive the holy Sacraments.

II. The conscience is man's interior sentinel, but it is not enough for his protection. In his youth, especially, man needs exterior sentinels or guardians, and these God gives him in *his parents*. Even in their earliest youth, children are exposed to the danger of sinning. In the youthful heart, evil inclinations lie dormant. How often do we not remark little children to be stubborn, angry, jealous, revengeful ! Later on, these evil inclinations gather strength, through bad example, or wicked associations ; and, if the child be not properly trained and protected, they become the source of innumerable and unforeseen dangers. Little by little, young people grow to love even the dangers of sin, to delight in the society of wicked comrades, and in frequenting forbidden places, where their virtue is lost, their innocence corrupted. Now, because children partly can not, and partly will not, watch over themselves, God has appointed parents as his watchmen over them. They must see where danger threatens their innocence ; they must keep them from the occasions of sin, and from bad company. If necessary, they must punish them severely, sooner than suffer evil to creep into their hearts

But alas ! how often do these watchmen sleep upon their posts, allowing their children to be exposed to the greatest danger, and finally, to perish in eternal ruin ! Their slothfulness begins in the earliest training of their children. No matter how stubborn or angry an infant may be—its will is law : it must be done ; and afterwards, the foolish parents complain, that the boy or the girl will not obey. Even babies must be trained ; their self-will must be mastered whilst they are yet little. At that time, the task is easy, and impressions the most lasting. Delays, in such cases, are especially dangerous, sometimes, fatal.

Again, very often in the presence of their children, parents are not on their guard at all as regards their words and conduct. They curse, swear, blaspheme, and even do worse than that. O, it is terrible to say ! Many children have learned their greatest sins from their own parents ! If children break a valuable article, or lose a ten-dollar gold-piece, they are scolded and punished for their fault ; but if they curse, sing immodest songs, carry on smutty discourses, the foolish parents laugh, and do not reprimand them. Later on, the sons and daughters may be away from home for half a day, or a whole day ; the parents do not know where their children are ; neither do they care to know. The daughter may stay till after midnight in improper or doubtful places, at the dance, or the theatre ; she may go home alone, or with others of the opposite sex. Ah ! many parents are asleep, in the literal sense of the word, whilst their children are in the greatest spiritual danger.

How terrible, how awful, is often the loss that arises from such a sleep ! Terrible for the children, who, in their inexperience, thoughtlessly fall into sins and vices, and are ruined for time and eternity ;—terrible for the parents, who are blinded to the evil, until it is too late to remedy it ! As there are many good Christians, who, to-day, still give thanks to their parents, that they were strict with them in their youth ; so there are also many who accuse their parents as the authors—through their levity and want of watchfulness—of their children's ruin and perdition. In Spain, a young man was once executed on account of a great crime. Having arrived on the scaffold, he asked permission to speak a few words to his father. When he was brought to him, the unfortunate malefactor offered him publicly the most outrageous insult, and then cried aloud : “ Father ! I accuse you before God and men ! If you had done your duty in my youth—if you had watched over me, and punished me more severely when I deserved it, I would not now be here,—I would not end my life on the gallows !”

God once cried out to Cain : “ Where is thy brother ?” How much more terrible will it be, when he shall cry out to parents at the Last Judgment : “ Where are your children ?” Unhappy father, unhappy mother ! Will you then reply : ‘ I know not ; am I my children's keeper ?’ Yes, you are ; God has appointed you for that office. Woe to you, if you have not diligently and perseveringly guarded, and watched over them ! The Lord shall demand their blood at your hand ; if they are lost through your fault or carelessness, their destruction will be laid at your door !

Christian parents ! take heed in time that such a misfortune may not fall to your lot ! Reflect upon your children's present spiritual state. If they were to die this very moment, do you think they could stand in the judgment of God ? If you must answer me : “ They are not

as they should be, and would be, if I had done my duty,"—can you say before God that you are innocent of their ruin? Do not tell me. "I have told them a thousand times, but they do not obey me!" Why do they not obey you? Because you have not trained them to obedience—because you have not given them the example. Prove yourselves thoroughly in earnest. You may take your duty to your children easy, but God will not take it easy. Think of the account you will have, one day, to give of your stewardship! Pray to God, that he may assist you in the difficult affair of the education of your children. Introduce severe discipline and good order into your household. Permit nothing bad or doubtful. Call your children to an account. Ask them, where, and with whom, they go. Above all, keep them from bad associates. Watch both day and night. At the same time, in all temporal matters be gentle and friendly with them. In the affair of salvation alone, be strict and earnest. And though you must punish with severity—that is not hardness, but true love for your children. Thereby, you will promote their temporal and spiritual welfare; and then, experience for yourselves a merciful judgment, and the never-ending rewards which God bestows upon faithful and devoted parents.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF DANCES.

“The enemy came, and sowed cockle among the wheat.” (Matt. 23 : 25.)

Truly, a damnable act, to sow cockle among the good seed, in order to cheat the husbandman out of his rich harvest of wheat ! But let us not wonder at this, for he who has done it, is the enemy of both God and man, whose black heart knows no other joy than the perdition of souls and the destruction of God's kingdom on earth. For this, he has ever scattered cockle with an overflowing hand ; and more particularly in our days, when Christians live with more freedom, and when places of entertainment, especially dancing-halls, stand open for the unwary. But, is not dancing, (you say,) a harmless pleasure, an allowable amusement ? We will briefly consider, to-day, what is to be held of dances : and our judgment will be established with certainty, when we consider,

- I. *Who are those that advocate, and*
- II. *Who are those that condemn, dancing ?*

I. The first advocate of dancing is, *the world*. Come, let us go into a ball-room, and see what is done there. Do you perceive the exuberant good humor, the unbounded hilarity, of these merrymakers ? Do you see their luxurious dresses, their seductive attire ? Do you notice here the continual familiarities between persons of opposite sexes, and the flames of impure love which dart from eye to eye ? Do you not see here many things that entice the senses, infatuate the heart, and endanger even the self-control of an austere penitent ? Free, boisterous, rollicking expressions, indecent words, flattering discourses, and doubtful jests—do you hear such things from the children of God ? If our Lord Jesus and his holy Mother, were to enter a ball-room and pass through the midst of the dancers, would he who preached only flight from the world, renunciation, mortification, self-denial, and penance,—would she, the Virgin of virgins, who lived in holy retirement, and with her divine Son chose the ignominy of the Cross,—would they, I say, recognize those wild, whirling, abandoned beings, as their worthy followers, over whom they could extend their hands in blessing ? An experienced man writes :

“ I have never read that a holy virgin has been a dancer ; and in reality, in ball-rooms, you will find, as a rule, only the children of the world, who wish to enjoy all possible pleasures, and find their greatest happiness in spending their beautiful youth in earthly dreams of joy ”

2. *The flesh* favors dancing. At their root, dances spring from sensuality, effeminacy, and often, absolute lust. Christian young man, Christian young woman, what do you seek in the dance ? Why is the pleasure of the waltz so enticing, so alluring, for you ? Answer this question—but answer it as sincerely as if you were now stretched on your death-bed, or standing, at last, before your eternal Judge. Is it the mere turning round in a circle, the mere motion of the body to the strains of delightful music, or is it *something else* ? Yes, it *is* something else ! Why do young people of opposite sexes enjoy dancing together, and especially, those persons, who (as it is commonly phrased), are in love with each other ? Ah ! young man, young woman, you may well blush, for you know what makes the dance so attractive, but also, so doubtful to you ! If the dancers were altogether of the same sex, I assure you, the ball-rooms would stand deserted ; many young men and young women who, at present, are crazy to dance, would, in that case, prefer to remain at home. O, let us not conceal it from ourselves ! The flesh celebrates its triumph in dancing, and it is for this reason, that it so strongly advocates the ball-room.

3. *Hell* is in favor of dancing. Of course it is. Why should it not be ? In the ball-room, it reaps a rich harvest. “ I have often heard,” says a pious man, “ that many at dances have lost their virtue, and have been brought to an unholy life.” To deny this, would be preposterous. O how many guileless hearts, yes, even angelically pure souls, have been shamefully defiled in ball-rooms ! How many have there lost the royal bridal crown of baptismal innocence ! How many have there been seduced to sins, which they afterwards bewailed with hot tears, and ineffectually cursed in the hour of death ! How many souls, whom the Angels of God had protected for years from ruin, whom parents and priests had long preserved in virtue, whom hell had tempted for years in vain, have become the easy prey of Satan through a single dance ! Holy men, such as St. Ephrem and St. Charles, do not hesitate to assert that the devil taught men to dance ; that dancing-parties are the veritable feasts of the devil. It is a legend, that Satan once journeyed around the world, looking for a choice abode. In churches, monasteries, regal palaces, lordly castles, stores, warehouses, and many other places, he every where found sins, but, every where, also, works of godliness. Hence, he did not make his fixed abode in any of these

places. At last, however, he came to a ball-room: and there, he beheld only light and frivolous people, arrayed in luxurious, and often indecent, garments; charming, captivating women, who challenged the men with overflowing glasses of wine, and sailed around in their arms to the sound of most enchanting music. He saw there not the smallest thing that might tend to promote the honor of God, or the salvation of souls. Enraptured, he cried aloud: "Here, I will rest! Here, I will establish my permanent abode! for, within these walls, I am not molested in the least, and can ply undisturbed my trade of winning souls for hell!"

II. We know now who are the advocates of dancing The world, the flesh, and the devil,—but *who are they that condemn it?*

1. *Sound reason.* He who, without prejudice, considers the dangers generally attendant on dancing, can not reasonably defend it. O how many things in the ball-room combine to draw the heart from God, and lead it into the way of sin! The music, which excites to hilarity; the drinking, by which levity is increased; the rapid motion by which the blood is fired; the immodest or seductive dress, whereby sensuality is excited; the words of double-meaning, by which impure lust is fanned into a bright flame; the mutual embraces which the waltz permits, and which would be considered shameful outside of the dance,—all these are things which a man of sound judgment would call doubtful, or extremely dangerous to morality. He who looks at a dance with clear eyes, will no longer wonder that a man who denied the existence of God, the philosopher Baile, once declared of dancing, that it serves no other purpose than to corrupt the human heart, and to prepare for innocence, first, a dangerous assault, and finally, its grave.

2. *The Sacred Scriptures* condemn dancing. They warn us against danger in general. "Go not in the way of ruin, and thou shalt not stumble against the stones" (Ecclus. 32 : 25); and to him who carelessly seeks the occasion of sin, the Wise Man exclaims: "He that loveth danger, shall perish in it." (Ecclus. 3 : 27.) He warns us against flatterers, and against free, unguarded glances at the coquettes of the ball-room: "Look not at a woman who hath a mind for many; lest thou fall into her snares." (Ecclus. 9 : 3.) "Mind not the deceit of a woman. Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh to the doors of her house." (Prov. 5 : 2, 8.) The same sacred Text warns us against dancing expressly: "Use not much the company of her who is a dancer, and hearken not to her; lest thou perish by the force of her charms." (Ecclus. 9 : 4.) And St. Paul admonishes us not to become like them of whom it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play" (that is, to dance). (1. Cor. 10 : 7.)

3. *The Church* condemns dancing. She has never approved of dancing, but rather, has always expressed her horror of it. The Council of Constantinople forbids dancing under the penalty of excommunication ; the Council of Aix la Chapelle calls dances godless things ; and the Council of Tours, stratagems of the devil. And what say the Fathers and Doctors of the Church upon this point ? “ Dances draw a series of abominable vices after them, which grieve the angels, rejoice the devils, and fill hell with exultation.” (St. Ephrem.) “ If one go chaste to a dance, he comes back defiled.” (St. Cyprian.) “At dances, one always sins.” (Thos. of Aquin.) St. Chrysostom calls dances, “ the works of the devil, the pestilence of good morals, the mockery of the Gospel, the public confession of impurity, the destroyer of virtue.” St. Ambrose terms them, “ the coffin of innocence, and the grave of purity.” And St. Augustine says, “ It is less sin to dig on Sunday, than to dance.” St. Jerome calls Nicholas of Antiochia, the author of all dissensions ; and adds as the reason : “ He has danced with women.”

Now, your judgment on dancing will no longer be doubtful. A pleasure which counts as its advocates, the flesh, the world, and the devil ; and against which, sound reason, the Sacred Scriptures, and the Church are strongly arrayed, can not, by any possibility, be called innocent or harmless. My dearly beloved, I know that all of you who really and sincerely desire your salvation, will, after this, make cheerfully to God a sacrifice of this doubtful and dangerous amusement.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

BAD COMPANY.

"Let both grow until the harvest." (Matt. 13 : 30.)

Wheat and cockle, good and bad grain, in one and the same field—how sad, how deplorable ! Can the wheat thrive ? Can it produce an abundant harvest ? Surely not ; the cockle draws from it all strength and life, and hinders its perfect growth. Thus it is, also, in the world ; thus, in all human societies. Wheat and cockle, good and bad people, are always found together. The good cannot thrive well here below, because the wicked hinder them by their hurtful influence. And yet, both are to grow, side by side, until the Master reaps his harvest. How, then, must the good Christian conduct himself, to the end that the wicked people around him may not corrupt, nor hinder him in his progress towards holiness and heaven ? I answer : he must

I. *Avoid the society of the wicked ; and*

II. *If unable to fly, he must not suffer himself to be seduced by the wicked.*

I. The Holy Ghost gives us a beautiful rule to regulate our intercourse with our fellow men ; "With the holy, thou wilt be holy ; and with the innocent man, thou wilt be innocent ;" and he adds : "With the elect, thou wilt be elect, and with the perverse, thou wilt be perverted." (Ps. 17 : 26, 27.) That means, if you associate with good people, you will remain good ; but if you seek and keep the company of the wicked, you yourself will become wicked. Who can doubt this truth ? Who can especially doubt that wilful and unnecessary intercourse with the wicked, leads to wickedness ? He, who is a companion of sin, will not escape sin. To be a saint among the godless ; to be pure among the impure ; to be pious among the lukewarm ; to be good among the bad,—is as rare as a jewel in the mire, or a pearl in the sand. The rule is, that a good man, keeping company with a wicked man, without necessity, soon becomes corrupted. That the bad man becomes good, is the exception. "Show me whose company you keep," says the proverb, "and I will tell you what you are "

Daily experience confirms this. Do you not all know of some dissolute vagabond who was once a well-behaved and exemplary young man

—of some miserable, lewd street-walker who was once a pious and virtuous young woman? The ruin in both cases has been wrought by bad company;—by associating with dissipated young men and “fast” women, in vile places of resort, theatres, casinos, dance-houses. Here, is the father of a family who, not long ago, was a good, hard-working, edifying Christian,—now, become a gambler, a drunkard, a spendthrift! The sad change, again, is due to bad company, to constant intercourse with drinking men, to first monthly, then weekly, then daily, visits, to saloons and gambling houses. Yonder, is a man, formerly pious and religious, devoted to prayer and the Sacraments; now, he hardly ever goes to Mass, and never to Confession and Communion,—nay, worse; he even speaks against, and scoffs at, the Church and religion. Why, all this? Because, for years, he mixed, without necessity, with infidels and freethinkers; he listened to their discourses against God and the holy faith; and, little by little, he began to join in those godless discourses, and take pleasure in them, until, at last, he himself became an infidel. Thus, bad company led to the utter loss of his faith. And so it goes with all sins and vice. It is extremely easy to learn evil by free and constant intercourse with sinners and vicious men. A little leaven ferments the whole mass of flour; one rotten apple will corrupt a whole barrelful of sound ones; a little poison will penetrate and destroy a whole healthful system; a man stricken with small-pox, disseminates disease and death, with every breath of his mouth. It does not need much time to spread the infection, but the longer and more intimate the intercourse, the surer and more deadly the destruction that follows.

Therefore, avoid all intercourse and communion with the godless. St. Paul most emphatically enjoins this upon all Christians: “We charge you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother walking disorderly.” (2. Thess. 3 : 6.) “Now, I have written to you not to keep bad company: if any man that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or a server of idols, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner: with such a one, not so much as to eat.” (1. Cor. 5 : 11.) And not without reason, does the Apostle urge this course upon Christians; for he will not escape sin, who is the companion of sinners; the cockle cannot help but destroy the wheat.

O Christian parents, I exhort you in particular, to guard your children from the company of the wicked, and from evil associations! Young people in bad company, without the supervision of their parents, are like sheep without a shepherd; the wolf will soon come, and devour them. They are like a ship without a rudder; the storm will drive it where it pleases, and will, sooner or later, urge it to shipwreck and de-

struction. From wicked associates, children early learn what they should never have known. Suddenly, the flower of their innocence is broken; blighted, is that beautiful bud, which was blossoming so sweetly before the eyes of God and men. At one foul stroke, are lost all the pain, labor, and solicitude of parents, teachers, and pastors, alike eager for the instruction and salvation of these unhappy children. All at once, all love of virtue ceases, and every inclination to vice begins. Truly, I do not say too much, when I exclaim: Avoid the company of the wicked as you would shun a person infected with the cholera or the small-pox; the contagion of vice is worse than that of the deadliest disease.

It is true, we are often so situated, that we cannot avoid all intercourse with wicked and vicious persons. What, then, must we do if, now and then, such intercourse is unavoidable? We must not suffer ourselves to be seduced by the scandal of the wicked.

II. St. Paul gives us a very beautiful direction for our intercourse with the wicked. He says: "Let no man deceive you by any means," (2. Thess. 2 : 3)—that is, do not be led astray, either by the bad example of others, by their scandalous discourses, or their sinful enticements and commands. Again, he says: "Be not carried away with various and strange doctrines." (Hebr. 13 : 9.) By strange doctrines, he understands all teachings contrary to faith, and every seduction to unbelief. As soon as evil examples surround us and tempt us, let us remember to "prove what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God." (Rom. 12 : 2.) That is, to examine whether the matter in hand accords with what God wills us to do, or is in harmony with the practices of godless people. As a rule, the will of God commands us to do the very contrary to what wicked people would entice us.

In short, I would have you, each one, follow the advice of Tobias: "Take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord our God." (Tob. 4 : 6.) If any man give you a bad example, think of the example of virtue given by Jesus, and follow in the foot-prints of your true Lord and Master. "I have given you an example," says he, "that as I have done to you, so do you also." (John 13 : 15.) If any one carry on obscene or immodest discourses in your presence, think of the words of the Holy Ghost: "Hedge in thy ears with thorns; hear not a wicked tongue." (Ecclus. 28 : 28.) Should any one entice you to intemperance in eating and drinking, call to mind the words of Jesus: "Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness." Should a wicked seducer dare to put your virtue, your innocence, to the test, think of the presence of God, and say with Joseph of Egypt: "How can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God?" (Gen. 39 : 9.)

And if any bold profligate should try to force you to sin by violence, think of the terrible punishment of sin, and choose rather to suffer death, with the chaste Susanna, than grievously offend your God. Should any one give you sinful commands, think of the words of the Apostles : " God is to be obeyed before man." (Acts. 5 : 29.) In fine : In every allurements and enticement to sin through godless men, always think of God and his holy will, and you will sustain no loss from temptation or violence.

But you will escape more surely without sin, and without damage to your soul in intercourse with godless people if, with a Christian zeal and a truly apostolic courage, you boldly oppose their sinful conduct, and cry out against their impudent enticements. Do not remain silent when forced to witness scandalous actions, sins, or vices. Openly protest against the scoffs, the mockeries, and blasphemies, of the irreligious. Boldly repel the thousandfold artifices and stratagems, which the servants of the devil employ, in order to entice you into their snares, and seduce you from the way of virtue. With noble, true Christian, courage, stand before the godless, would-beseducer and confederate of the devil, rebuke him, reprove him : and you will not only strengthen and confirm yourself in virtue, but you will also preserve others from eternal ruin and perdition.

Take this admonition to heart. If possible, carefully avoid all intercourse with the wicked, that you may not be led into evil. Do not mingle with evil associations, without the most urgent necessity ; and, above all, never presumptuously flatter yourself that you are safe against bad example, and that you will remain constant and firm in the midst of enticements. You shall surely become bad among the bad, and perish in the danger which you have courted. The safer you think yourself, the greater your peril. But, if intercourse with the wicked be unavoidable, and you cannot entirely withdraw yourself from dangerous associations, be extremely circumspect and self-distrustful ; and constantly invoke the help of God, lest, little by little, you lose your fear of the danger, and, at last, adopt, as your own, habits and practices, which you, at first, abhorred and condemned. Prove, then, what is the will of God, what is pleasing to God, and do not what the tempter desires, but what God commands. Oppose the tempter with a truly Christian courage ; admonish and chastise him for his godlessness, in which he transgresses the divine commandments, and plunges himself and others into hell. If thus, you do not convert him from the error of his ways, at all events, you save your own soul from sin and eternal damnation. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY, AFTER EPIPHANY.

ACTUAL GRACE.

“The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed.”
(Matt. 13 : 31.)

The two parables mentioned in the Gospel of this day primarily symbolize our holy Church in her outward extension and interior efficacy. They admit, however, of other explanations, and may fitly be applied to divine grace. As you know, we distinguish two kinds of grace : Sanctifying grace and actual grace. The first, God imparts to us in the Sacrament of Baptism, and restores to us,—in case we have forfeited it,—in the Sacrament of Penance, changing us from sinners into just men, into children of God and heirs of heaven. This grace can be forfeited only by mortal sin. Actual grace, or the grace of assistance, is so called, because God assists us with it, or helps us thereby to perform good works, to guard ourselves against sin, to faithfully fulfil his divine will, and acquire eternal salvation.

The heaven spoken of in the Gospel-parable, is a figure of sanctifying grace, which permeates our souls, transforming them, and rendering them pleasing in the eyes of God. The mustard-seed, on the other hand, typifies actual grace. Like the tiny grain of mustard-seed, it is apparently very insignificant and of little value, often unnoticed and despised by the multitude ; and yet, if it fall into good soil, if we willingly receive and foster it, some mighty tree may proceed from it, producing fruits of infinite value. I have chosen this latter theme for the subject of our present meditation, and will now show you :

- I. *What is actual grace ;*
- II. *Why we should highly esteem it ;*
- III. *What use we should make of it.*

I. *What is actual grace ?*

1. Actual grace consists in the light which God infuses into our understanding, in the strength which he infuses into our will, to the end that we may both will and do that which is good. I will illustrate this

by an example taken from real life. St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, was, before his conversion, an officer in the Spanish army, and, like many others of his class, led a somewhat worldly life. He seldom thought of God, or of the salvation of his soul; the idea of working for heaven, of living for God, of performing good works, never entered his mind. Darkness reigned in his soul; he was afflicted with spiritual blindness. His will was strongly attached to creatures, and to the vanities of the world. During the siege of Pampeluna, he was wounded; and, whilst lying ill in the hospital, he asked for books to while away the time which hung heavily upon his hands. He asked for novels and romances, but there was no other book in the house, except a copy of the *Lives of the Saints*. Having no other choice, he finally began to read it. On a sudden, as he perused the record of so many heroic lives, his understanding was enlightened, so that he saw clearly the necessity of amending his life and of serving God, by avoiding evil and doing good.

But to know what we ought to do for the salvation of our soul, is not sufficient. We must also be willing to do what we know is necessary. Some of the greatest sinners clearly recognize the truth that they should avoid sin and live piously, if they would save their souls; and yet, they do not do so. Their hearts are so closely wedded to sin, that they make no effort to divorce them. But God helped Ignatius by piercing his heart with a great horror of sin, and with a great desire of leading henceforth a virtuous life. The divine aid inclined his will to avoid evil and do good. Following this light and holy impulse vouchsafed him from above, Ignatius confessed his sins, did penance for them, performed all the good in his power, persevered to the end, and is now one of the greatest Saints in heaven, happy for ever.

2. This divine assistance, by which the understanding is enlightened and the will enkindled to do what is good, is what we call *Actual grace*. How many of such actual graces are not men continually receiving!—the sinner, that he may not fall deeper into crime, but be converted and seek pardon; the just man, that he may persevere in avoiding sin and performing good works,—that he may advance in the grace of God, and merit heaven. God calls the sinner to penance, by afflicting him with dangerous diseases; by the warning of a friend's sudden death; by forcible words from the pulpit, or in the confessional, which move his heart. All these are the inspirations of actual grace.

Even in daily things which men call trifles, a Christian recognizes the grace of God which enlightens him and invites him to do good. For instance, when an interior voice admonishes you to say your morning prayers, to resist a temptation of anger, to recall the meekness of Jesus,

when you are provoked, or scolded, or despised ; to reject the sinful enticements of your companions,—it is the voice of God speaking to your heart, it is actual grace. Sometimes, all on a sudden, the eyes of your soul are opened to clearly perceive that all is vanity of vanities, that God loves, and has loved, you with an everlasting love. All at once, without any apparent cause, you feel disgusted with sin ; your heart is thrilled with an interior consolation, with a pleasure in well-doing, with a desire to become better and more pious, to perfectly fulfil your baptismal vows, and observe all the duties of your state of life for the love of God alone—behold, again, this is actual grace ; it is the voice of God speaking to your heart !

II. Having learned what is actual grace, let us now consider *why we should highly esteem this grace.*

1. Because it is a voice, a call, from God. You are to do this, or to avoid that, for his love, for his sake. Listen to what Jesus says : “ Behold, I stand at the door, and knock : if any man will hear my voice, and open to me the gate, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” (Apoc. 3 : 20.) Whenever the grace of God in time of temptation, warns you against sin ; or when it exhorts you to pray, to suffer with patience, or to go to confession ; it is just as if Christ were outside the door of your heart, knocking for admission, and beseeching you to receive him as your guest. Tell me, could you have the heart to refuse this to your loving Saviour ? If a friend had saved your life at his own personal risk ; if, for instance, he had snatched you from a raging fire and thereby seriously burned himself, could you refuse to admit him to your house—refuse to grant him whatever he might ask of you ? Will you not do as much for him who rescued you from the eternal flames of hell, who died that you might live ?

2. We should highly esteem this actual grace of God, because it has been purchased for us at such a high price, at the price of the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Let us suppose a familiar, every-day case in point. A certain father is forced to work hard to support his family ; nevertheless, he manages to send his son away to college, in order to procure him a good education. He makes monthly remittances to him of a few dollars, earned in the sweat of his brow, and saved by acts of heroic self-denial. But the son, instead of purchasing the necessary books, and preparing joy for his father’s heart by diligent study, spends his poor father’s hard-earned wages in saloons, with bad company. Now, when the news of his son’s conduct reaches the unhappy father’s ears, does it not overwhelm him with grief ? Behold, every

grace *you* have received has been purchased by the price of the blood of Jesus ! To merit grace for you, the Son of God toiled and suffered thirty-three long years, and, at last, shed his blood on the cross. And will you make no use of it, but simply squander it away ?

III. *Great are the advantages derived from a faithful co-operation with the actual grace of God.*

1. The great advantage which we gain if we co-operate with divine grace, and the great loss which we suffer if we slight or abuse it, should move us to make a diligent use of so precious a gift. If you wish to know its worth, ask those Saints in heaven who once led sinful lives. Ask them, if, instead of corresponding to the grace offered to them ; if, instead of confessing their sins, and doing penance for them, they had continued to pursue the broad road of sinners, would they now be in heaven ? And if you wish to know what a terrible thing it is to turn a deaf ear to the call of God when he admonishes to repentance, ask one of the condemned in hell ; and, if he were permitted, he would reply to you : “ God called me ; he enlightened me to see my sins ; he exhorted me to confess them, and to amend my life ; but I rejected the inspiration, and continued to pursue the way of iniquity. Had I followed the call of grace, I would now be in heaven ; instead of that, I am here in hell—damned, and lost for ever, through my own fault ! ”

2. If God send you, poor sinner, the rays of his grace ; if he call on you, and urge you to be converted ; do not harden your heart. It may be your last warning. If you listen attentively to the divine voice, you will receive additional graces, and be saved. Otherwise, little by little, God will withdraw his grace from you, and leave you to your own devices. Yes, an apparently small grace which you neglected, might have opened heaven to you ; its neglect lands you in hell. “ If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace.” (Luke 19 : 42.)

3. Let us suppose, however, that you are not in mortal sin, but in the state of grace. God sends you an actual grace ; for instance, he admonishes you to pray more devoutly, to be more patient, to bridle your tongue, and calmly receive an insult or offense. Are such small inspirations of no account ? If you avail yourself of this grace, if you pray, if you are patient, you acquire for yourself an additional merit, sanctifying grace is increased in you, so that you are more acceptable to God, and the beauty of your soul is increased a hundredfold. Every good work which you do in the grace of God, though it be only

the devout recital of a single *Our Father*, makes your soul shine with a new splendor, adds to your crown of grace, a new and sparkling jewel. How much trouble do women, (and men, too,) give themselves to increase the beauty of their bodies? And yet this corporeal beauty is like a brief dream, evanescent, and worth nothing in the eyes of God. Will you give yourselves less trouble to increase the beauty of your soul? What is more than this, actual grace, co-operated diligently with, shortens purgatory, and immeasurably increases one's eternal reward in heaven.

4. But if you do not co-operate with the grace of God; for instance, if you do not avoid a temptation, or do not pray when you are admonished to it, you cause your own ruin. Why? If a poor beggar casts away the alms you give him, are you not disinclined to take pity on him a second time? If God sees you despise the graces he gives you, will he multiply his gifts upon you? No, on the contrary, you have every reason to fear that he will give you fewer graces, that you will become poorer and weaker, fall into tepidity, even into mortal sins, and will be for ever lost. If you drop one link of a chain, you lose your hold on the entire chain. If you refuse to accept one grace, you may lose the whole chain of graces which was prepared for you, in case you co-operated with the one so unfortunately rejected.

Oh! how rich you would now be, if you had faithfully corresponded with divine grace during the many years of your past life! Redeem the lost time, by faithfully co-operating with it henceforth. Listen to God, when he speaks in your heart, and earnestly strive to do his holy will.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE TRUE PROGRESS OF THE CHURCH.

The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed"

(Matt. 13 : 31.)

The parable of the grain of mustard-seed is the best refutation of one of the most common calumnies against our holy Church. In her, our adversaries say, there is no progress, no growth, no development of life. Not only is she the enemy of progress, but everything within her is at a complete stand-still, doomed to intellectual decay and death. With her rigidly-inflexible articles of faith, and her obsolete and exaggerated precepts, it is asserted that she opposes every free movement of the human spirit, demanding from her members, a blind, unthinking obedience, the annihilation of reason, and of all free and independent life. Behold, in the parable of the mustard-seed (to which our Lord compared the Church), a proof of the utter falseness and injustice of this accusation! A shoot which springs up from a small seed into a glorious tree, laden with blossoms and fruits, and overshadowing the earth, is surely a type of continual progress of rich life and abundant growth. The tree of the Church is like its divine Founder, of whom the Evangelist says: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men, and the light shineth in darkness" (John 1 : 4, 5); and he himself said: "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly." (John 10 : 10.)

In order to further prove how unfounded is this reproach that the Church is inimical to true progress, I will show you, to-day, that there is the truest and best of progress,

- I. *In her inner life ;*
- II. *In her local extension ; and*
- III. *In virtue.*

I. It would be, indeed, a sad and terrible thing, if all growth and progress were excluded from our Church. To be dead in the midst of life, and unable to exercise any blessed influence on her members, would be to condemn them also to spiritual impotence and death. If the Church is to be a universal institution of salvation, she must bear within herself

a rich and powerful life ; for only life can awaken and nourish another life.

As in Jesus Christ himself, so in the Church, we distinguish a divine and a human side. The divine side excludes every idea of progress. There could not be a more perfect Christ, a more perfect God. So, speaking from a doctrinal standpoint, there could not be a more perfectly-developed church than the Catholic Church. As St. Paul says in this connection : " Though we, or an Angel from heaven, preach a Gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema." (Gal. 1 : 8.) But, on the human side, we behold and admire an immense progress in the Church, and a rich fountain of life.

1. The Gospel, as it was delivered to the Apostles, and as it has been preserved by the Church without loss and corruption, by the assistance of the Holy Ghost, is incapable of any increase or decrease. No new doctrine can be added in the course of time, nor can any be taken away, or lost. The Church only guards what has been revealed ; and if any difficulty arises, she decides what is in accordance with revelation, and what is not. But is it on this account that doctrinal progress is excluded from her ?

Consider the consciousness of the faith of the Church from the first Christian centuries down to our own days. The doctrine of the Cross of Jesus Christ and of the *Apostles' Creed*, (in which, as in a nutshell, the whole Christian faith is contained,) has grown up into a system of science, surpassing all earthly wisdom in the richness of its contents and in its marvellous consistency, and casting the splendor of its light over every other department of knowledge. The truths of revelation as to God, his perfections and attributes, as to his only-begotten Son, who assumed human nature for the salvation of the world, in the womb of the purest of virgins, and who suffered and died for us ; the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and who descended upon the Apostles ; that of the one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, of the communion of Saints, and of life everlasting,—all these truths have been, from time to time, more and more closely examined, more and more explicitly known and taught, ranging themselves around the one central truth of the most holy Trinity, as brilliant stars around the sun. All deductions which are included in every truth of the Christian revelation have been drawn by the greatest intellects, the most learned and pious men, before the light of day ; and the connection of one sublime doctrine with all the others, has been most profoundly investigated. Infidelity and heresy have been permitted by the wisdom of God, so that the faith of the Church might be defined more and more clearly and emphatically. The precious stones of truth which our Lord had

laid in his Church, were polished, as it were, in the course of time, to a sparkling lustre, and arranged in a most artistic setting.

2. This progress of the Church is manifested in the ecclesiastical life, as a fruit of faith. Now, it is like a cultivated field in which a profusion of flowers and fruits abound, so to speak, in a perpetual Spring. The plain, simple forms of divine worship,—the breaking of bread observed by the early Christians, and for a long time performed in the darkness of the Catacombs,—have grown into a worship of grandeur and sublimity, which is looked upon with admiration both by the faithful and infidels.

3. Again : behold the precepts which the Church has given according to the needs of the times and the wants of nations, for their education and sanctification ! Here, too, we notice a rich and mighty life. The few, simple, elementary maxims of Christian perfection laid down by Christ in his Sermon on the Mount, have been more fully developed in the course of time. The wisest precepts of the Church, which she has given for all conditions of life, have grown out of them. The Church, through this growth of her inner life, has become the saving institution of the world ; she has sanctified state and justice, matrimony and morals, the family and the individual, and all branches of science.

All worldly progress diminishes and fades away before that richness of life which the Church begets of herself, through the life-blood of the grace of God, flowing within her veins. Can any one prate, after this, of stand-still, decay, and death ?

Even in the constitution of the Church, is there not a wonderful progress possible and noticeable ? It is true, her fundamental principles, given by Jesus Christ, are, like himself, unalterable. But between them, there is room for much, which, according to the necessities of the times, may be arranged and ordained by the Church. How intimate, for instance, is, now-a-days, the union and intercourse between the visible Head of the Church and her members, lay, as well as clerical !

Verily, he who denies true progress in the Church of God, does not know what he speaks about. If he expect the truth to be subjected to the caprices of men, he may just as well rebuke the stars in heaven for their obstinacy in retaining their fixed orbits, or for emitting to-day, the same bright, peaceful light which they gave forth on the day of their creation.

II. In order to proclaim his Church the one founded by him, and to silence every assertion that progress and life are excluded from her, our Lord has granted her that growth which is clearly visible to all, viz.: *her*

local extension. This, again, should fill us with admiration and joy ; should enliven our faith that our Church is really that grain of mustard-seed planted by the hand of Christ in the soil of this lower earth.

1. The Church was founded, in order to draw all the nations of the earth within the circle of her blessings, to teach and to baptize all men. She must, therefore, spread every where and offer, at least, to all races and climes, the truths and graces which the Lord has deposited in her bosom. It is her mission to strive and struggle at all times, to convert the world to the belief in Jesus Christ. The honor of God the Father demands this, inasmuch as he sent his only-begotten Son into the world for the salvation and redemption of all men. Such is the will of Jesus Christ, who shed his blood for all on the wood of the Cross ; and such is the design of the Holy Ghost, who hovers over his divine Spouse, sheltering and protecting her, and abiding with her to the end of time. The outward and visible growth of the Church in the world, is a necessary consequence of her end and foundation. She is established for the education of mankind ; she is the one fold of the Lord, wherein all nations must be united under the one Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and his visible vice-gerent on earth. She is the only saving Church, and she must not dwell in one land, or fill and sanctify only one nation, but, according to her destiny, must become a universal Church. Thus, her name *Catholic*,—one which she has borne from the first days of her foundation, and which all times, without contradiction, have conceded to her.

2. Has not the Catholic Church become a mighty tree expanding its branches over all parts of the world, and inviting the nations to dwell under her shadow ? Look only cursorily at her growth, in order to recognise and admire the divine motive power.

The twelve Apostles were assembled at Jerusalem, about to go forth into the whole world, and carry the grace and truth of the Gospel to all nations. Tradition says that they divided the world among themselves, and that a part of it fell to each, as a missionary field. The chief root of the heavenly mustard-seed was carried by St. Peter, the representative of Jesus Christ, and the visible Head of the Church, from Jerusalem to Rome. In that Eternal City, which was the enlivening centre of the pre-Christian world, and which had collected within itself the splendor and opulence of all the nations of antiquity, the grain of mustard-seed was to grow into a wonderful tree, overshadowing the universe.

In the first century, we find, already, bishops in the east and south of Europe, as well as in Asia and Africa ; and a short time only had elapsed, before we see the great Roman empire filled with Christians. It was no exaggeration for Tertullian to say of that period : “ The

Christians, in almost every city, constitute the majority." "There is no race of people, though they still live as nomads in wagons, instead of in houses," (St. Justin could say, in his discourse to the Jew Tryphon,) "by whom prayers and thanksgivings are not sent up in the name of Christ Crucified." In the third and fourth centuries, Christianity had already penetrated into Persia, India, and other regions of the interior of Asia. From the fifth century on, the branches of the mustard-seed extended, in the west, from Spain and France into England, Ireland, and Scotland. It was now, no longer, the individual and separate efforts of zealous and holy men, who devoted themselves to the conversion of heathen nations; but the Holy See and the German emperors united, in order to carry the leaven of heavenly doctrine and grace to the most distant regions; to establish solid, ecclesiastical order in the converted countries, and to protect the scattered seed. Up to the tenth century, the holy cross of our Lord was erected among the Saxon people, and among the Slavonic nations towards the eastern part of Europe,—in Moravia, Bulgaria, Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary; and the Tree of salvation spread out its branches to the extreme north, to Sweden and Norway, Iceland and Greenland. In the twelfth century, we find messengers of the Catholic faith among the Mongolians; and two hundred years later, the first Christian congregation in China was founded at Peking. With swift and gigantic strides, the marvelous Tree of the faith extended its branches over the sea, when, towards the end of the fifteenth century, new continents were discovered. So rich are its blossoms in the interior of Asia, and especially in America, that the New World seems to vie with the Old in the number and holiness of her members.

Thus, at present, the Tree of salvation spreads far and wide, under our very eyes, and it will continue to flourish and to blossom until it has overshadowed the whole earth, and the words of Christ are fulfilled: "There shall be one fold and one Shepherd." Again, I ask: Is there, then, no life, no expansion, in the Church? Do only lethargy and death dwell within her? Is not her continual growth the best refutation of all calumnies against her? Yes, so rich and mighty is her life, that, without her, the entire life of the world would go to ruin and decay. Without the Tree of grace, the world would have remained what it was in pagan times,—a dreary, arid desert.

We, her privileged children, who are taught to cry out to God: "Thy kingdom come," should by prayer and almsdeeds, and by our holy lives, contribute our share towards the growth of this wonderful Tree of life. From the root to the crown, all parts of the great Tree must be in harmonious and complete activity, if it would attain the perfect growth decreed by God.

III. Contemplate, my beloved, this growth *in the souls of the faithful*. Not content with pouring forth the fulness of her inner life over the whole universe and actively penetrating all its various departments, the Church also desires to grow in each individual soul, bringing forth therein, beautiful blossoms and fruits. The kingdom of God must grow in our hearts. The wonderful progress we have contemplated and admired in her inner life and her local extension, must be reproduced in each of our souls. According to the will of her Founder, we must ever increase in the *knowledge and love of God*; we must grow strong *in obedience*. Would that all those who talk of stagnation, retrogression, and death in the Church of Christ, earnestly strove for this progress in their own interior life!

1. We must grow *in divine knowledge*. Our spirit longs for truth, and strives for knowledge. It is only sound and wholesome when it is nourished with the bread of pure and genuine doctrine. Shall we be content only with growth in the knowledge of earthly things? Shall Christians quench the thirst of their immortal souls in the pools of fallible human science? Is it not a reproach to us, and an ingratitude to the revelation given to us by our Saviour, to stop short at the little rivulet of religious knowledge in which we waded as children, when we may plunge and bathe in the boundless ocean of truth? Without knowledge, there is for us no comprehension of Christianity, and without comprehension, no divine life or love. Hence, consider it your first duty to grow and increase in the knowledge of the doctrines of Jesus Christ. Listen attentively to sermons, read instructive books, so that the mustard-seed of truth may spring up in your soul, and mightily develop itself therein.

2. *Love* must proceed from knowledge. "Performing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in him, who is the head, Christ." (Ephes. 4 : 15.) Life and love are the main points, not knowledge and erudition. What would it avail to eternal life, if we could give the most accurate definition and explanation of every article of faith, if our hearts, at the same time, do not become warmer and richer in love? Without the love of Jesus Christ, and without its growth in us, our entire religious life is as hollow and empty as "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal." "If any one love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make an abode with him." (John 14 : 23.)

But can we increase in love without growing *in obedience* to God and his holy commandments? Of what use are sentiments of love, if the works do not give testimony thereof? Charity is manifested by obedi-

ence, by the observance of the commandments. "He that loveth me not," says Christ, "keepeth not my words" (John 14 : 24); and again : "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven : but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 7 : 21.) Obedience to God's commandments is the crown and perfection of love.

Who, then, will dare to accuse our Church of being inimical to, and destructive of, all progress and growth of life? I call out to all those who make this accusation : Endeavor to increase in the interior life, in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ, and try more and more perfectly to keep his holy commandments ; and your eyes will be opened to see and recognise the wonderful development of life and progress in our holy and much-abused Church. The highest conceivable progress is within her hallowed fold. Only ignorance can dare talk of spiritual death, where the very fulness of life is abundantly flowing. Like a giant-tree, the Church stands among the nations of the earth, growing and growing, until it overshadows them all. So, also, may the kingdom of God grow in our hearts, into the resemblance to Jesus Christ, our Saviour and perfect Model ! Amen.

BISHOP EHRLER.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

THE RACE TO AN ETERNAL GOAL.

“Know you not that they who run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain.” (1. Cor. 9 : 24.)

The Apostle compares the life of the Christian to a race. “Know you not that they who run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain. Every one that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible one.” What does the Apostle mean by these words? That we should strive with great zeal for eternal salvation; that we should all be animated with a holy emulation, and, without fear of the obstacles in the way, courageously overcome them. Our life is a race; our goal is heaven. Though those who run are exposed to many dangers, they have also many and powerful means to help them to their end. Let us meditate on this truth, and consider

- I. *The goal of this race;*
- II. *The participants;*
- III. *The obstacles which beset this race;*
- IV. *The means of help offered the runners.*

I. *The Christian's goal is heaven.* The Apostle says: “Many strive that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one.” The corruptible crown are the riches, honors, and joys of this world. They are perishable, evanescent. They fade like the grass that is mowed down—they vanish like smoke that is blown into the air. And yet, how many are there, alas! who strive and labor hard for these deceitful goods, and endure so much in order to acquire them! This being so, how much more should we strive for those perfect and unchanging goods of heaven, which the Apostle calls an incorruptible crown,—that “inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not, reserved in heaven for you.” (1. Pet 1 : 4.) “In

comparison with this imperishable crown, we must consider all else as **little**, worthless, and unworthy of our esteem. Towards the eternal **Goal**, our eyes and thoughts should be directed at all times. We **should** yearn after it with a great desire, and strive to the utmost of our **ability** to attain it. That is, we should be zealous in doing good as **long** as we live, and in faithfully discharging the duties of our state of **life**. Hence, the Apostle says : "So run that you may obtain."

I. *The participants in this race.* No man runs alone to heaven. There are many in the race ; for all have the same sublime destiny, though all do not endeavor to attain it. What, then, must we do ? We **must** encourage and stimulate one another to persevere in the race ; we **must** help one another to reach the grand Goal. Let us look to it that **no** one, through *our* fault, either lags in the race, or goes astray from the road. If we see a fellow-Christian becoming weary and fatigued, ready to give up, because the race appears to him too long or too arduous, we must stretch forth to him a helping hand, and urge him on. If one should fall, and be unable or unwilling to arise again, we must lift him up and put him upon his feet. If another should wander astray, we must conduct him back to the right path,—that is, we must inspire him with courage by our good example, charitable admonitions, and frequent advice ; we must have patience with his faults, instruct him in doubts, console him in adversities ; and by prayer, meekness, doctrine, entreaties, and fraternal correction, assist him to attain his final aim. All have this duty, but especially those who, in one house, united by the bonds of blood, relationship, or obedience, run together in the race to heaven. For this reason, parents should zealously endeavor to stimulate their children, that they too aspire to heaven ; they should help and assist them, admonish, entreat, reprove, and chastise them, and be unceasingly solicitous for the eternal salvation of the souls entrusted to their care.

II. It cannot be gainsaid that, *in our race to heaven, there are many obstacles, dangers, and delusions.* We have innumerable enemies, who hate us with a mortal hatred, and begrudge us heaven and the possession of God. First of all, there is *the devil* who, having out of envy, seduced our first parents and cheated them out of their earthly paradise, would also have robbed them of heaven, if the mercy of God had not frustrated his wicked purpose. Undying is his hatred towards God and man ; and he is ever indefatigable in seducing souls, in alienating them from God, robbing them of heaven, and plunging them into eternal perdition. Another powerful enemy of ours is *the world*, made up, as it is, of bad people, to whom virtue, piety, and godliness are as a

thorn in the flesh. Through its manifold delusions and temptations, its flattering speeches, mockery, or ridicule, the world ever endeavors to divert pious souls from the divine service,—from prayer, attendance at church, the reception of the Sacraments, and from a general Christian line of conduct. It would fain induce all Christians to abandon the narrow way to heaven, and enter upon the broad road of sin. What are we to do against this potent enemy and its emissaries? We must despise them, scorn them—we must combat and subdue them. Hence, the Apostle says in the Epistle of to-day: “I so fight, not as one beating the air; but I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection.” In order to subdue our enemies, to overcome the dangers and obstacles which beset our way to heaven, we must make use of the heavenly weapons bestowed upon us, of the shield of Christian faith, the sword of prayer, the armor of humility, self-denial, watchfulness, and perseverance. If we are vigilant, in order to discover the snares, the evil purposes, of our enemies; if we are humble, in order to draw down the grace of God upon our heads; if we mortify our perverse inclinations, our propensities to sin, and shut the door of our senses upon the allurements of the world; if we join to this, fervent prayer, and, with confidence in God, do not waver, but persevere in good,—we shall surely overcome, for “he that persevereth unto the end, he shall be saved.”

IV. And we shall overcome the more certainly, because of the powerful *means of help* which are at our disposal. Perceiving our good will and our sincere desire to come to him, God will not refuse us the necessary graces to attain our end. On the contrary, he will strengthen our weakness, assist us in temptations, support us in all spiritual dangers, and send his holy Angels to be our guides and protectors. He will never forsake us,—for “even though father and mother should leave us, the Lord will take us up.” (Ps. 26 : 10.) “The Lord is my light and salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? And if armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear.” (Ps. 26 : 1, 2, 3.) Hence, the words of the Apostle are true: “If God be for us, who is against us?” (Rom. 8 : 31.) And again: “I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me.” (Phil. 4 : 13.) Is not God himself our food and nourishment on our way to heaven, the precious *Viaticum* of our long and dangerous journey? O, what a treasure is the holy Communion—the Bread of life, the true Bread of heaven, the food and drink of the table of the Lord, wherewith he strengthens us, refreshes us, and fills us with joy, consolation, and new courage, healing all our infirmities and miseries! To this, we must frequently have recourse—to this Bread of the weak, to this Medicine of the sick,—to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the

Altar. If the evil spirit pursues us, if the world lays snares for us ; if temptations become violent, and our zeal grows cold ; if we have been vanquished in the combat, and have fallen into sin,—we must fly to Jesus in his holy Sacrament,—to our mighty Deliverer, who is ready to help us, who invites us with the tender words of love : “ Come to me, all you that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you.” (Matt. 13 : 28.)

Supported and strengthened by that Bread of life, we shall run the race to the eternal Goal, we shall finish our course, and arrive at our end, and thus, each one of us will be able to say with St. Paul : “ 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.” (2. Tim. 4 : 7, 8.) Amen.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

SLOTH IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

About the eleventh hour, he went out, and found others standing, and he saith to them : Why stand you here all the day idle ?" (Matt. 20 : 6.

Is not this a true picture of the world ? How many idlers does not God discern at all hours, when, from the heights of heaven, he turns his all-seeing eye upon the earth, in order to observe the ways and occupations of his children ! Thousands of them throng the roads of life, dreaming away their precious time in idleness or useless employments. They are slothful in their earthly vocation, either self-chosen, or given them by God. Legion is the name of those who go through life thinking they were created for no other purpose than to eat, and drink, and have a good time of it. There is even such a thing as a busy idleness. Many, like the fishermen of the Gospel, toil all night, yet take nothing,—trifling away their hours in certain favorite pursuits, without a single serious thought for the honor of God and the welfare of their neighbor. Where are those who, free from every reproach, can raise their eyes and hearts to heaven, and bear truthful testimony to their own souls, that they have never spent an idle hour in their calling ? Of none of God's gifts is a worse use made, than of time, the most valuable and important of all. But the worst, and at the same time, the most common kind of idleness, is that which concerns our supernatural vocation,—the salvation of our souls. Do we not all know many such idlers ? Men buy and sell, marry and beget children. They accumulate money, acquire lands, and attend to all the affairs of this world ; but they neither think of God, nor of the salvation of their souls. And if they make any effort towards fulfilling these duties, how cold are their prayers, how fruitless all their works, because they are performed in the state of sin, and lack that higher motive, that pure intention, which alone can make them meritorious to salvation !

That we may avoid the example of all such idlers, I will speak to you, to-day, on slothfulness in the divine service ; and show you that it is

- I. *Directly opposed to our true destiny ; and*
- II. *Productive of the most deplorable consequences.*

1. *Sloth in spiritual matters is directly opposed to our true destiny.* What is our true destiny on earth? To adore God, to love God, and thereby, to save our souls. Who does not perceive that spiritual idleness is thoroughly incompatible with this exalted destiny?

1. We are in this world to adore and serve God. Does that deserve the name of adoration and service, which is slothfully and tepidly rendered to the divine Majesty? What master will tolerate in his service, a lot of lazy, sleepy servants who do their work only by halves, and carelessly at that? Shall the Lord of lords be less exacting than a mere earthly master? Has he not said: "Cursed is he that doeth the work of God deceitfully" (Jer. 48: 10.) "He shall not make his word void." (Num. 30: 3.) There are no idlers in the whole extent of God's magnificent kingdom, except man. From the beginning of their glorious existence, the holy Angels have been occupied in praising and adoring their Lord and King. They are ministering spirits, ascending and descending between heaven and earth,—the ever-ready and faithful messengers of their God. All other creatures incessantly fulfil the task for which they are created,—fire, water, air, the fertile soil, the world of vegetation, the heavenly bodies,—all are in continual motion, doing perfectly the will of their Creator. Man, alone, is lazy and slothful in the divine service. He, alone, like the unprofitable servant in the Gospel, is idle in the midst of other faithful and zealous servitors of their common Lord. He buries the talents which he receives from him. He is indifferent. He wills, and again, he wills not. Whatever he does for God, he does only by halves, and tepidly and sleepily at that. If he prays, one eye looks up to heaven, whilst the other is fixed on the earth. His heart is full of distractions, which make the adoration of God a mere lip-service. Many of us pretend to worship God with a succession of lying resolutions and empty promises, wherewith we seek in vain to deceive both God and ourselves.

2. Shall not what I have said of a tepid and lazy adoration of God, hold good so much the more of our love of him? Is not the last-named contradiction still more striking and fatal? Every man ridicules a lukewarm, indifferent lover. A cold, selfish love is unworthy of the name of love. And shall God content himself with such a travesty of pure affection? As water extinguishes fire, so tepidity is the death of love. Love is zeal, love is warmth, love is enthusiasm,—and what is lukewarmness but the reverse of all three?

God requires of us a fiery, strong, untiring love. He is not content with less. He gave us the commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy

strength, and with all thy mind." (Luke 10 : 27.) Every faculty of the mind, every feeling of the heart, every motion of the will, should be employed in loving God. "I am come to send fire on earth, and what will I but that it be enkindled?" (Luke 12 : 49.) He has sent the fire of his love, he has sent his only-begotten Son and the Holy Ghost upon the earth, in order to enkindle our cold and tepid hearts, and move them to the burning love of himself. Has not that Eternal Son manifested his love in a mighty never-ending manner? Has he not cast his grace, and the pledge of his love, the Holy Ghost, into our hearts, that love, as a supernatural virtue, may set them all on fire, and ascend from them in purest flames to heaven? Shall we return such burning love with coldness and tepidity?

O, how far is our love of God from that true, perfect love wherewith his Saints have ever loved him! You acknowledge yourself, that love is the rightful due of that amiable Lord who has created you, and overwhelmed you with benefits from the first moment of your life. Your own heart urges you to it, and you have protested numberless times in prayer, that you love him above all things,—yet, as soon as our Lord requires of you a proof of your love, every spark of that divine fire has vanished. The smallest precept of religion is too arduous for you—the lightest sacrifice, too painful. A passionate affection for some creature, a vile sensual pleasure, suffice to extinguish the love of God in our hearts. Yet, with our impure and distracted affections, with empty hands, and souls utterly averse to all labor and sacrifice, we presume to claim the glowing regards of the divine Heart! A love, void of fire and vigor, of life and activity—a love, without the evidence of good works,—is an empty sound; it is a lie, a delusion, despised by the Lord.

3. Of all affairs, the most important is the salvation of our souls. The duty of adoring and loving God, must lead us to him, and effect the salvation of our souls. Hence, the service of God is the means of attaining that grand end—our eternal salvation. Life, time, numberless graces, have been granted to us for the same purpose.

Do you not see that tepidity and sloth are incompatible with this life-task of ours? Whatever portion of it we lose through sloth, can never again be made good. God has decreed unto each of us, a certain space of time during which we can, and must, complete our important task. Whatever is left undone at the expiration of that time, cannot be made up, but is irretrievably lost. The interior temple of God which we are deputed to build upon earth, must be finished when our last hour strikes; and the Lord has reckoned the stones wherewith we daily erect that structure.

O, let us not deceive ourselves! Sloth in the divine service will not

save us in the day of judgment. Our lukewarm devotions, our rare, irregular attendance at divine service, our infrequent reception of the holy Sacraments, and our scanty works of charity, will not secure for us the crown of victory. When did any worldling ever complete a task satisfactorily, without working at it with all his might? And shall we hope to save our souls by tepidity and sloth? What folly and presumption! Can worldly success, or temporal cares, suffice to secure for you the Beatific Vision? The eternal Truth hath said: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matt. 16: 26.) And to the busy sister of Mary, he also said: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary." (Luke 10: 41.) That one necessary thing is the salvation of your soul. You have an allotted time wherein to accomplish it—but no time to spare; and if you do not save your soul, though your life be spent exclusively in what men call the highest and most important pursuits, it is nevertheless a lost existence!

II. Tepidity and sloth draw after them *the most lamentable consequences*. Of these, I will mention only three:

1. *The omission of many good works,*
2. *The commission of many and grievous sins, and*
3. *Finally, the incurring of eternal damnation.*

1. *Tepidity omits many good works.* St. John describes the miserable state of a lukewarm soul in this graphic manner: "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. Because thou sayest: I am rich, and made wealthy, and I have need of nothing; and thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Apoc. 3: 15, 17.) Whilst the zealous Christian strives to verify in himself the words of the Apostle: "He who soweth in blessings, shall also reap of blessings" (2. Cor. 9: 6), the lukewarm Christian is careless with regard to prayer, Sacraments, divine service, works of charity, etc. However splendid, therefore, your appearance before the world—before God, you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. O, that we might all, following the advice of St. John (Apoc. 3: 18), buy the precious gold of divine and eternal charity! O, that we might be clothed in the white garment of the Christian virtues, covering thereby the shame of our native poverty and sinfulness!

2. *Tepidity leads to many sins.* A state of indecision cannot last long.

“Let him that thinketh to stand, take heed, lest he fall.” (1. Cor. 10, 12.) The just man and the saint are liable to fall ; but the indifferent Christian, who, in the tepidity of his heart, has not even the earnest will to combat the temptations and dangers which beset him, cannot help but fall. Contemning venial sins, the evil propensities of our corrupt nature will grow unnoticed in his heart, till light faults are succeeded by mortal sins. “He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater ; and he that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is great.” (Luke 16 : 10.)

3. *The end is eternal damnation.* “I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.” Who can love a man who is neither good nor bad ? Who can drink water that is neither cold nor warm ? When God sees that the lukewarm Christian does not endeavor to become a decided adherent and follower of his Lord, he withdraws the graces that have been so often abused. When the tree, in spite of all the good care it has received, after years of waiting, yields no fruit, it only deserves to be cut down, and cast into the fire. It is a fact, that great sinners are sooner converted than lukewarm Christians. St. Bernardine of Sienna said he had seen usurers and harlots doing penance, but he had never witnessed the conversion of a lukewarm Christian.

The surest way to heaven is, to aspire to the highest degree of sanctity. He who does not strive to climb up to the highest round in the ladder of perfection, cannot stand on the lowest for any length of time. Is it not from the Evangelical Counsels, which are diametrically opposed to lukewarmness, that all great deeds and heroic achievements in the Church have proceeded ? He who seeks for the most comfortable way to heaven, will, no doubt, entirely miss it. “No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9 : 62.) Dearly beloved, are *you* laying up treasures for the world to come ? Are you not chasing the will-o'-the-wisp of worldly deceits, and neglecting the bright, fixed star which guides the soul to life everlasting ? Lift up your eyes to your Home above the clouds. Make haste to enter God's vineyard, and recover the treasure you have forfeited. Redeem the lost time. Our salvation in all things, our salvation above all things !

BISHOP EHRLER.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

THE WORD OF GOD.

"The seed is the word of God." (Luke 8 : 11.)

Our Blessed Lord has deigned to explain with his own sacred lips the parable of the sower read in the Gospel of this Sunday ; hence, my dear brethren, we need not have recourse to the holy Fathers, or sacred commentators, to understand its application. The Son of God compares himself to a husbandman who goes out to sow his seed. The grain is always good, but the soil upon which it falls, must determine the character of the harvest. A portion of this blessed seed, carried away by the wind, falls by the wayside, and, being trampled down by the passers-by, or eaten by the birds of the air, is, as a matter of course, totally lost. Another portion falls upon hard, unprepared, or stony soil, and, lacking the necessary moisture, dries up and withers away,—because it has no roots. A third part, falling amongst thorns, takes root indeed, springs up, and, for a while, promises to reach a happy maturity ; but the weeds and briars growing up simultaneously with the grain, suffocate it, prevent its growth, and end by killing its roots. Finally, a fourth part falls into good and well-prepared ground, and, growing into maturity, brings forth fruit a hundredfold.

This seed, says our Lord, is the Word of God. It is sown in our hearts by the heavenly Husbandman, but, upon the disposition, or the manner, in which we receive it, depends whether or not it will bring forth fruit to salvation.

To-day, my dear Christians, let us endeavor to ascertain to which of the four kinds of soil mentioned in the Gospel, our own souls may be compared, so that we may promptly remove all such hindrances as prevent the word of God from bringing forth, therein its much-desired fruit.

Answer then candidly, my beloved, this important question : *What profit have you derived from hearing the Word of God preached to you so often in this holy place ?*

I. Three-fourths of the husbandman's seed, (as the holy Gospel states,) was lost; in like manner, three-fourths of those who hear the Word of God, who listen to the preaching of the eternal truths of salvation,

are not benefited thereby, either because their hearts resemble the open highways, or the stony ground ; or, because the thorns,—i. e., their sins of commission or omission,—choke the divine word in their souls, and prevent it from ripening into a golden harvest of good and holy works.

Some fell by the wayside. The heart that is open to every vagrant thought and impression ; the mind that gives free access to every sort of distracting and frivolous imagination, is like the highway mentioned in the Gospel. Thoughts of all kind,—good, bad, or indifferent,—are continually entertained by such a soul. Imaginations and desires come and go, pass and repass, without being questioned, or being obliged to show their passports. Such dissipated souls hear, indeed, the word of God, but no sooner has the divine seed fallen into their hearts than “the devil cometh, and taketh it away, lest, believing, they should be saved”

This is the first stratagem of the Arch-enemy. He assails the members of a congregation at sermon-time, with various thoughts, useless and foreign to the subject ; thoughts, not bad in themselves, nay, even sometimes of a pious nature, but, out of place there and then ; and thus, he diverts the attention of the listeners from a subject suitable to their present wants, and which might prove of great benefit to them if they listened with proper dispositions. To such distracted Christians, may be applied the words of the prophet Ezechiel (33 : 31) : “They hear thy words and do them not : for they turn them into a song of their mouth, and their heart goeth after their covetousness.” I trust that you do not belong to this class of indifferent hearers of the word of God. Consider, I implore of you, to-day, that God will hold you responsible for your neglect, should you wantonly disregard the special favor he confers upon you in the preaching of his Gospel. “Rejoice, and be joyful in the Lord your God : because he hath given you a teacher of justice : and he will make the early and the latter rain to come down upon you.” (Joel 2 : 23.) You are the field blessed by God upon which he causes the dew of his graces to descend, morning and night. God forbid, my dear brethren, that you should imitate the ungrateful Jews, to whom even the manna sent from heaven became, in time, distasteful ! God forbid that you should say, or even think : “Our soul now loatheth this very light food” (Num. 21 : 5) ; we are tired of listening to the holy word of God, or of hearing it explained to us ! In that case, we might well fear and tremble, applying to ourselves those words of St. Paul, wherein, (threatening the first Christians,) he declares that “the earth that drinketh in the rain that cometh often upon it, and bringeth forth herbs useful for them by whom it is tilled, receiveth blessing from God. But that which bringeth

forth thorns and biers, is rejected, and very near to a curse, whose end is to be burnt." (Hebr. 6 : 7, 8.)

With the same Apostle of the Gentiles, I think I may add, however, "My dearly beloved, we trust better things of you" (6 : 9), and pray that you will continue to listen with earnest attention to him who speaks to you in the name, and by the authority, of God.

II. *Some fell upon a rock.* Be not deluded, beloved Christians, by your overweening self-love. Think not, that you have done all that is required of you, if you listen to sermons and instructions with attention, and even with pleasure. By so doing, it is true, you permit the evangelical seed to find an entrance into your hearts; and some temporary good resolutions may result therefrom, some pious emotions, some momentary fervor. But take heed, and carefully note, whether these ardent resolutions—these pious desires, do not resemble the tender blade springing up from a rocky soil, which withers away at the first heat of the summer's sun, because it has no root. You, indeed, approve of the sermon you hear; you are delighted with the word of God; you receive with eagerness, and listen with gladness to the instructions given, because of the manner in which those sacred truths are explained to you. You exclaim in your heart: "God is good; he is eminently deserving of my love! I will adore and serve him, I will be a good and faithful Catholic!"

But, pray tell me, my dear friends, how long does this delightful fervor last? Alas! like the little green blade upon the rock, fading before the fierce heat of the summer, it withers away at the smallest temptation or difficulty that presents itself. "As soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it had no moisture." The carnal Jews who listened with pleasure to the words of our Saviour, praised him and followed him in the ardor of a momentary enthusiasm. They admired his wisdom and his doctrine, but no lasting impressions were left upon their minds, no permanent benefit derived from his divine preaching. In like manner, we must acknowledge it to our shame, though many of us listen with pleasure to the sermons and instructions of our pastors and spiritual directors, and seem to understand the sacred truths announced, yet we continue the same careless Christians. What, I ask, my brethren, is the reason of this strange inconsistency,—what, its sad and fatal cause? If we enter into ourselves, and carefully and sincerely examine our hearts, we will perceive that our inordinate passions and worldly attachments, our spirit of self-indulgence, our unwillingness to carry the cross, or to suffer with Christ,—are the stony ground upon which the seed of the word of God falls, wherein it withers away and dies, without bringing forth any fruit for salvation. Root out of your

hearts first, my dear Christians, all such evil propensities ; turn up the soil of your interior by the plough of a thorough conversion ; eradicate the deadly vices which have there taken root, and you will soon reap with joy a blessed harvest.

III. *Some fell amongst thorns, and the thorns growing up with it, choked it.* Who would have believed, if our Lord himself had not declared it,—that, by these thorns of the parable, he wished us to understand the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life ? Yet, so it is. Even as the soil on which these briers grow luxuriantly, may be, and often is, in its native state fitted to produce a healthy crop of wheat ; so is the natural soil of those hearts which are carried away by too much anxiety for worldly things, calculated in the first instance to be benefited by the word of God. But what happens in a field where thorn-bushes, briers, and the like, are permitted to grow ? If grain is sown therein, it may spring up, indeed ; it may even take root, and, for awhile, appear healthy and promising. But lo ! the summer's sun causes the briers to increase faster than the wheat, and all the moisture necessary to promote the growth of the grain, is absorbed by the unfriendly and obnoxious leaf of the worthless bramble. By little and little, the healthy stalk is seen to languish, and, for want of sap and genial heat, dies before the grain has ripened ; and thus, in fulfilment of the Gospel-prophecy, the thorns growing up with it, choke it. Even so it is, says our Lord, with those whose hearts are set on the pleasures and comforts of this world ; who are distracted, and permit themselves to be tormented, by a thousand anxious cares, regardless of the words of divine Wisdom : “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice ; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matt. 6 : 33.) The desire of riches ; an excessive anxiety to succeed in business ; to acquire honors and high station,—are the fatal thorns that suffocate in many a soul the seed of the word of God.

And yet, alas ! how many Christians excuse themselves from a serious attention to the needs of their immortal souls, by the shallow plea : “I have not time for such things” ! They admit that it will profit them nothing if they gain the whole world, and lose their immortal souls ; nevertheless, from morning till night, they are engaged in the busy and absorbing traffic of the world, intent solely on gaining a little perishable wealth, a lucrative position, an honorable post, or some empty applause,—forgetful, all the while, of the one thing necessary.

In conclusion, dearly beloved, let me exhort you to reflect seriously upon this subject, and ask yourselves, to-day, before the altar of God : *What profit have I derived from the innumerable sermons and exhortations I have heard from my youth upward ?* Instead of permitting the dew

of heavenly grace to moisten my heart, to the end that the divine seed might take root and grow strong therein,—I have, perhaps, through my culpable indifference, trampled, as it were, on the word of God, and destroyed it in my soul. Or, it may be that I am inordinately attached to the vain and worthless pleasures of a deceitful world, or to the base idols of my unruly passions, and that these things have choked the growth of the divine seed, to the great detriment of my soul, and the risk of my eternal salvation. Whatever may have been the cause of God's word failing to produce in the past its desired fruit in our souls ;—whatever the obstacles whereby we have wilfully prevented the blessed grain from ripening into a royal harvest of good works,—let us resolve, to-day, to remove at once all these impediments, and to so prepare our hearts for the reception of the Gospel-seed, that we may belong to that fourth class of holy and favored Christians, whom our divine Lord designates, (in contradistinction to their careless or worldly brethren,) as those who “ in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience.” Amen.

REV. L. BAX.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

THE GRACIOUS MEANING OF THE WORD OF GOD.

"A sower went out to sow his seed." (Luke 8 : 5.)

The words of this day's Gospel, as St. Augustine beautifully remarks, need not to be explained, but only to be observed. Our Lord himself has disclosed to us the sense and meaning of the parable of the Sower and the seed. The less difficulties, therefore, the sacred Text presents to the understanding, the more should we endeavor to fulfil its admonitions. With good and perfect hearts, receiving the word of God, we should keep it, and bring forth fruit, sixty, or (better still), a hundredfold.

I never reflect upon this beautiful parable of the Sower and the seed, without feeling myself urged to a more zealous fulfilment of the sublime office which I hold amongst you. In the evangelical sower, the ideal of the Christian preacher stands before me. "A sower went out to sow his seed." The husbandman stands in his field, casting the seed, with full hands, into the furrows. The preacher, too, stands in the midst of his hearers who, desirous of their salvation, sit at his feet to receive the seed of divine truth that falls from his mouth. The husbandman sows only good seed, selected with a careful hand out of last year's harvest, and which, with God's blessing, has come to full perfection. I am not called to announce to you my own views and opinions, nor the suggestions of human wisdom and prudence, but to deposit in your souls heavenly seed—seed, ripened in the field of the Church, under the blessed influence of Jesus and the Holy Ghost. I plant in your hearts that which I myself have received from the Church. As St. Paul says: "When I came to you, I came not in loftiness of speech or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of Christ. For I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And my speech, and my preaching, were not in the persuasive word of human wisdom, but in the showing of the spirit and power." (1. Cor. 2 : 1-4.) The sower prodigally scatters his seed, and it does not trouble him if the greater part of it fall upon rocks, or among thorns. Thus, the Christian preacher ascends the pulpit, and announces the word of God again and again, although many of his words fall upon stony hearts and

unfruitful souls. He remembers the exhortation of St. Paul to his disciple Timothy : "I charge thee before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, by his coming and his kingdom, preach the word of God, be instant in season and out of season, reprove, entreat, rebuke with all patience and doctrine." (2. Tim 4, 1, 2.) The sower of the Gospel is also the model and the consolation of the Christian preacher, when so many of his efforts and labors appear to be unsuccessful and profitless. He teaches him to persevere, to trust to the rain of divine grace, and to the blessing of heaven that a part, at least, of the seed he sows, may yield fruit in the end.

How beautifully, my dear Christians, are your duties in regard to the word of God, set forth in the parable of the present Gospel! The nature of the spiritual harvest depends upon the quality of the soil wherein the divine seed falls. Our Lord compares the souls of men to four different kinds of soil. I pray you, then, each one of you, to-day, to examine your own heart, and apply to it the test of our Lord's clear and explicit words. If we all fulfil our duty in regard to the word of God ; if you, in particular, offer to it the conditions of a good and well-prepared soil, our Lord will surely pour out his blessing upon the divine seed in your souls, that you may, for the future, properly venerate this sacred word of God. I will explain, that it is :

- I. *A voice from heaven ;*
- II. *The nourishment of our soul ;*
- III. *The mirror of our heart ; and*
- IV. *The consecration of our life.*

I. *The word of God, a voice from heaven.* The good Christian regards the word of God as a voice from heaven. Its holy sounds seem to fall from Paradise into the turmoil of his earthly life ; and heavy and insupportable, indeed, would be his burthen, if those celestial accents did not strengthen and console him, reminding him ever of his true Home beyond the clouds. As the earth longs ardently for the light of the sun, and as every creature thereon depends for its life and growth on the blessing of heaven ; so man longs for the strength and power of the word of God.

1. What is the word of God ? Is it not the word of the priest who preaches it ? It is a message from God, sent to you through his priest. It is the voice of God in heaven, speaking to us by the tongue of man. When St. John calls Christ *the Word of God*, he reveals to us, by those very words, the dignity and sublimity of Christian preaching. The word of God that is preached to us from every Catholic pulpit, and the

Word of God that proceedeth from the Father from all eternity, and who assumed human nature in the chaste womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary,—are substantially the same.

2. From the creation of mankind the Lord, in his love and mercy, spoke to his people often, and in divers ways, by his Patriarchs and Prophets. Finally, he sent his only-begotten Son, his divine Word, into the world ; and this one Word of the Father has divided itself into as many words as the Son of God has proclaimed truths and doctrines. This one Word of the Father shall sound forth till the end of time. It is repeated time and again, and announced anew, by the mouth of every Catholic priest.

3. There is a great difference between the true word of God, as it is preached in our churches, and that mock word which is proclaimed in other places of worship. I, my brethren, have no right to announce to you my own conceptions and interpretations of the Gospel. I must first prove that my opinions do not contradict the word of our Lord, and the teachings of his holy Church. The Catholic priest does not address his hearers in his own name ; much less, is he chosen by them to express and propound *their* views. He speaks in the name of the Church, and preaches her faith. He speaks in Christ's place, and repeats his teachings to the faithful. All that is his own, is the dress in which he arrays the truth. The substance is put into his mouth by the Church, and no priest has a right to take anything away from the divine word, or to add thereto one jot or tittle. Thus, the word of God always remains a voice from heaven.

Do you not easily recognize that divine word as a voice from heaven ? What are the truths and doctrines that are announced to you from our pulpits ? Not earthly wisdom, not the things of this world ; but the concerns of your soul, and of your eternal salvation. That the word of God might always continue to be a voice of heaven ; that its divine truths might never be changed or mutilated by those who handled them ; and that their outer expression which, (according to the exigencies of the times and the needs of men,) might sometimes differ, but, nevertheless, might never suffer injury or loss,—our Saviour has promised the Holy Ghost to his Church, in order to preserve her unalterably in his doctrine. He himself remains with her by the help of his grace, in order to protect his word, the revelation of his mouth,—assuring his Church that the gates of hell, the spirit of untruth, should never prevail against her. Therefore, what is preached to you by us, is in every respect, the voice of heaven ; and in this light, it is looked upon, and listened to, by the Catholic.

II. *The word of God is also the nourishment of the soul.* Earthly bread does not suffice for the life of the soul. The thoughts and suggestions of human wisdom cannot appease the hunger of our hearts. As long as our soul, descended from and related to God, is active within us, our Saviour's words hold good: "Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. 4 : 4.) The plant draws the sap of life from the earth in which it is rooted: nevertheless, it needs for its growth, light and rain from heaven. In like manner, natural science and earthly knowledge are not sufficient nourishment for the soul. Man needs the light of divine grace, the dew of divine truth, to perfect the growth of his inner life.

The word of God is that supernatural food which gives nourishment to the soul. It is the dew of heaven that gladdens and refreshes the earth; the light, in which alone it can develop a sound and healthy life. There is no need or distress of the soul that cannot be alleviated or sweetened by the word of God. Like a rich and abundant banquet, it appeases the hunger of all who approach it. It is a consolation in despondency: "Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou disquiet me? Hope in God, the salvation of my countenance and my God. I will go unto the altar of God, to God who giveth joy to my youth." (Ps. 42.) It is a consolation in poverty, which ceases to be a real evil in the light of the divine word. It is a consoling support in all dangers, temptations, and doubts,—in every trying situation of life. It raises up the oppressed and comfortless; it gives strength to the weak, and dries the tears of the sorrowful. It gives courage, and greater fortitude and decision, to those who are sorely tempted. It admonishes the sinner to repentance, and the just man to constancy and perseverance. Which of you have not experienced in your own soul, a repetition of the miracle wrought on the day of Pentecost! All understood St. Peter's word, and all those who were of good will, had the wants of their soul satisfied. The word of God is the manna from heaven, having in it the sweetness of every taste.

Will you, then, neglect to partake of the food of the word of God, for the strengthening of your soul? What else can support you in the pressing exigencies and trying ordeals of life? It is a duty to take earthly food for the preservation of bodily life. This is a universally-recognised necessity, willingly practised by every one. He who refuses to nourish his body, is guilty of suicide. Have we not a like duty with regard to our souls? Otherwise, we commit spiritual suicide. I cannot understand how the Christian who does nothing more for his soul but hear a low Mass on Sundays, will be able to stand at the judgment-seat of God. It is our sacred duty to do all that is profitable and necessary for our eternal salvation, and no one is exempt from this duty.

III. *The word of God is the mirror of the heart.*

1. Self-delusion, *a. a. s.*, is a universal fault. Want of self-knowledge is one of the most deplorable consequences of original sin. Our vision lacks clearness and impartiality when directed towards ourselves. Blinded by self-love, we see the least faults in the life of our neighbor, but utterly fail to discover our own. In the words of our Lord, we see the mote in the eye of others, but not the beam in our own eye. Hence, we stand in need of a friend to warn us, to hold a mirror before our eyes, in which we may see the features of our own soul. This, our friend, is the preacher of the Gospel; and the mirror he holds before us, is the word of God.

2. This is clearly indicated by the Sacred Scriptures, and in the various similitudes made use of by Christ. He calls the word of God *a hammer*, which strikes souls hardened in sin, and destroys all the self-delusion and self-conceit of the human heart. Again, his word is *a sword*, which pierces to the depths of the soul, and with its sharp edge, severs all the fetters and snares of sin. It is *a light*, before which every shadow of darkness vanishes; *a fire*, which seizes upon our iniquities, and irresistibly consumes them; *a leaven* that leavens, so to say, the whole soul. History records the conversion and sanctification of innumerable sinners, effected by the hearing or the reading of the word of God. Instance St. Augustine, St. Ignatius, &c. Daily experience bears testimony to the same effect of the divine word upon sinful souls of our own age.

3. Consequently, the pious Christian regards the word of God as a gracious mirror. When he listens to a sermon, he does not merely sit at the feet of Jesus, and strive to draw therefrom nourishment for his spiritual and supernatural life. He is firmly convinced, moreover, that in every exhortation from the pulpit, God instructs him in his duties, enlightens his understanding, frees him from doubts, reproves him, and urges him to repentance. Every sermon he hears, is equivalent to an examination of his conscience. He considers every word spoken, as addressed directly to himself, and accepts it accordingly, as a rule of his life. He looks into the mirror of the Gospel, and sees clearly therein the defects, the failings, and short-comings of his heart. In the looking-glass of life, he discerns, in short, his true spiritual countenance.

If, with such dispositions, you would come here on Sundays; if each would apply the words he hears to his own life, and follow them conscientiously throughout the whole week,—with what inestimable blessings would he attend the regular hearing of sermons! The word of God would

truly be "a lamp to your feet, and a light to your paths." (Ps. 118 : 105) The common cause of sin is negligence in hearing the word of God. " He that despiseth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him. The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12 : 48.)

IV. *The word of God is the sanctification of our life.* It is (as I have already said) our sweetest consolation. To many Christians, indeed, it is almost their only consolation.

1. By sin, we were driven out of Paradise, and, for our punishment, made captive to the earth, and to all its pains and miseries. Holy Job gives us a complete picture of human life, the truth and fidelity of which all men will admit. " The life of man upon earth," he says, " is a warfare, and his days are like the days of a hireling. As a servant longeth for the shade, as a hireling looketh for the end of his work, so I also have had empty months and have numbered to myself, wearisome nights." (Job 7 : 1-3.) After having fixed your gaze upon the dust and slime of the earth for six long weary days, the word of God, preached to you upon Sundays, lifts up your longing eyes to a better and brighter world. It speaks to you of your Father in heaven, of your first-born Brother who, for love of us, became as a servant, and of the Holy Ghost, who transforms our souls unto life everlasting. It speaks to us of the Saints in heaven, of their joy and blessedness ; and of what they have done and suffered to attain their present glory ; and it exhorts us to follow their example, that we may, one day, exchange this wretched life for a glorious hereafter. Deprive man of the word of God, and the earth is turned into a dreary wilderness—a hopeless place of exile.

2. The word of God is a consolation in our many labors and afflictions. It explains to us their purposes and reward, the final end of human life, and its manifold struggles.

Who will not open his heart gladly to the divine Sower, so that his seed may fall abundantly therein ? Who would not willingly enjoy the full fruit and blessing of this heavenly seed ? I have already said much to you of the signification of the word of God in our regard ; but when we look into the other life, there, above all, will its blessings appear in a clearer light. Tell me, what will be the subject of your thoughts throughout eternity, if you be so happy as to attain eternal salvation ? If thought is the life of the soul, on what will your soul live and feed for ever ? Will you think, perhaps, of the low and miserable things of earth ? One never entertains such thoughts over there ! It would be a contradiction of the Sabbath of Paradise ! Only holy things can satisfy our souls in that

abode of holiness ! But what will our thoughts be ? Nothing else but what the divine Word teaches us. The mysteries of God and of his kingdom, shall be our life, shall be the nourishment of our souls, through all eternity. Do you not see, how void you are of happiness without God's word ? Do you not see, that you cannot enjoy eternal felicity at all, if you do not prepare your soul in time, and rehearse here your eternal enjoyment, by listening to, and profiting by, the holy word of God ? Ah ! my beloved, hasten to gather up in your hearts the seeds of this precious word, and help them to fructify in good and perfect soil. Increase constantly in the knowledge of God ! Thus, you will labor for the eternal happiness of Heaven ! Amen.

BISHOP EHRLER.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

THERE IS NOTHING PERFECT UNDER THE SUN.

“We know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect shall come, that which is in part shall be done away.”

(1. Cor. 9 : 10.)

SHORT SERMON ON THE EPISTLE OF THE DAY

With justice, the Apostle calls all earthly things a patch-work. “We know (only) in part.” Our knowledge is merely fragmentary ; it is imperfect. All temporal affairs and possessions are but patches, pieces of that perfect whole, which is above us, and into the possession of which we shall come only in heaven,—if we be so fortunate as to arrive there. For this reason, the Scripture says, that there is nothing perfect under the sun ; and in the Epistle of this day, we are told that, “when that which is perfect shall come, that which is in part shall be done away.” Now, since the more we know the emptiness of these imperfect things, here below, the more we shall aspire to that which is perfect, let us make, to-day, a short meditation on the great truth that *there is nothing perfect under the sun.* Consider, therefore,

- I. *That whatever we know, is imperfect ; and*
- II *That whatever we possess or have, is imperfect.*

I. *Whatever we know, is imperfect.* All that we know, or have

learned, is only a part of that which we shall yet learn and know. We perceive this,

1. From the fact, that we are daily advancing in knowledge, daily making progress in the school of experience, daily adding to our store of our information ; and should we live a hundred years or more, we should be obliged to confess that our education is not yet finished. We would be forced to say, with the Apostle : " When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child ;" but, although we have now become a great deal wiser, more prudent, more circumspect and experienced, we do not yet possess perfect prudence, thorough experience, entire knowledge. We are still little more than children. All our knowledge is only patch-work, fragmentary We perceive this also,

2. From the fact, that there are others a great deal wiser, more prudent and experienced, than ourselves. We may have learned, or know, a great deal ; but others have learned and know still more. We may be very clever, wise, and smart in our own business or trade ; but there are others who excel us. How often, do we exclaim : " Here is something that I never knew before !" How often, does our ingenuity invent something, only to find that others have either anticipated or perfected our invention. All our labor has been useless ; all our knowledge is but patch-work. We perceive this also,

3. From the fact, that many things are entirely unknown to us, and that we shall never know or learn them. Much of what has happened in the past, we do not know, and much of what happens in the present, is unknown to us ; of the future, we are entirely ignorant. Material things pass before our eyes, but we know very little of their origin, of their significance, their virtues. How, or why, these things exist, we can explain either not at all, or, at best, only in part. Taking all in all, we must confess that all our learning, knowledge, wisdom, and experience, are but fragmentary, imperfect, defective. We have no reason to be proud thereof. This is so clear and undeniable a truth, that, thousands of years ago, a heathen philosopher, (called the wisest man of Greece,) uttered this remarkable sentence : " All that I know is that I know nothing !" St. Paul, who excelled all the other Apostles in learning, says : " We know (only) in part." What shall we say of those haughty spirits who, less wise than the Greek philosopher, less humble than St. Paul, imagine that they know everything ? Such men speak of all things as if they understood them ; despise others as ignorant, and disregard human and divine authority. This is a terrible infatuation ; for, those who are so grossly deceived by their pride and self-esteem, are seldom or never converted.

II. *Whatever we possess is only in part*,—it is an imperfect patch-work.

1. All that we call our property, all that we have acquired, is only a small part of that which may yet be ours. Many a one, like an Astor or a Vanderbilt, has commenced business on a small scale, and, in the course of time, has accumulated fabulous wealth. It is said of many a rich man in our great Eastern or Western cities, that he carried all his worldly goods in a valise when he came there to settle, and now, he is one of the wealthiest men of the place. Behold, his wealth increases every day—everything he touches turns to gold ; so that the words of Scripture are fulfilled : “ To every one that hath, shall be given : and he shall abound.” (Matt. 25 : 29.) Yet, after all, though our millionaire may possess much, and acquire more every day, his wealth is only a part of a great whole ; there are many men who possess a hundred and a thousandfold more than he. The most enormous fortune is only a portion of the wealth of the universe ; for all the riches of the world cannot be in the possession of one, or of a few individuals. Who shall describe the mighty treasures that are, and shall be, for ever concealed in the bowels of the earth ? Even the holding of all imaginable treasures, is but possession in part. Can the millionaire, with all his wealth, prolong his life even for a single hour ? Can he restore to health his shattered constitution ? Can he command the winds, or the sea ? Can he stop the sun in his course ? Behold, all riches, all earthly treasures, are only patch-work, unstable and perishable possessions ! Nothing is more uncertain, nothing more changeable, than the goods of this world ! No man who rises in the morning happy and rich, can say with any degree of certainty that he shall be happy and rich at night-fall. From numberless examples, the truth of the old adage can be proved : “ Praise not the day before evening, nor the mariner till he has reached the port.”

2. Pray, tell me, is not this equally true of the joys and pleasures of the world ? Are they not also an imperfect patch-work ? O, how unreliable are all earthly joys, how quickly are they changed into pains and sufferings ! How often are they not attended by fatal consequences ! Of all the pleasures and joys of this world, nothing remains but a misty remembrance—a remembrance only too often fraught with bitterness and remorse of conscience. Since then, everything on earth is imperfect and fragmentary, let us aspire to that which is perfect, whole, and entire ; and since we, as yet, know and possess only what is imperfect, let us strive for a perfect knowledge and a perfect possession. This perfect knowledge is : *To know and love God* ; and this perfect possession is included therein ; since, he that knows and loves God, also

possesses God. Without this possession, all other things are nothing. Therefore, has the Wise Man said : "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, besides loving God, and serving him alone !" And the Apostle also declares : "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." (1. Cor. 13 : 1.) To know God, to love God, to serve God, to possess God, and thereby, to save our soul, is no patch-work, but perfection in the highest degree, the soundest philosophy, real life, and beatitude for time and eternity ! Amen.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

THE NATURE OF MORTAL SIN.

"Ana he cried out. saying : Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me."
(Luke 18 : 38.)

SHORT SERMON.

The Gospel of this day makes mention of a spiritual and a corporal blindness. For three years, Jesus had explained to his disciples in plain and unmistakable words, his divine mission, and his passion and death ; but their carnal desires of an earthly kingdom blinded their minds, so that "they understood none of these things." Besides this spiritual blindness, the Gospel speaks of a certain blind man who sat by the wayside, begging, and crying out : "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me !" Both the disciples, and the beggar by the wayside, are the representatives and types of men as Jesus found them, when descending down from heaven. Mankind was blind concerning God, and its own origin and destiny. Jesus "was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world." (John 1 : 9.) But alas ! as "he came unto his own, and his own received him not," so, scores of thousands in our own days close their eyes against the true light, because they love darkness rather than light ; nay, they dispute the Christian doctrines, as if they were submitted to the judgment of the human intellect. They scoff especially at what Revelation teaches concerning

mortal sin ; and, as this present season of Lent reminds us so vividly of this mystery of iniquity, I will explain to you to-day,

I. *What mortal sin is in the eyes of God,* and

II. *What it is before the tribunal of human reason.*

I. Let us open the holy Bible, and see *what mortal sin is in the eyes of God.*

1. The Holy Scripture informs us that the Lord created countless hosts of holy Angels, who were all glorious and happy in singing the divine praise. So it was, in the beginning of time. If now, you lift your eyes up to heaven, you behold a great change. In the ranks of the celestial spirits, you see many empty places. Where are those angels who once possessed all this glory ? What has become of them ? In hell, a raging fire burns, which will burn for ever. There, the worm of an evil conscience gnaws continually at the very heart of its victims. You see there, a dark and terrible dungeon ; you hear there, perpetual howling and gnashing of teeth. Evil spirits, burning with every passion, in their infernal fury, appear desirous of rendering their abode more horrible still. Who has built this dreadful place ? Who has filled it with inmates ? SIN has done it. Sin has built hell. Sin has rent heaven. Sin has cast the holy angels, those bright stars of heaven, into this abyss of torments. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning ? . . . Thou saidst in thy heart : I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God ; I will sit in the mountain of the covenant, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the Most High. But yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, into the depth of the pit." (Isaias 14 : 12-15.) "God spared not the angels that sinned, but having cast them down into the place of torments, delivered them into the chains of hell, to be tormented, to be reserved unto judgment." (1. Pet. 2 : 4.) One single sin has changed the nature of the angels, and cast them for ever down into the place of torments. What must sin be in the sight of God, who punishes it so severely, and for ever ! "If thou, O Lord, wilt mark iniquities, who shall stand it ?" (Ps. 129 : 3.)

2. We perceive the same vestiges of divine justice on the surface of the earth. We cannot suppose that the creation, such as it now is, proceeded from the hands of God. All parts of the world resound with wail and lamentation. Wars and struggles never cease. Man, the king of the universe, enters life in tears ; his days are the days of a laborer, and in agony, he returns his soul into the hands of the Creator. "We know that every creature groaneth, and is in labor even till now." (Rom. 8 : 28.)

Holy Scripture tells us that this was not the condition of things from the beginning. "And God saw all the things that he had made, and they were very good," is the closing remark of Holy Writ upon the creation of the world." (Gen. 1 : 31.) Adam and Eve, at first, knew nothing of the sorrows and cares of life. "And the Lord God had planted a paradise of pleasure from the beginning, where in he had placed man whom he had formed." (Gen. 2 : 8.) What has destroyed the original order of nature, and caused the misery of mankind? Holy Scripture answers: "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.) "The creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that made it subject in hope." (Ibid. 8 : 20.) How dreadful must sin be in the sight of God, since one single sin has made the whole human family unhappy! "If thou, O Lord, wilt mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand it?" (Ps. 129 : 3.)

3. If you want to know further what sin is, accompany me to Golgotha. Behold your Saviour hanging on the cross, his hands and feet nailed to the tree of malediction, his heart pierced through. "I am a worm and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people. All they that saw me have laughed me to scorn; they have spoken with the lips, and wagged the head." (Ps. 21 : 7, 8.) "O, all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see, if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow!" (Lam. 1 : 12.) In his anguish, the dying Redeemer cried out with a loud voice, saying: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27 : 46.) Why is it, O great and merciful God, that thy beloved Son suffers so great torments? Hear the answer of the Holy Ghost: "Surely he hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows; and we have thought him, as it were, a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his bruises we were healed." (Isaias 53 : 4, 5.) "He bore our sins in his body upon the tree." (1. Pet. 2 : 24.) Before the voice of the Cross denouncing sin, all the world must keep silent. Let us, my beloved, repent of our sins. "If in the green wood, they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke 23 : 31.)

I. *Our fear of sin will increase by reflecting on what natural reason teaches us with regard to it.*

1. Sin, when considered in the light of reason, is a frivolous *revolt* against the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. To one Will, all creation is subject, from the sand on the sea-shore to the Seraph standing

before the throne of God. It is the will of our Lord. "O Lord, my God, thou art exceedingly great, who stretchest out the heaven like a pavilion; who coverest the higher rooms thereof with water. Who makest the clouds thy chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the winds. Who makest thy angels spirits, and thy ministers, a burning fire. Who hast founded the earth upon its own basis; it shall not be moved for ever and ever. The deep, like a garment, is its clothing; above the mountains, shall the waters stand. At thy rebuke, they shall flee; at the voice of thy thunder, they shall fear." (Ps. 103 : 1.) Wind and storm, thunder and lightning, the waters and the earth, hearken to his voice. "He telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names." (Ps. 146 : 4.) And, as visible nature, so the world of spirits, obey him. "The four and twenty ancients fell down before him that sitteth on the throne," etc. (Apoc. 4 : 10.) Man, alone, makes an exception. He says to the Lord : "'I will not serve' (Jer 2^o: 20), I defy thee! My will and desire must be fulfilled; my passions are above thy commandments!" Do you understand now, the words which the Lord spoke, to give utterance to his astonishment at sin? "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." (Jerem. 2 : 12, 13.)

2. Sin is also an enormous *ingratitude*. How many are the benefits of God, from the moment of your creation up to this day! Who can count the spiritual blessings, the fruit of our Lord's Crucifixion, the holy Sacraments, etc.? These blessings and benefits are so great and numerous, that God, seeing the ingratitude of those whose bodies and souls he had nourished with ineffable care, exclaimed: "Here, 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 hath not understood." (Isaias 1 : 2, 3.)

3. Sin appears as "*a mystery of iniquity*" in the strictest sense, from the following consideration. Jesus Christ has imparted to us a supernatural life. In our soul, he has built a world far more magnificent than that of heaven and earth. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost abide in our soul; and "the charity of God is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us." (Rom. 5 : 5.) By sin, the most admirable work of Jesus Christ is destroyed; by it, man is deprived of his divine adoption and inheritance; the temple of the Holy Ghost is reduced to ruins, and the precious blood of Jesus Christ

and its fruits, trampled under foot. "Not only as man but as a child of God, you sin," says St. Chrysostom. Do you now understand why penitent Saints have led a life full of tears, self-denial, mortification, and works of penance, to atone for the few sins they had committed?

None of us can plead any excuse before the divine judgment-seat. If you are blind, O sinner! it is your own doing. You know what sin is, and where it leads to. Therefore, avoid sin, if you desire to enter into the Celestial Jerusalem. Amen.

BISHOP EHRLER.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

THE NATURE AND USES OF DIVINE GRACE.

"We exhort you, that you receive not the grace of God in vain."
(2. Cor. 6 : 1.)

SHORT SERMON ON THE EPISTLE OF THE DAY.

The most eloquent panegyrist of grace is St. Paul, because he was himself indebted to grace for everything. His marvelous vocation to the Apostolate, his apostolic labors, his success in preaching the Gospel—all this he ascribes to grace. "By the grace of God, I am what I am." Hence, he loves to speak of this grace; hence, he so frequently exhorts the faithful to employ well the graces which they have received; and hence, he says in the Epistle of to-day: "I exhort you, that you receive not the grace of God in vain. For he saith: In an accepted time, have I heard thee, and in the day of salvation, have I helped thee. Behold, now is the acceptable time, behold, now is the day of salvation." That we may follow the admonition of the Apostle, as becomes Christians, we shall briefly consider,

- I. *What we must know.*
- II. *What we must believe, and*
- III. *What we must do, with regard to divine grace.*

I. *What is grace?* It is every supernatural help which God gives us

that we may obtain thereby the salvation of our soul. When we, of ourselves, are unable to do the good which God requires of us, he comes to our assistance ; he strengthens us to keep his commandments, he aids us to resist temptations, and to bear sufferings and adversities. Furthermore, he raises us up when we have fallen, and are incapable of rising again by our own power. He enlightens us in doubts—he infuses into us feelings of fear, of repentance, of confidence, of courage ; and with this grace, he meets and accompanies us on our way to heaven. He perfects the good in us ; for, from him it comes, to will and to perfect. From this follows :

II. *What we must believe concerning grace.* We must believe

1. *That grace is necessary for all men to salvation.* Without grace, we cannot do the least thing, or have even a single good and meritorious thought. "Without me," says Christ, "you can do nothing," (John 25 : 5)—that is, without my grace, you cannot do the least good. And the Apostle says : "All our confidence we have through Christ in God, not as if we could think anything of ourselves as of ourselves, but all our sufficiency is from God." Since we are so wretched and miserable, that of ourselves we cannot perform a single good and meritorious work, or conceive even a good and meritorious thought ;—what would become of us, if divine grace did not come to our help ? God's grace is as necessary for us, as bread is to the hungry, the physician to the sick, the guide to the blind, or the mother to the new-born babe. It gives us our spiritual life ; it is our spiritual nourishment ; and of it, the Psalmist says : "The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing. He hath set me in a place of pasture ; he hath brought me up on the water of refreshment. Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they have comforted me. Thou hast prepared thy table before me. Thy mercy will follow me all the days of my life." (Ps. 22 : 1-6.)

2. From this belief in the necessity of grace, follows the belief that God gives it to every one, according to his necessities. Yes, *God gives to all men sufficient grace for the observance of his commandments and the obtaining of eternal salvation.* As he makes his sun shine upon the just and the unjust, and allows his rain to fall upon the good and the bad ; as he confers benefits upon all men, without exception, for the preservation of their corporal life ; so, he gives to all, without exception, his spiritual graces, his help, his assistance, his illumination, for the preservation, promotion, and growth of their spiritual life. He gives it to

the faithful that they may live according to the precepts of their faith, and diligently keep his commandments ; he gives it to the infidel and heretic, that they may come to the knowledge of the true faith, follow the divine inspirations, or the voice of reason and conscience. He gives it to all who have to suffer temptations, or to bear sufferings ; for God "will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it." (1. Cor. 10 : 13.) He gives his grace to sinners, that they may be converted, and obtain salvation. Hence, no man can say that he has not received sufficient grace to lead a pious Christian life—no one can excuse himself on the plea of ignorance, inability, or weakness ; for, although God may have given to one five talents, to another two, and to another only one ; that one talent is sufficient for the latter to obtain life everlasting. This is chiefly what we have to know and believe concerning grace.

III. *Now, what does God require of us when he gives us his grace ? What must we do ? What must we avoid ?* We must not resist grace, but avail ourselves of it for our salvation, and with its help, do good. This is what the Apostle enjoins on us in the Epistle of this Sunday : "I exhort you, that you receive not the grace of God in vain." And St. Paul was fully justified in giving us this exhortation. He has given us the noblest example of zeal and fidelity to grace. He became through grace, what he was, and what he is to-day—the object of the highest veneration of the Catholic Church. The same is required of us ; we, too, must make our numberless graces living and effectual in our lives. The knowledge, the faculties, which we have received or acquired ; the instructions, admonitions, and corrections, which have been given us ; the interior good inspirations and illuminations which are imparted to us ; the sufferings and trials, which are inflicted upon us ; the life of the Church, of which we partake all our spiritual helps—such as prayer and public exercises of devotion ; the religious societies and confraternities to which we belong, and the holy Sacraments, which God has placed at our disposal ;—behold, all these are graces which we must employ, in order to lead a truly Christian life, and obtain the divine favor.

This, my beloved, is the holy season of Lent. Now, does the Church call upon you in louder and more urgent tones, to employ well and properly the graces of God. Now, at least, should we listen to, and take to heart, the warning words of the Apostle : "Receive not the grace of God in vain. For he saith : In an accepted time, have I heard thee, and in the day of salvation, have I helped thee. Behold, now is the acceptable time ; behold, now is the day of salvation." And that we may not doubt how to employ the time of grace and salvation—that we

may not hesitate as to what good we are to do, the Apostle exhorts us, to give no offense to any one ; to serve God by prayer and the performance of our duties ; to bear tribulations, sufferings, and distresses with patience and resignation to the will of God ; to love chastity, and practise the love of the neighbor ; and finally, to avoid all inordinate love of this world's goods, using them solely for the glory of God and the benefit of men.

Thus, shall the divine grace not prove unfruitful in us, and thus, shall we obtain a double advantage ; for God will reward our fidelity with ever-increasing graces, and the treasure of our merits will be marvelously multiplied. Let us not bury our talents, the gifts of grace, in the field of our souls ; suffer them not to lie dead and inactive in our lives ; but, putting them out to usury, let us acquire the interest of eternity, if we would hope, one day, to hear the Lord address to us the consoling commendation of the favored 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 : 21.) Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

THE CHRISTIAN'S TEMPTATION, WARFARE, AND VICTORY.

" Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil."
(Matt. 4 : 1.)

The divine commands are always attended by the promise of a reward. God seems to weigh each commandment against its reward, in order to urge us thereby to an increased fidelity. When he, for instance, commands us to persevere to the end, he promises at the same time eternal salvation, saying : " He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved." (Matt. 10 : 22.) When he desires us to do violence to ourselves, deny ourselves, or bear sufferings with patience, he immediately declares that the violent bear away the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 11 : 12.) To those, who (in obedience to his counsels), leave all things, and follow him, he promises a hundredfold reward, and life everlasting. When he requires us to fight against temptation and overcome it, he, at once,

holds up before us the promise of reward : " Blessed is the man that endureth temptation : for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life." (James 1 : 12.) What our dear Lord elsewhere promises by word, he shows by deed in the Gospel of this day. Through the temptation which he condescended to endure, he teaches us what we, his followers, must expect, especially from the devil. By his victory, he exhorts us to a courageous fight against temptation ; and by the honors conferred upon him by the Angels after his victory, he shows the reward which awaits all who vanquish the snares and delusions of the enemy.

That we, too, may obtain victory and reward in our spiritual combat, I will show you, to-day, that like our Saviour, we must

I. *Undergo temptations ;*

II. *Fight bravely against temptations ; and*

III. *Value, as it deserves, the great reward of our victory.*

I. No man, no state, no sex, no age, is entirely free from temptations. First and foremost,—the devil prepares temptations for every child of Adam, but especially, for the just and virtuous. " Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." (1. Pet. 5 : 8.) Again : Satan has his aiders and abettors—the world, the wicked, sinners, and seducers, who tempt their fellow-men, or give them scandal by their evil lives. Finally, our own flesh is a powerful ally of the devil, always revolting against the spirit. Our evil concupiscence and sinful lusts continually draw us to evil, and hinder us in the practice of virtue.

1. The greatest virtue, the highest holiness, does not protect one from temptations. Even the infinitely holy Son of God permitted himself to be grievously tempted, not once, but time and again. His faithful followers, the Saints, had also to suffer the greatest and most violent temptations. You will seek in vain for a place where you will not be tempted. In the desert, whither no man comes, the tempter came to Jesus. Even the holiness of the sanctuary does not exclude temptations. Upon the pinnacle of the Temple, the tempter beset the Son of God. No occupation, even the holiest, is proof against temptation. The tempter assailed Jesus when he was armed with rigorous fasting and devout prayer—the very weapons whereby the tempter is ordinarily deprived of his power.

2. All this, however, must not discourage us. Temptations are but the work of the devil and his confederates, the world and the flesh. They are not our own work, provided we do not consent to them. Nay, they

are often the evidence of our virtue ; they are useful and salutary to us, if we constantly combat them ; they are a sign, that we are still in the grace of God—otherwise, the devil would not take so much pains to draw us into sin. They are useful and salutary, because by our victory over them, we acquire great merits for heaven. “ Difficult is the combat, but fruitful ; for he that has overcome the temptation, will also have the crown.” (St. Bernard.) “ Temptation is permitted for the trial of faith, for the practice of virtue, for the increase of merits.” (St. Chrysostom.) “ He who does not consent to the temptation, will receive a more honorable crown than he that has not been tempted at all.” (St. Aug.) Hence, as St. James says, we should even rejoice when we are tempted : “ My brethren, count it all joy, when you shall fall into divers temptations.” (St. James 1 : 2.) Certainly, it is no small advantage, if, by overcoming our temptations, we increase our merits, and acquire a beautiful crown in heaven. God delights in giving us that beautiful, heavenly crown ; but his justice only permits the reward to those that fight the good fight, and persevere unto the end. Christ meant this, when he said to his disciples : “ You are they who have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint to you, as my Father hath appointed to me, a kingdom : that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and may sit upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Luke 22 : 28-30.)

II. Victory over temptations can only be obtained by *flight*, or by *persevering combat*.

1. Certain temptations can be vanquished only by *flight*. Such are all exterior allurements against holy purity. Let us fly from all those associations and resorts which abound in impure stories, jests, and songs. By listening to them, we will fall into temptation, and into the sin of impurity. If we do not turn our eyes from obscene pictures and images, from indecent and lewd theatricals—if we do not steadfastly avoid them, we shall fall into the sin of impurity. If we do not fly from sensual amusements, plays, and dances, in which innocence is in danger ; if we do not avoid the company of certain persons of the opposite sex,—in a word, the occasions of this sin, we shall surely fall into the sin of impurity, in thoughts, desires, and even in deeds. We may truly say : The occasion of this sin, is already the sin itself. Impure temptations and proximate occasions of lust, are like a contagious disease ; with every breath, every touch, of the patient, we may be infected. They resemble a fire which devours whatever comes near it ; they resemble a muddy torrent which draws everything in its course down into the abyss. Hence, St. Paul says : “ Fly fornication” (impurity of every kind). He

does not say : *Resist !* but "*Fly !*"—because he knew that resistance alone would not suffice against impure suggestions ; flight is absolutely necessary. St. Augustine also says : "We must resist all vices, with the assistance of God, but avoid impurity by flight."

In the Sacred Scriptures, we have many lamentable and warning examples of those who, refusing to avoid the occasions, fell deeply into the sin of impurity. Lot committed the most abominable sin of incest, because he remained in a cavern with his daughters. Herod lived in the same sin, because he would not dismiss the wife of his brother. The sons of the high-priest Heli grievously sinned against holy purity, because they refused to give up the society of dangerous women. And who knows, but that the chaste Joseph would have fallen, if he had not fled from the seductions of Putiphar's wife. Do not trust to your constancy and virtue, in the occasion of this sin. To fly the occasion, is to avoid the sin. Hence, take deeply to heart the admonition of St. Paul : Fly impurity.

2. There are other sorts of temptations which we can and must overcome by *resistance* and *combat*. Every Christian is a soldier, a warrior. The three enemies against whom he fights, are the devil, the wicked and seductive world, and his own flesh. Against this triple alliance, he has sworn eternal enmity in Baptism ; to combat against them, he has been anointed and strengthened in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. It would be perjury and treason against God, to refuse to fight these enemies. "Every temptation must find us ready for battle." (St. Aug.)

3. Would you know how to fight? Behold the example of our divine Saviour! "Begone, Satan," he said to the tempter in the desert, and drove him boldly away. Let us do the same. If we be tempted to impurity in thoughts or desires, we must say with Christ : "Begone, Satan!"—for it is written : "The impure shall not possess the kingdom of God." (1. Cor. 6 : 10.) If we be tempted to avarice or covetousness, to cheating or injustice, let us again say : "Begone, Satan!"—for it is written that : "Thieves shall not possess the kingdom of God." (1. Cor. 10 : 6.) "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods." (Exod. 20 : 17.) "Thou shalt not steal." (Ex. 10 : 15.) If we be tempted to gluttony and intemperance—if drink entices our passions to sin, let us cry out : "Depart from me, tempter!"—for it is written that : "Drunkards shall not possess the kingdom of God." (1. Cor. 6 : 10.) If we be tempted to unjust judgment of our neighbor, to calumny, slander, or detraction, again we must exclaim : "Begone, Satan!"—for it is written : "Judge not, that you may not be judged." (Matt. 7 : 1.) If we be tempted

to revenge against our offenders, to persecution of our enemies, to the return of evil for evil, we must say with Christ : " Begone from me !"—for it is written : " Revenge not yourselves, but give place to wrath (to the justice of God) : mine is revenge, I will repay, saith the Lord." (Rom. 12 : 19.)

But, to encourage ourselves to this ceaseless warfare, to persevere until the battle is won, let us often dwell upon *the reward* which awaits the victor.

III. " To him that overcometh," says St. John in the Apocalypse, " I will grant to sit with me in my throne : as I also have overcome, and have sat with my Father in his throne." (Apoc. 3 : 21.) And again : " Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life." (Apoc. 2 : 10.) Behold, this is the reward for our victory over temptation,—the crown of life everlasting, and a throne of glory in heaven. A threefold reward awaits the threefold victory over the devil, the world, and the flesh. He who overcomes the temptations of the devil, shall occupy one of the glorious seats in heaven from which Lucifer and his associates were ejected. He who triumphs over the allurements of the world, shall appear on the Last Day with the Judge of the world in the clouds of heaven ; he shall sit on one of the twelve seats of the judges, and, with Christ, judge and condemn the world. He who overcomes the temptations of the flesh, shall arise on the Day of Judgment in a body adorned with glory and immortality, in a tabernacle of flesh made conformable to the beautiful Humanity of the God-Man. We shall shine as the sun (Matt. 13 : 43) ; we shall eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. (Apoc. 2 : 7.) We shall hold the palm of victory in our hands, on our throne in heaven ; and the more violent our temptations, the hotter our battles here below—the more glorious will be our happiness in the blissful Hereafter. The Angels shall minister unto us, as they ministered unto Christ when he had overcome the temptations mentioned in to-day's Gospel.

How much this reward should encourage us ! Contemplating it with the eyes of faith, we should never despond, nor grow weary in our many and violent temptations, but courageously fight on to the end. Short, is our period of struggle and probation. Soon, shall the time of temptation and strife pass by ; and then, we shall enjoy our unfading crowns, our eternal reward. Yes, we will watch, pray, fight, fly, and overcome ; we will not give up the battle, nor grow fatigued in the warfare, till we have conquered all our enemies. Our dear God will not suffer us to be tempted above our strength ; he will make issue with our temptations, and finally, give us the imperishable crown of heaven. Amen.

O. S. B.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

OUR SANCTIFICATION IS GOD'S WILL AND GOOD PLEASURE.

"This is the will of God, your sanctification." (1. Thess. 4 : 3.)

We have so much to do ; we are always so busy and full of care. But what does it all amount to ? All that the most of us do, is for our temporal advancement. Our labors, our anxieties, are all for our bodies, our houses, our business. Have you not, then, a soul, as well as a body ? Are you merely a business-man—not a Christian ? What is the duty of a Christian ? What, his solicitude, his occupation ? Listen to the answer which the Apostle gives to these questions in the Epistle of this Sunday. So walk, that you may please God, and become more and more perfect in his sight : for "this is the will of God, your sanctification." The sanctification of our life is, therefore :

I. *The will of God*, and

II. *The means of gaining for us, God's favor.*

I. We are in this world solely *to lead a holy life*. For this, God has created us ; for this, God has expressly willed our being. There are, indeed, many vocations, many stations, in human life ; and each vocation, each state, has different duties and obligations ; but, taken all together, they have only one kind of holiness. There is but one road to sanctity—*a Christian life*. In this road, walk all who fulfil as Christians, the duties of their vocation or state ; and who, in everything they do, direct their eyes to God, and to their sublime destiny. Whether they be parents and superiors, or children and servants,—rich or poor, high or low, young or old ; whether they be millionaires living on their princely income, or needy laborers toiling hard for their daily bread,—they must always have *this* before their eyes,—that they are *Christians*, and as such, are bound to lead a holy life. Each, in his particular state of life, must faithfully and conscientiously fulfil the precepts of the Christian faith, as they are prescribed to every human state, and to every human vocation. He must, as the Apostle says, abstain from all uncleanness, all injustice, all passion of lust and concupiscence ; and he must know how to possess his own vessel, that is, his soul, in sanctification and honor. Not alone to

the Thessalonians, but to all Christians, does the Apostle say : “ We pray and beseech you, in the Lord Jesus Christ, that as you have received from us, how you ought to walk, and to please God, so also you would walk, that you may abound more. For you know what commandments I have given to you by the Lord Jesus ;” (that is, the precepts, regulations, and directions which I have given to the different states : to the judges, to the laborers, to parents, children, servants, widows, to the rich and poor, to the young and the old ;)—for “*this*,” he adds, “is the will of God, your sanctification.” We should never lose sight of this, beloved. We should always consider that a holy life, (the conduct becoming a Christian,) is our chief vocation, our main task, which includes every other vocation ; that we live, in order to become holy ; that we labor, in order to become holy ; that, whether as superiors or inferiors, rich or poor, high or low, young or old, God requires of us only this one thing,—that, by the fulfilment of his divine will, we aspire to perfection and holiness. In short, our divine Saviour says to each one of us : “ Be you perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matt. 5 : 48.)

II. *Our sanctification wins for us the divine favor.* Walk in such a manner as you have been taught by us, says the Apostle, in order to please God. This means, that the pure intention of pleasing God in all our actions, actually wins for us the good pleasure of God. He himself has promised this ; for it is written : “ The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him ; and in them that hope in his mercy.” (Ps. 146 : 11.) God finds pleasure in faith and meekness (Ecclus. 1 : 34) ; to depart from injustice, is to offer sacrifice ; to depart from iniquity, is that which pleases the Lord. “ The oblation of the just is an odor of sweetness in the sight of the Most High. He that adareth God with joy, shall be accepted, and his prayer shall approach even to the clouds.” (Ecclus. 35.) According to the words of St. Paul in this day’s Epistle, God “ is the avenger” of all those who do not fulfil the will of God, and who neglect the sanctification of their life ; and the Wise Man declares that “ The Most High approveth not the gifts of the wicked, and hath no respect to the oblations of the unjust.” (Ecclus. 34 : 23.) Hence, the Lord is the Rewarder of the just, and his eyes look with pleasure upon them that fear him. Abraham gained the good-will and pleasure of God, because he was promptly obedient to the divine commands. Joseph was a favorite with God, because of his fidelity and innocence. David was a man according to the heart of God, so long as he walked before God ; and God was greatly pleased with the elect of the Old Law, who preserved the faith, and hoped in his promise. Over his only-begotten Son, who became incarnate to fulfil the will of his heavenly Father,

he brooded with an infinite complacency and delight, crying out (as we read in the Gospel of this day) : " This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ! "

And O ! what can be greater or more glorious than the approval of God ? Without comparison, it is worth more than all the good-will and approbation of men, all the riches and treasures of the world—than all ease and comfort, than health and long life. How many Saints have labored for, and obtained, this heavenly boon ; and for it, have sacrificed all earthly treasures ! In order to please God, the martyrs have shed their blood, the holy virgins have renounced the joys of the world. In order to please God, we should faithfully discharge the duties of our state, bear the adversities and hardships of life, abstain from all uncleanness, and injustice, work out the sanctification of our souls, and endeavor to advance more and more in perfection. How much better off are they who aspire to holiness and perfection, and possess the friendship of God, than those who strive for the miserable things of this world, and endeavor to gain the friendship of men ! The friendship of God will remain for ever, and will afford us eternal felicity ; but, what remains to those who labor for the world ? For whom have they toiled ? Where are their friends, when they once depart this life ? What shall it profit them, if they have acquired riches, and left them behind to mocking heirs ? Once dead and gone, they are forgotten ; and they shall be miserable for all eternity, if with empty hands, poor in good works, they have gone into the presence of their Judge. " What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? " " All is vanity of vanities, besides loving God and serving him alone. "

Let us then consider daily that we are called to a holy life ; and daily fulfil the duties imposed on us by our respective stations, that we may gain and preserve the precious friendship of God. And let us never forget the words of the Apostle : Walk in such a manner as to please God, and become more and more perfect, for this is the will of God, your sanctification. Amen.

ZIEGLER.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

HEAVENLY DELIGHTS.

“*Lord, it is good for us to be here.*” (Matt. 17 : 4.)

SHORT SERMON ON THE GOSPEL.

“Lord, it is good for us to be here !” Thus, St. Peter exclaimed, when, transported with joy, he beheld the transfiguration of Jesus. “‘Lord, it is good for us to be here’ ; we will remain here ; we will, henceforth, enjoy this manifestation of thy glory. We will make our abode on Tabor, and never again depart from it ! That thou, O Lord, mayest consent to my wishes, I, with James and John, will build here three tabernacles : one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias !” Truly, this was the natural desire of the Prince of the Apostles ! Who would not have echoed it, if permitted, like Peter, to gaze upon the Son of God in his resplendent transfiguration, and to drink delight and felicity from his glory ?

But that transfiguration, beautiful and glorious as it was, was but a shadow of our Lord’s real transfiguration in heaven. If we could only behold him there, we would rapturously exclaim : “It is good to be with Jesus in heaven ; it is good to witness the manifestation of his true glory. Here, will we build a tabernacle for ourselves !” Or, in other words : We will labor with all fervor and solicitude, that we may dwell for ever with our glorified Lord in heaven ! Blessed are those who make such a resolution—who so live, that they may, one day, share with Jesus in Paradise,

- I. *The greatest joy and delight, and*
- II. *An eternal joy and delight.*

I. What shall I say of the bliss which the Saints and Angels enjoy in heaven ? Ask me not, my beloved, to portray or describe to you, that marvelous delight. The great Apostle of the Gentiles, after having once been rapt even to the third heaven, and beheld its matchless glory, could give no adequate description of what he witnessed. He could only stammer, like a child : “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.) How, then, could I dare to paint even in the faintest colors, a faithful picture of Paradise? I can only repeat what the mercy of God itself has revealed to us of the joy of the blessed in heaven, in order to awaken in your souls an ardent desire for those wonderful delights.

1. *The glory of the blessed in heaven is exceedingly great.* How great was the glory of Jesus in his transfiguration! The Gospel says: "His face did shine as the sun, and his garments were white as snow." (Matt. 17 : 2.) Behold, such also is the glory of the blessed in heaven; for of it, the Eternal Truth itself says: "Then, shall the just shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father." (Matt. 13 : 43.) And St. John says: "The Lord God shall enlighten them." (Apoc. 22 : 5.) Their glory will be a reflection, an image, of the glory of God; and, therefore, as St. Paul says, it will be: "Above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." (2. Cor. 4 : 17.) "Who," exclaims St. Augustine, "can express this glory? What God has prepared for them that love him, faith cannot conceive, hope cannot surmise, and love cannot comprehend; it surpasses, by far, our wishes and desires. We can obtain it, but we cannot estimate it."

2. Exceeding great, is *the reward* of the blessed in heaven. "Rejoice and be exceeding glad," says our Saviour to his faithful followers, "because your reward is very great in heaven." And wherein, does this great reward of God consist? In the possession and enjoyment of God himself. "I," says God, "am thy reward exceeding great" (Gen. 15 : 1.) I, with my ineffable beauty,—I, with my inexpressible glory and happiness,—will be your reward and your delight. Hence, the reward of the blessed in heaven will be so great, that it cannot be measured; so rich, that it cannot be expressed; so precious, that it cannot be estimated.

3. Exceeding great, is *the happiness* of the blessed in heaven. They will be happy in everlasting joy, happy without any pain or suffering. "Joy everlasting shall be on their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness; sorrow and mourning shall flee away." (Is. 51 : 11.) "They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house: and thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure." (Ps. 35 : 9.) Yea, so great will be the happiness of the elect, that, one day in heaven will surpass a thousand happy days on earth. St. Augustine says: "So great is the happiness of heaven, that if one were allowed to enjoy it for only one day, he would give countless years of this life of pleasure and

enjoyment, of all temporal joys, for it." With justice, therefore, (considering this happiness, over which the Saints gloat,) St. Bernard exclaims: "O joy above joy! Joy! thou excellest all joy, and outside of thee, there is no joy!"

With justice, too, does St. Augustine say: "Every one there, will possess as many joys as he has companions and brothers in felicity." O city of God, O heavenly paradise, how beautiful art thou—how unspeakably happy are thy inhabitants! O Christian, whoever you are, turn your eyes thither. Do you desire beauty? There, you shall shine as the sun. Do you desire honors and riches? "Glory and wealth are in the house of the Lord." (Ps. 111: 3.) Do you wish for liberty and strength? There, you will resemble the Angels in velocity and power. Do you long for youth? There, everlasting youth blooms like a fadeless flower. Do you thirst for refreshment? There, you will enjoy the invisible food of Angels, and quench your thirst with the chalice of unalloyed joy. Do you wish for sweet singing, enchanting music? There, the Angels and the choirs of the blessed sing the joyful *Halleluja!* Do you yearn for society and congenial friendships? *There* is the communion of Saints. Whatsoever you may ask for, and more than you know how to ask for, you shall there find.

After all this, do you wonder that the elect continually exclaim in heaven: "It is good for us to be here"? Must we not constantly endeavor to build for ourselves a mansion in that beautiful, wonderful Land? In other words, shall we not labor to the utmost of our power and ability, to secure for ourselves, after death, a place in heaven, where we may partake of the glory, the reward, and the felicity of the blessed? Not only are this glory, reward, and felicity exceeding great; they are also *eternal*.

II. All the joys and pleasures of the world—all the earthly amusements and enjoyments of men, are but a passing illusion—enjoyed to-day, but gone to-morrow. This world's glory and happiness can last but a few years, and soon ends in misery and mourning! Can that be called joy—can that be styled happiness—whose beginning reminds us already of its end, of its nothingness? Falsehood, delusion, deception,—such is earthly joy. All worldly gratifications cry out to us: "After a few days—perhaps, a few hours—all our sweetness will be past. Nothing will remain except a weary mind, a sad heart, reproaches and remorse of conscience!" A true joy, a true happiness, must be eternal. Heaven, alone, can, and does, offer it to us.

Listen to the words of the Eternal Truth himself: "The just shall go into life everlasting." (Matt 25: 46.) Did not the angel Gabriel say of him to Mary: "Of his kingdom, there shall be no end" (Luke:

1 : 33.) Did not our blessed Lord console his Apostles with the words : " So also you now, indeed, have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you " ? (John 16 : 12.)

What consolation is ours, whilst, here below, we fight, wrestle, and labor for heaven ! What consolation, if, for heaven's sake, we patiently endure sufferings, tribulations, and pains. Our labor lasts but a short time : our rest in heaven will be everlasting : short the suffering, eternal the reward ; brief the pain, eternal the happiness. Time passes away, and the sufferings of this life pass with it ; but the glory of heaven, the reward for labor in the vineyard of the Lord, shall not pass away. This reward knows no change, knows no end ; it will last for ever. When one year of glory is past and gone, another follows—hundreds, thousands, millions of years follow ; a whole eternity follows, without ceasing and without end. Must we not then exclaim : " It is good to be in heaven, in everlasting felicity " ? Must we not exert all our energies, and make every effort, in order to build a tabernacle for ourselves in that everlasting abode of bliss ? Truly, as often as we think of the happiness of heaven, we must exclaim with St. Augustine : " O source of life ! when shall I enter into the joy of my Lord, from which no one is removed ? O true, sweet, amiable life ! O blessed life, without end ! "

When St. Symphorianus was conducted to the place of martyrdom, his mother followed him on the way ; and, in order to encourage him to constancy, continually repeated these words : " My child, my child, think of the eternal life ! " Christians, should it become hard for you to keep the commandments of God, to practise virtue, to work for heaven,—think of the eternal life ! Should you find it difficult to bear the sufferings and tribulations of this life, to submit willingly to the dispensations of divine Providence,—O, think of the joys of heaven ! And you, sinner, if it seems hard for you to avoid sin, to return to God through penance, and to climb unflinchingly the hard, steep paths of virtue,—O, think of the life to come ! My dearly beloved, in every thought, word, and action, let us all look to the reward which is prepared for us in heaven. Let us consider, that a little exertion will purchase for us a great reward ; a momentary effort, an eternal repose. Yes, if we accept with joy this short, this trifling labor which Virtue exacts of us, we shall receive, at last, a good, a great, an eternal reward in heaven. Amen.

ZIEGLER.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

THE FALL OF THE ANGELS, A LESSON FOR US.

“*And he was casting out a devil.*” (Luke 11 : 14.)

SHORT SERMON ON THE GOSPEL.

Here, as in many other places, the Sacred Scripture speaks of the existence of the devil, of evil spirits, and designates them as beings of a higher spiritual order, but of a perverse will, rejected by God for ever. Alas ! these spirits first came forth as good Angels from the hand of God. How did they fall so deeply ? We really know but little of their fall ; but even that little is very instructive for us, being well calculated to fill our hearts with the fear of God, necessary for salvation. Let us then briefly call to mind what holy Faith teaches with regard to the fall of the Angels, and consider

- I. *Their sin*, and
- II. *Their punishment.*

I. Concerning the sin of the Angels, we know that they committed it

1. *In heaven*,
2. *Only in thought*, and
3. *Only once.*

1. The Angels sinned *in heaven*, whilst they were standing around the throne of the Most High, whilst they were enjoying a delight and felicity incomprehensible to us. Who can think himself secure on earth, when he remembers that the Angels fell in heaven ? They were pure Spirits, and yet, they sinned. Shall *we* not tear with a great fear, who every where carry about us the concupiscence and weakness of the flesh ? The Angels had no natural propensity to evil ; yet, after all, they sinned. What is to become of us, who are conceived in iniquity, and born in sin,—who constantly incline to evil through the motions of an innate and most violent concupiscence. The Angels said and heard in heaven nothing but what was good and holy, and still they sinned.

What have we not to fear, who are surrounded by innumerable bad examples,—who can scarcely listen to a discourse, or lift our eyes, without being tempted to sin? Let us, therefore, live in fear, and trembling, and watchfulness, yet never give way to cowardice and pusillanimity; for, he who is strong in weakness, will conquer by the help of the divine grace.

2. What terrible deed did the Angels do in heaven? What evil words did they speak? They neither did nor said anything offensive to God. How, then, did they sin? They were guilty of a *bad thought*. Did they then cherish a vain complacency in their beauty, a certain confidence in their own power, or a thought of overweening pride or envy? Alas! we know not. This much is certain, however, that they sinned only in thought and will. And yet, it was a mortal sin!—O! my beloved brethren, if we did nothing worse than what the Angels did, I believe, we would regard ourselves as Saints. Had we really sinned in no other way, save in thought—O, how well-satisfied we would be with ourselves, what great store we would set by our godliness! Though we do not declare that all thoughts are sinless, we rarely consider a sin of thought as anything more than an imperfection, or, at most, a venial sin. Hence, many people utterly fail to carefully examine their consciences upon thoughts of pride, avarice, envy, and hatred, or confess them with contrition and a purpose of amendment. Woe to us, if we make light of what was fraught with such dreadful consequences to the Angels! A single thought may be a grievous, a very grievous sin.

3. How often did the Angels commit the sin of thought? *Only once*. Nevertheless, it was punished with the greatest severity. How often do you hear people say: "One time is no time!" But is this judgment the judgment of God? The fate of the fallen angels loudly proclaims to all rational creatures that even one sin is infinitely detestable in the eyes of God. Perhaps, you will say: God judges men differently from the Angels? Has he, then, two weights and measures?—a heavy one for thoughts of the Angels, and a light one for the thoughts of men? No: regardless of the person, he judges all his creatures with equal wisdom, equal love, and equal justice.

II. Concerning *the punishment* of the fallen Angels, it was

1. *Without indulgence,*
2. *Without delay, and*
3. *Without end.*

1. The punishment was inflicted *without mercy*. At the behest of God, St. Michael opposed the proud hosts of Lucifer with the cry: "Who

is like God?"—and, straightway, cast them from their high places into the deepest depths of hell; or, as we read in the book of Job, "into a land of misery and darkness, where everlasting horror dwelleth." (Job 10 : 22.) When such sublime spirits sinned, and were not spared, how can we miserable sinners, worms of the earth, count on mercy and forbearance? Our case is far worse than theirs. The Angels owed God only their creation; but we, Christians, owe him also our Redemption. God had called the heavenly spirits into existence by a single word; but for us, he suffered inexpressible torments. He shed the last drop of his precious Blood, in order to ransom us from the power of the devil. *Our* sins, my brethren, involve a double malice, a double ingratitude. In order to find mercy, at least, hereafter, let us now be thankful and obedient to God, and manifest a greater zeal, the longer and the more audaciously we have lived in open rebellion against his holy commandments.

2. The punishment of the Angels was inflicted *without delay*. One moment, their sin was committed, and the next, their howls of rage and despair resounded through their new and horrible abode. To sin in heaven, and to burn in hell, was, so to say, one and the same thing!—O, how God must have hated sin, when he acted thus towards the Angels! Let us be convinced that God cherishes an equally great hatred against *our* sins, and will inflict on us no less punishment, unless we make him our friend by a timely repentance and conversion.

3. The punishment of the Angels will be *without end*. Though they have now been imprisoned for countless ages "in that land that is dark and covered with the mist of death" (Job 10 : 21), they have not approached one point towards their release. Though they have spent all those centuries in pain, and misery, and despair, their agonies are not, and never shall be, mitigated in the least. But one might ask: Why an endless punishment for one sin—and that, only a sin of thought? Inscrutable are the judgments of God—unsearchable, the depths of his justice! In the next life, we shall obtain a satisfactory answer to this question. But the common opinion is: The one sin of the Angels so hardened them in guilt, that they will never again make friendship with God. That they are entirely given over to their wickedness and pride, is plain and palpable beyond doubt; for, wherever one of them manifests himself, it is done in hatred of God, and in hatred of man as the image of God. Their only pleasure is to do evil, and to frustrate as much as possible, the purposes of God. Dear Christians, the devil very well knows that his obduracy was caused by a single sin; and from the time of his fall, dates the stratagem which he so often and so successfully employs against men. He suggests to us, that to sin once, is of no consequence,

—that, afterwards, we can confess it, and do penance for it. He is very well satisfied, if he can succeed in plunging us into one mortal sin, because he knows that with many, their eternal damnation is decided thereby. No contrition follows the first fall,—no amendment, no penance, no confession, but rather a perseverance in sin, and final impenitence.

Let us learn from this meditation, how important it is, always and every where, to live in the fear of God, and to cherish in our hearts a great horror for every sin,—yea, even a single sin of thought. All ye who have hitherto preserved your innocence, resolve, to-day, to manfully resist every temptation for the future ; to reject with determination the first suggestions of the evil spirit, and always walk in purity before God. As for the rest of us poor sinners, who cannot look back upon a blameless past, let us now promise God henceforth to enter upon the way of penance and virtue, and never to give up our warfare against our perverse inclinations. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

A BAD CONFESSION, AND HOW IT CAN BE REMEDIED.

“When he had cast out the devil, the dumb spoke.” (Luke 11 : 24.)

Satan is the great enemy of the human race. Having irretrievably lost all right to heaven, he bitterly envies man his salvation. He seduced Adam and Eve in the garden of Paradise ; he had the audacity even to tempt our Lord three different times in the desert ; and he still continues—for such is his nature—to tempt man, and, by wicked suggestions, to lead him to sin and utter ruin. Hence, St. Peter warns us, saying : “ Be sober and watch, for the devil goeth about, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (1. Pet. 5 : 8.)

True, our Lord, by his death on the cross, has conquered the prince of darkness, so that he no longer possesses such great power over man. St. Augustine says : “ In the new testament, in this time of grace and salvation, the devil is like a bull-dog that is chained ; he may bark, but can bite only him who goes too near him ; he can seduce only him who does not resist his temptations.”

Still, Satan can lay snares for the soul, and even (if God permits it) injure the body. This was the case with the mute in to-day’s Gospel, who was possessed with a dumb devil, and who could not speak until Jesus cast out from him the evil spirit. In these, our days, we do not often find people whom the devil makes corporally dumb ; but, there are many Christians whom his malice makes spiritually dumb. These are they who are afraid, or ashamed, to confess their sins to the minister of Christ ; or who, if they do, make a fruitless and profitless confession.

The time is approaching when you must go to your Easter duty. I have no doubt you will all go, but my only fear is, lest some will make a bad confession ; hence, I wish to warn you, to-day, against a sacrilegious, or an invalid, confession. Give me your attention, then, while I answer the following questions :

- I. *When is a confession bad ?*
- II. *What injury does a bad confession do ? and*
- III. *How can a bad confession be remedied ?*

I. The first question is easily answered. Call to mind what your

Catechism says of the Sacrament of Penance. A duly-ordained and authorized priest has power in the name of God to forgive sins, if the sinner is truly sorry for his sins, confesses them candidly and sincerely, and has the firm purpose not to commit them any more. Three things, then, are required for a good confession :

1. *Contrition of the heart,*
2. *Confession of the mouth,* and
3. *A firm purpose of amendment.*

If one of these is wanting, the confession is fruitless and profitless,—nay, sacrilegious, which is a hundred times worse than no confession at all.

1. First of all, he who goes to confession must have *a true, heartfelt sorrow for his sins.* God speaks thus through the prophet Ezechiel : “Be converted, and do penance for your iniquities, and iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, by which you have transgressed, and make to yourselves a new heart, and a new spirit.” (Ezech. 18 : 30, 31.) And through the prophet Joel : “Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting, in weeping, and in mourning : rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord, your God.” (Joel 2 : 12, 13.)

It must be obvious, then, to all, that without true contrition, the sinner cannot hope to obtain the forgiveness of his sins. By sin, he has turned his heart from the Creator to creatures ; now, in order to recover the friendship of God, he must necessarily turn his heart from the creature to the Creator—hate and detest his guilt, and, at least, begin to love God. All this is not possible, without a sincere, supernatural sorrow.

Ask yourselves this question : Before your confession, were you really sorry for your sins ? Did you heartily detest them, and grieve because, by them, you had offended so good a God ? If so, then you may believe that your confession was valid, and that you were entitled to the benefits of the divine mercy. But if, at your confession, you were still attached to your sins ; if you confessed only for custom's sake or through human respect, without fear and anxiety, without sorrow for having offended God, or having lost heaven and deserved hell,—you may believe for certain that your confession was not good, because true contrition was wanting. Contrition is the very soul of repentance. As the body without the soul is dead, so, confession without true contrition is dead,—yea, profitless, sacrilegious !

2. But confession is also sacrilegious *if a mortal sin is knowingly and*

wilfully concealed in confession. The priest in the confessional is both judge and physician. As a judge cannot pronounce sentence if there be no accusation ; as a physician cannot cure a disease that is not disclosed ; so, the confessor cannot forgive a sin that is knowingly concealed from him. Moreover, if you were to confess nine mortal sins, and conceal the tenth, you are still in a state of disgrace with God ; and, being in that state, you can not obtain forgiveness for the mortal sins you have confessed. Therefore, confess all your sins, or none at all ; for, according to the Wise Man : “ He that hideth his sins, shall not prosper, but he that shall confess and forsake them, shall obtain mercy.” (Prov. 12 : 13.)

4. Again, confession is sacrilegious, *if the resolution to amend one's life be wanting.* When you go to confession, you must recall what the Lord said through his prophet Ezechiel : “ If the wicked do penance for all the sins which he hath committed, and keep my commandments, and do judgment and justice, living, he shall live and not die.” (Ezech. 18 : 21.) The best proof of a good confession is the amendment of our lives. We must, as St. Paul says : “ Put off the old man, and put on the new.” (Col. 3 : 9.) We must put into force the words of the Baptist : Bring forth worthy fruits of penance ; for the tree that doth not bring forth good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire. (Luke 3 : 8, 9.)

Here, is a very common mistake. You accuse yourself, for instance, of great enmity, but refuse to be reconciled to your enemy. You accuse yourself of theft, injustice, of possessing ill-gotten goods,—but you refuse to make restitution. You confess the sins to which a dangerous occasion or company has led you, but you are unwilling to break off the occasion, to avoid the bad company. You confess the habit of sin, but you labor not to destroy that habit. What good will it do you to confess your sins, if you are not willing to quit them ? You come out of the confessional still burdened with your sins ; and, worse than all, you add the guilt of sacrilege to the black catalogue of your crimes. Such confessions are fruitless and sacrilegious, just as much as those who lack true contrition and a sincere accusation.

II. What injury does a bad confession do ? *It deprives us of the forgiveness of our sins, and adds a new sin to the old.* “ Be not without fear about sin forgiven.” (Ecclus. 5 : 5.) Even pious Christians who with the utmost diligence perform this duty, are frequently not without fear, lest there might be deficiency on their part. How much more should *they* fear, who confess without real contrition, who conceal mortal sins in confession, or, who have no earnest will to amend their lives ! Their confession is worse than no confession at all. **A**

bad confession blots out no sin. It takes two to make a bargain ; in like manner, the confessor and the penitent must each do their own part in the holy Sacrament of Penance. Every lawfully-ordained and duly-authorized priest has power in the name of God to forgive sins, if (that is the condition) the sinner is sorry for his sins, confesses them sincerely, and is resolved to amend his life. Tell me, would you not be filled with fear and consternation, if you learned that the man to whom you had confessed your sins for years, was no priest, but a cheat and an impostor? In like manner, you have reason to be alarmed if you discover that the confessions which you made to a duly-authorized priest are invalid through your own fault ; and that the sins from which the priest absolved you, are, after all, not forgiven, either because you had no sorrow, because you concealed a mortal sin in confession, or, because you had no purpose of amendment.

1. A bad confession not only does not remit our sins, but adds to them a new mortal sin—that of sacrilege. Thereby, we profane and abuse a most sacred thing,—a Sacrament which God has instituted for our sanctification. Penance is something most holy, containing holiness in itself, and conferring it on others. It is a precious pearl of the Christian religion, and our Lord commanded his Apostles and all priests : “ Not to give that which is holy to dogs, nor to cast pearls before swine ;” that is, not to give the sacred mysteries to such as live as dogs and swine.

As that confessor commits a mortal sin who absolves a sinner whom he judges unworthy of absolution ; so, that penitent commits a mortal sin, who permits the priest to give him absolution, when he knows that he has made a false confession. And will he dare, after such a confession, to approach the holy Communion ? Will he continue for months,—yea, perhaps, for many years,—to confess invalidly, to receive Communion unworthily, and thus, put off his conversion to his death-bed ? Alas ! is it any wonder if he then despairs of the grace of God ? In punishment for so many and great sins, and for the abuse of manifold graces, he is too often abandoned by God ; and, dying without either priest or Sacrament, perishes eternally. Consider and weigh all these things in your hearts, my brethren, and you will surely see, that the injury caused by a bad confession is incalculable.

III. How may bad confessions be remedied ? *By being neither ashamed nor afraid to confess all our sins, by exciting ourselves to contrition, and a firm purpose of amendment, and by a general confession.* Consider, that it is a shame and a disgrace to commit sin, but not, to confess it. “ There is a shame that bringeth glory and grace ; (and) there is a shame that bringeth sin.” (Ecclus. 4 : 25.) The latter is that fatal shame which

hinders us from confessing the wrong we have done. If we were not ashamed to sin in the sight of the all-seeing God, why should we be ashamed to confess in secret to the representative of God? Don't fear your confessor; he is a man like yourself, and knows human frailty and weakness. He is himself subject to imperfections; he will have compassion for yours. He will not be angry with you, no matter what you have done; but will sympathize with you, mourn, and weep with you. He will be pleased with your candor and sincerity, and rejoice at your conversion, as do the Angels in heaven, "who rejoice more over one sinner that does penance, than over ninety-nine just who need not penance." Why are you afraid of him? Do you not know that he is bound by a solemn oath to eternal secrecy, and that, under the penalty of death before God and man, he can never divulge anything that has been confided to him in confession? So, there is no danger to your honor. Finally, is it not easier to acknowledge our sins before a priest, a friend, a father, in secrecy here below, and thereby be forgiven, than to live uneasily in sin, to die unhappily, and, on the day of judgment, to be exposed to confusion before all men, Angels, and devils? Take courage, then, and confess those grave sins which, up to this time, you have never confessed, or, for want of contrition and a purpose of amendment, have confessed invalidly.

In order to excite yourselves to a true contrition and a firm purpose of amendment, consider who he is whom you have so grievously offended. You have offended God, *your Judge, your greatest Benefactor, your best Father*, who in himself, is your Sovereign good. FEAR *this just Judge*, who has prepared eternal torments for the unrepentant, and eternal happiness for the repentant. HOPE in *this great Benefactor*, who has created you, brought you out of nothing, and given you the being you now enjoy; who redeemed you by the precious blood of his Son, who died for you on the cross, and cleansed you from your sins; who, through his Holy Spirit, has given you the true faith, and who offers you, now, the means to secure your salvation. LOVE *this holy, this ineffably amiable Father*, who has never done you any evil, whose pleasure and joy it is, by penance, to restore a lost child to his friendship and favor. Why should you not be willing to return to so good a Father?

But you say: "I fear a general confession." Know, that it is well, or necessary for all those who have not been to confession for a long time, or who have made bad confessions in the past. Both these classes of souls are sick. Now, if you were sick in body, and knew that a certain medicine would infallibly cure you, would you not willingly take that medicine? Would you not give any price to purchase it? Behold, a general confession is the only remedy that will heal your

soul, dangerously diseased because of bad confessions ! Before human tribunals, a malefactor may justly fear to criminate himself ; he knows that he will be convicted and punished, if he acknowledges his guilt. Not so, before the spiritual tribunal, the confessional ; *there*, the sinner who candidly and sincerely acknowledges his crimes, is forgiven, and restored to God's grace and friendship.

How happy I should be, if this sermon were the cause of conversion to even one soul, that has, perhaps, confessed unworthily for years ! Merciful God ! who willest not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live,—suffer no one to make a bad confession this Eastertide. And you, my brethren, pray not only for yourselves, but for all sinners, that they may see their folly, be converted from their evil ways, and thus, eating worthily with us the Paschal Lamb, may with us, succeed in saving their immortal souls. Amen.

A. W. O.S.B.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

THE LIBERTY CHRIST HAS BROUGHT US.

“ Therefore, brethren, we are not the children of the bond-woman, but of the free ; by the freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free.”

(Gal. 4 : 31.)

SHORT SERMON ON THE EPISTLE.

Faith teaches us, that sin has brought man into the power and servitude of the devil, and that he languished under that satanic yoke and dominion, till Jesus Christ consummated the redemption of mankind. Yes, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, has liberated us from the servitude of sin and hell. This, is that freedom of which St. Paul speaks in the Epistle of to-day : “ Brethren, we are not the children of the bond-woman, but of the free ; by the freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free.” Each one of us has become a partaker of this freedom, through the reception of the Sacrament of Baptism. Each one of us must strive to ever retain this freedom, and never relapse again into the slavery in which we had the misfortune to be born. We shall the more zealously preserve this freedom, bought for us by the precious Blood of Christ, if we consider wherein it consists, and how happy we are in its possession. This freedom consists :

I. *In the liberty of the children of God, and*

II. *In that the world and sin have no longer any part in us.*

I. *This freedom consists in the liberty of the children of God.*

1. All who through Christ have become free, and have received the Sacrament of Baptism, belong to God, are the property of God, the children of God ; and thenceforth, are to serve God with free, filial love. Such are no longer the slaves of the devil ; he has no more power over them. The Lord our God is a good, kind, and friendly Master. He rules over us not with the iron rod of force, not with severity and cruelty, not with caprice or ill humor, but with all meekness and wisdom. He does not repulse us with harshness and austerity, but draws us to him-

self with the silken cords of his love. He lays no intolerable yoke upon our shoulders, but his commandments are light : “ My yoke is sweet,” says he, “ and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11 : 30.) Being our Master, and we his property, he certainly requires us to serve him, but not by coercion, nor from servile fear. He wills that we serve him from free choice, voluntarily, — that is, not as servants, but as children. Slaves obey a tyrant either through fear of the lash, or through hope of wages ; but good children obey their father lovingly, voluntarily, because they are children, and because all that is in the house is their own. So, should we also serve God and fulfil his commandments. God is our Father, and we are his children ; all that God possesses, belongs also to us. Heaven, and the eternal beatitude of the Deity, belong to us, too, and are our property. Herein, consists the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free,—that we serve him as heirs of an everlasting inheritance. To every one who serves God, (whether many or few years,) and never violates his commands, our heavenly Father addresses the words in the parable of the prodigal son : “ Son, thou art always with me ; all that I have is thine.” (Matt. 15 : 31.)

2. O, how happy are we who belong to God, who are God’s property, God’s children, allowed to serve him in such a delightful manner ! The people of this world consider it a great honor to serve as the courtiers of their king ;—and the higher and more exalted their sovereign is, the happier and more honored they esteem themselves in serving him. But *we* serve the King of kings, the Lord of lords. Be rebuked by the example of worldlings ! With what zeal, with what devotedness, do they not serve their master, — content with the small reward, the trifling wages, they receive for all their pains and labor ! With what fidelity, with what zeal, should we serve God, since the reward he bestows upon his faithful servants, is infinite and everlasting ! “ I myself am thy exceeding great reward,” says the Lord.. He does not say to us : “ The half of my kingdom, I will give to thee ;” but rather : “ My whole kingdom, my whole heaven, shall be your reward !” How we should rejoice to belong to such a benevolent and powerful Lord, to be his property and his servants ! With what generosity, should we sacrifice everything for him, with what patience and resignation, bear every cross, every hardship ! We must give him our whole heart, and belong to him entirely and undividedly ; for, when we are once made free with the freedom of Christ,

II. *The world and sin have no longer any part in us.*

1. All those who do not belong to Christ, are captivated to the service of the world and sin. They are beasts of burden, groaning under

a cruel yoke ; all their senses are bound and riveted to the possession of earthly goods, and to the gratification of their passions. But those who are Christ's are no longer chained to the service of the world and of sin ; their hearts are free from all worldly attachments ; sin has lost for them its attraction ; they now hate and detest it. Hence, it is said of them : " Cast out the bond-woman and her son." The bond-woman is the world, and the son of the bond-woman is sin ; therefore, the world is seated in wickedness, and " all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life," as St. John says. But they who have cast out the bond-woman and her son, no longer love the world, nor the things that are in the world. They seek not their happiness in the possession of earthly goods, nor in the gratification of their passions ; their desires, their aspirations, ascend higher. They cling not to the bond-woman, but to the true mother, to that Bride of Christ, the heavenly Jerusalem,—for which they have renounced the cares and sinful allurements of this world, and whither they hasten on extended wings, because they have been set free by Christ.

2. O, how happy are all those who possess this glorious freedom ! How happy is he who is delivered from the bonds of this world and of sin ! How peacefully, how contentedly, can *he* live who does not attach his heart to creatures, and who, casting off all earthly cares, subdues his passions, and relieves his conscience of all burdens ! O, that we too were in possession of this freedom ! O, that we likewise belonged entirely to Christ and that the world and sin had no longer any part in us. Once, alas ! we possessed this blessed freedom,—but through sin, we lost it. He who sins, is no longer free ; he is no longer a child of God, but a slave of the world and of hell.

Follow the counsel of the Apostle : " Cast out the bond-woman and her son." Turn your hearts from the world, and shut your senses against sin. Cling to Christ, and serve him in the joy of your heart. Keep the commandments of God, and follow Jesus. Then, shall you belong to him entirely ; you shall possess him, and never lose him ; and he will be your portion and inheritance for all eternity. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

AN UNWORTHY COMMUNION.

“ He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord.” (1. Cor. 11 : 29.)

In this time of penance and spiritual abasement, the holy Church, in the Introit of the Mass, bids us rejoice, and be glad with her. “ Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you that love her.” (Is. 66 : 10.) The world does not understand how penance and joy can be united. The explanation, however, is obvious, if we consider to what kind of joy the Church invites us : not to worldly and deceitful, but, to true joys. The principal reason for rejoicing during this time of penance, is stated in the Gospel of this day, in which the miraculous multiplication of bread is described, and a figure is given us of the miraculous Bread of Angels, which is preserved in every tabernacle—the holy Eucharist. “ Rejoice, O children,” says our Church, “ for the time is at hand when you shall partake of the heavenly banquet !”—Let us, however, bear in mind that only he who receives holy Communion worthily shall taste the sweetness of the Angelic Bread ; whereas, “ he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord.” (1. Cor. 11 : 29.) “ Whosoever shall eat this bread or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.” (1. Cor. 11 : 27.) That this most holy Sacrament may be, and remain to you, the delight and consolation of your hearts, let me describe to you the awful and terrible nature of an unworthy Communion, exhorting you at the same time, never to approach the table of the Lord without having proved yourselves, as St. Paul enjoins on all communicants. Consider then, that an unworthy Communion is

I. *Dreadful in itself ; and*

II. *Dreadful in its consequences.*

I. An unworthy or sacrilegious Communion is *a dreadful crime in itself.*

1. Some sins are greater than others. But sacrilege is the greatest of sins ; inasmuch as it is a profanation of holy things, holy persons, or

holy places. An unworthy Communion is not only the profanation of a holy thing, but of a thing most holy. To profane a Church, to abuse a chalice, is a great crime, because it is the profanation of a holy thing expressly dedicated to the service of God ; but to abuse a Sacrament, is not only to abuse a holy thing whereby grace is conferred, but the Author of all grace and all holiness. Tremble, then, at the horrible thought of an unworthy Communion ! It is a tremendous sin, it is a direct outrage against God. What can be imagined more holy than the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ ? “ Whosoever shall eat this bread unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.”

2. Although every mortal sin is a repetition of the crucifixion of the Lord, inasmuch as it renders the sacred Passion of the Lord void, yet, by a Communion in the state of mortal sin, the sufferings of our Lord are renewed in a special manner. This crime bears with it a striking resemblance to the various tortures and pains inflicted upon our Blessed Lord by those who took an active part in his crucifixion. To become guilty of the body of the Lord, is to take upon one's self the guilt of the death of Christ,—it is to be responsible for all that Judas, Pilate, Herod, and their followers, have done.

(a) When did the Passion of Jesus Christ commence ? It began with the betrayal of Judas. His disciple and friend betrayed him, sold him, and delivered him to his enemies. Is not the unworthy communicant also the disciple and friend of Jesus Christ ? Was he not baptized in the name of Jesus ? Has he not, like Judas, seen all his wonderful works, and listened to all the holy truths of his doctrines ? And yet, like Judas, he betrays his Master with the sinful kiss of his lips, and delivers his sacred Body to his enemy, the devil

(b) After Jesus had been betrayed and apprehended, he was fettered, and cast into prison. Unworthy communicant ! behold your terrible work ! Do you not force your pure Saviour into the filthy prison of your sinful heart ? Must he not, fettered by the word of promise and the word of the priest, enter into your guilty mouth, as he once entered, in bonds, the prison of his Passion !

(c) Bound with ropes, like a criminal, he is dragged from one tribunal to another,—reviled and mocked at by the populace. Do you not drag your Lord into your heart, and there, expose him to the revilings and mockeries of Satan and his infernal crew ?

(d) His enemies place the cross on his shoulders, and lead him to

death. It is impossible, as far as in you lies, to destroy the life of your Lord by an unworthy Communion, but you torment and torture him, you compel him to be dishonored, as often as you receive him in the state of mortal sin.

(e) At the death of Jesus Christ, heaven and earth trembled. Heaven and earth glorified him. But hell shouts with joy, when you crucify him anew by an unworthy Communion.

(f) The Jews, in crucifying Jesus, were instruments in the hand of God to carry out his grand design—the redemption of mankind. But the unworthy communicant leads Jesus to the cross against his own will.

(g) The Jews led the Lamb of God to the slaughter, because they were his enemies; but *you* pretend to be his friend, at least, you avow that you are not his enemy. “If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it. 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.)

(h) The Jews who nailed Jesus to the cross did not assail his divinity, but only his humanity. They killed him by many torments, but only in the suffering, mortal flesh. By an unworthy Communion, *you* offend his divinity.

3. The malice of this crime is increased by the circumstances under which it is committed.

(a) It is committed publicly, in the house of God, in the sight of Angels, and of the Christian congregation.

(b) It is concealed under the mask of piety and reverence. The sacrilegious sinner kneels down, his hands folded, as if for prayer. He strikes his breast, simulating love and friendship. “He who receives Holy Communion unworthily, is worse than Judas.” (St. Bernard.)

(c) The rashness of the sinner is begotten of the very humility and self-abasement of Jesus Christ. If Jesus should appear in his glory and majesty, no one would venture to approach him in sin, as the Israelites feared to hear the Lord speak to them, “lest they might die.” (Exod. 20: 19.) If we cannot comprehend the mystery of the Most Blessed Sacrament, how can we comprehend the wickedness of him who receives it unworthily?

II. *A sacrilegious Communion is dreadful in its consequences.* I do not here intend to speak to you of the everlasting punishment of the sacrilegious communicant, but only of such punishments as are often inflicted upon him, even here below, to wit : sudden death and obduracy. As the cloud, which was once the guide out of Egypt, gave light to the children of Israel, whilst it caused darkness to the Egyptians, the enemies of God,—so do a blessing and a curse, life and death, spring forth from this most sacred mystery.

1. Sickness and even *sudden death* are frequently caused by an unworthy Communion. This punishment is prefigured in Judas, who was the first to commit this atrocious crime, and who, after having received the holy food, went out and hanged himself. Like dreadful results have been declared by the Fathers of the Church in all centuries, and are clearly indicated by St. Paul in his words to the Corinthians : “ Therefore are there many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep” (the sleep of death). (1. Cor. 11 : 30.) Ecclesiastical history records many instances of the judgment of God upon unworthy communicants. The Ark of the New Law produces the same effects as the Ark of the Old Law, which was a blessing to the Israelites, and a curse and destruction to the infidel Philistines. (1. Kings 5 : 11.)

2. A more frequent punishment is *spiritual sickness and death*,—obduracy being the other lamentable consequence of an unworthy Communion. “ After the morsel, Satan entered into him,” says St. John of Judas. (John 13 : 27.) He went forth from the Table of the Lord, to partake in the murder of his Redeemer ; and, even after having cast down the price of blood in the temple, his heart remained hardened, because, like Cain, he cried out in despair : “ My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon.” To him who is guilty of a sacrilegious Communion, nothing is sacred. Hence, the sad experience, that such a one heaps sin upon sin, sacrilege upon sacrilege, until he dies in his sins. “ He who receives holy Communion unworthily, is in a more lamentable condition than one possessed by the devil.” (St. Chrysostom.)

That such a sinner is seldom converted, is also clearly intimated by the words of the Apostle : “ He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself.” He carries about his own sentence of eternal damnation.

And yet, how many approach the Communion-table, who have not made a full and sincere confession of their sins, or who have not fully repented of them ; or whose hearts are filled with enmity against their neighbor, whose hands are foul with injustice ! Such men eat judgment to themselves. If any one of you has been guilty of this sacri-

lege, I conjure him, for the love of Jesus Christ, to deliver himself from this judgment! You need not despair. The Lord will receive and pardon you, if, like the sons of Jacob, who had sold and betrayed their brother Joseph, you return to him. He whom you have offended, is still Jesus, your Brother.

BISHOP EHRLER.

FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION.

MARY OUR MODEL IN PREPARING FOR THE HOLY COMMUNION.

"Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee : blessed art thou among women." (Luke 1 : 28.)

Mary is blessed among women. Of all the daughters of Eve, she was chosen to be the Mother of God. We are blessed among all creatures of God, since, in Holy Communion, we receive the same Divine Child in our hearts, whom Mary, on this day, conceived in her virginal womb. It is, therefore, becoming that we should regard Mary as our model, in preparing ourselves for this infinite grace.

- I. *Mary conceived Jesus with angelic purity ;*
- II. *Mary received Jesus with an ardent desire ;*
- III. *Mary listened to the message of the Angel with boundless reverence.*

1. Mary's life was a life of spotless holiness,—the work of divine grace, and her own faithful co-operation. She was conceived without sin, and never defiled her soul with the slightest actual sin. This grace was conferred upon her by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Mary co-operated faithfully with the divine grace, serving God from her earliest childhood in the Temple.

2. Angelic purity should adorn our souls also, when we receive Jesus in the most blessed Sacrament. We should be in the state of grace. For,

- (a) That which we receive, is the true Body and Blood of the Son

of the living God, hidden under the veil of the species of bread. God is the Holy God, abhorring all sin.

(*b*) The mystery we receive, is a *virginal flesh*, formed in the womb of the purest Virgin by a miracle of the Holy Ghost. Virginal souls, such as Mary, Joseph, John, were permitted to approach this sanctuary of God. It was laid in a new sepulchre ; it is touched by the hands of a virginal priesthood. Would you venture to receive this holy Body into a sinful heart ?

(*c*) This divine Flesh was sacrificed for our salvation on the Cross ; and as often as we eat of this Bread, we are to announce the death of the Lord. Shall we eat in sin this divine Flesh, that was sacrificed for our sins ?

(*d*) It is a glorified Body. It has been freed from all earthly imperfections, and is now present here, adorned with the same wonderful qualities which characterized it when it ascended into heaven. And will you be rash enough to touch and receive it with a sinful mouth and heart ?

Prove yourself, dear Christian ; make a sincere and sorrowful confession, and then, come and eat of this Bread.

II. *Mary received Jesus with the ardent desire of her heart.* If the Patriarchs and Prophets with great desire looked forward to the coming of the Saviour ; if Simeon and Anna served in the Temple, night and day, by fastings and prayer, waiting for the consolation of Israel,—how great must have been *her* desire to see the Saviour of all mankind, who was from all eternity predestinated, not only to carry him in her arms, but to give human flesh to the Holy of Holies from her own pure blood and maternal substance !

1. This blessed Sacrament strengthens us against sin. It is, as the Council of Trent says, “ an antidote by which we are delivered from daily trespasses, and preserved from mortal sins.” (Sess. 13. Cap. 2.) Who, then, would not ardently desire this strengthening Bread ?

2. By the reception of this divine Food, all virtues grow in our souls. “ He that eateth me, the same shall also live by me.” (John 6 : 58.) He who lives by Jesus Christ, will also love what he loves. By the reception of this sacred Flesh, vice is abhorred, chastity is loved, earthly things are despised, and man transformed into a new man,—not by nature, but by grace.

3. In Holy Communion, the greatest desire of the human heart is fulfilled : the most intimate union with God, attained. In this Holy Sacrament, we obtain by grace, what our first parents attempted to obtain by sin. "Behold a great nation : neither is there any other nation so great, that hath gods so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions." (Deut. 4 : 6.)

4. This celestial Bread is a pledge of our future glory, and of the resurrection of our body. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell ; nor wilt thou give thy holy one to see corruption." (Ps. 15 : 10.) "Your fathers 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." (John 6 : 49)

How great was the desire of the Saints for this heavenly Bread ! If we do not return love for love, we have reason to fear that the word of the Saviour will be fulfilled in us : "The queen of the south shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it : because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon : and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here." (Matt. 12 : 42.)

III. *Mary listened to the message of the Angel with profound reverence.*

The holy Virgin listened to the words of the Angel with intense reverence and humility, so that he said to her : "Fear not, Mary ; for thou hast found grace with God." Even after the angel had explained to her the grand mystery of the Incarnation, Mary exclaims with a like reverence : "Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it done unto me according to thy word." From that out, she regarded herself as the sanctuary of God, giving vent to her emotions in the incomparable *Magnificat*. Let us, also, pay the profoundest homage and reverence to the Son of God, when, under the appearance of bread, he enters into our hearts.

1. Who is he who comes to visit us ? The King of heaven and earth. Sun, moon, and stars praise his majesty. The angelic hosts lie prostrate in adoration before him.—He said the word, and the world was made.—He is conqueror of death and hell.

2. Who are we ? Dust and ashes—unprofitable servants ; our souls and bodies are contaminated with sin. Our holy Mother exhorts us with good reason to say, at the approach of Jesus, the reverential words of the Centurion : "O Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof !"

Let us manifest our reverence for the Blessed Sacrament, especially by preserving the treasure we have received, by penance and amendment of life. To the Blessed Virgin, the day of the Annunciation was the beginning of a new life : the dignity of Mother of God had imposed on her new and higher duties. Every Communion imposes upon us new duties. St. Augustine remarks : " Let him amend his life, who is to receive the Life." Let us, then, in this sacred time, make a due preparation for the reception of the Blessed Sacrament, whereby we become, like Mary, full of grace, and are entitled to believe, with her, that the Lord is truly with us.

BISHOP EHRLER.

FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION.

DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD.

" Hail, full of grace." (Luke 1 : 28.)

These are the words with which the angel Gabriel greeted the Blessed Virgin, when he brought her the joyful tidings that she had been chosen to be the Mother of God. He declared to her that she possessed the grace of God,—yea, the very fulness of that grace ; as if he would have said : God has given special graces to certain Saints ; but to thee, O Mary, he has given all graces collectively. " Happy Mother !" says St. Bernard, contemplating this event, " happy Mother, whose heart, at the time of this announcement, was found pure indeed, but not empty ! For, how can one say of that heart that it is empty, of which the Angel has said that it is full of grace ?" The angelic messenger goes on to say to Mary that the Holy Ghost shall come down upon her. For what purpose—since she is already full of grace ? In order that, from the overflowing fountain of her superabundant graces, some small streams might descend upon us poor, sinful creatures. The Angelical Salutation redounds thus, to her greater honor and to our greatest benefit. Mary is

- I. *Full of grace for herself ; and*
- II. *Full of grace for us.*

These two points shall form the subject of the present instruction. Listen, then, attentively, dearly beloved, since the first point of our meditation contains the cause of your joy ; and the second, the cause of your confidence.

I. Mary was exempt from

1. Original sin : and
2. Actual sin.

Consequently, she was full of grace for herself.

1. That Mary was free from original sin, we believe upon the sure testimony of God, of his holy Church, and even of human reason itself. If, in many cases, "we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater." (John 5 : 9.) In the Sacred Scripture, as in a letter sent to us from heaven, we find the following description of Mary, under the figure of the Bride in the Canticle of Canticles : "Thou art all fair, O my love ; and there is not a spot in thee." (Cant. 4 : 7.) Could she be all fair, and without spot, if she had ever been stained with original sin ? The Church celebrates the feast of Mary's Immaculate Conception ; and, as far back as the second Council of Nice, we read : "We honor and reverence the image of the Mother of God, our spotless, Blessed Lady." Our reason, also, confirms the words of St. Bernard and St. Thomas : "It is incredible, that the Son of God should have been born of Mary if she had been stained with original sin." "Because, a disgrace attached to the Mother, descends also to the Son."

2. Mary was not only born free from original sin,—she preserved her spotless purity unstained until the end of her life. It was proper that the Queen of Virgins should spend her whole life free from actual sin, because she brought forth the Conqueror of sin and death. She was sanctified before her birth, because she was to bring forth the Source of all sanctity. It was necessary, that she should preserve her holiness unblemished, in order that she should be a worthy Mother of God ; which would not be the case if she had even committed the least sin. As God gives special graces to those whom he selects for special offices, in order to fit them for the same ; so, there is no doubt but that Mary received the grace to avoid all sin, because she was destined to conceive and bring forth the Holy One, who is without sin. Thus, no matter how we view the question, it still remains certain, that Mary was free from all

sin, whether original or actual, and consequently, was "full of grace" for herself.

II. Mary receives

1. *Grace for the just*, and
2. *Pardon for sinners*.

Therefore, she is "full of grace" for us

1. It is of Mary, that Holy Writ says: "My abode is in the full assembly of Saints." (Ecclus. 24 : 16.) St. Bonaventure, commenting upon these words, says: "She not only dwelt in the full assembly of the Saints, but she also preserves the Saints in the fulness of sanctity, so that their number may not be diminished. She preserves their merits, that they may not be lost; she keeps back their enemy, the devil, and prevents him from injuring them." Let us believe, with St. Bernard, that whatever graces we may hope for, or ask of God, we shall receive through the hands of the Blessed Virgin Mary. "No one receives a grace from God, except through thee, O purest Virgin! No one is saved, except through thee, O holiest Virgin!" says St. Germanus. O, let us then seek for grace from God only through Mary; for what she seeks, she certainly finds, as the Angel announced to her, when he said: "Thou hast found grace with God." (Luke 1 : 30.)

2. But, perhaps you will say that it is only the just who can hope for this grace. By no means. Mary is justly called, in the *Litany of Loreto*, the "*Refuge of sinners*." It is almost impossible that a sinner who flies to her refuge, can be lost, as has been taught by St. Bernard, and many other Saints. She is, in the New Law, for poor sinners, what Esther was in the Old Law for the Jews. She often approaches the throne of divine Justice, and makes supplication in the words of Esther: "Give me . . . my people, for which I request." (Esth. 7 : 4.) And is it possible that the heavenly Father will refuse the prayer of his beloved daughter,—the divine Son, that of his Virgin Mother,—the Holy Ghost, that of his purest Spouse? No! "Call upon Mary," says St. Bernard, "thou who art laden with sin, thou who fearest to appear before the divine Judge, thou who art almost despairing; remember Mary, and invoke her aid!" "It is not impossible to her to recall to the path of salvation, the half-despairing sinner." (St. Peter Damian.)

Rejoice and be glad, dear Christians, Mary is full of grace for herself, and she is able to help you! She is full of grace for you, and she desires, and is ready, to help you. Call upon her, ye just, that she may

keep you in the path of justice ! Fall at her teet, ye sinners, that she may obtain from God your true conversion ! But remember well what she revealed to St. Bridget : "I am a mother to those who desire to reform, and be converted." If you have not a strong desire to reform your life, then, you have nothing to hope for from Mary's assistance : for you are not of her children. It is true, that the divine Bridegroom says to Mary, (addressing her as the Bride in the Canticle,) "Feed thy kids." I also agree that sinners are meant by the word *kids* ; but not such sinners as only honor her with their lips, while their hearts refuse to be converted ; for Mary is not only the Mother of Mercy but she is likewise, the Mother of Justice and of Truth.

If we are so fortunate as to be among the number of the just, or, if we have an earnest desire of seeking again our lost justice, we may, with the greatest confidence, exclaim with St. Bernard : "O Lady ! O Mediatrix ! O Advocate ! reconcile us to thy Son, recommend us to thy Son. We pray thee, through the grace which, to-day, thou hast found ; through the dignity to which thou wert raised ; through the divine Mercy, whom thou didst afterwards bring forth ; receive us among thy children, that we may be sharers, (through thy intercession,) in the glory of him who vouchsafed to become a sharer of our miseries !" Amen.

B. . . N

ORATION FOR ST. PATRICK'S DAY.

"The just shall be in everlasting remembrance." (Ps. 111 : 7.)

In the finely-wrought panegyrics to which you have listened on many a 17th of March, the career of St. Patrick has been clearly and forcibly described. You have been stirred by delightful emotions, when you contemplated the Gallic boy in the home of his parents. You fancied you could see his noble countenance, (upon which candor had set its seal,) lighted up by the glow of filial affection. You imagined you saw him moving among his kindred, diffusing around him joy, calmness, and content,—receiving the advice of his parents in deferential silence and youthful seriousness. At home, in the parental mansion, Maun (for such was the original name of St. Patrick,) was, (as was natural,) an object of great interest to his immediate relatives. It is, however, with his acts in Ireland, that we have especially to do. How must not his affectionate heart have been wrung at separation from those he loved ! Unsuspicious of any foe, he was, perhaps, indulging in some puerile day-dream, when he heard the shout of the marauders who followed in the train of Niall, monarch of Ireland. Before he can realize his peril, or prepare for escape, he is a prisoner in the hands of the Irish. Little know the hardy Kernes who seize him, that they are bearing away with them their own future conqueror. Hurried on board the rude bark of his captors, Maun cogitates upon his sad fate. His eyes, despite his efforts, gush forth torrents of tears ; his heart throbs heavily in the intensity of his grief ! How was it possible that he should be unmoved by his melancholy prospects ? He, whose noble birth, high connections, and superior talents, offered hopes of attaining to the prefecture or the consulate, is now reduced to the miserable condition of a neglected slave. All the domestic joys that lightened the burden of existence, are taken away—his future fate is judged to be terrible on account of its uncertainty. He watches anxiously the coast of his native land fade away from his gaze—he strains his eyes to discern it, where it is no longer visible. A delightful phantasy makes him suppose it in full view, even when it is hidden from him by the intervening sea. At length, he awakes to a correct sense of his position. The uncouth attire of the ship's crew, who bear him onward to Inisfail, excites his amazement, while he cannot restrain his admiration at their marvelous dexterity. Among the many fierce warriors that surround him, he sees no sympathizing face. He feels that, henceforth, his life, as far as terrestrial en-

joyments are concerned, will be a blank. This consideration drives him to think of God. He raises his eyes from the sea,—in which he sees a type of God's immensity,—to the sun, whose beauty faintly indicates the ineffable loveliness of the Creator ; and, piercing the blue vault of the firmament, he presents himself in spirit at the throne of the Most High.

The supplication addressed by the captive boy to the God of heaven, meets with a ready and favorable response. The fear he, at first, entertained of his wild fellow-passengers, subsides ; the regrets that swelled his bosom, as he dwelt upon the bright habitation of his parents, are dissipated ; his heart is tranquillized, and his face becomes serene. He resigns himself to the will of him who made the earth and all thereon, and in that resignation, finds quiet, peace, and serenity. He no more regards with terrified glances the stalwart soldiers of Niall. At landing, he is not disturbed at the formidable aspect of the idolatrous inhabitants of Ireland. Though carried off to his mountain home by Milcho, his master by purchase, he does not repine. As a shepherd upon the rugged mountains of Ulster, he finds much time at his disposal. That time is not wasted in idleness. It is spent in communing with Heaven, and in acquiring a knowledge of the language and customs of the Irish. So intimately is the mind of the shepherd-slave penetrated with the resignation of the true Christian, that every new calamity is welcomed by him as a peculiar benediction. If he contrasts his present, with his past condition, it is only to bless God. At home, he was richly and elegantly attired ; here, his clothing is of the coarsest and roughest material ; at home, he had a beautiful abode, furnished with taste and skill ; here, he dwells upon the mountain heather, in the cave, or in the hovel ; at home, he had servants to attend him ; here, he is the slave of men who scarcely know the first principles of religion ; at home, he was caressed by loving parents ; here, he is buffeted and insulted by the unlearned boor ; at home, a vista, sweet and golden, exposed its varied tints to his gaze ; here, a life of gloom, of hardship, of injury, stares him in the face. With this tremendous contrast in his mind's eye, he still recked little of the change that had come over him ; for, in his mean employment, he was assimilated to the lowliness of Jesus, and was afforded an excellent opportunity of copying his divine Master's humility.

Seven weary years pass away, and the exile is restored to his disconsolate family ! He cannot, however, remain in its bosom. He is called upon by the unborn children of the land of his sufferings, to "come and help them." Like the prophet Samuel, he answers, "Here I am !" He prepares himself for the Irish mission. He studies, he prays, he fasts. He is consecrated Bishop, and, with a gladsome foreboding, sets sail for Ireland. He lands—commences instantly to make known the object of his coming—is listened to with patience—converts several. He

pushes his way to Tara, where the States-General of the whole island is assembled. He lights the fire of Easter, before the *Beal-thinne* has been kindled. He is summoned to appear before King Loegaire. The chieftains are seated around the monarch. Patrick, (for, by this name, derived from the dignity with which the sovereign Pontiff had invested him, he is henceforth known,) enters the circle formed by the bold barons and learned sages of the Emerald Isle. The majesty of his mien, the earnestness of his manner, and especially, the grace wherewith the most High God adorned his preaching, touched his noble audience. The sublimity of Christian truth was acknowledged by the intellectual Druids of the assembly. Some mysteries, however, they were disposed to question. They wished to know how Three Persons could exist in One God. No sooner had this question been propounded, than St. Patrick bends his mitred head to the earth, and plucks from the greenward a little trefoil, the Irish shamrock! By this little trinity of leaves in unity of plant and stalk, he illustrated the mystery of the adorable Trinity.

From the deep impression made by the sainted bishop upon the nobles of the land, on the sacred hill of Tara, may be dated the beginning of the marvelous success which crowned his efforts. The very personification of fortitude, St. Patrick undertakes the conversion of the country. Druidical superstition had taken firm hold upon the mind of the nation. Learning was highly esteemed among the idolatrous priests, and they prided themselves upon their acquaintance with science. They were the lights of the neighboring nations, as many writers adverse to Ireland, are compelled to admit. To enter the arena against these powerful antagonists, to seek to wrest from them an authority they had wielded for centuries, was truly a daring enterprise. Sustained, however, by the name and power of his divine Master, St. Patrick commences the conquest of the entire Island to the faith of Christ. Disregarding the strict prohibition of the King, he lights the Christian fire at Easter—a fire which the Druids predict, must that night, or never, be extinguished in Erin.—He chooses for explanation of the most unfathomable mystery, a simple and humble leaf of the meadow; and leaves it to all succeeding times, as the emblem of religion and patriotism, to be worn honorably on his own festival.

When the Apostle of Green Erin had ended his mission, what an unexpected change had been wrought in the space of thirty years! The Latin language which, before, the Irish would hardly condescend to learn, was studied and cultivated. Roman manners were made familiar to the nation that would not bear her slavish brand; the idols, to which adoration had been openly paid, were burned to ashes, or otherwise demolished; the groves deemed sacred by the Druids, were cut

down ; the temples in which idolatrous rites had been celebrated, were purified and became Christian churches, in which the worship of the true God was worthily solemnized. Those who had been sticklers for the mummeries of their benighted ancestors, learned to despise the ancient follies, and to praise the God who had brought them into his admirable light. The alms craved in the name of some fabulous deity, were now solicited in the name of God ; the business formerly transacted under the auspices of some mythological sage, was now undertaken in the name of the Ruler of the universe ; passions fierce and bloody were checked ; men of revengeful disposition became peaceable as lambs. The bards who had, previously, devoted their poetic talents to proclaim the achievements of false gods, now sang, in strains of delicious melody, the praises of Christ, the Redeemer ; the Druidical priesthood forsook their former errors, and became thoroughly imbued with Christian sentiments ; youths and ladies of noble family consecrated themselves to God ; convents and monasteries arose, and the illustrious St. Patrick, as he looked forth from his see of Armagh, saw around him a people, who, after flinging off the darksome habiliments of paganism, had been enrobed in a vesture sparkling all over with the gems of virtue. Calmly, sank the patriarch of the Irish Church to his serene death. He sank to his death, but he had seen before the close of his life, his brightest anticipations verified, his holiest dreams realized. The benefactor, the father, of the Irish on earth, he went to heaven to act as their patron and advocate before the throne of God. He left them an heirloom—the Holy Faith of Christ—which they continue to love and cherish

If time allowed, we might catch a glimpse of the sufferings of the Irish for their religion, or we might depict the happiness that reigned in the "Isle of Saints and Sages," when the sons of eastern Europe flew thither, to kindle at the fires that blazed in her monasteries, the expiring torch of learning.

Circumscribed as we are, I say nothing of the massacres of the faithful Irish ; I say nothing of the bloody atrocities of Cromwell at Drogheda, when he slew most treacherously the gallant garrison ; or at Wexford, where his brutal soldiers massacred the unprotected women who crowded around the great Cross, craving mercy. I say nothing of the cruel famine that almost compelled the mother to devour her tender, unconscious babe ; I say nothing of the children strangled with their own loving mother's hair, by fiends in human shape ; I dwell not upon the wretchedness of dying by the roadside, while the tyrant passes by, and regards his suffering fellow-creatures with scorn, contempt, and aversion. I shall not now dilate upon the graves to which your brave sires were hurried—those graves, which the foe has desecrated ; I do not direct your attention to those old abbeys which the hand of the ravager has torn down ;

nor point out to you those altars where your free forefathers sought comfort—those altars which have been trampled upon by the foeman—which have been destroyed by the miscreant servants of a bloody Henry a despotic Elizabeth, or a ruthless Cromwell !

The Irish race is indestructible, it would seem ; for, despite persecution, it exists and prospers. To-day, the shamrock, the emblem of our nationality and faith, is sought for by Irishmen every where. Some search for it amid polar snows ; others seek for it amid the sands of the Equator. Scattered as they are, their brilliant, light-hearted spirits are as the rays of the noontide sun, meeting in Erin, as in their own native, glittering centre. To-day, from sea and continent, from island, lake, and mountain, the children of the Emerald Isle direct their glances to

“ Their own loved island of sorrow.”

“ *Quae regio in terris nostri non plena laboris.*” To-day, the Irish and their descendants ponder on the grievances of their race. To-day, the full consciousness of the dire oppression of which they have been the victims, is imparted to them. To-day, they long for the freedom of their beloved, down-trodden Erin !

As Irishmen, we proclaim ourselves sons of St. Patrick. If we be truly sensible of the great honor to which we are born, let us endeavor to show ourselves worthy children of our noble father. The religion which he committed to the care of our ancestors, has been by them faithfully transmitted to us. The greater our devotion to our faith, the nearer we approach St. Patrick. Appreciate your holy faith, love its dogmas, proclaim its excellence, practise its morality, instil its principles into the minds of your children, and teach them, by precept and example, to revere and guard it. You are the children of St. Patrick, who pleads for you in heaven ; you are engaged in the same warfare in which he won his crown. You are the descendants of those pure, those stainless heroes, who united the fiery chivalry of the knight to the benign and gentle meekness of the monk.

From the ruined castles which those men so bravely defended—from the plain of Clontarf, the scene of Brien's glorious victory—from the verdant vale, where the flag of “ *God and Our Lady*” was proudly unfurled—from the mounds of earth, beneath which the dust of our valiant forefathers lies entombed—from the eight hundred and fifty Saints, that in three centuries, shone like diamonds upon the escutcheon of Ireland—a voice, like that of an angel, calls upon us to love our brethren, to love our country, to love our God !

REV. P. A. TREACY,

BURLINGTON, N. J.

FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH.

THE LESSONS OF ST. JOSEPH'S LIFE.

*“He was beloved of God and men ; whose memory is in benediction.
He made him like the saints in glory.”* (Ecclus. 45 : 1, 2.)

To-day, the Church celebrates the feast of one of the greatest of her Saints, St. Joseph,—whom God, even upon earth, distinguished and honored in an especial manner, by intrusting to his paternal care and love, his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. To this saint, the Church, in the Epistle of the feast, applies with justice, the words of Holy Scripture : “He was beloved of God and men ; whose memory is in benediction. He made him like the saints in glory.”

And, indeed, brief as is the history which we possess of St. Joseph, it suffices to reveal to us his vast treasures of virtue and sanctity, and afford us an admirable example for our imitation. In order, then, to draw profit from the festival of to-day, I propose for your consideration, a short sketch of the life of St. Joseph.

I. Joseph's ancestors had the honor of belonging to a royal race, for they were descended from the royal house of David. But, at the time of Joseph, his family was much impoverished, and we find him, at the period of his espousals with Mary, not as the prince of a royal house, surrounded by worldly splendors, but as the poor carpenter of Nazareth. Thus vain and fleeting, are all earthly honors ! How unhappy is the man who sets his heart upon them ; who makes them the end and aim of his existence ! As his temporal glory vanishes, his false, delusive happiness also disappears ; and then, to such a man, comes the fulfilment of the threat pronounced by our Lord : “You shall not have a reward from your Father, who is in heaven.” (Matt. 6 : 1.) The case was very different with St. Joseph ; he did not suffer the least vexation at the decline of his illustrious house ; on the contrary, he sought his nobility in a pious heart full of innocence and virtue—his riches, in the treasure of the kingdom of heaven, in a faithful fulfilment of his duties.

2. For this reason, the eye of the Lord rested lovingly upon him

selecting him for the Foster-father of his divine Son, and espousing him to Mary, the holy and immaculate Virgin. The world never beheld a more beautiful couple, for their union was founded upon a similarity of pious sentiments. O, that all who contemplate entering the married state, would keep Mary and Joseph before their eyes! Would that they would choose their companions in wedlock according to the principles of religion, rather than with a view to temporal advantage. Would that they would prepare themselves for their approaching marriage by pious and chaste conduct! Unhappy marriages would then be most rare—the blessing of God would rest upon the family; and Christian sentiments and manners would replace the infidelity and immorality of our present age; for, “The fear of the Lord shall delight the heart, and shall give joy, and gladness, and length of days. . . . It is a crown of wisdom, filling up peace and the fruit of salvation. . . . The fear of the Lord driveth out sin.” (Eccles. 1 : 12, 22, 27.)

3. After the Angel had announced to Mary: “Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus” (Luke 1 : 31), Joseph began to perceive the fulfilment of the sublime mystery; but, as he was still in ignorance of the counsels of the Most High, and of the message of the Angel, a suspicion of Mary’s infidelity must naturally have arisen in his mind. His pure, gentle heart must have been sorely tried by the doubt; but, as he was full of forbearance towards the failings of others, and was “a just man,” as the Sacred Scripture tells us, he sought to suppress the knowledge of Mary’s seeming sin, and resolved to leave her secretly. He shrank from publicly accusing her, of subjecting her (as was the custom of the time), to the fearful penalties of the law.

My brethren, how often do you follow this beautiful example? Alas! among us Christians, there is no sin more wide-spread than that of rash judgment and censorious suspicion; nothing more common than the trumpeting forth of our neighbor’s faults, even to the most trifling failings and imperfections. We spread abroad the faults of others, without waiting for confirmation of our rash suspicions; we openly condemn upon the merest hear-say, or the slightest appearance of evil. The true cause of this uncharitable conduct is envy, the base sin of the Pharisees, which caused them to be angry at the wide-spread fame of Jesus. Or, it is pride, as with the proud Pharisee in the Temple; or, it proceeds from the malice of our own hearts, which ascribes to others the evil which we find in ourselves, as the spectators judged Eleazar to be guilty of pride in dying courageously for his faith, because they themselves had not his firmness and fidelity. My dear Christians, guard yourselves against these sins; they violate Christian charity, which “thinketh no evil” (1. Cor. 13 : 5),

“which covereth a multitude of sins” (James 5 : 20), and which excuses the sins of others, like Christ, who said : “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23 : 34.) These sins are a usurpation of the rights of God, who alone “ is the searcher of hearts and reins” (Ps. 7 : 10) And who is the Sovereign Judge, meting out to us the same judgments that we pass upon our neighbors.

4. St. Joseph’s pious forbearance with his silent spouse found favor with God ; and he sent an angel to acquaint him with the mystery, and disclose to him the high honor which had been conferred upon him, in making him the Foster-father of the Incarnate God. And here, the question forces itself upon us : Why did the heavenly Father select such poor people to be the earthly parents of his Son ? To teach us that God does not regard the social position of his servants, but rather, the sanctity of their hearts.

From the moment of his enlightenment, St. Joseph became the most faithful protector of the Blessed Virgin. He labored assiduously for her support ; accompanied her in her journey to visit her cousin, St. Elizabeth ; did not leave her side on the way to Bethlehem ; assisted her in the flight into Egypt, maintained her there, and, during their stay in Nazareth ; accompanied her in the journey to Jerusalem ; rigidly respected, and carefully screened, the precious pearl of her virginity. Ye husbands and fathers, keep this noble example ever before your eyes, —you who are accustomed to neglect your wives and children for the sake of indulging your sensual appetites ; you who treat your wives harshly and cruelly, who look upon them not as companions, but as slaves ; you who contemn the pious desires of your wives, and absent yourselves from the obligatory services of the Church ; you, who, in seasons of trial and affliction, selfishly think only of yourselves, leaving your sorrowing companions without the least consolation. Can you meditate upon St. Joseph, without shame and self-reproach ? No : in contrast with his sanctity, you cannot but condemn yourselves ; and if you wish to escape the dreadful judgments of God, you must promise amendment, and keep your promise.

5. When “the fulness of time was come,” Mary and Joseph received the holy Infant, and nursed him with the tenderest care. They withdrew into Egypt with him, in obedience to the command of the Lord. In distress of mind, they sought the divine Child during the three days that he was lost to them in Jerusalem ; and they did not relinquish their search until, at last, they found him, to their great joy, in the Temple of the Most High. Parents, learn from all this, a lesson regarding your duty to your children ;—that you should never lose sight of them, should

guard them against all dangers both of soul and body, and should watch over them, that they may not wander from the path of justice. If, unfortunately, they *should* stray away, like lost sheep from the fold—oh, do not desist from your search, until you have regained your erring son or daughter, to the path of duty. Nourish the spirit of piety in their hearts; and then, you may have the consolation of truly saying of your children, as was said of the holy Child Jesus, that every year they have “increased in wisdom, and age and grace with God and men !”

6. With the finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple, all traces of St. Joseph cease in Holy Writ; but, before we finish, let us reflect upon two particular virtues practised by our saint—*his confidence in Divine Providence* in every circumstance, whether joyful or sorrowful; and, *his obedience to those in authority*. Dearly beloved, would that we also, instead of indulging in discontent, impatience, and anger at untoward events, would raise up our eyes to heaven, whence, at the right moment, the hand of our Almighty and all-kind Father will direct everything to our eternal salvation. O, that we, also, might practise that other virtue of *obedience*, which is so difficult in these days, when a mistaken idea of liberty leads to disorder, and rebellion against all lawful authority. Close your ears against all such seductive doctrines; it is right that you should make all progress in everything that pertains to your temporal and eternal welfare; but, never forget that you owe respect and obedience to the established authorities; for “all power is from God,” and every disobedience to lawful superiors is also a rebellion against God, who is the Source of all authority. If you have well-founded grounds of complaint, just grievances, bring them forward in a lawful manner, but never to gratify spite or anger; for, if all would rule, and no one obey, the earth would become the theatre of the most terrible and devastating confusion. Christians, adhere to order, law, and religion; otherwise, your disobedience will call down upon you, heavy punishments.

The days of St. Joseph were passed in piety and holiness, until, at last, he breathed forth his pure soul, peacefully, in the arms of Jesus and Mary. Dearly beloved, imitate the example of this great Saint, and then you may, one day, have the happiness of seeing at your death-bed, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. And, while they comfort and strengthen you for the last awful journey—to your joy, you shall hear Jesus say to you: “This day, thou shalt be with me in Paradise !” (Luke 23: 43.) Amen.

PASSION SUNDAY.

THE MORE WE UNDERSTAND THE HEINOUSNESS OF SIN, THE BETTER
WILL BE OUR CONFESSIONS.

“Which of you shall convince me of sin?” (John 8 : 46.)

SHORT SERMON ON THE GOSPEL.

With this Sunday, in many dioceses, the Easter confession and Communion begin. Our divine Redeemer, too, begins his bitter Passion and death in the sight of the Jews, as it were, with a confession. He justified himself to the Jews, publicly, asking them : “Which of you shall convince me of sin ?” And no one could convince him of sin. Without sin, an innocent Lamb of God, he suffers himself to be nailed to the cross, and thus celebrates his pasch. We cannot say as much of ourselves, for all creatures would contradict us, crying out : “You are sinners!” “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (1. John 1 : 8.) We, too, are to celebrate our pasch, and this, we cannot do, unless we be cleansed from our sins, unless we have made a good confession. “If we confess our sins, he (God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity.” (1. John 1 : 9.) Our principal care should then be to make a good confession ; and our confession will be the better, the more we understand the malice of sin. Let us, this morning, consider :

I. *The malice of sin, and*

II. *How the knowledge of its malice helps us to make a good confession*

I. “Every man is a liar” (Ps. 115 : 2) ; every man sins. Of how many sins have you, my brethren, made yourselves guilty from your youth upwards ? Perhaps, your youth was, and—with some of you—still is, a continual, uninterrupted series of offenses against God. O, understand, at least this once, the malice of sin, and know it for the tremendous evil that it is

1. Consider it with regard *to God*. It is the most grievous insult and offense which we, his creatures, can inflict upon him, our Creator ;

it is the blackest ingratitude wherewith we, his children, can requite his many benefits ; it is the most culpable disobedience which we, his servants, can show him. When and whilst we sin, we declare to God that we do not acknowledge him as our Creator, we will not serve him as our Lord, nor love him as our Father. We even go so far as to despise God, to expel him, as far as lies in our power, from our hearts, and to destroy his holiness, justice, and majesty. All meanness, abomination, insolence injustice, ingratitude, and malice are united in sin.

2. If we consider sin with regard *to man*, we find that there is nothing more pernicious and injurious to him. With justice, it can be called the greatest, the only, evil in the world. Sin robs man of *whatever real good he has*. It deprives him of *the grace and friendship of God* ; and if it is the greatest happiness for man to have God for his friend, to possess the good will and pleasure of his Creator, it is obvious what an evil and misfortune it is to have God for an enemy. It deprives man of *the beauty of the soul*. Just as beautiful as a soul is in the splendor of virtue, in the state of innocence,—just so ugly, hideous, and abominable it is if it be defiled, contaminated, and disfigured by sin. It robs man of *his peace of heart*. Contented, cheerful, and happy, is the man who has a good conscience ; discontented, unquiet, and tormented by the reproaches of a bad conscience, is the sinner. Ah ! how miserable does sin make man ! Behold the damned in hell ! What has made them so utterly wretched—what has cast them out of heaven, and deprived them for ever of the possession and enjoyment of God ? Sin. What has precipitated them into hell, eternal damnation, the society of the devils, into fire that will never be extinguished ? Sin—sin, nothing but sin ! What a great evil, then, is sin. and how necessary is it to know this greatest evil !

II. If we rightly understand the innate malice and two-fold injury of sin, we shall also *detest it, confess it, and amend our life*

1. Reflecting that your sins have been a base ingratitude to God for all his benefits ; that your disobedience to your heavenly Father has deeply wounded his tender heart ; that your crimes have crucified Jesus anew, and abused all the graces of the Holy Ghost ;—if you consider the goodness, longanimity, and mercy of God, and the hardness, cruelty, and malice of your heart,—*how can you help being sorry, and sorely afflicted in spirit ?* Into what misfortune has not sin plunged you ! What injury has it not done to your souls ! Of what precious goods has it not robbed you ! It is your greatest enemy, persistently seeking to destroy you, and plunge you into hell. *Must you not then hate and*

detest it? And if you consider, that you cannot repair your offenses against God, your ingratitude, your disobedience to your greatest Benefactor, the whole malice of your works—that you cannot regain the friendship of God, recover your lost goods and graces, nor obtain the pardon of your sins, until you have freed yourselves from the slavery of the devil, thrown off your load of guilt, made an entire confession, and laid the foundation of your future life by a sincere return to God and virtue,—how you will hasten *to make such a confession, and begin the amendment of your life!*

2. It is impossible for a man who has once known the malice and heinousness of sin, to remain in it. The sad experience of the multitude, who continue with utter indifference to live in their sins, always adding new offenses to the old, is only to be explained by this—that they do not fully realize the greatness, malice, and heinousness of their sins. A sick man cannot be helped as long as his sickness is not known; but when once he knows what ails him, he can easily recover his health.

Hence, all spiritual writers say, that the main point in the conversion of a sinner is, that he should know his sin; the first step to amendment, is the knowledge of the sin; just as the first step to love, is the knowledge of the object. I cannot love that which I do not know; and I cannot hate that which I do not know. When St. Peter knew how ungratefully he had acted in denying his Lord and Master, he remained no longer among the group about the fire, but went out weeping, and repented bitterly of his sin.

If your Easter confession is to avail you truly and lastingly to salvation, you must endeavor to attain a real knowledge of the greatness and malice of your sins. Therefore, enter into yourselves, examine your hearts; and, if you find that they are addicted to sinful habits, to impurity, intemperance, anger, envy, pride,—consider, how you have thereby offended God, and exposed your salvation to the greatest danger. Implore your divine Lord, sincerely and humbly, to make you know your sins, and to inspire you with a great hatred, with a true sorrow, for them. Then, go and make your Easter confession,—penetrated with a firm purpose of amendment. Let no false shame deter you from confessing all your sins, even the most grievous; mention their number and each of the circumstances, which make known the greatness and species of your sin. Have confidence in your confessor; tell him everything that weighs upon your heart, and submit yourselves obediently to his judgment, his instructions, his counsels, and commands. O, you shall see how happy you will be, when you are once more reconciled with God,—when the load of sin is removed, and you have obtained

again true peace of heart ! It will seem to you as if you had been born anew. This holy season invites you to it, especially the memory of the bitter Passion and death of Christ, which, at this time, are brought before our eyes. The consideration of the sufferings of Jesus must surely move us to detest sin ; and by a good confession, we shall partake of the merits of his Passion. Amen.

PASSION SUNDAY.

THE THREE STONES OF UNBELIEF, PRIDE, AND DISOBEDIENCE.

“ Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.” (John 8 : 59.)

The Gospel of this day relates to us a marvelous fact. The divine Saviour, who wished to be always about his Father's business—who, with holy anger, drove out of the Temple the buyers, sellers, and money-changers,—is driven out of the Temple, in his turn, by wicked men. He is no longer master in his own house ; he permits himself to be expelled from the holy place, and, going forth, has not whereon to lay his head. Jesus flies before his own creatures. Alas ! how shall the light shine upon the darkened people, whence shall their strength come for battle with the enemy, whence their consolation in suffering and tribulations, if the Sun of Justice departs, if the captain leaves his army, and the Father of the poor, the Comforter of the afflicted, the Physician of the sick, departs from the place of consolation ! If the builders reject the corner-stone, upon what shall the edifice rest ? If they reject the architect, who shall direct the building ? Unless the Lord keep the house, who shall watch it successfully ? The divine Saviour fled from the Jews—and this was the cause of their ruin. The overthrow of Jerusalem and the destruction of its world-renowned Temple, teach us, that if Christ flies to-day from the temples of our hearts, his departure is the signal of our eternal ruin. Who would not gladly avert from himself this sacrilege ? Who would not gladly prevent himself from being robbed of divine consolation and love ? Who would not cheerfully ward off from himself the judgment of divine justice, and the curse of coming perdition ? We, too, alas ! like the Jews, throw stones.

at our Lord, which drive him ignominiously away from our interior temple. These stones are our sins ; but especially, those of

- I. *Our unbelief,*
- II. *Our pride,* and
- III. *Our disobedience.*

Impiety and forgetfulness of God have, at all times, undermined and destroyed the happiness of families, kingdoms, and nations. Always and every where, the old truth has been corroborated : He that forsakes God, will, in turn, be forsaken by God. We are taught this by extinct nations, which were adorned with the victorious crown of glory ; by the flames and deep wounds of civil wars ; by the bloody contests of disunited nations ; by the rebellion against lawful authority, and by the moral immersion of so many nations in sins and vices. We are taught this by the blood-stained pages of the past ; by the poverty and misery of our present age ; by those deep-seated diseases of modern times which gnaw at the very root of family-life, and corrupt the fountains of the human heart. Yes, he that flies from God, his loving Father, goes into the land of famine and humiliation, and languishes under the tyranny of his passions. To him who turns his back upon God, as Jonas did, nothing remains but to perish in a sea of sin and perdition. He who leaves the Jerusalem of divine worship and goes down into the Jericho of impiety and godlessness, will fall among the robbers of his passions, who will strip him of his goods, i. e., of the treasures of grace, and leave him half-dead by the road-side. The civil wars and combats of our time, the vilification of authority, the bitter hatred against the Church and her priesthood speak much of this flight from, and forgetfulness of, God. The Christian who does not hold fast to God's paternal hand, has no longer any stay or protection on earth. If he will not permit himself to be carried as a precious stone in the ring of the elect, he deprives himself of all real honor ; for true and lasting honor is only that which God gives. Whence—he may ask himself—is the modern spirit of perdition and unhappiness, whilst every where the door of grace stands open?—Whence, the hatred and mockery of men at everything sacred and venerable?—Whence, the continual opposition to, and assault upon, the Church, which has ever proved itself the rock of God, triumphing over the downfall of weak, human works? All this comes

I. From *Unbelief*. Unbelief drives Christ out of the heart. It is the flinty stone which hatred, derision, and malice fling against our holy faith, and its sacred ministers and ceremonies. *The stones of St. Stephen* are but a small symbol of all the stones which, in word and writing, in

jest and earnestness, with malice or ignorance, have been collected and cast from eager hands, in battle against the Church of Christ. The Jews of old have many modern imitators. The hatred and malice of the Jews, their blasphemy and dishonor of the divine Saviour, whom no one could convince of sin, proceeded from their unbelief. Unbelief seeks its own honor, not the honor of God ; it will not subject itself to truth ; and, from blindness or fanaticism, it is not capable of knowing and valuing the truth. And yet, nothing is so plain and evident to reason, nothing so adapted to the human capacity, as divine truth. Nothing is more convincing and lovely, than the mild doctrine of the Father to the son, the call of the good Shepherd to the sheep, the Master's word of truth to the disciples ! "He that is of God, heareth the word of God ;" he who does not seek his own honor, but the honor of his heavenly Father, will, at once, find honor ; for, "there is one who seeketh and judgeth." But the unbeliever, who resists the divine truth, and contradicts and blasphemes God, has severed the holiest of bonds : the bonds of love, of gratitude, of filial devotedness, which bind him to God. He has cut himself off from the truth ; he has rebelled against the divine Law-giver, and provoked his future Judge, into whose hands it will be terrible, one day, to fall. The word of God becomes for him a sword, which strikes and wounds him, a sentence of death which condemns him, a stumbling-block which crushes him. But, to the believer, it is a joyful message, which reveals to him his salvation, and prophesies to him the starry crown of eternal glory. It is a fruitful seed, which, received in a loving heart, produces fruit a hundredfold. It is a pledge of his honor, which he seeks in a fervent worship of God, and which he will surely obtain, through the help of the divine grace.

If, therefore, you wish to have honor—*believe* ; to secure your salvation, subject yourselves now to the mild sway of the Gospel ; to secure your eternal glory, submit to the saving truth, which, to-day, as of yore, is confessed, loved, and honored by the whole of Christendom. Unbelief separates from God, and strips man of all honor, here and hereafter. Those who are not of God, do not hear the word of God. Think of the honor which the Gospel of Christ has brought to the whole world, and to individuals—the honor, which the word of God has won in so many kingdoms and nations—the honor, which has invested the cross of Christ with a world-wide, sparkling, glowing splendor—glorifying that which is foolishness to the Jews, and a stumbling-block to the Gentiles ! Think of the magnificent temple of Jerusalem, and the grand cathedrals which the exalted spirit of faith has erected ! Behold, what the human spirit can do, when, united with and strengthened by, the grace of God, it works and strives in his divine service. Unbelief can do nothing but pull down and destroy the holy edifice, casting the consecrated stones thereof,

in the anger and blindness of its heart, at God, and at the holy truths of faith. Such were its achievements formerly, and such are they to-day. O, let us, then, lay *a firm foundation* for our temporal and eternal welfare, in humble faith—placing on it, and cementing well, the precious building-stones of divine grace, and of a fervent worship of God, and adorning the summit of this spiritual temple with the holy cross. Formerly, that cross appeared as a sign of ignominy on the bloody heights of Golgotha,—but now, as a trophy of victory, it sends forth its rays from the glittering apex of innumerable spires and towers throughout the world. Therefore, subject yourselves believingly to the holy Cross, which brought honor to the world, and which will bring honor to you with the Lord for time and eternity!

II. *Pride.*

1. Humility must accompany faith; it is its stay and support. Pride hardens the heart, and drives Jesus out of his temple. Hence, came the anger and hatred of the Jews, because the Lord pointed out to them their secret sins, vices, and passions. They were incensed against him, because he disclosed the folly of their proud faith in the Messiah, and laid bare their pride in their unmerited extraction from Abraham,—because he uncovered and frustrated their malice, and the dark designs of their hearts. O, if they had but entered into themselves, and cast out the stumbling-blocks which hindered the entry of Jesus, how gladly would he have rejoiced them by his presence! If they had not nourished and fostered the passions which Jesus reproved in them, and not turned them against their Redeemer and Saviour, they surely would have found their salvation. They exalted themselves and their own wisdom—and yet, how little do they appear to-day! Vain and void, are their assaults upon the Rock of Ages, petty and impotent their passions;—their anger was as a puff of wind from the mouth of a child, utterly unable to overthrow the impregnable structure of God. They persecuted their Redeemer, they hated their Benefactor. They killed the Lord of their life by the pride of their hearts; they pursued him with their malice to their own perdition—for the divine Justice has judged and rejected them.

2. The same proud resistance, the same hatred, the same blindness and infatuation against the eternal Truth and the divine Law, to-day, accompany and sustain Unbelief. The stormy sea of human pride and rebellious passion still assails the bark of Christ and his Church. How unreasonable is all this! One glance at the blindness and shortsightedness of man, at the weakness of his will, the inconstancy of his heart,

clearly manifests his impotence. What would you make of yourself, mortal man? Are you not a weak worm, whose life is evanescent as smoke,—whose heart is an abyss of the basest passions? What do you think yourself, what do you make yourself, whose thoughts are empty and wavering, like the reed,—whose strength is like a dry, withered leaf,—a little dust,—whose interior is a den, wherein dwell murderers of every virtue! What would you make of yourself, who are impotent, sinful, and miserable,—a leper, a paralytic, a publican, in the eyes of God? A single glance from God can annihilate you; one breath from him—and you wither; one wish—and you are no longer in the land of the living! What would you make of yourself, who are nothing? Your word is but a passing breath; your passions and your life tracelessly disappear upon the shores of Time, as the waves of the sea upon the strand. Your honor is nothing; if you seek and find the honor of a venal world, lo! it is of no value, since it cries out *Hosanna!* to-day, and *Crucify him!* to-morrow.

3. Hence, despise the pride which drives Christ out of your hearts, and love *humility*, which draws him to make his lasting abode therein. Love humility, which Christ taught by his exalted example, when he humbled himself unto death, even the death of the cross. He has pointed out to us the thorny way of humility and mortification, as the way to eternal glory; he has ennobled the way of the cross by his own foot-prints; he has made humiliations, sufferings, and sacrifices the royal road to heavenly glory. “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may also exalt you in the time of visitation;” for, who has ever resisted God, and had peace? Who has ever raised the sword against God, and conquered? *Humility* is the foundation of the edifice of virtue, of the temple of sanctity. As the corner-stone of humility, Christ dwells amongst us in the Blessed Eucharist. Humility and confidence in God have made the Church great, for it is the mother of union and concord; but pride is the disturber of peace, the teacher of rebellion, the enemy of unity, and of eternal salvation. The building of the tower of Babel teaches us a useful lesson. When powers are divided, the peace and happiness of individuals, as well as of nations, are prejudiced. Now-a-days, men seek their own honor, they build their own house of happiness, and refuse obedience to the divine Teacher and Architect. Hence God has confounded them and abandoned them to the obstinacy of their own hearts. Seek, therefore, the honor of God, in the humility and simplicity of your hearts; for, what will the honor of a corrupt world profit you, if God does not honor you? How can disgrace before the whole world harm you, if God honors and exalts you? Pride always hastens to the abyss, and soon falls a victim to the divine judgment.

III. *Disobedience.*

1. Obedience must follow faith and humility, for the three are inseparable. If faith is firm and humble, it will naturally lead to obedience. Hence, every true believer can say with Jesus: "I know him (the Father) and keep his words." I know him in the world, and bow down under *his* law, who has given laws to nature, and prescribed to the world its course. I know him in his divine providence, and live joyfully resigned to God, trusting to the power of grace, which makes me strong in my infirmity, and enables me to do all good. I know him in his holy Church and his holy will, and I submit to them, and cheerfully walk in the way of his commandments, because to serve him is to reign!"

Therefore, the true Christian knows no other will but that of his heavenly Father. Its fulfilment is his food. He daily prays: "Thy will be done!" *The cross on the altar* reminds him of the necessity of subduing his own will, and of entirely sacrificing it to God; for obedience is better than sacrifice. *The cross on the steeple* teaches him that obedience conducts to true exaltation; and that the kingdom of heaven is promised to the good and faithful servant. *The cross in the cemetery* proclaims that, only through the cross of obedience and self-denial, man shall find repose and peace here, and eternal rest, hereafter. How little is this understood and appreciated, now-a-days! With criminal contempt and pride, the stones of sin are flung at God and his holy law; and God, who sees their sinful ways and the malice of their hearts, flies before them, and abandons them to their own wickedness and hardness of heart. From afar, he hears the rage and tumult of the nations—but he laughs them to scorn. Be not deceived; God will not suffer himself to be mocked; for he is a God of order, and, like the sound of a violent, approaching storm, hastens the day of his vengeance, the day of perdition to sinners!

2. Let us all work, therefore, for the glory of God, through humble obedience; for obedience is the foundation of all stable society, of all family happiness, and civil peace, as well as of the blessing of our holy mother, the Church. Society, in its essence, may be compared to a building which must be erected by the architect, according to a certain fixed plan. The laborers must obey his orders, or the building cannot be properly completed. The grand Architect of the Church is God, who, in his divine providence, carries out and elaborates his plans for the benefit of the nations. His workmen are the priests and the faithful, all laboring to perfect the interior and exterior of that sublime institute. His commandments are the laws and orders by which all must be governed. Consequently, he who in the evening of life, expects wages, must diligently work, and obey the will of God.

You see, therefore, my brethren, that there are two kinds of stones—building-stones of salvation, and mill-stones of perdition. Of the former, are God's graces and commandments, faith, the voice of the priest and of conscience, the moments and opportunities of doing good, the good example of others, the faculties of body and soul. These are truly precious building-stones of salvation, placed in your hands to erect therewith the edifice of a holy life. How many, alas! fling them in the hatred and malice of their hearts, against God, their Benefactor and Law-giver! Do you, my beloved, employ them for your salvation. Lay with them a firm foundation, in humility, upon the corner-stone, Jesus Christ and his holy faith. Add stone to stone; unite them with the cement of divine love, with a pure intention, and thus, erect the temple of your salvation for the honor of God, and your own eternal repose. Amen.

BISHOP EHRLER.

PALM SUNDAY.

THE JEWISH HOSANNA AND THE CHRISTIAN HOSANNA

Hosanna to the Son of David." (Matt. 21 : 9.)

SHORT SERMON ON THE GOSPEL.

Thousands and thousands of people had already been assembled, to-day, in Jerusalem, coming from the four quarters of the earth ; for the festival of the Pasch was at hand, and the Jews were bidden to adore the Lord in his Temple, according to the Law of Moses. Here it was, that the divine Saviour wished to fulfil the prophecy of Zachary : " Jerusalem, thou daughter of Sion. Behold, thy king cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass." He wished to enter Jerusalem as the promised Messiah. What a glorious day for our Lord ! What a glorious reception from that immense multitude, who cried out to him : "*Hosanna to the Son of David!*" But no, this *Hosanna* was nothing more than a painful greeting to him in whose ears the coming : "*Crucify him ! crucify him !*" already sounded. He, the Searcher of hearts, knew the fickleness of all who now received him with jubilation, and exultation. Faithless Jews ! To-day, "*Hosanna!*" and after a few, short days, "*Crucify him!*" O that it were not so, faithless Christians !—To-day, "*Hosanna!*" to-morrow : "*Crucify him !*" Let us consider to our sorrow and grief, but also to our salvation :

- I. *The Hosanna of the Jews,* and
- II. *The Hosanna of the Christians.*

1. If we review the public life of our Lord, we find that the Jewish people or at least, the majority of those who saluted him, to-day, with loud acclamations of *Hosanna!* had already frequently overwhelmed him with praise, had called him their greatest Benefactor, and declared him to be the true Messiah ; thus, uttering to him in other words, their jubilant *Hosanna!* When he had healed the paralytic, they praised God for having given "such power to man" (the Man-God, Christ). (Matt. 9 : 8.) When he had raised the daughter of Jairus to life, and healed the two blind men, they spread his fame abroad in all that country." (Matt. 9 :

26 : 30.) When he had freed the blind and dumb demoniac from all his sufferings, the multitudes were amazed, and said : "Is not this the Son of David?" (Matt. 12 : 23.) When, one day, he had calmed a great storm, they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying : "Thou art truly the Son of God." (Matt. 14 : 33.) "And there came to him great multitudes, having with them the dumb, the blind, the lame, the maimed, and many others : and they cast them down at his feet, and he healed them. And the multitudes wondered, seeing the dumb speak, the lame walk, the blind see, and they glorified the God of Israel." (Matt. 15 : 30, 31.) And, when he had restored hearing and speech to another deaf-mute, the people exclaimed : "He hath done all things well : he hath made both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." (Mark 7 : 37.) And, when he had raised up the youth of Naim, "there came a fear on them all, and they glorified God, saying : That a great prophet is risen up among us : and God hath visited his people." (Luke 7 : 16.) Again, after his conversation with the Samaritan woman, when he had instructed the people who remained with him for two days, they said : "We know, indeed, that this is the Saviour of the world." (John 4 : 42.) And when, in a miraculous manner, he had fed five thousand people with five loaves of bread and a few fishes, they, seeing the miracle he had done, said : "This is the prophet, indeed, that is to come into the world." And the Evangelist tells us, that they went even so far as that they would take him by force and make him king. (John 6 : 14, 15.) All these expressions and praises of Jesus by the people were, in reality, so many joyful *Hosannas*.

But the crowning tribute of praise, was the outcry wherewith they greeted him at his solemn entry into Jerusalem : "Hosanna to the Son of David ; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Blessed is he, who has conferred on us so many benefits ; blessed is he, who has made the blind to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak ; who gave bread to the hungry, health to the sick, and life to the dead. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord,—that is, blessed is he who is sent by God as the true Messiah and Saviour of the world ! Could the people give greater praise to Jesus ? Could they express their love more plainly ? Could they more solemnly confess their belief in him, and in his divine mission ?

Yet, behold these same people five days later ! What a change of mind ! What an alteration in their sentiments ! What different conduct towards the unjustly accused Jesus ! What brutal behaviour towards him, when he was in the hands of his enemies ! What malice, when those enemies had excited the fickle multitude against their Redeemer ! What did these very men do who, a few days before, had cried out : "*Hosanna* to the Son of David !" —? What did they do when they had a choice

between Barabbas the murderer, and the innocent Lamb of God? Instead of *Hosanna*, they cried out: "Crucify him!" What did they do when Pilate asked them: "What evil hath he done!"—? They cried out the more: "Let him be crucified!" What did they do, when Pilate said: "I am innocent of the blood of this just man?"—? They answered: "His blood be upon us and our children." (Matt. 27 : 20-25.) What did they do, when Pilate showed him to the people after his cruel scourging, in order to move them to pity, and obtain his release? They cried out, saying: "If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend." And again: What did they do—they who, a short time ago, would make him king,—when Pilate said to them: "Behold your king!"—? They cried out: "Away with him, away with him, crucify him! We have no king but Cæsar!" And when he was hanging on the cross—they, who before had said: "This is truly the Son of God" (Matt. 14 : 33), blasphemed him, wagging their heads, and saying: "Vah, thou that 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." (Matt. 27 : 40.)

Who is not incensed in his heart, against this fickle-minded and faithless people? Who is not tempted to pronounce a curse upon those, who, in spite of the many benefits which they received from the divine Saviour, and in spite of their knowing him by his many miracles, to be the Son of God, and declaring him to be such, went over to his enemies, and with satanic malice and obstinacy, demanded that he should be crucified!—But no, let us not curse them; let us rather turn our indignation against ourselves, and against all other guilty Christians; for, let us admit with grief and horror, that our *Hosanna*, like that of the Jews, is frequently followed by their cruel: "Crucify him!"

II. We say in the Creed: "I believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, our Lord." We confess that for us and for our salvation, he suffered and died on the cross. We say of him, that he rose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father, on the throne of his glory. And, in this confession, we pronounce over our divine Redeemer, as it were, *our Hosanna*. We say in the *Hail Mary*: "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus,"—and we say with the Gospel of this day: "Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord." These are our *Hosannas*, or expressions of joy and jubilation. What do we when we follow the sorrowful *Way of the Cross*, and contemplate at each *Station* a special suffering of Jesus? We sigh over his Passion and Death, expressing in every sigh, our *Hosanna* to our Crucified Love. Finally, what do we, when, on Easter Sunday, we rejoice over the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ, and are glad at

his victory over sin, death, and hell? We join in the joyful *Alleluia* of the risen Saviour, we give vent to our *Hosanna* to the triumphant Redeemer.

But what do we, if—after Jesus has atoned for our sins by his passion and death—we sin anew? What do we, if,—after having cleansed ourselves by a true repentance from our sins, in this holy time, and, in our joy over our resurrection from sin, having chanted the joyful *Alleluia*,—we relapse into our old sins? We do far worse than the faithless Jewish people. We become not only fickle, and unfaithful to the divine Saviour, crying out with the Jews to the Pilate of this world: “Away with him, away with him! let him be crucified!” but we crucify him ourselves, as St. Paul expressly says: “They (sinners) crucify again to themselves the Son of God, making a mockery of him.” (Hebr. 6: 6.) We crucify him by envy, like the Scribes and Pharisees; and deliver him into the hands of his enemies. We crucify him by our avarice, covetousness, and injustice; and sell him, like Judas, for thirty pieces of silver—for ill-gotten goods. We crucify him, by bearing false witness against our neighbor—by lies, calumny, slander, and detraction, whereby his enemies obtained his sentence of death. We crucify him by our pride, and again thrust the painful crown of thorns upon his head. We crucify him by the sin of impurity, and nail him, naked and shamefully exposed, to the cross. We crucify him by gluttony and intemperance, and give him vinegar and gall to drink. We crucify him by curses, imprecations, and blasphemies, to which we give vent in our anger and madness, like the wicked Jews and the cruel executioners beneath the cross. We crucify him by every single mortal sin, for which Jesus has endured a special suffering.

O, unfaithful Jewish people, how often have you cried out, “*Hosanna*” to Jesus! And, to-day, you exclaim: “Crucify him, crucify him!” O, far more unfaithful Christian people! How often has not every Catholic Christian, in his prayers and holy hymns, praised and glorified Jesus, saluting him with “*Hosanna!*” How often, after every confession, has he not renewed his promise of being faithful and loyal to his Lord, and how often has he broken his faith, and again and again relapsed into the old sins, thereby crucifying Christ anew! Ah! dear brethren, henceforth, it must not be so. From this very day, no more breaches of fidelity—no more inconstancy and fickleness! On the contrary, from this very hour, let us firmly renounce our former unfaithfulness. Never again, crucify Christ by a mortal sin, but remain faithful to him all the days of your life, that you may be found worthy to join with his Angels and Saints, hereafter, in the joyous and never-ending *Hosannas* of Paradise. Amen.

PALM SUNDAY.

THE ENTRANCE OF JESUS INTO THE JERUSALEM OF OUR HEARTS

"Behold thy king cometh to thee, meek." (Matt. 21 : 5.)

SHORT SERMON ON THE GOSPEL.

The triumphal entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem confers a great honor and a great grace upon that city. He enters her most solemnly, because he desires to make her happy ; he will bring her peace ; she is to receive him as her king ; he will reign in her, and of his reign, there shall be no end. But alas ! Jerusalem refuses to acknowledge him as her ruler ; she keeps aloof from him ; and those of her children who go to meet him, who receive him, do not remain loyal to him, are not constant in their love and fidelity,—they soon change their sentiments, and fall away from him.

This ungrateful, faithless Jerusalem is a true picture of our own souls.

I. Consider first, how Jerusalem treated our Lord. She was a city chosen by God for great things, and honored by countless graces. In her, was the Holy of Holies, the Ark of the Covenant, the visible image of the invisible presence of God. In her, was the Temple, to which all Israelites were obliged to come at certain times, to adore God. To her inhabitants, God sent most of the Prophets, and they were the witnesses of most sublime miracles and revelations from on high. Neither were they spared the great visitations and chastisements which God inflicts upon his people for their amendment. And when the Saviour had come, he manifested himself to Jerusalem in the most important events of his life. As a child, he appeared in the Temple, and caused himself to be announced therein as the world's Redeemer, through the pious Simeon and the devout Anna ; as a boy of twelve years, he there attracted the admiration of the teachers of the people ; and in later years, he often taught in the Temple. He wrought his greatest miracles in Jerusalem and its immediate vicinity : there, he healed the man who had been blind from his birth ; the paralytic, who had been under his

infirmity for thirty-eight years ; and raised up Lazarus, who had already been in the grave for four days. Thinking sorrowfully of all these miracles, of all these benefits, which God had conferred upon Jerusalem from the beginning down to his own days, Jesus gave vent to those pathetic words : "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how much have I loved thee, how often have I visited thee in my grace and mercy ! Fain would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her young ones under her wings, but"—he adds immediately—"but thou wouldst not!" By these few words, he declares all the ingratitude and disobedience, all the stubbornness, fickle-mindedness, inconstancy, and instability wherewith Jerusalem requited the manifold benefits of God. How deeply did this city sin against Jesus ! In her, dwelt his bitterest and most inveterate enemies,—those who hated him, persecuted him, and sought his life. His miracles made no impression upon this unbelieving generation—his doctrines and teachings were ignored by them.

The time of his Passion drew near. Jesus intended once more to show himself to them—once more, to offer them his grace, and make another, and last attempt to gain the affections of their hearts. He celebrates his solemn entry into Jerusalem—and, for a time, they seem to be moved by this proof of his love. Full of joy and enthusiastic devotion, they go to meet him ; they spread their garments in his way ; they cut boughs from the trees, and strew his path therewith ; they cry out : "*Hosanna* to the Son of David ! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord !" But this good sentiment, this joy, this exultation, is but short-lived. A few days later, these very same people cry out : "Crucify him, crucify him !"

II. Thus, alas ! do many Christians deal with Jesus ! *We have received far greater graces than the Jews.* Through the Sacrament of Baptism, we have had the unmerited grace to be made children of God, members of the only true and saving Church. We have learned through faith, to know God ; we have been sufficiently instructed with regard to our eternal destiny, God's designs over us, our last aim and end, and the means for attaining it. We have the preaching of the Gospel, whereby we are taught all truths ; and the holy Sacraments, whereby we are strengthened to all good. We have priests who are constantly and exclusively occupied with our salvation ; we have churches, in which Jesus Christ is really present ; we have the holy Mass wherein the Son of God offers himself daily anew on our altars, and wherein he confers on us, daily, numberless graces. We have our beautiful, sublime, public worship ; the festivals of God and of his Saints, and many exercises of devotion, whereby piety and the fear of God are promoted. We cannot complain that God has neglected anything for our salvation ; we cannot excuse

ourselves by pleading that we have no opportunity for working out our salvation. We can work it out, if we only will.

Jesus also celebrates his entrance into our hearts. In holy Communion, he takes possession of our hearts. In this holy Easter-time, and through our holy Easter Communion, Jesus comes to us, and within our souls, we may hear these words resounding : " Behold thy king cometh to thee, meek ! " In order to receive him worthily, we, too, must make a proper preparation. We must cleanse our souls from every defilement, from the old leaven of sin. Only in pure souls, will Jesus make his abode ; we must cast off the works of darkness, if we wish to put on Christ. The best preparation for a holy Easter Communion, is, therefore, a good Easter confession. *That* is equivalent to spreading our garments before Jesus, to strewing the branches of trees in his way ; *that* is our *Hosanna*, wherewith we greet him, and rejoice over his triumphant entry into our souls.

But let us see to it, that we do not imitate the inconstant Jews in their fickle-minded apostasy. Give not Jesus a glorious reception, to-day, only to thrust him, to-morrow, ignominiously from the city of our souls. Let us not confess and communicate to-day, and to-morrow, return once more to our old sinful habits ; to-day, abhor iniquity, and to-morrow, return to wallow, like swine, in the mire. Alas ! how many of us have, hitherto, acted thus towards Jesus ! How often have we promised amendment, and how often broken our promise ! How often, made a good beginning, and failed to persevere in what we had begun ! Ah ! time and again, we have become disloyal and unfaithful to Jesus ; again and again, we have fallen back into faults which we had just before repented of, and confessed ! By our inconstancy, by our instability, we have often offended God ; in fact, done the very same things which Jesus reprehended in the Jewish people. One day, we have cried out in the joy of our hearts : "*Hosanna* to the Son of David ! " and the next, in the malice of our hearts : " Crucify him, crucify him ! "

Now that Jesus comes to us in this holy Easter-time, let us firmly resolve to forsake him no more. We know not whether he will ever come again to us ;—whether the measure of grace, or of sin, will not henceforth be filled up for us. Let us, then, receive Jesus in such a manner, that he may never more leave us, and that we may never again be separated from him for time and eternity. Amen.

ZIEGLER

GOOD FRIDAY.

THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

“Attend and see, if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.”
(Lament. I : 12.)

Jesus Crucified! Two little words, and yet, how full of important significance! *Jesus Crucified!* Alas! our loving Lord has suffered and died for us! A tragedy has been completed, at the sight of which the sun grew dark, the moon hid herself, rocks were rent, the earth trembled, and all nature was troubled. Man, alone, remains unmoved. O, beloved brethren! what an outrage! Behold your crucified Saviour! “We have seen him, and there was no sightliness that we should be desirous of him.” (Is. 53 : 2.) I saw him, says the Prophet, and he was “the most abject of men, despised; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity.” (Is. 53 : 3.) O crucified Saviour, art thou he “who hast made the morning-light and the sun” (Ps. 73 : 16); who “art beautiful above the sons of men” (Ps. 44 : 3); on “whom the angels desire to look” (1. Pet. 1 : 12); “to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28 : 18); and “who hath poised with three fingers the bulk of the earth”? (Is. 40 : 12.) “Cruel Jews!” I exclaim; and yet, the next moment, I ask myself: “Why am I filled with rage at the Jews?” Which of us can say: “I am innocent of the blood of this just man”? (Matt. 27 : 24.) The Jews crucified him, and we Christians helped them in their bloody work. Yes, they only crucified him once, and we so often!—alas! innumerable times! It may be, that this has been the case, heretofore, but if, to-day, we attend seriously and see what our sins have brought upon our loving Redeemer, and what he suffered on our account it is impossible for us ever to sin again.

Therefore, consider

- I. *The interior anguish, and*
- II. *The exterior sufferings, of our Lord Jesus Christ in his cruel Passion and Death.*

These two important considerations are calculated to re-ignite within us the extinguished fire of divine love. And do thou, O divine Word!

speak to the hearts of these people, whilst I appeal to their ears ; do thou act, whilst I speak ; and you, my beloved friends, attend and see !

I. Among the interior sufferings of Christ, we include

1. *Those of his Agony in the Garden of Olives,*
2. *Of his cruel mockery, and*
3. *Of the manifold calumnies he endured.*

1. The grand tragedy of Redemption began in the Garden of Gethsemane. Our Saviour commenced his work of atonement where Adam sinned. "The God of all consolation, who comforteth us in all our tribulations" (2. Cor. 1 : 2), began to be sorrowful and very heavy. He himself confesses : "My heart is troubled within me, and the fear of death is fallen upon me." (Ps. 54. 5.) What may be the cause of this exterior affliction ? Perhaps, it is because the mighty sufferings of his Passion are close at hand ? But, "he was offered because it was his own will." (Is. 53 : 7.) He is the ransom for our sins. "He hath rejoiced as a giant" (Ps. 18 : 6), to complete the work of our redemption. It could not, then, have been his impending sufferings which caused his grief. *Sin*, alas, SIN is the cause ! The enormity of sin, the number of sins, the ingratitude of the sinner. Consider the enormity of even one mortal sin, and the majesty of him who is thereby offended ! "Who," says the Psalmist, "can understand sins ?" (Ps. 18 : 13.) And who is there amongst us that must not acknowledge : "My iniquities are multiplied above the hairs of my head" ? (Ps. 39 : 13.) In considering man's ingratitude, our Saviour, no doubt, thought within himself : "What profit is there in my blood ?" (Ps. 29 : 10.) "There is none that doeth good, not one." (Ps. 13 : 2.) Be not surprised, then, that the magnitude of Christ's sufferings, in the Garden of Olives, was able to force the red torrent from every pore in his innocent body, so that "his sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground." (Luke 22 : 44.)

2. And now, behold, Judas, the faithless Judas, comes forward, and betrays him. The Jews fall upon him, seizing and binding him. My God ! and art thou bound, who alone possesseth the power to bind and loose ? Ah, "let us break these bonds asunder !" (Ps. 2 : 3.) Alas ! my Saviour, no earthly bonds would have had power to bind thee, if thou hadst not already been bound by the cords of love ! Couldst thou not free thyself, who released Lazarus from the shackles of death, and struck off the chains from Peter ? Yes, but he submits to it, like a gentle lamb, for love of us ! O sorrowful sight ! "They began to spit on him," says the Evangelist (Mark 14 : 65) ; and, in short, they spat on him so often that he resembled a leper. The Latin words used, express strongly the number and atrocity of these outrages to the sacred person

of the incarnate God. My beloved friends, may not this filthy spittle be the water to which our Saviour refers, when he cries out in the person of the Psalmist : " The waters have come in even unto my soul " ? (Ps. 68 : 2.) Are not these other words fulfilled to-day : " He shall be filled with reproaches " ? (Lam. 3 : 30.) But the rage of his enemies is not yet satisfied. They blindfold him, they strike him, and ask him mockingly : " Prophesy, who is it that struck thee ? " (Luke 22 : 64.) Oh ! fools ! " He that planted the ear, shall he not hear, and he that formed the eye, doth he not consider ? " (Ps. 93 : 9.) Is not this meek, silent Victim, he " who seeth in secret " ? (Matt. 6 : 6.) Truly, they do not know him ; and say within themselves : " There is no God. " (Ps. 13 : 1.) But one day, they will look with consternation upon him whom they have pierced. Human words are utterly unable to express how great were the sufferings of our Saviour during this scorn and mockery.

3. In order to realize more clearly the interior torments of our Redeemer, I beg of you to consider the awful calumnies of which the Jews had been guilty, to secure his sentence of death ; the vices which caused this sentence to be given ; and the persons who took part in it. As to the calumnies, they were almost innumerable. Furthermore, since Jesus came to atone for all sin, every vice had a share in helping to condemn him : and, since he died for all, his persecutors and enemies were of all conditions of life. " They held counsel. " (Matt. 27 : 1.) " They sought false witness against Jesus, that they might put him to death. " (Matt. 26 : 59.) Consider the judge, the witnesses, the verdict. The judge was exasperated at him ; the witnesses were bribed, for " their hand is filled with gifts " (Ps. 25 : 10) ; the judgment or sentence was highly unjust. Consider the mockery of such a trial. The Creator stands at the bar of his own wretched creatures ! God is interrogated most sternly by a worm of the earth : " What hast thou done ? " Did they not know that " he hath done all things well, he hath made the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak " ? (Mark 5 : 37.) Yes, he has, indeed, done so much good, that if all his works and words were written (says the Evangelist), " the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written. " (John 21 : 25.) And yet, they say : " He hath blasphemed, " (Matt. 26 : 65)—" He is guilty of death, —He must die ! " " My amiable Jesus ! we have sinned, and thou must expiate it ! An act which should never have taken place ! A grace of which we are undeserving ! A love beyond measure ! " (St. Bernard.)

II. *To the exterior sufferings of our Saviour, belong chiefly .*

1. *The scourging,*
2. *The crowning with thorns, and*
3. *The crucifixion.*

1. The sufferings which Christ experienced in his soul were certainly infinitely great ; but they are not so apparent to us, and therefore, they do not touch us as much as mere physical pains are apt to do. "So lift up your heads !" (Luke 21 : 28) and behold our blessed Saviour coming sorrowfully forth from the court of Pilate. For what purpose ? "I am ready for scourges," he himself says. (Ps. 37 : 18.) "Many are the scourges of the sinner" (Ps. 31 : 10) ; but "my heart is ready, my heart is ready," to embrace them all ! (Ps. 107 : 2.) He is stripped, who, from eternity was clad in majesty and strength ; he who clothed the heavens with clouds, the trees with leaves, the earth with plants and flowers. He was bound to a pillar, "before whom, the pillars of heaven tremble." (Joel 26 : 11.) O, what a terrible tragedy ! It is sad to look upon, whether we consider the executioners, their instruments, or the scourging itself ! The executioners are like "the fat bulls," spoken of by the Psalmist. (Ps. 21 : 13.) They are "swift to shed blood." (Ps. 13 : 3.) The instruments used were rods woven of thorns. The scourging is, in itself, a most ignominious and painful punishment ; disgraceful, as being the punishment only of slaves ; and exceedingly painful, because the executioners offered their services not merely to scourge him, but to scourge him to death. The blood spouted forth copiously. "From the sole of the foot to the top of the head, there was no soundness in him." (Job 2 : 7.) Nothing was left uninjured, but his sacred tongue ; the latter was spared that he might still be able, even upon the cross, to pray and plead for us poor, ungrateful sinners !

2. Not enough yet ! They plaited a crown of thorns, and put it upon his head ! This was a species of torment which the most cruel tyrant had hitherto not conceived. O, what intolerable sufferings did not the form of this crown, and the number and kind of thorns of which it was composed, cause him ! Alas ! like a terrible helmet, it encircled and covered the head on all sides ! The thorns numbered a thousand ; and, apart from being very long and pointed, were so sharp that they were capable of penetrating through leather. "They surrounded me like bees, and they burned like fire among thorns." (Ps. 117 : 12.) "They also took a reed, and struck his head." (Matt. 27 : 30.) Alas, Christian soul, "look on the face of thy Christ !" (Ps. 83 : 10.) It does not appear any longer to be the face of our Lord Jesus, but that of a leper. He describes his sad state by holy Job : "My face is swollen, and my eye-lids are dim." (Job 16 : 17.) "The light of my eyes itself is not with me," says the Psalmist. (Ps. 37 : 11.) In all these distressing circumstances, our patient Saviour utters no word of complaint, but "as a deaf man, hears not, and as a dumb man not opening his mouth." (Ps. 37 : 14.)

3. Do you await the close of this awful tragedy? Do you hope for release for the divine Victim? The judge, it is true, has said: "I find no cause of death in him." (Luke 23: 22.) But the witnesses exclaim: "He is guilty of death." (Matt. 26: 66.) The judge replies, "I will let him go." (Luke 23: 22.) But the people continue to shout vehemently: "Crucify him, crucify him!" (Luke 23: 21.) Yes, yes, Pilate has, indeed, delivered Jesus up to their will. (Luke 23: 25.) The new Isaac now hastens forward to Golgotha, laden with the wood for the sacrifice. His clothes are torn forcibly from his bleeding body, and the old wounds are re-opened. His sacred hands and feet are nailed to the cross with sharp, or, as some say, with blunt nails, for the purpose of aggravating his sufferings. All his limbs are violently stretched, as on a rack—his bones are dislocated, his nerves and sinews torn. They lift up the cross with its precious burden, and then, suffer it to drop suddenly, and with all possible force, into the place prepared for it. O heaven! the wounds of our agonizing Saviour are widened by the dreadful shock—the blood no longer drops, but gushes forth in torrents! Sinners, let your eyes become as fountains of tears at this frightful sight. O, my dear Christians, study closely this bloody portrait of redeeming love! How many sad glances do not those dim, tender eyes cast down upon you from the cross! He would fain move you to pity and compassion. Yes, he seems to say to you with pleading reproach: "O, my people, what have I done to thee, or in what have I molested thee?" (Mich. 6: 3.) "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." (Jerem. 31: 3.) "Is this the return thou makest to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people?" (Deut. 32: 6.) "Return to me." (Ps. 44: 22.) "I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live." (Ezech. 33: 11.)

Alas! my God! "thy word is exceedingly refined" (Ps. 118: 140); and "who can resist thee?" (Ps. 75: 8.) All nature trembles before thee. Thou lovest us so tenderly, and we, in return, crucify thee. "O Lord, deal not with us according to our sins." (Ps. 102: 10.) We recognize our wickedness and thy goodness. From thy interior sufferings, we learn how we should bewail and repent of our sins; and from thy exterior pains, how we should try to atone for them in our bodies. We are resolved to serve thee more faithfully for the future. We fall down at thy feet, and adore thee with penitent, contrite hearts, and beg of thee to take away all our sins. O, that we had never offended thee! O, that we had always loved thee! Thou art our only and infinite Good, and we have prized thee so little! Thou art the King of kings, and we have rebelliously revolted against thee, and said, as it were, with the Jews: "We will not have him to reign over us." (Luke 19: 14.) "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee," each one of us may exclaim,

to-day : " I am not worthy to be called thy son." (Luke 15 : 18.) But, " a contrite and humble heart thou wilt not despise." (Ps. 50 : 19.) Thou art he, " who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in thy own blood." (Apoc. 1 : 5.) O, " wash me yet more from my iniquity !" (Ps. 50 : 4.) Yes, *amplius lava me !* Purify us completely, until we shall be worthy to be perfectly united to thee ! Amen.

B.

EASTER SUNDAY.

HAPPY STATE OF THE CHRISTIAN, AFTER A GOOD CONFESSION AND COMMUNION.

" *He is risen, he is not here.*" (Mark 16 : 6.)

SHORT SERMON ON THE GOSPEL.

It is Easter,—it is the time of which it is written : " This is the day which the Lord hath made, let us rejoice, and be glad therein." All men must rejoice, because, by the death of Jesus on the cross, sin has been vanquished ; and by his resurrection, death has been overcome. The sinner, especially, should rejoice, who, in this blessed time, has celebrated the feast of the resurrection by a worthy reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist. By being freed from the heavy burden of his sins, by his transformation into a new man, and by his victory over past sinful habits, he has become truly a happy man. Let us, then, to-day, consider the happiness bestowed upon the Christian by a good Easter confession and Communion.

I. Early in the morning of the day that Christ arose from the dead, pious women went out to the sepulchre, in order to anoint the body of the Lord. There had been a heavy stone at the mouth of the grave, but, when they came near the sepulchre, these good women saw that *the stone was rolled back*. Such a stone lies also upon the heart of the sinner. A very great and heavy stone. What kind of a stone is it ? It is the load of sins, which the sinner has heaped up during the time of his aversion from God, during the years that he remained sunk in

his bad habits. Many and various, are the sins he has committed : all the unchaste, unjust, and hostile actions of his life have been as so many stones cast upon his soul, and so welded together by habit, that, by degrees, they have risen to the height of a mountain. How heavily, alas ! this tremendous weight presses upon his heart ! How does he sigh under his weary burden ! Though he may not appear to feel it, though others know nothing of his state, he bears an insupportable burden ; and when he is alone, he feels its weight so much the more. But when, by an humble and contrite confession, he has obtained the forgiveness of all his sins,—when the words of the priest, who holds the place of God, are pronounced above him : “ I absolve thee from thy sins ,”—the stone is at once removed from his heart. How light he feels ! What great happiness has arisen in his interior ! As a man who, after a long and painful illness, rejoices once more in his recovered good health ; so does the sinner rejoice, who, having for a long time been weighed down by the weight of his sins, quits the confessional after a good confession. A heavy load has been lifted from his heart ; he feels like a new-born child ; he breathes easily ; the sun of divine grace shines in his heart, and peace, joy, and happiness beam from his countenance. It is not possible to portray the state of such a man ; but, perhaps, there are some among you who have already experienced it, and who say to me : “ Yes, it is so ! ” David was once a great sinner ; he had to suffer much on account of his sins ; but, how happy he felt, how his heart rejoiced, when God, through the prophet Nathan, announced to him the forgiveness of his sins : “ Praise the Lord, my soul, who forgiveth all thy iniquities, and healeth all thy infirmities ! ”

2. The women found the stone removed, and entering into the sepulchre, *they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed with a white robe : and they were astonished.* The sepulchre which, before was dark and gloomy, is now illuminated. In the place where the body of Jesus lay, sits an angel, clothed with a white robe. This, too, is an image of the happy state of the sinner, after the worthy reception of the holy Sacraments. Once before, he had received the white garment of innocence,—in the holy Sacrament of Baptism. But only during the years of his childhood, did it remain pure and undefiled. Soon, he fell into his first grave sin, and the white robe received its first dark spot. The oftener and the more grievously he sinned, the more the baptismal garment lost its original beauty, and became fouler, uglier, unrecognizable. And how was it with his heart ? The meek, innocent, humble mind had disappeared ; the sun of divine grace had set ; the spirit of impurity, hatred, and envy had taken possession of that heart, and it had become as dark and gloomy as the grave. Ah, no man can be un-

happier than he who has committed grievous sin ! And yet, no man is too great a sinner to recover his lost happiness, and make clean the soiled garment of his innocence. This, the Sacred Scriptures testify—this, God declares by the mouth of his prophet : “ If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow ; and if they be as red as crimson, they shall be made white as wool.” (Is. 1 : 18.) With confidence, David exclaims, after he had grievously sinned : “ Wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow.” (Ps. 50 : 9.) And this miracle is repeated at this holy Easter-time, in all contrite, truly penitent sinners. Is it not, then, a joy beyond description, when the repentant sinner beholds his own marvelous transformation ? With a heart tortured by grief, shame, disquietude, and bitter reproaches, he came to the confessional,—with a peaceful happy heart, he goes away from it. With a contaminated, disfigured, ugly soul, he came,—with a pure, beautiful soul, he departs. He can say with David : Give joy to my hearing,—let me hear, O God, the words : Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee ; and the bones that have been humbled shall rejoice. I shall begin to live anew with joy, after having been entirely depressed by grief !

3. Finally, let us consider the words which the angel spoke to the pious women : “ *You seek Jesus ; he is risen, he is not here.*” May not the same be said of those sinners who have been so happy as to make a good Easter confession ? The worst, the most dangerous and difficult obstacle for many,—that which strongly fetters them to sin, which exercises a cruel dominion over them, and makes them utterly miserable,—is the bad habit and occasion of sin. To escape these inexorable and powerful tyrants, and to free one’s self effectually from their dominion, there is no other means but a good confession and Communion. The grace of the holy Sacraments help and strengthen the sinner to break with his old habits, and to avoid the occasions of sin ; to flee from that house in which he once sinned, from that person who has been the cause of his aberrations. From that moment, it can be said of him, as it was once said, under different circumstances, of our Lord : “ He is risen, he is not here.” He is no longer to be seen in this house ; he is no longer to be found with that person ; he is no longer infected with this or that bad habit—he is free. And if freedom is considered a great happiness,—if so many men strive and long for freedom, because they recognize in it their greatest good—who is happier than a man who is free from the power of sin ? It is only now that he can elevate himself to God, it is only now that he can, with giant strides, walk in the way of virtue, and increase in perfection, until he attains the highest felicity of heaven.

O, that many, yes, all, might become sharers, to-day, of this great happiness ! He who has not yet obtained it, let him hasten to do so.

The door of grace is still open for him. Let him make his confession while these days of salvation last, that he may also be able to join in the joyful song of Easter : "This is the day which the Lord hath made : let us be glad and rejoice therein !" Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, OUR CONSOLATION.

"His sepulchre shall be glorious." (Is. 11 : 10.)

This prophecy has been fulfilled in a threefold respect. The sepulchre of our Lord was made glorious, because he was not buried upon Calvary, like others who suffered the penalty of the law, but in the new and beautiful garden-tomb of the wealthy Joseph of Arimathea, so that the words of the same prophet Isaias might be fulfilled : "He shall give the ungodly for his burial, and the rich for his death, because he hath done no iniquity, neither was there deceit in his mouth." (Is. 53 : 9.) Again, the sepulchre of Jesus was rendered glorious in the course of time, by magnificent exterior adornments ; for, Constantine the Great erected over the holy sepulchre a splendid church, which, although often destroyed by fire, has always been restored with additional grandeur and elegance. From the time of its erection by Constantine, this church has ever been a place of pilgrimage, a holy and venerable resort, annually visited by thousands of pilgrims from all quarters of the globe. There, they pray and mourn, watering the ground with their tears, abjuring their sins, and vowing fidelity to their Redeemer. How glorious, then, is his sepulchre ! But all this after-glory pales before the pristine splendor wherewith the holy sepulchre was invested by the Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

How awful are the darkness and coldness of the graves of men ! Therein is naught save rottenness and worms. In the sepulchre of Jesus, the darkness and coldness of death (but not its corruption), reigned on the first and second day ; but on the third day, life and light entered into the habitation of death ; that is, Jesus came forth from his sepulchre on the third day, with a living, incorruptible, and glorious

body. "He is risen, he is not here," said the Angel of the sepulchre to the holy women, who came to anoint the body of our Lord ; and, pondering the great mystery of Easter, we shall see and understand

I. *That the Resurrection of Christ stamps our faith with the seal of truth ;*

II. *That it solves many doubts and perplexities of this mortal life ; and*

III. *That it takes all bitterness from human sufferings and death.*

I. The long and dreary winter—a picture of death—approaches its end, and the friendly spring—a type of the Resurrection—brings new life, to all created things. Sad, indeed, my brethren, was the holy season of Lent ; but now, it is past ; and we can sing once more the joyous *Alleluia*. Yes, Easter is a very glad and consoling festival. During Lent, my words to you were full of sorrow and mourning ; I spoke to you only of penance, fasting, and mortification ;—but, to-day, I will preach to you something joyful and comforting.

1. Everything in and about the divine Redeemer of mankind is exceedingly grand and marvelous. History contains nothing equal to his life in point of moral grandeur, sublimity, and simplicity. It is simply without a parallel. His conception through the miraculous agency of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the ever-Immaculate Mary ; the annunciation of that mystery through an archangel ; his birth of a Virgin Mother ; the presence of the exulting Angels at his Nativity ; the wonderful Star which appeared to, and guided, the Wise Men from the East to adore him,—how marvelous are all these heavenly manifestations ! And how clearly they all prove that the Babe of Bethlehem was really the long-promised and long-expected Messiah, since all the ancient prophecies were thus fulfilled in him ! If any further testimony were needed, the great miracles which Jesus wrought by his own power, leave no room for doubt that he was truly the Son of God. For this reason, he appealed to those very miracles in support of his divinity, when he said to the Jews : "Believe you not that I am in the Father and the Father in me ? Otherwise believe for the works themselves." (John 14 : 11, 12.)

Neither were signs wanting at his death,—signs which distinctly characterized him as the Son of God :—the eclipse of the sun, the rending of the veil of the temple, the earthquake, the rising of many of the dead from their graves,—these signs spoke so eloquently and emphatically, that even the Centurion and they that were with him, watching Jesus, having seen the earthquake and the things that were done, were greatly afraid, saying : "Indeed this was the Son of God." (Matt. 27 : 54.) These signs should have been more than sufficient to convince even the

most incredulous, that Jesus Christ was true God, and that the Father was in him, reconciling the world to himself.

But, although the signs were great, the weakness of the faith of men was still greater. Ah ! it was hard for the carnal, sensual Jews to believe in the Resurrection of Jesus ! He himself often upbraided them for their incredulity and hardness of heart. Even his disciples experienced great difficulty in believing in his Resurrection, that is, in his divinity. Do you not see, my brethren, that if Jesus had died like a malefactor ; and, like other men, had henceforth remained cold and lifeless in the sepulchre, it would have appeared as if his enemies had triumphed, as if all his miracles had been only illusions ? His memory would have vanished in a short time from the face of the earth ; even his disciples would have soon forgotten his teachings, and gone astray. How little they were confirmed in their faith, may be seen by their yielding so completely to doubt and despondency, after the death of Christ. Their faith was not, by any means, a firm and living virtue. "We hoped that it was he who should have redeemed Israel : and now, besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done," said the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. (Luke 24 : 21.) His Apostles would not even believe in the Resurrection of Christ, when it was announced to them by the pious women ; so that Jesus, afterwards, "upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart, because they did not believe them who had seen him after he was risen again." (Mark 16 : 14.) Only when the risen Saviour appeared in their midst, living, and in person, and said to them, "*Fear not, it is I*"; when Thomas could touch his wounds, and the print of the nails,—only then it was, that the Apostles believed ; and Thomas, falling on his knees before him, said : "*My Lord and my God !*" Only then it was, that their belief in the divinity of Jesus became immovably fixed and firm, so that neither persecution, nor temptation, nor the world, nor hell, could rob them of it. Only then it was, that they preached the risen Saviour, with all power, before the Jews, and, later still, before the Gentiles, although both Jews and Gentiles laughed them to scorn, and mocked them.

Thus, the Resurrection of Christ confirmed and strengthened the faith of the Apostles and disciples ; and for this faith, they laid down their lives and joyfully shed their blood. St. Paul lays such a stress upon the Resurrection of Christ, that he says : "If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." (1. Cor. 15 : 14.)

Let us not doubt, then, dear Christians, this glorious Resurrection of the Son of God. If the Apostles had not truly seen their risen Lord and Master, they would never have believed in his Resurrection so steadfastly, preached it so confidently, or suffered persecution for the truth of

this mystery, and sacrificed their lives in its defense. It is true, we have not personally beheld the risen Lord ; but the Apostles have seen him for us, and St. Thomas has doubted for us ; and, after his transient incredulity, he was never again incredulous, but believing, that we, my brethren, might believe. Let us then strive to win the benediction expressed in our Lord's consoling words : " Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed." (John 20 : 29.) And believing, we shall find that :

II. *The Resurrection of Christ solves many doubts and perplexities of this life.* In this world of care, many things appear to us dark and incomprehensible, and frequently cause us to give way to doubt and fear. How often, my brethren, does it not happen that truth is seemingly vanquished, while falsehood, error, and deceit flourish and triumph? Vice gains the victory over virtue ; the wicked prosper, they are favored and preferred ; all things succeed with them, whilst the just, on the contrary, are oppressed and persecuted. Does not every-day experience teach us, dear Christians, that the just, as a rule, are left without any temporal recompense or reward, while the wicked, far from being always punished, sometimes meet with an astonishing success? These are strange things ;—and it often appears as if God had ceased, for the time being, to govern the world ; as if the Most High were indifferent to all things here below. This singular anomaly was clearly visible in the life of Christ. He was Purity, Holiness, Innocence itself, and yet, he was persecuted, calumniated, mocked, derided, and rejected. He went about doing good ; he was the universal Benefactor of the human race, and yet, he experienced only ingratitude. Yea, the Holiest and Most Innocent was unjustly condemned to death, and nailed to the cross ; whilst the wicked, exulting and scoffing, stood around the cross on which he died.

The sepulchre was sealed and guarded, and for a time, the cause of Jesus seemed to be lost. In those dark hours, no help appeared to come to the dead Christ, even from heaven itself. Although he prayed on Mount Olivet : " Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me !"—although he exclaimed on the cross : " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?"—yet the terrible work of the crucifixion was accomplished, and his enemies could sneeringly say : " He trusted in God, let *him* help him !" What an enigma ! But the dawning of Easter Sunday solved the riddle. Easter-day brought light into darkness. Short-lived was the triumph and joy of the Jews, and great their subsequent confusion and rage. After the long-continued humiliation of our divine Lord, followed, for him, the height of eternal glorification. Praise be to his holy Name !—he has conquered all his enemies !

Transient, are ever the joy and victory of the wicked. In a short time,

all things will be changed. Not the end, but the beginning, is here upon earth. Here, the knot is tied ; in eternity, it is cut. Yes, brethren, there must, there shall, be a change. Let the wicked triumph for a time ; let justice, for the nonce, be conquered and subdued by injustice ; but, O dear Christians, behold the empty sepulchre of your Redeemer, to-day ; and then, looking upon the luminous body of the risen Saviour, and beholding the standard of victory in his hand—remember well, that his lot is our lot. His victory is gloriously accomplished ; so, also, will our victory over sin and hell, with patience and perseverance, be gloriously accomplished. After that first Good Friday, on which the sun was darkened, the friendly sun of Easter shone radiantly forth. With the help of God, dear brethren, there will come a certain Good Friday which will be followed by the glorious Easter for *you* as well as for your risen Lord. Doubt not, murmur not, complain not ; only wait a little while. Do good, and you shall surely be rewarded ; suffer with patience ; the crown is ready. Pray, and trust in God ; he helps his faithful children in his own good time. All doubts and perplexities shall, in the end, be solved ; and why not *yours*, dear brethren ?

III. Short, wearisome, and painful, is our pilgrimage upon earth. Who does not know it ? All pleasures, joys, and earthly goods have an end. Death goes from place to place, from house to house. Before long, we, my dear brethren, shall, in our turn, be in the grave. If this were the end of all things, if there were nothing beyond the tomb, our terrestrial life would be, indeed, very sad. Who among us, in such circumstances, could ever enjoy peace or consolation ? How melancholy, especially for those who scarcely pass a happy hour ; whose life is filled with bitterness and privation ! In this class, dear Christians, we usually find the pious servants of God ; the best-beloved of Christ always have to suffer the most.

But, let us be consoled ; there is another, an eternal existence,—a resurrection of the body, and an endless life of the soul. The festival of Easter gives us this solemn assurance ; and hence, it is a festival of joy for all the just and afflicted children of Adam. The enemies of Christ could torture and kill his Humanity ; it was their hour and the power of darkness ; he had put himself into their hands ; for a short time, they wreaked their wrath upon his virginal Flesh ; but they could not destroy or kill his soul. Glorious and immortal, he came forth from the sepulchre. He has taken his body with him up into everlasting glory ; and thus, he is rewarded, and the justice of God, satisfied.

We, too, dear Christians, shall rise again. If Christ be not risen again, we are of all men, the most miserable ; our faith is vain, and we are yet in our sins ; but if Christ be risen again, we shall also rise again.

Out of our mother-earth, we are born for labor and pain. From the dust of the grave, we come forth to judgment and reward. From the maternal womb, we came forth, and tears and woe awaited us ; from the grave, the pious and penitent ascend to everlasting bliss. Yes, Easter presents to the faithful Christian, a new view of life. As the sun dispels the fog and the darkness of night, so, the gloomy terrors of suffering and death flee before the rising of the Sun of Justice. The afflictions of this life are heavy and grievous ; but they are the seed, the condition, of salvation. " Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory ?" (Luke 24 : 26.) For us, too, dear brethren, our present sufferings must be the seed of future glory. " A woman when she is in labor, hath sorrow, because her hour is come ; but when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." (John 16 : 21.) This life is our hour of travail for eternal life ; it is bitter and painful indeed ; but when the immortal soul is, at last, delivered,—when she comes forth from the womb of Time into the perfect bliss of Eternity, she shall rejoice, dear Christians, and no longer remember her former anguish and hardship.

Truly, the grave is terrible. How awful is the reflection : These beautiful eyes, these agile hands and feet, this handsome countenance, this noble body,—the prey of the grave, the food of worms, a handful of dust ! Sadly and mournfully, we gaze into the graves of those near and dear to us. But, through the darkness of the grave, lies the way to eternity. Jesus speaks of the grain that must be cast into the earth and decay, before it can yield fruit. What thou sowest will not live, unless it first die. Even Jesus, the Life of our life, had to taste death, and inhabit the sepulchre. His friends mourned and wept over his grave. But, behold ! that grave is empty ! The Lord is risen,—he lives,—he dies no more ;—and the mourning and anguish of his disciples are turned into indescribable consolation. An angel standing at the door of Christ's sepulchre, comforted the pious women with these tender words : " Fear not, you seek Jesus of Nazareth ; he is risen." We may imagine the same angel standing at the portal of the tomb which is destined, one day, to receive our lifeless bodies, dear brethren, and saying to us : " Fear not death, fear not the grave ; Jesus, your Redeemer, is risen,—you shall, also, rise again, and happily behold each other !" And thus, our sepulchre, in time, dear Christians, may, also, be glorious,—not by being adorned and ornamented with a costly monument, but by the blessed resurrection of a redeemed and glorified body. That this may be accomplished, my brethren, you must now adhere steadfastly to the Risen Christ ; live piously and penitently ; sanctify the body, and die to sin. Then, out of the dust and rotteness of the grave, shall arise a

new, sublimated, and impassible body, which will enter rapturously into heaven in the train of the divine Lamb. Let us, then, so live, dear brethren, that our sepulchre, like his, may be glorious. Amen.

A. W. O.S.B.

LOW SUNDAY.

THREE MEANS OF PERSEVERANCE AFTER THE EASTER CONFESSION

"Peace be with you." (John 20 : 19.)

SHORT SERMON ON THE GOSPEL.

Sweet, blessed words !—*"Peace be with you"!* Past are the days of Christ's Passion. By his death on the cross, the Son of God has restored peace between God and man. To his disciples, and to all mankind, he cries out : *"Peace be with you!"*—By a contrite Easter confession, every good Christian has cleansed his soul from sin, and regained peace of conscience. How sweetly, therefore, does this salutation of Christ sound in his ears ! O, that the peace between us and our good God might never again be disturbed ! This should be our resolution after fulfilling our Easter duty : never more to sin, but to steadfastly guard and maintain the purity and peace of our hearts. To help you to keep this good resolution, and to preserve you against future temptation, I recommend three special means, viz. :

- I. *To consider the example of the good,*
- II. *To avoid the example of the wicked ; and*
- III. *To reflect upon the consequences of sin.*

I. What should animate us, after repentance, to constancy in good, and to the keeping of our good resolutions ? The example of other penitent souls, who have remained faithful to their promises after conversion. It is a fatal thought, which often comes to sinners, and, especially, habitual sinners, that it will be impossible to avoid their besetting sin, even with the best will and the firmest resolution. "I do not wish to sin," they say,—*"yet, at the first opportunity, I find that I commit it*

again. I am too weak to withstand temptation !” Such men are conquered in every assault of the enemy.

Now, my friend, if you are one of this sort who, at the first occasion of sin, become unfaithful to resolutions made in confession,—I give you this advice : Look at those penitents who frequently fell into the same sin to which you are addicted, but who have amended their lives through their firm will,—and say with St. Augustine : “ If these could do it, why should I not be able to do it ?”

Angry man, take St. Francis of Sales for a pattern. This Saint was, as he himself confessed, very much addicted, naturally, to anger and passion ; but, through the continual contemplation of the meekness of Jesus, and a ceaseless strife against his evil inclinations, he acquired the lovely virtue of meekness. Now, as often as anger and bad temper threaten to surprise you, look at, or think of, this Saint, and say : What *he* could do, I also should be able to do !

Impure man, behold St. Augustine and St. Mary Magdalene who, after having abandoned the vice of impurity, never again relapsed into it. Say, in the morning when you awake, and during the day and night, whenever you feel a carnal temptation, or encounter a sensual occasion of sin : If St. Magdalene and St. Augustine could overcome these assaults, I do not see why I should not be able to do it !

Impatient man, you have often heard of the patriarch Job. In one day, he lost all his worldly goods, and was deprived of his children by a sudden death. When word was brought him of these misfortunes, he simply said : “ The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away : as it hath pleased the Lord, so be it done ; blessed be the name of the Lord.” (Job 1 : 21.) Now, as often as you are tempted to impatience in sufferings or afflictions, remember Job, and say : Should I not be able to submit myself resignedly to God’s will as *he* did ?

Drunkard, take an example from the renowned king, Charles XII. of Sweden, who, in his youth, was passionately fond of wine, and often became beastly drunk. One day, in his drunkenness, he offended his mother. The next morning, he took a tumbler full of wine, and went to his still afflicted mother, saying : “ My dear mother, yesterday, in my drunkenness, I offended you very much ; I beg your pardon.” Then, he drank the tumbler of wine to the last drop. “ This,” said he, “ is the last tumbler of wine I shall ever drink. By the help of God, you will never see me taste another drop.” It was the turning-point in his life. He kept his word. Drunkard, remember this king, whenever you are tempted to drink to excess, and say : Why should I not be able to do what Charles of Sweden did ?

How many relapsing sinners, my brethren, have been strengthened in their good resolutions by the good example of others, and have amended

their lives ! Cannot *you* do the same ? But, we shall never be able to keep the good resolutions made in confession, if we

II. Permit ourselves to be influenced by *the bad example of the lukewarm, or the wicked*. Certain penitent sinners who relapse into their past sins after confession, sometimes console themselves with the reflection that many others do the same. At first, they were really determined to keep their good resolutions ; they did not break them for a long time ; but finally, allured by the bad example of others, they returned to the old sinful occasions, and relapsed into their past guilty habits. Such often think and say : “Why should I not do as others do ? Why should I, alone, be so scrupulous, while others take their pleasure ? No doubt, I am stricter than I need be. I am making sins out of things which my neighbors do not consider sinful at all !”

This is foolish talk. Answer these questions : Is a sin no sin, because many people commit it ? Does the sinful life of others, excuse your own sins before God, or deliver you from his judgment ?—Does not our Blessed Lord say : “Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat ” ? And you will rush madly into that road, and consent to be damned with the many ! O blindness, O fatal delusion ! The bad example of inconstant and relapsing sinners should, on the contrary, confirm you in your good resolutions, and urge you to walk more circumspectly and more constantly in the narrow path of virtue. Will you jump into the river, because others have done the same ? Will you commit suicide, because so many others take their own lives ? Ah ! no,—be warned by the bad example of relapsing sinners, and avoid the fate of those who, every day, approach nearer and nearer to their eternal damnation

No less, is the folly and madness of those who, after confession, break their good resolutions, because they listen to the talk of ungodly men. They perceive that they are ridiculed on account of the penitential zeal they manifest after confession ; that they are sneered at, despised, and even persecuted, because they have led, for some time, a pious and strictly Christian life ; and, in order to escape all this contempt and persecution, they are weak enough to break their resolutions, abandon the way of virtue, and return, once more, to their former worldly and sinful life. Christians, who thus permit yourselves to be seduced by a godless generation, will these wicked ones defend you at the judgment-seat of Christ ? Will they take your sins upon their own shoulders ? Will the human respect which tempted you to break your good resolutions, justify you before your eternal Judge ? Certainly not. Disregard, therefore, the bad example of the wicked, and listen not to the talk of the worldly-minded. Fulfil what you have promised ; keep the

good resolutions you have made at your Easter confession. Heed not the world, nor its opinions; its praise or blame is, alike, worthless. Consider, that here is question of your soul, of your own salvation.

III. My beloved brethren, why did you make your Easter confession? Was it not to cleanse your soul from sin,—to attain your salvation? Why do you repent of your sins? Is it not to pacify God, and make amends for your manifold offenses? And finally, why did you make the resolution to sin no more? Was it not that your soul might be freed from the risk of eternal ruin? Verily, you are right in doing all this, for only one thing is necessary,—the salvation of our souls. This affair is one of the most important consequences. If we lose our souls, we lose everything.

Set this truth vividly before your eyes, whenever you begin to waver in your good resolutions. “No more sin, that my soul may not perish!”—must be your watch-word. Keep inviolably the promises made at your Easter confession; and consider that your salvation depends on their persevering execution. “Go, and sin no more.” (John 8: 11.) “No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9: 62.) No one who has begun the amendment of his life, and yet longs to return to his former sinful courses, will be found worthy of the kingdom of heaven. “He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved.” (Matt. 10: 22.) What will it avail you to have risen from the grave of sin in your Easter confession, if you die again spiritually the next day by a mortal relapse? If Jesus had said to you: “Thy sins are forgiven thee,” and you had not ceased to sin, what would his forgiveness profit you? Truly, he who relapses into sin again and again, is worse than he who remains in sin. His soul is in greater danger of being lost, than if he had never entered upon the way of repentance. If, therefore, in our Easter confession, we have spoken the words: “O my God, I firmly resolve never again to offend thee by any sin!” let us not waver in our resolution, nor, by a relapse into sin, plunge our immortal souls into everlasting perdition.

LOW SUNDAY.

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

“ This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith.”
(1. John 5 : 4.)

It is the belief of the holy Fathers that, during the forty days which elapsed between his Resurrection and his Ascension into heaven, our Saviour made known to his Apostles all the ordinances and decrees relative to the foundation and government of his Church. The Gospel of this day manifests to us this gracious activity of the Lord. Therefore, it is in accordance with the spirit of the Ecclesiastical year, that I now draw your attention to the four marks, or signs, whereby Christ's Church is distinguished from all heretical bodies. The first Ecumenical Council of Nice gave voice to our profession of faith in these marks, saying : *I believe in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.* I propose to speak, to-day, of the first mark of the Church, viz. : of her UNITY, and invite you to fix your thoughts on these two points :

- I. *If Christ established a Church, she must be One ;*
- II. *To the Catholic Church, alone, can this mark of Unity be applied.*

I. Every sincere Christian, whatever be his creed, will deplore the many and great dissensions in Christendom. There have always been schisms and heresies, but never so many as since the rise of Protestantism. A few years ago, an official report enumerated *fifty six* larger Christian denominations in the United States, while the smaller ones amounted to *two hundred and eighty-eight* ! This sectarianism cannot be in accordance with the will of Jesus Christ. You and I believe that, when Jesus Christ came upon this earth, he came to speak words of power to man, and to establish his faith upon a durable foundation. The work which he came to accomplish, was not to set up a loose association of men, differing in every belief of the mind, and every object of the heart's love, but to make all men of one mind and one faith, as he and the Father are one. He established only One church. It is a divine

establishment, founded by the Apostles, with Jesus Christ himself as the chief corner-stone.

1. By UNITY, we mean that all the members of the true Church must be united in the same religious belief, and in the acknowledgment of the same pastoral authority. Heresy and schism are opposed to Christian Unity. That our Saviour requires this unity of faith and government, is expressed very emphatically in the prayer which he offered for his followers at his Last Supper, when he besought his heavenly Father, *that all might be one in him, as he and the Father were one.* (John 17 : 21.) It was clearly, then, his will, that all his disciples should be united in the belief of the doctrines which he commanded his Apostles to preach, as well as in the participation of the same Sacraments ; and that, an unfailling and never-changing authority was to be established for the maintenance of that Unity.

2. Our divine Saviour never speaks of his *Churches*, but of his *Church*. He does not say : "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my *Churches*, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them ;" but, "upon this rock, I will build my *Church*, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against her,"—whence we must conclude, that it never was his intention to establish or sanction various conflicting and contradictory denominations, but one corporate body, whose members are all united under one visible Head. The Church, being a visible body, must have a visible head.—Our Saviour speaks of *One Church*, which he calls *his Church*. In the ocean of time, there is only one Rock, upon which, as on an immovable foundation, he has built that Church.

3. *The Church is called a kingdom* : "He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom, there will be no end." (Luke 1 : 32, 33.) Now, in every well-regulated kingdom, there is but one king, one form of government, one uniform body of laws, which all are obliged to observe and obey. In like manner, in Christ's spiritual kingdom, there must be one Chief, to whom all owe spiritual allegiance ; one form of ecclesiastical government, one uniform body of laws, which all Christians are bound to observe ; for, "every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation." (Luke 11 : 17.)

4. *Our Saviour calls his Church a sheepfold* : "And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold ; them, also, I must bring ; and they shall hear my voice : and there shall be made one fold and one shepherd." (John 10 : 16.) What more beautiful illustration of unity can we have than that which is suggested by a sheepfold ! The sheep of a flock all

herd closely together. If they are momentarily separated, they are distressed until they are united. They follow in the same path, they obey the same shepherd, and fly from the voice of strangers. So did our Lord intend that all the sheep of his fold should be nourished by the same Sacraments, and the same Bread of Life ; that they should follow the same Rule of Faith, as their guide to heaven ; that they should listen to the voice of one chief Pastor, and carefully shun false teachers and shepherds.

5. *He compares his Church to a human body.* In one body, there are many members, all inseparably connected with the head. The head commands, and the foot instantly moves, the hand is raised, the lips open. Even so, our Lord ordained that his Church, composed of many members, should be united under one supreme, visible Head, whom they are all bound to obey. There cannot be more than one body under one head.

6. *He compares his Church to a vine,* all the branches of which, though spreading far and wide, are necessarily connected with the main stem, from whose sap they are nourished. In like manner, our Saviour will have all the branches of his great Vine connected with the main trunk, and all draw their nourishment from that parent stock.

7. Finally, the Church is called in Scripture by the beautiful title of *Bride* or *Spouse* of Christ ; and the Christian Law admits of only one wife. The very idea of bride implies unity : "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2. Cor. 11. 2.) The Apostles, again and again, inculcate in their writings, and all the Fathers defend, the Unity of the Church. St. Cyprian wrote an entire book on the subject, comparing the Church to the sun, the light of which is the same all the world over ; and to a tree, consisting of one trunk and many branches, any one of which cut off from the trunk, cannot vegetate. He also likened the Church to the one ark of Noah, or to Christ's seamless garment, which was not rent even by the Roman soldiers on Calvary.

In fact, our reason and common sense tell us, that God could not be the author of dissensions, the originator of various opposing creeds. God is essentially one ; he is Truth itself. How could he then affirm, for instance, to one body of Christians, that there are three Persons in God ; and to another, that there is only one Person in God ? How could he say to one individual that Jesus Christ is God and Man, to another, that he is only Man ? How can he tell me that the punishments of the wicked are eternal, while he is said to tell another that they are not eter-

nal? One or the other of these statements must be false, for God is not the God of dissensions, but of peace.—Why, in short, should there be two or more churches? Only one can be from God, because he cannot make contradictory revelations. He cannot declare, for example, that the Pope is the Vicar of Christ, and also Antichrist; that Holy Mass is the highest form of worship, and also idolatry. Hence, it is clear, that Jesus Christ intended that his Church should have *one common doctrine*, which all Christians are bound to believe; and *one uniform government*, to which all should be loyally attached.

II. With all due respect to our dissenting brethren, truth compels me to say that this Unity of doctrine and government is not to be found in the Protestant sects, taken collectively or separately. That the various Protestant denominations differ from one another not only in minor details, but in the most essential principles of faith, is evident to every one conversant with the doctrines of the different creeds. The multiplicity of sects in this country, with their mutual recriminations, is a scandal to Christianity, and the greatest obstacle to the conversion of the heathen. We have several Baptist denominations, each having its own distinctive appellation. There is also a northern Methodist Church and a southern Methodist Church. The Presbyterians have their Old School and their New School; and even in the Episcopal communion, which is the most conservative body outside the Catholic Church, there are the Ritualistic, the High church, and the Low church. Nay, if you question closely the individual members of many of these denominations, they will frequently give you contradictory statements as to their religious tenets. Protestants differ from one another *not only in doctrine, but also in their form of church government and discipline*. Where, then, shall we find this essential Unity of faith and government? I answer, nowhere, save in the Catholic Church.

The number of Catholics in the world is computed at nearly two hundred and fifty millions. They have all "one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism," one Creed. They receive the same Sacraments, they worship at the same altar, and pay spiritual allegiance to one common Head. Should a Catholic be so unfortunate as to contumaciously deny a single article of faith, or withdraw from the communion of its legitimate pastors, he ceases to be a member of the Church, and is cut off like a withered branch. The Church had rather sever her right hand from her body, than allow the corruption of any member to corrode her vitals. It was thus, that she excommunicated Henry VIII., because he persisted in violating the sacred law of marriage, although she foresaw that the lustful monarch would involve the whole English nation in spiritual ruin. The Church says to her children: "You may espouse any political party

you choose ; with this, I have nothing to do !” But, as soon as they trench on matters of faith, she cries out : “ So far shalt thou come, and no farther !” The temple of faith is the asylum of peace, concord, and unity.

How sublime and consoling is the thought that, whithersoever a Catholic goes over the broad world,—whether he enters his Church at Pekin or Melbourne, London or Paris, Rome or Vienna, New York or San Francisco,—he is sure to hear the self-same doctrine preached, to assist at the same Sacrifice, and to partake of the same Sacraments ! This is not all. The creed of the holy Roman Catholic Church is now identical with what it was in past ages. The same Gospel of peace that Jesus Christ preached on the Mount ; the same doctrine that St. Peter preached at Antioch and Rome ; the same doctrine that St. Patrick introduced into Ireland, that St. Augustine brought into England, and St. Pelagius into Scotland,—is ever preached in the Catholic Church throughout the globe, from January till December. It is with the Church, as with her divine Founder : “ Jesus Christ yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever !”

The same admirable Unity that exists in matters of faith is also established in *the government of the Church*. All the members of the vast body of Catholic Christians are as intimately united to one visible Chief, as the members of the human body are joined to the head. The faithful of each parish are subject to their immediate pastor ; each pastor is subordinate to his Bishop ; and each Bishop of Christendom acknowledges the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome, the successor of St. Peter, and Head of the Catholic Church.

To live and die in union with the Church, was the ardent desire of the faithful of all ages. Separation from the Church was always an abomination to him who saw in her the body of Jesus Christ and the Ark of the New Covenant,—a sin, not to be expiated even by martyrdom. “ Where Peter is, there is the Church.” Adhere firmly to this Rock, my dearly beloved, and, imbibing the spirit of the Church, be of one mind. Have peace, and the God of Peace and Love will be with you. Unity of Faith and Charity is the safe road leading to eternal salvation. Amen.

BISHOP EHRLER.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

“*I am the good shepherd.*” (John 10 : 11.)

SHORT SERMON ON THE GOSPEL.

Jesus has a great desire to win and attract to himself, the hearts of men. How lovely are the pictures, how beautiful and touching the parables, he makes use of to accomplish his object ! Now, he represents himself under the image of a sower ; again, under that of a merciful Samaritan ; and, to-day, under the most amiable of all—under that of the Good Shepherd. “*I am the good shepherd.*” He is, in truth, the Good Shepherd. Let us consider to-day :

Why is Jesus the Good Shepherd ?

I. *Jesus is the Good Shepherd, because he knows his sheep.* “*I am the good shepherd ; and I know mine.*” What a consolation this is for us ! He knows us,—that is, we are not so lowly for him as to despise us. He does not act like proud people, who occupy a high position, and hence, do not condescend to those who are of the lower walks of life ; or, like rich people, who slight, and think little of, the poor ; or, like upstarts, who no longer recognise their poor relations, are ashamed of them, and deny their own blood. No : Jesus knows us, and although he is the true Son of God, and we, only the adopted children of God, he regards us as his brethren. He does not despise our miserable, human nature, for he himself has assumed it ; he is not ashamed of us, for he once had daily, intimate intercourse with the like of us on earth. In the days of his life on earth, he was always found in the society of the poor, whom he loved the most. He does not fly now from our presence, nor proudly withdraw himself from us ; for he is always present in our midst in the holy Sacrament of the Altar. Jesus knows us ; that is, *he knows about all our affairs.* He knows all that we do ; his eye constantly watches over us, and his fatherly hand is ever spread over us, to protect us. *He knows our trials and temptations,* and assists us in them. We may trust in him fully and unwaveringly ; and no enemy of body or of soul can prevail against us, without his permission ; for it is written : “*The Lord is the protector of my life ; of whom, shall I be afraid ? If armies*

in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear ; and if a battle should rise up against me, in this, will I be confident." (Ps. 26 : 1, 3.) *He knows our weakness*, and strengthens us ; *he knows our merits*, and will reward them. When we fall, he raises us up again, and has compassion on us, as a father on his son, as a mother on her daughter. Jesus knows us ; he will give testimony of us ; he will confess us before his Father in heaven : " He that confesseth me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven." He will say to each of us : " I know you !" To the Angels, he will say : " These are my brethren ;" and, to his Father : " These are the sheep of my fold,—the people of my pasture, the sheep of my hand !" How we shall rejoice, to be recognised by so great and good a Lord before the whole heavenly court, and in the midst of all the Angels and Saints ! And we shall rejoice all the more, if, upon earth, we have led a life despised for his name's sake !

II. *Jesus is the Good Shepherd, because he feeds and nourishes his sheep.* He himself says : " *The good shepherd calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out ; and when he hath let out his own sheep, he goeth before them ; and his sheep follow him, because they know his voice.*" (John 10 : 3, 4.) He calls them the sheep of his pasture, saying : " I will feed them in the most fruitful pastures ; and their pastures shall be in the high mountains of Israel : there, shall they rest on the green grass, and be fed in the fat pastures upon the mountains of Israel." (Ezech. 34 : 14.) Where is now his pasture ? Where is the mountain of God, the fat mountain of Israel ? What nourishment does he give us ? The mountain of his pasture is the Catholic Church, which he has grounded upon a rock, and which he has provided with all nourishment for his children. Therefore, it is a fat mountain, a strong mountain. Into this Church, he has called us, and he preserves us safely therein, for she is the true sheep-fold of Jesus Christ. In this Church, and in her alone, there is food and refreshment, wherewith he feeds us and gives us to drink ; namely, his sacred Body and Blood. Hence, he says : " My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed ;" and he himself testifies that this is our true food and nourishment ; that we must eat and drink thereof, if we hope to attain everlasting life. " Eat ye all of this,—drink ye all of this. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him—he shall have life everlasting." He has also made provision that we shall never suffer for want of this food. His pasture will never become dry or barren—but always, daily and continually, a rich and superabundant food springs up therein. In the whole world, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, the holy Sacrifice of the Mass is celebrated, and on countless altars, the Food of Life is

present in the hands of the priest, for the nourishment of those who hunger and thirst after justice. Behold, how liberal and generous the Good Shepherd is ! What a good, wholesome, and rich food he sets before us ! But we must eat of that food, we must partake of that heavenly refreshment in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, if we wish to become truly and really the sheep of his pasture.

III. JESUS IS THE GOOD SHEPHERD, *because he has given his life for us.* Hence, he says : “ *The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep ;* ” and in order to prove that *he* is the Good Shepherd, he adds : “ *I give my life for my sheep.* ” He is not like a hireling, whose own the sheep are not ; who cares nothing for their welfare ; who leaves them, and flies, when danger threatens. He is willing to encounter every peril—he risks his own life for his sheep ; yes, he sacrifices it joyfully for them. If Jesus had merely told us that he loved us ; if he had assured us of his love only by words, we might still doubt ; but since, in order to redeem us from the power of the devil, to acquire for us a right to heaven, and a share in his own eternal happiness,—he has died for us on the cross, we can no longer doubt that he loves us. “ Greater love than this no one hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15 : 13.) It is true, he has done this only once ; but if it were necessary, he would still be ready to renew his Passion and Death for each individual soul ; and, although one drop of his blood would have been sufficient to redeem a thousand worlds from all guilt and punishment,—out of his overflowing love, he has shed all his blood for us, and would be ready to do it again, if his heavenly Father should demand it of him. Therefore, St. Augustine exclaims : “ I was lost, and thou art come, O Jesus, to rescue me ! Thou hast given thy blood as the price of my redemption ; yea, thou hast loved me more than thyself, because thou hast been willing to die for me ! ”

Jesus, therefore, is in truth the Good Shepherd. Why, then, in justice, should we not be, as he desires, his good, faithful sheep ? He knows us,—why, then, should we not also know and confess him ? He is ready to feed and nourish us with the best of food,—what is more just than that we should take this divine nourishment from his hand ? He loves us unto death,—what is more just than that we should love him in return ? We manifest our love for him, by being obedient to his words and commandments, and by the imitation of his life and virtues. Therefore, Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, says of the sheep of his flock : “ They know me, they hear my voice, they follow me.” Blessed are those who, during life, know the voice of the Good Shepherd of their souls—they will also recognise his voice when he shall call them, among the elect of God, into the fadeless pastures of everlasting life ! Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH

"And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be made one fold, and one shepherd." (John 10 : 16.)

The destiny of the true Church is clearly expressed in these words of our Lord. She is to embrace all nations. "Go ye, and teach all nations!" (Matt. 28 : 19.) The Church of Christ, in short, must be CATHOLIC, or Universal. In Paganism, they knew only of national religions; Judaism itself was but a national religion. But the Christian Church was destined to spread over and embrace the whole world. Thus, we read: "Ask of me, and I will give thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession." (Ps. 2 : 8.) Again: "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, for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts." (Mal. 1 : 11.) "Go ye, and teach all nations." (Matt. 28 : 19.) And again: "You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts. 1 : 8.) Therefore, our Lord compares his Church to a grain of mustard-seed, "which, indeed, is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown up, it is greater than any herbs, and becometh a tree; so that the birds of the air come, and dwell in the branches thereof." He compares it to leaven, which leavens a great mass of flour; and to a human body, growing to perfection. The Church, from the very beginning, has carried out this design of her divine Master, by sending missionaries into the whole world, so that St. Paul already could say: "Their sound went over all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the whole world." (Rom. 10 : 18.) Small in the beginning, numbering only one hundred and twenty souls on the first Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down upon the Apostles,—the Church, by little and little, spread in every direction, supplanting paganism and Judaism, and receiving all nations within her pale. It was with sacred pride, that the holy Fathers of the first centuries claimed

the name *Catholic*. "Christian is my name, Catholic my surname." The name Catholic is the proper name of Christ's Church, because it suggests her destiny and calling. Having spoken to you, last Sunday, on the Unity of the Church, I shall speak, to-day, of the Catholicity, or Universality, of the Church, and prove to you :

I. *That the Church of Christ must be Catholic, or universal, both in regard to time and to place ;*

II. *That the Catholic Church is really Catholic, or universal, both in regard to time and to place ;*

III. *That all other Christian denominations are not Catholic, or universal, in regard to time and to place ; and therefore, cannot claim to be the true Church of Christ ; or,*

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, ALONE, IS THE TRUE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

I. Foreshadowed by the Jewish synagogue, and casting forth that shadow, the Catholic Church ran her race through all the Christian centuries. She witnessed the labors of the Apostles, and the bloody triumphs of the martyrs. She admired, later, the wisdom, learning, and virtues of the holy Fathers. She witnessed the downfall of the Roman Empire, under the repeated onslaughts of barbarous pagan nations,—and these—heirs of the fallen Empire—she again led to Christ. She came forth triumphantly from the struggle against heresy and infidelity ; and, rejoicing over the discovery of new countries, she sent her best sons to gain to Christ the savage hunters of the primitive forests, and bring to the wild sons of the American plains, the blessings and graces of their spiritual mother in Europe. She maintains in our own days, the claims of Christ and of justice against modern paganism and tyranny. The Church is the sun of time, shining through all ages, accompanying the nations in their course, and sending forth her light even to the end of time. "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. 28 : 20.)

I. The Church of Christ must be Catholic, or universal, *as to time and place*. She must have existed in one unbroken, uninterrupted span from the time of Christ and his Apostles, to this very day ; she must exist to all future times to the consummation of the world. This is evident from her destiny. Christ established his Church for no other purpose than that all men of all times should come to the knowledge of the truth, and find their eternal salvation in her bosom. Whatsoever does not belong at least to the soul of the Church, will as surely perish, as did those who were drowned in the Deluge, outside of Noe's Ark. Now, since God wills all men to be saved, the Church of Christ must necessarily exist without any interruption. If she ceased to exist in any

age, the people of that time would be deprived of their sole means of salvation, and God himself would be the cause of their eternal perdition. To entertain such a thought, would be blasphemy. Hence, Christ repeatedly assured us of the permanent duration of his Church : " Thou art Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my Church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. 28 : 20.)

2. Our holy Church has remained unchanged during the last eighteen hundred years ; not one particle of her deposit of faith has been lost. She constantly administers the seven Sacraments, glorifies God by the same holy Sacrifice, and has always been governed by her bishops, united with the Supreme Pastor in Rome. She preaches the same faith and morals to nations and their rulers, be it acceptable or not. With youthful freshness and vigor, she has marched through varying times beside the nations, witnessing, by turns, their rise and fall, and calling forth new life in the midst of ruins. She has always resembled, and still resembles, her divine Master, who was yesterday, who is to-day, and who will be to-morrow, and for all eternity ! O, how consoling it is, to behold the Church, clad in the variegated garment of the nations, east and west, north and south, full of life and vigor, encompassed by thousands of ruins, which are still the admiration of mankind !

3. The Church of Christ must be found to have a foothold in all parts of the world. It must be so constituted as to suit all climes, from the ice-bound regions of the North to where the luxurious foliage of the Tropics drops into the warm sea. This universality of place is a necessary corollary of her destiny. As she is the only institution established by Christ for the salvation of mankind, she must meet the wants of men, and accompany them on their peregrinations over the face of the world. Wherever they may think it expedient to dwell, all must have an opportunity to enter her portals, to be sanctified and saved. Christ himself gave an earnest of this Catholicity or Universality, when he said to his Apostles : " Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." (Mark 16 : 15.) When he told them that they should be witnesses unto him in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth,—that pledge was assured. Therefore, any Christian body of men confined within the limits of a particular nation, or nations, and lacking this universality of time and place, cannot be the true Church of Christ.

II. *The Catholic Church is really Catholic as to time and to place.*

1. She has existed from the time of Christ and the Apostles, to this day

and will exist to the end of time. The very word *Catholic* indicates this. The Catholic Church has an unbroken, uninterrupted golden chain of Sovereign Pontiffs. Leo XIII succeeded Pius IX, Pius IX succeeded Gregory XVI, and so on, back through the long centuries, till we come to St. Peter, who received his commission directly from Jesus Christ, at the Last Supper, in the year of our Lord, thirty-three. Even heretics and schismatics, when speaking of our Church, are forced to call her *the Catholic Church*; otherwise, they would not be understood. The Catholic Church, therefore, is evidently the true Church of Christ; for, if she had ever fallen away, she would have received another name. Our adversaries have been frequently challenged to name the Christian era when the Catholic Church came into existence; but they have not answered the question to this very day, and they never will. They well know that it was on the feast of the first Pentecost, that the grain of mustard-seed began to bud; and that its mighty trunk and wide-spreading branches now fill the whole world. The Catholic Church, therefore, is universal as to time. She is also universal as to place.

2. She was the most widely spread in all ages, and the number of her children exceeds that of any non-Catholic sect. No country is without Catholic churches. Europe is mostly Catholic. There, alone, our Church numbers one hundred and twenty millions, while all Protestant denominations number only fifty-four millions of souls. It has been estimated by careful statisticians, that there are about two hundred and fifty millions of Catholics on the globe. The heretics of the East amount to seventy-five millions, but are subdivided into various sects; the Protestants, the heretics of the West, amount to eighty-five millions, and are also divided into numerous different denominations.

3. The Catholic Church is spread all over the world, there being no country in which she has not her faithful children, and in which she is not continually growing. Indeed, the growth of Catholicity in these United States, reminds us of that of the first Christian centuries. The grain of mustard-seed, by degrees, has become a mighty tree, in the branches whereof, the birds of the air repose their weary wings. Our Church, therefore, justly calls herself *Catholic*, for she has existed at all times since Christ; she is spread all over the earth; and the number of her children increases every day.

4. And, even if it ever should happen towards the end of the world, that whole nations should fall away from the Catholic Church, she would, nevertheless, not cease to be Catholic, or Universal. For, it is by no means required, that the Church, in order to prove her Catholicity as

to time and place, should embrace all countries at all times. Just as the sun rises in the east, and gradually progressing by little and little, illuminates the countries of the far-distant west, yet never in such a manner as to shine upon more than half the globe at one and the same time ; so the Catholic Church, rising in distant Judea, began soon to cast the vital heat of her grace, and the pure rays of her doctrine, upon all the inhabitants of the Old World. And when our own Catholic hero, Christopher Columbus, discovered the New World, the very first thing he did was to plant the cross upon its soil. Glory and thanks be to God, the sun of the Church is shining with undimmed splendor, here, to-day ! But if, on account of the sins of the people of some particular country or countries, the light of faith has been there, extinguished, and the warmth of divine grace grown cold, so that the conquest to the Church must be made over again, it nevertheless remains true, that she once illuminated and vivified those quarters, and that she will bring them life and salvation once again, if she only be let alone, and can secure a hearing. Even in this case, the Church remains Catholic, or Universal.

III. *All religious bodies separated from the Catholic Church, taken collectively or separately, are destitute of the mark of Catholicity, or Universality. They are not Catholic as to time.*

I. We know the hour of their unhappy birth, and the names of their apostate founders. Being children of time, they necessarily bear the characteristics of their mother : *Changeableness and death.* Either such innovations in religion disappear like smoke, or they are so changed as not to resemble their originals. Tertullian said to the heretics of his day : “ You are later than we, for which reason, your religion is false.”

The present sects have not always been from the time of Christ. It is true, there have always been heresies and schisms ; there have always been men who held doctrines more or less similar to those of modern heresiarchs. But, since the former were (as nobody denies), heretics, who would be anxious to claim them as their prototypes ? Modern heretics cannot even trace their origin to those ancient heretics. If they agree with them at all, it is only in a few points. A Protestant is not a Catholic, merely because he believes a few doctrines of the Catholic Church. In like manner, the heretics of former centuries were not Protestant, simply because their false views are found to coincide with the latter on some points. Modern sects are not a day older than their founders, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, John Wesley. They are, therefore, destitute of the mark of Catholicity as to time ; their doctrines are new-fangled, their names are new ; they had no existence whatever for more than fifteen centuries, and therefore, they are

not the Church of Christ, because his Church could not perish, or lie buried for more than a thousand years under the rubbish of heresies and schisms. It is a shuffling evasion, to say that the Church is invisible, and that there were holy men in all ages, who, struggling against corruption, constituted this invisible Church. How, for the sake of reason, can Christ's Church be invisible? And what right have their tongues to brand holy men with hypocrisy, as they continued to belong to a church which they thought to have forfeited the claim of a divine origin?

2. *They are not Catholic as to place.* As already remarked, all the Protestant denominations together have only about eighty-five millions of members, while the Catholic Church numbers about two hundred and fifty millions. The sects are not wide-spread, like the Catholic Church, even in Europe. There are countries where there are no Protestant churches, or congregations whatever. Hence, our separated brethren can lay no claim to the mark of Catholicity; neither can they ever become Catholic in all countries. Their chief doctrine prevents this; namely, that the Bible is the only rule of faith. According to this doctrine, every one who wishes to be saved, must search the Scriptures. But how many pagan nations are there that cannot read! To them, the way of salvation is barred. Moreover, the Sacred Scripture must not only be read, but must also be rightly interpreted and understood. Now, among a thousand persons, there is scarcely one who can interpret it rightly; nay, in reality, no one, not even the most learned man, is certain that his interpretation is the right one. Thus, it is impossible for Protestantism, according to its chief doctrine, to become the common belief and property of all men.

3. The Catholic Church sends her missionaries into every country, and they convert very many every year. The older schismatics do not pretend to make converts. There are Protestant ministers in heathen countries for purposes of evangelization, but, according to their own testimony, without apparent result. Like the heretics of old, they do not like to convert the heathens, but to pervert the Catholics. They can destroy, but they cannot build up.

4. Let us, however, for a moment suppose, that the Protestant sects were spread over the whole earth, and that the number of their adherents surpassed that of the Catholic Church; still, they could lay no claim to the mark of Catholicity, because they lack the mark of Unity. They do not constitute one body, one Church; they have not the same faith, the same Sacraments, the same visible head; they are independent of one another, resembling independent states, which are united

only in one common interest ; namely, in hatred of the Catholic Church.

It is an incontrovertible truth, that the Protestant denominations, taken collectively or separately, do not possess the mark of Catholicity as to time and place. They were not always, and they are not every where ; they are, therefore, not the true Church of Christ. Take to heart the words of St. Augustine : “ Outside of the Church, you can have everything except salvation.” Without any merit of yours, you are Catholics. Be loyal to your faith, and live up to it. If you do so, you may rest assured that you will be saved. Amen.

Z—.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE PATRONAGE OF ST. JOSEPH.

“ *And Jesus himself was beginning about the age of thirty years, being, as it was supposed, the son of Joseph.*” (Luke 3 : 23.)

The Gospel of this festival tells us of the near and dear relationship existing between St. Joseph and the Saviour of the world. He was the Foster-father of Jesus, and the virgin-husband of his virgin-Mother. As brethren of Jesus and spiritual children of his blessed Mother, we, too, look up to St. Joseph as a Foster-father, and believe, with strong reason, that the salvation of our souls is dear to him, and that he stands in heaven as one of our most interested and active patrons and protectors. For this is the great question in heaven and on earth, and beyond this, earth has no interest in his eyes, and should have none in ours. I propose, this morning, to show that the eternal fate of the soul is the only really great question worthy of our consideration, and, that all other questions are to be measured by their relation with this.

I. In the first place, your soul *is the only thing you have that is really yours.*

1. You are accustomed to call a great many things yours, when they are not, because you are allowed to use them. You are like lodgers in a boarding-house. You may use many things for the time being ; but

only those things really belong to you which you are allowed to take away with you. A lodger finds in the apartment assigned to him, various articles of furniture,—a bed, a table, a washstand, a mirror, chairs,—they are there for his convenience, and so long as he remains, are his alone. But they are not his property. If, on leaving the house, he should undertake to carry them away with him, as if they were his own, he would soon find out his mistake. “Drop that,” the landlord would say, “that is mine, and so is that and that. You can take nothing away from here but the luggage you brought !”

So, while you are in this world, it is easy to confound what is yours with what is not ; but when your time of departure comes, not a thing can you take away—not even that cocoon you lived in, your body. All belonged to this earth, before you came to lodge here. Your soul, alone, is yours. It came with you, and it goes with you when you go. The rich man we read of in the Gospel, did not understand this. He thought that the lands he possessed, his great barns, and grain he had harvested therein, were all his own ; and therefore he said to his soul : “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thy rest now, eat, and drink, and make good cheer.” But God said to him ; “Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ?”—Every one understands that it is foolish to build an expensive house, or make great improvements, on another man’s land ; for the house and all fixtures go with the land. For the same reason, it is foolish to fix our hearts, to waste our affections, on anything that belongs to this earth, and which we must leave behind us when we depart for that unknown country beyond the grave. The soul is the only thing that is really ours ; the care and culture we expend on *that*, is not lost. He whose soul is rich, is rich, indeed ; for his spiritual treasures go with him to eternity. O, then, there is but one great question before us all, and that is *the eternal fate of the soul !*

2. In the second place, consider this : “*Your soul is immortal.*” I need not tell you, that the more durable a thing is, the more valuable it is. A substantial house of stone or brick, is more valuable than a rude shanty of boards. Your body is but a shanty put together in a frail and unsubstantial manner, and only intended to hold together for a few years. It is but the model and rough material of a new and more spiritual and enduring tenement, which you are to inhabit hereafter. *Not so, with your immortal soul. No power on earth, or in the elements, can put an end to it !* God, who alone can destroy it, has declared that he will not. O, think of it ! Your soul is an eternal possession, and all the improvements you make upon it, all the virtues and merits you add to it, belong to it for eternity !—You make great account of the pleasures of

one day. Now think of two days, of ten days, a year, a hundred years, a thousand years, a hundred thousand, a million happy years ! And yet, a million happy years would come to an end at last ! What, then, shall we say of the life of a soul, which is immortal, of the joy of a soul in Paradise, which is eternal ! Well, then, every good act, every merit you gain, has an infinite value, since it gives an increase of happiness to the soul in heaven, and that additional happiness is everlasting. Every Mass you hear devoutly, every prayer, every good work done, every pious aspiration uttered, every temptation resisted, every time your heart throbs under the impulse of the love of God,—the soul's treasure in eternity is increased. And in like manner, every neglect of a blessed opportunity is an infinite loss ! O, how dreadful, then, to lose soul and all—the immortal soul, with all its infinite treasures ! What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ? Tell me, then, what is the great question, if not what I have said ?

II. The human soul is something very precious. Let us try to estimate its value. It has a *real* value and a *fictitious* value.

We will begin with the real value. One day, when the Emperor Augustus was dining at the villa of a rich Roman, whose name was Vedius Pollio, a slave of the household happened to break a crystal vase. He immediately fell down at the emperor's feet, and begged for his life. "Why, where is the danger to your life ?" said Augustus. The slave replied, that his master had condemned every servant that should break a vase, to be cast into the fishpond and be drowned. The emperor arose from the table, and taking a cane in his hand, broke every vase in the room. "Begone, inhuman wretch !" said he to his affrighted host, "and know that the life of one man is worth more than all the crystals in the world !"

This sentiment of Augustus was a very noble one for a pagan ; but if our Lord had been there, he could have taught him a nobler lesson. He could have taught him, that even the life of a man is of little value compared to his soul. "Fear not them," he would have said, "that kill the body, but cannot kill the soul ; but fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." Yes, it is the Emperor of heaven, who teaches you, that the soul is worth more than all the treasures of the earth, aye, that it is infinitely more valuable than life itself !

2. The real value of the soul, therefore, is much greater than its market value. "Market value ?"—I hear some one say. "Why, Father, what do you mean ?" I mean, by market value, the price that souls commonly sell for. "Sell for ? Why, human souls are not in the market to be bought and

sold !” Indeed, they are. The devil is bidding for souls all day long and all night long, and the market value of each soul may be said to be that which its owner is willing to let it go for. Every time a man, under the influence of some temptation, deliberately commits a grievous sin, does he not know that the consequence is the forfeiture of his soul’s eternal liberty and happiness? What is it but trading with the devil, who takes nothing but souls in payment?

3. I have given you some faint idea of the value of a human soul. You are able; therefore, to understand, that the only great question before us all is *how to save our souls*. The salvation of the least and poorest man that walks in rags through our streets, is of more consequence, than all the plots and schemes for worldly advantage that occupy the minds of millionaires, in every town and village on earth. I wish we could all think so, and feel so. I wish we had more of that deep wisdom and holy solicitude for souls, which characterize the inhabitants of heaven. Our Lord tells us, that there is joy before the Angels of God over one sinner that does penance. O, this sacred solicitude, this kindly interest of the Saints and Angels in our behalf—to what can I compare it? Did you ever read a history of a shipwreck, where friendly eyes on the shore were gazing anxiously on some ship in distress, and friendly hearts trembling with solicitude for the safety of her crew and passengers? I fancy such a scene before me now. The ship has been driven by a storm upon the breakers, and, dashed about by every wave, is fast going to pieces, with a hundred lives on board. Some cling timidly to the spars and rigging, some plunge desperately into the foaming sea, and strike out for the shore. And the spectators, safe on the shore, with what intent interest they gaze upon the scene, straining their eyes to detect each struggling form that may be lifted up on the crest of a wave! How they shudder when one sinks to rise no more! How they exult over the few that are saved! How they shout, as, now and then, some brave wrestler for life struggles out through the breakers, and stands with dripping locks and drenched garments on the beach!

So, from heaven, the Angels gaze down upon this stormy ocean of human life. They see with horror the wreck which sin has made; they look with pity on this vast crowd of fellow-creatures struggling in the waves. For the shipwrecked sinners one plank of salvation remains—the plank of Penance. With breathless interest, they watch each one as he essays to do penance, and eagerly canvasses his chances for salvation. They notice the first movements of grace, the first tear of repentance; and when, at last, the pardon is given on earth, and registered in heaven, a thrill of joy runs through that countless host, and the flutter of their glad wings is heard through all the corridors of heaven,—

the signal of a freshly-forgiven soul ! Now, you will easily understand what our Lord meant when he said : “ There is joy before the Angels of God over one sinner that does penance.”

ADAPTED FROM THE PAULIST FATHERS.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE NECESSITY OF GOOD WORKS FOR SALVATION.

“ A little while, and you shall not see me : and again, a little while, and you shall see me : because I go to the Father.” (John 16 : 16.)

In these words, our divine Saviour announced to his disciples his approaching Death, his Resurrection, and Ascension into heaven. He spoke them on Holy Thursday, after his Last Supper, when he was on his way to Gethsemane. On Friday evening, his body was in the tomb ; hence : “ A little while, and you shall not see me.” On the following Sunday morning, the risen Christ appeared first to a few, and then to all the disciples, as they were assembled in the Cenacle ; and thus, they saw him again : “ A little while, and you shall see me.” After forty days, he quitted this earth, and returned into heaven, according to his promise ; for he had said : “ I go to the Father.” Thenceforth, they saw him no more, till they departed this life, and entered into the joy of their Lord. But even this interim, considered from a Christian point of view, was short ; for, although a few of the Apostles may have lived to old age, what were the years of their life, compared to the years of Eternity ?

What Christ said to his disciples, may be said to all who wish to be his followers. He also cries out to us : “ A little while, and you shall not see me, because I go to the Father ; I go to prepare a place for you, that, where I am, you may also be. Therefore, make good use of the little time which remains to you, that you may merit heaven !”

A little while, and you shall see me ! “ Yes, Christ, our Judge, will soon come to us again. We know not the day, nor the hour, but he tells us in his Gospel, that he will come like a thief in the night, when he is least expected. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when

he comes, shall find watching ! Let us, then, do good, whilst it is day ; for the night cometh, when no man can work. To aid you to prepare for that supreme hour when each one of us must render an account of his stewardship, I propose to speak to you, to-day :

- I. *On the necessity*, and
- II. *On the quality*

of the good works, wherewith we must be provided, if, after "the little while" of this life, we may hope to see our Lord Jesus Christ in the kingdom of his glory.

I. *The necessity.* Our knowledge of God's justice and holiness compels us to acknowledge, that he will reward the good, and punish the wicked ; and that, without good works, no reward is possible. Even the pagans understood this ; and mythology proclaimed an *Elyseum*, or heaven, for the just, and a *Tartarus*, or hell, for the wicked. Deny the existence of heaven and hell, and the whole structure of morality falls to the ground. If God neither rewards good works, nor punishes evil, then virtue ceases to differ from vice, and all idea of God's justice and holiness is destroyed. Reason itself demands a reward for virtuous deeds, hence, it follows, that the only reasonable and true religion of Christ, the holy Catholic Church, must also inculcate the necessity of good works. Besides our Saviour's parable of the barren fig-tree, which was cut down and cast into a fire, a few other passages of Holy Writ will sufficiently prove our Catholic doctrine on this point. A young man once came to Jesus, asking him : "Master, what good shall I do, that I may have life everlasting ?" Our Lord replied : "*If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*" ! Life everlasting is absolutely dependent on the observance of the divine commands and precepts. Again, let us consider the sentence of the Judge, on the Last Day : "*Come, ye blessed of my Father, and possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*" (Matt. 25 : 34.) Why does he give them the kingdom of heaven ? He himself furnishes us with the answer : "I was hungry, and *you gave me to eat* ; I was thirsty, and *you gave me to drink* ; I was naked, and *you clothed me.*" (Ibid. 35, 36.) In other words : The kingdom of heaven is the reward and recompense of your good works. "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." (Ibid. 23.) The good servant has earned the reward of his fidelity. He has discharged his little duties with diligence, and his master permits him in recompense thereof, to share his own eternal felicity.

The following passage from Revelations, is emphatically plain, and proof against all objections : " Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord . . . for their works follow them." (Apoc. 14 : 13.) Again, St. Paul says in his Epistle to the Romans : " God will render to every one according to his works." If good works are not necessary, I would like to know what these words of Christ mean : " Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of heaven : but he that doth the will of my Father." (Matt. 7 : 21.) To encourage his disciples to perform good works, and to strengthen them in their sufferings, Jesus says : " Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for your reward is very great in heaven. " (Matt. 5 : 12.) And again : " Behold, I come quickly : and my reward is with me, to render to every man according to his works." (Apoc. 22 : 12.) O my dear Catholic brethren, although you may hitherto have been convinced that good works were necessary to salvation, has not your belief been theoretical, rather than practical ? What will it avail us to believe in the necessity of good works, if we do not perform any ? Our punishment in such case will only be the greater ; for he who knows the will of his master, and does it not, shall be punished with many stripes. (Luke 12 : 47.) Woe to us, if ours be a barren faith, not working by charity ! How many careless Catholics are there who glory in the name, yet never think of laying up for themselves treasures in the kingdom of heaven !

Do not deceive yourselves ; faith without good works, is as dead as a body without a soul. If you should have all knowledge, all faith,— " if you should speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity " (1. Cor. 13 : 1), are destitute of good works,—Jesus, your Judge, will say to you on the Last Day : " Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, . . . for I was hungry, and *you gave me not to eat* ; I was thirsty, and *you gave me not to drink* ; I was a stranger, and *you took me not in* ; naked, and *you clothed me not* ; sick, and in prison, and *you did not visit me.*" (Matt. 25 : 41-44.) In fine, you have done no good works. The Judge will not ask, " What have you learned ? How many languages did you speak ? How much have you read ? How much money did you make ?" But the question will be. " What good works have you done ? Give an account of your stewardship !" Woe to those who will then see—alas ! too late !—the necessity for laying up treasures in the kingdom of heaven ! Naked, and destitute of good works, they will sigh and bewail in vain, their past folly and idleness. O my beloved ! let not such useless regrets ever be yours ! Work while it is day—while you are young, and strong, and active, for the night will soon come—the dark, silent night of death—wherein no man can work !

11. *The quality.* That our works may be acceptable to God, and available to salvation, they must be performed

1. *In the state of grace ; and*
2. *With a pure intention.*

1. The Catholic Church teaches that a man in the state of mortal sin, can perform no meritorious works. Fallen nature without grace, cannot attain a supernatural reward. No one by a purely human effort can merit heaven much less can he perform meritorious works, in the state of mortal sin. The Catholic Church calls the works only of one justified and re-born in Christ, good, and meritorious of eternal life, because they are performed by the power of Christ, from whom, as from the Head, grace continually flows into his members, the elect. "I am the vine," says he, "and 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.) Consequently, the Catholic believes that his good works and merits are not of his own, but are only performed by the power of Christ, without whom we can do nothing. To merit eternal life, grace is necessary ; and all works, no matter how praiseworthy, that are done in the state of mortal sin, are profitless to eternal salvation.

2. That our works may be meritorious, they must be performed not only in the state of grace, but, also, with *the right intention.* Above all, the glory of God must be our motive. If *that* be wanting, all merit is gone. Our divine Saviour clearly indicated this, when he reproved the self-sufficiency and vainglory of the Pharisees, saying : "Take heed, that you do not your justice before men, that you may be seen by them : otherwise, you shall not have a reward from your Father who is in heaven. Therefore, when thou dost an almsdeed, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward." (Matt. 6 : 1, 2.) God does not regard so much the magnitude of the work, or the grandeur of the gift, as the intention with which the one is done, or the other offered. Jesus was sitting, one day, in the Temple, opposite the poor-box. While the rich cast in hands full of money, he saw also a poor widow dropping in two brass mites. Having remained silent for a while, our Lord, at length, said : "Verily, I say to you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than all they." A proof that the good intention, with which she offered her gift, gave value to it. In this sense, St. Paul writes : "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, all things do ye for the honor of God." God's glory must be the mainspring of

all our words and deeds, if we wish their value to extend into eternity. It is this supernatural motive, which, by a divine alchemy, turns to gold our most insignificant and indifferent actions. What could be more trifling than a cup of cold water? And yet, our Lord declares that: "whosoever shall give to drink to one of his little ones a cup of cold water, only in the name of a disciple, Amen, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward." (Matt. 10 : 42.)

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE SANCTITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

"A woman, when she is in labor, hath sorrow, because her hour is come : but when she has brought forth the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." (John 16 : 21.)

Our mother, the Catholic Church, has to bring forth children, not to the world, but to heaven, by regenerating and sanctifying them in great pains and labors. It is for this reason that we claim for her, and for her only, the mark of SANCTITY. Besides the one Church of Christ, there is a multitude of religious sects in the world, each of which claims to be the true Church of Christ. Which of these can assert with truth that it is the true Church? Which is really the Church established by Christ? Only that one which has the marks of the true Church. Of the marks of Unity and Catholicity, I have spoken to you on the last two Sundays. To-day, I intend to speak on the third mark, *the Sanctity of the Church*, and to show you :

- I. *That the Church of Christ must be holy ;*
- II *That the Catholic Church is really holy ;*
- III. *That all other religious denominations are destitute of the mark of holiness, from which it necessarily follows that the Catholic Church, alone, is the true Church established by Christ.*

I. The true Church of Christ must be holy, because she is the Bride of the Son of God, the "Lamb unspotted and undefiled." It is her destiny and calling to lead her children to sanctity. It was thus

that our Saviour prayed, immediately before his bitter Passion, in these words : " I do not ask that thou take them away out of the world, but that thou preserve them from evil. They are not of the world, as I also am not of the world. *Sanctify them in truth.* Thy word is truth." (John 17 : 15-17.) The true Church, therefore, must be holy

1. *In her Founder.* She must have a founder, who by the sanctity of his life, and by his miracles, proves himself to be sent by God ; for otherwise, God could not require us to believe him in matters pertaining to eternal salvation. If, therefore, men who lead wicked, sinful, and dissipated lives, set themselves up as founders of creeds, or as the reformers of the true faith, it is a sure sign that they are false teachers. Religious bodies that have such men for their founders, evidently cannot be the Church of Christ. But, because holiness is not of itself an infallible sign of a divine mission—because, as we all know, no man can absolutely pronounce as to the holiness of another, no man being able to look into the heart and soul of another, nor scan his motives—the founder, or preacher, of a new religion, must prove his mission by still another sign, which is really infallible, namely *by miracles.* To confirm the new doctrine he preaches, he must show his credentials from heaven by working miracles. And if, in confirmation of his doctrine, he works miracles, it is impossible for it to be false. Almighty God, through whom, alone, miracles are wrought, cannot co-operate, even in appearance, in the confirmation of a lie. Truth, as well as holiness, is one of his divine attributes. If Martin Luther, notwithstanding his great sins and vices, had said : " To prove to the world and to all men, that I am sent to reform the Catholic Church, I shall, in the name of Almighty God, raise this dead man to life," and had he then done so, we should be bound to believe him. Moses, and the other Prophets, as well as Christ himself, and his Apostles, proved their divine mission by miracles.

2. The true Church must be holy *in her doctrine.* She must teach only what makes man really happy and pleasing to God, and reject what is wrong and displeasing to him. The reason is evident. The doctrine of the true Church is of divine origin ; it must, therefore, be good and holy. Nothing but what is good, can come from God. If, therefore, there be any doctrines which are not holy, in any religious denomination, it is a palpable sign that it is not the Church of Christ.

3. The true Church must be holy *in her means.* She must possess all the means necessary for the salvation of mankind. Christ established his Church for the avowed purpose of leading all men to sanctification and salvation. If a religious denomination be destitute of these means, it cannot be the true Church of Christ.

4. Lastly, the true Church must be holy *in her members*. A healthy, sound tree brings forth good fruit ; so, the Church of Christ must produce Saints. There must be Saints in the Church, who confirmed their sanctity by miracles, as Christ expressly declares : “ And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name they shall cast out devils : they shall speak with new tongues : they shall take up serpents : and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them : they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover.” (Mark 16 : 17, 18.) If, therefore, any denomination can show no Saints who wrought miracles, it cannot be the true Church of Christ.

II. The Catholic Church is truly holy, for she has

1. *A holy Founder*, Jesus Christ, the Holy of Holies. His holy Spirit is to sanctify his Church to the consummation of the world. It is an undeniable, absolute fact, that Jesus Christ established but one Church ; it is also incontrovertible that the Catholic Church throughout all centuries *asserted and claimed to be the one true Church of Christ*. Moreover, if the Church had any other founder than Jesus Christ, Church history would inform us of that fact. But if we go back in history, from century to century, we always find the Catholic Church in existence, and no other founder mentioned than Jesus Christ. If she had been established by any other than Jesus Christ, she should have a particular name, the name of the founder ; but she was never called anything else than the Catholic Church, from which again it follows, that she can have, and has, no other founder but Christ.

2. *All the doctrines of our Church tend to holiness*. They are stars shining in the dark night of our temporal life, and pointing out to us a better world to come. The Church holds up to us the perfections of God for our imitation. She teaches the love of our neighbor, and, by inculcating the beauty of the Evangelical Counsels, she presents to us many of her children as models of heroic Christian charity. She is not content with exterior probity, but insists upon interior sanctity. She preaches the corruption of man in consequence of original sin, and the necessity of subjecting the flesh with its concupiscences to the control of the soul. She promises to the just, the everlasting joys of heaven, and threatens the wicked with the everlasting pains of hell ; whilst her doctrine on Purgatory warns us to avoid even the smallest sins and imperfections. She maintains the indissolubility of the marriage-tie against kings and tyrants, and by so doing, she has kept up the bulwark of public morality and safety. And she does not pretend to teach the word of man, but is the infallible interpreter of him, who said : “ I am the light of the

world, he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8 : 12.)

3. *She is holy in all the means that are necessary to mankind for their sanctification in every circumstance of life.* As soon as we are born into the world, the Church has a Sacrament to purify and sanctify us,—Baptism. She has, then, the Sacrament of Confirmation in store for us, to strengthen us and make us perfect Christians. If we have lost baptismal innocence, she reconciles us with God, by holy Penance ; and all through our life, she gives us the Sacred Flesh and Blood of Christ as a nourishment for our souls. She follows us even to our dying bed, and there, assists us in the dark passage of death, with Extreme Unction, in order that we may courageously fight the last battle in the warfare of life, and enter Eternity, bearing the palm of victory and peace. She ordains priests, and invests them with the power of reconciling man to God. She also sanctifies Matrimony, and obtains for married people the grace to faithfully fulfil the difficult duties of their state. She daily celebrates the Sacrifice of the Mass, by which she continually applies to us the merits of Christ, and implores for us all graces. All her precepts are exhortations to work out our salvation. By obliging us to submit to her doctrines, she crushes our intellectual pride, and fosters humility, the foundation of the edifice of virtue. By her many exhortations to penance and mortification, she obliges and encourages us to struggle against ourselves,—that is, against our worst enemies, our sinful and unruly passions. Indeed, the Catholic Church may challenge all mankind in relation to each of her doctrines and precepts. "If any man will do the will" (of this doctrine or precept), says Christ, "he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be from God." (John 7 : 17.)

4. The Catholic Church is holy, for she has *holy members*. If the true Church of Christ is provided with the means of sanctifying her children, this holiness must be manifested in their lives. In the Catholic Church, there is a countless multitude of Saints, that is, such as, by the acceptance of her faith, by the observance of her precepts and counsels, and by the use of the means of grace, have become holy and blessed. To be brief, I will call your attention to the millions of Saints to whose sanctity God himself has borne witness by incontestable miracles. There is no country, no sex, no state of life, which has not had its Saints. We know of holy Popes, bishops, priests, and laymen, of holy monks and nuns, of Saints who attained the highest degree of perfection in every-day life. And in our present century, more than two hundred persons have been canonized, and the process of the canonization of many more has been inaugurated.

But are there not abuses in the Church? Do not many Catholics lead a scandalous life? Undoubtedly. But does not our Lord compare his kingdom, his Church, to a field where wheat and cockle grow together? Were there not in St. Peter's net, fish of different size and quality? Was there not a Judas among the twelve Apostles? Did not Christ foresee this when he said: "Scandals must needs come. But woe to him, through whom the scandal cometh"? If it were not for bad Catholics, there would be no Protestants; the first Protestants were bad Catholics.

III. *Every other religious community has forfeited the title of holiness.* Their founders are not holy. They assert, indeed, that Christ is their Founder, but unjustly. It is a historical fact, that they sprang into existence by an open breach with the already-existing Catholic Church, by a separation from her, and by the substitution of their own doctrine, their own teachers, and their own service, in place of those of the Mother Church. Those who were the originators of the defection from the Old Mother Church, must also be looked upon as the beginners and founders of these religious denominations. Such founders and heads of new religions are Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Henry VIII, Wesley. Now, the question is: Were these founders of new systems of religion holy? By no means; on the contrary, they were men who were governed and controlled by the basest passions, such as pride, hatred, and impurity. They led the most scandalous lives; and even their adherents cannot defend them against this charge. And how is it with the miracles which they should have performed in confirmation of their divine mission, since they were destitute of ecclesiastical authority? They have never performed any miracles. The religious communities separated from the Catholic Church have, therefore, no holy founders.

1. *Their doctrines are not holy.* The so-called Reformers of the sixteenth century—did they not deny to man the liberty of will? Did they not assert that grace performs all in us? Did they not impute, at least indirectly, to God the authorship of sin? Yes, these founders of religious sects preached doctrines that are in direct opposition to sanctity. They taught, that the Ten Commandments referred only to the Jews, and not to Christians, who were not bound to keep them, because it was impossible to keep them; that man is saved by faith alone, without good works; that good works are not only useless, but sinful; that there is no sin, but unbelief; that God, from eternity, predestined one portion of mankind, without any fault of theirs, for eternal damnation, and the other portion, without any merit of theirs, for eternal salvation. According to this horrible doctrine, whatever good

works man may do, they profit him nothing if he be predestined for damnation ; and if he be predestined to be saved, he cannot be lost, let him sin as long and as grievously as he please. Their doctrine was : "You may sin on bravely, but only believe." That these, and many other heretical doctrines are not holy, needs no proof.

2. *They have not the necessary means of salvation.* Most of the holy Sacraments are discarded, and the two or three that have been retained, are mere ceremonies and signs, not means of grace, and therefore :

3. *There are no Saints outside of the holy Catholic Church.* All the sects taken together cannot exhibit one saint who, by heroic virtues and miracles, gave evidence of his sanctity. All the Saints mentioned in their religious calendars, and whose names they give to their children, are borrowed from the Catholic Church. With them, holy members or Saints are an impossibility, because their doctrine is not holy, and because they have not the means of grace. (John 15 : 4.) If there be among them pious good persons,—and there is no doubt but there are many.—it is not because they live according to the precepts of their religion, but because they follow their better convictions. What Protestant, for instance, could lead,—I will not say a holy life, but a life proper and honest in the eyes of the world, if he were ruled by the doctrine of Martin Luther, who says : "Sin on bravely, but only believe and rejoice in Christ. Sin does not separate man from Christ, even if he should commit a thousand sins of impurity, or the same number of homicides in one day !"—?

The Catholic Church, therefore, is holy, and holy to the exclusion of all other Christian communities ; they have no holy founders, no holy doctrine, no sufficient means of salvation, and no Saints. The Catholic Church, alone, possesses these marks of Sanctity ; therefore, she, alone, is the true Church of Christ. Give thanks to God that you are members of this true Church, which is so holy, and aspire to be holy yourself. Avoid evil, do good, and aim at greater perfection every day. Alas, that there should be so many Catholics whose lives are anything but holy ! Be not led astray by their bad example ; look rather at the great army of the Saints, who adorn the Church, and imitate their example.

Let us be holy children of our holy Mother. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (Matt. 5 : 17.) This is your vocation, your sanctification : "Be holy, as your father in heaven is holy" Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE SUREST EASIEST, AND SHORTEST ROAD TO HEAVEN.

"Whither goest thou?" (John 16 : 5.)

SHORT SERMON.

Whither goest thou? This is the most important question that man can ever ask himself. Our life upon earth is a journey; but, it is wholly in our power to go forward or backward. Nowhere on earth is there a stand-still; we must all go forward unceasingly. But whither do we journey? To old age, to death, to judgment, to eternity. And whither do we go in eternity? Either upwards to heaven, or downwards to hell. That which we begin here, we shall accomplish there. That which we strive for here, we shall obtain yonder. Let us, therefore, inquire particularly as to the road we go. The traveler does not ask if he will eventually reach his destination; he only questions as to whether or not he is in the right road to it. Neither does the husbandman ask whether he shall reap wheat or barley. "What things a man shall sow, those, also, shall he reap." (Gal. 6 : 8.) Hence, enter with good cheer and confidence in God, upon the way to heaven; and, with God's grace, you shall infallibly arrive there. Ah, you sigh, and say. "Father, the road thither is *so difficult, so long, so dangerous!*" Listen. I will tell you now which is

I. *The surest,*II. *The easiest, and*III. *The shortest way to eternal life.*

I. Our Blessed Lord does not require of us austere works of penance, nor heroic actions; he does not command long vigils, nor continual fasting and almsdeeds; for all these things, far from leading directly to God, may, as experience teaches, be the outcome of a sinful, and especially, of a proud heart. Our Lord demands of us nothing extraordinary or singular in our life and occupations, in our attire or abode, in our speech or gestures. He regards as hypocrisy all that is purely external. What he asks of us is *a good will and a sense of gratitude*, which manifest themselves here below *in doing and suffering all for his love*, even

as he upon earth, died and suffered all for *our* love; *in seeking every where and in everything the honor of God*, even as he in everything endeavored to promote the honor of his heavenly Father. Hence, the Apostle writes: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do: do all things for the glory of God." (1. Cor. 10: 31.) Mind, then, the following rule: Whilst outwardly you appear to live like other people, let a high and pure intention animate all you do. Offer up every thought, word, and deed for the love of Jesus, for the honor of God. Be careful to do nothing to which you can not apply this rule. This is the one thing necessary: this is the sure road to the grandest heights to virtue and salvation. Every labor and pain, every joy and recreation, every corporal pain and spiritual grief, every act of virtue and every omission of sin, every step and movement of the body, every breath and pulse of the heart,—in a word, everything you think, say, or do, must be referred to God. If you do something great and praiseworthy, it is only the good intention which gives to your action the right dedication and unction, and makes it valuable before God. If you have to do only little, lowly, common things, it is again the good intention which ennoble them, which makes them more acceptable to God and more profitable to yourselves, than the most vaunted enterprise of the people of the world.

Consider well, what sweet consolation lies in this doctrine. A Christian who makes the diligent formation of a good intention the first business of his life, cannot possibly be lost in the other world, nor feel altogether unhappy even in this world. Such a one makes the best atonement for all his sins, especially for the sins of his youth; and he gains more and more the calming conviction that he has the happiness of living in the grace of God. Thus, he acquires for himself the highest peace of soul, and the assured hope of a happy death and a merciful judgment. He adds, so to say, every moment, a new jewel to his crown of glory in heaven, and casts, every moment, a fresh drop of heavenly dew upon those purgatorial flames, which, if not thus extinguished, are destined to torment him after death. The man of pure intentions obeys in the most perfect manner that first and greatest commandment of God: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." (Luke 10: 27.) "He that loveth me," says Christ, "shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (John 14: 21.) And St. John declares that: "He that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him" (1. John 4: 16.)

II. Now, the question arises: *How is it possible for human frailty and forgetfulness to persevere in the constant renewal of its good intentions?*

If the good intention be not actual, it may at least be virtual. Listen, and I will make this clearer. Say every morning : " My Lord and my God ! I offer thee all my thoughts, words, and actions during this day ! " Say this slowly, and with great attention, that you may know what you say, and that the words may come truly from your hearts. Do not, at the very beginning of the day, hypocritically tell a lie in the face of God. Then add : " Yes, my God and my Love, I will do and suffer everything during the day, for thy love ! " The oftener you renew this offering during the course of the day, the better. How quickly can this be done ! Sometimes, you may say : " My God, thy holy will be done ! " Or again : " All for the greater honor of God ! " Or, " Lord Jesus, this pain I unite with thy bitter Passion ; this sweat, with thy bloody sweat ; this thirst, with thy thirst on the cross ! " Every renewal of the good intention which proceeds from a loving heart, gives the entire inner man for some time a heavenly direction. Holiness is increased thereby, and all actions thus performed, are changed, as it were, into pearls for one's celestial crown of justice and glory. How many good works might we, in this manner, perform in one day ! What treasures of merits might we not accumulate for the hour of death ! Nor does this require any extraordinary change in our way of life. Imagine two persons living together in the same house ; they eat together, work together, and go to church together. Outwardly, they do all things alike ; but one acts *with*, the other *without* a good intention. Do you know what happens ? One goes the way of salvation ; the other, the way of perdition ; for God can only reward with eternal felicity that which is done out of pure love for him, that is, with a pure intention.

III. But some may object : *This exercise, after all, is not so easy, as it seems at first sight. We have often resolved to do it, but have not succeeded. We forget it during the day.* I answer : What is easier than to eat, and drink, and walk ? How long does it take a little child to learn to do these things with ease ? Imitate the little children ; try and try again, without losing courage ; and finally, you will acquire a great facility in feeding your soul continually with the food of divine love. You will soon learn to run like a giant, in the way of virtue. If you are forgetful of your morning resolutions, are you altogether excusable ? Do you not often hear the clock strike ? If you really desire to walk before the Lord, that sound should remind you of your resolutions. See here,—when you lose your temper, how is it that you immediately begin to call on the name of God, to blaspheme him and provoke him, often worse than the devil ? You think then quickly enough of hell and heaven, the Sacraments, the cross, and everything that is sacred and ven-

erable to the Christian,—why, then, can you not remember all this when your soul is calm, so that, pronouncing these words in love and gratitude, you thereby renew your good intention? Ah! you are not in real, downright earnest with regard to the things of God. I will tell you why you forget your good intention.

(a) Some of you forget it, *because you still love sin*. Naturally, the passions rejoice when no thought of God or Eternity troubles or disturbs them. He who hates sin, and is constantly engaged in battle with his own corrupt inclinations, cannot forget God; his own heart urges him, again and again, to cry out: “Lord, help me, I desire to live in thy love!”

(b) Others forget about their good intention, *because they have no ardent desire for heaven*; they are very well content to live in the world and enjoy the world. Ah! the soul that disdains this vain world, with its low and filthy pleasures, cannot help but live more in heaven than upon earth; wherefore, St. Paul expressly says of his devout fellow-Christians: “Our conversation is in heaven.” (Phil. 3: 20.)

(c) Some forget to make a good intention, *because they refuse to bridle their tongues*; they will not observe silence. The world and self-love create so much tumult and distraction in the mind, that holy thoughts of God and eternity are drowned and lost in the perpetual uproar. He that talks little, or only what duty, labor; or fraternal charity require, will easily accustom himself to converse with God, and will find his sweetest pleasure in frequently making a good intention.

You have now heard what I have so often told you before. O, I beseech you, be no longer content with hearing only; “for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.” (Rom. 2: 13.) Obey the admonitions given you, to-day. They contain the one thing necessary. He who lives according to them, can commit no mortal sin, and therefore, will not suffer the loss of his soul. When you lie upon your death-bed, when you pass to join in the praise of God, with the heavenly choirs of Angels and the hosts of the blessed Saints, believe me, you will praise the day and the hour in which you began this holy exercise; for it, alone, will then exalt you to a throne of inconceivable glory in heaven. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE APOSTOLICITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

“And when he, the spirit of truth, shall come, he will teach you all truth.” (John 16 : 13.)

What the Holy Ghost was to the Apostles, he is, and will be, to the true Church of Christ, to the consummation of the world : her Comforter and Teacher, the invisible Pilot, who steers the ship of salvation through the turbulent waves of time. But which is the true Church of Christ ? Which is the ship of salvation ? Where, in which community, does the Holy Ghost abide, and perform this work ? Our Saviour promised the Holy Ghost to his Apostles only. It is to them, only, that he said : “If I go, I will send him to you.” (John 16 : 7.) It is on the Apostles that he breathed, and said : “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” (John 20 : 22.) And the Apostles, being conscious of possessing the Holy Ghost, imparted him to those who were baptized. “Peter and John, when they were come, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. For he was not yet come upon any of them. Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 8 : 15-17.) Consequently, there is no church which can rightfully claim to possess the Holy Ghost, but she who has come down directly from the Apostles through an uninterrupted succession of her bishops ; and for this reason alone, the Catholic Church is the true Church of Christ, to the exclusion of all other religious communities. She, alone, is APOSTOLIC. Know, then,

- I. *That the true Church of Christ must be Apostolic ;*
- II. *That the Catholic Church, alone, is truly Apostolic ;*
- III. *That all the other religious sects are not Apostolic.*

I. *The true Church of Christ must be Apostolic*

1. *In her origin.* There is no legal power in the Church unless it be conferred by Jesus Christ ; for to him, alone, all power is given in heaven and upon earth. “All power is given to me in heaven and on earth. 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 : 18, 19.)

In virtue of this power, Christ sent his Apostles to teach all nations. And that they might be able to teach all nations effectually, he promised to protect them against erroneous doctrines : " Behold, I am with you all days," not only for three or four centuries, but, " to the consummation of the world." " As the Father hath sent me, I also send you." (John 20 : 21.) Consequently, any religious community that has been founded, not by the Apostles, but by others who were not in communion and connection with the Apostles, and cannot trace back their power to the Apostles, are not the true Church of Christ.

2. *In her doctrine.* The doctrine of the true Church of Christ must agree in everything, with what the Apostles taught, and it must contain nothing but what they taught. Christ made only the Apostles his representatives upon earth ; to them, alone, he gave the commission and power to found and propagare his Church, to teach all mankind the way of salvation ; upon them, he sent the Holy Ghost, who taught them all truth, and communicated to them, in the preaching of the word of God, the gift of infallibility. Consequently, any religious community that teaches anything but what the Apostles taught, cannot be the true Church of Christ.

3. *In her pastors.* We are told that the Apostles conferred their power upon others. Therefore, the true Church of Christ must have pastors who are connected with the Apostles, and derive their spiritual power from them, by proving their commission from them. Christ appointed his Apostles, pastors of his Church, and invested them with the same power which he himself had received from his heavenly Father. The Church was to exist to the end of time, but the Apostles lived not always ; therefore, the power given to them by Christ was to pass over to others ; and those who received their spiritual power from the Apostles, are the lawful successors of the Apostles. " Matthias was numbered with the eleven Apostles." (Acts 1 : 26.) " The Apostles praying, imposed hands upon them " (who were chosen deacons). (Acts 6 : 6.) They even imposed hands upon Paul and Barnabas, whom the Holy Ghost had already selected for the preaching of the Gospel, in order to empower them by this ordination and commission, to perform the duties of the Apostleship. The Apostles recognised none as pastor of the Church, who had not received his mission from themselves, or from one of their lawful successors. There is not one instance in Holy Scripture to prove that any one, without the imposition of hands by the Apostles, partook of the Apostolic power. Consequently, any religious community whose founders and pastors have no connection with the Apostles, cannot be the true Church of Christ.

II. The Catholic Church is APÓSTOLIC

1. *In her origin.* She can be traced back to the Apostles, upon whom she is built. The student of history can name the author of every new heresy, the time and place of the birth of every religious sect, separated from the Catholic Church, as well as the Councils by which these heresies were condemned. But with regard to the Catholic Church, we know nothing of the kind. Go through history, from century to century, and you shall find no trace of her having any other founder, than Christ and his Apostles. No time can be named when the Catholic Church had fallen away from the doctrine of the Apostles, whether as regards matters of faith or morals; neither can a place be mentioned where the Catholic Church, in the course of time, originated. History can point to no other place where the Catholic Church was founded, than Jerusalem—to no other year when she originated, than the year 34 after the birth of Christ. And lastly, no Council can be mentioned by which the Catholic Church with its doctrines had been condemned. Consequently, the Catholic Church was founded by the Apostles, and is of Apostolic origin.

2. *In her doctrine.* She teaches, to-day, nothing but what the Apostles taught eighteen hundred years ago, either by word of mouth, or by writing. If she ever had departed from the Apostolic teaching, we should have an exact knowledge of it, and be able to determine when and where this occurred. But how much soever our adversaries may exert themselves to adduce such proof against the Church, they shall never succeed; for we can prove that every dogma which the Catholic Church now teaches, was believed by the Church at the time of the Apostles. It is the perception of this complete identity of the doctrine of the Catholic Church to-day, with that of the primitive Church, which, by God's grace, now (as it has been in the past), is the impelling cause and motive for the return of many to the bosom of the Catholic Church.

3. *In her pastors.* The Pope is the successor of St. Peter, the head of the Church. This is easily proved; for we can trace back the line of the Popes from Leo XIII, our present Holy Father, to Peter, whom Christ himself made visible head of the Church. The Roman See, then, is surely Apostolic. Consequently, all the Sees in union with the Roman See are Apostolic; for all are built upon the rock of the Church, and recognized as parts of the true Church. And no man can be a bishop of the Catholic Church, unless recognised as such by the Apostolic See. If the root is Apostolic, the whole tree is Apostolic.

In the other episcopal Sees, the uninterrupted succession may be more

difficult to trace back, because many of them have long since ceased ; while far the greater number was erected at a comparatively late date. Among the former were the once flourishing Sees of Africa ; while among the latter may be reckoned all the Sees of America and Australia. And if you consult history, it teaches you that the various branches of the Catholic Church have been founded either by Apostles, or by men sent by the successors of St. Peter, or, at least, by the successors of the other Apostles. St. James the Greater is the founder of the Church in Spain ; St. Remigius planted the faith in France ; St. Boniface, the Apostle of Germany, made three wearisome journeys to Rome to ask the authorization and benediction of the Pope. St. Augustine, the Benedictine monk, was sent by Pope Gregory to the Anglo-Saxons ; St. Patrick, to Ireland, with the blessing of Pope Celestine ; St. Columban, to the Scotch.

If needful, every priest could trace his succession back to the Apostles. He knows the bishop who ordained him ; he can find the name of the bishop who consecrated that bishop, and so on, back through all the centuries, to St. Peter and his companions. But this is not necessary, for it is certain, that no bishop has ever been recognised by the Catholic Church, who was not lawfully called and consecrated in union with the Roman See. The succession is easier traced in the bishops. Every Catholic bishop can name the bishop who consecrated him, as well as the Pope who confirmed him by sending the Papal Bull, all of which is properly kept in the Vatican archives. From this you see, that the bishops are connected directly with the Apostles, and from them, derive power as fully as if St. Peter were yet living to-day in Rome. Thus, then, the Catholic Church is Apostolic in her origin, in her doctrine and in her pastors.

III. *None of the non-Catholic sects are Apostolic.*

They lack

1. *An Apostolic doctrine.* History proves this incontrovertibly. We know the date of each schism or apostasy from the Catholic Church ; we know the names of their originators or abettors ; we know the pretexts for their separation from the Mother Church. They are different edifices from that built by Jesus Christ, who says to them : " I know you not." (Matt. 25 : 12.) The Catholic Church had already existed fifteen hundred years when these heretics tore themselves away from her. Before that time, their doctrine was unknown ; the first members were Catholics up to the time that they apostatized from the Catholic Church. They became bad Catholics, and were it not for their

being bad Catholics, there would be no Protestants to-day. They are all novel sects, having no connection with the Apostles. Consequently, they are not of Apostolic origin. We may appropriately repeat to these modern Christian communities the words which Tertullian addressed to the sectaries of his time : "Where do you come from? When did you come to light? Where did you hide so long? Up to this time, we have not heard of you. You came too late, therefore your religion is false." We may repeat to them the words of St. Jerome : "Why do you come after four hundred years? Without your doctrine, the world has been Christian up to this day. We must stay in the Church that was founded by the Apostles."

2. *They are not Apostolic in their doctrine.* Their doctrine differs from the doctrine of the Apostles, as heaven differs from the earth. The Apostles teach the observance of the commandments ; Protestants teach that the commandments do not concern Christians, that it is impossible to keep them. And yet, Christ has said : "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." The Apostles teach, that neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor the Sodomites, nor the covetous, nor blasphemers, nor thieves, shall possess the kingdom of God. (1. Cor. 6 : 10.) Protestants teach that there is no sin for the Christian except *unbelief*. The Apostles exhort us to penance, mortification, the practice of good works, and the necessity of subjecting the flesh, with its concupiscences, to the control of the soul,—that, by these good works, we may make sure our vocation and election ; but Protestants teach that good works are useless, even sinful, and that they cast a reproach upon the merits of Christ, as if they were not sufficient for the atonement of the sins of the world.

3. *They have no Apostolic pastors.* They have no Pope ; their head is the king or queen in whose country they live. None of the sects can boast of having the successors of the Apostles for bishops. Who gave those who founded a new church, their authority? Not the successors of the Apostles, from whom they were separated. Did they prove their mission by miracles? St. Francis Xavier, a member of our Church, though legally sent, proved by miracles his mission to the Gentiles, whilst Luther, Calvin, Henry VIII, and others, were tyrannizing over the people, whom they were pretending to lead to God!

With the separation from the One Apostolic Church, all stability of doctrine was lost. If one man has the right to follow his own caprices, every man possesses an equal right to do so. Hence, the subdivision of Protestantism into countless sects, which certainly is not a mark of the One Apostolic Church.

Heretics and schismatics have endeavored to justify their separation from the Church, by the assertion that her corruption and abuses were excessive and intolerable. But these abuses are exaggerated. Besides, who authorized *them* to define what are abuses? If things were suffered to go on in that way, every individual would be free to proclaim himself sovereign master of divine revelation.

Our Church is Apostolic. None of the religious bodies separated from our Church, can claim this mark of Apostolicity. With the Apostolic Fathers, we say to them: "You are new-comers, you are innovators, you are not Apostolic; therefore, your faith is vain and false, your religion is a swindle, and a fraud on the records!" As for us, knowing that the Apostolicity of our holy Church is founded on the Apostolic See, let us adhere to that foundation-stone, laid by Jesus Christ himself. Amen.

E. and Z.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

PRAYER.

"Ask, and you shall receive." (John 16 : 24.)

SHORT SERMON ON THE GOSPEL.

The Gospel of to-day is a part of Christ's discourse after his Last Supper. He exhorts his disciples to fervent prayer : "Amen, amen, I say to you : If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you." (John 16 : 23.) He could not have exhorted us in a more touching manner, than he did. He promises to grant all our petitions, if we pray in his name. "Ask, and you shall receive ; seek, and you shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth ; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." (Matt. 7 : 8.) Not content with thus exhorting us to prayer, the Son of God has taught us also a certain form of prayer, drawing himself an outline of the petitions which we should present to our heavenly Father. Faith teaches us then :

- I. *That it is our duty to pray ;*
- II. *That we must pray in the right manner ; and*
- III. *That prayer is all-powerful with God.*

I. *We must pray.*

1. God wills that we should pray. This we are taught by both the Old and the New Testament, which exhort us, again and again, to pray. "Trust in him all ye congregation of people : pour out your hearts before him : God is our helper for ever." (Ps. 61 : 9.) "Let nothing hinder thee from praying always." (Ecclus. 18 : 22.) "Cry to me, and I will hear thee." (Jer. 33 : 3.) "And he spoke also a parable to them, that we ought always to pray, and not to faint." (Luke 18 : 1.) The words "*we ought*" imply and contain a strict precept. "Be instant in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving." (1. Thess. 5 : 17.) "Pray without ceasing." (1. Thess. 5 : 17.) "The end of all approacheth. Be prudent, therefore, and watch in prayers." (1. Pet. 4 : 7.)

2. Prayer is necessary for our *temporal welfare*. "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" (1. Cor. 4 : 7.) God is the Author and promoter of our temporal welfare. "The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich, he humbleth, and he exalteth." (1. Kings 2 : 7.) Since God owes us nothing, it is our duty to ask him for any blessing we may desire. Because of prayer, the Three Children were protected against the flames in the fiery furnace of Babylon. (Dan. 3 : 25.) Because of prayer, Jonas was delivered out of the belly of the whale, Susanna, from death, St. Peter, from prison. How many sick were healed by Jesus, in consequence of their prayer !

3. Our *eternal welfare* depends on prayer. Without prayer the sinner cannot rise from his fall, for conversion is a grace of God, which is obtained only by prayer. We must ask for the grace of God also, that we may be strengthened against temptations: "Watch ye, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." (Matt. 26 : 41.) The devil hates nothing more than prayer. "The roaring lion does not frighten away the wild beasts as quickly as the prayer of the just man, the devil." (St. Chrysostom.) Final perseverance is a gift of God, a gratuitous grace, which cannot be obtained but by prayer. Without prayer, the just man cannot persevere in the grace of God.

4. Prayer is necessary both before and after death. It releases us from the punishment due to our sins here on earth: "He that loveth God, shall obtain pardon for his sins by prayer, and shall refrain himself from them, and shall be heard in the day of prayer." (Ecclus. 3 : 4.) Furthermore, it releases us from punishment after death: "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins."

II. We must pray, however, *in the right manner* if we expect our petitions to be granted.

1. We must pray *with attention*; that is, we must avoid all wilful distractions in our prayer. We cannot expect God to listen to our prayers, if we pay no attention to them ourselves. A prayer without attention is an insult to God; it is mere lip-service, which is an abomination to the Most High, and mockery in his sight. "Cursed is he that does the work of the Lord deceitfully!" In order to pray with attention, we must place ourselves in the presence of God, and recall our thoughts as often as we perceive them to be wandering away. "This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips they glorify me, but their heart is far from me." (Is. 29 : 13.) God weighs the words of the heart, not of the mouth.

2. We must pray *with humility*. The prayer of him that humbleth himself, shall pierce the clouds." (Ecclus. 35 : 21.) "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." (James 4 : 6.) Remember the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. An humble faith obtains everything it asks, because it asks aright. "All things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come to you" (Mark 11 : 24.) "Let us go with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid." (Hebr. 4 : 16.)

3. We must pray with *resignation to the will of God*, leaving to him the granting or refusing of our requests. He, being the Physician of our souls, knows better than we, how to distinguish the medicine from the poison. People often ask for what is detrimental to their salvation ; and God, in lovingly refusing their requests, acts as a good mother who will not give a sharp knife to the child that asks for it, because the granting of the request would be its sure destruction. Never ask unconditionally for any temporal blessing. Seek first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and pray for temporal goods only as far as they may be conducive to God's honor and your own eternal welfare. "Lord, do with me according to thy will !" (Tob. 3 : 6.) "O my Father, if this chalice cannot pass away except I drink it, thy will be done !" (Matt. 24 : 42.)

III. *Prayer is all-powerful with God*. It vanquishes the Almighty, it does violence to him. The prayer of a just man availeth much. "The Lord hath regard to the prayer of the humble ; and hath not despised their petition." (Ps. 101 : 18.) "Ask, and you shall receive." (Matt. 7 : 7.) "And all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." (Matt. 21 : 22.)

Yet our prayer will be granted only under certain conditions :

1. What we pray for must conduce to our salvation. From God come only good things. "Every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights." (James 1 : 17.) If men pray for a stone instead of bread, for a serpent instead of a fish, God in his bounty does not, and cannot, grant such foolish petitions.

2. We must be the friends of God. "He that turneth away his ears from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination." (Prov. 28 : 9.) "Behold, the hand of the Lord is not shortened, that it cannot save ; neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have divided between you and your God, and your sins have hid

his face from you, that he should not hear." (Is. 59 : 1.) Is then the sinner not to pray at all to God? Ah! yes, he, too, must pray, he must beseech God for the great grace of conversion from his evil ways.

Pray fervently, pray in the right manner, and you will experience the efficacy of prayer. Are you tempted to sin? "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation." Are you a sinner, desiring the forgiveness of your sins? Pray, and you will obtain your request. An act of contrition is prayer itself, and is not possible without previous prayer. Are you just in the sight of God? Pray that you may persevere to the end in the love and friendship of your God.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

WHAT IS MEANT BY PRAYER.

"Amen, amen, I say to you : If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you." (John 16 : 23.)

The week upon which we enter to-day, is called, in the language of the Church, *Rogation Week*;—and in it the Church exhorts us, in an especial manner, by prayer and solemn processions, to implore the grace and mercy of the Lord. These prayers and solemn processions have existed in the Church as a pious custom since the fourth century. At that time, a portion of France was frequently visited by earthquakes, sterility, famine, and other misfortunes. The Bishop who, at that time, filled the see of Vienne, had recourse to God in these public afflictions. He admonished the faithful to penance and to prayer, and ordered solemn processions during the three days before the feast of our Lord's Ascension into heaven. Immediately, all these public calamities ceased. The holy practices recommended by the Bishop of Vienne, spread gradually from France through the whole of Christendom, and have prevailed therein for fourteen hundred years.—If our lives are beset by continual trials, should we not cheerfully respond to the invitations and admonitions of our holy Church, and join in her solemn devotions for obtaining God's grace and mercy?

How beautifully our Saviour encourages us to pray, in the words of

this day's Gospel! "Amen, amen, I say to you : If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto, you have not asked anything in my name. Ask, and you shall receive ; that your joy may be full." He has given to his disciples and to us, by these words, an unlimited promise, an infinite assurance, which must fill our hearts with the greatest confidence. Hence, I will review, to-day, the admonitions of the Gospel and of our holy Church ; and together, we will endeavor to search into the essence, and properly esteem the privilege, of prayer. Prayer, then, is :

- I. *Our highest duty,*
- II. *Our greatest strength, and*
- III. *Our grandest dignity.*

I. It is a proverb : "Necessity teaches us how to pray," or . "He who would learn to pray, must go to sea." Alas ! this is a melancholy truth. It shows us our mean and narrow views concerning prayer. Shall prayer be merely the outcry of the heart to God in the temporal needs and dangers of life ? A something only necessary for our fleshly life and preservation ? Ah ! prayer means something far higher and more sublime. It is founded in the very essence of God himself. It is, as I have said, *the highest duty of man.*

1. Prayer is the elevation of the soul to God. Is not this the first and highest duty of man ? Is not God the Lord of heaven and earth, before whom every one of his creatures must bow down in awe and reverence ? Is he not our good and tender Father, to whom our hearts and souls must always be drawn in love ?

The earth and the heavens pray to the Eternal, who is their Lord and Maker. The birds of the air, the beasts of the field, and the fishes of the sea, all praise God in their respective ways. The grasses and the flowers, the trees of the woods and forests, all pray, offering their blossoms and fruits to their Creator, and bowing down their tops in holy awe at his word. The mountains and the hills pray, standing in immovable devotion before him who created them. The stars of heaven pray, revolving in their endless orbits, seen by no eye but the all-seeing eye of him who formed them, and whom they serve in holy obedience. The heavenly choirs of the Angels are always praying, singing unceasingly, day and night, before the throne of the Everlasting : "Holy holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth !"

2. Men may look upon the world as they please, according to their intelligence and taste. They may consider it a broad battle-field for

their strifes, or a great kitchen in which their food is produced from thousands of edibles. But, with Holy Writ, I cannot consider creation other than a grand temple in which, from the grains of sand upon the sea-shore, up through all the grades of created beings—to the Cherubim and Seraphim before the throne of God,—the divine praise resounds from myriads upon myriads of tongues. Should man alone remain dumb amid all this joyous chorus of nature? Appointed by the Lord to be king over all his works, the priest in the great temple of creation, into whom God breathed his spirit, and on whom he impressed his own image,—shall man alone remain silent? By his very nature, he is intended to collect into his spirit and mouth, the whole adoration of visible nature. He is to be the spokesman of all creatures, their voice, and representative before the Eternal God.

3. The duty of prayer becomes greater and more urgent, when we consider that God is not only the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, but also our most loving Father and Benefactor. Does he not, every moment, give us a thousand proofs of his loving care? Is it not merely through his love for us, that we live and breathe? Every breath that we draw, every particle of food that we eat, every drop of water that we drink, everything in our physical life, is a gift of his love. These proofs of his love are so numerous and abundant, that the daily enjoyment of them has rendered us indifferent to them.

And, what shall I say of those supernatural gifts of mercy and grace which are imparted to us by the holy Sacraments? By all the blessings of the Church of Jesus Christ, that highest creation of his love for us? Let each one ask his own heart if he cannot exclaim with the Psalmist: "What shall I render to the Lord, for all the things that he hath rendered to me?" (Ps. 115: 12.) Looking back upon the manifold mercies of our lives, can not each one of us cry out with the Blessed Virgin: "My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he that is mighty hath done great things to me: and holy is his name?" (Luke 1: 46, 47, 49.)

What return can you make the Lord for all his gifts? Will you offer him your possessions, the goods of the earth? "The world is his and the fulness thereof." (Ps. 49: 12.) None of these things are worthy of him. "Offer to God the sacrifice of praise; and pay thy vow to the Most High." (Ps. 49: 14.) Cast yourself down before his face, and say to him: "I acknowledge that thou art my Lord, the Ruler of heaven and earth! I know that thou art my Father, to whom I owe all that I have and am! To thee, therefore, I consecrate my heart with all its affections!" It is, indeed, little, that we offer to God when we present him our grateful prayers; but this is all that we can give, all that he demands from us.

Prayer is as old as the human race, as old as religion itself. There has never been a people upon the earth, that did not honor their gods by prayer and sacrifice. In the whole creation there is only one single intelligence that does not pray, and that is the Devil. The enemy of God from the beginning, that fallen angel, lives but to curse and blaspheme the Lord our God.

Our life must be a continual praise of God, an unceasing prayer. If we do not cast ourselves joyfully and lovingly before his face, praising and adoring him, and thanking him for his benefits, the Lord will, one day, bow down our stiff necks, and bend our stubborn knees, compelling us to fulfill the first and highest duty of man.

II. But prayer is also our *greatest strength in all our corporal and spiritual necessities.*

1. Who can number or describe all the miseries of body and soul which afflict the children of Adam? We are all poor, infinitely poor creatures. The proud man may exist, for a brief space, without being conscious of his poverty; but, sooner or later, it will make itself felt very sensibly, and he will be borne down by the weight of his miseries. Poor as we are in the body, we are still poorer in the soul, through the sins of our lives. What is more necessary, then, than to raise our hearts in prayer to him, who, as the Apostle says, "is rich to all that call upon him"? (Rom. 10 : 12.)

How can I describe the power and strength of prayer? Ask the poor and the sick, the persecuted and the despised; ask the unhappy, whose name is legion, what sustains them in their needs? Ask those who in severe spiritual struggles and in violent temptations, strive against sin and the power of the devil, what endows them with strength and perseverance? Ascend into heaven and ask the Saints what procured for them their crowns and palms of victory? One answer will come forth from the mouths of all: "*We owe all this to prayer, for prayer is the highest strength of man!*"

2. Prayer is, in truth, the universal panacea for all earthly needs and miseries. It is the spiritual sun, whose rays cannot be numbered, and whose blessings cannot be weighed or measured. It is the breath of the spiritual world, which ascends to heaven from the hearts of men, and which returns again to earth in richest blessings. Prayer procures for us the aid of the Almighty. For, even though the Lord may not immediately grant our prayers; though he may still permit the yoke of earthly cares to oppress us,—yet, he grants us the power and strength to bear patiently the heaviest afflictions. As when weak man is on the point of falling into sin, prayer supports and strengthens him against sink-

ing into that terrible abyss. Furthermore, prayer obtains God's pardon for the sinner, and merits for him the grace of repentance and conversion. It prepares us for the reception of the holy Sacraments, and procures for us sanctifying grace. It enables us to preserve this gift of God, obtaining for us that greatest and highest grace of heaven,—final perseverance.

Nothing can supply the place of prayer. While each of the holy Sacraments, even Baptism itself (the first and most necessary Sacrament), can be supplied by some other grace which the Lord grants us, or by other acts of virtue ; while every virtue and good work which we should practise, by God's mercy, can be made good,—nothing can take the place of prayer in the application of grace to our souls. Prayer is the mainspring of good, its bloom, and highest perfection. It is the last plank to which the sinner can cling after his spiritual shipwreck.

3. Hence, God never turns a deaf ear to any sincere prayer. Even when our prayer is not actually granted, the prayer itself is not in vain, for it prepares us for other graces ; yea, through the infinite goodness and mercy of God, far greater and higher graces than we (with our limited, human views) have asked of him. Prayer is the weapon with which we may storm heaven ; it is a holy violence to which the Almighty himself yields, and by which he permits his anger to be appeased.

Therefore, our Saviour has so often and so emphatically commanded us to pray always. The great Saints were all men of prayer ; prayer was their duty, their delight, their happiness. The holy hermit, St. Anthony, found so much sweetness and comfort in prayer, that he spent whole nights in it, and when the sun arose in the morning, he would cry out : “ O beautiful sun, why do you disturb me at my prayers ? ” St. Philip Neri was penetrated by such inexpressible happiness in prayer, that he often cast himself upon the earth, during his devotions, and exclaimed : “ Lord, it is enough ! I beg of you to withhold, for a time, the torrent of your consolations ! ” The same Saint was often heard to say during prayer : “ O Lord, why hast thou given me only one heart with which to love thee ? ” Prayer was especially the strength of those Saints who offered up their lives in ceaseless labors for the good of their neighbors. A St. Vincent of Paul, a St. Francis Xavier, a St. Dominic, and thousands of other Saints, after spending the day in laborious toil, found their whole strength and refreshment in prayer during the night.

III. Prayer is also *the highest dignity of man*. It is not only an exercise sanctified and ennobled by the practice of the Saints, sanctified and

ennobled by the Angels of heaven, who bow down in adoration before the throne of God,—but it is an exercise which sanctifies and ennobles man himself. *It raises us above the earth ; it admits us to the communion of the blessed in heaven ; it draws us near to God himself, and fills us with supernatural sentiments*

1. Prayer raises us above the earth, and above the narrow limits of time. In prayer, a ray of divine light gilds the darkness of our earthly life, consecrating and sanctifying it. We are destined, one day, to stand before the throne of God, with souls and bodies glorified, enlightened, and spiritualized by divine grace. This, our destiny, is typified here on earth by a devout man who raises his hands and eyes to the Lord in pious and fervent prayer. Art can produce no nobler or more beautiful picture than that of a good man in the act of prayer. Only then, is heavenly splendor and loveliness spread over his whole being .

2. Prayer admits us to the communion of Angels and Saints, and through it we draw near to the throne of God. Can we enjoy a higher dignity and distinction, here below, than that of being admitted in spirit to approach into the holy ranks of the Elect, uniting with them in adoration before the throne of the Eternal ? Through prayer we become Angels upon earth, busy in the praise and worship of our God ! Nay, more, we rise even to the throne of God himself. St. Chrysostom says : “ This is the highest and greatest dignity of all, an honor which surpasses even the glory of the Angels, that the creature may speak confidentially with his Creator, and associate familiarly with him.” Dust and ashes, that we are, we are permitted, in prayer, to enter the presence of the everlasting majesty, the sovereign Lord, who carries the world in the hollow of his hand. The eternal King of heaven and earth bends down to us in love. We can pour out to him our wants ; we can spread out before his face all that troubles and oppresses us ; and this almighty, holy, and just God listens to us in love and mercy. Should not our hearts rejoice with holy joy, that we are allowed to appear before his face, and that he has granted us the privilege of prayer ? The Lord cannot grant man a greater dignity or a higher distinction than that which is contained in prayer. Only the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, in which we receive our Saviour himself into our hearts, contains a greater grace for us. O, that we always meditated upon the dignity of prayer ! How happy do men esteem themselves if a prince of this world listens graciously to their prayer and petition ! How do they praise the hour in which he promised them help ! How do they court the favor of a man ! But towards the Lord, their God, who is ready to raise them to the highest honors, they are cold and indifferent.

3. Prayer fills us, even upon earth, with heavenly sentiments. It is a breath of Paradise, which penetrates us and sanctifies our inmost essence. What can contribute more to the sanctification of our life than continual intercourse with a pious man? The proverb says truly: "Tell me who are your companions, and I will tell you who you are," because our associates exercise an incalculable influence upon our character. If we live in close union and continual intercourse with God, will we not be sanctified and made perfect by that Fountain of all sanctity and perfection? Will not prayer deepen in us our likeness to God? Shall we not, even here upon earth, bear his divine features?

"Prayer effects wonderful transformations," says St. Chrysostom. "It changes the carnal into the spiritual heart, the tepid into the zealous, the human into the divine, and communicates to us, in an incomprehensible manner, the dispositions of the Seraphim, who, standing before God, sing his praises, and wave their wings." When Moses descended from the mountain, "from the conversation of the Lord," the Holy Scripture tells us that his face darted rays. (Exod. 34 : 29.) Shall not such rays of divine light and glory be shed over those who in the familiar intercourse of prayer, walk with God in heaven? Such is that patent of nobility which raises us from the dust of the earth. It ennobles man in his whole being, more than any accomplishment that art or science can give. Earthly culture is but a thin veneering; the holy culture of prayer, alone, produces a noble character, a perfect man, who will grow into an angel of God.

Alas! that we should prize so little this great privilege of prayer! If, in all our undertakings, we built upon prayer and not upon our own strength, we would find our endeavors more frequently crowned with success. That which is visible and tangible, supplants the invisible and heavenly; and we attach little value to prayer even while it affects our life the most. The proud man-of-war is guided in its course by the little rudder that works away concealed beneath the water. Prayer is the lever of the world.

"Only on the day of judgment," says Mœhler, "shall we learn the connection of the mysterious powers of Christianity with external history. Then, we shall find that many a poor mother has exercised a greater influence over the history of the world, than those who sat upon thrones, or who stood at the head of armies." Then, only, shall we fully recognize the gracious operations of prayer.

From this time forward, then, my beloved, let the motto of our lives be: "Pray and work!" First pray, and then work! Then, will labor be blessed by prayer. You, O parents, in particular, observe this motto in your homes. Never suffer to be omitted there, morning and evening

prayer, or the grace before and after meals. Let us all pray earnestly. Let us pray without ceasing. Let prayer be our highest duty, our greatest strength, and it will lead us to the supreme dignity of children of God, our Father, whose name be blessed throughout all eternity! Amen.

BISHOP EHRLER

THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

THE GLORY OF HEAVEN AND THE LABOR NECESSARY TO ATTAIN IT.

"God is ascended with jubilee." (Ps 46 : 6.)

SHORT SERMON.

The painful and laborious life of our Blessed Lord is past, and the happy hour has arrived, of which the royal prophet has said : " God is ascended with jubilee." What delight must have filled the heart of the God-Man when he could realize the words which he spoke to Magdalen after his Resurrection : " I ascend to my Father" ! What inexpressible joy, when the portals of heaven were thrown open, and Jesus hastened to the embrace of his heavenly Father, when, amid the rapturous Alleluias of the heavenly choirs, he once more took possession of his throne of glory !

Let us, to-day, follow in spirit our Saviour ascended into heaven, and represent to ourselves the glory and splendor into which he has entered. Who would not ardently desire to share this glory in the sweet company of Jesus ? What can be more beautiful and precious than the joy of heaven ! Let us, however, not forget that our Lord has set a price upon that glory. " Ought not Christ to have suffered these things," said he, "and so to enter into his glory ?" (Luke 24 : 26.) Hence, we must understand

- I. *That, while the glory of heaven is a something to be eagerly desired;*
- II. *It is a something for which we must constantly suffer and struggle.*

I. The royal prophet cries out : " How great is the multitude of thy

sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden for them that fear thee!" (Ps. 30 : 20.) Who shall venture to describe the grandeur and the glory of heaven? Perhaps, an eloquent St. Chrysostom? No, he himself gives this answer: "I have no words to describe the glory of heaven." St. Bernard, too, has declared: "The reward of the Blessed in heaven is so great, that it cannot be measured; so rich, that it cannot be expressed; so precious, that it cannot be estimated." And St. Augustine has written with his golden pen: "What our future glory in heaven will be, what great riches it offers us, and with what splendor it shines, we may praise with our tongues, but we cannot describe it!" None of these holy men could give us an adequate description of the joys of heaven, because they had never beheld them. Even St. Paul, who had been elevated to the third heaven, could not depict this incomparable glory, but only broke out into these words: "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.) But should not Christ, who was in this glory from eternity, be able to describe it to us as it is? He speaks, indeed, of the joys of heaven, of the happiness of the Saints, of the glory of the just, saying to his Apostles: "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, because your reward is very great in heaven." (Matt. 5 : 12.) And again: "The just shall shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father." (Matt. 13 : 43.) But the real quality of this joy, the true sweetness of this delight, the true glory of heaven, he could not explain to us in its entire perfection and superabundance, because he spoke in the language of men, and that language was inadequate to express the glory of heaven and its joys. Even if he had described them to us in the language of the Godhead, we would neither have understood it with our intellects, nor felt it in our hearts. In that day, when we shall no longer see through a glass, darkly, but "face to face" (1. Cor 13 : 12.), then, only, shall we comprehend how great is the glory of heaven.

We must, therefore, content ourselves to exclaim with St. Bernard: "O joy of joys! Joy! thou excellest all joy! Joy, there is no joy besides thee!" Must not such a joy, such a glory, awaken in our souls the most ardent desire after heaven? We may well cry out with the Psalmist: "My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord." (Ps. 83 : 2.) "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water; so my soul panteth after thee, O God." (Ps. 41 : 2.) Or, break forth into the words of St. Paul: "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ." (Phil. 1 : 23.) Or, with St. Ignatius, exclaim: "O how I disdain the world when I contemplate heaven!" Yes, our whole desire must be directed towards heaven. Let us labor for that prize, cost what it may. The cost is sufficiently explained in these words:

II. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24 : 26.) Now, if the Son of God, the Sovereign Lord of heaven, had to suffer in order to be admitted into heaven, what must we, poor sinners and exiles, do and suffer for heaven's sake? Our Lord has no other watch-word save that of warfare and suffering for the kingdom of heaven. "How narrow is the gate, and strait the way, which leadeth to life." (Matt. 7 : 14.) "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." (Matt. 11 : 12.) "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matt. 16 : 24.) All these passages clearly tell us that we must do much, and suffer much, for heaven.

What have the Saints done in order to gain heaven? Some of them went into the desert, hid themselves in caverns, and lived the greater part of their lives on roots and herbs. Others renounced the world, left all they had, and retired into the solitude of a monastery, in order there to serve God unceasingly by fasting, prayer, and vigils. Thousands of virgins offered to God their chastity, sacrificed all the joys and pleasures of the world, and led, unto death, an austere, penitential life. Tell me, have not such borne upon their shoulders a very heavy cross? Have they not stormed heaven by violence? And what are we doing for heaven? Do we not love the world and its vanities? Do we not love our own ease and comfort, the conveniences and amenities of life? Do we not find it a hard task to serve God, to pray, to do penance for our sins, to chastise our bodies, by fasting, and, in short, to merit heaven by self-denial?

Reflect upon the combats of the martyrs. What cruel sufferings did they not endure for the sake of heaven! St. Paul tells "of many holy ones who were stoned, . . . cut asunder . . . and put to death by the sword." (Hebr. 11 : 37.) These, and often far more terrible things, have myriad other martyrs endured.

Now, what are *we* willing to suffer for heaven's sake? Where is our patience in afflictions, in sicknesses, humiliations, and calamities? Do we not frequently give way to impatience? Do we not murmur against God, and complain of injustice? And yet, we know that God loves us, when he chastises us; we know that he sends us crosses and afflictions unto salvation, that, like our prototype, Jesus Christ, we may enter through much tribulation into eternal glory. Let us remember this in the time of visitation, and consider that heaven is worth all the sufferings, and a great deal more. "My soul," says St. Augustine, "if you had to bear the greatest torture every day, and at times, even the torments of hell, heaven would be worth more!" Therefore, encourage yourself to patience in sufferings, and say: If Jesus, the innocent Lamb of God, had to suffer all this in order to enter into his glory, I, a miserable sin-

ner, will gladly and patiently bear my cross, in order to follow him into the everlasting delights of Paradise, which he has prepared for those that love him. Amen.

THE ASCENSION.

THE JOYS OF HEAVEN.

“And the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God.” (Mark 16 : 19.)

Jesus Christ has ascended into heaven—has gone home to his Father. He has departed, as he himself said, in order to prepare a place for us, and thence he will come again, in order to take us to himself. He has returned home, in order to receive from his Father (in return for all his earthly humiliations), his heavenly glory, and to make us sharers thereof. Christ has gone home to his Father’s house, in order to send us the Comforter, to teach us all truth, and to fill our hearts with peace, grace, and benedictions, and, as it were, to give already in this world a foretaste of the heavenly joys.—Thus, the Ascension of our Lord has no other object in view, than to raise us up to heaven ; to remind us of the perfect bliss, which awaits us beyond the grave, and, by this comforting assurance, to encourage us in the battle for faith, justice, and virtue.

Hence, I know of no more fitting manner of solemnizing the glorious festival of to-day, than by meditating upon the *Joys of Heaven* :

- I. *In their origin* ; and
- II. *In their plenitude.*

I. Before I introduce you to the joyful assemblage of Angels and Saints, you must, first, follow me to the judgment-seat of Christ. Our souls have scarcely been separated from the body, before they are called to the particular judgment which awaits each man. O, the anguish and fear that will then overwhelm our souls ! The remembrance of our manifold infidelities—the many neglected opportunities of doing good—the whole terrible record of our sins, will all most grievously oppress

us. Satan will stand forth as our accuser, while our holy Guardian Angels, alas! can produce very little testimony in our favor. Then, we imagine that we are already lost,—we seem to hear, in anticipation, the dread voice of the Judge, pronouncing our sentence of condemnation: “Depart, into everlasting fire!” But lo! the cross, the sign of victory, the joy of the Christian, appears in sight, and from it resound the words once addressed from there to the penitent thief: “This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise!” (Luke 23: 43.) All true, persevering penitents shall then hear resounding from the cross of Christ, our Intercessor and Mediator, the tender, paternal salutation: “Come, my beloved—come into the kingdom of your heavenly Father!” And, in a moment, the delightful anticipation of heavenly bliss shall fill our hearts. Criminals who have been condemned to death, have often died of joy upon learning of their reprieve—upon being promised merely a longer sojourn in this sorrowful vale of tears. Who, then, can describe the extent of happiness that shall overwhelm us, when a reprieve from eternal death, an assurance of admission into never-ending joys, shall be communicated to us!

March forward, happy children of divine mercy, blessed souls, purchased by the blood of the Incarnate God! Heaven already opens on your view,—the bridal-chamber of your heavenly Spouse stands ready. Its pearly portals opening, reveal to your enraptured gaze the splendor and glory of the heavenly Jerusalem. True it is that: “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” (I. Cor. 2: 9); but St. John, in his revelations, comparing heaven, the abode of eternal felicity, to a city, thus describes it: “The light thereof like unto a precious stone, as it were to a jasper-stone, as crystal. . . The city itself pure gold, like to clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city . . . adorned with all manner of precious stones. . . And *it* needeth not sun nor moon to shine in it; for the glory of God hath enlightened it. . . And nations shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honor into it.” (Apoc. 21: 11-24.) You thus see how St. John makes use of all the splendors of earth, in order to give us a faint idea of the beauty of heaven—and, nevertheless, his whole description is only a dim shadow of those celestial glories, whose vision shall, one day (please God) rejoice our hearts

II. Entering into those blissful mansions, the souls of the elect are immediately surrounded by hosts of Angels. Beloved Christians, if, according to the words of our Lord, there shall be so much greater joy in heaven over the conversion of one sinner, than over ninety-nine just, who need not penance,—who shall describe the jubilation that shall prevail in that

blessed abode, when its inhabitants shall welcome therein the chosen souls who have persevered to the end in the grace and favor of God ! Yes, in that moment, our Guardian Angels, who have protected and guided us so tenderly through life, will become visible to us, and will manifest their joy at having conducted us safely to the happy goal of all our hopes. Then, the glorious army of Patriarchs and Prophets will appear before us ; we shall hear the songs of victory entoned by the noble army of the martyrs. The shining ranks of Virgins (both male and female), shall appear marshaled by the pious Joseph who in Putiphar's house withstood all the temptations of the devil, by the chaste Susanna, who brought to shame the grey heads of her wicked accusers and tempters. O, all you who have, here below, preserved your baptismal robe unstained—all you who have unfortunately defiled it by sin, but who have washed it clean in tears of repentance—rejoice in the felicity which you shall experience on receiving the kiss of peace and welcome from those pure and holy souls !

But, dearly beloved, when you have once reached the mansion of eternal joy, and taken your places among the heavenly hosts, looking around, you shall eagerly seek for those who were dear to you upon the earth. Behold, there, O Christian parents, those beloved children, whose early death so deeply grieved your parental hearts ; there, you, shall find them again as children of heaven ; they shall run towards you, embracing you with filial joy and reverence. They will announce your coming to their heavenly friends, saying : “ Behold, those are they who educated us as Christians, implanting in our young hearts the love of justice and virtue, bringing us up in obedience, and preserving us from occasions of sin. They are, by the grace of God, the authors of our happiness !” In that blissful place, the bereaved husband and mourning children shall be re-united to her whose early demise wrung their hearts with sorrow. The weeping orphans shall be comforted that hour, by being restored to their parents, whose death had left them friendless and homeless, and from whom they shall never more be separated. Beloved brethren, if you are absent but a few days from your homes and your dear ones, with what joy do you not return to, and embrace, them ! How immeasurably great, then, will be your happiness when you shall meet all your cherished ones in heaven, without fear, or danger, of ever being parted from them again !

In the company of the Angels and Saints, the good Christian will approach the throne of the Almighty Lord of heaven and earth ; and, then, shall be fulfilled the prophesy of Isaias (33 : 17) : “ His eyes shall see the king in his beauty.” Yes, then we shall see him face to face ;—the Saints shall behold him in the splendor of his perfections, in the majesty of his glory, and in all the charms of his everlasting loveli-

ness ! There, they shall behold the fruition of their holy faith, hope, and charity ; and his glorious vision shall compensate them for all their weariness and pain which they have undergone in the toils and conflicts of earth. The just shall acknowledge that all their past trials and sufferings proceeded from a loving Providence ; and that earthly happiness and riches would have conduced to their eternal ruin. And from the Beatific Vision, their souls shall be inundated with a torrent of delight, which human language is inadequate to describe.

On the day of the general resurrection, when the soul shall be reunited to the body, both shall, then, in common, enjoy the heavenly beatitude. The body "is sown in dishonor : it shall rise in glory : it is sown in weakness : it shall rise in power." (1. Cor. 15 : 43.) And, as St. John writes : "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes : and death shall be no more ; nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow, shall be any more." (Apoc. 21 : 4.) St. Ephrem also says : "Here, there is no place for blushes, nor error, nor repentance ; no room for sin. Joy follows vexation ; eternal peace succeeds to war. Here, the afflictions of age give place to the freshness of youthful vigor ; the soul experiences no anxious cares ; the body is free from all ailments. Here, no terror affrights, no snares are spread, no enemies are in ambush ; for here, the palm of victory has replaced the sword of battle. The Blessed will congratulate themselves, without ceasing, on the end of their warfare, and on the crowns which they have won." And these joys are eternal !

Dearly beloved, I have endeavored to lay before you a slight sketch of the joys of heaven. If St. Peter esteemed himself blessed upon Mount Tabor at the moment of our Lord's Transfiguration ; if the hearts of the two disciples journeying to Emmaus, were burning with love while walking in the company of Jesus ; if we, ourselves, experience an indescribable happiness as often as we receive Jesus in the holy Sacrament of the Altar,—what impression must not the first sight of the joys of heaven make upon our hearts ! But, let the thought of these things inspire you with a firm resolution to renounce all sin, to break the chains which have bound you to the false joys of earth. Turn back from the broad way in which you have, heretofore, unhappily walked, and, in future, carry your cross in patience. Belong to Christ upon earth, in piety and holiness, so that you may, one day, also happily ascend to him, and belong to him in heaven, through the endless ages of eternity !
Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

OUR WATCH-WORD IN TEMPTATION.

“ These things I have told you, that when the hour of them shall come, you may remember that I told you.” (John 16 : 4.)

SHORT SERMON.

Before returning to his Father, our divine Saviour reminds his disciples of all that they would have to suffer in his service. The worst that could come upon them, would be martyrdom ; and to this, he refers when he says : “ The hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth a service to God.” He foretells them this, so that in that decisive hour, recalling his prediction, they may remain faithful to him. Decisive, eventful hours must also come to us, dear brethren—times of trial and peril, when we shall be strongly tempted to fall away from our dear Lord and Master. We will then be tempted to commit sin, or to waver and grow inconstant in good. Let us, at such seasons, recall to mind the words of our divine Saviour, to the end that we may overcome

- I. *The temptation of evil, and*
- II. *Our inconstancy in good.*

I. The only rule for our life is the will of God. This will, Jesus Christ has made known to us in his Gospel. He has there taught us all that we must do, as well as all that we must omit. He has prescribed for us the Christian virtues which we must practise ; and he has clearly indicated the evil we must avoid, in order to become true children of our heavenly Father, true heirs of his everlasting kingdom. These doctrines and precepts are constantly assailed by our three great enemies,—the world, the flesh, and the devil. They unceasingly entice us to follow their will and allurements, and transgress the will and precepts of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Whom shall we follow in the hour of temptation ? Shall we obey the suggestions of our three-fold enemy, or the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ ? Undoubtedly, the latter. As soon therefore, as the tempter entices us to evil, let us remind ourselves

of the precepts and doctrines of Jesus, and resolve to follow them at any cost. Our Lord demands this, when, in the Gospel of to-day, he says to us, in the person of his Apostles : " These things I have told you ;" or, in other words, I have made known to you the will of my heavenly Father and my own, " that when the hour of them shall come, you may remember that I told you," and thus, remain faithful to my will.

This, then, is what we must do when temptations incite us to sin. If it be a temptation to injustice, some temporal advantage, some unlawful greed for the goods or gains of others, let us call to mind these emphatic precepts of God : " Thou shalt not steal." (Exod. 10 : 15.) The unjust shall not possess the kingdom of God. " Amen, I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence, till thou pay the last farthing. (Matt. 5 : 26.) If the spirit of pride assail us, and urge us to exalt ourselves above others, to slight and contemn them, or to shine before the world, by fine clothes and outward tinsel, let us think of the words of Jesus : " Every one that exalteth himself, shall be humbled " (Matt. 23 : 12.) If the temptation be that most terrible one of all,—if impurity assail us with foul thoughts or desires, if others seek to entice us by lewd actions, immodest discourses, or any other evil thing against holy purity,—let us recall at once the special benediction and reward which Jesus promised to the chaste : " Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." (Matt. 5 : 8.) Let us reflect that nothing defiled can enter heaven, and that the impure shall not possess the kingdom of God ; and so, banish promptly from ourselves the spirit of lust and voluptuousness. Again, when tempted to revenge,—when aversion and hatred arise against those who offend us, and inflame the heart with bitter rage,—remember and obey the gentle words of the sweet Lamb of God . " But I say to you : Love your enemies : do good to them that hate you ; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 5 : 44, 45.) When tempted to utter a curse, a lie, a blasphemy, a perjury, let us never forget that the Gospel of Christ commands us to speak the truth, and to avoid every curse, blasphemy, and perjury, under pain of mortal sin.

" Thy word is a lamp to my feet," says David, " and a light to my paths." (Ps. 118. 105.) The doctrine of Jesus is, indeed, a brilliant lamp, shining brightly forth upon the dark path of our present life, and directing us to the way we must enter, when we come to the cross-roads between good and evil. In every temptation to sin, my beloved, ask yourselves : What does God wish me to do ? What would this temptation have me do ? Acting thus, we shall never take the wrong path. As the mariner consults the compass on the wide seas, lest his frail bark should go astray and suffer shipwreck, so we must consult the word of God, upon the stormy sea of life, and be guided by it to our true port—Heaven.

II. The vivid remembrance of the will of God is salutary for us not only in the hour of temptation, but also in our seasons of *inconstancy in the practice of virtue*. Heaven is not a free gift ; we must purchase it with much labor and self-denial. We must merit it by good works ; we must strive, and fight, and suffer for it ; for “ the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away. ” (Matt. 11 : 12.) “ Not every one that saith : Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, ” says Christ, “ but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. ” The way of the cross is the way to heaven. Jesus has trodden that way ; the Saints have followed him, and we must follow him too. He and they had to suffer much for justice’ sake, and so entered into the glory of Paradise.

But, alas ! how frail and wavering we are ! how miserably inconstant in the battle, in the labor, in doing good for heaven ! How often do we drag wearily along the steep road to Calvary, half-tempted to turn back, because the path is rough and thorny ! What can give us new courage to persevere ? The remembrance of the words of Jesus, by which he enkindles us afresh in the practice of good. For instance, you find great difficulty in renouncing sensual pleasures ; the lust of the world easily leads to sin, and you begin to waver in your resolution to live in chaste retirement from the world and serve God alone. Recall at such times the words of Jesus : “ Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple. ” (Luke 14 : 33.)

In fact, for all our Christian duties, the fulfilment of which is often difficult for us, our divine Saviour has a cheering word, which banishes inconstancy, and encourages to push forward to the heavenly prize. His Gospel constantly cries out to us : “ He that persevereth unto the end, he shall be saved ” (Matt. 10 : 22) ; it urges us on to perseverance by the words : “ No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. ” (Luke 9 : 62.) And when evil temptations gather around us, and the heart grows faint and feeble in the practice of virtue, let us listen with keen and loving ears, and we shall hear through the dark shadows of this lower world, the Voice that, ages ago, cheered the apostolic exile on the island of Patmos : “ I know thy works and thy labor, and thy patience . . . Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life ” ! (Apoc. 2 : 2, 10.)

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE POPE.

“When the Paraclete shall come, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me” (John. 15 : 26.)

From the beginning of Christianity, there have been great struggles for the possession of truth. In our own days, we have witnessed the struggles and excitements of human passion caused by the doctrine of PAPAL INFALLIBILITY. Every century has passed through similar struggles in opposition to the dogmas of the Church, some of which were so vehement, that the tempests that have been excited in our present time are nothing in comparison with them. Think not that like conflicts will not occur again. So long as the chair of truth rests on this sinful earth, hell and its allies will attempt to undermine and overthrow it by falsehood or violence. When the Christian mind is agitated and disturbed by religious contentions, when one says: “Here is Christ!” and another, “There is Christ!” shall there be no authority on earth to peremptorily decide the question, to separate truth from error? If the Church has been instituted for the preservation of divine revelation through all time, she must be endowed with the prerogative of Infallibility. Otherwise, truth would be destroyed and swept from the face of the earth. Either an infallible Church, or no Church at all. The Sacred Scripture cannot decide religious disputes. An infallible book needs an infallible interpreter. Again, you are all aware of our stern duty to obey the voice of the Church: “If he will not hear the Church,” says Christ, “let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican.” (Matt. 18 : 17.) The Church could not demand our assent to her doctrine, if she could give us no security, that she will not lead us astray. For this reason, the God of Truth conferred the prerogative of infallibility on the Patriarchs and Prophets of the Old Law, through whom he spoke to his people; and for this reason, he conferred the same prerogative on the Pope, through whom he speaks to his people of the New Law. But the following questions arise:

- I. *In what is the Pope infallible?*
- II. *When is he infallible?*
- III. *How is he infallible?*

I. The Vatican Council, held at Rome in the year 1870, defined the infallibility of the Pope in these words: *When the Roman Pontiff decides a doctrine concerning faith or morals, he possesses that infallibility with which our divine Saviour would have his Church endowed.* The infallibility of the Pope has no reference :

1. To his capacity as a private teacher, but only his official capacity, when he judges of faith and morals as Head of the Church. As such, he cannot err. Neither does it refer to his private life and conduct. When the Vatican Council was in session, the enemies of the Church endeavored to sow the seed of discord among the people by the assertion that the Council, by the declaration of the Pope's infallibility, taught that he could not sin,—thus confounding infallibility with impeccability. This is all false. The Pope is no more impeccable than Peter was, and as the latter could sin after becoming the Head of the Church, so every one of his successors has his faults, and can commit sin. Like any other man, the Supreme Pontiff may abuse his free-will, and sin ; but when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in his official capacity, as Head of the Church, he judges of faith and morals, he cannot err.

2. *The Pope is not infallible as to temporal affairs.* There have been those who would make us believe that the infallibility of the Pope is a threat and encroachment on the rights of princes and nations ; that the infallible Pope may sanction and approve, reject and disapprove, the constitutions of states and civil laws,—depose princes, and absolve subjects from their allegiance and obedience to them. This is not true. In temporal things, the Pope is not infallible. He does not meddle in temporal affairs and politics ; every man is free to espouse the political party or cause he fancies. It is only when something is commanded or forbidden contrary to the eternal, unchangeable law of God, that the Pope is obliged to raise his voice against the wrong. This he does, not by reason of his infallibility, but as Head of the Church, whose right and duty it is to watch over the salvation of the faithful, and prevent the violation of God's law, through human enactments, by all the means in his power and at his disposal.

3. The Pope is not *infallible as to natural and profane, or secular, sciences.* *Lis est inter doctores.* The learned disagree ; they hold sometimes the most divergent and contradictory views and opinions in matters of science. The Pope does not interfere or endeavor to settle these disputes ; he does not peremptorily declare who is right, or who is wrong. He lets scientists alone, as long as they remain in their own territory ; but, as soon as they go outside of it, and broach opinions contrary to di-

vine revelation, he raises his voice and condemns their errors, because it is his stern duty to preserve the deposit of faith pure and undefiled, and to guard the faithful against error and untruth.

4. Papal infallibility embraces nothing but matters of faith and morals,—that is, it controls nothing but what we must believe and do in order to please God and save our souls. The Pope has the right infallibly to declare and to define what is revealed by God. He propounds no new doctrines, he makes no new laws of morality, but only such as are already contained in the divine revelation ; for *Revelation* is an accomplished fact, to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken away. It is the Pope's duty to preserve intact the revealed truths of religion, to defend them, to guard them as the apple of his eye, to establish their true sense and application, and to reject and condemn the opposite opinions, doctrines, and assertions as erroneous and false. It betrays, therefore, a great want of common sense and a great ignorance in those men who assert, that an infallible Pope can make and unmake laws and doctrines as he pleases.

II. The Pope is infallible *when he speaks ex cathedra.*

1. We must distinguish between the Pope *as a private* teacher, and the Pope *as the Head of the Church*. As a private teacher, he is no more infallible than any other man. Many Popes were very learned ; some wrote excellent works on religious subjects. These writings have no more claim to infallibility than the writings of other divines. The same may be said of their addresses, allocutions, and sermons ; they need not be believed as the infallible word of God. The words of the Holy Father are always to be received with respect ; but, it surely would be going too far to say that, whatever the Pope says, or writes, should be considered and believed as infallible truth.

2. The Pope is infallible when he speaks *ex cathedra*, or, as the Vatican Council plainly says : *When in his official capacity, as Head of the Church, he judges of faith and morals*. Peter is the Rock upon which the Church is built. To Peter, our Blessed Lord said : “ Thou art Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” St. Peter is to the Church what a strong foundation is to a house. A house built upon a solid rock-foundation is secure against all winds and tempests ; so, the Church, because her foundation is laid upon the rock of truth, St. Peter, is proof against all error. This is what gives her her characteristic strength and stability. For, if the Pope could err in Christian doctrine, he might prescribe or

ordain something contrary to faith and morals, and then, the gates of hell would prevail against the Church. Christ, however, promised that such a thing should never happen ; therefore, the Pope is infallible.

To Peter, it was said : ‘Feed my lambs, feed my sheep.’ (John. 21 : 15-17.) In these words, Christ imparted to Peter the spiritual supremacy of the whole Church over the lambs, that is, over the faithful, and over the sheep, that is, over the bishops and priests. But if, according to these words of Christ, the Pope is the universal shepherd, whom all must obey, it necessarily follows that he must be infallible. If he were not infallible, he might ordain and prescribe to the faithful things contrary to faith and morals, which would not be to their salvation, but to their perdition. In that case, the fault would be with Christ, because he appointed the Pope as the shepherd of all the faithful, and required them to assent to his teachings, under the penalty of excommunication here and hereafter. When Christ made Peter the Head of the Church, he imparted to him the gift of infallibility, because without it, he could not exercise his office with benefit to the immortal souls committed to his charge.

On the faith of the chief Shepherd, the faith of the flock depends. “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you (my disciples), that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for *thee* (Peter) that *thy* faith fail not, and thou being once converted, *confirm* THY brethren.” (Luke 22 : 31, 32.) Here, our Blessed Lord assured St. Peter, that he prayed for him in particular that his faith might not fail ; and that he was expected, as Head of the Church, to confirm his brethren in the true faith. In other words, by virtue of the prayer of Christ, Peter was made infallible ; he could neither err himself in faith, nor propose any error to others. “*Confirm thy brethren*” ; that is, strengthen them in faith. This supposes that he could not err in faith, otherwise, he might teach them errors, and weaken, instead of confirming, them in faith. The words of Christ : “Confirm thy brethren” would have no sense at all if only the Church, not Peter and his successors, were infallible ; for in that case, Peter would not confirm his brethren, the bishops, but they would confirm him in faith. Hence, on the faith of the Pope, the faith of the whole Church depends.

But, to the end that any decision of the Pope may be considered as given *ex cathedra*, it must concern faith and morals. Herein, alone, the Pope is infallible. The decision must be not merely an assertion, but a judicial sentence or judgment—a final decision. If the Pope, in matters of faith or morals, were to make an assertion without obliging the whole Catholic world to receive it, we would not be bound to accept such an assertion as infallible. The declaration must be such a one as regards the universal Church. If it concerns only individual

persons, the Pope is not infallible, because infallibility is attributed to the Pope only when what he defines or declares is a law binding all Christendom.

III. The Pope is infallible by virtue of the divine assistance promised to him in Peter ; and his decisions in his capacity as Head of the Church, of themselves, and not through the consent of the Church, are unalterable.

1. The Pope possesses infallibility only *by virtue of a special assistance from God*. If the Pope were left to himself, and depended solely on himself, even though he might excel in science and piety to the most eminent degree—there could be no thought of his infallibility. History teaches us that the most learned and most pious men may become entangled in error equally with the ignorant and impious. Witness the case of Origen, Tertullian, and Fenelon. We know that the Pope and Bishops together, that is, the teaching Church, are infallible, because Jesus promised them, for all time, his and the Holy Ghost's assistance. The same may be said of the Pope alone, because he is endowed with a special divine assistance, by virtue of which, he is infallible in matters of faith and morals. In order to be infallible, he need not be omniscient, nor even very learned ; for Peter and the other Apostles were neither omniscient nor learned men, and yet, they possessed infallibility. How foolish and malicious, therefore, is the calumny so often uttered by the enemies of our Church, that we Catholics make the Pope God, by attributing to him infallibility !

2. The decisions of the Popes, of themselves, not through the assent of the Church, are *final and infallible*. This is a necessary corollary of the Papal infallibility. If the assent of the Church were necessary, there could be no longer any question of the infallibility of the Pope. True it is, indeed, that the assent of the Church will never be wanting to the decisions of the Pope in matters of faith and morals, but it is not this assent that makes the decisions of the Pope infallible ; on the contrary, the Church assents to the papal decisions and declarations, because the Pope is infallible. The infallibility of the Pope does not rest on the assent of the Church, but the assent of the Church rests on the infallibility of the Pope.

3. *The decisions and declarations of the infallible Pope in matters of faith and morals are UNALTERABLE*. I say, the decisions and declarations of the infallible Pope, *in matters of faith and morals* ; for ordinances and laws in other matters may be altered and repeated. The reason is, be-

cause in the latter case infallibility is not attributed to the Pope, such laws and ordinances only concerning particular circumstances and periods. If, therefore, the circumstances and times change, the ordinances also suffer a change, or may be abolished altogether. Thus, Pope Clement XIV, and even Leo XIII, in our own times reduced a number of feast-days of obligation because the circumstances of the age seemed to require it. But the case is quite different with definitions and decisions in matters of faith and morals. In these, the Pope is infallible; they are the unerring divine truth, and therefore, unalterable. It is an impossibility for a Pope, or a General Council, to repeal decisions once made in matters of faith and morals. What they have once declared and decided, always remains in force, and no succeeding Pope, or future Council, can change or alter anything.

The truth of the infallibility of the Pope is as old as the Church itself, for Christ taught repeatedly, and emphatically, and the Christians of all times have believed it, and held the declarations of the Pope as binding in conscience. The Fathers of the Vatican Council in 1870, in promulgating the infallibility of the Pope, did not make or create a new doctrine, but confirmed an old one, which had always been believed. In proclaiming this dogma, the Church enforces as a law a principle which has always existed as a matter of fact. Adhere, then, to your spiritual Father, and to the bishops and priests united with him, through whom the Church always announces to you the true, divine doctrine. Believe and do what the Church teaches, that, as good and faithful Catholics, you may find grace with Jesus, the immortal Founder of our holy Catholic Church. Amen.

OCCASIONAL SERMONS.

DEVOTION OF THE FORTY HOURS.

"The ways of Sion mourn, because there are none that come to the solemn feast: all her gates are broken down; her priests sigh; her virgins are in affliction; and she is oppressed with bitterness." (Lament. 1 : 4.)

These words of the Prophet Jeremias express the deep-seated grief which filled his heart at the obstinacy of the chosen people of God. Jerusalem was desolate, her Temple was destroyed; her people no longer listened to the voice of God's messenger, and none came thither to celebrate the solemn feasts. Years have passed since the Prophet sent up his sighs and groans over this melancholy state of things. The world has since been favored by the advent of its Messias; a heavenly religion has been established: feasts of greater solemnity than those of old have been instituted, and yet, to-day, we sigh with Jeremias because there are none that come to our feasts. How many who profess to be Christians, and Catholics, allow days set apart for special devotions to pass by unheeded, neglect attending exercises of piety established especially for their benefit! How many, through malice or indifference, have insulted the Eucharistic God by their sacrilegious communions! For such, the Church has offered her prayers; she has petitioned the Most High until that Spirit which directs her has inspired the devotion which began here this morning, and which will continue for the space of forty hours.

During the siege of 1530, in Italy, a good old priest called upon the people of Milan to unite with him in prayer that Heaven might free them from the many and great troubles attendant upon the war. Moved by his appeals, and confiding in his promises, the people assembled in their church, and on that day, began the beautiful devotion which is now called "*The Forty Hours.*" The good priest chose that period of time in commemoration of the Forty Hours that our divine Lord remained in the tomb. The practice of the Devotion of the *Quarant' Ore* was followed by the most satisfactory results. The war ceased, peace was restored, and the people, overjoyed at this benediction from

heaven, desired their zealous pastor to renew every year this beautiful devotion. At first, it was confined to the city of Milan, and partook somewhat of the nature of a mission or retreat. It was not intended, as it is at the present time, to honor exclusively the Blessed Sacrament, but rather, as an occasion for reconciling the enmities which existed to an alarming extent among the people of Italy. The great success attending the devotion induced its pious author to institute it in other places. It is related, that on one occasion, he reconciled more than one hundred enemies.

Although blessed from its commencement, and producing wonderful fruits, it was not until some years later that the Devotion of the *Forty Hours* was celebrated in the like manner that we observe it at present. Pope Clement VIII, in 1592, gave it a perpetual establishment, and enriched it with indulgences. Those who approach the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, and pray for some time in the church where the Exposition is made, gain a plenary indulgence; and for every extra visit, they can receive a special indulgence of ten years. These are applicable to the souls in purgatory. Are there not among them, my brethren, some of your friends who cry out to you at this moment, they cannot help themselves, that they depend upon the charity of those whom they have left behind them to free them from their torments? Offer, then, these indulgences in their behalf; and when they reach the abode of the Saints, they will not forget those who were instrumental in releasing them from their sufferings. This golden opportunity, my friends, should not be neglected. You are called here in the interests of Jesus Christ. While the people of the world are indulging in crimes, and boldly offending their Creator, how it must delight the Sacred Heart of Jesus to see some of his followers, at least, prostrating themselves before his holy altar, and there endeavoring, by fervent prayers, to repair the injuries and insults which are offered him! Yes, during these times, he is treated more ignominiously than he was during his bitter Passion. From his first coming into the world, he was persecuted, although his coming was for the redemption of men. Behold that Infant—behold the man-God in weakness and poverty! He is refused even a lodging-place; he is obliged to fly from Herod. Young and feeble as he is, he is terribly feared by a mighty ruler. We condemn in the strongest terms the actions of his persecutors; we grieve over his sufferings; we wonder how man could be so cruel as to inflict such torments on our divine Saviour, and, carried away by these thoughts, we overlook our own share in his bitter Passion and death. He is treated, I say, more cruelly now than in the days of Herod; he is more sensible to the insults offered him now,—for those outrages of the past were a part of the great drama of our Redemption

The Jews knew him not ; they would not receive him for their Messiah ;—if they had believed in him, they would not have crucified him—but, O sinner, you who believe that he is the Son of God, you who believe that he redeemed you, you who know that he is offended by mortal sin, what excuse can *you* offer? Why do you treat your Redeemer worse than the Jews did? O atrocity! O ingratitude! professing the religion of his Holy Name, you despise the One who bore it, and your very religion rises up and condemns your unbelief! O my friends, be not among the number of those who thus injure our Blessed Lord. Fly from his enemies, come to this altar, pour forth your prayers and sighs, and endeavor to repair the insults he receives.

While the Herods are condemning, and insulting him, come to your King, not lying on a little straw in a stable, but here, reigning on your altar, surrounded by his Angelic hosts. While the blasphemies of wicked men are raging outside, remain at the foot of the cross, and mingle your tears with those of his Blessed Mother, and his beloved disciple, St. John. Now, you have an opportunity of proving your love ; now, you can show fidelity and allegiance. by assiduously assisting at the different exercises of this beautiful devotion. Besides the interests of Jesus Christ, my friends, which should here be your prime motive, also offer up your prayers for those who are, in any way, near and dear to you. How many are there whom we love in this world, who are exposing themselves to danger, who are, every day withdrawing themselves from God, and rushing to the very brink of eternal destruction. The salvation of these dear ones may depend on the prayers that you offer during this time of special grace. The number of our sins is limited, and when the measure is filled up, the condemnation of the sinner will follow. Saul did not think in pardoning Amalech against the command of God, that he was placing the seal upon his own condemnation. Aman did not foresee, that the gibbet which he erected for Mordecai would first be used for his own execution. Balthassar, profaning the sacred vessels at his impious banquet, never dreamed that his sentence of death would soon appear in fiery letters upon the walls of the banquet-room. The measure of these men's iniquities had been filled up, and the judgments of an angry God overtook them. O stop, sinner! Go no further! The ground whereon you stand is sinking beneath you! The next sin may be your last ; in the midst of your enjoyments, judgment may be pronounced, and eternal misery prove your sentence. It is to avert that terrible fate, that you are solicited, to-day, to come before this altar and plead for yourselves—for those poor ones whose measure of iniquity is nearly filled up. God is good, he is merciful. He is pleased at your petitions for your neighbor, and he will listen to your prayers. If six just persons had been found, Sodom

and Gomorrah would not have been destroyed ; and, as the angry father is often secretly pleased at the intervention of a friend who seeks to protect the child from punishment, so, Almighty God is pleased when by our prayer, we arrest his avenging arm about to descend upon an erring neighbor.

We have a figurative example of this in the Old Testament.

The impious Nabal had insulted David in a most outrageous manner. Resolving to resent the insult, David proceeded with four hundred guards to punish the offender. The wife of Nabal, hearing of his coming, went forth to meet him, hoping by exostulations and entreaties to avert the anger of the prince. Prostrating herself before him, she besought him with tears to desist from his intention, and to spare her husband. " Let not my lord, the king, I pray, regard this naughty man Nabal, for, according to his name, he is a fool, and folly is with him. And when the Lord shall have done to thee all the good that he has spoken concerning thee, and shall have made thee prince over Israel, this shall not be an occasion of grief to thee, and a scruple of heart to my lord." David was moved. His anger was appeased, and he said to her : Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me, and blessed be thy speech ; and blessed be thou, who hast kept me to-day from coming to blood, and revenging me with my own hand. Go in peace into thy house ; behold I have heard thy voice, and have honored thy face." (1. Kings : 25.) Behold, Christians, what you should do during these days. Have you a husband who, by his carelessness, is neglecting his duties to God, who has strayed, or who is straying, away from the paths of righteousness ? Imitate the faith and confidence of the wife of Nabal. Have you a son whose associates are ruining him, whose bad habits have brought disgrace on himself and his family, whose measure is nearly filled up ? Come before this Prince of peace, who is prepared to strike him down ! Come, and prostrate yourselves here, and ask him to regard not the folly of your boy. Ask him to desist for awhile ; beseech him to touch that callous heart, to give him the grace of a perfect and sincere conversion.

But, while remembering others, forget not yourselves. We have all offended God, and divine justice requires satisfaction. Of ourselves, we can do nothing, but, by making use of the means the Church gives us, we can atone for all our failings. This devotion of the Forty Hours, so touching and so simple, is one of the chief means wherewith she supplies us. None save Jesus Christ himself can offer worthy acts of adoration to God. An infinite Being, alone, can offer adequate homage to Infinity, but our acts, when united to Christ's, are divinized and elevated, and become capable of appeasing the justice of God. Yes, if our prayers are not offered in union with the prayers of Jesus Christ, they are of no

avail ; if our tears and sighs are not united with the tears and sighs of our Crucified Redeemer, they are useless. O Christians, what a charming belief, that we can offer our sacrifices and our trials in union with the sacrifice of the Cross ! that Christ's Blood will blot out our iniquities ! that we can be restored through him to the fellowship of the Saints ! Come, then, to this devotion ; assist at this solemnity. Look at him on this altar, ready to receive you, prepared to sanctify and to save you ! Co-operate with him, and induce others to join you. Your zeal for Christ's interests, your compassion for your neighbor, and the salvation of your own soul, cannot but influence you to act thus during these days of benediction.

And what are the dispositions that are required to this end ? St. Paul tells us that he who approaches God, must first believe in God ; consequently, it is useless to attend this Devotion unless you endeavor to excite within yourselves a lively, active faith. To come here merely through curiosity, to be attracted by the beautiful decorations of the altar, by the discourses that will be given,—these are motives unworthy of a Christian heart. No, these lights which shine so brightly, these flowers which send forth their delicious fragrance, should be but symbols of the light of faith, of the fragrance of the virtues wherewith your souls should be replenished.

Faith will cause all else to vanish before your eyes, and you will behold nothing but your King dwelling on this altar. It will suggest to you many thoughts both of sorrow and of joy. In that remonstrance, you will only see your Crucified Jesus ; you will see him scourged, crowned with thorns, his hands and feet sending forth fountains of blood,—and all this, for your redemption. It is your pride and vanity which have offered him vinegar and gall ; it is your criminal desires and attachments which have fastened his hands and feet to the wood of the cross. Look at him closing his eyes, that they may not see your many irreverences ; shutting his ears, that they may not listen to your blasphemies and evil conversations. All his senses seem to have lost their power ; his lips alone are parted, to call you, to beg of you not to offend him afresh, but rather to come and dwell near him, in order that you may become the recipients of his graces. Such, my friends, are some of the suggestions which a lively faith will make to you. These should move your hearts with desires of imitating your beloved Lord in works of self-denial and charity. If the Master has suffered, should not the loving disciple also undergo some sufferings ? If you wish to follow Christ, you must bear your cross patiently. You come to adore him at the foot of the altar ? Your piety is praiseworthy ; but, if you come without the spirit of penance and charity, it will avail you nothing. He speaks to you, and says : The respect you pay me, while so many offend me, is

very pleasing to me—but O ! it would please me much more, if you would renounce your passions, if you would unite yourselves more to my sufferings !

Promise him, this hour, that you will do as he desires,—promise that you will, hereafter, lead a life which will be pleasing and acceptable to him. Attend to this devotion with these dispositions. Jesus Christ will reward you ; he will solace your afflictions ; he will aid you in temptations ; and, one day, he will lead you into that everlasting sanctuary where the veil will be withdrawn, and whereon you will see him in his heavenly beauty and magnificence, surrounded by his celestial court, there to enjoy the reward of the faith and penance which you practised on this earth. Amen.

HOLY THURSDAY.

JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT, OUR FATHER, OUR PHYSICIAN, AND
OUR FRIEND.

“Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and he will dwell with them. And they shall be his people : and God with them shall be their God.”
(Apoc. 21 : 3.)

Loving his own who were in the world, Jesus loved them unto the end. So, on the last night of his life, just before Good Friday, he gathers his Apostles about him in that upper chamber in Jerusalem. Behold him in the midst of them ! After the Paschal Lamb has been served, he says : *“With desire have I desired to eat this Pasch with you.”* He then gets up from the table, and proceeds to wash the feet of his Apostles. Peter protests, saying : *“Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet.”* But he is obliged to yield. They all receive this mark of love, by way of preparation, for what was now to come—the institution of the Holy Eucharist. The account the Evangelists give of the last named, is so clear, so simple, that it is hard to see how any one can mistake their meaning. Jesus taking bread into his sacred Hands, says : *This is my Body.* Then he takes the chalice, saying : *This is my Blood of the New Testament.*

They all receive Holy Communion from the hands of Jesus. The traitor Judas also receives, and, immediately, Satan enters into him. He leaves the Cenacle, goes out into the night, bent upon his infamous errand. Then Jesus opens his heart to his faithful ones ; and his words on this occasion form a long discourse—so sad, so sweet, and so comforting. He tells his Apostles that he is about to leave them. They are inconsolable. Jesus says : *Because I have spoken these things, sorrow hath filled your heart.* Then he goes on to assure them that their sorrow will soon be turned into joy.

“I will not leave you orphans,” he says to them ; *“I will come to you again and abide with you.”* At this very hour Jesus devises the means of perpetuating his presence upon earth by instituting the Sacrament of his love *Do this in commemoration of me.* By these words, he conferred on the Apostles and their legitimate successors, the priests of the Church, the power of consecrating his Body and Blood. This

power has ever since remained active and living in the Church. Wherever you find a Catholic priest, there, by virtue of Christ's institution, is the mystical sacrifice offered; there, too, is the tabernacle of God with men, the abiding sacramental presence of Jesus Christ. Our Lord has kept his word; he has not left us orphans.

In the holy Sacrament of the Altar he is now the same gracious Lord that he was during his mortal life upon earth. *Jesus Christ yesterday, to-day, and the same for ever.*

In studying his character, as revealed in the Gospel, we find our Lord ever acting the part of a kind and bountiful Father, of a skilful physician, and of a constant friend towards all who approach him. He continues still to be a Father, a Physician, and a Friend, to all who seek him in the Sacrament of the Altar.

Let us consider, to-day, how admirably he fulfils this threefold office of Father, Physician, and Friend, in our regard.

I. *Father.* A father discharges his duty to his children by providing for them *food, clothing, and education.*

1. *Food.* It is clear that children must have food in order to sustain life; and that it is the parent's place to provide it. So, also, in the spiritual order, we need nourishment for our souls; it is this that our Lord gives us in the Sacrament of the Altar. This is the bread descending down from heaven, that if any man eat of it, he may not die. *If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever, and the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. For my flesh is meat indeed, &c.*

This blessed food unites us in the most intimate manner with our Lord, so that each worthy communicant can say with St. Paul: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This food is so necessary to sustain the supernatural life of the soul, that our Lord declares we shall not have life in us, unless we eat of it. *Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man.* As the body cannot live unless nourished by material food, so the soul cannot maintain its life without this heavenly Bread.

Come often to this divine banquet, and eat of the Bread of Angels. The oftener you come, the better.

2. *Clothing.* A parent must clothe his child. Now, raiment is needed for a twofold purpose; namely, to protect the body against the cold blasts of winter, and to shelter it from the burning rays of the summer sun.

In the spiritual life, we also need clothing to protect our souls against the chilly atmosphere of the world, so ruinous to devotion, and also from the heat of our own disorderly passions. Our Lord does all this

for us in the Sacrament of his love. He clothes our souls with the robes of his grace, and adorns them with his choicest treasures.

3. *Education.* The third obligation of a parent towards his child is to educate him. The child must be trained in the way he should go. In the holy Sacrament of the Altar, our Lord is our true teacher. He gives us the most sublime lessons in all virtues. Do you desire to be instructed in humility, patience, obedience, &c? You have only to come here to the school of Jesus, and he himself will instruct you from the tabernacle. He will teach you by his example, how to practise humility. The sight of his abasement must confound your pride, and cause you to seek to be unknown, and accounted as nothing.

Consider, also, the example of charity which he presents to us on the altar.

It is his all-consuming love for us that makes him a prisoner in the tabernacle. Behold here, too, your model of *patience!* Infidels and heretics insult and outrage him. Bad Catholics grieve him by their indifference and irreverence towards him. He endures it all patiently for our sake. Would you learn *obedience* also? Look at the Divine Victim on the altar, who permits the priest to do as he wishes with him! O, what beautiful lessons of virtue our Teacher gives us from the chair of the Eucharist! How eager we should be to sit at his feet and assiduously imitate his virtues!

II. *Physician.* During the years of his public life, Jesus healed all manner of diseases and infirmities. He made the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. Our Lord still continues to exercise the office of a physician towards us; he is the physician of our souls; for there are spiritual maladies as well as corporal ones. In consequence of Adam's sin, our nature is weak, and prone to evil. And our own sins, also, have inflicted deep wounds upon our souls. These spiritual ills are far more to be feared than the diseases of the body. The latter end with death and the grave; not so, the evils of the soul; their consequences endure for ever. Hence, you see the absolute need we have of a physician to heal these spiritual ailments.

But we need not go far to find one. Jesus, the physician of our souls, is near by in the Sacrament of the Altar. Virtue goes out from him to heal all who approach him, even as formerly, when he walked among men. He invites all to come: *Come to me all ye that are heavy laden!* Come with confidence. Here, is a physician who has a remedy for all your disorders!

The remedy is *the bread of life descending down from heaven; that if any man eat of it he may not die for ever.* Let us have frequent re-

course to our divine Physician, so that we may receive this sovereign medicine for the cure of our spiritual ailments.

•III. *Our Friend.* Consider our blessed Lord as our Friend in the Holy Eucharist. He is here a true and ever-faithful friend. He foresaw the need we should ever have of a friend to aid us in all the difficulties of life, hence he wished to abide with us himself for that purpose. But how can we appreciate the value of a true friend? Ecclesiasticus says, that nothing can be compared to a good friend. *A faithful friend,* he says, *is a strong defense, and he that hath found him hath found a treasure.* We know full well the value of such a friend—one who has been tried, and found faithful. He is, in truth, the medicine of life. But surely, no human friend, no matter what may be his virtues, can be compared with Jesus, the Friend of our souls! Who could be like him? Who has ever given us such proofs of affection as he? *Greater love than this no man hath that he lay down his life for his friend.* Ah! divine Lover of our souls! who could doubt thy friendship for us, after contemplating thee on Mount Calvary pouring forth thy blood for our salvation? Who, then, is so worthy of our affection as Jesus? He is so tender, so kind, so amiable, that it seems to me, he should enamor all hearts to the exclusion of every other love.

Alas for mere human friendship! It is so fickle, so selfish, that no man can depend upon it! How frequently do we see the greatest friends become the bitterest enemies! The lovers of to-day, are the fierce foes of to-morrow. Such is the friendship of flesh and blood. But there is One whose friendship never flags, never varies; there is one who is ever constant in his affection. Jesus Christ is ever the same—yesterday, to-day, for ever! We may change Judas-like, we may betray him by our crimes. But our divine Friend still continues to love us. Like the prodigal child, we may abandon him, and wander off into strange lands. But he never ceases to look for our return, prepared to receive us with open arms when we come to ask his pardon. No father is more indulgent than he.

He is still, as of old, the friend of sinners. So, you, O sinners, need not fear to approach him. He will give you a hearty welcome, and invite you to a heavenly banquet.

How sad, to think of our ungenerous conduct towards this long-suffering Friend! How few ever come to visit him in his lowly abode! The courts of kings are crowded. But the courts of the King of kings are empty, though he is ever ready to receive all who come to visit him. The church doors are open all day long, but few enter to pay even a passing visit to the Lord of Hosts.

This is strange, it is sad, that we Catholics should thus treat our

best friend. Strange sign of friendship, this,—to stay away from him who has done more than all others in this world to win our love. O merciful Jesus, who thinks of thee? Who cares for thee? The sights and sounds of the great world distract us, and we forget our Jesus, our Emmanuel.

True, a few faithful souls frequently and fervently visit the Blessed Sacrament. Their lively faith in the Real Presence of Jesus draws them to the altar. We can readily understand this. It is the simple working of the law of love. *Where the body is, there also are the eagles gathered together.* It is quite natural for a soul to visit the object of her love. This is only right and reasonable. But it is difficult to understand why the great mass of Catholics who believe that Jesus is really present on the altar, yet never think of visiting him. Can they hope to enjoy his presence in heaven, when they are so neglectful of his sacramental presence here upon earth?

Let us follow the example of the Saints, and make frequent visits to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. If possible, we should visit him at least once every day.

How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. . . Blessed are they that dwell in thy house. They shall praise thee for ever and ever! Amen.

D. M.

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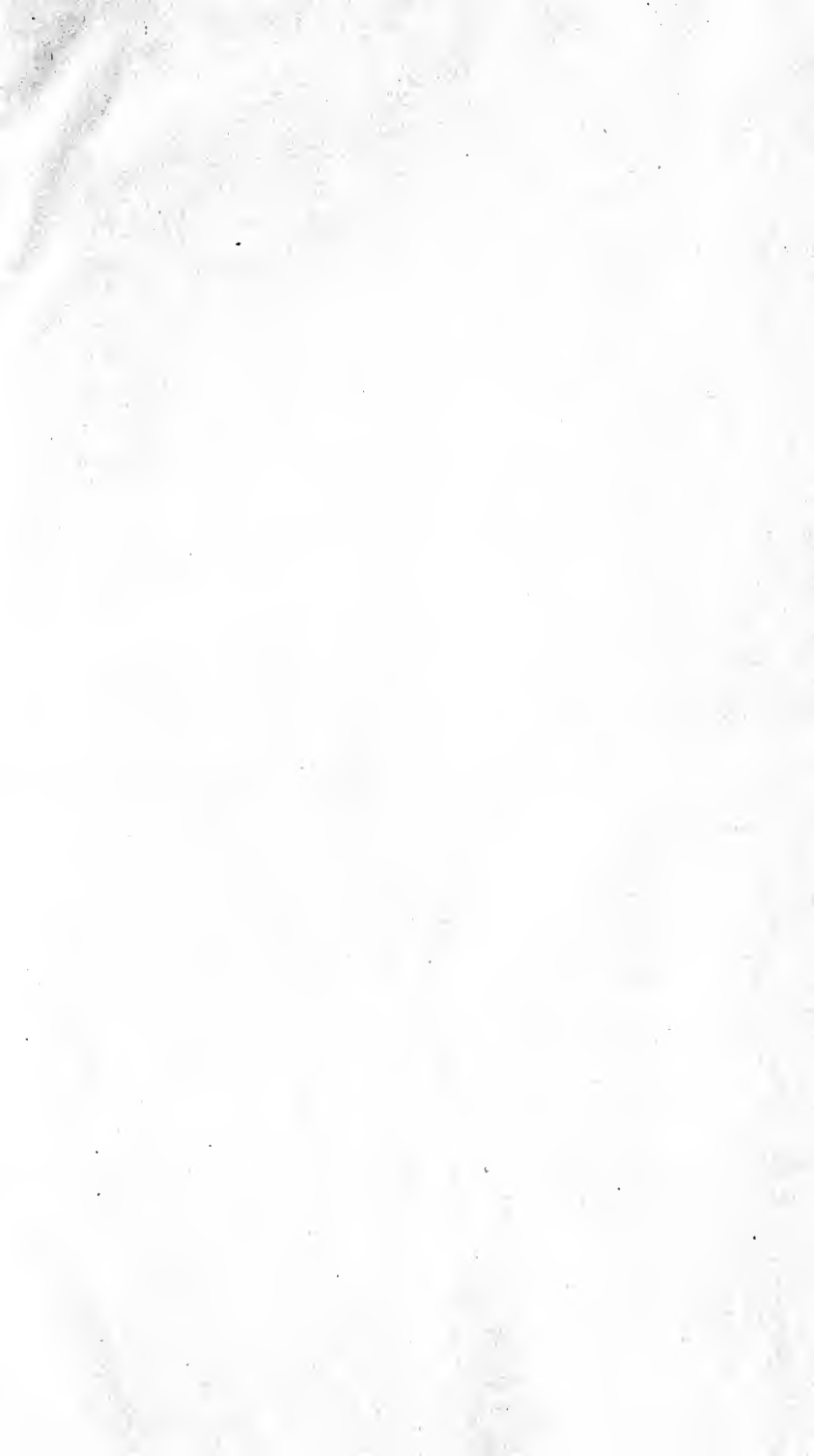
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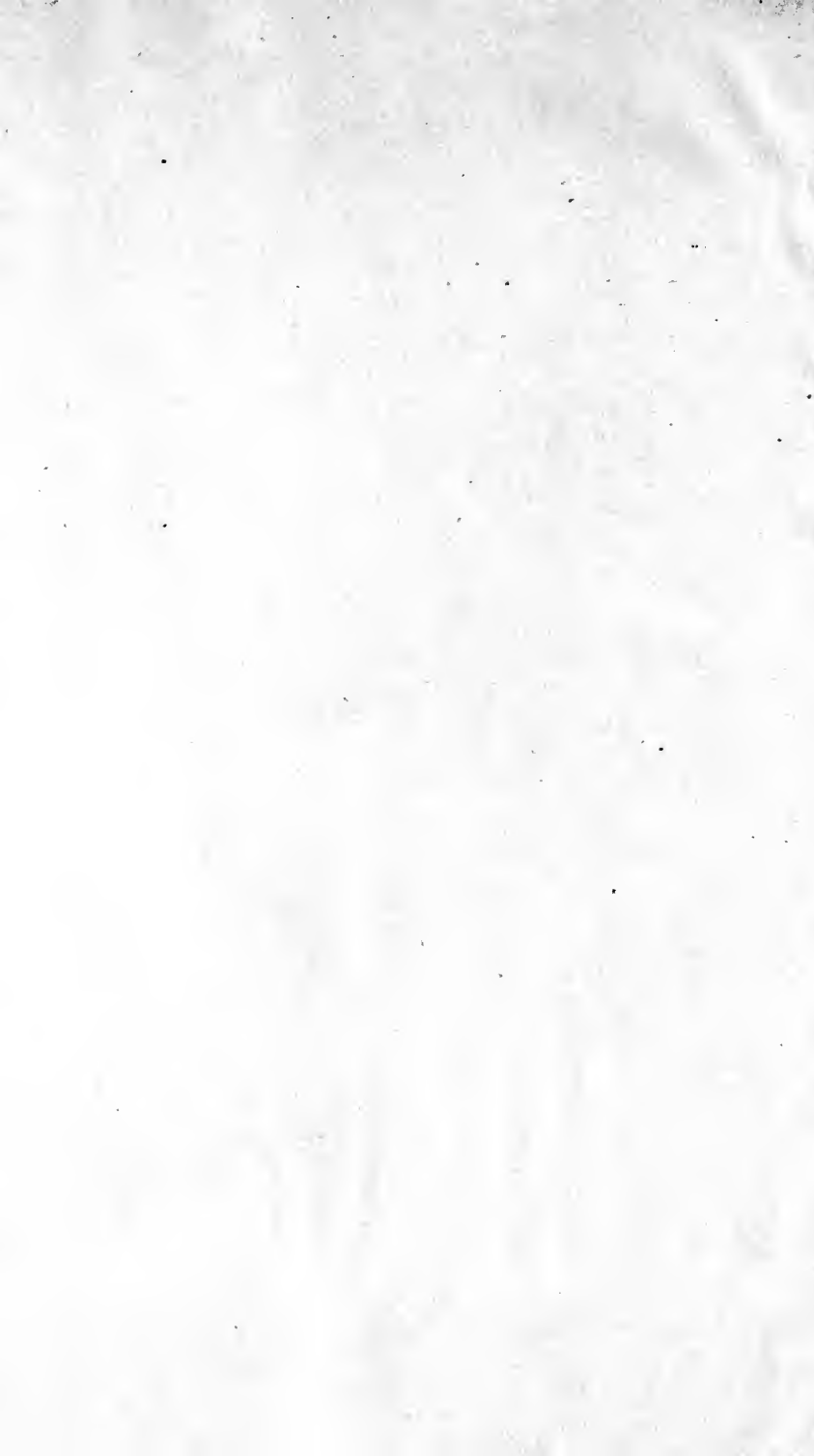
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