

UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



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At. Rev. J. B. ...



# The Ecclesiastical Conferences,

THE SYNODAL DISCOURSES,

AND

EPISCOPAL MANDATES,

OF

MASSILLON BISHOP OF CLERMONT,

ON THE

PRINCIPAL DUTIES OF THE CLERGY.

TRANSLATED

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

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

*Miss J. Toran*

DUBLIN:

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1825.



[Entered at Stationers' Hall.]

# DEDICATION.

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TO THE

RIGHT REV. JOHN MACHALE, D. D.

BISHOP OF MARONIA IN THRACE,

COADJUTOR OF KILLALA,

AND PROFESSOR OF DOGMATIC THEOLOGY IN THE ROYAL  
COLLEGE OF MAYNOOTH.

MY LORD,

WHEN I reflect that it is not often that the friendship and reputation of the Patron, unite in challenging the homage of his literary clients, I cannot but esteem myself fortunate in being able to dedicate my first public effort in the cause of Religion, to one whom I have known and esteemed so long, and who is so much worthy of a better offering. These

volumes, my Lord, are but a first-fruit of that generous emulation, which your talents and example have so largely contributed to awaken in our college, and which diffusing itself around, cannot fail, soon to greet your Lordship in performances, in which it will be far more discernible than in that now offered to the Clergy of these countries, under the protection of your name.

Abilities of the first order have always abounded in our community; but, for the beautiful model on which they have been formed to reflect honor on Religion and Maynooth, they are in a high degree indebted to the eloquent lectures and writings of your Lordship. It is to us a subject of sincere regret that the relations which have hitherto subsisted between your Lordship and our establishment, are now about to cease; but the connexion will not be wholly severed. Zeal for our character and fame shall still continue to attach you, to the scene of your past labor and reputation: re-

spect for exalted worth, and gratitude for long and distinguished services, shall ever bind our affections and our happiness, to the destinies of the Professor of Dogmatic Theology.

Receive, my Lord, this humble testimonial, as an assurance, that though we regret your departure, we rejoice in the early honors by which the Pontiff and the voice of your country, have associated you to one of the most venerable national Hierarchies on earth; and as a pledge, that as long as the love of virtue or a taste for elegant composition shall distinguish our students, your name shall be cherished in Maynooth.

I remain, My Lord, with affectionate respect,

Your Lordship's

Most attached and

Faithful serv.

*Royal College Maynooth.*

*May 16, 1825.*

C. H. BOYLAN.





## TO THE READER.

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**J**OHAN BAPTIST MASSILLON, Bishop of Clermont, and member of the French academy, was born in the year 1663, and died in 1742. In the graces of composition he was inferior to none of the polished writers, who, during his times, adorned the literature of France: in pulpit oratory he had but few rivals among his cotemporaries. His career of public instruction was brilliant and long. The force and pathos of his eloquence were felt by all. The infidel was humbled and convinced; the great and the powerful were shamed out of their vices, the licentious were converted; the hardened were softened into repentance; the monarch's bosom was filled with the terrors of the judgment to come.

The Clergy too, were improved by the sweetness and piety of this illustrious Prelate: the Discourses, of which a full and correct translation now appears, for the first time, in English, were exclusively devoted to their instruction.

The first volume, as far as page 425, contains his Spiritual Conferences in the seminary of Saint Magloire, of which he was Director; its remaining part, and the second, those which he addressed during his episcopacy, to his assembled Clergy in the seminary of Clermont, the Discourses which he pronounced annually in the synod of his diocess, and the Mandates which he issued from time to time, on subjects of great public interest.

The object of all those Discourses is the same—to teach the ministers of religion to honour their office by a life worthy of the sanctity and excellence of their state, and to aspire to be useful, by being first truly virtuous. He is no frivolous declaimer, who, ignorant of the precise limits of truth, seeks to surprise, and to be admired, by urging their duties beyond the strict line; whilst

he repels his auditory by hazarding maxims which are neither authorized by the Gospel nor by the example of the Saints. He contents himself with enforcing the obligations of the clergy, such as they are found in the Holy Scriptures, in the canons of councils, and the Doctors of the church; and such as they are still seen in the lives of those exemplary Pastors, in whom sanctity, as well as truth, is perpetuated in the church of God. He pushes no duty beyond its proper bounds, but neither does he diminish its just extent. His arguments are drawn from the purest sources, and urged with an unction and a force which can neither be evaded nor opposed. He dissipates every prejudice, goes to the source of every vice, unfolds the hidden springs of action, and leaves ignorance and corruption without subterfuge. He demonstrates the impiety of justifying abuse, by the plea of its antiquity and diffusion: it remains always the same; it can change its nature no more than vice can become virtue; and whilst truth continues unalterable, abuse in every shape, however long practiced or fondly cherished, must be abhor-

red and avoided by all, who will not become the miserable instruments of their own perdition.

The eloquence of the Ecclesiastical Conferences is more mild and placable, but not less ornate, than that of his other sermons. Massillon addresses himself to the Clergy, as to persons well instructed, and meekly but cogently recalls them and himself, to duties which they already know. He rarely recurs to those burning reproaches and vehement denunciations which befit the sacred orator, when he is to describe the horrors and punishments of crime, or rouse the lazy sinner from his lethargy: he details in simple and pathetic language the sad and fatal consequences, not only of the open disorder, but even of the tepidity or ignorance, of the Priest,—he cannot stand or fall alone; his example must sanctify or destroy; his firmness and zeal must save thousands of souls, or his indifference and neglect plunge them with himself into inevitable ruin.

The discourses which may be called Episcopal, because they were delivered when the author was

already a Bishop, will for ever remain a model of the tender and parental tone in which a Prelate should address his Clergy. In them he betrays no unworthy consciousness of his high dignity; no vain complacency in his own authority and wisdom; no supercilious condescension for inferior rank; no arrogant disregard for habits and opinions: his whole manner bespeaks kindness and love; every expression breathes the tenderness of a father for his children; his power and station are forgotten whilst he exhorts his colleagues and himself to fidelity and zeal, in the discharge of their sublime and formidable duties. Nothing can be more pathetic, more touching, or more truly episcopal, than this portion of the Conferences.

Should those volumes fall into the hands of persons for whose use they are not immediately intended, they may learn from them, what description of labourers they should beg of the *Lord of the harvest*, for the work of the gospel. They will be enabled to form a just estimate of the clerical character, and will be convinced that those who have foregone the pursuits and enjoyments of the

world, and forsaken their father's house, for the severe virtues and laborious duties of the sanctuary, are not without strong claims to their confidence and respect. On perceiving the awful obligations of the Priesthood, they must feel too, that neither flesh nor blood should give pastors to the church, and must abhor those guilty parents who ruin the everlasting hopes of multitudes, and blast the happiness of their children even here, by placing them in the vineyard of the Lord, without a marked vocation from heaven. At a moment like the present, this reflection will not be without its use.

One of the most eminent critics of sacred eloquence that has appeared among the French,\* after an elaborate discussion of the various productions of Massillon, assigns the highest place to the Discourses of which a translation is offered to the Clergy of these countries, in the following volumes. His merits are indeed of the first order. No writer excels him in the sustained elegance

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\* Cardinal Mauri.

and beauty of his style, nor in the tender pathos which moves and wins the virtuous heart. Men without any attachment to his religion, or perhaps to any other, have not hesitated to place him at the head of the prose-writers of France. In justness and continuity of thought, in refined delicacy of taste, in beauty and variety of colouring, in the secret harmony of his periods, in all the charms of language, and all the graces of elocution, he is inferior to no orator of ancient or modern times. In him there is no sparkling of false taste, no affectation of feeling, no far-fetched contrasts, no subtle epigrammatism of phrase, no antithetical fine-drawing, no empty magnificence, no quaint ebullitions of fancy: all is rich, noble, varied, natural and simple. There is labor in his compositions, but it is well concealed: there is repetition, but without prolixity, and all the art which the most curious perusal can discover in them, serves but to render them the more graceful and natural. His knowledge of the human heart, his sketches of the world, his delineations of morals have been rarely surpassed. His illustrations from the sa-

ered scriptures are frequent and appropriate. He is always warm and persuasive, sometimes vehement and impassioned, but in general, his zeal is chastened into sobriety by the severity of his judgment, and by a deep sense of the respect which he owed to his subject. The magnificent current of his ideas is like the "flumen orationis" of Cicero—a river rolling onward its broad, deep and limpid waters in tranquil and stately majesty. His rare and various talents are above all praise, and need not the humble eulogy of his translator. *His* object was to give an accurate transcript of the beautiful original, by expressing its sentiments in English, in such words as Massillon would have used, had he written in our language. Whatever his industry and pains could effect in this delicate and difficult task, he can say with truth, has been done. The work is as literal as the peculiar character of the two idioms would admit. He has used no liberty with his original, save in four or five instances, where a slight deviation from his text seemed necessary to suit its tenor to its immediate object—the instruction of the clergy of these coun-



tries. In such cases, the reader is always advertised of the alteration, by a brief notice at the foot of the page.

Should this translation be honoured with the notice of those learned individuals who preside over periodical criticism, it may be hoped, that no unkindly rigor will be exercised on its humble pages. Its pretensions do not rise above its merits; its only ambition is to be useful; and should that end be attained by fidelity and correctness, the translator's task is fairly performed, and the judicious critic will not reproach him for the absence of nicer excellencies.

The translator may be permitted to hope, that these volumes will be found to advance the interests of Religion, by inflaming the zeal, and exalting the views, of its ministers. The just reputation of the Irish Clergy cannot suffer from this attempt to supply them with new facilities for meditating on their sacred obligations, amidst the distraction of parochial cares, and the pressure of official duties. Their patience and firmness have

long since won the admiration of Europe: their detachment from the interests and pursuits of the world, the lowliness of their temporal condition, and their austere and laborious habits, fit them, in no ordinary degree, for the instruction and consolation to be derived from these discourses. The most virtuous too, occasionally need advice and encouragement; the tepid must be warmed into fervor; the slothful, stimulated to action; the slumbering, awakened from their torpor; the headstrong must be repressed, the confident humbled, the timid supported; *the just must be justified still more, and the holy be still more sanctified.* Whilst the Clergy are men, these great objects will remain to be accomplished; should these volumes contribute to effect them, the translator will be more than rewarded.—Farewell.

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## ERRATA.

[On a diligent perusal, the errors of the Press appeared too few and too unimportant to require particular enumeration. It is hoped therefore, that the pious and learned reader will pardon and correct any of consequence, should such be found to have escaped the Translator's notice.]

# A DISCOURSE

ON THE

## EXCELLENCE OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

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Ecce positus est hic in ruinam et in resurrectionem multorum in Israel.

*Behold this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel.*

LUKE, chap. ii. ver. 34.

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**WHAT**, think you, my brethren, is the reason why the just Simeon mingles so mournful a prophecy, with the august mysteries, which, on this occasion, are accomplished in the temple? The only Son of the Father has just entered it, for the first time: he takes possession of his new priesthood, and exercises the first public functions of it, in offering himself to his Father: instead of the blood of goats and of bulls, he substitutes the oblation of his own body, that is

to say, the victim so long expected, alone capable of appeasing the anger of God, and of reconciling him with man: a high priest of real blessings,\* he already proposes to himself, to enter by his own blood into the eternal sanctuary, and to open its gates to his brethren: in a word, he renders the glory of this second temple far more illustrious than had been the glory of the first; and yet in the midst of occurrences so joyous to the human race, the holy Simeon, who, after beholding them, quits life without regret, turns to Mary, and declares that this new Pontiff, who was to be the light of the gentiles and the glory of Israel, is, notwithstanding, set up for the destruction, as well as for the salvation of many. Passing over the other reasons of this mystery, let us confine our view to that particular truth which regards ourselves.

It appears to me that Jesus Christ, this day, taking public possession of his priesthood in the temple, is the exact figure of every Priest when he has received the sacred unction, and appears, for the first time, in the church, clothed with that awful dignity. And it is

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\**Pontifex futurorum bonorum.*—Hebr. c. ix. v. 11.

on this solemn occasion, that we may say of him, *Ecce positus est hic in ruinam et in resurrectionem multorum in Israel*: He is now established a minister for the ruin or for the salvation of many. Upon this terrible alternative, turns the destiny of a Priest; and it is, to the letter, true of each one of you, that you will be established, or are already so, to build up or to destroy, to pluck up the scandals of the field of the Lord, or to add another to their number; to save or to kill; in a word, to be a source of life or an odor of death among men. Behold the subject which I propose to treat in this discourse.

### FIRST REFLECTION.

What idea have we, my brethren, of the awful ministry to which we aspire? and what does the choice of this holy state present to the greater part of those, who have declared for it? Some excluded by the circumstances of their birth from the prerogatives and the temporal blessings of the first-born; sorrowful, perhaps, like Esau that they can no longer pretend to the inheritance, console themselves that the Father of the family has benedictions of more than one kind, and look upon an engagement in

the most holy and sublime of all conditions, as the lesser portion ; as a step which they cannot avoid ; as a decency which even the world imposes on them ; as a consideration which they owe to their name, to the interests of their house or to themselves.

Others from their tender youth, familiarized to the hopes of elevation ; accustomed by the language of parents and of friends, to view the awful burden of the priesthood only under the flattering appearance of rank and dignity, rush forward to it, as to certain wealth and distinction. Like the profane Heliodorus they enter into the temple, only because they have heard that it contained immense treasures ; not reflecting that they should find there, nothing but sacred deposits, destined not to the maintenance of their splendor and their luxury, but to the support of the orphan and of the widow.

Some determined by the tendencies of a mild and easy temper, solely to spare themselves the fatigues and perils of ambition, to escape the cares and the agitations of fortune, throw themselves into the inheritance of Christ, as into a haven of security, where they promise themselves nothing but the charms of peaceful repose ; the happy quiet of morals, amiable and



free from all perplexity ; a condition of life, in which they are to exist only for themselves.

There are even some, who, born with greater vivacity, with stronger ambition and desires of glory, propose to themselves in the church, distinguished functions, and illustrious employments ; and already promise themselves from their talents, not the salvation of their people, but the admiration and applause of their country.

Finally there are others who undeceived as to the pleasures, and disgusted with the injustice, of the world that neglects them ; weary even of their passions, solely on account of the void and the bitterness which follows their gratification ; putting off the ignominy of the secular habit, enter into the ministry as into a more certain way of salvation, and one in which decency itself will shelter them against those occasions of relapse which they had found in the world ; and thus look upon this exalted and divine profession, from which penitents themselves were formerly excluded, and which was open to innocence alone, merely as a reparation for past crime, and a security against the danger and remorse of relapse. Each one views the priesthood only in reference to himself ; and, as if

we were to be ministers of religion only for ourselves, none consider it a state that brings many obligations, and that binds up our destiny with that of our people.

Yet, whatever may be our views on entering into holy orders, when we become Priests, we are public men ; we contract holy and essential relations with all the faithful ; we are as the corner stones on which the edifice reposes, and we can no longer remain firm without supporting those around us, nor yield without dragging them with us in our fall : *positus est hic in ruinam et in resurrectionem multorum in Israel.*

For, first, a Priest by the very circumstance of being honoured with the christian ministry, and marked with its august character, whatever place he may occupy in the church, is charged with the interests of the people before God : it is his duty to bear, every day, to the foot of his throne, the wants and transgressions of the faithful. Heaven, as it were, opens and shuts, only at his word : as his dignity gives him a readier access to the presence of the Lord, it is his duty to solicit him, in favor of his brethren ; to move him to compassion, even to force him, and snatch from him his graces. The princes of the earth wish that the complaints

and the necessities of their people, should reach them only through their ministers, and that their favors and graces should descend and be conveyed through the same channel: similar is the order established by God in his church; and hence the canonical prayers which she enjoins as a public and daily duty to every minister; persuaded that the prayers of the clergy are the canals of public graces, and that they are the cries which the Father of all ever hears and respects, on account of the regard due to the dignity and eminence of their character.

Now, a Priest who is worldly and unfaithful to his calling; a Priest, who, every day, bearing his tongue even into heaven, by virtue of the mystic benedictions pronounced at the altar, suffers it, on quitting the holy place, to crawl on the earth, according to the expression of the prophet,\* and uses it only in vain, idle, and profane discourses; a Priest whose heart, full of the world, can no longer relish the things of God, whose imagination, stained by a thousand indecent impressions, can no longer collect itself for an instant, in the presence of the Lord; a Priest who scarcely snatches from his plea-

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\* Psalm 72, v. 9.

asures, a few hurried moments, to honour God with the extremity of his lips; who suffers the divine and burning expressions of the royal penitent, to drop from a tongue, cold, languishing and inattentive; who discharges himself of a duty so consoling, and of itself capable, says Saint Ambrose, of softening down the dangers, the pains and solitudes of his functions, who discharges himself of it, I say, as of an oppressive and hateful yoke; a Priest of this character, what can he obtain of God, whom he knows not, and whom he would not dare to solicit in favor of himself? what can his priesthood profit the people amongst whom he lives, or over whom he has been established? In what can the church perceive, that in him she has a spouse, a consoler, a defender, a mediator, a guardian of her faith and of her sanctity? for these are the august titles which we share with Jesus Christ. But I will go yet farther: is he not guilty, before God, of all the graces which he fails to draw down upon his brethren, and which the order of providence had attached to his prayers and his sighs? Before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, will not the corruption of the flock, the disorders of his friends and relatives, the decay of the faith among the people; in a

word, the evils and the scandals that afflict the church, be esteemed his work? What do I say? On the terrible day of vengeance, will not thousands of weak and unfortunate souls reproach him, that had his piety and his prayers assisted their good desires, they would have long since done penance in sackcloth and ashes? Had Moses, contrary to the command of the Lord, allowed his weary hands to fall, and ceased to pray on the mountain, would not the blood of the vanquished Israelites have cried to heaven against him; and guilty of the victory of Madian, would he not have been justly deemed the murderer of his brethren? You occupy the place of a pastor agreeable to God, who, by his cries and his tears would have opened the bosom of the divine mercy on the faithful; and thus you deprive the people of a help to which they had a right. You are placed in the sanctuary as a cloud, at the same time, dark and without water, which not only yields nothing itself, but which prevents the influence of heaven from falling on the earth. You are in the field of the Lord, as a tree that is dead and rooted up, which not only cumpers the earth unprofitably, but which impedes the fruitful warmth of the sun from passing to the plants which it covers

with a deadly shade, under which they lose all hope of health and increase.

And whence think you, my brethren, proceed the licentiousness of the world, the decay of morality, the relaxation of discipline, the decrease of faith and of piety in the church? whence think you, do they proceed? From the tepidity and the infidelity of her pastors. We are always the first cause of the contempt and forgetfulness of the law of God among men: the evils of the church are, almost in every case, our own crimes. It is because, we scarcely weep any longer between the porch and the altar; it is because our vows, tepid, languishing, oftentimes even defiled, are no longer powerful enough to ascend to the throne of God, and open the bosom of his mercies, upon the faithful; it is because the church wants true and fervent mediators, who might, like Moses, speak with confidence and a holy freedom to the Lord, oppose themselves like him to the vengeance of the Almighty, and arrest, as it were, his arm already prepared to pour out scourges, and execute chastisements on his people. Thus, I might here say, in a sense different from that of the prophet, O Lord, we are become like to the corrupt and unfaithful gen-

tiles, to the people who know thee not : we imitate their excesses and their wanderings : the worship itself amongst us, as amongst them, has become an abuse, a superstition or a scandal ; thy people bear no longer any mark by which they can be distinguished from the uncircumcised. Whence, O my God, come such deplorable evils ? It is because thou hast placed over our heads, men like ourselves, Priests who resemble the people ; it is because our guides and conductors themselves point out to us a road which leads to death : *Posuisti nos in similitudinem gentibus . . . . imposuisti homines super capita nostra.*\* Thus, a Priest merely because he does not pray, or because he prays but negligently, is, from that defect alone, set up for the ruin of his brethren : *positus est hic in ruinam multorum.*

In the second place, a Priest is appointed to reconcile men with God : *Ut repropitiaret delicta populi ;*† he is established to offer up the victim of propitiation, which alone, God regards with a favorable eye, and which alone is capable of disarming his wrath, when it is kindled by the sins of the people. Now, what does a Priest, who has never received, or who has ex-

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\* Psalm 43, v. 15, and 65, v. 12.    † Heb. c. ii. v. 17.

tinguished the grace of his vocation, come to do, when he ascends to the altar? He comes as a public minister, to raise to heaven, his hands, empty and perhaps impure, which will bear his infidelities into the very presence of the Almighty; he comes to defile, by his very looks, the presence of the tremendous mysteries; he comes to offer up to the Father, the blood of his eternal Son, which he sheds and profanes, and which cries for vengeance against him; he comes as an enemy, and not as a Priest, to sacrifice the victim of life; in a word, he comes to renew the crime and the guilt of the crucifixion. Alas! I ask, what can the people promise themselves from this minister of death? what, but the convulsion of all nature, as formerly, the eclipse of the shining lights of the firmament, the veil of the temple rent asunder, schisms, divisions, heresies in the church, darkness over all the earth, the confusion and horror of the whole universe. For, if from the earliest ages of the church, disease among the people, sudden deaths, frequent and fatal accidents, were the sad consequences of unworthy communions alone; if Saint Paul assigns no other cause for these disasters: *Ideo inter vos multi infirmi et imbecilles,*



*et dormiunt multi* : \* what chastisements, O great God, dost thou reserve for unworthy sacrifices, for oblations profaned, for mysteries defiled? Do not doubt it, my brethren, if the scourges of heaven are so common and so terrible in our days; if the evils and the dissensions of the church, seem, every day, to increase and become more inveterate; if the public calamities are so lasting; if evils are multiplied upon us; it is the profanation of holy things that arms the divine justice; it is wicked Priests that draw down these misfortunes upon the people: *Propter hoc enim*, says Saint Gregory Nazianzen, *res omnes nostræ jactantur et concutiuntur; propter hoc fines orbis terræ suspicione et bello flagrant.* †

Yes, my brethren, it is the Jonases, those disobedient prophets, who draw down from the stores of the anger of God, the winds and tempests which have so often beaten and endangered the vessel of the church, and which would have miserably sunk her in the abyss, if the gates of hell could prevail against the promises of Christ, and if he himself had not placed bounds to the impetuosity of the waves, beyond which

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\* Cor. c. xi. v. 13. † St. Gregory Naz. Orat. 23.

they shall never pass. Yes, my brethren, the many nations that have fallen off from the unity of faith, and become followers of strange doctrines, will one day rise up against those unworthy pastors, who yet lived when error began to be disseminated amongst them, and will reproach them with the profanations of which they were guilty, and which alone had determined the justice of God to make use of heresy to overturn the altars they had so long defiled, and to abandon to his enemies, those temples which the irreligion of his ministers had a thousand times polluted. They will upbraid those scandalous Priests, that a strange worship would never have succeeded to the devotion of their fathers, nor would the Ark of the Covenant in the midst of them, have become the prey of the Philistines, if the Lord, weary of the transgressions by which, like Ophni and Phinees, they had dishonoured his service, had not withdrawn the glory of his presence from between the cherubim. Hear how the Lord himself complains of them, by the mouth of his prophet: The unworthy pastors are the fatal source of all the misfortunes of my church; it is they that have brought ruin and utter desolation over my chosen vineyard: *Pastores demoliti sunt vineam*

*meam*.\* The portion of my inheritance, once rich and abundant in fruits, they have changed into a frightful wilderness: *Dederunt portionem meam desiderabilem in desertum solitudinis*.† They have darkened all its beauty, they have left it exposed to the plunder and the fury of its enemies; and the unfortunate land still weeps over the mournful solitude, which the prevarication of those who were appointed to watch in its defence, have brought upon it: *Posuerunt eam in dissipationem, luxitque super me: desolatione desolata est omnis terra*.‡ What a misfortune, then, my brethren, for an age, for a kingdom, for a people, is a single pastor, unworthy of his ministry! he is set up only for the ruin of his brethren, *Positus in ruinam multorum*.

We read in history that, at the birth of those tyrannical and cruel emperors who were, one day, to persecute the church, and inundate the empire with the blood of christians, frightful signs appeared in the heavens, and there traced the fatal presage of future calamities. It may be that such observations sprung from the credulity of the people. But if we knew how to

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\* Jerem. c. xii. v. 10. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid. v. 11.

interpret the appearances of the heavens, or rather if it were true, that the finger of God had incised on them, the evils to come upon his church, we should, without doubt, there see terrific signs preside at the birth of a bad Priest : we might read there, by anticipation, the story of public calamities ; we should see all nature tremble at the present which God, in his wrath, had given to men ; and affrighted by such prodigies, we would ask ourselves, like the parents of the Baptist, but in a sense altogether different, who then is this child to be ? and what new misfortune does he come to bring upon the earth ? *Quid putas, puer iste erit ?*\* And truly, the cruelties of those tyrants in making martyrs to religion, at least multiplied the faithful, and bore to the truth of the gospel, a bloody and public testimony which gave glory to God. But the infidelities of a bad Priest, whilst they afflict the church, announce nothing but calamities still more lamentable than the very scandals by which he disgraces her. And when I say a bad Priest, I do not mean one guilty of the most enormous crimes, but one that is worldly, ambitious, dissipated, given to the amuse-

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Luke, c. i. v. 66.

ments and the frivolities of the world, more occupied with his hopes of gain and the care of his fortune, than with the functions of the sacred ministry ; and I say that he is the man of sin, seated in the temple of God ; a scourge prepared by the divine justice, for the iniquity of men, a child of wrath, born to be a curse to his brethren : *Positus in ruinam multorum.*

In the third place, a Priest is a co-operator with God in the salvation of souls : *Dei adiutores.\** Through the channel of the sacraments, he applies to men the blood of Jesus Christ ; he purifies their conscience in the waters of penance ; he announces to the faithful the words of life and reconciliation, and breaks to them the bread of doctrine and truth.

Now a Priest who is unworthy of this august name, becomes by these very functions the co-operator of Satan in the seduction and the ruin of his brethren. Nor do I confine this observation to those ignorant and mercenary pastors alone, who regard piety as a traffic ; who, without science or merit, are guided in the tribunal of penance, only by an indiscriminate and criminal indulgence, and who having entered

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\* 1. Cor. c. iii. v. 9.

into this difficult and formidable function, without vocation, without learning, without knowledge of its rules, without elevation of mind, and without the purity of motive worthy of the greatness and sanctity of such a ministry, discharge its duties, without order, without discernment, without zeal, and without any attention either to the dispositions of sinners or to the enormity of their guilt. I pass over the innumerable evils with which their ministry afflicts the church: the confidence and impudence of sinners; the neglect or abuse of essential obligations; the frequentation of the sacraments in a state of criminality; the indocility and disgust of people of the world, when we attempt to undeceive them by pointing out the true road to salvation; the continuance of sinful customs and of false maxims among the faithful; the inutility, in their regard, of the sacred mysteries, of the solemnities and the favors of the church; in fine, their confidence and security on the bed of death. It is the ignorant and unfaithful dispensers of the sacrament of penance, who alone, have changed the face of christianity: they alone have destroyed whatever remained of faith, of piety, of respect for ancient practices, and that christian spirit which the lapse of

ages had not been able to extinguish: in a word, they alone are the corrupters of the people, the notorious cause of the decay of morals, the first era of the general depravity, relaxation and impenitence of the faithful. For alas! my brethren, you know it well; in the world, all is treachery, danger, and seduction for innocence. There remained then for it only the holy mountain, the sacred tribunal of penance, whither the soul that was endangered might fly like the dove for safety, or at least for help to extricate her from the nets in which the world and the devil had entangled her. Now it is on this very mountain, on the Thabor where she hoped to find an asylum, that she meets, in the ignorance, in the criminal indulgence, perhaps in the corruption and mercenary disposition of the pastor, snares far more dangerous than those from which she had escaped, because she is without suspicion of their existence, and that religion itself seems to warrant her security and confidence: *Audite hoc Sacerdotes . . . quia vobis iudicium est, quoniam laqueus facti estis speculationi et rete expansum super Thabor.\** Hear, O ye Priests, says the prophet Osee, because far from

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\* Osee, c. i. v. 1.

being the guides of my people, and far from conducting them in my paths, you dig pits into which they fall without resource; and instead of bursting, have tightened, the bonds of idolatry and dissoluteness in which they were captive, and have yourselves been to them as fatal toils, from which the simplicity, which you have abused can no longer escape; therefore shall judgment come upon you: *Audite hoc Sacerdotes . . . quia vobis judicium est, quoniam laqueus facti estis speculationi et rete expansum super Thabor.*

I do not, I say, speak of these unworthy and guilty pastors, in a place so full of the spirit of the priesthood: I speak only of those who weaken the effect of their ministry by tepid and worldly habits; and I say that in neglecting to stir up in themselves, the spirit of their vocation, by prayer, by estrangement from the world, by the mortification of the senses, by a life interior and recollected, they can have no grace to speak of the things of God. They reprove, they correct and instruct in the tribunal, without unction, without zeal, without benediction: the most terrible truths which they utter, are accompanied by an air of dryness, of constraint and of insensibility, which divests them of all their



force: they no longer find those tender expressions which spring from the heart, and which alone can reach and affect it: they want that character of piety, which gives to the simplest discourse, so much weight and so much energy: the coldness of their heart seems to freeze the words on their very tongue; and it is impossible that they could infuse into the souls of the faithful, that ardor of religion, that divine flame of heavenly love, of which they feel not a spark in themselves. For, my brethren, it is necessary, after long converse with the Lord, to descend like Moses from the mountain, that is, from prayer and retreat, to speak with dignity and effect, of the sanctity of the law; to inspire terror into the soul of its violator; to force tears of compunction from the worshippers of the golden calf, and compel them by the unction and the vehemence of a holy zeal, to burn and trample in the dust, those idols which, before, they had adored.

And, hence it is, my brethren, that sinners rise from the knees of those tepid and worthless Priests, cold and frozen: hence also that insipidity of the pastor, arising from his little practice in speaking of the things of God, which weakens the holy terror of those truths

which the spirit of God had awaked in the hearts of sinners, and extinguishes in them, those first agitations of grace and repentance which they bring to the tribunal; so that those who had approached these salutary waters, dejected, trembling, confounded at their crimes, depart from them, calm, confident, almost persuaded that they had magnified to themselves, the enormity of their disorders, and that there was no just cause for their great alarms. Hence also, these tepid and worldly pastors, if they undertake the public ministry of instruction, as they possess neither a tender piety nor a heart bleeding for the transgressions of the faithful, are obliged to supply the deficiency, by having recourse to an eloquence, empty, barren, cold and puerile, whose only effect is to disgrace the sacred majesty of the gospel; and thus, the christian pulpit is become an exhibition, a sounding brass, and the venerable truths of religion are weakened and disfigured by heartless and profane discourses: hence, apostolic men are so rare: hence, the ministry of the word, that great resource of the salvation of the people, is confided to men, weak in faith, strangers to the science of the saints, void of the spirit of God, and oftentimes full of them-

selves and of the spirit of the world: that is to say, hence, is the preaching of the gospel without fruit; the most holy season of the year without penance; the prayers of the church without effect; all the public functions of the ministry, and all the sources of salvation, without advantage to the faithful.

No, my brethren, whatever may be the innocence of life, of which such Priests may otherwise boast, they are according to the expression of the prophet, breasts without suck, and wombs that bring not forth: they kill and destroy, like the bad shepherds, merely because they neglect to nourish and vivify the flock. The unction, the benediction, which by the tepid and careless discharge of their duties, they fail to draw down on their ministry, is a means of salvation, of which they deprive their people; and it is true to say of a Priest without fervor, without recollection, without the spirit of prayer and of mortification, that he is a scourge of God, upon his brethren: *Positus in ruinam multorum.*

In fine, even although we should propose to ourselves none of those public functions; for I do not examine in this place, how far it may be lawful to enter into the church, with

the intention of taking no part, in the labors of the ministry; although, I say, we should propose to ourselves no public function, and should desire to engage in the priesthood only for ourselves, yet are we not always the models of the flock, *forma facti gregis*; and is it not in our morals that the people seek and find such examples, as either inspire them with the love of virtue, or confirm them in the habits of vice?

Now a worldly and scandalous Priest, of what sins is he not guilty, even by barely shewing himself to the people? He owed to them the regularity of an edifying conduct; the gravity of virtuous morals; the censure and condemnation of the crimes and the disorders of the world, by his very example: his holy and sacerdotal life ought to confirm in their mind, the truth of the maxims of Christ, upon the world, and upon the impossibility of salvation to those who follow its practice, and cherish its spirit. What secret joy! what an authority for them! what an apology for their enormities, when they find in him, their own passions, their own errors, their own weaknesses! what consequences do they not draw from thence, regarding those terrible truths of salvation, by

which they have been so often affrighted? We exhort them in vain : the gospel of the greater part of the world, is the life of the clergy, of which they are the witnesses ; it is not what we announce to them from the christian pulpit, but what they see us practise in the detail of our morals : they look upon the public ministry of the word, as a scene destined for the delivery of sublime maxims, which are no longer suited to the weakness of human nature, but they regard our conduct as the reality, and the true standard to which they should endeavour to conform. And hence, my brethren, how many are the sinners who, affrighted by holy inspirations, oppose perhaps, nothing, in the secret of their hearts to the impulse of grace, but the remembrance of the fatal example of an unworthy Priest ! hence, how many seducers of innocence, to encourage a timid soul in the paths of libertinism, to harden it against crime, and bind it in the fetters of impiety, appeal to the notorious scandals of a person consecrated to God ! how many are the souls, whose reprobation has been effected, by the public disorders of a wicked pastor ! how many secret falls, from which there is no return, and which decide for eter-

nity! how many invisible and irreparable misfortunes! What ravages in the inheritance of Christ, of which the angels of heaven alone are witnesses! Great God, thou beholdest the mystery of iniquity, which is done in secret; thou wilt reveal it in the fitting time, and then perhaps, it will be seen, that there are but few christians in hell, who cannot point out in some reprobate Priest, the author of their everlasting ruin.

Yes, my brethren, we are the lamps raised on high, to shine in the house of the Lord; but from the moment in which the pestilent breath of the serpent, has extinguished our light, we emit on all sides, a thick and noxious smoak, which bears darkness and infection around, and becomes an odor of death to those who are perishing: we are the pillars of the sanctuary, but being pulled down and scattered about, are become stumbling blocks to those who pass by: we are the salt of the earth, intended to save mortals from corruption, but which having lost its savor, corrupts, itself, the very bodies it was destined to preserve. All the power and all the virtue with which our sacred character invests us for the sanctification of the people, is changed into the in-

strument of their destruction, and their very physicians are become for them the sources of their most contagious and incurable maladies.

So the holy scriptures inform us, that the most terrible punishment which the Lord can exercise on cities and on kingdoms, is to raise up wicked Priests, in the midst of them : it is thus he punished the greatest excesses of Jerusalem. I will give you, says he, pastors who will call evil, good, and good, evil ; who will not lift up what is fallen, nor strengthen what is tottering, but who will walk, according to their own ways : such is the last and the greatest scourge. When he is but slightly irritated, he contents himself with arming kings against kings, and nations against nations ; he confounds the order of the seasons, strikes the plains with drought and sterility, or scatters desolation, famine and death, over the earth. But when his wrath is at the highest point, and all his other scourges seem exhausted ; when he says in his indignation, what chastisement yet remains for me to inflict on my people, and what shall be the last mark of my fury upon them ? *Super quo percutiam vos ultra ?*\* Oh !

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\* Isaiah, c. i, v. 5.

it is then he draws forth from the treasury of his vengeance, and places over his people, unfaithful ministers, pastors that are worldly and corrupt,

Great God! to what then, dost thou destine me, in the terrible secrets of thy justice: I think that I have not yet so far abandoned thee, as to become thy enemy; that I have yet remaining too much fear of thy holy name, and too much desire of my salvation, not to be unwilling to become the minister of Satan, against thee, by destroying those souls whom thou hast purchased by all the blood of thy only Son. Nevertheless, if I bear within my bosom, in the discharge of my ministry, a tepid heart, a soul altogether carnal; the spirit, the views and the inclinations of the world, I have been born only for the ruin of my brethren, and thou hast perhaps reserved me for these latter times of relaxation, and general depravity, only as the most terrible scourge which thou couldst employ to punish the disorders of the age: *Positus in ruinam multorum.*

These, my brethren, are terrifying truths; but let us not forget that there are also consolations; and these are better suited to the pious assembly which I have now the honor of ad-



dressing ; for a Priest who discharges with fidelity and zeal the functions of his ministry, is set up for the deliverance and the salvation of many : *Positus in resurrectionem multorum.*

## SECOND REFLECTION.

We have only to resume the same train of reasoning. A Priest is charged with the interests of the people before God : he is one of those angels who incessantly descend and ascend the mystic ladder of Jacob : he descends in order to take charge of the vows and the necessities of the people ; he ascends by prayer, in order to bear them to the foot of God's throne, and open the bosom of the divine mercy on the miseries of his brethren. Now how great is the abundance of graces and of benedictions, which the prayers of a holy Priest draw down upon the church ! For his are not the vows of a private individual, who without title, without authority, without public function, addresses himself to the Lord in his own name, and who, dust and ashes as he is, should esteem as a great favor, the very liberty of speaking to his God. They are the vows of a public minister, established for men, in the things that appertain to God ; who prays in the right of

his office, who speaks in the name of the who'e church, particularly of the entire body of the just, who constitute its most pure and most essential part, that is to say, who speaks in the name of Jesus Christ and of his members, who form but one body, one Christ, whom the Father always hears, whose petitions he never rejects. What do I say? They are the vows of a Priest who in virtue of his priesthood, forms but the same Priest, the same mediator, the same voice with Jesus Christ, and who appears before God clothed with the same titles and the same rights. What, O Lord! canst thou refuse to prayers, dictated by piety, inflamed by charity, consecrated by the faith of all the just, bearing to thee, the desires of the entire church, and presented by thy only Son, at the foot of thy throne?

We are sometimes surprised, my brethren, by signal conversions in the church and in the world: to see worldly, effeminate and dissipated pastors, resuming the spirit of their vocation; renouncing all human views and human interests, and consecrating themselves to the most laborious and most humiliating duties: dissolute and scandalous sinners, becoming, all on a sudden, sincere and humble penitents:

infidels themselves who gloried in their horrible impiety, quickly changed into humble and pious christians. We ask each other, whence could come changes so unexpected, and which it seems, nothing had prepared us to look for. The world which ever judges in a worldly manner of the works of God, always finds human reasons to explain them. But if we could ascend to the true cause, we should see that they are the effect of the prayers of some holy Priest, who perceiving by the lights of the tribunal, the deplorable condition of those souls, and the little benefit which they derived from his wise instructions, and his secret and tender remonstrances; sensibly afflicted at their errors and their impending destruction, had always wept before God over their misfortunes, and had not ceased to cry out in the bitterness of his heart: Pardon, O Lord, pardon those souls whom thou hast redeemed by thy precious blood; burst the fatal chains in which they are bound; deliver not to the devouring lion, souls that confess thy holy name; remember thy eternal promises and thy ancient mercies; and suffer thyself to be more moved by their miserable state than by their blindness and their crimes. It is here the stroke has been given, which has beaten

down those rebellious and inveterate sinners, and changed them into penitents full of humility and sorrow. Ananias prays in the privacy of his house ; he asks, undoubtedly, for the conversion of a persecutor, who, he knew, had set out from Jerusalem, and was approaching, breathing only the ruin and slaughter of the new christians : his prayers finish what those of the holy deacon Stephen had begun ; Saul is struck to the ground on the road to Damascus ; and from a persecutor is turned into a vessel of election, to bear the name of Christ before kings and princes and the nations of the earth.

No, my brethren, there is nothing which the prayers of a good Priest cannot obtain from the Father of mercies : they offer a holy violence to his justice, and resist, as it were, the execution of his vengeance. Thus we read, that when on account of repeated prevarications, he had resolved to exterminate the disobedient children of Israel, and not suffer his justice to relent in their regard, he himself conjures Moses and Aaron, no longer to intercede in their favor ; no longer to restrain his arm raised to chastise the iniquities of his people, but to allow his just indignation to take its course, as though it were not possible for him to withstand the

prayers or disregard the supplications of the mediator and the pontiff of his covenant. And behold here the reason why the first Priests and faithful, distinguished the different hours of the day, only by their public prayers : they were the principal and ruling exercise, to which every thing else was referred : prayer and the ministry of the word were the only occupation of the pastors, the only one which they had received by succession from the apostles. Hence, what graces were then poured upon the church ! how many generous martyrs ! how many pure and illustrious virgins ! how many venerable pastors ! how great the fervor of the faithful ! how rigorous the penance of the anchorets ! how beautiful were then, the tents of Jacob ! what a spectacle did the church present in those days ! how worthy the respect and admiration of her very enemies ! what a glorious object was then the assembly of the faithful, a thousand times more illustrious and more august, by the pious unanimity, by the fervent zeal, by the innocence of morals, by the lively charity which united all its members, than it is, at this day, by the titles and dignities, by the very sceptres and crowns of those who compose it. Thus, although a holy Priest were merely to pray, it

is yet always true to say, that he is set up for the salvation of many: *Positus in resurrectionem multorum.*

But, in the second place, a Priest is the sacrificer of the new covenant; he renews, every day on the altar, the one oblation, the great sacrifice, the resource of the human race, foretold from the beginning of the world: he appears in the place of Jesus Christ forming his church by his death, immolating himself anew for her; every day washing away her stains in his blood, strengthening her against the efforts of hell; renovating whatever is decayed; presenting her to his clement and merciful Father, that he may vouchsafe to give her peace, to terminate her internal dissensions, to defend her against the attacks of error, to reunite in her bosom, those who have torn it by their separation, to reunite all her own children in the spirit of charity and truth, and in fine, to govern and direct her, wherever her members are found throughout the whole earth: and hence it is, that prayers and supplications are offered to his holy name, for princes, for kings, for pastors, and for all those that are in elevated stations, that they may maintain the peace of the church, the repose of the faithful, the dignity

of the altar, the decency and solemnity of public worship.

Now a fervent Priest, is at the altar, the minister of all the graces, which are poured on the various members of the church: it is he that offers up the adorable victim from which these inestimable blessings are derived to men: it is he who, like to Abel, conciliates the favor of the Lord to these holy oblations. It is not that the victim draws its value from the excellence of the minister who offers it, but a holy Priest, opposes no obstacle to the immense benefits which flow from this great sacrifice, on the earth; he leaves it all its value, and adds to it, as it were, that of his own piety and fervor.

It was to the celebration of the holy mysteries, and to the sanctity of her first pastors, that the church once owed the conversion of the Cæsars. Forced to conceal themselves in obscure and subterraneous places for the renewal of the unbloody sacrifice, they offered it, for the very princes whose cruel persecutions compelled them to take refuge, in those dark and dreary abodes; and in weeping over the subjection, and praying for the liberty, of the church, which beheld with grief, these mysteries

of light, turned, as it were, into mysteries of darkness, they hastened the conversion of the Emperors, whose blindness oppressed, and whose jealousy held her in captivity.

Even in these days, my brethren, it is to the mystic benedictions of holy ministers, that the church owes the pious princes, the faithful pastors, the great men whom God raises up, from time to time, to enlighten the world; to defend the faith against the assaults of error; to uphold decaying but venerable institutions, and prevent falsehood from prescribing against truth: to the same cause, we should ascribe the unexpected relief from public calamities, the escape from impending scourges, the termination of wars, in circumstances which seemed to threaten that they would last for ever: such are the blessings that spring from this source. Those who judge of things only by the limited views of the human mind, attribute the honor to the wisdom of princes, and the profound policy of their ministers; but could they see events in their first and secret cause, they would often find that a faithful pastor, a Priest not unfrequently obscure and hidden from the eyes of men, has far greater influence on public events, than those important men who are placed at the head



of affairs, and who seem to hold in their hands the destiny of people and of empires. What a treasure then for the earth, is a holy Priest! what a gift to the church! what a blessing and resource for the faithful! what a happiness for cities and for kingdoms! and how many powerful motives to animate us, to renew, without ceasing, the spirit of our vocation, to stir up in ourselves the grace of the priesthood, and never to suffer that first fervor to cool, which has consecrated us to the ministry of the altar: *Positus in resurrectionem multorum.*

But not only does the Priest offer the victim of redemption and of propitiation, but, in the third place he is the co-operator of God, in the salvation of souls, by the administration of the sacraments, by the preaching of the word, and by all the functions which tend to the salvation of his brethren. Thus how many are the graces, of which a holy and enlightened pastor, is both the instrument and the minister, in his various duties! If he receives the deposit of consciences, how many sinners moved to compunction at the tribunal, in those happy moments in which the soul is entirely open, and in which a word said with unction, pierces to the quick and never returns empty! how many

others enlightened and undeceived with regard to abuses and maxims, which they thought innocent, either because they were authorized by general usage, or even by ignorant and blind guides! how many crimes prevented! how many souls drawn from the abyss of guilt in which they were so long sunk! how many others, timid and insincere, who had, heretofore, lyed to the Holy Ghost, and concealed the shame of their wounds from the physician, brought back to sincerity and penance! how many sacrilegious profanations interrupted! how many tears and groans of sorrow forced from the obdurate sinner! how many holy desires inspired! how many seeds of conversion sown in other souls, which will bear their fruit in due season! how many just supported in piety, and how many others, that were wavering, gained to Christ by their example! Count, if you can, the infinite number of these graces and blessings, and comprehend how far a Priest renders himself guilty, when he deprives the church of them, by the coldness and inutility of his ministry: *Positus in resurrectionem multorum.*

If he announces the word of the gospel, how many ignorant, instructed! how many hardened consciences shaken! how many infidels con-

founded! how many just, confirmed! what a new force and authority for these austere maxims of christianity, which the world never ceases to combat and extenuate! how many preachers themselves, corrected and brought back to the model of his simplicity, his unction, his holy vehemence! What men were the Bernards, the Xaviers, the Patricks, the Malachys!\* every thing was borne down by the energetic eloquence, and the power of the spirit which spoke in them: cities, courts, provinces, kingdoms, nobles and people, nothing could withstand the impetuosity of their zeal, and the distinguished sanctity of their morals: the tears, the groans, the silence and deep sorrow of those who heard them, were the only applause which attended their ministry: their austere and penitential lives left to the world no reply to the truths which they announced; the simplicity and the severity of their morals did not belie the gospel which they preached: their example, instructed, persuaded, effected

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\*The two last names have been substituted for those of the Raymonds and Vincent-Ferriers of the text. This change, it is hoped, will require no apology.

still more than their discourses ; and the spirit of God, which inflamed them, and the divine fire with which they were filled, found the way to the coldest and most insensible hearts, and turned the sacred temples in which the faithful had assembled to hear them, into so many supper-rooms,\* from which each one went forth like the apostles, inflamed, and, as it were, inebriated by the abundance of the Holy Ghost, which he had received. What great things, is not a single apostolic man, capable of producing on the earth ! alas ! twelve of them were enough to convert the whole universe : *Positus in resurrectionem multorum.*

In fine, the last reason is drawn from the zeal and the very example of a holy Priest. I say first, of his zeal, that although he should fill no public function ; although through a sentiment of humility or the consciousness of the want of talents, he should carefully, and for ever, avoid every exalted office, at the same time that piety alone in a Priest is a great talent, and that with it, he may be said to have, as it were, all others : *Venerunt mihi omnia bona, cum illa* : † although he should devote himself solely

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\* See Acts. c. i. v. 13. and c. ii. v. 4.

† Wisdom. c. vii. v. 11.

to the performance of good works, should merely enter into the detail of the miseries and the necessities of his brethren ; still how great is the good which a Priest of this character never fails to produce among men? he reconciles those whom variance and strife had separated ; he penetrates the darkness which shame, so often, casts around indigence, and in relieving their distress, spares those unknown objects of charity, even the confusion of being assisted ; foundations of utility and edification, find in his solicitude and zeal, resources which prevent them from falling into decay, and which often give them a new stability : how many public scandals prevented by these means ! how many opportunities of salvation, secured ! he confirms the virtuous, and employs them for the advantage and sanctification of his brethren : he presides in all their holy enterprises : he is himself the soul of all the piety of a city or a parish : he is, in the estimation and in the hope of the greater part of sinners, the instrument, which God will, one day, use for their conversion : he animates all : he finds remedies for every evil : no disorder escapes him : there is no public good to which he does not sacrifice himself : no undertaking can dis-

courage nor disgust him: no sinner appears to him, unworthy of his zeal: in fine, nothing can elude the ardor, nor withstand the force and attractions, of his charity: *Nec est qui se abscondat a calore ejus.\**

It is written that the dead body of a man being casually placed near the remains of Eliseus the prophet, the dead man begins immediately to be reanimated; his eyes which were closed in death, begin to open; his tongue is loosed, and he comes forth from the abode of death, into life and light. Alas! my brethren, the most infected carcasses, the souls in which death and corruption have long prevailed, can scarcely approach a holy Priest, an envoy of the Lord, dead to himself, to the world, and all its hopes, without feeling at the instant, a virtue that proceeds from him, a breath of life which begins to reanimate them, to inspire them with good desires, to awaken them from their lethargy, and operate in them the first fruits of grace and salvation: *Nec est qui se abscondat a calore ejus.*

I said also the example: yes, my brethren, although a holy Priest were to do no other

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\* Psal. 18. v. 7.

good than exhibit the example of a regular and edifying life ; although he were merely to display to the faithful, piety, disinterestedness, mortification, modesty, innocence, and sacerdotal gravity, in the detail of his morals ; still it is true of him that he is set up for the salvation of many. Example, you know, is the shortest and most certain way to persuasion : men themselves live principally by imitation : they have need of models, and it is to their sole influence, that we may, almost always, trace their vices as well as their virtues. And what a blessing for them when God raises up in the midst of them, a holy Priest, enlightened and tender, whose piety, is as it were, a spectacle to angels and to men ! it is a perpetual gospel before their eyes, which answers every difficulty, and leaves their transgressions without apology or palliation. If his example fails to turn them from their evil ways, at least it inspires them with respect for virtue ; it forces them to confess that there are still some truly just on earth ; it repairs the injury which worldly pastors do to the sanctity of the priestly character in public opinion, and removes the contempt into which it had fallen by the indecency of their morals : it is a reply to the censures and derisions,

which libertines continually extend from the ministers to the ministry itself, and, as it were, elevates and honours the priesthood. For, my brethren, it is against us principally, that the world loves to direct the sharpest arrows of its satire and malignity; it pardons nothing in unfaithful pastors: the more they appear to esteem it, and conform to it, to become its partizans and apologists, the more they become the objects of its ridicule and contempt. The world has no pity for a bad Priest; and as Saint Isidore says, whereas formerly, the clergy were the censors of people and of kings, and a terror to the wicked by the sanctity of their lives; the scene is now lamentably changed; the people is become the censor of the clergy, who fear its judgment, and who tremble before the Princes and the great, because they aspire to their favors, and dread their contempt or neglect. *Olim Sacerdos populo erat formidabilis; nunc contra populus terrori est Sacerdoti.\**

In a word, my brethren, a holy Priest is the greatest gift which God can bestow upon men. What favors think you, did he promise by his prophet, to the children of Israel, if at last,

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\* St. Isidore. Epist. 278.



they would be converted to him and renounce all their prevarications? Was it the empire of nations? the conquest of the world? the overthrow and destruction of their enemies? the termination of all the evils and calamities that afflicted them? a land flowing with milk and honey? These magnificent promises he had already made to them, and they had not been powerful enough to restrain them within the observance of the law, nor prevent them from prostituting their homage to strange gods: he therefore passes over promises so brilliant and so capable of making an impression, particularly on a people, who were almost always actuated by carnal and terrestrial motives; but it is only to make one, yet a thousand times, more glorious and more valuable: be converted, O ye children of Israel, says he, and return to the God of your fathers, whom you have forsaken, and I will give you,—what, my brethren? I will give you pastors according to my own heart: *Convertimini filii revertentes . . . et dabo Pastores juxta cor meum.\**

Raise up then, in thy church, O my God, faithful Priests, pastors, according to thy own

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\* Jeremiah. c. iii. vv. 14. 15.

heart: never cease to form them in this holy place, in which thou hast for so long a time diffused the first spirit of the priesthood: draw from this assembly vessels of election, to bear thy name before kings and nations; and in separating them for the work of the ministry, do thou prepare them to sanctify those, to whom thou sendest them. We do not ask of thee, O my God, the cessation of the evils that afflict, of the wars and troubles that disquiet and terrify, us; propitious seasons; the return of abundance and prosperity; give us holy Priests, and with them thou wilt give us all things: *Positus in resurrectionem multorum.*

And in order my brethren, to gather the entire fruit of this discourse, let us reduce what has been said, to this single reflection: I can neither destroy, nor save, myself, alone: from the moment that I have been placed in the holy ministry, and clothed with the christian priesthood, I must be either a scourge in the hands of God, on the wickedness of men, or a blessing sent down from heaven for their happiness: I must either resemble the dragon of the Apocalypse, that hideous and devouring beast, which drew with him, in his fall, a third part

of the stars of heaven to the earth;\* or the true serpent of brass† Jesus Christ, who being raised from the earth attracted all things to himself; healed the wounds, and took away the calamities of his people: I am now placed between these two destinies: *Positus in ruinam et in resurrectionem multorum in Israel.*

What a powerful motive to fidelity in all my duties, to vigilance in every part of my conduct, to zeal in my ministry, to fear and terror on the subject of my state, to the renovation of the spirit of my calling: what a motive of hope, of dread, and of confusion, in the expectation of the coming of the sovereign pastor, Christ Jesus, who will demand of me an account of my stewardship, and present to me the souls whom he had entrusted to my care, either for my condemnation, if they have perished,\* or as my glory and crown, if they have found life and salvation through my ministry.  
*Amen.*

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\* Apoc. c. xii. v. 4.

† Numbers. c. xxi. v. 8.

## A DISCOURSE

ON THE

### ESTRANGEMENT OF THE CLERGY FROM THE WORLD.

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Tulerunt illum in Jerusalem, ut sisterent cum Domino, Sicut scriptum est: Quia omne masculinum adaperiens vulvam, sanctum Domino vocabitur.

*They carried the child to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. As it is written in the law of the Lord: That every male opening the womb, shall be called holy to the Lord.*

LUKE. chap. ii. verses 22. 23.

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MY brethren, it was written in the law, that every first-born of the Jews, should be consecrated to the Lord: that is to say, should be, like Samuel, dedicated to his worship, destined to the service of the temple, separated from profane uses, in a word, should be holy to the Lord, and even sacrificed at the foot of his altar, as a sacred first fruit, over which the world had no longer any right, but which God had re-

served to himself, and which they were obliged to redeem and replace by another offering.\*

Jesus Christ, the first-born among his brethren, prefigured by the first-born of the children of Israël, presents himself to-day, to accomplish this law, to fulfil its figure and unfold its mystery. His consecration to the altar, is the source and the model of ours; we are, as it were, the first-born of the new covenant, the first fruits of the faithful, which the church consecrates to the Lord for all the rest of her members; and in this point, we have succeeded to the destiny of the first-born among the Jews. Like to them we are, at a tender age, presented in the temple, separated from profane uses, and devoted to the altar. Like to them, the world has no longer any right over us, and we are reserved to be offered and sacrificed to the Lord. The only difference is, that their consecration and sacrifice were redeemed by another offering, as being only the figure of the consecration of Jesus Christ, whereas, ours being the continuation of his, is real and perpetual, and cannot therefore be ransomed nor replaced by any other victim.

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\* Exodus. c. xiii.

Now the principal character of this consecration is, to separate us from all profane intercourse, to dedicate us so entirely to the altar and its worship, that it is no longer lawful for us to quit the sanctuary, to return to the tents, or participate in the works, of sinners; and to estrange us from the world, as from a place, in which the sanctity of our consecration cannot appear with propriety, nor remain long without profanation.

I am aware that the manners of the clergy must not be too repulsive, nor too austere: called, as we are, to sanctify sinners, we must, after the example of Christ, take upon us, as it were, their resemblance, and appear almost clothed in their infirmities: destined to be the visible angels, by whom they are to be conducted, we must, like the celestial guide of the young Tobias, appear, in a certain sense, to imitate their customs and their manners, but whilst we seem to eat and drink with them, we must in secret nourish our piety and our faith with an invisible food, which cannot be seen by men.\*

I know that our ministry obliges us to mingle with the rest of men; that, as the Apostle

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\*I seemed indeed to eat and to drink with you: but I use an invisible meat and drink, which cannot be seen by men. Tobias. c. xii. v. 19.

says, we must go out of this world, if we would break off all intercourse with sinners ; and that the grace of the priesthood enables us to conquer, not by flight, but in combat. I know, in fine, that even under the jewish dispensation, the sacerdotal tribe, was spread and dispersed among the other twelve, to teach us, it would appear, that the intermixture of the clergy and people is necessary, and that to hold up to men, the light of a good example, is not the least of our sacred obligations.

But it is not the charity which ventures abroad to be active, useful and edifying, that I wish to combat, but that love of the world which draws us from retirement, renders us unprofitable, and which, whilst it dissipates ourselves, scandalizes the faithful: that violent inclination which renders the sanctuary insipid, tears us from its most sacred occupations, and drags us into the tumult and dangers of the world: in a word, that idle, useless, worldly life, which leads us from dissipation to dissipation, which attaches us to the assemblies of sinners, to their maxims, their pleasures, their inclinations ; and which leads us from the decorum of the world to its amusements, from amusements to dangers, from dangers to crime.

Now I say that nothing can be more incompatible with the gravity and sanctity of our state, or with the spirit of our ministry, than this life of dissipation, of worldliness, of intercourse and of unprofitableness, however authorized by the prevalence of example, and however palliated by the plea or the appearance of innocence. Let us prove this interesting truth: it is of itself sufficiently important to constitute the entire subject of this instruction.

#### FIRST REFLECTION.

The spirit of our ministry, is a spirit of separation, of prayer, of weeping, of labor, of zeal, of knowledge, of piety: remark these various characters. Now they are all lost and extinguished amidst the bustle and distraction incident to engagements and connexions altogether worldly.

It is first a spirit of separation: I have already remarked, that the sacerdotal unction sanctifies and sets us apart: it withdraws us from the public functions of society, and dedicates us for ever, to the service of the altar, and the worship of the Lord. From the moment in which we have been anointed Priests, we cease, as it were, to be citizens and members



of the commonwealth: though united with other men by those public duties that bind us to the state, we form a separate people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood: we take upon ourselves more sacred engagements, we contract new relations and begin to live under other laws. It is not that we are exempt from the obedience and submission due to the established authority of our country: on the contrary, we should be an example to the rest of the faithful, by being the first to give to Cesar what belongs to Cesar: we cease to be citizens, merely as far as regards the public functions, which the state demands of all her members: the sacred mysteries become our only functions: the temples of religion our only habitations: the altar our post of honor: the works of piety and of charity, our tribute and our public burdens.

+ It is for this reason that the civil laws do not call upon us, for the ordinary service or the necessities of the state, nor include us in the general mass of society: they regard us as separated from the body of citizens, and disburdened of those duties and obligations which constitute the principle of civil life: they resign, as it were, the right they had to us, and leave us entirely to a more holy and more august des-

tion: they respect the profound recollection, which our functions require; the mystic seal by which we are consecrated to Jesus Christ, and they leave us to enjoy a sacred leisure, in order that by our prayers and oblations, we may compensate those other services which we fail to render to the commonwealth.

Every thing then, in a Priest, should be holy and removed from common pursuits: his tongue, according to the expression of the Apostle, should speak only of the things of God, and even trifles profane it, as ordinary meats defile a consecrated vessel: his hands should no longer serve, but to offer up gifts and sacrifices: the sports, the amusements, the works of men, degrade them from their sanctity, and tarnish the splendor of their unction: his eyes should rest only upon religious objects, the temple, the altar, and the sacred mysteries: if they wander elsewhere, they forfeit the right of penetrating into the tabernacle, and seeing face to face, the glory and majesty of the God who has chosen it for his residence. In fine, the whole person of a Priest is as a religious spectacle, which should ever be accompanied and surrounded by respect, by gravity and decorum, that it may awe every beholder into reverence and veneration.

Hence, my brethren, when the conversion of the Cæsars and the great increase of the faithful had introduced into christianity before so pure, the relaxations, the pomp, and the vices of the world; and when the society of christians becoming thus more extended and consequently more corrupt, was no longer a safe asylum for virtue, the clergy sought refuge and security under the cover of the episcopal residence; the eagles began to assemble round the body;\* Africa, the East and the West, beheld ecclesiastical communities arise, where, under the guidance of the chief pastor, the ministers of religion separated from the world, learned in their concealment, how to appear in public with advantage and edification to the people.

Establishments for the education of the clergy, have succeeded to these first communities. In the few years of probation and of seclusion, passed in those retreats, it has been the intention of the church, to form the candidates for the priesthood to such a love of retirement and recollection, as may for ever separate them, at least in heart, from the world. But is not even this short period of retreat and of separation a

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\* Matthew. c. xxiv. v. 28. Luke. c. xvii. v. 37.

burden to you? Is not this trial for you, the result of necessity, rather than of choice? And do you ever feel, or say with the Royal Prophet to the Lord, that a single day spent in the repose and the innocence of his house, is better than years passed in the tabernacles of sinners? Were your seclusion not a matter of necessity; were there no propriety, no interested hopes, no laws, no customs to compel you to it; were your inclinations alone to decide on your conduct, what choice would you make? Is it to you an affliction to return to the world and mix in the society of men; to be again witness of those disorders which you should never behold without the liveliest sorrow? or rather are not your happiest days those which bring you again into the midst of former scenes and former dangers? It is written that the greater part of the spies of Moses, having returned from their expedition, omitted nothing to disgust the people of God with the land of Chanaan: it is, said they, an unhealthful land which devoureth its inhabitants:\* the barrenness and the security of the wilderness, are infinitely preferable to the milk and honey which flow through its plains. Is such your

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\* Numbers. c. 13. v. 33.

language when you return from the world to the desert? You come back satisfied and intoxicated with its pleasures: you carry even into this holy desert, the fruits of that destructive land; you dwell with rapture on its delights and advantages, and inspire those who hear you, with the desire of possessing them: the most precious portion of your time, and the most sacred exercises of your retirement are passed in thinking on them: and thus a single day which brings you again into the world, deranges and dissipates you, renders all the duties of this holy place entirely insipid, fills you with disgust, aggravates your restraints, dries up your heart, and destroys in a few hours the fruit of a whole year of your probation. Judge then whether you are likely to preserve in the midst of the world, the love of recollection and of separation, when you lose it in the very bosom of retreat.

Yet as the world itself no longer esteems you to belong to it; as your goods, your lands, your very person, are, in reference to the state, as a thing that is not; that is to say, as they are withdrawn from the condition of those things which contribute to the movements and the agitations of civil society, whatever still binds you to the world, except the salvation of your bre-

thren, and the august functions of the ministry, humiliates and degrades you; obscures and profanes your consecration, and again places you under the yoke and the ignominy of the age. The vessels and the ornaments of the altar can no longer serve for profane purposes; to use them so, would be a crime that would defile their consecration: a Priest then, who is consecrated to God, in a manner far more holy, more intimate, and more indelible than the sacred vases or the gold and the linen of the sanctuary, stains and defiles his consecration still more, if he employ his person, his talents, his mind or his heart in the works of death, and the profane uses of the world. Holy and awful doctrine, how little art thou known! the ministers of the altar, are at the present day, the first to take a part in the affairs and the agitations of the age. In vain does the Apostle admonish them, that those who have enrolled themselves among the soldiers of Jesus Christ, should no more return to the occupations and the embarrassments of the world: they are the principal actors in all its scenes; the temporal interests of families are entrusted to their care; they are to be seen at the head of the intrigues, the disputes, the quarrels, the animosities of worldlings: the men

of heaven are become men of earth: the dispensers of the mysteries of God, are become the ministers of human passions: those who are charged with the spiritual interests of the people, would consider it a disgrace to be occupied about their eternal welfare, and they sacrifice the most imperative and honorable duties, to the vain glory of directing the temporal and transitory concerns of men: they leave to meaner talents the care of those souls for whom Christ died, and imagine that in devoting themselves to offices which have nothing great, but the names and the passions of those by whom they are filled, they only reserve themselves for more dignified and more illustrious functions. It is from these scenes of intrigue and agitation, that they ascend to the altar, with all the tumult and distraction of human passion, instead of that spirit of recollection and of prayer, which should ever precede and accompany our approach to the holy mysteries: and this is my second reflection.

#### SECOND REFLECTION.

In effect, in the second place, the spirit of our ministry is a spirit of prayer: prayer is the ornament of the priesthood, the most essential

duty of the Priest, the very soul of all his functions. Without prayer, a Priest is of no use in the ministry, and of no advantage to the faithful: he sows, and God gives no increase: he exhorts, and his words are as the sounding brass: he immolates the victim of propitiation, and draws down no blessing upon the sacred offerings: he recites the praises of the Lord, but his heart is far from him, and he honors him merely with the extremity of his lips. In a word, a Priest without prayer, is but a phantom without soul and without life: the most sacred, most fruitful and most spiritual of his functions, are but as the mechanical movements of a mere machine. It is then prayer alone, that gives efficacy and success to his various duties, and he ceases, as it were, to be a public minister, from the moment that he ceases to pray: prayer is the only consolation of his labors; and his functions become for him, as the yoke of the mercenary, as so many hard and overwhelming tasks, if prayer does not sweeten their bitterness, relieve their pain, nor solace their failure of success.

But prayer supposes a mind pure and free from those vivid and dangerous images, which defile the soul or obscure its lights: it sup-



poses a mind stored with holy thoughts, and familiarized to the meditation of God's law; a mind which is, as it were, thrown out of its proper place, by being compelled to turn its attention to the pursuits and frivolities of the age, and which, the moment it is set at liberty, returns to the remembrance of those eternal truths, from which it had been diverted. Prayer supposes a tranquil heart, whose liveliest feeling, is a sentiment of the love of God, and of gratitude for his benefits; a heart accustomed to relish the things of heaven; a heart, timid, sensitive and vigilant, always on its guard against external impressions; always occupied in correcting the weaknesses, and repairing the imperfections, inseparable from man's condition, and always watchful to allow itself nothing that might cool the ardor of the tender and familiar intercourse which it has with its God. Behold what the spirit of prayer demands of you.

Now combine, if you can, these dispositions with dissipated and worldly habits: see, whether on quitting a company and discourse, in which your imagination has been led over a series of public intrigues, over the pretensions and the hopes of men; in which you have been let into

the secret interests which unite or divide those who are high in authority, or who occupy the most distinguished stations in your neighbourhood ; in a word, in which you have been entertained on whatever is most dazzling and contagious in the figure of this world : see, whether on departing from such society, you will find yourself disposed to collect yourself at the foot of the crucifix, and there with a head still replete with profane images, meditate on those eternal truths which frequently present nothing but clouds to the purest eye, and which the most faithful heart, pressed down by the sole weight of what is earthly in man, finds it oftentimes, difficult to relish. <sup>4</sup> What do I say? see, if on quitting a profane assembly, in which you have been struck with a thousand indecent spectacles, and a thousand dangerous objects ; where together with the seeds of all the passions, you have suffered to sink into your heart, the sorrowful matter of a thousand temptations, of a thousand impure recollections that will trouble the peace of your soul, will defile or at least cloud your innocence, and by their poisonous impressions, destroy whatever little still remained of relish or sensibility for the things of heaven, for the sacred observances, and

the important duties of the priesthood : see, whether you can pass from those haunts of profaneness to the foot of the altar, to pray for yourself and for your people ; to cool the wrath, and disarm the anger of the Lord ; to deplore the wanderings and the vices of a world which you have been just applauding, and to treat the holy mysteries with that silence of the senses, that profound recollection, that religious awe, that majestic gravity, that calm of the heart and of the mind, which you have just forfeited, and which is notwithstanding so absolutely indispensable for the right performance of functions so formidable and so divine.†) Alas ! you will carry to the altar the amusements, the trifles, the illusions, the dangerous objects of the world, in the midst of which you live ; you will insult the presence of the tremendous mysteries, by indecent images ; your heated imagination will tear you from the altar, and drag you back into the bustle and society where you have left your heart : your prayers, even in the retirement of the sanctuary, will be but a review of your pleasures ; your mind in the performance of them, will converse more with the world than with God ; and not only will your office become unprofitable

to yourself and to your brethren ; and not only in offering up the holy victim of propitiation, will you fail to soften his anger against them or yourself, but you will exasperate it, and draw down new scourges ; and your ministry, which should be a ministry of reconciliation and of life, will become a ministry of death, of hatred and of perdition. You, yourself will soon experience it : you shall be the first to feel the arrows of the indignation of the Lord. As soon as the world shall have extinguished in you the spirit of prayer, the tender and delightful intercourse of the soul with God, will be for you turned into an intercourse of mere decency ; as it will be uneasy and troublesome, you will shorten its duration ; by little and little, you will lose all relish for it, and abandon the practice ; you will become dry, will wither and fall ; and you, who should have wept between the porch and the altar over the sins of your brethren, will be no longer touched by your own ; your functions themselves will harden you : in participating in the errors and the pleasures of the world, you will justify and uphold them, and so far from afflicting your piety and enkindling your zeal, they will but

gratify your taste and corrupt your innocence: and this is the third reflection. *L. 189*

### THIRD REFLECTION.

The spirit of our ministry is a spirit of weeping: we are the angels of peace, mentioned by the Prophet, who should bitterly weep because the ways of justice are made desolate, and no one walketh, any more, in the path that conducts to life; because the covenant is become useless, and that the Lord seems to have rejected his people: *Angeli pacis amarè fletunt: dissipatæ sunt viæ, cessavit transiens per semitam: irritum factum est pactum: projecit civitates: non reputavit homines.\**

Yes, my brethren, we ought to be men of sorrow, to weep without ceasing between the porch and the altar, over the scandals that dishonor the church and expose her to the derisions of the impious: in a word, the spirit of our ministry is that spirit which asketh for the saints with ineffable groanings.† Samuel, says the sacred page, after the death of Saul, retired from public life and spent the rest of his days in bewailing the mournful destiny of that unhappy

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\* Isaiah. c. xxxiii. vv. 7. 9.    † Rom. c. viii. v. 26.

prince. Jesus Christ the prince and the model of pastors, seeing the blindness and obduracy of Jerusalem, wept over the approaching ruin of that unfortunate city: he could not restrain his tears at the spectacle of the dead body of Lazarus, in whom he beheld the figure of a guilty soul, long dead in his sight. Our bowels, like those of the Apostle, should be moved at the miseries and the disorders of our brethren; we ought to bear towards them the heart of a mother. Like the true mother mentioned in the judgment of Solomon, we should feel all our tenderness awakened, and our blood agitated, when we see the prince of darkness ready to deprive the children of the church, of the life of grace, and divide them between the world and Jesus Christ. No, my brethren, as long as there shall be sinners on the earth, sorrow and mourning will be the portion of the Priest: as long as the children of Israel in the plain, occupied in revelry and dancing, shall forget the God of their Fathers, and like fools, prostitute their homage to a golden calf, so long shall the true Moses, on the mountain, tear his garments and rend his heart before the Lord, and offer himself to be an anathema for his brethren: the tears of the Priest should be as a continual ex-

piation for the sins of the people. The world shall rejoice, says Christ, to his apostles: the children of the age will run dancing and rejoicing towards the abyss; smiles and sports shall be their portion, but sorrow shall be yours; the world, in the midst of which I leave you, will ever be for you a spectacle of grief and of lamentation; and even although it were not to persecute you, although crosses and gibbets did not await you in it, still would its corruption alone compel you to pass your days in it, in mourning and weeping: *Mundus gaudebit vos autem contristabimini.*\*

Now can you unite this spirit of sorrow and of weeping with the intercourse and the dangerous follies of worldly societies? upon what, let me ask you, do the thoughts and the most serious occupations of the world, turn? upon pleasures of which you must be the witness, the approver or the accomplice, if you frequent such assemblies. Although you were merely to witness them; yet can a Priest familiarize his eyes to the sight of objects which ought to pierce his heart? can he make a recreation of such objects? The first doctors of the church interdicted the

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\*John. c. xvi. v. 20.

faithful from the shows of the gladiators, because they did not believe that disciples of the meekness and the charity of Christ, could innocently feed their eyes with the blood and death of those wretches, or take a cruel pleasure in a spectacle, which ought rather to afflict their piety, and make them deplore the hard fate and eternal ruin of these miserable victims. But, of such mournful objects, you, a Priest, a pastor of souls and a co-operator with Christ for their salvation, are not ashamed to make an amusement : you behold with pleasure your brethren perishing and arming each other for mutual destruction : you see them inflict mortal wounds by indecent and lascivious glances, carrying poison and death into the hearts of one another ; and tearing each other in pieces with the fangs of the most malignant detraction ; and yet this miserable carnage amuses you, and amidst scenes that ought to make you weep tears of blood, you give yourself to enjoyment, and spend the most delightful hours of your life.

But you will not be content to be a simple spectator ; you will applaud what passes, for you cannot mingle in the society of worldlings, to be the eternal censor of their conduct, or to poison their pleasures by a sad and austere coun-



tenance ; advice would not be there, in its proper place, nor can you have any just title to reprehend amusements which you constantly frequent : they would have a right to say to you, why do you come amongst us ? this is not your place : why should you be so assiduous an attendant on pleasures, which you deem so worthy of blame ? it is vain to pretend to hate that, without which, it appears, that you cannot be happy : absence from these scenes would better become you, than censures. Now, not to condemn is to consent, says the Apostle, to their works of darkness ; it is to approve them. But you will go still farther ; you will participate in them and finally you too will appear upon the scene. We do not hold out long against those practices, which form, as it were, the entire groundwork of those societies which we frequent. We wish to be like every body else ; we grow weary of being left alone, and we can no longer bear to appear selfish or singular. The complaisance of to-day becomes an occasion to-morrow ; it quickly changes to inclination : thus will you suffer yourself to be dragged along, and having long accustomed the sanctity of your character, to the sight of the abuses and the disorders of the world, you will familiarize

it to those abuses and those disorders themselves. The people of God soon learned to imitate the manners of the Chanaanites, after they had contracted with that people, those relations and that familiarity which Moses had forbidden. Already that relish for the world, which leads us to seek its society, is but a secret desire to imitate it; we are already disposed to live as it lives, when we cannot be happy without it; conformity of disposition is the ordinary cement of friendship, and we are friendly to the world, only because we have the same inclinations and desires as the world. The children of Jacob lived always separate from the Egyptians: they dwelt apart, because their manners had nothing in common with those of the people of the land: the children of Israel offered in sacrifice to the Lord, the animals which Egypt adored: these things were but in figure. We, in the midst of the world, form a distinct people, because we sacrifice to the Lord the passions which the world adores: from the moment in which we burst through the barrier that separates us from it, that we quit the happy land of Goshen, and mingle with the idolatrous multitude, their religion becomes ours; we must worship what they adore. Separation was all our security, for it kept alive

and upheld a difference of manners ; by being intermingled with them, we form but one people, and in all things our lives imitate and resemble theirs. Thus we every day, behold in the world, ministers of Jesus Christ, not only imitating the manners and excesses of worldlings, but even improving upon them ; surpassing them in effeminacy, voluptuousness, pomp, extravagance and oftentimes even in scandal ; refining upon pleasures, priding themselves upon greater delicacy and superior skill in sensuality, and becoming, O my God ! the scandalous models of perfection in whatever tends to flatter the senses and the passions ; instead of being according to their engagement, examples of all the virtues which mortify, and constrain, the appetites and vices of man. But, my brethren, although the life of the world werè merely a life of idleness and inutility, yet on this very account ought it to be interdicted to ministers of Jesus Christ, who have been established to cultivate the field of the Lord ; to watch without ceasing, lest the enemy scatter the cockle among the good seed, and to devote themselves entirely to those laborious functions, to which they are solemnly pledged by a con-

secration to the service of the church : and this truth furnishes me with a fourth reflection.

#### FOURTH REFLECTION.

In effect, my brethren, the spirit of our ministry is a spirit of labor : the priesthood is a laborious dignity ; the church whose ministers we are, is a vine, a field, a harvest, a holy warfare, a rising edifice ; terms which announce care and fatigue, labor and application. The Priest is placed in the church, like the first man in paradise, to cultivate and guard it : *Ut operaretur et custodiret illum*.\* Hence, from the earliest ages, the active discharge of the ministerial duties was always inseparably attached to ordination ; it was not the usage to call the lazy workman from the market place, to honor his sloth with an unmeaning title, or to reward him as a faithful labourer, unless he had borne the weight of the day and of the heat ; and the Bishop imposed hands upon the candidates for the ministry, only that he might disburden himself of a part of his weighty load, by committing to them a portion of the pastoral solicitude : in a word, the dignities of the church

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\* Genesis. c. ii. v. 15.

were not empty names and idle honors, but employments full of anxiety and of toil.

Thus a Priest owes his whole time to the faithful: excepting necessary relaxation, all that is spent in vain and idle intercourse, all the moments, all the days which he allows himself to waste in the frivolous vanities of worldly societies, in sport and dissipation, are days and moments which he owed to the salvation of his brethren, and of which they will demand an account at the tribunal of Jesus Christ. By his ordination he has become a public minister; the people have acquired a real title to his person, his leisure, his occupations, his talents, these are consecrated goods, which form, as it were the patrimony of the poor; he is but the depositary of them, nor can he longer dispose of them at his pleasure: he must answer for them to the church and to her children; it is not for his own sake, but for her's, that she has placed him in the number of her ministers; it is that he might bear a part of her burdens and of her toils: he degrades himself from his rank, from the moment that he abandons its duties, and he ceases to be a minister as soon as he ceases to labour: he dissipates, in frivolity, in vain and unprofitable vi-

sits, in amusements always indecent, and oftentimes dangerous, that time upon which rolls the salvation of his people ; that time on which depends the eternal destiny of his brethren ; that time to which God had attached the conversion of sinners, the confirmation of the weak, the perseverance of the just, and which from the beginning, had entered into the designs of his mercy towards his church and his elect : such is the crime of the idle life of a Priest.

And, in good earnest, my brethren, are you ministers of the church only to drag yourselves along, every day, from house to house ; from assembly to assembly ; from folly to folly, and not to find in your state, even occupation enough to cheer that listlessness which is inseparable from the idleness of a worldly life? What! whilst the leaders of God's people are, every day, in battle against the enemies of his name ; whilst so many holy Priests devote themselves to the most painful functions for the salvation of their brethren ; whilst so many zealous ministers with a health exhausted by years and by fatigues, relax nothing of their ardor and their labors, but even redouble their cares, and their vigilance in proportion as their strength decays, and like the Apostle generous-

ly immolate themselves for the faith of their brethren ; whilst so many apostolic men traverse the seas, and in the most distant islands go to seek the crown of martyrdom as the recompense of their labors, or the salvation of the many nations whom God seems to have abandoned : you, the colleague of their apostleship, and honoured with the same ministry ; you, would ingloriously languish in an indolence not only unbecoming your character, but disgraceful to a simple member of the state ? You, the man of God upon earth, the interpreter of his will, his envoy among men ; you, would forget your title, your functions, his interests, his glory and your own, and would merge your dignity in an empty and unprofitable life, which would render you not only the shame of the church, but the reproach of civil society, and an object of scorn in the eyes of worldlings themselves ? For, my brethren, even in the world each individual, in his proper condition, has duties and obligations which occupy a considerable portion of his life : the magistrate, the soldier, the father of a family, the merchant, the artisan, all the various classes of citizens, have separate and serious functions, which fill up the greater part of their time : they have

hours, days, times, set apart, for the painful labors of their different professions ; the worldly Priest alone, amongst the multitude, is the most useless and most unoccupied creature on the face of the earth ; the Priest alone, whose moments should be so valuable to the church ; whose duties are so numerous and so important ; whose cares ought to increase in proportion as the vices of men are multiplied ; the Priest alone, has no function among men ; passes his days in an eternal vacuity, in a circle of unprofitable frivolities ; and that life which ought to be the most occupied of all, the most filled up with duties, the most respected, becomes the most empty and the most contemptible that is to be found even in the world itself. When David exhorted the generous Urias to go down into his house and taste the happiness of domestic pleasures ; what, replied that valiant and faithful soldier, whilst my companions sleep under tents, and amidst the storm of battle expose their lives in defence of the people of God, shall I repose in my house, and give my heart to the sweets and the joys of family endearments ? *Et ego ingrediar domum meam ut comedam et bibam ?*\* This should, incessantly, be

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\* 2 Kings. c. xi. v. 11.



the language of the idle and worldly Priest to himself; can I live effeminately and unprofitably without being of any use to the church or to the state, whilst the rest of men have each his separate occupation, and particularly, whilst my brethren, my colleagues in the ministry, generously sacrifice their lives for the church, and glory in the fatigues and the perils which they undergo for the salvation of the children of God?

Yes, my brethren, whilst there are sinners to be converted, ignorant to be instructed, weak to be supported, afflicted to be consoled, oppressed to be defended, infidels to be confounded, can a Priest find leisure for the pleasures and the vanities of worldly assemblies? are we then made for an idle life; we who after the greatest diligence and the utmost exertions, fall far short of our duties? Behold Jesus Christ the prince and the model of pastors, seated by the well of Samaria; notwithstanding his fatigue, he takes no repose, save in doing the work for which he was sent; he does not even allow himself time for a frugal repast; *my meat*, says he to his disciples who press him, *is to do the will of my Father* :\*

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\* John. c. iv. v. 34.

he beholds the fields covered with a ripe and abundant harvest, and whilst his Father wants labourers, and the crop is on the point of perishing, he cannot suffer himself to lose a single moment, and therefore conducts this sinful woman to the knowledge of the truth. Let us estimate by this example the value of our time, and the use we ought to make of it. It is related of Nehemias that when engaged in rebuilding the temple, he was invited by the officers of the king of Persia, to go down into the plain of Ono, to confer with them, to renew the alliance, and celebrate their interview by rejoicings and festivities: *veni*, said they, *ut percutiamus fœdus pariter in vinculis, in campo Ono* :\* but that holy man, not thinking that he could without guilt, interrupt the sacred duty with which he was charged, for an affair of mere civility, replied ; I am engaged in a great work and cannot leave it nor lose sight of it, lest it should be neglected in my absence : *Opus grande ego facio et non possum descendere, ne fortè negligatur* ! † Is a Priest, my brethren, occupied in repairing the spiritual edifice of the church, in raising a temple to the living God in the hearts

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\* Esdras. c. vi. v. 2.

† Ibid. c. vi. v. 3

of the faithful, charged with a less holy or less important work? and what should be his answer to those, who under frivolous pretexts, endeavour to turn him from his sacred purpose, and engage him in the vain and unprofitable civilities of the world, but the language of the pious leader of the Jews? *Opus grande ego facio, et non possum descendere ne fortè negligatur.* What can be more worthy of his ministry, or more respectable even in the eyes of the world, than that no human solicitation can divert him from the sanctity of his functions, and the service of his brethren; than to prefer the great, sublime and honorable work of God, to the trifles and the pursuits of the children of the age; to respect his ministry and his functions, to esteem as mean and beneath the dignity of his office, all those objects which occupy worldlings so unprofitably; and to consider every hour and every moment given without necessity to the world, as so much time denied to the building up of the holy Jerusalem, and which must therefore retard the accomplishment of the work of God upon earth: *Opus grande ego facio, et non possum descendere ne fortè negligatur.* I allow, that zeal and firmness are necessary to burst the ties of flesh

and blood, to forbid ourselves almost all intercourse with that world to which we are bound by so many cords of friendship, of connexion, and of civility ; in which we are, every day, reproached with the austereness and the singularity of our seclusion ; a point on which we are taught that it would be even vain for us, to give good example ; and where in fine, we are seduced and led astray, as well by the conduct of our brethren in the ministry, as by the bent of our own inclinations : but this very consideration supplies me with another reflection, and becomes a new proof of that truth of which I wish to convince you.

#### FIFTH REFLECTION.

I say then, in the fifth place, that the spirit of our ministry is a spirit of firmness and of zeal. We are appointed to exhort, to correct, to reprehend, in season and out of season : public disorders and abuses should ever find us unbending and inexorable : the Priest must no longer regard those ignominies which never fail to accompany the exercise of sacerdotal freedom : with far greater majesty than the Pontiff of the law, he bears inscribed upon his brow, *Doctrine* and *Truth* : he no longer knows

any man according to the flesh : his firmness towards his relatives, his friends and protectors, must warrant his sternness towards those with whom he has no connexion ; and his severity towards the latter should never blush at his complaisance towards the former : the grace of the imposition of hands is a grace of strength and of courage, it infuses into the soul marked with the sacred seal, a heroism, which raises her above her own weakness, which fills her with sentiments, noble, lofty, generous, and worthy of the elevation of her ministry ; which lifts her above fear and hope, above reputation and reproach, and whatever else sways the conduct of the rest of men ; and which causes to flow through our veins, together with the sacred unction, that undaunted spirit, that sacerdotal energy, that apostolic blood which we have inherited from our fathers, from our predecessors in the ministry, from the illustrious founders and first heroes of our religion.

Now, this spirit of firmness and zeal, is the most opposite that can be imagined to the spirit of the world. For, the spirit of the world, is a spirit of compliance, of adulation, of complaisance, of obsequiousness, of false regard to persons and to circumstances : we must have no

sentiment of our own ; must think with the greater number, or at least with the stronger party ; must have our suffrage, as it were, always ready, and wait only for the favourable moment to proffer it : we must smile at impiety, and applaud obscenity, that is scarcely concealed ; must accustom our ears to the most open and most cruel detraction ; eulogize ambition and its schemes ; suffer the endowments of the mind and of the body to be prized above those of grace. In fine, if we would live in the world, we must think, or at least, we must speak like the world : we must not bring into it an unbending, a singular and untractable spirit, which would not only render us a mockery and a laughing-stock, but which would soon become disgustful even to ourselves : we, who are the salt of the earth must change, must conform and even infatuate ourselves with the children of the world ; we, who ought to be the censors of the world, must become its panegyrists ; we, who are the light of the world, must perpetuate its blindness, by our suffrage and our baseness ; in a word, we, who ought to be the help and the salvation of the world, must perish with it.

But admitting that you bring with you into the world, all the precautions of the most vigi-

lant piety, and that you stand firm against the force of example, and all those seductions which it is so difficult to resist long ; admitting that your love of truth, your firmness and courage are apparent and undoubted ; yet will you soon begin to relax. Those notions of zeal and of courage which you have imbibed in this place of retreat, during the progress of your clerical education, will be quickly effaced : the commerce of the world will weaken and change them, and make them appear as so many extravagancies even in your own eyes : to them will succeed other ideas less stern, more human, and more in conformity with the common manner of thinking : what appeared to you, zeal and duty, you will deem excess and imprudence ; and you will consign to the headstrong and the ignorant, what you had once considered to be the virtue and the wisdom of the priesthood. Nothing so much enervates the firmness of the ministry, as the unprofitable commerce of the world : we enter by little and little, and even without perceiving it ourselves, into the prejudices, the excesses, the false reasonings by which worldlings are accustomed to extenuate and justify their disorders : by habitually frequenting them, we no longer find them so guilty :

we even become almost the apologists of their luxury, their idleness, their pageantry, their ambition, their animosities, their jealousies; we learn, like the world, to give to all these passions a milder name; and what confirms us in this new system of conduct, is, that it is accredited by the suffrages of worldlings; that the world gives to our cowardice and degeneracy, the specious names of moderation, of superior mind, of knowledge of the world, of talent to render virtue amiable; and to the opposite conduct, the odious epithets of meanness, of vulgarity, of excess, and of harshness, fitted only to alienate from religion, and render piety disgusting and contemptible. Thus, through gratitude, we treat the world obligingly, because it flatters our baseness with all the honors and all the respect due to prudence and virtue; we think it more innocent, since it finds us more estimable; and we are more favourable to its vices, since it has metamorphosed our vices, into virtues. For, how rarely is it that we are the severe and troublesome censurers of our admirers; and how few are there to be found, like Barnabas and Saul, who because they would not relax the truth, caused themselves to be stoned by the very people, who, but a moment



before were ready to offer them sacrifice, as to Gods that had come down upon the earth.\*

The spirit of zeal is then incompatible with the spirit, and the commerce of the world: in proportion as you familiarize yourselves to what is most reprehensible in its conduct, you will no longer find any thing to reprehend; you will lose sight of the great rules of morality, and of the doctrine of the saints, and you will even forget amidst the trifling and the dissipation of worldly society, whatever little you had learned of them in your early years; you will no longer cultivate those precious seeds of study, and knowledge, which might render you useful to the church; books will become for you, an unpleasant and tiresome occupation, and you will quickly lose all relish for them; to serious and professional studies, you will substitute light and frivolous, perhaps, indecent and dangerous reading, because you will find it of greater use in your connexion and intimacies with the world: and this suggests a new reflection to confirm my doctrine, and condemn your practice.

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\* Acts. c. xiv.

## SIXTH REFLECTION.

Yes, my brethren, in the sixth place, the spirit of our ministry is a spirit of knowledge. The lips of the Priest, says the Holy Ghost, are the depositories of doctrine:\* we, like the prophet, are commanded to eat the sacred volume of the law,† in spite of all the bitterness with which study and watching may be attended: we must eat the bread of the gospel in the sweat of our brow, and must adorn the interior of our soul with the law of God, as the jewish Priests were accustomed to adorn the exterior of their garments. The holy scriptures are, as it were, the substance and the foundation of the christian priesthood: it is thus that an ancient council expresses it, *Sacerdotii hypostasin*. The Priests are compared by the doctors of the church, to the two great lights, which God in the beginning placed in the firmament: we must rule the day and the night; the day, by guiding the faith and the piety of christians; the night, by enlightening the darkness of error, of unbelief, and of strange doctrine. We are the interpreters of the law, the deposi-

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\* Malachy. c. ii. v. 7.    † Ezekiel. c. iii. v. 1.

taries of the traditions of the church, the doctors and the oracles of the people, the seers and prophets established to clear up their doubts and make known to them the will of the Lord, the resource of the church amidst the troubles, the scandals, and the schisms that distract and afflict her.

But sustain if you can, all these illustrious titles, amidst the manners and the dissipations of the world. For, learning in a Priest is not like one of those brilliant and rare talents, which heaven distributes at its choice, and which it does not bestow on all; in him it is an essential talent inseparable from the ministry. The Apostle after having enumerated the various gifts, which the spirit of God poured upon the early church, and remarked that in it, some were prophets, some had the gift of tongues, others the grace of healing, and the power of miracles; \* adds, that others, were pastors and doctors: *Pastores et Doctores*: nor does he separate these two characters, for the one is a necessary consequence of the other. Now, nothing is more fatal to the love of learning, than a taste for the commerce and the society of worldlings: study

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\* 1. Cor. c. 12.

demands retirement and collectedness ; daily dissipations and interruptions, cool our ardor at once, and entirely destroy all relish and all zeal for improvement. I do not say, that they prevent you from undertaking profound studies, from investigating what is most obscure in antiquity on the subject of faith and discipline, and enriching the church with new works ; this is not what is required from you : such talents are confined to a small number of learned and laborious ministers whom God raises to be the lights of the age. But I say, that even the common and ordinary studies requisite for a Priest, to attain a knowledge of his duty ; to fill himself with the sacred truths which he is obliged to announce ; to put himself in a condition to exercise the functions of his ministry with confidence and safety ; I say that even for these studies, he requires a mind accustomed to think, to meditate and to be alone : too much of intimacy and of intercourse with the world, must not render his books tedious and insupportable ; there must be a certain desire of instruction ; a temper of mind serious, and averse to trifles ; a habit of retreat and of reflection ; an arrangement of time, in which he calls himself to an account for his progress, and in which the hours allotted to

his different duties, are, in their regular order, each employed in the prosecution of its peculiar object; in a word, a kind of life uniform, occupied, regulated, that can never be combined with the engagements, the eternal variations, the irregularity and the distractions of the life of the world. So, my brethren, hence it is, that we see so many Priests better instructed in the trifles, the usages, and the affairs of the world, than in the duties of religion, and the laws of the church: hence it is, that the world is filled with idle ministers who go about dragging along the shame of their character, together with their incapacity: hence, that is, from this idle and irregular life, without application, without constraint, and without knowledge, hence I say falls and scandals and the opprobrium of the church, and those horrors which I dare not name. For, my brethren, on quitting this place of retreat, and returning to the house of your friends, or entering on the labors of the priesthood, there is nothing but reading that can support your piety, as there is nothing but piety that can regulate and guide your studies. The love of books alone, can remove and shelter you from the perils inevitable amidst the bustle and the seductions of the world: from the mo-

ment in which you shall no longer find any thing at home, to fix, to attach you, to fill up the void of your days, you will be obliged to go seek it in public: the commerce and the amusements of the world will become necessary to you, nor will you be any longer able to dispense with them. In vain will you propose to yourself certain limits and rules; in vain will you resolve to divide yourself between your books and your worldly connexions, for this is a plan which no one fails to make; the world no more than Jesus Christ, does not long suffer these divisions; you will soon pass over entirely to its side; the love of the world will increase in you, and become stronger every day; and in proportion as it increases, the love of books already so weak and languishing, will diminish till it becomes utterly extinct: disgust will change into aversion; you will no longer be able to endure a single moment of application and serious reading, nor will you even attempt to shake off your indifference, nor offer yourself the least violence on the subject; idleness once relished and habitual, will soon remove or destroy whatever is serious or grave in your life or about your person, except indeed some external marks of your state, which will remain

only for your reproach. And then judge whether abandoned to yourself, without succour, without occupation, with no other resource than the very occasions which enervate you; incessantly exposed, and defended only by your love of the very danger; judge, whether you are likely to go far without yielding, without surrendering yourself, without losing all relish of innocence and virtue, having already lost the love of whatever might preserve and defend it, instead of keeping alive that pure and tender piety which honours the ministry, and which alone can sanctify all its functions: and this brings me to my last reflection.

#### SEVENTH REFLECTION.

I say then, in the last place, that the spirit of our ministry is a spirit of piety. By this spirit of piety I understand not only innocence of morals, but that purity of conscience, that religious feeling, that love of God, that delicacy of soul, which is alarmed at the very appearance of evil: such is the spirit of piety which is as the soul and the entire security of our ministry, for we live as it were in the continual intercourse with holy things. The temples, the altars, the holy mysteries, the sacred canticles,

the word of life; it is amidst these divine and terrific objects, that we pass our days; and it is about these magnificent spectacles which the angels themselves do not behold without trembling, that we are occupied.

Now let me ask you, what is there in all these functions that must not excite terror even in the most collected and tender piety? How great the spirit of prayer, of retirement, of circumspection, of faith, of rigid watchfulness over the senses, that ought to prepare us for these formidable duties! A Priest must no longer tolerate in himself any thing which he cannot bring to the altar, and which cannot sustain the presence of the tremendous mysteries. The very ornaments in which he is clothed, the sacred vases which he uses, and in which the holy oblation reposes, could not appear in the sanctuary, if they had not been purified, sanctified, and consecrated by the prayers of the church. How much more ought the dispositions, the desires, the affections of heart, which the Priest carries to the altar, and which form, as it were, a sacerdotal robe, the sacred ornaments of his soul, to have a superior holiness; how much more should they be purified, sanctified and consecrated by the unction of the



holy spirit residing in him? He can no longer bear into the holy place, the common desires, dispositions and affections of mankind; although they be not defiled, they are unworthy of appearing in it; they must be purified by the divine fire of charity, and thus pass from their ordinary and profane state, as it were, to one that is holy and sublime: in a word, as there is nothing more elevated and grand than his functions, so there should be nothing more holy, more pure, more exalted than his piety. Yet you pretend to combine with a worldly life, with the dissipations and the dangers of society, and of worldly intercourse, that piety and that holiness which few Priests can attain even in the seclusion of the most austere retreat. Alas! an entire life of prayer, of recollection and of penance could not, in ancient times, quiet the holy anxieties of the ministers of the Lord: they could not think of the altar without trembling, nor did they ascend its steps without a sacred horror: the more mortified their lives, and the more vigilant they were to guard their souls from every stain, the more they felt themselves to be defiled in the presence of the lamb without spot, which they were going to immolate. And you, would pass from a party of

pleasure to the altar of God ; you would bless the sacred offerings with the same breath, with which you had just uttered frivolous and profane words ? you would bring to the tremendous mysteries a mind filled with vain and indecent images ? and instead of ascending in spirit to the foot of the glorious and everlasting altar of the heavenly Jerusalem ; instead of annihilating yourself in spirit with the Thrones and Dominations, and of singing with them in the presence of the Almighty the canticle of eternity which the church puts into your mouth ; after having reminded yourself to raise your heart on high, *Sursum corda*, you would suffer it to trail along the dirt of the world which you had just quitted, over a thousand objects unworthy of engaging the attention of a wise man in any place, and infinitely unworthy to occupy, even for a moment, a Priest at the altar offering Jesus Christ as a victim of propitiation to his Father ? and yet you would dare to appear in the holy place with a conscience, negligent, doubtful, almost altogether worldly, in which there is nothing but disorder, darkness, and confusion, and where perhaps, it is your greatest crime, that you feel no remorse, and

that you are without any definite or even general impression of your own guilty state.

But moreover, this worldly and dissipated life is not only irreconcilable with that sacerdotal piety which should accompany us to the altar, but also with that grave and edifying piety which should prepare us for every duty, as it is this alone that can ensure the success of our various functions. For, in good earnest, after having rendered your person a continual and public spectacle, amidst the amusements and the empty joys of the world, how will you display before your people in the christian pulpit, all the seriousness and severity of the gospel truths, all the sincerity and sorrow of a true zeal? what grace will you then have to treat of the dangers to which the faithful are exposed in the world, and of the wisdom of forsaking it; of the snares which the devil lays for innocence; of the necessity of prayer, of recollection and of watchfulness; of the eye which we must pluck out when it becomes a subject of scandal to us; of the account which we must render even for an idle word? and in fine, how will you recommend those bitter maxims of self-denial, so little visible in your own morals, and so little known to the world? what an air of coldness and in-

difference will you not then exhibit? The sacred truths of salvation issue with regret, as it were, and by constraint from a mouth habituated to worldly and frivolous discourses. To preach Christ crucified, with the Apostle, we must, like him, be attached to the cross: to inspire the love of God, and of the things of heaven, we must have it and feel it ourselves: to move and gain the heart, we must employ language that springs only from a heart that is moved and inflamed. In the chair of truth, you will resemble the mercenary declaimers of Athens and Rome, who displayed their eloquence in the public schools, upon vague and indifferent subjects, that interested neither their auditors nor themselves. You will make the ministry of the word a vain and ostentatious exercise, a spectacle for the world, not a serious instruction for sinners: you will seek rather the applause, than the conversion, of your hearers; your own glory, rather than the glory of Jesus Christ; yourself, rather than the salvation of your brethren. But supposing that you were to speak with an appearance of zeal, that you were to borrow the most touching expressions of christian eloquence, that you, yourself were to be moved by the truths which you announce,

and to which you cannot entirely refuse your heart; in what light, think you, will you be regarded by your audience, who are fully acquainted with the dissipation of your morals, and the eternal unprofitableness of your life? what will they say, when they hear you weeping over the disorders in which you yourself indulge, and which will find you on quitting the pulpit, again, an eager and devoted friend? your weeping will be to them as the weeping on a stage: in their opinion you will have played your part well, and all the sanctity and majesty, all the threats and terrors of the gospel, will be for them, as the profane and empty scenes of a theatrical exhibition.

No, my brethren, it is difficult indeed to maintain all the seriousness of our ministry in the midst of the world. The success of our functions is attached only to the exactness of our morals, and to rareness of our communication with the children of the age. The appearance of a Priest, of a minister of religion in the world, ought to be as rare, as was formerly the apparition of the angels of God, those ministers of the divine will: such is the earnest wish of an ancient father. Its singularity would strike the people with all the interest of a novel

spectacle, and thus the error of the Jews that no man could live after seeing the angel of the Lord, might become a truth amongst us; so that a sinner having once beheld the modesty, the gravity and sanctity of a Priest, would feel that he must live no longer to the world and to his passions, but must die to all, after having once witnessed so holy and so edifying a sight: *Morte moriemur quia vidimus Dominum.*\* By shewing ourselves often in public, we accustom the faithful to see us without respect or attention; our dignity always suffers from the familiarity of our presence; it is difficult to be always on our guard against ourselves, for the most vigilant piety has, yet, its moments of inattention or relaxation, and the most trivial fault that we commit, is from the nature of our character or by their malignity, heightened in their mind, into a crime. Whilst Moses remained among the people in the camp, notwithstanding the splendor of his miracles, and the sanctity of his life, there was nothing to be heard but complaints against his conduct: his very relations themselves, accustomed to see him more nearly, almost regarded him as an ordinary

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\* Judges. c. xiii. v. 22.

man ; and God found it necessary to strike his very sister with a sudden leprosy, to punish her murmurs, and the contempt in which she held his servant. But after forty days of retreat on the mountain, scarcely does he shew himself to the same people, when he appears a new man, all shining with glory ; and such is the excess of their respect, that they no longer dare even to raise their eyes to behold him. We, my brethren, have every thing to lose in a familiar intercourse with worldlings : if we do not forfeit our innocence, we debase, at least, our character ; if the world does not become our idol, we become at least, its fable and contempt ; if we do not imitate its manners and its disorders, we at least, render our functions and our virtues wholly useless to it.

And besides, how can we flatter ourselves that this worldly and unprofitable life will not in the end, lead us to the precipice ? but this must be the subject of another discourse ; in the present, I have proposed to myself to consider the worldly life of the clergy, only in reference to its incompatibility with the spirit of our ministry, and not with regard to the irreparable misfortunes into which it plunges us. How many are they my brethren ! how many shameful falls ?

how many secret abominations? how many names and blasphemies engraved on the heart of a Priest, where nothing should be written, but the ineffable name of the Eternal, with the names and the love of the tribes confided to his care! how many crimes which have grown old in the midst of holy things? how many deaths attended with impenitence, despair, irreligion, with frightful insensibility to the very last? for hardness of heart at the hour of death, is the ordinary end of a bad Priest.

These consequences make you tremble; but they are of daily occurrence; they are unavoidable; the world leads to this, sooner or later. And besides, do you reckon it as nothing, that your conduct should be the scandal of your brethren, and the sorrow of the virtuous? What? shall you be eternally to be found amidst the pleasures and the follies of the world, living habitually with persons of another sex; rendering them frivolous and shameful attentions, unworthy alike of the gravity, and the sanctity of your character; and yet the world make an exception in your favour, and not impute it to you as a crime? and shall the impious pardon you alone, and not make you the subject of their derisions and their blasphemies? The Pharisee



is scandalized on seeing a sinful woman at the feet of Jesus Christ, although it was in the most edifying and touching circumstances of repentance and tears ; and shall the world behold you, you a minister of the altar, you the envoy of God upon earth, shall it behold you at the feet, perhaps, of a sinful woman, and not be offended at the sight ? and will it suspend the malignity of its judgments ? and shall that world which forgives us nothing, that world, the first arrows of whose censure and scorn are always levelled against us, that world which even studies to find weaknesses in our very virtues and in our holiest actions, discover nothing worthy of its derision and reproach, even in our vices and our scandals ? No, my brethren, its failing in our regard, is not to excuse or extenuate what ought to be condemned, but to blacken and exaggerate even what might be excusable.

But, you will say, that our functions themselves place us in the necessity of entering into the society, and the commerce of worldlings. This I readily admit : but we go there but rarely, when we go only at the call of duty. When we have no other object than to conduct souls to Jesus Christ, we appear in public only to shew them the path of salvation ; from the mo-

ment that they have found it, and can advance without us, we conceal ourselves and return to the obscurity and safety of retreat, like to the star which guided the wise men to the infant Saviour, and which was an illustrious figure of what ought to be the conduct of pastors. See how it shews itself as far as Bethlehem, whither it had to conduct those sages of the East. From the moment in which they find, recognise and adore Jesus, it disappears, it becomes eclipsed, it sinks away amidst the clouds of heaven, its ministry was finished, and with its ministry its appearance ends.

But when we have a certain name in the world, and are connected with it by so many duties, we cannot dispense ourselves from those thousand civilities and attentions, which long usage has established. Remember, my brethren, that we have our laws and our rules apart; that the tyranny of the usages of the world, and the tribute of unprofitableness which it exacts, bind none but its slaves, for the children are free,\* according to the expression of Jesus Christ; that it is ridiculous to subject to the laws and the abuses of the world, those who are to judge

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\*Matthew. c. xvii. v. 25.

the world; that the decencies of other states, are the indecencies of ours; that there is a certain reserve proper to persons consecrated to God, which is prescribed by good taste even according to the world; and that our infrequency in public will always be attended with honor, even in the estimation of those, who may appear to impute it to us as a crime.

Thus my brethren, let the most solid fruit of your seclusion in this holy place, be to destroy, in yourselves, all relish for the world, its commerce and amusements. As long as you shall feel any remains of this fatal desire, reckon it as an evil leaven that will one day corrupt the whole mass; it is by it alone that you will perish, and if you ought to despair of bringing it into subjection to your duty, take then the world for your portion, before a solemn and holy engagement shall have imposed upon you the severe law of separating yourself from it for ever. It is not yet too late; resume then the ignominy of the secular habit, since you cannot forsake the morals nor the inclinations of the age: do not add to the dangers that await you in the world, the crime of appearing there in a sacred character, which ought to have divorced you from it for ever: its seductions will more than suffice to

cause your destruction, even when the state of laic to which you shall have returned, will make it your duty to remain in it: judge then what safety you can promise yourself if you enter into it against the order of God, and against the rules of the holy state which you will have embraced. But if in consecrating yourself to the holy ministry, you are sincerely resolved to put off the affections, as you lay aside the habit, of the world; the first time that clothed with the priesthood, you shall hold Jesus Christ in your hands at the sacred altar, say to him like the just Simeon, to-day: now O Lord I shall, with joy, disappear for ever from the world, and my eyes shall close on its profane objects without regret, since they have seen thy salvation, and since thou hast, this day, accomplished in me what thou didst prepare for me before the beginning of ages. *Amen.*

# A DISCOURSE

ON

## THE AMBITION OF THE CLERGY.

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Ductus est Jesus a spiritu in desertum, ut tentaretur a diabolo.

*Then Jesus was led of the spirit into the desert, to be tempted of the devil.*

MATTHEW, chap. iv. ver. 1.

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**T**HERE is not, my brethren, in the entire life of Jesus Christ, a circumstance which has a stronger resemblance to your situation in this holy place, than the history of his retreat and of his temptations. On the point of entering upon the functions of his ministry, he is conducted by the spirit of God, into the desert: he does not as we do, withdraw himself from the society of men, to expiate by prayer and austerities, the weaknesses, the transgressions, and the dissipations, inevitable in ordinary life; for he had

but increased in grace and wisdom at Nazareth: still it seems, that on quitting the paternal roof, he dares not enter upon the public duties of his mission and of his priesthood, without placing between his divine life and his ministry, an interval of forty days of retirement and penance.

But if in his retreat, he places before us, a model to imitate, in his temptation he points out to us, the rocks to be dreaded in so holy an enterprise. The Redeemer, says the Evangelist, having fasted forty days, was afterwards hungry: then the tempter approaching says to him: command that these stones be made bread. This proposal being rejected, the devil takes him into the holy city, and placing him on the pinnacle of the temple, urges him, under the pretext of confidence in God, to cast himself down; and finally having failed in his [impious design, he transports the Saviour to the top of a very high mountain, from which shewing him all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory thereof, all these things says he, will I give thee, if falling down, thou wilt adore me.

In these three temptations, my brethren, I discover the whole progress of a dangerous ambition, and the various arts to which the tempter

has recourse, to seduce the ministers of the Lord into a snare so common, and yet so little known, at the present day. For, in the first place, in order to give a specious colour, to a passion so fatal to the ministry, he makes us desire merely a modest competency, equally removed from indigence and wealth: we wish merely to live; to be in a condition to maintain our character and station in the world; in a word, he proposes to us, no more than our necessary bread, and nothing can appear more equitable or moderate. *Dic ut lapides isti panes fiant.* In the second place, having seduced us thus far, he soon persuades us, that while so many others, by their industry and their management, rise to exalted dignities, a common and obscure manner of life necessarily degrades us, in the estimation of men: under pretext of barely seeking an employment, worthy of our time, and of our talents, he makes us cast an eye on the first offices of the ministry; he transports us in spirit to the pinnacle of the temple, by raising our views to the highest place in the sanctuary, and bids us cast ourselves down into the most august and perilous situation, in the vain hope, that God will support us, in the rash design, as if God could find his glory, in

our ambition, or had promised to uphold temerity and folly : *Statuit illum super pinnaculum templi, et dixit illi: mitte te deorsum; Angelis enim suis mandavit de te.* Finally, the tempter having compassed these designs, begins to be less reserved: having led us to destruction, through a guilty path, he regards us as a prey, that can no longer escape from his bonds: he places us on a height, from which he discovers to us the kingdoms of the world, and their glory: there are no longer any bounds to our ambition: at his suggestion, we grasp at all, nor does he now seek to justify our conduct, to ourselves, by any pretence of piety or of zeal; he proposes openly to us, to become his adorers, to sacrifice to his promises, our soul and our salvation, for such is the price of his favors: and he encourages us to the contract, by the example of those, who have secured the object of their desires, by prostituting their homage to his worship: *Hæc omnia tibi dabo si cadens adoraveris me.*

I intend then, on this occasion, to point out the dangers of these three rocks, over which ambition conducts the clergy, step by step, to the precipice. To three errors so common, and so fatal, I shall oppose three reflections, which



will exhibit them in their true light, and protect you in every point, against the arts, and the enterprises of the tempter. For this purpose, we have only to consider the ambition of the clergy, in its object, in its means, and in its effects. In its object, it is always unjust, nor can it be either palliated or excused, by the plea that our desires are moderate, since all desire is criminal: in its means, it is a guilty temerity, in which it is vain to try to cover our conduct and attempts, with the pretext of zeal for the glory of God, for every attempt is an impious intrusion, an unjust and sacrilegious usurpation. In its effects, it has been, at all times, a disgraceful and a fatal scandal to the church, and one on which it is folly to appeal for justification, to the practice of other times, or the example of cotemporaries, as if the greatness of the evil could authorize its injustice. May our Lord Jesus Christ grant, my brethren, that these interesting truths may fall upon hearts, disposed by grace, to value their importance, and receive instruction.

#### FIRST REFLECTION.

What is the honor of the sanctuary? for in order to know, whether our desires be lawful,

we must first examine, what it is that we desire. It is in the first place, says Saint Paul, an honourable servitude, which establishes us over all, only to be subservient to all : it is a laborious, and universal solicitude, which places in our hands, the passions, the necessities, the weaknesses, and the entire detail of human misery : it is an overwhelming burden, which compels us, to carry in our bosom, a whole people, as a parent does her child ; to bear its restlessness and caprices, without disgust ; to endure its murmurs and ingratitude, without abandoning it ; to restrain within the bounds of duty, and unite in the observance of painful laws, the infinite variety of humours, inclinations, talents, interests, and conditions, that compose it : and redouble our cares, in proportion as they study to render them useless : it is a troublesome elevation, which exposes us to the eyes of the public, and which prevents even things that are lawful, from being expedient, by reason of the weakness of our brethren : it is a painful inspection, which obliges us to reprove in season and out of season ;\* which becomes more difficult, and more dangerous, in pro-

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\* 2 Timothy. c. iv. v. 2.

portion as the morals of the world become more corrupt ; which, in constituting us the guardians of discipline, clothes us with an authority, which is almost always unavoidably exercised more in refusal than in concession, and which consequently exposes us to the hatred of the very persons, whom we are endeavouring to save : that is to say, it is a state, of which the cares are infinite and ungrateful ; of which the greatest immunity is the obligation of setting an example, that may serve as a model, and in which the wisest exercise of authority and the most disinterested efforts of zeal, serve only to produce murmurs and discontent. But this is not what is most terrifying.

A sacred dignity is, in the second place, a perilous commission, which renders us accountable, before God, for an infinite number of souls, whose salvation or destruction, is, as it were, our work ; and which, therefore, besides our own sins, makes us answerable for the sins of those, over whom we are placed : it is a formidable dispensation, which places in our hands, the mysteries of God and the entire fruit of the death of Jesus Christ, so that, our slightest infidelity is a criminal abuse of his blood, and tends to make void, the inestimable benefit of his cross :

it is a ministry, which divides us, between prayer and solicitude, which makes it to us, an essential duty, to preserve the love of retirement and recollection, in the midst of cares and embarrassments; to preserve that unsullied reputation, that shining innocence, that sacerdotal modesty, amidst all the passions and all the weaknesses, of which we are the witnesses and the depositaries; which obliges us, to mingle among men, and sometimes to enter the very palaces of kings, and which, notwithstanding, renders it imperative upon us, to carry thither all the simplicity, all the gravity, all the humility and mortification of the desert, that we may condemn by our example, the corruption and the ambition of those whom we approach: it is a post of watchfulness, in which, we must have the arms of our spiritual warfare continually in our hands; the sword of the word, the buckler of faith and doctrine, to combat against flesh and blood, against the invisible powers; against the errors which corrupt the purity of the sacred deposit, and the prejudices and maxims of the world, which infringe the sanctity of discipline, so that, the abuses which we tolerate or which we fail to correct, become our transgressions; and public disorders are charged to

us, as our own crimes. Now is there upon earth a situation of more imminent peril? a state, which in the almost universal decay of discipline and morals, ascribes to us, the guilt of public disorders, and reckons our personal innocence, as the easiest point of our duty. Nor yet is this all.

A place of distinction in the church, is a mediation between heaven and earth; a sacerdotal royalty, which places in our hands the fountains of grace, the treasures of the church, the keys of life and of death, of heaven and of hell; which bends down to our authority, those who sustain the universe; which leaves to the very angels, functions inferior to ours, and elevates us above whatever is named in heaven or on earth: it is a divine office, which gives us authority, over Jesus Christ himself; which renders him obedient to us, even to the mystic death of the adorable sacrifice; which, if I may be permitted to say it, puts us in the place of the eternal Father, and gives us power to beget his only Son upon our altars, in the concealed glory of the sanctuary; in a word, which establishes us, the visible gods of the earth. Now, can there be any office so great, so holy, so sublime? Let us reflect on all these characters: of

all conditions, this is the most painful, the most perilous, the most divine.

Now, in the first place, I may be permitted to ask you ; are you laborious enough to aspire to an office, so beset with pain, with anxiety, and toil ! are you prepared to offer continual violence to yourselves, to break down your inclinations, to sacrifice the most innocent pleasures to duty, to be all to all, and not live a single moment for yourselves ? Can you, like the Apostle, be in want, and in abundance ;\* in reputation and reproach ! can you familiarize yourselves with what is most difficult and serious in your occupations ; bear up against the little success of your labors, and so far triumph over your nature, as to find relief and pleasure in your very fatigues ? Alas ! brought up, for the greater part, in uncontrouled and easy morals, in a life, which has never acknowledged any rule but humour, every restraint operates upon you, as a tyranny ; the very uniformity inseparable from this abode of retreat, is to you an insupportable torment, and you long for the termination of your stated course, as the happy period that is to emancipate you

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\*2 Cor. c. vi. v. 8.

from all your disgusts and all your sufferings. You are dissatisfied with all authority : whatever requires regularity and attention, is little suited to your disposition : whatever is serious, shocks you, and whatever is not pleasure appears to you, as a punishment. If, at an age, in which dependance is yet natural ; in which the passions still bend under the controul of discipline, you are so reluctant in the discharge of your duties, so little disposed to counteract your slothful or vicious tendencies, what will you become, when having shaken off the yoke, your inclinations will be the only rule of your desires and of your morals ? In the temple of the living God, you will be an idol, which will have eyes, and see not ; a tongue, and speak not ; hands, and work not ; feet, and yet remain idle and immoveable : *Pastor et idolum*.\* The seat which you will occupy in the sanctuary, will be for you a bed of indolence and luxury : you will regard a holy dignity, as the end of your toils and the place of your repose : you will think, that you have purchased it dearly enough, by a short subjection and some little of restraint : the fruit and flowers you will gather to yourself,

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\* Zachary. c. xi. v. 17.

and leave all the thorns to others : you will enter into the inheritance of your sainted predecessors, without any design of entering upon their labors : you will be jealous of the honors of the ministry whilst you despise its functions ; in a word, you will turn exclusively to your own account, a sacred title, which has been established solely, for the benefit of the faithful. Thus then, although the dignity of the sanctuary, were merely a laborious and painful ministry, it would be rashness in you to pretend to it.

But, in the second place, it is a ministry surrounded by rocks and perils. Now I ask you, are you sufficiently confirmed in piety to aspire to a state, all the functions of which, are so delicate, and dangerous, and in which, those who appear to us the strongest, are every day, so miserably shipwrecked ? Alas ! you know not yet, how to govern the house of your own heart, how then will you govern the church of God ? you are still a reed, that yields to every blast ; how then will you become a pillar, to support the weight and majesty of the temple ? you slumber and suffer thorns and briars to grow up in your own heart, how then will you watch over the entire field of Christ, to prevent the enemy, from



sowing cockle amongst the good seed? Perhaps, you yet stumble in the ways of God, and need a holy conductor to raise you, from time to time, from your falls; how then will you sustain and confirm those, who are weak? Perhaps, an occasion still hurries you along, a breeze casts you to the ground, the least breath of the serpent poisons your heart and puts an end to all your projects of virtue; a single look defiles you; a single worldly and licentious conversation destroys in you, the fruit of many months of retreat; a single raillery of a reviler of piety and religion, forces from you a criminal assent; in a word, scarcely have you advanced a few steps in the paths of God, when you basely fall back, under the weight of your weaknesses, and passions; how then will you, like the good shepherd, bear on your shoulders, the strayed and tired sheep, back to the fold? If the laborious nature of the ministry stamps the character of folly, on the ambitious pretensions of your sloth and of your laziness, do not its perils, when compared with your fragility, render your rashness still more conspicuous, still more criminal?

But, in the third place, the honor of the sanctuary to which you pretend, is an angelical, and divine dignity. Now are you sufficiently pure

and holy, to aspire to its sublime functions? What is the story of your morals and of your life? what have been your early years, and what are you even at this day? Judge yourself, in the presence of Jesus Christ, and draw forth from the treasure of your heart, the new and the old. As yet, scarce capable of knowing God, you have been capable of offending him: your budding inclinations have been so many crimes: as far back as you can ascend towards your childhood, you will find the origin of your corruption, nor can your memory discover in your very infancy, a single object to repose on, but defilement: you are of the number of those, of whom the Royal Prophet says, that they have gone astray from the womb of their mother.\* Without penance, without remorse, without interruption, you have rolled on from precipice to precipice, you have abode in the vilest passions and have a thousand times, profaned the temple of the living God, within you. Your guilt does not consist of rare transgressions, into which the frailty of youth and the seduction of occasion, has sometimes hurried you, and from

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\* *Alienati sunt peccatores a vulva, erraverunt ab utero.*—Psalm. 57. v. 4.

which, you have been immediately brought back, by a sense of religion and of the fear of God : guilt with you, has been a fixed and tranquil habit, the very bottom of the abyss, a state in which crime entered into your ordinary actions, and into the very plan and texture of your life ; and if the vigilance of superiors or human considerations, have sometimes compelled you to exhibit some external signs of religion, by the participation of the sacraments, you have approached them, perhaps, but to fill up the measure of your iniquity, and from a sinner as you were, have become a profaner of what is holiest in religion, and most venerable upon earth.

Yet, all covered with leprosy as you still are, and unworthy of appearing amongst the simple faithful at the foot of the altar, exhaling the stench of your passions and diffusing around, an odor of death ; having no other mark of a vocation to the dignity of the sanctuary, than a great name in the world, the second place in the house of your father, the credit of friends, the disorders of youthful licentiousness, and criminal desires of elevation, you have the impious temerity to pretend to the supreme honor of the ministry, for which angels themselves would not be sufficiently pure ; to claim the recompense

of piety and innocence; to aspire to a divine state, which, the tears and merits of the longest and most sincere penance, could not formerly attain? The man, who presents himself, with an ordinary dress, at the banquet of the gospel, is rejected, although he had been invited, and sought no distinction, amidst the crowd of guests; and you would rashly approach, not in the garb of ordinary morals, but altogether covered with defilement; not to seat yourself amongst the other faithful, but to preside, to distribute the holy banquet, and sanctify it by the words of benediction? What will be the indignation of the father of the family at your entrance? and what are you coming to do, in the temple of God, the very walls of which, will be seized with horror, on beholding the idol raised up with honor in the holy place?

Although I had no other reasons to adduce, than those already stated, and which are personal to you, still would they be sufficient to prove that your desires of elevation are rash and criminal. But I go yet farther, and will suppose you to possess all those qualifications, of which you are destitute; all that love and patience of labor, requisite for a laborious ministry; all that solidity of virtue, necessary for perilous functions;

and in fine, all that innocence and sanctity of morals, demanded for a sacred dignity; and I say, that if you aspire to the honor of the ministry, you are unworthy of it, and that all your virtues, which might have otherwise prepared you for it, become so many vices to exclude you. Listen, and you shall be convinced of this truth: an ecclesiastic, say the laws of the emperors, should be so far removed from all desire and all solicitation, as to render it necessary to seek him out, and compel him by violence, to enter the church: *queratur cogendus*: as to resist the prayers, and entreaties, even of those who have authority over him: *rogatus recedat*: as to conceal himself from their designs and pursuit: *invitatus refugiat*; and that the necessity of obedience alone, excuse his consent: *sola illi suffragetur necessitas excusandi*; for he is assuredly unworthy of the honor of the priesthood, if he does not receive it against his will: *Profecto enim indignus est sacerdotio, nisi fuerit ordinatus invitatus*. These are not the scruples or the fears of a recluse, nor the exaggerated expressions of some servant of God, too deeply penetrated, perhaps, by a sense of the greatness, and the excellence of his vocation; nor a discourse of instruction, in which the vehemence

of zeal or the importance of the subject may sometimes carry the preacher beyond the limits of strict truth; they are laws, every term of which is measured, in order to define a precise obligation; those who speak are Princes and Cæsars, little accustomed to overdo, or exaggerate the duties of religion, and who in matters regarding morals or discipline, can be rarely reproached with rigor or excess. But, you will say, that if those only, who refuse and flee away, deserve to be selected, there would be no longer any one to fill the vacant places of the ministry. There would, it is true be none; but the reason is, that we choose only those, who press forward to offer themselves, and who make greater efforts, and use greater arts, to arrive at the honors of the sanctuary, than the clerics of former times did, to avoid them. There would, you say, be no longer any to be found, to fill the vacant places: but the spirit of God has not abandoned his church, and there are formed in it every day, and will be formed in it, till the end of time, vessels of election to bear his name, before the kings and nations of the earth; and the interior succession of faith, of piety and of charity in his ministers, will no more fail, than the exterior succession of the

ministry itself: leave to him the care of selecting, himself, those whom he has destined for the work of the gospel: he will be at no difficulty to make them known. Do not you, by your guilty temerity anticipate his choice; do not come to present yourself in the place of those, whom he had chosen, nor usurp a dignity, for which he was preparing in secrecy, a faithful servant; do not derange the order of his vocation, and of his eternal designs. The church never wants true pastors, but when daring and impious ambition usurps their places.

But, if the laws of the emperors are so severe, upon the ambition of the clergy, judge what must be the strictness and the severity of the holy Doctors of the church. Saint Chrysostom and Saint Gregory establish it, as an incontestable principle in this matter, that all desire of elevation in the house of God is a criminal disposition, which closes the sanctuary against us, and the most infallible mark, that we are not called to its ministry. An enlightened charity, says Saint Augustine, chooses, at once, the safety of obscurity and retreat, and it is only when compelled, that it assumes as a painful yoke, the honor of the pastoral charge, and the peril of its responsibility. All suppose that

we cannot enter into the church, that kingdom of Jesus Christ, but by the way, and through the merit, of compulsion, and their conduct confirms their doctrine. What resistance did I not make, says Saint Ambrose, when I was raised to the Archbishopric of Milan? Not being able to alter the choice of my electors, I entreated, at least, some delay, but their desires were not to be resisted nor deferred; and if there has been precipitancy in my elevation, it is the fault of those, who have done violence to my wishes: *Vis cogentis est.* How great, says Saint Augustine, was the torrent of tears which I shed at the foot of the altar, when the venerable Valerius forced me to become his coadjutor in the church of Hippo? the violence to which I was then constrained to yield, could be nothing else than the punishment of my former sins. I, says Saint Paulinus, in the account of his ordination, I, who am but a worm and not a man, was dragged to the altar, surrounded by a multitude that bore down my voice and my resistance, and in spite of the ardent desire which I felt to make this cup pass far from me, I was forced to say to the Lord, *thy will, not mine be done.* I should never end, were I to relate here, all that might be collected on this subject.



Antiquity abounds in such examples: then it was, as is well known, that pious solitaries, through an excess of zeal, attempted to mutilate their very persons, that they might for ever exclude themselves from the proffered honors of the church. Such was the rule of the saints, the conduct of our predecessors, and such has been the spirit of the church in every age.

To fear, to refuse, to fly, was not in those times, deemed heroic virtue; it was the received law, a common maxim, a universal rule, a usage as generally established as that which now prevails of soliciting and of presenting ourselves; and this holy dread was carried so far, that the church of Africa was obliged to enact penalties against those clerics, whose excessive humility, prevented them from consenting to their ordination, even when regularly called by their Bishop. Fortunate ages! alas, at this day, we need nothing, but the thunders of the church against usurpers, and barriers to arrest the aspirings of impious temerity. And what is most surprising is, that in an age in which we speak only the language of antiquity; in which we pretend to be so entirely disabused of the ignorance and credulity of the middle ages; in which we take credit to ourselves, for having

brought back our discipline and our morals to the model of our fathers, in which a superior criticism has cleared up whatever was obscure in the annals of the church, we deceive ourselves, on a point so evident, and so marked in characters of light, in all the writings of the ancients ; and we regard either as doubtful or extravagant, the most constant rule, the most uniform practice, the most firmly established usage to be found in the wide range of tradition. What ought to surprise us is, that these certain and incontestable maxims are regarded as the offspring of piety and zeal, which however fitted to edify the inmates of a house of retreat, the nature of man, and the circumstances of the times, render it hopeless, to reduce to practice. What, in fine, ought to surprise us, is, that we have resigned to certain souls of more exalted or more stern virtue, all those pious delicacies of fear and of repugnance, as if timidity were a singularity and not the essential spirit of our vocation ; as if it were only a refinement of piety, and not piety and religion itself.

After this, I shall not stop to explain the expression of the Apostle, touching the desire of the episcopacy ; it is a mean and vulgar objec-

tion, which hardly deserves a place, save among the proverbs of the vicious and the ignorant. It is true that Saint Paul has not recourse to that divine and burning eloquence, of which he was so illustrious a master, to combat this desire, but that on the contrary, he speaks of it with composure, if not with commendation. But give me tyrants and executioners : dignities, poor, laborious, despised : Bishops, obliged to live by the labor of their own hands : give me an infant church unprovided with labourers : give me those apostolic men, who had received the first fruits of the spirit : in a word, give me in the sanctuary, a title of honor and pre-eminence which leads but to the scaffold : and in all these circumstances, desire if you will, to sacrifice yourself for your brethren : this, indeed, may be permitted you, you will then desire a good work. The Apostle is addressing himself to Timothy, who terrified by the greatness of his ministry, had need to be encouraged ; and were he to speak in these latter times, *he would most certainly have used other language*, as in fact, he himself assures us, that the different dispositions of those, to whom he directed his instructions, compelled him, sometimes, to do. I need not add, with Saint Jerome, that Saint Paul, indeed says,

we desire a holy thing, but he does not say, the desire of it is holy ; with Saint Chrysostom, that for fear of countenancing the rash ambition of those, who might desire the honors of the sanctuary, he enters into a detail, of the episcopal virtues, to make them comprehend the difficulty of acquiring them as well as the presumption, at which that man must have arrived, who would dare to wish for a place, to which these virtues ought to be inseparably attached : or with Saint Cyprian, that in declaring, that a bishop ought to be irreprehensible, chaste, meek, temperate, the Apostle seems to relax, to content himself with exacting common virtues, not daring to propose those angelical and superior virtues, which are necessary for the first dignities, lest the despair of being able to attain them, should discourage and put away those who were called to the ministry, and thus impede the progress of the gospel, by leaving the churches without pastors. Such is the manner, in which, the Apostle speaks of the desire of the episcopacy, encouraging their zeal and allaying the pious fears of the inferior clergy, and exhorting them not to decline so excellent and so holy a work, at the moment when the church had the greatest need of their services.

But we aspire not, you will say, to the first dignities of the church; we desire merely such a title as, in securing a moderate revenue, will afford the means of upholding the respect, and maintaining the decency; of our character, in a private and unostentatious manner.

To this I might answer at once, that such is the ordinary language even of those, who set no bounds to their ambition, but who in the outset; would blush to disclose the full extent of their wishes and of their projects. I might add moreover, that it is a snare of the devil; that cupidity does not easily set bounds to its cravings; that the tempter proposes to you, at first, but bread, that he may lead you farther by degrees, and awaken in you those higher pretensions of which he beholds the seeds in your heart. The Israelites asked, at first, for simple and ordinary food to appease the hunger that tormented them, and the Lord sent them the Manna. This relief which they had begged appeared sufficient, and they received it with thankfulness; but soon after, new desires began to arise, and meats the most delicious, which God rained down upon them, could not in the end, satisfy their immoderate appetites. But I reply first, that if you labour in the field of

Jésus Christ, you have a right to the fruits which you cultivate: serving the altar, you must live by the altar. Now, what you can receive with justice, you may desire without guilt: but you are a mercenary, if you suffer this just retribution, to become the end and the motive of your toils: it ought to be the support and the recompense of labor, but it should not be the exclusive and unworthy object of the labourer. Yet, functions are desired merely for the sake of the retributions which are attached to them: the best paid, are the most sought: there are but few to solicit those, in which there is nothing to be gained but the glory of God, and the salvation of our brethren. A spirit of sordid interest enters into the most sacred offices: the sublime functions of the priesthood are appretiated like the mean and mechanical efforts of the artist; and more regard is had to the sum which they may produce, than to the good, which they may enable their possessors to perform: Thus under the plea, that we are permitted to live by the altar, we carry on a species of traffic on the very altar, and by the meanness of our views, accustom our people to make no distinction, between the wages of the artisan or the husbandman, and the salary of a Priest of the Most High. I reply, in the second place, that if you

seek the titles and revenues of the sanctuary, merely as a means of passing your years in ease and tranquillity, your desires are criminal and unjust: the goods of the church are a holy stipend, to which you can have no right, except in proportion as you serve in its spiritual warfare. I reply in fine, that if you have no talent to serve the church; if you can confer no other honor on your ministry than that of a name, high in the world, the church knows no one, according to the flesh: it is not name, but talent, that can profitably discharge her functions, and nothing can confer honor upon her, but the gifts of God and what may contribute to the salvation of the faithful. Wherefore, you ought not to desire titles and revenues, which you could not enjoy without crime. And can you believe that you are justified, in desiring the riches of the sanctuary, because perchance your birth and connexions place them within your grasp? Can you believe, that the human considerations which may have swayed your patrons in the choice of you, will become motives of preference with God himself; or that the result of an abuse, can give you title or security? Now, if desires alone be criminal, the manœuvres, by which they are carried into effect, cannot be innocent.

## SECOND REFLECTION.

Ambition begins by desire, it proceeds by intrigue. The tempter having seduced us to make the first step, raises our desires to the top of the temple, flatters us with the hope that angels will stand by us, to prevent our fall, and covering our ambition with the cloak of religion and of zeal, he hides from us the abyss, which he is digging under our feet and into which we are about to be precipitated.

But first, my brethren, every step here is a sacrilegious intrusion ; you glorify yourself : you do not wait till you are called by him who called Aaron : you run, though no one has sent you. The gift for which you intrigue, is a celestial and perfect gift : it must come down from the Father of lights : if then, you pretend to render yourself worthy of it, by meanness, by attentions, by assiduities, by flattery, by solicitation, you are a profane wretch, who attempts to buy the gift of God : whatever you do in reference to the dignity to which you aspire, is at bottom a criminal price, a sacrilegious sum, which you offer for it : you traffic for a thing that is holy, by your compliances, your condescensions, your assiduities : you are then



treading in the footsteps of the profane and execrable Simon. Alas! says Saint Chrysostom, what difference doth it make, that you offer not money: are not your entreaties, your solicitations, your canvassings, as so much gold, which you proffer? It was said to that wretch, may thy money perish with thee; and it will be said to thee, adds this father, may thy canvas, thy solicitations, thy intrigues, in a word, thy ambition, go to perdition with thee, since thou hast thought that thou couldst obtain the gift of God, by the base arts of human passion: *Ambitio tua tecum sit in perditionem, quoniam putasti ambitu humano, donum Dei possideri.*

But you flatter yourself, that you will be useful to the church. Heretofore, God did not bring to his church, services that would disgrace her, and he abundantly knows how to provide for her wants by the means which himself has established. What a disposition to be useful to the church, to enter the sanctuary in spite of her and in violation of her laws! Although you were to possess all the talents best fitted to do her honor, your sole intrusion would render them not only useless, but scandalous and fatal to her. We must indeed have a very profane idea of the care which God

takes of his church, if we suffer ourselves to be deceived into a belief, that we can be useful to her by ambition and crime. But besides, if you feel so great a zeal to be serviceable to the church, do not defer your services till you shall have obtained her dignities and her wealth : she has many offices and many wants, in which you may display your zeal in her cause : must you be raised to the highest rank, as the only condition on which you will give her the benefit of your talents and your toils? Is this the price, at which you promise your labors to the church? It is not then her interests that you regard, but your own : it is not then the church which you wish to serve, but it is the church which you wish to make subservient to your unjust and infamous cupidity.

Wherefore, my brethren, let us not seduce ourselves : let us not mistake some light sentiments of religion, which float as it were, on the surface of our hearts, for our true inclinations. For often, says Saint Gregory, those who seek to be raised to the pastoral charge, propose to themselves pious labors and works of holiness ; and although ambition alone be the very soul of their projects, they yet deceive themselves into the persuasion, that they shall perform the no-

blest services. Thus whilst on the surface, there appears to them nothing but holy and laudable intentions, there lurks in the bottom of the heart, a real intention, a criminal desire of elevation: *Fitque ut aliud in imis intentio supprimat, aliud tractantis animæ superficies cogitationis ostendat;* but the illusion is gross, and rapidly dissipates and vanishes of itself. In effect, were the dignities of the church poor, as formerly, full of labor, without distinction, without pomp, exposed to hunger, to nakedness, persecution and death; would you esteem them worthy of your concern and of your anxiety? If you were to be exclusively devoted to prayer and to the ministry of the word, to bear the burden of the day and the heats:\* if the honor of the sanctuary held out nothing more flattering than such duties, would you so much envy the lot of an Apostle? Alas! we should then see your eagerness rapidly abate; your intrigues and solicitations changed into fears, resistances and frivolous assertions of your weakness, and unworthiness: in a word, were you to be merely a fisher of men, the command of the bark would appear to you, an object little worth your seeking.

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\* Matthew. c. xx. v. 12.

But you are aware, that the sea on which you are about to embark, conceals treasures in its bosom, and that with the nets of Peter, you will find money in the very entrails of the tribes of the deep; and in this expectation it is, that you wish to govern the ship, and succeed to the office of the Apostle.

But if at bottom, our very intentions belie the vain pretext which we form to ourselves, that we shall be useful to the church, the pretensions which we put forth to ensure the success of our designs, belie it still more forcibly; for the claims on which we pretend to the honors and the dignities of the sanctuary, are claims which the church has at all times execrated, which are incompatible with her spirit, and against which she has not ceased to groan and protest, in every age. And truly my brethren, what are the titles which, at this day, we see urged, as giving a right to the honors and to the formidable ministry of the temple? a great name and illustrious birth; as if in Jesus Christ, there were a distinction between the noble and the vulgar; as if flesh and blood ought to possess the kingdom of God and the inheritance of Christ: as if the vain splendor of a name, which perhaps, has begun to be illustrious by the am-

bition and crimes of your ancestors, could with their blood, confer on you, the humility, modesty, zeal, innocence, and holiness which they themselves never possessed: as if a distinction altogether human, which draws in its train, pride, effeminacy, luxury, prodigality, and morals ever opposed to the spirit of the gospel, could render you worthy of our ministry. No, my brethren, the church has need, not of great names, but of great virtues: the nobility which our exalted functions require, is a nobility of soul, a heroic heart, a sacerdotal courage, which neither threats, nor promises, nor the favor, nor disgrace of the world, will ever be able to shake: the only plebeianism that dishonours our ministry, is a sinful life, corrupt morals, worldly inclinations; a base and grovelling heart, that sacrifices duty and conscience to human favor, and which in seeking only to please men, renders its base possessor no longer fit to be considered a servant, much less a minister, of Jesus Christ. Since the time in which the Cesars and the masters of the world, submitted their necks to the yoke of faith, the church has had sufficient of external splendor, and needs not to borrow it from her ministers; the protection of sovereigns ensures her tranquillity, and secures to

her the respect and obedience of the people ; and it is in this regard, that the powers of the earth are useful to her. But the nobility and temporal greatness of her ministers, are a burden to her. She is compelled to support their extravagance, and their pride ; and to see funds consecrated to sacred uses and destined to alleviate the miseries of the unfortunate, squandered to decorate the empty phantom of name and of birth. So her founders and her most illustrious pastors were, at first, taken from amongst the last of the people : and the ages of her glory were those ages, in which her ministers were but the off-scouring of the world ; and from the moment, in which the high-born and the powerful seating themselves on the pontifical throne, introduced the splendor and pageantry of the world into the temple, she has begun to degenerate. I am far from insinuating, that virtue united to illustrious descent, does not confer honor on the ministry : it gives weight to authority, and credit to piety : the respect of the populace, worn away by the baseness and unworthiness of many pastors, may sometimes require to be renewed and upheld by this sort of distinction, and it is undoubtedly true, that those who unite noble birth to great piety ; who add

distinguished talents and brilliant virtues to an ancient and respectable name, deserve a preference. But the flesh of itself profiteth nothing: it often becomes even a subject of shame and of scandal to the church; it is the spirit that quickeneth, it is piety that availeth unto all things.

To the claims that are drawn from name and from birth, are added those which are supposed to spring from the wounds and the services of your relatives: they are alledged as so many titles, that give you an incontestable right to the dignities of the church: you pretend that the innocence, the repose and tranquillity of the sanctuary, ought to be the prize of conflagrations and carnage; that the church should, as it were, defile her dignities and her offices, by the very blood which she so much abhors; that the wars and calamities over which she weeps, should be rewarded with a ministry of reconciliation and peace; that scars which may be an honor to our country, should give the right of inflicting a deep and disgraceful wound on the church; and that valor in the field should give pastors of charity and humility to the flock. Military services may obtain for us rank in the army of our prince, but not in that of Jesus Christ: they

may give generals\* to the forces, and governors to the provinces, but not pastors to the church: valor may be decorated with those external marks of honor, which are awarded by kings, and which confer distinguished rank in the state, but not with the order and the honor of the priesthood, of which Christ is the founder and the chief: in a word, his blood, which has saved and reconciled all, ought not to be made the recompense of merit, which shines only in the dissensions, and has for object the extermination, of mankind. Can the wars in which your relations have obtained renown, have become for you, the marks of vocation for a profession, the principal function of which, is to announce peace on earth to men: can their hands still reeking with the blood of the enemy, have any right to place you in a temple, which the Lord would not permit David to build, because his wars and his battles, though undertaken by the command of God, had polluted his hands, and that by the shedding of so much blood, they could be no longer pure enough, to raise, and consecrate a house to the God of holiness and peace? What is there in common, between the soldier of this world, and the soldier of Jesus Christ: between the din of arms, and the inno-



cence of the sanctuary : between the victories gained over men by the sword of vengeance and death, and those to be gained over sinners by the sword of the word of life and salvation ? So the piety of the country has strongly felt the injustice of such motives of preference : services performed for the state, are no longer paid off with sacred dignities ; and the glorious achievements of the father, are no longer remembered in the distribution of the honors of the sanctuary, if his children have not rendered themselves worthy of them, by the rectitude of their lives, and by talents useful to the church.

What shall I say of the other arts, by which guilty ambition strives to secure its object ? Shameful services rendered to the powerful : indecent employments, exercised in the houses of the great. To the disgrace and scandal of the church, we see men become ministers of Jesus Christ, without any other merit, than that of being the unworthy ministers of their projects and passions. The Apostolic canons depose the bishop, who should have recourse to the secular powers, to obtain the honor of the episcopacy ; and what anathema would they not have pronounced against wretches, who would profit of their very vices, to elevate themselves to the

prelacy? The scriptures regard Jason and Alcimus and so many other Pontiffs as intruders, and usurpers, because they obtained their priesthood by their subserviency, and by basely earning the favor of the tyrants, who were, in those days, masters of Judea. In the history of the people of God, their names are held in execration, because to obtain the high priesthood, they favoured the idolatry and superstition of these pagan kings, and not only imitated the manners, and adopted the usages, of the Greeks and the Gentiles, but attempted to introduce even their impious and profane worship into the holy city. Those who enter into the dignities of the church through a guilty path, are capable of every enormity. Paul was an Apostle not by the favor of men, nor by the choice of any man; and it is for this reason alone, that he had a right to call himself an Apostle of Jesus Christ. Alas! my brethren, how small is the number of those, who at this day, could give the same marks of their vocation, and the same signs of their Apostleship. Almost all vocations are human, and there are but few, in which the favor of men has not had a greater share, than the spirit of God. Complaints are in consequence, every day, made of the degeneracy of pastors, and of

the abuses which dishonour the holy ministry. I have said elsewhere, and I cannot repeat it too often, that it is bad vocations, which produce such a number of bad pastors. When in former times, they were chosen by the church, the sanctity of their lives did honor to their ministry; since they began to choose themselves, every thing has changed.

Shall I add in this place, my brethren, or not rather draw the veil over those arts and indignities which debase the priesthood; for ambition is a vice that leads to every crime, and that has recourse to every artifice; shall I add, that to obtain the recompense of virtue, we go so far as to counterfeit its exterior; we add imposture and hypocrisy to crime; we put on the appearance of modesty and innocence, whilst within we are filled with rottenness and corruption; we employ fraud and artifice to become ministers of truth; and that too, in a country, in which piety alone gives a right to the honors of the church, and in which virtue is sought in the most distant and obscure retreats, into which she may withdraw for concealment. Alas my God! the Ambroses, and so many other holy pastors defamed themselves, and covered themselves publicly with the shame of vice, that

they might appear unworthy of the sacred ministry and escape the proffered honors of the sanctuary; and at the present day, to obtain them, we pretend to virtues that are not ours; we put on the appearances of piety, which we despise in secret; we call ourselves living, whilst in thy sight we are dead; we disguise ourselves as lambs, that we may get admittance among the flock, where we kill and destroy instead of tending and guarding the fold.

### THIRD REFLECTION.

This would be the place to combat the third pretext, of which the tempter makes use, to justify the ambition of the clergy; namely universal usage, and the example of all those by whom we are surrounded. He lifts the ambitious soul to the top of a lofty mountain, and there, as from a favourable point of view, he shows her the kingdoms of the earth and all their glory, what is passing in them, the paths which lead to dignities and greatness, the success and elevation of all who have chosen these paths; and dazzling her with the fascinating illusion of the spectacle, he encourages and confirms her by the example of the multitudes engaged in the busy and splendid scene. But as

I have already had occasion to speak elsewhere of this pretext; I shall close this discourse with two reflections.

The first is, that usage never can prescribe against the laws; that abuses are not the more lawful, because they are become common; that the number of those who infringe the law, increases indeed the merit of those who observe, but cannot justify those who transgress, it; that we ourselves have been established to correct abuses and bring them back to the law, not to accommodate the law to abuses, nor set the example of a conduct and a prejudice, which damns the greater part of men; that ages may relax, discipline decay, and morals change, but that truth remains for ever: moreover that corruption is not so universal but that there yet remain some pastors after God's own heart, who never bend the knee to Baal, and in whom the tradition of fear, of resistance, of flight, and of estrangement from the honors of the temple, that has marked the conduct of the virtuous in every age, is yet preserved, and whom we may, therefore, take as a model; and that in fine we every day, behold those who appeared most ambitious, most eager, most ardent, in the prosecution of promotion, from the moment in which,

touched by the truths of salvation, they begin to take more serious resolves, and more solid measures for eternity ; we behold them, I say, changing their pursuits with their morals ; flying the same honors after which they had run ; dreading the very burden which they had so much desired ; and fearing as a misfortune, what they had so earnestly begged as a favor, and manifesting in their conversion, the necessity and the wisdom of preferring duty to custom, the example of the saints, to the prejudices of the multitude, and the laws of the church, to the abuses of these latter times.

But, you will say, men of the greatest integrity and virtue, do not scruple these things. Judge no man ; but distrust a piety which publicly violates and tramples on the wisest laws : do not justify open transgressions by a virtue which either belies, or deceives, itself. Jesus Christ himself has prophesied, that times should come, when truth should be so weak, and error so powerful, that, if it were possible, the very elect would be borne along by the torrent. There are so many false just, who carefully avoid those open excesses to which the world attaches infamy, but who make no scruple of those arts and pursuits, which the world au-

thorizes, but which have ever been a subject of horror to the church ; their soul is less an object of concern than their reputation, they are regular, edifying, would not wish to dishonour their character in the eyes of men ; but as their heart is corrupted by ambition, they reckon as nothing what degrades them only in the sight of God : such are the just of the world, but they are not the just who live by faith.

But if, whilst every body else is urging his claims, and forwarding his pretensions, we alone remain quiet, it is certain that we shall be forgotten. Even this very fear is itself criminal and proceeds from a corrupted heart. The saints dreaded to be chosen, and that very dread rendered them worthy of the choice of the church : you fear that you will be forgotten, you are then unworthy of being chosen, and your election would be the greatest of misfortunes both for yourself and for the church. Do not then, any longer, dread to be forgotten ; dread rather lest the justice of God, irritated at the criminal dispositions of your heart, should cause a choice to fall upon you, which would be your ruin, and punish the temerity of your desires by their accomplishment. You fear that you will be forgotten ? but it is for this very reason that you

ought to conceal yourself. As long as you do not dread the formidable burden of the ministry, fly: tremble lest it should be offered to you; abide in silence and retreat, till God changes your heart, till he plucks up that root of ambition and bitterness that defiles it: till he makes you feel the dangers of the honors and the offices of the church, and makes you sensible of the holiness required for them; and begin not to feel confidence till you begin to fear them.

But besides, if God has designed you for a place of honor in his sanctuary, he can surely accomplish his intention, without your co-operation and intrigues, he, who shakes the spheres, if necessary to conduct one of the elect to that situation marked out for him in the eternal decrees. He destines Moses to deliver his people from the servitude of Egypt; and it is in vain that the hardened race destroy all the new-born children of the Hebrews; in vain is he exposed on the Nile: in vain does the daughter of Pharaoh bring him up in the learning of Egypt, and prepare him for the first dignities in that illustrious kingdom. The designs of God upon him are accomplished by the very obstacles which ought to have prevented their effect: he is preserved from the general carnage of the



Hebrew children, from the fury of the waters, from the dangers of education in the palace of Pharaoh, and in spite of so many risks, and through the midst of so many perils, God conducts him to the ministry to which he had called him. Saul was to become a vessel of election: the Lord opens the heavens and descends; he casts him to the ground, and he makes him an Apostle, at the very time he was persecuting the church, and with arms in his hands, was breathing the destruction, and thirsting for the blood, of the disciples. It would be in vain for you to fly to the extremities of the earth, or go down to the bottom of the abyss: his hand would not fail to draw you back, were your elevation or talents, necessary for the consummation of his elect. Look to Jonas: he was destined to be the instrument of the conversion of Niniveh; the dangers attendant on such a ministry alarm his weakness; he flies this sinful city, and even buries himself in the deep: he is shut up in the belly of a monster; but the abyss hears and obeys the voice of the Lord; gives up the timid prophet, and Niniveh is converted. Leave to God the care of your destiny; he himself well knows how to accomplish the designs which he has upon you; if your elevation be his good

pleasure, it will also be his own work; render yourself worthy of it by retreat, by fear, by flight, by lively sentiments of your own unworthiness, for these are the steps by which he is pleased to conduct his own, to the highest places in his temple.

But, you will add, when persons of a certain rank and standing are not advanced in their profession, they are dishonoured in the estimation of the world. But if the oblivion, in which you are left be the consequence of the unclerical and perhaps even licentious life which you have led, it is not the oblivion, but the morals which have caused it, that dishonours you. Even according to the world, the real honor of a person consecrated to God, is to live in a manner worthy of his calling. Do not dread that the world will cover you with reproach, as long as you shall exhibit to it, the example of regularity, of modesty, and of perfect estrangement from all solicitation and intrigue: it is not so unjust as you would make it: were you in such circumstances to be forgotten, the world itself would promote you by its wishes and its esteem; the public voice would repay with interest, the injustice which the partial distribution of dignities had done you: the comparisons which it

would not fail to make between you and those preferred to you, would confer a new honor on you; the world which is already disposed enough to censure its masters, would be delighted to be able to say with an appearance of reason, that intrigue, favor and chance had more to do than merit in their choice; and the oblivion in which you might have been left, far from dishonouring you in the world, would secure to you a higher consideration than you before enjoyed, and lend a brighter lustre to your virtues. Dignities confer no honor; they often serve but to render our vices and our dishonor the more conspicuous: what truly honours, is that merit alone, which renders us worthy of precedence and of command.

In fine, the last reflection is, that we are the less authorized to plead the common practice in justification of our canvassing and intrigues, as this would be to glory in the shame and the disgrace of our body. For you say, that the road to distinction has been altered, and that we no longer live in those times, when clericks in their various offices, could each, by his zeal and his fidelity to his duties, attract the notice and esteem, and ensure the suffrages and the choice, of the clergy and the people. Alas! my bre-

thren, faithful pastors never knew the road to preferment ; they were acquainted with the paths in which they might hope to avoid, not with those in which they might expect to find, distinction. But whence comes it that this road has been altered ? is it not because the pastors themselves have changed ? Can we make an apology of what condemns us, or alledge the opprobrium of the church in our justification ? and in effect, what do we say, when we contend that the road to distinction has been changed ? We say, that whilst the clergy were untainted by ambition, when they had no other share in their own elevation, than their refusal and their tears, morals were pure, discipline respected, dignitaries modest, the ministry honoured ; learning, sanctity, zeal and talents rarely left without their recompense : it is thus that the Chrysostoms, the Gregorys, the Basils, the Augustines were given to the church ; but that since ambition and intrigue have opened a passage to the altar, and that the dignities of the sanctuary have become the prey of the most eager and the most daring ; ah ! it is since, that the ministry was to be seen without honor, authority become despicable, ordinances compelled to bend to circumstances and inte-

rests, functions contemned, laws worn away by repeated relaxations, the most venerable discipline of our fathers become a point of history or criticism, so little trace of it is to be found in our morals! It is since, that the sublimity of the priesthood was to be seen dragging itself indecently along in the palaces of kings; pontiffs of the Most High bending their sacred head to the favor of the minister, and of the great; debasing their dignity by cares and attentions, which are an object of derision and of censure even to the world itself; exhibiting to the court, not the firmness and the intrepidity of Ambroses, but the baseness and condescension of courtiers; and retaining of their sacred character merely what seemed necessary to bestow a value, or rather to heap ridicule, on the meanness of their servile and unworthy homage: it is since, that pomp has been seen to become a suitable and necessary part of a ministry of humility; the patrimony of the poor, the prize of sin: the offerings of the faithful, that is to say, the sacred revenues, squandered in the support of vanity and voluptuousness, in the indulgence of humour, of caprice and sensuality, in inflaming and gratifying the worst passions. Every thing has felt and every evil has

attended the uncanonical entry of the clergy into the honors of the ministry ; it is the fixed point, the fatal epoch, from which we may date all the misfortunes of the church ; it is the impure source, from which have sprung all the abuses and disorders over which she mourns ; it is a worm, which not content to gnaw the leaves, eats into the very root of the evangelical tree, the figure of the church, withers its verdure, and its beauty, and destroys both its health and its fruitfulness ; it is a defilement, which corrupts the very fountain of the ministry, and the only remedy which the church can expect for her sufferings and her sorrows, is that the same spirit which formed her first pastors, would mercifully deign to inspire their successors.

Wherefore, my brethren, the common practice, far from encouraging, should humble and confound us, should make us weep before God, over the mortal wounds, which the ambition of the clergy, every day inflicts on the church, and persuade us but the more, that the very desire of sacred dignities is a crime ; that intrigues and solicitations, are sacrilegious intrusions, and in fine, that so crying an abuse, however authorized by usage and example, is our confu-

sion and disgrace. Open, O Lord, our hearts to truths so ancient, and yet so new ; raise our faith above the practice by which we are surrounded ; bring us back to the standard of those happy ages, in which thy holy maxims were yet in use ; and teach us to view with fear, the excellence and the sanctity of that ministry, of which we are altogether unworthy, if we do not fly from it, and tremble under the sacred hand that imposes upon us so heavy and so awful a burden. *Amen.*

# A DISCOURSE

ON

## COMMUNION.

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Acceptit Jesus panes ; et cum gratias egisset, distribuit discumbentibus.

*Jesus took the loaves ; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to them that were seated.*

JOHN. chap. vi. ver. 11.

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It is not enough, says Saint Augustine, explaining this part of the gospel, to consider what is illustrious and wonderful in the actions of the Redeemer, and seek in his miracles, merely so many incontestable proofs of his mission and of his doctrine. Miracles in this point of view, are for infidels only, who need to be convinced, and not for the faithful whom grace has rendered docile, and who have already captivated their minds under the glorious yoke of faith. The latter, continues this father, should



look for instruction rather than conviction, in the miraculous works of Christ: they should unfold the mystery, and not confine their attention to the examination of its certitude; should descend into the depth and understanding of these divine operations, so fruitful of admonition, and not be content with admiring the splendor of their surface: for if rightly understood, they have their language, and it is only to degenerate and carnal disciples, that they are as parables and enigmas.

Let us apply this rule to ourselves, and seek to discover that instruction which our blessed Saviour has given us in the stupendous miracle of the multiplication of bread: let us investigate the sense concealed under the letter, and see whether in feeding, like Moses of old, a famished multitude, with miraculous bread in the desert, he did not intend to trace for us a figure of that heavenly bread, which he was one day, to multiply on our altars, to relieve the necessities of his followers, in the barren and sorrowful wilderness through which they journey.

What should induce us to believe it, is, that we may remark in all the actions of the people before the performance of the miracle, those dispositions which should prepare us for a wor-

thy communion; and in the relation of what follows the prodigy, the fruits which we should gather from so holy a mystery: to these I crave your most earnest attention.

In the first place, our divine Redeemer, seeing the multitude assembled, begins by healing those who laboured under any infirmity and needed his assistance: *Et eos qui cura indigebant, sanabat.*

In the second place, after having healed, he teaches, them; speaks to them of the kingdom of God, strengthens and accustoms, them, to listen with interior attention to his words, and in fine, purifies them by the sanctity of his presence, and the grace of his instructions: *Et loquebatur illis de regno Dei, et cepit illos docere multa.*

In the third place, Christ does not multiply the loaves, till the people is very hungry: he waits till the day is far spent, till the hour of dinner is past, and the fatigue of the journey and the sterility of the place, make the simple multitude sigh for their necessary sustenance: *Desertus est locus, et hora jam præterit; unde ememus panes ut manducent hi!*

Finally, he makes them sit down on the grass, and after having raised his eyes to heaven, and

rendered thanks to his Father, he multiplies by his sacred benediction, the five loaves and the fishes, and distributes them to the people: but before eating, he orders them to be seated on the grass. Behold to the letter, all the dispositions which we should bring to a worthy communion.

The result of this prodigy, is, in the first place, that all this multitude is filled: *Manducaverunt omnes et saturati sunt*. In the second place, so great is the abundance that many fragments remain, which Jesus orders them to gather that they may not be lost: *Colligite quæ superaverunt fragmenta ne pereant*. In the third place, the people are so struck with the greatness of the prodigy, so delighted with this miraculous sustenance, that they will have no other king but Christ: *Jesus ergo cum cognovisset quia venturi essent ut raperent eum et facerent eum regem*. Now, these are precisely the fruits, which we should collect from the holy communion.

In the exposition of this gospel, I propose to myself, to follow simply, the design which the spirit of God seems to have had in view—to point out the dispositions by which we should prepare for communion, and the advantages which we should derive from it. To avoid too

great length, I shall treat but the first part. The subject is truly important for all who are already engaged, in virtue of their sacred character, to ascend every day to the altar; or who by the rules of a religious profession or the peculiar sanctity of a preparation for the ministry, are obliged to approach the bread of life, more frequently than the rest of the faithful.

### FIRST DISPOSITION.

The first disposition pointed out, in the story of this multitude, is, that before feeding them with the miraculous bread, Christ cured all those who had need of being healed: *Et eos qui cura indigebant sanabat.* We must then be cured, before we dare to participate of the celestial bread; and the necessity of this disposition is founded on the sanctity of the sacrament, its nature, its properties, the end of its institution, and such has been in every age the practice of the church. Lazarus was raised from the dead, unbound, and purified from the corruption which he had contracted in the abode of death, before he was received at the table with Christ, among the guests at the supper in Bethania.\* If he

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\* John. c. xii. v. 2.

who was defiled, had, contrary to the ordinance of the law, eaten of the flesh of the pacific victim, before he was cleansed, he was to be cut off from among his people.\* And, in effect, dost thou exact too much, O my God, when thou requirest of us to purge the temple of our bodies from its profanations before thou descendest to fill it with the majesty of thy glory, or when thou commandest us to purify our flesh from its stains and pollutions before thou comest, as it were to incarnate thyself in it; thou in whose presence the angels are not pure, and before whom our very justice is full of defilement? It is then necessary, according to the expression of the gospel, that the house be cleansed and set in order, to receive the King of Glory; that the sepulchre in which we are to deposit the body of Christ, be new and without rottenness or infection; that the altar on which we are to offer the Lamb without spot, be not defiled by the oblation of unclean animals; that Dagon be cast from it to the ground, in order that the ark of the covenant may repose on it with dignity. Who does not know that life and death, grace and sin, Christ and Belial, the mystery of sal-

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\* Levit. c. vii. v. 20.

vation and the mystery of iniquity, the blood of the alliance and the fornications of Babylon, cannot dwell together? But if all know and agree that we should be healed before approaching to him, who is the resurrection and the life, all are not equally instructed in the conditions that should accompany the cure, and without which it is but false or doubtful. Our cure should be solid, and not threaten a speedy relapse; it should be internal, the work of grace, and not merely external, the result of restraint or of the removal from occasion; it should be entire, and not partial, leaving half the evil uncorrected.

It should be solid; one which establishes us in a state of constant health, and fixes the eternal vicissitudes of our heart; which bears lasting fruit; which applies the axe to the root of the bad tree, and extirpates the evil, without sparing the fatal germ which would instantly shoot forth, and again produce the fruits of death. For, my brethren, these alternations of sickness and health, these wounds which open, the moment after they are closed, these prompt, and ever certain, returns to guilt, this stream of passion and of crime, which is interrupted only by the sacraments; this monstrous mixture of holy

and profane, of life and death, of rupture and reconciliation, of sacraments and relapses, of remedies constantly applied and always ineffectual; this source of corruption which seems to swell its current by the very waters of penance, and to overflow its banks more rapidly after the sacrament: in a word, this state of debility, in which every interval of health is but the prelude to a new attack! great God, what a life to approach thy venerable mysteries! can any state be worse or more unworthy than this? You return without delay to the vomit: alas! you are then of the number of those unclean animals, to which the Lord has forbidden\* us to give his sacred body; you fall, incessantly, after having tasted of the heavenly gift; it is then greatly to be feared that you have not been renewed by penance; you look behind, after having put your hand to the plough, you are not then fit for the kingdom or the table of Jesus Christ.

It is not, that I pretend, my brethren; that every relapse after the sacrament, should induce us to consider the cure to have been false: no; for, alas! what is man? a leaf which is driven about by the wind; a reed which the slightest

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\*Matthew. c. vii. v. 6.

blast presses to the earth ; a feeble traveller in a strange land, who is secure neither from surprise nor from open attack ; a wretched creature who bears within himself, the source of all his evils and the instrument of his own defeat ; combats from without, fears from within ; foreign enemies that surround, and domestic enemies that betray, him ; standing alone in the midst of so many dangers, every thing conspires to corrupt him, and his very self, assists in the seduction. Once more then what is man ? but a continual miracle of grace whilst he remains firm ; but a child of Adam, who yields to the impulse, and follows the fatal impressions, of his origin, when he falls.

Thus the flesh of Jesus Christ may strengthen, animate and defend us ; but to preserve us from all relapse, to subject all our enemies, to attach us to justice and truth by indissoluble ties, is, it is true, the privilege of this heavenly wine, but only, when used in the kingdom of the Father ; it is indeed, the benefit to be derived from this bread of the elect, but only, when it will be no longer a hidden manna, but when we shall eat of it openly, in the society of the Lamb.

We do not then require that the Eucharist should so confirm you in grace, as to put the



last seal to your salvation; for we all know, alas! that the life of man is a continual temptation; and that the most just, sometimes fall; but we ought to expect, that after having recourse to the remedy, your precaution would be increased, your disorders diminished, your relapses less frequent and less sudden: we ought to expect, as Saint Chrysostom says, that going forth from this divine banquet, like lions rendered the more fierce, the more courageous, the more fearful by the blood on which they feed, you would appear more terrible to Satan, more courageous to resist, more intrepid in your own defence, more difficult to be overcome: we ought to expect that after your bodies have been marked with the blood of the Lamb, the impure spirit would respect, and not dare to approach, them, as of old, the exterminating Angel in Egypt, did not dare to enter the doors that were stained with the blood of the figurative lamb: we ought to expect that the divine Eucharist would repose in your hearts, not merely to suspend the course of your passions for a short interval, as the ark of the covenant once suspended the stream of the Jordan,\* whose waters, however,

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\* Joshua c. iii. vv. 11. 16. c. iv. v. 18.

immediately resumed their current, when the monument of the glory of Israel, had passed to the other side: in a word, we ought to expect that after feeding on this solid food, you would be as strong men, and no longer as feeble and vacillating children, who are caught in the first snare, and overthrown by the first assault. The Evangelist as an ancient Father remarks, does not reckon the women or children amongst those, whom Christ, this day, fed with the miraculous bread, and by the omission he wishes to inform us, that we should bring to this substantial banquet, not the weakness of children nor the inconstancy of the sex, but the vigor and the firmness of full-grown men. For, truly if you find yourself the same, on quitting the altar, as weak in temptation, as bitter towards your brethren, as worldly in your morals and inclinations, as eager for distinction, as ambitious of dignity, as passionate, perhaps as dissolute as before; is it not a sure sign that you have presented yourself at the holy table, with the sting of death in your bosom, with the shameful ulcer of sin, still unopened in your soul? In effect, the cures effected by grace, are not those cures which last only for a day. Grace changes the heart, rectifies the inclinations, creates a new

man, builds the house on the solid rock, puts the armed strong man in possession of our soul: now surely, the new man does not grow old on the very day of his birth; the house on the rock is not beaten down by the first raging of the tempest or the first blast of the storm; the spirits of impurity must often return to the charge, before they overcome and despoil the armed strong man when he is once in peaceable possession of the court of our soul: in a word, and let us say it more correctly, the change of heart is not the work of a moment; as grace ordinarily triumphs in the soul, by slow and insensible advances, so also it is true, that it forsakes it only by little and little, by a tardy and imperceptible abandonment: your relapses, then demonstrate that you were not cured, or that your cure was not solid, when you presented yourself to partake of the sacrament of the altar.

But a cure, in order to be solid, must be interior, that is to say, it must not owe its stability, to the removal from occasions, or to the constraint and security of an asylum, but to the renovation of the will, and to the liberty of the children of God. On the subject of conversion, it is a dangerous illusion to fancy ourselves pe-

nitent, when we cease to be sinners : to persuade ourselves that the tree is good, when it no longer produces the fruit of death ; that the fire is extinct as soon as it is covered, or that passion is extirpated when it no longer appears : there is however a wide difference between the cessation from evil and the change of the heart. The law, says Saint Augustine, conducted nothing to perfection ; it prevented transgression by the fear of punishment, but did not reach to the will of the carnal jew ; it prescribed and regulated his works, but left his heart to all its irregularity ; he was not a prevaricator, but he was not therefore just, for true justice does not consist merely in avoiding evil and in doing good, but in hating the evil which we shun, and in loving the good which we embrace. It may then happen that the decency of our character, that human fear, a variety of obstacles or the absence of occasion, serve as a bridle to the passions and suspend the commission of crime, although the heart be not freed, nor the wound of sin healed in the soul. Now in the sight of God, we are only what our heart makes us : men see only the exterior and judge from appearances, but God sees the inmost recesses of our conscience, and judges from that which is invisible.

This is an important reflection for you, my brethren, whom this sacred asylum removes from the world, and shelters from the occasions of sin. On entering into this habitation of peace, you have renounced the works of darkness, and exhibited some signs and performed some acts, of repentance; but let me ask you whether your conversion is to be ascribed to the grief, which you felt for your transgressions, or to the security of the place in which you live? You no longer follow the criminal desires of the flesh, but are not these desires still concealed in the midst of your heart? Crime in the holy place, would be attended with too much pain, and is it not in this point of view, that you regard and avoid it? The disclosures which you would be obliged to make to your spiritual director, would be full of bitterness, and is it not this bitterness alone, that makes sin disagreeable to you? the way of duplicity is replete with danger, and is it not this danger alone, that preserves you from it? Great God! how can I say, whether we should bless the triumph of thy grace, and console ourselves on the apparent success of our ministry! Your change, my brethren, is perhaps but external; perhaps your passions being no longer surrounded by those objects which served

to entice them, are merely slumbering: they are perhaps, enchanted by the spectacle of religion which you have before your eyes, by the devout exercises, the pious canticles, the edifying instructions, the splendor and variety of ceremonies, in this holy place: but these constitute but a passing charm, which is easily broken: in this dwelling of repose, in the tranquillity of retreat, they may sleep like the asp, which has heard the voice of the wise enchanter; but alas! and I say it with grief, scarcely, perhaps, will you have exposed them on the scenes of public agitation, scarcely will they have heard the noise of the world, when you will perceive them to revive, to awake, to shake off their drowsiness, and become the more ungovernable, as they have been strengthened by repose, and the quiet of long inactivity. Thus whilst Saul heard the music of David's harp, the evil spirit ceased to torment him, but scarce had the divine melody ceased, when as though the enchantment had been dissolved, he returned with still greater violence to all the former excesses of his fury and his rage.

But a cure cannot be interior, if it be not entire, for the works of God are perfect. Now we often imagine that to be cured, it is sufficient

to have cut away what was blackest in our passions, without fathoming the fatal source, or touching the corrupt inclinations from which they spring; to have preserved what was pleasing in our vices, and abandoned only what was troublesome, and with which our conscience could not be at ease: how many cures of this description? Yet in this state, our passions are not extinguished; their ardor is merely checked and moderated by our self-love; our vices are not rooted up, but merely bent to a point, from which there is still a long distance to virtue. Voluptuousness has subsided into effeminacy, a dissolute life into one of ease and inutility, scandalous transgression into vain and dangerous conversation, libertinism into philosophic submission to necessity, the forgetfulness of God, into a tepid and indifferent piety. We are only half cured: we are corrected, but not converted; we are not the same, but yet we are not new men; we are no longer seated in the darkness of the shadow of death, but our eyes are yet but opened in part, and we see only half the truth: like the blind man whose cure is mentioned in the gospel, we see, yet, but imperfectly, and mistake one object for another.\*

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\* And they came to Bethsaida; and they bring to him one blind, and they besought him, that he would

Now these remains of disease are more dangerous than the disease itself, for there are remedies for great disorders, but scarcely any, for infirmity of this description. Besides, if you remain in your present state, it is certain that your conversion, has been but the mere result of your own self-love: you have unloaded yourself of a burden which pressed you to the ground, of a talent of lead as the Prophet\* calls it, that weighed cruelly on your conscience: you have sought relief from the burden of your crimes, but you have not sought to punish them: you have shaken off the yoke of Satan because it was oppressive, but you have had no intention of taking up the yoke of Christ in its stead: you have been eager to empty those depths of defilement, those stagnant waters, which the finger of God had agitated within you, and which began to be insupportable to you by their very corrup-

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touch him. And taking the hand of the blind, he led him forth out of the town; and spitting upon his eyes, and imposing his hands, he asked him, if he saw any thing? And looking up he said: I see men, as it were trees, walking. After that again he imposed his hands upon his eyes, and he began to see, and was restored so that he saw all things clearly.—Mark. c. viii. verses 22. 23. 24. 25.

\* Zac. c. v. ver. 7.



tion ; but you have not even thought of forcing the bitter waters of penance from the hard rock of your heart. Yet the conversion of the heart is a mournful and a painful sacrifice, in which the victim must be seasoned with the salt of affliction and purified by the fire of austerities, before it can be presented at the altar. Sinners, in ancient times, did not reach the sanctuary, but through entire years of humiliation and suffering ; the communion was not the first step, but the prize and crown of their penance ; and the Eucharistic bread was for them a bread of sorrow of which they were not permitted to eat, but in the sweat of their brow. It was then wisely supposed, that a christian who had recently quitted the paths of sin, always carried with him a thousand of its weaknesses, which time and the grace of repentance alone, could strengthen ; that the Eucharist being the food of the strong, it was necessary, before using it, that he should have grown to man's estate, that being a new and powerful wine, it was not prudent to pour it immediately into a weak soul, grown old and worn, as it were, by transgression, but that it was necessary to wait till, like the eagle, he had renewed his youth, lest not being able to contain the precious liquor,

it should spill and be miserably trampled under foot.\* It is not then enough to be healed in appearance.

I have dwelt thus long on this disposition, because it seemed to me important: the cure must be solid, interior, and entire, nor is it difficult to discern whether it be truly so or not. When the heart is cured its desires and its inclinations are new: to live in the controul of all your senses; to listen with docility to the voice of Christ within you; to place your delight in prayer, in seclusion and in the meditation of his holy law, was heretofore to you an unknown language: it must henceforward become your familiar exercise; and this is the second disposition pointed out in the history of this multitude. Not only does Christ heal their diseases, but he speaks to them, instructs, and nourishes them, with miraculous food. For the divine banquet it is but little preparation, to be exempt from defilement, we must be also adorned with virtues.

#### SECOND DISPOSITION.

We must have rendered ourselves familiar with the presence and the communications of Jesus,

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\* Matthew. c. ix. v. 17.

before presuming on that greatest familiarity of seating ourselves at his table. He prepared his disciples, by three years of intercourse and of instruction, for that happy evening on which he gave them the last pledge of his love, in feeding them with his sacred flesh : he travelled with the two disciples to Emmaus, conversed with them on the way and explained to them the scriptures, before blessing and distributing to them the sacred bread. On this day, he speaks long to the multitude, he unfolds to them the celestial truths of his doctrine and entertains them on the glory and the mysteries of the kingdom of God, before multiplying the loaves with which he feeds them. That is to say, my brethren, those only who have been accustomed to listen to the voice, are called to the table, of the Redeemer ; those only, who live by faith, are worthy to partake of this sacrament. The holy Fathers say, that Mary would never have conceived the Son of God in her womb, if she had not first conceived him by faith in her heart. Now the communion is a new incarnation ; and therefore the participation of the Eucharist, pre-supposes the collectedness of the senses, a close familiarity with Jesus, the love and the meditation of his doctrine, a constant fidelity to all the injunctions

of his law, and to all the inspirations of his grace.

For, in truth, my brethren, if you never enter into your own hearts, to listen to the voice of Jesus; if your life is all exterior, all in the senses; if your prayers are so many wanderings of the mind; your lectures, either dangerous curiosity, or mere amusement; your studies, either dry labor, the result of passion, or the pursuit of ambition; your ordinary actions, either trifles or pleasures; your most august functions, degenerated into forms which no longer awaken your piety; in a word, if you do not live according to the interior man, you know not Jesus, for his abode is within you, his kingdom is in the heart, and that is precisely, the place, where you are never to be found. He is then for you the unknown God mentioned by Saint Paul:\* you have never spoken with him, as a friend is accustomed to speak with his friend; neither does he know you, at least with a knowledge of love and of discernment; you are in his regard, as though you were not. Now I ask you whether it be decorous or usual for a person to present himself at table where he is not

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\* Acts. c. xvii. v. 23.

known? Is not this the privilege of long familiarity? and you live without any interior or intimate relation with Jesus; you are a stranger to him, and yet you presume to sit down at his table? But are you ignorant that the law forbids the stranger to eat of the loaves of proposition? *Aliena non vescetur ex eis* :\* do you not know that Christ makes the pasche with his disciples alone: *Cum discipulis meis facio pascha* : † do you not know that this is, as it were, a family banquet to which none are invited but friends and neighbours: *Convocat amicos et vicinos* ? ‡ A life then, without recollection, and without connexion with Jesus, without a love for prayer or unction for the duties of piety, without vigilance over ordinary actions, or mortification in any thing that flatters the senses, in a word, a life without the exercise of christian faith; such a life, let us suppose it even exempt from crime, is a formal unworthiness which excludes from the altar. The manna of the Jews was laid in the ark, between the rod of Aaron and the tables of the law, and Christ Jesus the manna of christians, cannot repose in the heart, except

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\* Exodus. c. xxix. v. 33. † Matthew. c. xxvi. v. 18.

‡ Luke. c. xv. v. 6.

between the mortification of the senses, signified by the rod, and the constant meditation of the law of God, signified by the tables, on which it was written.

### THIRD DISPOSITION.

Another proof of this truth is found in the third disposition. This outward and dissipated life, however innocent you may suppose it, blunts the appetite for this divine nutriment: for as the soul, in this state, is satisfied in the greater part of her desires, she enjoys a false abundance. Now the heart hungers, only, when it feels itself empty; if you fill it with a perishable sustenance, it retains neither taste nor desire for the bread of heaven, and this state of disgust and satiety is more to be feared by those who still keep within certain limits in transgression, than by declared sinners. For criminal pleasures have this peculiarity, that in filling, they trouble and tear, the soul, and make it feel its wretchedness and destitution; and of the bite of crime, we may say as of the bite of the scorpion, that it carries with it its own remedy. But the pleasures which are called innocent, those indulgences which do not go entirely so far as guilt, those infidelities which approach,

without passing, the bounds of sin ; ah ! they fill the heart without disturbing it ; they bring with them a false abundance and felicity : what do I say ? they satisfy cupidity because they are agreeable, and even tranquillize faith by the appearance of innocence. They resemble the idols erected by Jeroboam,\* which amused the piety of the people by the imitation of the worship of Jerusalem, and at the same time, gratified his passion for idolatry, by the likenesses of two golden calves, and by the impious extravagance of the offerings and sacrifices.

Now to feed worthily on this bread of heaven, we must hunger for it ; and this, according to Saint Augustine, is the third disposition. Remark also, that the Redeemer does not multiply the loaves immediately, on the arrival of the multitude in the desert : he waits till the day is far spent and the hour of repast gone by : *Et hora jam pertransiit* : he waits till the people are overcome by hunger, and it is then, says the same Saint, that his mercy finds the favourable moment, to afford them sustenance : *Esurientes agnovit, misericorditer pavit*. For, my brethren, to approach to the altar with a tepid and blunted

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\* 3 Kings. c. xii. vv. 27. 28. 29.

heart, to bring to it a satiety that leaves you no longer any keenness of desire, in a word, to eat in disgust; ah! this would be to take food indeed, but food from which you could derive no advantage. The flesh of Jesus Christ has this peculiarity, that it nourishes, in as much only, as it delights those who partake of it, and that the benefits which we draw from it, are proportioned to the hunger and the love with which we approach it.

But what is it, to hunger for the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ? It is, in the first place, to banish from us whatever might estrange our affections from the sacrament of love; to refrain, as Saint Paul exhorts, from the very appearance of evil,\* that we may contract no defilement that would interdict us from the use of this pure azyme; to avoid with religious care, the intercourse of the uncircumcised, nor scarce dare to enter the places of their abode, lest their society defile, and render us unfit to eat of the passover; to profit of the desire of approaching the Eucharist, to live with circumspection, to render our most ordinary actions a preparation for the altar, nor allow ourselves any indulgence but such as

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\* 1. Thes. c. v. v. 22.



is compatible with the use of this adorable sacrament: to us particularly who celebrate, every day, the tremendous mysteries, this practice is altogether indispensable. For, a Priest who lives without recollection, offers up the flesh of Jesus Christ without fervor, and eats of it, without relish or desire, for the relish of the soul is the fervor of love: now if you eat of it without desire, you partake of it without benefit; you want that divine heat requisite to digest this holy food, and which by changing it into your own substance, would enable you to grow by the use of it: you resemble those patients who have not a sufficiency of natural heat to digest what they eat, and to whom, in consequence, nutriment is not only useless, but injurious; for whatever goes not to nourish, is turned into corruption, and the more solid and exquisite the food, the more is corruption to be feared. Now you continually eat of the divine feast, and yet you neither grow nor improve: I tremble for you: the manna collected contrary to the ordinance of the law, was changed into worms and rottenness;\* and who can say, whether, whilst you heap sacrament upon sacrament without profit, you are

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\* Exodus. c. xvi. v. 20.

not amassing a treasure of stench and infection! perhaps the flesh of Jesus, that germ of incorruption and immortality, is within you a fatal leaven which corrupts the whole mass; and when I say, *perhaps*, I soften down the severity of a truth which the Saints have taught without restriction or abatement.

In the second place, to hunger for the flesh of Jesus, is to find every thing insipid, except this celestial nutriment; to refuse like the multitude, to go into the neighbouring towns and villages, to satisfy their hunger, by food different from the miraculous bread that awaited them; to find a thousand times more sweets, in the table of the Lord, than in the honey of the tents of sinners; to desire it with ardor, to expect it with impatience, and to esteem no day of our lives so happy as that on which we are permitted to approach it; to find in it the consolation of our exile, the solace of our pains, peace in our troubles, strength in temptations, and light in our perplexities; to fall, like the Prophet\* into dryness and dejection, from the moment in which we forget to eat of this delicious and invigorating bread; in a word, to be

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\* 3 Kings. c. xix. v. 4.

the first to run to this princely feast, nor wait till we are pressed from the public places, and compelled by force to enter and partake of the banquet. \*

In the third place, to hunger for the flesh of Jesus, is to present ourselves at his altar, with a sincere heart, a simple conscience, an unfeigned faith, and to banish far from so sacred an action, every motive that is foreign to its holiness and unworthy of its dignity. For, it is but too true that propriety, example, and sometimes even duplicity, attract guilty adorers to this sacred festival; and that many, like the scribe mentioned in the gospel, † present themselves to the Redeemer, with holes in their hearts for the foxes, and nests for the fowls of the air; that is to say, with motives of interest or of human prudence, with views of pride or of vain reputation: in which however, the Son of Man cannot find whereon to recline his head.

I say propriety. Suppose you are in a pious community: you wish to live in it with credit and honor, nor are you of a character, nor as yet of an age, to throw off the yoke and live in

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\* Luke. c. xiv. v. 16. &c.

† Matthew. c. viii. vv. 19. 20. Luke. c. ix. vv. 57. 58.

open violation of discipline ; you wish to comply with your obligations, from a principle of reason and even of glory, and therefore on solemn and stated occasions you regularly approach the holy mysteries : whenever duty seems to invite to communion, reflection makes it a law. Oftentimes the heart refuses, but propriety prevails : often would we wish to stay away from the sacrament, and yet we partake of it against our conscience, that we may not scandalize our brethren. But Jesus calls to this banquet, those only who are sensible of their weakness, and have need of being relieved from their burdens : this is the table of his children, and you present yourself at it like a slave ; it is a kindness that should touch your heart, and you regard it as a painful servitude ; it is a feast of tenderness and of familiarity, and you make it a duty of mere propriety, a matter of pure ceremony. O what a crime ! thus to turn the altar into an empty exhibition, and consult for human appearances at the expense of Jesus Christ.

I say example. We do, what we see others do ; it is not Jesus that we seek, but it is the multitude that we follow : it is not piety nor the hope of the divine promises that conducts us to the altar, but mere imitation. We resemble the

Cinities, a singular nation, who mingled with the Israelites in the desert,\* and journeyed with them towards the land of Promise, ignorant of the dispensation which conducted the people of God, and thoughtless of the milk and honey of that happy country which was destined to become their possession: they embraced the fortunes, and observed the changes, of the camp, and without being animated by the same hopes, or inflamed by the same desires, they failed not to obey the signals, and follow the movements of the host of Israel.

I say duplicity, and I wish, I could dispense with this part of the subject. We receive Jesus Christ that we may be esteemed by men; we make the bread of truth subservient to our imposture, and take the searcher of hearts as the confidant of our execrable hypocrisy: the adorable veil of the sacrament becomes the veil of passion and of crime; and the Lamb without spot, serves only to seal the volume of death and the history of a guilty life, from the eyes of men. But, great God! is there to be found within the circuit of thy own house, in this abode of peace and religion, in the midst of

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\* Numbers. c. x. v. 29. Judges. c. i. v. 16.

thy chosen and consecrated people, is there to be found a wretch so profane and so sacrilegious? dost thou discover here among thy own ministers, any of those black monsters, who with sin in their hearts, approach, unmoved, to eat and drink their own condemnation; those monsters who cast thy divine flesh into the depths of corruption, and mingle thy sacred blood with the fornications of Babylon? dost thou behold in this assembly, any of those demons who transform themselves into Angels of light, and who by a new and unheard of prodigy, force thee to enter into the unclean animals?\* art thou, as thy Prophet complains, defiled in the midst of thy own inheritance? Ah! thou knowest the hearts of all: stamp then on the forehead of this impious wretch, as thou didst formerly on Cain, a visible mark of thy malediction, since like him he has shed innocent blood, and rendered himself guilty of the death of the just: judge and take away this anathema from amongst us, lest he draw down thy wrath on all his brethren: cause the loathsome leprosy that covers his soul, to appear on his flesh, that he may be driven from the camp, and not suffered to remain, to

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\* Matthew. c. viii. Mark. c. v. Luke. c. viii.

infect thy people : or rather, O Lord, convert, and heal him, in secret ; cause a ray of thy grace to shine in his criminal soul, and create within him a new heart : this wish is better suited to our ministry, and more worthy of thy infinite mercy.

For our part, my brethren, let us without flattering ourselves, examine what motive it is that conducts us to the sacred table : it is here, that the choicest gifts of heaven are bestowed, and it is therefore, here in particular, that the Lord is a jealous God, and can endure neither rivalry nor alloy in our hearts. Let us imagine when we approach the altar, that we hear a voice from the bottom of the sanctuary uttering the terrific interrogation : *Amice ad quid venisti?*\* O man ! thou who wearest the countenance of a friend, what is thy design in coming to my table ? comest thou to adore, or to betray me : to open to me thy heart, or to pierce my bosom anew, and put me to a cruel death ? comest thou to drink of the wine that brings forth virgins, or to drench me again with gall and bitterness ? *Ad quid venisti?* comest thou to me, as to thy light to dissipate the errors of thy senses ; as to

the fountain of life, to extinguish or to moderate the ardor of thy passions; as to the truth, to correct the deviations of thy heart; as to the way, that thou mayest go no longer astray in thy journeys; as to the life, to repair thy powers and reanimate thy languors? *Ad quid venisti?* Ah! my brethren, happy we, if we can then reply with the Royal Prophet: "all my desire is before thee, O Lord, and my groaning is not hidden from thee: \* prove my heart, search my reins, and see if there is to be found in them even a trace of disguise or infidelity."

#### FOURTH DISPOSITION.

But you will ask me, how are we to excite in ourselves, the desire and relish of the Eucharist? By the frequent use of this sacrament; and this is what is pointed out to us in the last disposition. The perishable meat of this world satisfies the body but oppresses the soul, and abstinence from it, is necessary to create and season our appetite. But the meat from above, which lasts for ever, awakens desire, and stimulates the taste; one communion produces a craving for a second: this is a hidden manna, whose



sweetness and strength cannot be estimated by a single trial, and to communicate with profit, we must communicate often. Christ commands the multitude to be seated on the grass, before they eat of the miraculous bread: *Jussit illos recumbere super fœnum*: and by this step, he wishes to instruct us, that the honor of being admitted to this heavenly table, should open our eyes to our infirmities, to our miseries and our wants, and animate us to have frequent recourse to the remedy of all our evils.

And here there are two rocks to be avoided: some, under pretext of their unworthiness keep at a distance from the altar; they are seated on the grass; like the Prophet, they see their misery and destitution, but they neither eat of this divine food, nor rely sufficiently upon its efficacy: others eat, without being seated on the grass; they lose sight of their weakness and fragility: and approach with presumptuous confidence to partake of the heavenly banquet. Two things there are, which you must never separate, a firm reliance on the virtue of the sacrament, and a deep sense of your own unworthiness; otherwise you will fall either into a respect which is a mere illusion, or, into the no less dangerous error of a rash familiarity.

A respect of mere illusion, is the state of those amongst you, who are still governed by their passions, who attempt no victory over themselves, and who yet flatter themselves that their most voluntary transgressions, are a just excuse for not approaching the altar: it is the state of those who mistake their base cowardice for a sentiment of religion, and who persuade themselves that the preference which they make of their passions and habits, to the table of Jesus Christ, is that discernment of faith, that necessary proof of themselves, commanded by the Apostle.\*

Your life, you say, is not sufficiently holy, to approach often to the sacrament: but allow me to ask you, who is accountable for its unworthiness? Live in such a manner as to be worthy to present yourself every day, at the table of the Lord. I admit that it is better to abstain, than to eat unworthily: but do you take any measures, do you make any exertions to render yourself worthy? you feel so little devotion, that you dare not approach: senseless man! because you are sick you will avoid the remedy? when you do this action rarely, you perform it

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\* 1. Cor. c. xi.

with more faith: but do you perform it with greater fruit? you fear to eat unworthily: but do you fear what renders you unworthy? Besides, your life you say is not sufficiently holy, and yet you think it holy enough to warrant you to aspire to a formidable ministry, in which the sacred mysteries are to become not only the daily food of your soul, but the fruit of your tongue and the work of your hands? It is better to abstain than to approach unworthily: alas! but why do you not apply this rule to your rash eagerness for the dignities of the church? You feel so little devotion: but you ought to be a burning and shining lamp; another bush flaming with celestial fire, heating, scorching and consuming whatever is around you; and if you remain cold, how will you infuse the love of Jesus into the hearts of the faithful, and kindle into a blaze that sacred fire which he came to scatter on the earth? When you perform this action rarely, you perform it with greater faith: but alas! if your faith becomes extinct by a familiarity with holy things, you should look upon the priesthood to which you aspire, as a frightful precipice: living in it, continually in the midst of whatever is most terrible in religion, you will pass from disrelish to tepidity; from tepidity to insensibi-

lity; from insensibility to contempt; from contempt, who can say? perhaps, to impiety and profanation. If then you are not worthy to partake often of the sacrament of the altar, you are not worthy to aspire to the sacred functions of the altar. If your tongue is not sufficiently pure to receive Jesus, can it be sufficiently pure to pronounce the words by which he is produced? If you dare not use the privilege of a simple christian, how can you dare to pretend to the privileges of the ministers of God? The same motives then, which remove you from the sacred table, should much more forcibly remove you from the ministry of the altar. Whence then comes it, that there is so much fear on the one side, and so much security on the other? it is because you do not shun what is beyond your desert, but what constrains you; you prosecute not what is holy, but what is elevated; it is because iniquity contradicts itself. I intended merely to encourage your timidity and raise your dejection, and I have found it necessary to combat your presumption.

The second rock is not less to be feared than the first. We are so far swayed by presumptuous confidence, that we confine all our piety to a frequent participation of the sacrament: to

vigilance, fervor, mortification and the renouncement of ourselves, we substitute a disorderly devotion, whose only effect is to bring us often to the altar, and thus, make the whole exercise of christian faith to consist in the frequent approach to the table of the Lamb: a gross illusion! for this is to mistake the church of earth for that of heaven. The citizens of the celestial Jerusalem, during the long day of eternity, will feast on this bread of the elect, and drink of the inebriating torrent of this new and delicious wine; to them the Lamb will give himself, as the glorious reward of their victory: *Vincenti dabo edere de ligno vitæ*;\* but to us he communicates himself only as our strength and support, our buckler and our sword. The frequent use, then, of the sacrament, should animate you with zeal in the cause, and fill you with ardor for the combat, instead of casting you into a lethargic repose, and rendering you insensible to your weaknesses and your dangers: you would otherwise resemble the fool, who in the midst of his enemies, would be content to collect arms around him, and slumber in security, without having bravely employed them in his defence. We must

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\* Apocalypse. c. ii. v. 7.

then eat, seated on the grass; we must never lose sight of our frailty, nor of the necessity of vigilance: we must never forget that the strength which we derive from the sacrament, is like the grass of the field, which is withered by the heat of the sun and dies in the drought of a single day; to-day it blooms, and to-morrow, says Jesus, it is cast into the furnace;\* thus the sight of our weakness, will induce us to have frequent recourse to the sacrament, and forbid us to rely too presumptuously on its efficacy. We will thus eat, seated on the grass, with a deep impression of our own weakness and insecurity; and this is the more necessary, as at our departure from the altar, bearing a precious treasure in frail vessels, a thousand enemies eager for so rich a prey, lie in wait, to carry off Jesus from our hearts, nor can we preserve him but by watchfulness and courage. Let us never forget the fate of those degenerate Jews,† who after receiving the ark into the camp, spent their time in shouting for joy as though they had, no longer, any thing to fear from the Philistines; and gave themselves up to a foolish

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\* Matthew. c. vi. v. 30. Luke. c. xii. v. 28.

† 1 Kings. c. iv.

confidence in the protection of this symbol of their religion, instead of taking still more vigorous measures than before, to prevent the capture of the ark from adding to the disgrace of Israel's defeat, and swelling the pride and triumph of the enemy. You know the rest: they were vanquished, and the ark of the Lord became the prey of the Philistines. This lesson is truly terrific, and easily applies to those, who relying too presumptuously on the Eucharist, leave to it, as it were, all the care of victory, and abandoning themselves to a criminal repose, cause the sacrament, by their speedy defeat, to become in their heart, the easy prize of Satan.

Let us then, never approach the holy table, without being solidly, interiorly, and entirely healed from our wounds; without being prepared for it, by the controul of our senses, and by the practice of prayer, and of every christian virtue; without hungering for this divine food, and without a lively sentiment of our necessities and of the fragility of our hearts: this sentiment will make us recur often to the sacrament lest watchfulness alone should not suffice to sustain us, and will make us unite vigilance to the sacrament, lest the remedy alone, without wise precautions, should prove unsuccessful.

If we bring with us, those dispositions to the altar, we may hope to gather from it, those fruits, pointed out in the history of the multitude, but which, time does not allow me, now, to develop. We shall depart satisfied : *Manducaverunt omnes, et saturati sunt* ;\* disgusted with perishable goods, and the pleasures of sense, and more hungry than ever for the banquet of Jesus. We will carefully preserve the remains of the feast that they may not perish ; that is to say, we shall receive such an abundance of grace, that after relieving our own necessities, we shall be able, out of what remains, to form a treasure of justice, from which we may, one day, draw spiritual riches to relieve and console those, whom providence shall confide to our care. In a word, we will no longer recognise any other king than Jesus ; we will establish his reign for ever in our hearts, and together with him, we ourselves shall reign over our passions and our vices : he shall be as a king of peace in full possession of our soul ; as a king of liberality, and of glory, he will cover it with his favors, and adorn it with glory and beauty ; nor, as long as it continues faithful, shall any be

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\*Mark. c. vi. v. 42.



found, powerful enough, to force it from his hands; so that we may then say, to him, even in the very moment in which he communicates himself to us, under the sacramental veil, as he himself said to his Father: *Mea omnia tua sunt, et tua mea sunt.*\* Yes, O Lord, whatever I possess, is, from this day, thine; reign as sovereign in my heart: I shall no longer contest with thee, its possession: it was created for thee alone, and to thee I owe it by every principle of justice, by every motive of gratitude and love. And although it were not thy right, yet ought I not to esteem myself too happy, in having any thing of my own to offer to thee? to thee who art the most splendid and generous of masters, who will not suffer thyself to be vanquished in bounty, and who repayest every gift, with favors a hundred-fold: my inclinations, my desires, my views, my talents, my strength, my very weaknesses, all are, henceforth, thine; I will from this hour use them as borrowed goods, of which I must render an account to thee. But thou also givest thyself entire, to me, in the sacrament: thy mysteries, thy doctrine, thy gifts, thy promises, thy goods, all that thou art

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\* John. c. xvii. v. 10.

is mine, in the moment, in which thou feedest me with thy sacred flesh: *Et tua, mea sunt.* Happy shall I be, if I never retract the offering which I now make thee, and still more happy, if I preserve, with exact fidelity, the precious gift which I this day receive from thee. *Amen.*

# A DISCOURSE

ON

## THE ZEAL OF THE PASTORS OF THE CHURCH AGAINST SCANDALS.

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Et cum fecisset, quasi flagellum de funiculis, omnes  
ejecit de Templo.

*And when he had made as it were a scourge of little  
cords, he drove them all out of the Temple.*

JOHN. chap. ii. ver. 15.

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**T**HE first exercise of the ministry of Christ in Jerusalem, is an act of zeal against the abuses, which dishonoured the glory of his Father, and the sanctity of his temple. That divine meekness, which had hitherto appeared in all his actions, is, this day, converted into a holy severity: he cannot endure a public scandal, which seems to insult the majesty of religion, even in its most sacred, and most venerable asylum. In vain is the practice tolerated by the false piety of

the Pharisees: in vain is it protected by the avarice, perhaps, of the first ministers of the Lord: in vain does it seem to be authorized by ancient and public custom: these are the very motives that fill him with a new indignation; and the more it appears difficult, and dangerous to apply a remedy to this scandalous and indecent abuse, the less does he use of delay or of caution, in purging the holy place from its defilement.

Zeal against the vices and the scandals, which outrage the glory of God, and dishonour the sanctity of religion, is then the first example, which Jesus Christ, in the discharge of the public functions of his ministry, in Jerusalem, has left to the pastors of his church. He sends us, indeed, as lambs who, in the violence and the outrages offered to themselves, are meek and silent, but who know how to raise their voice, and roar as lions, when the glory of the Lord, whose ministers they are, is insulted. He disapproves, it is true, the zeal of the two disciples, who wish to bring down fire from heaven, upon an unbelieving city,\* but in it, he blames only its impetuosity and bitterness: he condemns the zeal,

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\* Luke. c. ix. vv. 54. 55.

that would punish, rather than correct, and teaches us, that zeal without charity, is but the sally of humour, and not the impulse of grace. In fine, he gives us to understand, that we cannot pluck up all the scandals of his kingdom, because the malice of man is always on the increase; but he wishes, that we should denounce, without ceasing, a woe and an everlasting curse against the sinner, who scandalizes his brother; that we should generously condemn the scandals, which we cannot extirpate, or at least, that we should weep in secret, over those, which we are not permitted to censure in public.

Zeal against vices and scandals, is then the most essential duty of the minister of Jesus Christ: this will be my first reflection. But whence comes it, that this zeal is so rarely found in the pastors of the church? This is what I propose to myself, to unfold in the course of this instruction.

### FIRST REFLECTION.

From the time in which the church, by the sacerdotal unction, associates us to its ministry, we become co-operators with God for the salvation of our brethren; we enter into a participation of the priesthood of Christ, who has been

established a Priest and a Pontiff, only to destroy the reign of sin, to render to his Father, that glory, of which the malice of men had deprived him, and to form a people, spiritual, innocent, and faithful, an assembly of Saints to glorify him in every age.

Thus a Priest is a sacred minister, charged, on earth, with the interests of God, and the sanctification of men; in continuing here below, the priesthood of Jesus Christ, he continues his mission and his love for men: his prayers, his desires, his studies, his anxieties, his labors, his functions, all should have for only object, the salvation of his brethren: whatever is not referred to this noble intent, is foreign to the sanctity of his destination: he quits his proper sphere, he dishonours it, he renounces the high dignity of his calling, he covers, and disgraces himself with the foul, but just reproach of a species of apostacy, from the moment, in which he lends himself to other cares, and other occupations, than those, which tend to enlarge the kingdom of Christ, and form to his eternal Father, worshippers, in spirit and in truth.

Elias mounting to heaven, and leaving to his disciple Eliseus, his spirit of zeal, was but the figure of Jesus Christ, who, after ascending to

the right hand of his Father, sent down upon his disciples, that spirit of zeal and of fire, which was to be the seal of their priesthood and of their mission, and which, by consequence, was to inflame and purify the universe, and carry to every people of the earth, the science of salvation, and the love of justice and of truth. In effect, scarcely are they filled with this holy spirit, when these men, till now so timid, so solicitous to hide themselves from the fury of the Jews, burst with the courage of lions, from their retreat, overcome every resistance: unconscious and regardless of danger, they bear on their forehead, the sign of their divine master, and an intrepidity, which defies all the powers of the world: before the assembled princes and priests, they fearlessly bear testimony to the resurrection of Christ, and come forth from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they had been accounted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus.

The land of Judea is too confined for the ardor and extent of their zeal: they pass from city to city, from province to province, from kingdom to kingdom: they spread themselves to the very extremities of the earth: they attack abuses the most ancient and the most deeply

rooted : they tear from the most ferocious tribes the idols, which their ancestors had always adored : they overturn the altars consecrated by the incense and the homage of so many ages : they preach the opprobrium and the folly of the cross to the most polished nations, to those that gloried in their learning and their eloquence, their philosophy and their wisdom. The obstacles which present themselves on all sides, so far from relaxing, serve but to reanimate, their zeal and prepare its triumph : the whole world conspires against them, and they are stronger than the world : the cross and the gibbet are placed before them, to compel them to silence, and they reply that they cannot but announce what things they have heard and seen :\* and they publish on the housetops what they are forbidden even to whisper, in secret, to the ear. They expire under the sword of the executioner : new torments are invented to extinguish the new doctrine in their blood, and their very blood continues to announce it after their death, and the more of it is shed upon the earth, the more numerous are the disciples, which it brings forth to the gospel. Such is the spirit of the priest-

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\* Acts. c. iv. v. 20.



hood and of the Apostleship which they received, for the priesthood and the Apostleship form, in one sense, but the same ministry. Every Priest is an Apostle and envoy of Jesus Christ, among men; he exercises his functions it is true, in dependance, but he is a Priest only to exercise them. His zeal is under the controul of the first pastors, and it is for them to direct it; but zeal is still the first duty of the priesthood.

Behold, my brethren, to what we have been consecrated in receiving the imposition of hands. The church indeed does not require of each one of us, to go and preach Jesus Christ to barbarous nations, and water distant climes with our blood, that we may make the gospel fructify, and carry the knowledge of Christ and the tidings of salvation to the people that have not yet heard his name: this is a ministry reserved to a small number of Apostolic labourers, who perpetuate in the church the first spirit, with the first functions, of the Apostleship, and who by their toils unceasingly advance the accomplishment of the prophecies and the promises relating to the plenitude of the Gentiles, that is, one day, to enter into the new Jerusalem: but our mission because it is less laborious, is not therefore less extensive nor less apostolical. We

may leave those uncultivated and savage lands to the generous labourers, who, to scatter the holy seed, brave the perils of the ocean, and the barbarism of a thousand tribes, but we are destined to purge the field of Christ of the cockle, and to pluck up the scandals which grow in it, without ceasing. If our zeal be not heroic enough to attempt the conquest of new nations and add other lands to his inheritance, we ought at least, to cultivate those\* which our predecessors have acquired for him, and which are become his ancient possession. They found them consecrated to demons, and stained with the blood of a thousand profane sacrifices: the barbarism and blindness of our ancestors, jealous even to fury of a worship so impious and so foolish, did not affright them: they announced to them the doctrine of salvation: the devil long defended his temples and his altars against their zeal: he armed against them the superstition of the people: cities and countries flowed with

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\* The original being addressed to an audience of French ecclesiastics, refers solely to the progress and the fate of religion in Gaul: but the application to other countries is easy and natural, and to Ireland in particular, the observations may, it is hoped, be extended, without injury to the design, or violence to the spirit, of the text.—T.

their blood: and even at this day, the places still subsist where these generous champions of the faith, abandoned to the malice and the rage of the wicked, consummated their sacrifice. Those venerable monuments are found in the greater part of the cities of Europe, and embellish them far more than the columns and the statues raised by the vanity of the conqueror, for his proud trophies transmit to after-ages, little else than the memory of calamities and slaughter; but the monuments of religion announce the salvation of entire nations, countries delivered from the captivity of the devil and subdued to Christ, by the ministry and the blood of those christian heroes. In effect, the faith was not extinguished and buried in their graves: their executioners themselves became their disciples: new Apostles arose, as it were, from their ashes, and nations, where the impious and mysterious abominations of the Druids had, for ages, formed the religion of the people, were numbered amongst the most pure and flourishing portion of the church of Christ. One of these portions they have transmitted to our care, to us who glory in the title of their successors: they bequeathed it to us pure, fervent, and yet filled with the choicest gifts of the Holy

Spirit which they had received. The lapse of years which by a destiny, unavoidable in human things, draws along with it, a change of manners and a relaxation of discipline, has altered its first innocence, and disfigured almost all its beauty. The sacred doctrine which they left, has, it is true, suffered nothing from the lapse and the corruption of ages : it has reached us pure as it was found in its source : the heresies and the novel doctrines which proud and foolish spirits have attempted, from time to time, to spread amongst us, endured but for a little, and in the end have served only to establish and confirm the ancient faith. But our morals have been far from sharing in the privilege and the stability of our doctrine ; for whilst we have preserved with pious care, the pure belief, we have, alas ! far degenerated from the fervor and the innocence of our fathers.

It is then our duty ; it is for us, to restore the inheritance of Jesus Christ to its first beauty. Were it necessary to tear it from the empire of Satan and of idolatry, and to purchase it at the price of our blood, like our holy predecessors, the greatness and the peril of the enterprise might alarm our weakness : but we find it already secured to Christ, and become, by the

zeal and the sufferings of our fathers, his possession and his patrimony, and nothing left for us but to repair the ravages of time and decay. To labour in the work of the gospel, it is no longer necessary to expose ourselves to the wheel and the gibbet: nothing more is requisite than a sincere and ardent zeal, a respect for our ministry, that we be touched with the glory of Jesus Christ and with the scandals that afflict and dishonour his inheritance; in a word, that we be ever mindful that we are his ministers and Apostles, and that we succeed to those who delivered up their souls to gain unto him the very people who are now entrusted to us. We glory in being the successors of their ministry, but our glory is nothing, if we inherit neither their spirit nor their zeal. They raised the sacred edifice in spite of the winds and the tempests which threatened, at every moment, to bury them under its ruins: they cemented it with their blood: they were its laborious founders: we are but its peaceful guardians: the most painful of our functions extend no further than to efface the stains of time, to restore what is darksome to its first brightness, to replace what falls, to support what is tottering; in fine, to close the entrance of the holy

place against the unclean, or rather to dispose them to present themselves in it like the publican, striking their breasts in repentance, with hearts full of sorrow. In a word, whatever was grand, whatever was heroic, whatever appeared to surpass the powers of nature, has been effected by our predecessors: what remains to be done by us, is almost nothing; it is to preserve to Jesus Christ, what they acquired for him; to watch, lest the enemy sow tares in the divine field: to cultivate the plants which the heavenly Father has planted, to water them incessantly from the streams of doctrine and of the sacraments, that a fatal drought may not arrest their growth, and destroy their fruitfulness.

Can we be excused, if we refuse to devote ourselves to functions so sweet, so easy, so consoling? Can we be worthy to bear the name of the ministers of Jesus Christ, and to be esteemed the successors of these Apostolic men, if through our indolence, we suffer the precious fruit of their blood and their labors to perish; if we behold without being moved, iniquity and malice, increasing every day among men; scandals become almost public usages; faith dead, without charity and without works, in the great-

er part of christians ; God almost as unknown amongst us, as he was formerly in the midst of the superstitious and idolatrous Athens, and the people of the inheritance, the holy nation, christians once a sweet odor of Christ in the midst of a pagan and corrupt world, to which the innocence and sanctity of their morals made them an object of admiration, now dishonouring christianity by excesses at which paganism would have blushed, and by the open irregularity of their lives, causing the enemies of truth to blaspheme our holy religion ?

Whence comes it however, that the desolation of the heritage of Christ, which we witness every day, does not affect us ? Whence comes it that we imagine we have satisfied our obligations, when we have repeated, oftentimes without attention, certain prayers prescribed by the church, and discharged with negligence, certain external duties of the divine worship, attached to the situations we hold in the ministry ? Are we Priests only to exhibit ourselves to the people in our churches, to appear clothed with the dignity and the splendor of the priesthood, to adorn with vain and idle pomp, those material edifices, and leave our brethren, the living temples of the Holy Ghost, to perish ?

Is not the most essential of our functions, that at least, to which all the others may be referred, the edification and the salvation of the faithful? Although the church should not have confided to our care, a particular portion of the flock, it is, as it were, all entrusted to our zeal and our charity: by the very priesthood, we are invested with the mission of the principal Pastor, we become the fathers of the faithful: the church does not intend to associate to the sacred ministry, those who will not labour: we are all indivisibly charged with the work of the gospel; and a minister who is of no utility to his brethren is a usurper of the priesthood; he has no claim to the title but that which arises from a zeal for its offices and its cares.

### SECOND REFLECTION.

Let us then, my brethren, ascend to the origin of a defect so common in the ministers of the Church. Whence comes it that a zeal for the house of the Lord, that a holy ardor for the sanctification of the flock, that a burning desire to extend the kingdom of Christ, that a lively sorrow to behold his doctrine despised, and the greater part of our brethren perishing; whence comes it, that dispositions so worthy of the



priesthood, so conformable to our vocation, so honourable to our ministry, once so common among the first labourers of the Gospel, are now so rarely found in the clergy? Whence comes a misfortune so universal and so deplorable? for never has the church seen her altars surrounded with so many ministers; never did the field of Christ support within its enclosure more labourers capable of cultivating it. The pious generosity of the faithful\* in multiplying the support, and increasing the number, of the clergy, has, at the same time, multiplied the succours, which the church has a right to expect from their services; never did she stand in greater need of those succours: never did the multiplicity of vices and of scandals render the functions of zeal more necessary. Again, then whence comes it, that zeal, far more necessary now than at any former period, seems to be quite extinct in the greater part of those whom it should most inflame? Behold the cause.

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\* Massillon alludes, in this place, to the pious foundations so numerous in France and on the Continent, none of which however, are to be found among the Catholics of these islands. A slight alteration has, therefore been made, to adapt the tenor of the discourse to the actual circumstances of these countries.—T.

In some it is the comfort and affluence which they enjoy from the very bounty of the church, or inherit from the patrimony of their ancestors, which authorizes them to lead without scruple, an easy and tranquil life, and to look upon their situation as a privilege that exempts them from the laborious functions of the ministry: to the needy and indigent, they leave the care of God's glory, of the honor of the church, and of the salvation of their brethren for whom Christ died. It would appear that the duties of the priesthood, so holy, so sublime, so far raised above the ministry of the Angels, had no other end than to provide, like the low and mechanic arts, for mean and temporal wants, and not for the spiritual necessities of souls: it would appear that it is poverty and indigence alone, and not zeal, duty and charity, that should bring labourers to the gospel; as if to co-operate in the redemption of man, to render the sacrifice and mediation of Christ profitable to our brethren, to be the ministers of the designs of God for the consummation of the elect, to continue on earth the great work for which the Son of God was sent down from heaven, were a mercenary labor reserved for those whom hunger and lowliness of birth might force to seek the employ-

ment ; and that sordid interest alone must furnish co-operators to Jesus Christ, ministers to the church, sanctifiers to the faithful, and dispensers of the mysteries of God, to man.

You can dispense with the temporal support of the faithful ; but are you the less their father and their guide ? you do not live by the altar, but are you the less consecrated to its ministry ? When the church elevated you to the priesthood, did she intend to honour you with a useless title and not associate you to the number of her labourers and her ministers ? would she by the imposition of hands, have called you to her assistance, and made you a sharer in her honors, if you declared you did not intend to take a part in her labors ? All the titles with which she invests you at your ordination, are titles of toil, titles of charity, and of solicitude : it is her love alone for the children of God, that causes her to institute ministers, and it is this love alone that can make them worthy of the ministry. Alas ! what my brethren ? because the goodness of God has placed our birth in the midst of opulence, should his benefits authorize us to be more ungrateful, more inattentive to his orders, and to the duties of our state ? This abundance, far from becoming the pretext, or be-

ing intended as an excuse, for our inactivity, has been destined in the designs of providence, to assist in the discharge, and facilitate the success, of our functions. From the moment, in which the order of heaven has consecrated you to the church, it is for her, that you are all you are: rich or poor, you are dedicated to her service, and you must, according to the example of the Apostle, fulfil your ministry, in abundance as well as in poverty. Your wealth forbids you to live by the altar, but it does not exempt you from serving it: it is on the contrary in serving it, at your own expense, that you will ensure a greater blessing and more abundant fruit. The great Apostle himself considered it the source of the peculiar glory, and of the brilliant success, of his Apostleship, to have announced the gospel without reward. You know said he, in writing to the new christians, that I have not been a burden to you; that although like the other Apostles I might exact temporal blessings, in return for the spiritual ones which I imparted to you, I neglected to enforce this right, and that the labor of those hands\* alone, supplied whatever was needful in my Apostolic journies.

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\* 1. Cor. c. iv. v. 12.

To this heroical disinterestedness does he attribute the immense harvest, which the word of the gospel produced amongst them through his ministry.

And in effect, a holy pastor, who not content to sacrifice his cares, his labors, his health to the instruction and salvation of his brethren; sacrifices to them also the abundance with which providence may have blessed him; who provides, at the same time, for the necessities of the soul and of the body; with what religious respect does he not inspire the flock, for a ministry, capable of rendering those who exercise its functions, so generous and so charitable? How great are the benedictions, which accompany the labors of a minister of this character: how deep the impressions which his words and his exhortations make on hearts, already prepared and moved by his bounty? They love a religion so ready to succour the unfortunate, and they are equally touched by the benefits which it bestows on the needy, and by the crimes by which they have a thousand times dishonoured it. Did not Christ himself, although the master of all hearts, dispose the famishing multitude to recognise the divinity of his mission and of his doctrine, by feeding them with miracu-

lous bread, on the mountain? Did not the corporal cures which he wrought, every day, facilitate to his grace, the cure of the souls whose bodies were freed from the infirmities with which they were afflicted? Did not his benefits always prepare a way for his instructions? and did not his divine word fructify in all places, because *he went about, doing good to all?*\* And yet you would abandon your functions, on the very ground that promises you the greatest success in the ministry, and because providence has bestowed on you greater means of being useful to your brethren, you imagine yourself more excused from assisting them? The first cause then of the want of zeal is a state of comfort and of abundance in the ministry.

But it is true that this is but a pretext, which we use to authorize us to lead a commodious and idle life, and to remove ourselves to a distance from the painful offices of the ministry: the true cause of our abandonment of them, is the cold and languishing state of our heart; it is the want of love for God, and of charity for our brethren. In vain do our morals present to the eyes of men, a laudable regularity: in vain

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\* Acts. c. x. v. 38.

it is, that nothing appears in our conduct to wound the decency and the gravity of our profession: in vain it is, that by a smooth, prudent and tranquil life, we attract perhaps the esteem of the world, accustomed as it is, to see others of our state, join disorder and scandal to idleness: we are dead in the sight of God: his love which is inseparable from the love of our brethren, is absolutely extinguished in our hearts: our regularity is only a decorum which we think due to the world and to the dignity of our station, but we give nothing to God. In effect, my brethren, did we love God, were his glory dearer to us than our own, charged as we are by our ministry, with his interests, could we behold without emotion, his honor every day and in every place, outraged by the excesses and the errors that are spread over the face of the earth? Saint Paul, at the sight of the superstitions of Athens, struck to see a whole people who prided themselves on their wisdom, render public and sacrilegious honors to a thousand strange and fabulous divinities, whilst the one true God of the universe, was unknown amongst them, trembled, says the sacred historian, with a holy zeal, felt himself agitated by the most lively transports of the Holy Ghost, and of the divine love,

with which he was inflamed: *incitabatur spiritus ejus in ipso, videns idololatriæ deditam civitatem*;\* and this great Apostle, alone, without support, unknown, mean and abject in appearance, was not to be prevented by all the power and majesty of the Areopagus, from appearing before so grave and numerous an assembly, from announcing to them the God whom they knew not, and the vanity and absurdity of the idols to which they had raised such magnificent altars. And if by the just judgment of God, his zeal, to the greater part of those false sages, appeared nothing but folly, yet the word of the gospel did not return to him, empty: Dionysius, an Areopagite, Damaris a holy woman, and many others received with thanksgiving the benefit of the light of truth, which the Lord had now caused to shine in the midst of darkness.

When the fire of divine love truly burns in the heart, it produces in the minister of the altar, a lively grief to see his heavenly master insulted, his holy law violated and despised by the greater part of men; an ardent desire to avenge his glory, to procure for him the homage and the gratitude, due to his supreme Majesty

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



and boundless goodness; a holy eagerness to devote himself, to use his feeble talents, to sacrifice his very life to gain to him, true worshippers, to manifest his name and his glory, to inspire into all men the same sentiments of fear, of love and of gratitude with which he himself is fully penetrated. We cannot love, and not be sensible to the insults offered to the object of our affections; we cannot be sensible to them without employing all our efforts to prevent or arrest them, particularly when besides the obligation common to all men, our ministry makes this a peculiar and essential duty; a duty which is the very foundation, and which includes all the other duties of our profession.

And even though our zeal should not be blessed with success, though the truths which we announce to sinners, should fall upon hearts, hard and insensible, still we should have the consolation of having rendered glory to God, and done what was in our power, to procure him respect from those who insult him. He does not always console his ministers, by the prompt and visible success of their labors: but his word never fails to operate in secret: the holy seed which seems to fall upon an ungrateful soil, is not therefore lost, and sooner or later it will

bring forth the fruits of salvation. God has his own moments, and it is not for us to point them out, to his power and his wisdom: his spirit worketh where, and when, it wisheth: we see the changes which it produces, but the secret and admirable ways by which they are brought about, no man knows: these are among those profound secrets of providence, which will be disclosed only in the great day of revelation. From all, he requires, care, toil, cultivation; to himself alone, he reserves the increase: he commands us to teach, to exhort, to reprove, not to detain the truth in injustice but to make it resound in the ears of all: it is he alone that can open to it the entrance of the heart.

But my brethren, the fear that brilliant success may not attend our efforts, springing, as it does, from pride and self-love, so far from justifying our remissness, would serve but to render it the more criminal. Yet such fear is not the real cause of the neglect of our functions; the true reason has been already given, it is that we are concerned neither for the glory of God nor the salvation of our brethren. And truly as an Apostle says, how shall we be alive to the interests and the honor of God whom we see not, whilst we are regardless of the wants and

the ruin of our brethren whom we see?\* can we, without emotion, without an endeavour to save them, see those perishing, whom we love; especially when they are our brethren, when we are appointed to watch over them, when their salvation is to be the fruit of our care; when they are entrusted to us, as a precious deposite of which we shall render a severe account; when their destruction becomes always the cause of the condemnation and the perdition of ourselves?

Saint Paul wished to be an anathema for his brethren; that is to say, he accounted as nothing his labors, his persecutions, his disgraces, whatever he had endured, for them; he would have wished, had it been possible, to suffer beyond the bounds or duration of the present world, if their salvation had required it of him: his consolations, his afflictions, his anxieties, whatever passed in his heart, had no other object than their progress and perseverance in the faith which he had announced to them: his letters breathe nothing but touching, generous and Apostolic tenderness: you are, said he to them, the shining proofs of my Apostleship; that is to

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\* 1. John. c. iv. v. 20.

say, I am worthy of the glorious title of Apostle and Minister of Jesus Christ, only in as much as I suffer, and expose myself to every thing, to hunger, to thirst, to nakedness, and to the most frightful torments, to bring you to the knowledge of truth. Yes, my brethren, we are worthy of bearing the venerable name of ministers of Christ, only in as much as we love our brethren for whom Christ died, and spare no care, no toils, not even life itself, to snatch them from the empire of Satan. We are says an ancient father, *the Vicars of the Charity of Christ*: we succeed to that burning love, with which he was inflamed for men; he has made us the depositaries of it: he perpetuates his priesthood in us, only to perpetuate his love; that tender love which so eagerly sought, even a single strayed sheep; that paternal love which received with striking marks of the most lively joy, the son who rebelled, was lost and found again; that unconquerable love which forgot fatigue, sustenance, and all its necessities, to instruct a woman of Samaria; that generous love which shed tears of affliction over the faithless Jerusalem, now about to perish without resource, because it had refused to receive the peace and salvation which his goodness and mercy had prof-

ferred; in fine, that inexhaustible love, which sighed for the baptism of blood, in which he was to be baptized on the cross, because man was to find in it, the remedy of all his evils, the price of his redemption, and reconciliation with his eternal Father.

Now do we feel even a single spark of this love in our hearts? are we afflicted at the ruin of our brethren? do we like Jesus pour forth our tears over the vices which have so frightfully inundated every state and condition of life; the court, the city, the country, the great, the people, the rich, the poor? Alas! we learn with eagerness and with pleasure, the most secret, the most afflicting and the most shameful transgressions of our brethren: the story of those disorders which are concealed from the public, excites rather our curiosity than our sorrow; and we publish them, with a secret satisfaction to those, who have not yet heard the tale: we claim the praise of being better acquainted than others, with the private licentiousness of the palace, of the city or of our neighbourhood: the errors of our brethren are to us, a subject to amuse our idleness, rather than to touch our pity; and instead of exciting our grief or stimulating our zeal, seem rather destined to serve

as the matter of worthless conversation. Thus, morals become every day, more corrupt, because the zeal of the ministers of the Lord, is every day, more and more relaxed: thus the torrent of crime and of scandal spreads over the whole earth, because but few of Apostolic spirit are found, who might oppose themselves like a wall of brass, to its desolating progress. The greater part of sinners live, tranquil in their guilt, because they hear not those voices of thunder, which animated by the spirit of God, are alone capable of awaking them from their lethargy. The world by long habituating us to its disorders and its scandals, has rendered us insensible to their enormity: we look upon the sad spectacle of its folly, as an evil without remedy, one which has commenced with the world, and which will terminate only with the world: we persuade ourselves that the morals of the present days, have been the morals of every age: we forget those happy times, in which a single transgressor was looked upon as a monster and a prodigy in the midst of a numerous Church,\* and in which the crimes we treat as mere weaknesses, were expiated by separation from the assembly of the faithful, and by the tedious rigors of public penance. No, my brethren,

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\* 1. Cor. c. v.

christianity has been corrupted only by the corruption, the want of zeal, and the indolence of the clergy. The church would quickly resume her first brightness, were we to resume the first spirit of the holy pastors who have preceded us: were we ourselves to change, all things would change with us. Disorders now become universal, far from justifying or extenuating our infidelity, depose against us, and render it the more criminal: it is through our means alone, they have been introduced among christians, and have infected christianity: it is by us alone that they are perpetuated: they are the unfortunate work of our degeneracy and remissness; how then can they authorize or excuse our negligence and tepidity?

Yet, my brethren, it is but too true, that it is upon this very ground of the universality and publicity of disorder, that we justify our apathy and reconcile ourselves to our indifference for the salvation of our brethren: and this is a third cause of the want of zeal.

That is to say, it is a base timidity, which dares not raise its voice against common prejudices, and which is more solicitous about the vain suffrages of men, than about their important and eternal interests: it is a criminal human respect, which renders us more attentive

and more sensible to our own glory, than to the glory of God, of which we are the depositaries: it is the prudence of the flesh, which represents zeal, that heavenly wisdom, under the false ideas of excess, of indiscretion and of rashness: a new pretext which totally extinguishes the spirit of zeal, in the hearts of the greater part of the clergy.

We honour our cowardice with the specious names of moderation and reserve; under pretence that zeal must not be carried too far, we lay it aside altogether: by continually wishing to avoid the dangers of imprudence and precipitancy, we suffer ourselves, to fall without scruple, into those of apathy and indolence. We would wish to render ourselves useful to sinners, and at the same time, render them favorable to us; that is, we should like a zeal that would bring applause, should like to stand forth against the passions of men, and yet attract their praise, to condemn the disorders which they love, and yet to be applauded by the very persons whom we condemn. But how vain to expect to apply the knife to the sore, without the cries or the pangs of the diseased? No, my brethren, let us not deceive ourselves, if zeal, Apostolic, courageous, wise and disinterested; if the zeal that could once say to the



Cesars, *David whom you have imitated in his transgressions, imitate in his repentance* ;\* that zeal which once converted the world, if such zeal is so rarely found amongst us, it is, because in the discharge of our functions, we seek only ourselves, instead of seeking the glory of Jesus Christ and the good of our brethren. Our first concern, on entering into the ministry, is not whether we shall be useful, but whether we shall be applauded : we esteem nothing as success, which is not honourable to us, in the eyes of men : whatever is to be attended by humiliation and disgrace to us, although God were to be glorified by it, and his grace were to employ it, to shed benedictions on our ministry, we avoid as a disappointment and a misfortune : it would seem that we are pastors of the Church, only for ourselves. When the Apostle discharged the high duties of his Apostleship, he regarded glory and dishonor with the same indifference : he did not think it possible to please men, and at the same time save them and be the servant of Christ. But we wish to unite things which were judged incompatible by that heavenly man, who in heaven itself, had learned those secrets, which were never committed to the ear of man. Let us disabuse ourselves ;

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\* St. Ambrose.

Christ did not come to bring peace but the sword:\* the truths of which we are the interpreters cannot please the world, because they condemn the world. If, before entering on our functions, and endeavouring to render ourselves useful to our brethren, we wait till the gospel shall become agreeable to the world, and till truth shall no longer, find any to contradict it, we await what Christ has foretold us, will never come to pass. The world will be to the end, the enemy of Christ and of his doctrines; it will always, answer as the Jews did to him, *durus est hic sermo*; † these truths are too severe and unreasonable; these maxims are impracticable; we cannot hear them, without feeling ourselves full of aversion and revolt: *et quis potest eum audire?* The world will never alter this language; we must always expect to find it armed and ranged against us; opposing the arms of flesh and blood against the spiritual arms of our holy warfare; thwarting our designs, rendering our labors abortive, turning our doctrine into ridicule, decrying our ministry, and often pouring the venom of its censure and of its calumny upon our very persons.

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\* Mat. c. x. v. 34.

† John. c. vi. v. 61.

Why then should we suffer, what ought to be the consolation and crown of our duties and of our toils, to become the very motive of our disgust with our functions? Remember that the success of the sacred ministry, was not promised by Christ to his Apostles, but with the contempt, the disgraces, the contradictions and the sufferings that were to accompany it. If they had delayed to announce the gospel, till the cities and provinces should have been ready to receive it with applause, the whole world, would have remained yet idolatrous, and instead of the pure faith and sacred doctrine, we should have received from our ancestors but the sorrowful inheritance of blindness, superstition and idolatry. The most illustrious character, and the most demonstrative proof, of the divinity of Christ's doctrine, is, to be always contradicted and always triumphant; to stir up the enmity of the powers of the world, and yet subject the world to its yoke; to revolt flesh and blood, and pride, and ambition, and false wisdom, and all the passions of man, and yet unaided, without force, without support, without protection, to establish itself on the ruins of his vices and his concupiscences, by the arms of grace and truth, alone. It is then a want of faith, to dread con-

traditions and impediments, since faith itself points them out, as the glory and the recompence of our ministry.

See, if in every age, those pastors who were animated by the spirit of God, have not had contradictions to bear from the world, and if, succeeding to the zeal and to the ministry of the Apostles, they did not also succeed to their tribulations and opprobrium. It was not by cautiously managing, but by combating sinners, that they converted them: it was not by flattering the great and the powerful that they subjected them to the yoke of Christ; but like Saint Paul,\* by making even kings tremble on their thrones, by the terrible picture of the judgment to come, and of the punishments reserved for the worldly and the voluptuous.

Yet we flatter ourselves that we shall succeed better with the high and the powerful by using other means; and there is here a perpetual illusion which conceals, even from ourselves, our prevarication and our weakness. When our discourses are addressed to the people, we display against them, all the severity and all the frankness of a generous zeal: we condemn their

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\* Acts. c. xxiv. v. 25.

disorders freely and loudly : we lay aside that cautious timidity that would soften the asperity of truth : we announce it without fear, without evasion, without diminution, and, sometimes, even without the mildness and the moderation inseparable from true zeal, which is ever animated and directed by charity and wisdom. But towards the great as is said by the Apostle, *we alter our language*; scarcely do we dare to show them, at a distance, those truths which displease them, but which alone, could be useful to them : their most public and shameful vices are sacred in our eyes, and we touch them only with such circumspection, and with strokes so light and so ill-directed as that they themselves cannot perceive them : our great concern is not, to correct, but not to irritate them : it would seem that our ministry in their regard, had merely for object to treat them with caution, and not to convert them ; to announce to them, the word of salvation in such sort, that they may find in it, nothing, that should concern or interest them. We persuade ourselves that we ought not, by an indiscreet zeal to deprive the church of a credit and support that may be useful to her ; as if the church could not uphold herself without the aid of the arm of flesh ; as if men plunged in excesses, the

slaves of intemperance, could be useful in the work of God : as if it were at present necessary to flatter the great, to maintain that religion, which had established itself only in combating their passions and their vices ; as if, in fine, it were an indiscretion and a crime, not to be flatterers and prevaricators in the discharge of our ministry.

No, my brethren, let us not be solicitous to gain for religion, the support of flesh and blood : we may combine fidelity to our ministry, with the respect and attention due to greatness : what we owe to the love of truth is not incompatible with the observance of the rules of christian prudence. Religion authorizes not the excesses, nor the indiscretions of zeal : she condemns only human respect and the degenerate and interested views of self-love. Let us respect the great and the powerful, but let us not respect their immoralities and their scandals : let us render to them the love, the homage, and the tribute which we owe them, but let us not be equally complaisant to their vices : let us exhibit to the flock a model of submission and of fidelity to them, but let us not scandalize our people, by the example of a base and shameful adulation. The children of the world are sufficiently studious of corrupting

them by the poison of unceasing and unmerited praises; let not us too, prostitute our ministry to so unworthy and so criminal a purpose, but let us rather preserve for them, at least in our wise and commendable sincerity, a resource by which they may arrive at the knowledge, and comprehend the value, of truth. If our situations put it in our power to instruct them, let us not be guided by the consideration of what they may contribute to our fortune, but of what we owe to their salvation. The only means of being truly useful to them, is, not to wish to render them useful to us: from the moment in which we design to profit of their favor, we must begin by sparing and indulging their weaknesses; it is but rarely, that their graces are not the price and the reward of our condescensions and compliances. Let us tremble when they heap their favors on us; the more they raise us, the more we should fear that we may have degraded ourselves: their gifts always cost us dearly, since they are seldom to be purchased except at the expense of truth, and by the sacrifice of the dignity of our ministry. It is not that the great are inaccessible to truth: the more unaccustomed they are to its beauty, the more would they be disposed to respect and venerate it: they perish,

for the most part, because there is no one near who has the courage to point out the danger, or to stretch forth a hand to prevent them from falling into the precipice: it is not that they want the principles of religion or the fear of God, but they want ministers, who would dare to employ them, to correct their passions, and we should still see Theodosiuses among the faithful, were the bounty of God, still to raise up in his church, pastors of the zeal and the intrepidity of Ambrose.

It is then human respect that extinguishes in us sacerdotal zeal, and the love of truth. To this cause of the want of zeal, may be added another equally common, but which I sincerely hope does not regard those who now hear me: I mean irregularity of morals.

It is not surprising that a Priest whose soul is stained by a thousand criminal passions, finds himself without strength, without impulse, and without courage, when it becomes necessary to reprehend and correct similar disorders in others. What impression can be made upon our zeal or our honor, by the sight of crimes which we love and cherish in ourselves? Were we capable of being moved by the view of them in our brethren, we should begin by feeling and



deploring our own misery. Familiarized as we are, to iniquity, it becomes in others, an object calculated more to corrupt us, than to make us sorrowful, fitter to awaken our passions than to stimulate our zeal. The public scandals which we daily witness are for us, become so many motives of impenitence, justifying in our eyes, our own secret transgressions, and thus what should pierce our hearts with the most lively grief, calms and encourages us, and entirely extinguishes in our bosoms every sentiment of religion and of repentance. So, if our situation obliges us, in this state, to announce to the faithful, the truths of salvation, and stand forward against public disorders; what indifference! what coldness! how constrained and disconcerted is our whole appearance. No, my brethren, our morals should not bring a blush over the reproaches which we make to others: a zeal that is belied by our guilty conduct, is but a theatrical exhibition, in which there is nothing truly serious, but the abuse of our ministry and the scandal which results from it to the church. Not only do you debase the word of God in your own mouth, but you render the zeal of the holy ministers who announce it, suspected and unproductive. The world which sees in

them, the same zeal which you exhibit, suspects also the same vices: it persuades itself that zeal is but an idle and ostentatious art; and to justify to itself, its errors and its crimes, it has no reason, more specious or more forcible, than the lives of those who condemn them: this is the eternal burden of the libertine's song: it is the impious language which gives point and wit to the daring satires and the licentious verses that are continually poured upon the public. A Priest whose morals discredit the truths which he announces, makes more unbelievers and libertines than all the detestable writings which infidelity has produced and circulated in darkness, and he tarnishes religion by a stain which the piety and the zeal of so many holy pastors is no longer able to efface. Zeal then against vice, is seemly and useful to the church, only in the mouth of virtue. Supposing even that our miseries are not known to the faithful, that our caution in guilt has saved them from the scandal of our disorders; yet what words, can a heart that is double, corrupted and sunk in the most shameful and abandoned pleasures, furnish to recommend modesty and truth? to exalt the sanctity, and enforce the severity, of the law? what grace can you have, says the

Apostle,\* to thunder against the adulterers, the fornicators and the sacrilegious, if your denunciations against them, be strongly applicable to yourself? will not the secret shame alone, of your condition, the contradiction between your conduct and your language, the false personage which you are compelled to sustain, dry up the words in your very heart; and how will you be able to support so sad and so reproachful a ministry? even though you should carry artifice and dissimulation so far as to counterfeit the exterior of zeal, what fruit could accrue from it, to your brethren? it is in vain that we mask our disorders; through the appearances of piety, something unaccountably forced and singular breaks forth, which cannot flow from a pure source: it is in vain that the voice strikes the ear, the secret unction is wanting, and nothing reaches the heart: we cry aloud, we become warmed and impassioned; but we alone are heated, the auditory is cold as death: it is the heart alone, that can effectually speak to the heart: we may indeed counterfeit the language, and the vehemence, of zeal; but true zeal alone can faithfully represent itself.

Besides, loaded as you are with the divine malediction, how can you draw down the blessings

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\* Romans. c. 2.

of heaven on your ministry? can you be in the hands of God, an instrument of life and salvation to your brethren, you who like another Lazarus, abide, as a putrifying carcass, in all the horror and infection of death? will the Holy Ghost speak by a mouth, a thousand times defiled by the language of passion, of indecency, and of guilt? will he operate the work of justice and sanctification, by a worker of iniquity and of hypocrisy? will he attach his graces and his benefits to functions which insult him, and which are a crime and an abomination in his sight? will he make use of a ministry of sacrilege and of reprobation, to form to himself, saints and elect?

But, my brethren, how is it possible that a state of guilt, and of disorder, should not render a pastor incapable of zeal, and of any success in the exercise of his functions, since tepidity alone, in those, whose morals are otherwise regular, is an invincible obstacle: and this is a new cause of the want of zeal.

Yes, my brethren, it is not the state of frightful disorder that you have most to dread; that regards but a small number of souls given over to a reprobate sense, in whom every principle of piety and of the fear of God, seems utterly extin-

guished; nor does God permit those horrors and scandals to be multiplied in his church. But an evil against which you should be much more on your guard, is that state of tepidity and of negligence in the discharge of your duties, which destroys their entire fruit. And in effect, how can you, in the course of your office, show yourselves to the people, animated with that divine fire which bears sparks of grace even into the most cold and insensible hearts, you who appear lifeless and frozen in the very exercise of your duties, and who feel no quickening and generous ardor for the salvation of your brethren, nor for your own? If you discharge your ministry with an air of habit, of irksomeness and of repugnance inseparable from a tepid and unfaithful life, the same dispositions, will be found in those who hear you: your functions will awaken neither piety nor faith in yourself, and will leave them slumbering, in your audience. Alas! in a holy and fervent pastor, prodigies of zeal, of industry, of patience and of labor are necessary, to combat the obstacles, which the world, the devil and the present corruption of morals, oppose to the success of his ministry, and often in spite of all the ardor of his zeal, and all the toil of inces-

sant cares, he has the affliction of seeing them produce nothing. And you, unworthy and careless labourer, what can you promise yourself from your degeneracy and your idleness? what fruit can you expect to gather from a field, in the cultivation of which, your hands are feeble and languid, and which seems to have been intrusted to you, not that it might be the object of your labors and of your solicitude, but that it might serve rather as a place of repose for your sluggishness.

If a simple christian who lives in a state of tepidity, be unfit for the kingdom of heaven, and be rejected from the mouth of God, as a lukewarm and nauseous draught, what ought we to think of a Priest who does the work of God negligently? what an object of disgust to a God, ever jealous of his gifts! what an afflicting spectacle to the church, which thus sees, an office demanding zeal and labor for the salvation of her children, filled by a tepid and idle minister, instead of an active and faithful pastor, who would have given her glory and consolation, by adding to the kingdom of Christ, by edifying the just, and by turning a multitude of sinners from the evil of their ways, to the love of justice and the practice of penance! A tepid

and inactive life, is then one of the most ordinary causes of the want of zeal.

It is true, that it is, oftentimes, a tender and timid piety itself, that withholds us from the exercise of our functions, and this is the last cause of the want of zeal.

Yes, my brethren, we, every day, see individuals among the clergy, who are rendered useless to the church, by an extravagant love of retirement, by a mistaken delicacy of conscience, by an ill-directed sentiment of their own unworthiness, and by an ill-applied idea of the holiness and sublimity of their duties. They prefer the leisure and the tranquillity of solitude, of prayer and of study, to the labors and the agitations of the ministry; they dread the perils of dissipation, and they are insensible to the dangers of an inactive and useless life; they persuade themselves that it is sufficient for a Priest to edify the church by his conduct and his example, without assisting her by his toils; to be without reproach in the eyes of men, without contributing to their eternal welfare; in a word, they think that in labouring for their own salvation, they acquire the right of neglecting the salvation of their brethren. They give themselves up to a taste for idleness, because

repose offers only the pious ideas of retirement, of fear, of flight from the world and its dangers. They are estranged from the practice of their duties, by the very motives which ought to engage them to yield to the impulse of the spirit of God, and enter courageously on the labors of their vocation; the sentiments of faith and of piety, which alone can render them worthy of their ministry, prevent the exercise of its functions; and because they might discharge them with honor and with advantage, they fancy themselves authorized to abandon them. But how can they, says Saint Gregory, prefer the sweets and the security of retirement and repose, to the interests and the salvation of their brethren, since the only Son of God, himself, came forth from the bosom of his eternal repose, to render himself useful to men, by bearing to them truth and salvation and life! *Qua enim mente is qui proximis profuturus enitesceret, utilitati cæterorum secretum præponit suum, quando ipse summus Patris unigenitus ut multis prodesset, de sinu Patris egressus est ad publicum nostrum?\**

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\* Saint Gregory. Past. p. 1. c. 1.



You fear the dissipation and the dangers inevitable in the discharge of public functions ; but it is this fear itself that will support you ; they are to be discharged with success and security, only in proportion as they are discharged with fear and solicitude. You deem yourselves unworthy of a ministry so holy and so sublime ; but it is this very sentiment that will render you worthy of it ; we cannot exercise it in a manner worthy of God, but when we acknowledge our own infirmity and unworthiness. You feel a greater taste for study and retirement ; but whether is it taste or duty that ought to decide on your obligations ? have you become a public minister, that you might live only for yourself ? The love of retirement will ensure the success of our duties, and we ought to be interdicted, were we led to undertake and embrace them, merely by a leaning towards the world and its dissipations. But you are conscious that you possess no talents ; you are persuaded that you could be of no service to your brethren, and thus you think that you should leave the duties of the priesthood to pastors more learned, more holy, and more capable of producing fruit. You are persuaded that you could be of no service to your brethren ? but it

it is this very persuasion that will draw down a new blessing on your labors : God is jealous of the work of the sanctification of souls ; he cannot endure that man should ascribe it to himself, and we become faithful ministers, and fit to be co-operators in the designs of his mercy towards the people, only in as much as we shall esteem ourselves unprofitable servants. Finally, you perceive in yourself no talent for the functions of the ministry : but the ardent desire of the salvation of souls, is itself a great talent : a heart that is penetrated and inflamed with this holy desire, is always successful ; it compensates for all other talents ; what do I say ? it forms them in us ; whereas without this tender charity and this priestly zeal, however brilliant may be the talents we possess, we are but as the sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. We have all the talents necessary to render us serviceable to our brethren, when we have a sincere love, and an ardent desire, of their salvation ; this is the treasure of which Christ speaks, and from which the Scribe instructed the kingdom of heaven, draws all his talents and all his riches, ancient and new. Place yourself in the hands of those who govern the church ; they will know how well to employ you, according to the strength of

your talents and the extent of your acquirements: it is to them, not to you that it appertains, to judge of your capacity: there are in the church so many offices, that they will easily find one suited to your powers; and though nature may seem to have refused to you, the qualifications requisite for the right discharge of your duties, still the grace which you will receive from their appointment, will supply you with whatever may be necessary to ensure the success of your ministry.

Remember then, my brethren, that you cannot be too distrustful of those paths which turn you aside from the common track; whatever advantage or security they may appear to offer, they lead you astray, when the duties of your state call you in a different direction. The solitary would be ruined in the world, where neither the obligations of his profession, nor the will of God requires his presence. The Priest would perish in the inactivity of repose and retreat, which the duties of his ministry, and the wants of the church, cannot permit him to enjoy. Nothing, says Saint John Chrysostom, is more opposed to the spirit of that priesthood to which the church has associated us, than a retired and tranquil life, which is often inconsiderately look-

ed upon, as a more sublime and perfect state : *Nihil enim minus aptum est ad Ecclesiæ præfecturam, quam secordia et ignavia, quam alii exercitationem quamdam admirabilem putant.\** No, my brethren, there is no security for us, but in complying with what God demands of us : piety is not the mortal work of taste and caprice, but the divine fruit of order and of rule : diffidence in ourselves is a virtue, when it renders us more attentive and exact in the exercise of our functions ; it is a vice and an illusion when it alienates us from the discharge of our duties : to prefer a kind of life of our own choosing, to that which established order points out and prescribes, is not humility but presumption : it is to be guilty of the vanity of wishing to be our own guides, and of respecting more our own discretion and judgment, than the regular and express authority of the church. Pride ever seeks to be singular : true humility loves the common way, because nothing is so mortifying to pride, as to be confounded with the crowd of our brethren.

Let us in conclusion, again briefly call to mind all the various causes of the want of zeal

among the clergy; they cannot be too often placed before your eyes: from these poisonous sources flow all the evils of the church,—the contempt of holy things, the degradation and disgrace of the ministry, the decay and the corruption of the morals of the faithful. They are; first, a state of comfort and abundance, as if poverty alone, and not charity, ought to provide pastors, to glorify God and sanctify his people. Secondly, the want of the love of God; it must indeed be extinguished in our hearts, when we remain unmoved and insensible at the sight of those disorders, which every day, insult him in our very presence. Thirdly, the want of charity towards our brethren; can we pretend to love them, and yet see them perishing, whilst their eternal ruin, awakens not in our breast, the slightest desire to assist them! Fourthly, a human respect which makes us seek the esteem and the friendship of men, at the expense of religion and of truth; a baseness which binds up our tongue, and induces us to prefer our own glory and our own interests to the glory of the church, and the interests of Jesus Christ: courage, disinterestedness, a holy generosity, a wise and heroic firmness, are the first effects of the grace of the priesthood, and if those sentiments

are effaced from our hearts, the grace of our vocation is entirely extinct. Fifthly, an irregular and vicious life; what zeal can a Priest feel against the vices of his brethren, who is rendered insensible by the guilt and the enormity of his own crimes! Sixthly, a tepid and faithless life; zeal is a holy fervor whose first impulse and first attention are directed towards ourselves: he who pardons almost every thing in himself, can but feebly reprove the transgressions of his brethren. Finally, a timid and false piety: we decline, through a pious illusion, the functions of the holy ministry; we make of our piety a pretext to dispense us from the rules of piety itself; we fear that we ourselves shall be lost, and we do not fear to render ourselves guilty of the destruction of our brethren: we fly from those perils to which the order of God and the vocation of the church has called us, and flight becomes for us the only peril, which we do not know, and which we ought most to dread.

Destroy, O my God! in the hearts of thy ministers, every obstacle which the world and the flesh oppose, without ceasing, to that zeal which should render us, the instruments of thy mercies towards thy people: inflame them with that spirit of fire and of wisdom which thou

didst pour on thy first disciples. May the succession of Apostolic zeal be transmitted from age to age, in thy church, together with the succession of faith and of sacred doctrine. Do thou thyself form in thy vineyard, labourers powerful in word and in work, whom the world cannot intimidate; whom the powers of the earth cannot shake; whom no human considerations can affect; whose thoughts and actions will be guided only by the desire of thy glory and of the salvation of their brethren; and who shall count the suffrages of men as nothing, except, in as much, as they may contribute to bless and glorify thy holy name for ever. *Amen.*

# A DISCOURSE

ON THE

## VOCATION TO THE ECCLESIASTICAL STATE.

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Sicut misit me Pater, et ego mitto vos.

*As the Father hath sent me, I also send you.*

JOHN. chap. xx. ver. 21.

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**T**HESSE are the words of Jesus Christ, appearing after his resurrection, to the assembly of his disciples, when he came to console their faith by his presence, and to calm their fears by the peace which he announces, and which he bequeaths to them, as the sweetest fruit of his victory, and the dearest pledge of his remembrance.

He did not think it enough to say to them, in establishing them the ministers of his gospel,



go, behold I send you, teach all nations, and baptize them in my name. It was necessary to raise their spirits, as yet cast down, and confounded by the scandal of his passion, by inspiring them with exalted sentiments of the sublime office in which he was about to engage them. And he therefore gives them the most lofty and divine idea of their vocation, by comparing their mission to his own, and by assimilating his departure from the bosom of his eternal Father to come into the world, to their separation from his person, to bear his name and his gospel to the extremities of the earth: *Sicut misit me Pater, et ego mitto vos.*

In effect, it is as if he were to say to them : as I have been on earth, the envoy of my Father, so you shall be my envoys among men : as the Father was in me reconciling the world to himself, so shall I be in you, myself exercising a ministry of reconciliation : as those who have seen me, have seen my Father, so those who shall see you shall see me also, and you shall be on earth, the image of my person and the most lively representation of my power and authority: as it was the Father, who abiding in me, operated all my works, so it is I who abiding in you shall operate all yours, shall baptize, shall

give the Holy Ghost, shall speak before the kings and the princes of the world: as the Father had chosen me before the beginning of ages, and as all the designs of his mercy towards men were referred to me, so I have chosen you from the beginning of the world, and all my eternal designs towards my church are directed only to you: as the Father hath given me all power, so I also give you the keys of life and of death, of heaven and of hell, and bequeath to you a power which will even appear to excel my own. The Father hath caused me to sit on his right hand and given me all my enemies as a footstool; I will place you on twelve thrones, judging the tribes of Israel: the Father appearing in a splendid cloud, has borne testimony to me from heaven, and I shall, one day, appear, seated on a cloud of glory, and attended by all the angels of heaven, to bear testimony to you, before the assembled nations of the earth. In fine, as I have glorified my Father in the world, so you shall glorify me, shall confess my name and bear it through the universe till the consummation of ages: and as the mission which I have received from my Father has been the principle and the foundation of all my authority, and of all my greatness,

so the mission which you this day receive from me, shall be the only foundation of all your power and of all your elevation: *Sicut misit me Pater, et ego mitto vos.* To this last reflection I shall confine the instruction which you ought to draw from a parallel so magnificent and so august, and which conveys, at the same time, the most sublime and terrific ideas of our ministry.

The more exalted are the functions to which we are called, the more necessary is it for us to receive a regular mission to exercise them. Let no man, says Saint Paul, rashly dare to usurp this honor, unless he be called by God, as was Aaron: *Nec quisquam sumit sibi honorem, sed qui vocatur a Deo, tanquam Aaron.\** If it was necessary that Christ himself, to begin the work of man's salvation, should have been sent by his Father, surely it must be far more necessary, that we, in order to continue it, should have been sent by Christ: and as we are called to the same ministry, it is requisite that our vocation have the same marks which characterized his mission. Now what are the essential marks of the mission of Jesus Christ: that

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\* Hebrews. c. 5.

is to say, those to which he appeals to prove to the Jews, that he was sent by his Father? To explain them I have only to confine myself strictly to the words of my text: I shall present to you the rule, of which each one of you will make the application to himself. Were Jesus Christ to appear, this day, in the midst of you, could he say to each one in particular, as he once said to his disciples, as my Father hath sent me, I also send you: *Sicut misit me Pater, et ego mitto vos?* This is what we have now to examine.

But before entering into the subject, I suppose, that the vocation of heaven is necessary in the choice which we make of a state of life, nor is it my design to establish here, this general and capital truth, on which you have been already instructed. You know that our lot, forming as it does, a part of the general system of the universe, and holding as it were, by an infinite number of secret relations to every object by which we are surrounded, we can no more dispose of it, than we can dipose of the universal harmony and government of the visible world; that the choice of a state of life being appointed as the principal means of our justification, it can no more be the work of man

alone, than his justification itself ; and in fine, that although man has indeed been left to the guidance of his own counsel, yet his destiny shall for ever remain in the hands of God.

But even although the Lord were to leave to the caprice of men, the choice of every other profession : even although by a supposition foolish and injurious to the providence and the wisdom of the universal Sovereign, chance were to preside over that variety of conditions into which mankind is divided to minister to the various necessities of society : even although, like some impious philosophers, we should figure to ourselves, an indolent Deity, who having drawn the world out of nothing, should retire within himself, leave to chance the guidance of his work, regard the detail of its conduct either as an amusement unworthy of his greatness, or as a care incompatible with his repose : still, says Saint Cyprian, we should reserve to him the choice of his ministers, as an affair that is peculiar and that regards him alone, as it relates to the appointment of men, faithful to uphold his interests, agreeable in his sight, that they may appear in his presence with gifts and sacrifices, zealous for the honor of his altars ; calculated to secure to him the vows and the homage

of the people; in a word, the depositaries of his law, the interpreters of his will, and charged, as it were, with the care of his glory on earth. It is then incontrovertibly certain that the honor of the priesthood should not be the consequence of the choice of man, but of the vocation of God: that no man without sacrilegious intrusion, can speak in his name, who does not speak by his authority, can use his power if he has not received it, treat of the concerns of the Lord, without his commission, and be the man of God, as Saint Paul speaks, without being sent by God.

But my object is not to convince you of the necessity of being called to the priesthood, in order to enter legitimately into so holy a state: of this truth you have little doubt; but what appears to me, most essential on this important subject, is to summon you before your own conscience, and make each one ask himself the question: Am I called? Is it the vocation of Jesus Christ, or the voice of flesh and blood, that has placed me in the sanctuary? Is the holy state to which I aspire that destiny which the Lord prepared for me before the beginning of the world? Am I in my own place, or do I occupy the place of another? In a word, has Christ sent me, as his Father had sent him? To

clear up a doubt so awful and so interesting to our eternal salvation, we have only to consider what are the marks of the mission and of the vocation of Jesus Christ, and inquire at the same time, whether they are to be found in ours.

When Christ wishes to prove to the incredulous Jews that he was sent by his Father, what are the marks which he gives them, of the truth of his mission? In the first place, the testimony of his Father: it is my Father, said he, that beareth testimony to me: I have yet a greater testimony than the testimony of John.\* In the second place, the testimony of the prophets who had announced him, and of the people amongst whom he had lived: read the scriptures, said he to them, they all speak of me: † interrogate those who have heard and seen me, ‡ they will give testimony of what I have done in the midst of them. In the third place, the testimony of his own conscience: *the Prince of this world cometh, and in me he hath not any thing.* § *Which of you shall convince me of sin?* || Finally the testimony of his prodigies and of his works: *though you*

\* John. c. v. ver. 36.

† Ibid. c. v. ver. 39.

‡ Ibid. c. xviii. v. 21.

§ Ibid. c. xiv. v. 30.

|| Ibid. c. viii. v. 46.

*will not believe me, believe my works.\** Now as the mission of Jesus Christ is the model of ours, and as he sends us as the Father hath sent him, it is necessary that our call be accompanied with the same testimonies which proved the truth of his vocation.

The testimony of his Father, often given from heaven, not only in the presence of his disciples but even of the Jews, is the first mark, which Christ assigns, of the truth of his mission. But you will ask, are we thence to conclude, that Christ should appear in the sky to bear testimony to us, before the people? No certainly, my brethren: there never was a man except Saul, that vessel of election, destined to found and build up the church of the Gentiles, who was honoured by the descent of the Son of God from heaven, to call him to the Apostleship. Christ no longer speaks but by the mouth of the first pastors: to them he leaves the choice of his ministers: it is the established order of vocation to the ministry, and their testimony is his. To them he has intrusted the deposite of the faith, and to them he has committed the care of his worship, together with the power

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\* John. c. x. v.38.



of perpetuating it on earth, by perpetuating the priesthood which is its soul, its foundation and its most essential function. The testimony then of the chief pastors is the first mark of a canonical vocation.

It is true that since the great increase of the flock, the principal pastor being no longer able to know all the sheep by himself, it would be difficult for him to call individuals by name, to associate them to the sacred ministry; and he has therefore been obliged to devolve upon others the care of examining and of bringing up those, who ought to be separated from the multitude, and consecrated to the service of the Lord. For this purpose, houses of education and of retreat have been erected, where those who are destined for the priesthood, after being long proved under the eyes of experienced guides, receive from their mouth, the testimony which determines the chief pastor to call them to the sacred functions of the altar, and place on their shoulders a portion of the pastoral solicitude.

Now have you received this testimony from those who have been placed over you, to examine whether God has called you to his ministry? and can you reckon amongst the marks of your call, the suffrage of those who have been

appointed the arbiters of your vocation? Undoubtedly, you will answer that you are assured of their testimony, and that therefore your vocation appears to you, sure. But before you rest satisfied with such security, let us make some reflections upon the subject.

A testimony to afford assurance, supposes a perfect knowledge on the part of those who give it, and on the part of those who receive it, sincerity and good faith, in the disclosure of their lives and conduct. If it is founded on error, either because you were not known, or because you did not make yourself known, man may receive, but God rejects, it. Now, I ask you, have you discovered yourself entirely and without any disguise, to those, to whom in this place of retreat, you have confided the secrets of your conscience? Have you shown yourself without any dissimulation to the wise director who, between you and himself alone, must pronounce on the important affair of your vocation? have you introduced him into the interior of your heart? have you opened to him the volume of death and the history of your entire life? I do not ask you, if you have lied to the Holy Ghost: God forbid that so black a suspicion should escape my lips, or fall upon any

one of those who now hear me! But I ask you, if you have laid open your passions, in their sources; your relapses, in your irregular inclinations; and the constant character of your heart, in those disorders, which have always most prevailed in your morals? I ask you, whether, leaving your first conduct and transgressions in affected obscurity, whether not daring to reveal your shame, nor open this treasure of iniquity, under pretext that these sins have been formerly remitted, you have not contented yourself with exposing the latter circumstances of your life, and certain vague and general traits of your early morals, in which there is nothing to characterize you in particular, and by which it is impossible to know you? I ask you, whether you have not imitated the Gabaonites of old, who, to escape the sword, and obtain a lot among the people of God, concealing their name and their superstitions, their origin, their kindred and their morals, affected an exterior, modest and calculated to excite compassion, and thus surprised the piety and wisdom of Joshua? if such be the case, have but little confidence in a testimony founded in a knowledge of you, that is so uncertain and so imperfect: the consent of your

superiors is no longer for you, a mark that you are called, it is perhaps the most terrible punishment of your management and insincerity. To the latest day of your life, you will feel this burden on your conscience : I have entered on the ministry of truth, through the paths of dissimulation : I know not whether I am an intruder or a pastor sent by Jesus Christ: and in this anxiety and suspense, the presumption alone that is against you, is neither slight nor doubtful. You have followed neither the order of God nor the rules of the church : when she asks the testimony of your superiors, she supposes that you have made yourself known to them : now you have eluded this holy law and have called yourself : judge then if the spirit of God, that spirit of truth and sincerity, could have had any share in a vocation, brought about and consummated in duplicity and artifice. This is the first reflection.

I ask you in the second place, whether the hope and design of rendering your superiors favourable to you, has not been the spring and the very soul of all your actions, during the time allotted for your probation? Have not your modesty, your exactness, your devotions been a secret canvass, so many snares which you laid

for their piety? and can a testimony thus obtained by surprise, be of any weight before God? Men see only the exterior, and judge from appearances, but hath the Lord eyes of flesh, like to those of men, and doth he not see the bottom of the heart? I ask you still further, whether distrustful of yourself, and fearing that the marks of your vocation would appear altogether doubtful to those who were to judge of it, you have not employed with them, the solicitation of friends, the credit and recommendation of family, of rank, and of birth? Woe to us, if yielding to flesh and blood, we have bartered the interests of Jesus Christ, for the favor of men: if we have betrayed that church for which its divine founder delivered himself to death, and if the same human policy, which according to the wisest rules of discipline, so clearly pointed out your unworthiness, has been able to obtain from our degeneracy, a testimony that you were worthy of the priesthood. But, though such should be the case, could our infidelity change holy and established rules? Can we call him, whom God rejects? does he not curse our benedictions? In our weakness and misconduct, we have been the interpreters of your cupidity, and not of the wishes of the

Lord ; in a word, you receive the testimony of men, but you have not the testimony of God.

You would have reason to lay aside your fears, if, without any desire or procedure on your part, and viewing, with apprehension, the dangers and the excellency of the priesthood, another Ananias were sent to inform you on the part of Jesus Christ, that you were destined to the work of the gospel ; or that another Elias had commanded you, like Eliseus of old, to renounce all earthly cares, and follow him, to be the successor of the prophetic ministry. But if the suffrage of your superiors, has been the fruit of your management and your artifice, it is you, and not the spirit of God, that has spoken by their mouth : your mission is the work of man : you are not then sent by God. For although neither the voice of flesh and blood, nor solicitation, nor contrivance, should have had any share in the choice which your pastors and your superiors have made of you, and although in the testimony which they have given you, they had followed only the light and impulse of their own conscience, still you ought always to tremble, lest they should have been mistaken : you ought to fear, lest God, in punishment of your secret sins, had sent on them

a spirit of error, and permitted them, in selecting you, to make an unworthy choice: for their testimony, though it be necessary, is not infallible. The Jeromes, the Gregories, the Augustines, the Nepotians, the holiest Priests of those happy ages in which they flourished, with all the clearest marks of a legitimate vocation, on the part of their pastors, could not be tranquillized on the subject of these pious uncertainties: Anchorets, consummate in eminent piety, by long macerations, and by an Angelic life, when called by their Bishop to the priesthood, maimed themselves, to escape a burden and an honor, of which they scarcely thought Angels worthy, nor could the testimony and command of the Bishop whom they so much respected, strengthen them against the sentiment of their own unworthiness: and you, who have snatched their suffrage by artifice; who have forced them to bless what they ought rather to curse, you are tranquil under such terrific presumption of your guilt and unfitness? you would fancy that the church receives you into the number of her ministers, because men whom you have deceived, have not excluded you from that rank: you would persuade yourself that you may be satisfied on the subject of your vo-

cation, because your superiors have put no obstacle in the way of your advancement; and would believe that you are no intruder, because you have compelled them to consent to your intrusion? Judge, whether the security which you feel, is not itself the most terrible punishment of the crime that would usurp, without vocation, the formidable honor of the priesthood. It remains then firmly established, that the testimony of the pastors, is the first mark of our vocation to the ministry, as the first mark of the mission of Jesus Christ, was the testimony of his Father.

The second mark which Christ gives to the Jews, of the truth of his mission, is the testimony of the prophets who had announced, and of the people who had seen and heard, him. In effect, the people appear every where so favourable to the Redeemer, that the Pharisees mortified at his reception, could not help complaining of the public applause which he received, because they aspired to it themselves, and because it was the sole object of their hypocritical fasts, of their long prayers and their minute observances. The stupid and accursed crowd, said they, which knoweth not the Law, followeth after him. At one time, the multitude desire



to make him king over Judea : at another, they glorify God who had raised up so great a prophet in Israel : now the women of the holy city bless the womb that had borne, and the breast that had suckled, him, and again the people come forth to meet him in joy, and receive him, in triumph, into Jerusalem.

And truly, how could they withhold their homage and acclamations from an extraordinary and divine man, who appeared to have no other desire than that of the salvation of men ; who possessing the greatest talents that were yet seen upon the earth, confined himself to a small number of obscure and rude disciples, gave his instructions to the poor, and sought not, like the vain founders of sects, to accredit his doctrine, by the rank and distinction of his audience, but by the piety and the humility of his followers : a man who could speak only of heaven, and who esteemed as his relations and his friends, those only who did the will of his heavenly Father : a man, who, Lord of all nature, exercising command over the winds and the seas, multiplying bread, finding when he wished, treasures in the very entrails of fishes, reduced himself to a condition far below mediocrity, and who appeared still greater by his contempt of all earthly advan-

tages, than by the facility with which he could procure them : a man, who shunned, without despising, the great, and who reprov'd their vices without fearing their vengeance : who commanded that which was Cesar's, to be given to Cesar, and to God, that which belonged to God : and in fine, who in the detail of his most private actions was as great and as divine, as in those which he performed under the eyes of the public, and in whom those who were nearest his person, never could remark a single one of those moments, in which the most austere virtue relaxing itself into the pursuit of amusement, betrays the imperfection of man.

The suffrage of the people, is then the second mark of a canonical vocation. My dear brethren, writes Saint Cyprian\* to his people, it is customary with us, to consult you in our ordinations, and to examine in common with you, the morals and the merits of those on whom we are to impose hands. It is also just, as the church remarks in the pontifical, that those who are to sail in the same vessel, and who are so deeply interested in the skilfulness of the pilot, should have some share in his election, and

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\* Saint Cyprian. Ep. 64.

that their opinion be respected. The Priest being appointed for the people in all things that regard the worship of God,\* it is fitting that their suffrage should be consulted in the choice that is made of him. Such, you know, in early times, has been the practice of our fathers: the people were called in, and consulted in the ordination of the clergy: the Apostles themselves assembled all the faithful, and asked their suffrages in the election of the first deacons: *considerate viros ex vobis.*† The imposition of hands, says Saint Cyprian, is neither just nor legitimate, when the candidates have not the approbation of the public. According to Saint Paul, it was even necessary to have a good testimony from the very infidels: *ab iis qui foris sunt*;‡ and to the person who was about to be associated to the sacred ministry, nothing was deemed more indispensable than a reputation pure and without stain, in the opinion of the people, lest the dignity of the priesthood should be debased, or the sanctity of the worship be dishonoured, by those who were established its ministers.

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\* Heb. c. v. ver. 1.

† Acts. c. vi. v. 3.

‡ 1. Timothy. c. iii. v. 7.

I know that the folly of heresy, which ever tends to extremes, has urged this truth too far, and, that overturning the sacred discipline, the episcopal authority, the sacerdotal succession, and the necessity of a mission, it has established the people and the magistrate, the only electors of the ministers of the sanctuary, and thus degraded the holy and august ceremonies of ordination into popular tumult and civil arrangement. But it has ever been the fate of those whom the Lord has delivered up to the vanity of their own thoughts, to find error in the very paths of truth, and introduce new abuses, in attempting to restore ancient usages.

The church still asks the suffrage of the people, in the election of her ministers: it is a remnant which she has preserved of her first practice, one of those primitive and venerable features which mark the ancient beauty of discipline; it serves as a monument but cannot be used as a model. It is true, indeed, that in the temple where you are to receive the imposition of hands, she no longer assembles the faithful, to learn from them, whether you have conversed piously among them, and in a manner worthy of God: such a step would be no longer safe, nor indeed possible; but do not conclude from the

omission, that she is regardless of the consent and the suffrage of the people : she always esteems their testimony, a necessary mark of your vocation : the manner of asking it has changed, but the rule itself has not altered. For, she requires as an essential condition on your part, when you aspire to the sacred ministry, as an indispensable mark of your call, that you be able to enter into judgment with your people, and take them for witness of the integrity of your morals : she requires that like Jesus Christ, you be in a state to defy even your enemies to convict you of sin, at least of such sin as brings scandal and infamy in its train : she requires that like Tobias, you should have been distinguished from the rest of the children of Israel, and that whilst those of your age had foolishly and wickedly run to participate in the abominations of Samaria, you had continued a faithful adorer of the God of your fathers :\* she requires, in fine, that the people, in witnessing the purity and innocence of your life, had a thousand times blessed the womb that bore you ; and that their secret wishes, the public expectation, and the entire consent of the faithful, had already

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\* Tobias. c. i. vv. 5. 6.

raised you to the sacerdotal dignity, long before she herself had resolved to place you among her ministers. And this is the testimony of prophecies, which your vocation ought to have, in common with the vocation of Christ. Thus the faithful of Lystra and Iconium bore an advantageous testimony to the pious education and demeanor of Timothy ; and their public wishes for his elevation to the priesthood, which Saint Paul calls prophecies, had long preceded his ordination : *Secundum præcedentes in te prophetias.*\*

Now, do you find this consoling mark of your vocation ? Return to the places and the scenes in which you have passed your early years : is your memory, there, in benediction ? have you been distinguished from the licentiousness and passions of those of your age, by morals more pure, more grave and better regulated ? have you appeared to the companions and the witnesses of your early conduct, destined for the altar by the innocence of your life, and by a love for every thing that regards the divine worship, before the church had selected you for the functions of her ministry ?

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

Can you allege in your favor these early and prophetic suffrages? or rather, did not your first inclinations announce a dissipated, worldly, effeminate life, or a military, irreligious and tumultuous profession, rather than a ministry of modesty, of piety, and of charity? Interrogate those who have seen you: make them, if you can, consent to your elevation in the sanctuary: go and gather their suffrages, and recognise in their voice, the voice of God himself. With the recollection of your early transgressions still fresh in their minds, will they not be surprised at your rashness? and will they not cry out, *we will not have this man to rule over us.*\* It is for you to answer this question, and for my part, I tell you, that you are to be pitied, if in this picture you find your own likeness; and if in defiance of this public disapproval and of a testimony so positive that you are not called, you will yet present yourself at the altar, loaded, as it were, with the anathemas of the entire people. Behold the rule: it is for you, to make the application to yourself: If those in the midst of whom I have lived,

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\* *Nolumus hunc regnare super nos.*

Luke. c. xix. v. 14.

were to choose for themselves a pastor, could I flatter myself, that I would be the object of their choice? would they think my hands sufficiently pure to present, at the altar, their oblations and their vows, and to offer up the blood of the Lamb without spot, to wash away the stains of their sins? Would my tongue appear sufficiently chaste to announce to them, the truths of eternal life? my conduct, sufficiently irreprehensible, to give me a right to exhort them to virtue, and to reproach them with their infidelities and their crimes? If you have not this testimony, either you are not sent by Jesus Christ, or the wise and general rules, by which the church directs us to judge of the vocation of all others, admit of restrictions and exceptions, when applied to you.

The testimonies then of the pastors and of the people, constitute the two first marks of a vocation: but they are not sufficient: oftentimes what is great in the eyes of men, is of little value, and rejected in the sight of God: even though all the world were to call you, and offer violence to you, says Saint Chrysostom, examine the dispositions of your heart and the state of your soul, and do not yield to their instances, if you find yourself unworthy of this honor.



For, says this father, if you were unfit and unworthy before you were called, how could you have become qualified and worthy merely by being called? *An cum te nullus vocaret, imbecillis et minime idoneus eras: ubi primum vero comperiti sunt qui honorem ad te deferunt, derepentè in valentem atque idoneum evasisti?\**

So, we find that the third mark which Christ gives the Jews of the truth of his mission, is the testimony of his own conscience: and this testimony includes, first, the innocence altogether divine of his soul: *the Prince of this world cometh, says he, and in me he hath not any thing.*† In the second place, his love and his zeal for the functions of his ministry: *my meat, says he, is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perfect his work.*‡ Finally, the purity of his intentions: *I seek not, says he, my own glory.*§

Now, can our conscience render to us, this triple testimony? first, a testimony of innocence: on this I have spoken, on another occasion,|| but it is now a necessary part of my subject. Those of the sacerdotal order, according to Saint Epiphanius, were formerly drawn,

\*St. Chrysost. lib 4. de Sacerd. †John. c. xiv. v. 30.

‡ Ibid. c. iv. v. 34. § Ibid. c. viii. v. 50.

|| In the Discourse on the ambition of the Clergy.

almost exclusively, from the class of virgins : *Sacerdotium ex virginum ordine, præcipuè constat.* To be honoured with the priesthood it was necessary to have preserved innocence. Public penance, was itself an impediment, and as a note of infamy, which rendered the penitent incapable of being chosen for the holy ministry : the purity which was effected by those bitter and sorrowful waters, by tears and by macerations, seemed to be yet tinged with certain stains, which insulted the sanctity and the majesty of the tremendous mysteries. The penitent, it is true, had become a vessel of honor, was tried and purified by penance, but the odor of the old leaven yet remained, and rendered him unworthy of being placed in the sanctuary. However bright the wool, from which was to be formed the robes of the Priests, and of the Levites of the law, it was esteemed unclean and rejected, if it lost its first whiteness, if its brilliancy was not natural, but the effect of art. The stones that were to compose the altar were not to be hewn, that is, they were to owe their beauty not to the industry of the chissel or the hammer, but to nature and the place from which they were to be taken. These were only figures : on the part of God, this extreme jealousy of

the holiness of a temple, and of a priesthood empty and figurative, was designed to point out from afar, the Angelic purity required for the christian priesthood. But where are they now to be found, who bring to the sacred banquet, the robe of innocence, which is alone worthy of the nuptials of the Lamb; that robe without which no one has a right to enter into this holy place? O innocence! daughter of heaven, ornament of the sacerdotal order, sweet-smelling lily in the garden of the Spouse, alone worthy to adorn his altars, whither art thou gone? hast thou forsaken the earth for ever? although the world was unworthy of thee, couldst thou not find an asylum in the holy place? But let us not indulge in vain wishes and useless regrets. Thou, O my God! still knowest some chosen souls, who amidst the universal corruption of our morals, have preserved themselves pure and agreeable in thy sight: thy arm is not shortened: thou canst alike draw us from the bottom of the deep, or make us walk on the surface of the waters without being overwhelmed amidst storms and tempests: and it cost thee no more to preserve the three young Hebrews in the centre of a burning furnace, Daniel in the lion's den, or Lot in the midst of the abomi-

nations of Sodom, than the young Tobias under the protection of the paternal roof, and the pious care of religious parents. But we also know ourselves: we confess, in thy presence that we are sinners: and although thy powerful hand might have preserved us from corruption, we acknowledge with the deepest confusion, that we have need of that grace which delivers, of that salutary bath which purifies, from the defilement of sin, and of that second plank which thou hast mercifully provided to save those who have had the misfortune of being miserably shipwrecked after baptism.

I do not then ask you, whether your innocence is still pure and entire. The church being scarce able, any longer to obtain it, seems no longer to exact it: but the functions of her ministry are not less sublime, nor her priesthood less holy, now, than in former times: her spirit is always the same; and if she now only expresses her wishes, instead of enforcing the ancient severity of her discipline, it is not she that has altered, but it is we alone that have, as it were, compelled her to change. But I ask you, of what kind are your past sins and relapses? for although the church may no longer seem to require rigorously, an innocence absolutely en-

ture, there are, nevertheless, different degrees which she carefully considers in the manner in which you may have lost it. I ask you then : are your sins of the nature of those transgressions, into which youth is sometimes hurried by the frailty of age, and the seduction of bad example ; but from which it is quickly drawn by a good disposition, by a fund of religion, and the fear of God : such transgressions as soon pass away, and which not dwelling long in the heart, have not time to pervert it, to extinguish the faith, and leave in the soul, durable and almost indelible impressions of vice ; in a word, transgressions rarely committed and promptly repaired ? If such be your case, and such the image of your conscience, humble yourself in the presence of the Lord : tremble, in feeling that you bear about you an unworthiness, which according to the ancient rules of discipline should exclude you from the sanctuary. Remain, like the publican, at the door of the temple, but advance, if you are commanded ; and advance with fear and confusion : remember that in admitting you, the church relaxes her former severity ; that the small number of the innocent has caused her to open to penitents, a door into her sanctuary ; and that she has no longer the consola-

tion of choosing between the most holy, but is obliged to select out of the least unworthy, the pastors of the flock.

But is the guilt of your past life made up of sins that have become habitual? guilt which like Lazarus half putrid, spreads infection and stench around: guilt, in which, the inveteracy of the disorder has effaced from the soul, not only its first whiteness, but also every sentiment of modesty and virtue; guilt in which the continual habit of crime has produced in the heart a disgust for the things of heaven, and a lamentable tendency and shameful devotedness to vice, which it can scarce longer resist; and guilt notwithstanding, in which the only mark, you exhibit, of change, is to change your state of life; your only penance, to clothe yourself with the robe of innocence and holiness; your only humiliation, to usurp a glorious ministry; and in a word, your only qualification for the priesthood, to aspire rashly to its dignity and present yourself a candidate for its functions? If such be the history and such the tenor of your life, your own iniquities bear testimony against you: the laws of the church banish you, even on this very day, from the holy place: the circumstances of your birth and the command of your

parents call you in vain ; it is a voice of flesh and blood which gives no right to that office, from which you are excluded by the order of heaven : it is in vain that domestic arrangements seem to open to you the gate ; the rules of the church close it against you : it is not the vile interests of earth that should give ministers to her sanctuary, but the interests of heaven, and the salvation of her children. Weep over your crimes, in the state of a simple laic, it is your proper place ; but come not here, to put the seal to all your other iniquities, by receiving the sacred character : do not pollute the sanctuary by your intrusion, nor add to the defilement of your soul, the profanation of the house of God. Touched by repentance, you may return to God, may move him to clemency, and work out your salvation, among the penitent faithful, but you will die hardened and impenitent in the priesthood.

It may be, that this rule has, sometimes suffered exceptions : that long and fervent penance has made the church forget former disorders, and that a great sinner after being purified by the pious rigours of a mortified and retired life, by the abundant tears of sincere repentance, by acts of virtue still more public and longer continued

than his crimes; it may be, I say, that such a one has become a holy priest, has honoured his ministry, and that having himself had full experience of the allurements and the temptations of the world, he labours with more zeal, more unction and greater success to prevent his brethren from falling into the snares of the enemy: but when there is question of making an exception to the rule, it is necessary that the advantages to be derived from the deviation, compensate the inconveniences of the infraction. Now it is for you to inform us, what great advantages the church can expect from your promotion to the priesthood. For my part, all I can say to you, is, that if you have any faith yet remaining, it ought to terrify you from entering into a state, of which the general rule declares you to be unworthy, and in which your only assurance that you are not a profaner and an intruder, must arise from the belief, that your's is that singular case, that rare exception, one of those prodigies of which an age can scarce furnish a single example.

But besides this testimony of innocence, your conscience should also render to you, a testimony of love for the sacred functions of the ministry. Christ as yet, in his tender years, retires pri-



vately from his parents to the temple, where he is found, after three days, in the midst of the Jewish Doctors, already making as it were, the first essay of his ministry. The young Samuel ministered, every day, in the house of the Lord, and the scripture remarks, that he even rose from sleep when he thought that the voice of the High Priest Heli called him to any thing that regarded the decency or the beauty of God's worship.\* This early love, this esteem for the functions of the ministry, has always appeared in those Saints who were destined by heaven to the altar, and has ever been considered as a mark of vocation, and a happy presage of the priesthood.

But if you do not feel yourself born for the ecclesiastical functions : if you never appear to be less in your proper place than when you are seated in the temple, amongst the ministers of the Lord ; if the ornaments in which the church clothes you, are for you a strange attire, which not only does not become you, but which even disconcerts and embarrasses you ; if, the dress of the world accords much better with the air, the effrontery and the dissipation of your coun-

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\* 1. Kings. c. iii.

tenance ; if the modesty which the sacred canons so often recommend to the clergy, in their dress, their hair and their entire person, appears to you a ridiculous restraint, the mere result of bad taste ; if like the Jewish children you even mock the prophets of the Lord,\* the most holy of his ministers, who despising the superfluities of art, bear on their bald and venerable heads, the simplicity and the glory of the priesthood ; if the august spectacle of our ceremonies, is for you, a tiresome exhibition ; if you regard with foolish contempt, the inferior offices of the ministry ; if like the proud Michol,† you look with derision on those who lay aside their greatness before the Ark, and think themselves honoured by the lowest functions that regard the divine worship, (I mean the lowest in the sight of men, but always infinitely sublime in the eyes of faith ;) if, I say, such be the per-

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\* And he (Eliseus) went up from thence to Bethel : and as he was going up by the way, little boys came out of the city and mocked him, saying: Go up thou bald-head, go up thou bald-head. And looking back, he saw them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord: and there came forth two bears out of the forest, and tore of them two and forty boys.—  
4. Kings. c. ii. vv. 23. 24.

† 2. Kings. c. vi. v. 16.

trait of your dispositions, judge yourself, what ought we to think of your vocation. Unquestionably God has no more written it on your heart, than on your person: a taste and inclinations so opposed to the holy state to which you aspire, do not indicate that heaven has intended you for the priesthood: so decided a repugnance to the spirit and the functions of the ministry clearly points out the designs of God in your regard: he inspires a desire and a love of the state to which he calls; and could he give you a stronger proof that he does not destine you for his ministry, than by the marked dislike which you feel for all its duties? And what further explanation do you require on the part of God? it is not necessary that a voice from heaven should say to you, as it once said to Samuel: *Him the Lord hath not chosen: Non hunc elegit Dominus* :\* whatever we behold in you, sufficiently says so, to us; and the voice of your own heart and inclinations says it, still more clearly to yourself.

The last testimony which your conscience ought to bear to you, is a testimony of the purity of your intentions in dedicating yourself to

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\* 1. Kings. c. xvi. v, 8.

the service of the altar. Christ did not come to be served but to serve : that is to say, he came, not to fill the first places in the synagogue, nor to occupy a splendid station in his country, but to minister to the necessities, and devote himself for the salvation, of his brethren : he came to manifest the name and the glory of his Father to men, to bring back the strayed sheep of the house of Israel :\* zeal, charity and holiness were the only splendor of his ministry. It is for you to answer for the purity of your intentions ; to say, whether you do not propose to yourself splendor and distinction of another sort ; whether you enter into the priesthood to serve, and to labour for the salvation of the people. I do not pretend to penetrate into the most secret folds of your heart : God knows you, and that is sufficient : but it would not be necessary to sink deep, to perceive at once, the views which conduct to the church, the greater part of those who consecrate themselves to her ministry ; the motives of interest which influence vocations, are as public and as certain, as the vocations themselves are doubtful. Have you the misfortune to be of this number ? to as-

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\* Matthew. c. xv. v. 24.

certain it, enter into judgment with yourself : what do I propose to myself in the holy state for which I now declare ? labors, cares, watchings ; the salvation of souls, the enlargement of the kingdom of Christ : the destruction of the empire of Satan ? have I nothing in view but these laborious duties, in the inheritance of Jesus Christ ? do not lie to the Holy Ghost, but rather confess your injustice before the Lord. It is written\* that when Moses was about to establish Eleazar High Priest in the place of Aaron, he conducted him to the top of a high mountain, whence could be seen the rich plains about the Jordan, and the abundance and fertility of the Holy Land, that was, one day, to be his portion : and it was in the sight of the milk and honey which flowed through that happy country, that he clothed him with the sacerdotal ornaments. When your connexions according to the flesh, clothed you, themselves, as it were, in the sacred ensigns of the ministry, did they not lead you to a high mountain, whence they made you behold from afar, the wealth, the fertility, the milk and honey of a land, of which they promised, and made you expect, the possession ? and has not

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\* Numbers. c. xx. vv. 27. 28.

this expectation been the purest motive of your entry into the church, and formed your entire vocation? speak the truth, and give glory to God. What do you seek in the church? its riches, or its duties? its honors, or its toils? the fleece of the flock, or the salvation of the sheep? the gold of the altar, or the God who is there adored? what talents do you bring to this holy warfare? strength, courage, subdued senses; or effeminacy, the love of repose, a taste for luxurious and expensive pleasures? *Nemo miles ad bellum cum deliciis venit*, says Tertullian: and the Lord himself speaks to you, as he did, formerly to the soldiers of Gideon; let him who brings nothing to the field, but weakness, pusillanimity, the fear of labor, and of hardships, return to the house of his father: *Qui timidus et formidolosus est, revertatur*.\*

I admit† that it is natural and just to expect, on entering into the church, the decent retribution of the cares and the toils of the priesthood:

\* Judith. c. vii. v. 3.

† There is in this place, for two or three sentences, a slight deviation from the original; it is no greater than seemed necessary to suit this part of the discourse to the situation of the ecclesiastical candidates of these countries. In France and other Catholic kingdoms of Europe, benefices were often

the labourer is worthy of his hire:\* but to engage in a holy and terrible ministry, merely to obtain the succession of a living, of which one of our family is already possessed: merely because our hopes on the side of the church are more certain and more brilliant, than on that of the world; only because our name or our parentage will warrant us to aspire to the highest dignity; only because our connexions according to the flesh, like the mother of the sons of Zebedee,† have already asked for us, the first places in the kingdom of Christ; in a word, to speak still more clearly, to bear as the only mark of vocation, to a ministry of humility, views and desires of elevation; to a ministry of labor and solicitude, hopes of repose and tranquillity; to a ministry of mortification and poverty, the love of luxury and abundance; to go to Christ like the carnal Jews, not because he has the word of life, but because he multiplies the bread of earth: to renounce all in

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conferred on individuals before they had attained the age for ordination, and Massillon justly censures those who presented themselves for the ministry, without any other mark of a vocation, and with whom, the prospect of enjoying such a provision, during life, was the only motive for engaging in holy orders.

\* Luke. c. x. v. 7. † Matthew. c. xx. v. 21.

order to find all, or rather to forsake a ship and nets, to become the princes of the people : this is a criminal motive ; who is there that is ignorant of it ? and can crime, O my God ! be the mark of a vocation to the most holy of all professions ?

But it is not yet enough for you, to have that testimony of conscience, which includes innocence of life, a love for the duties of the ministry, and purity of intention : it is further necessary for you to examine, whether you possess the peculiar talents of this state, and whether you are likely to be useful to the church. So the last mark, which Christ produces of the truth of his mission, is the testimony of his miraculous works and of his doctrine. All admired the unction of the words that fell from his lips : never had man spoken as he spoke : he did not, like the ostentatious Pharisees, seek to catch the vain applause of the multitude, nor had he recourse to that cautious reserve, which has for its object, not the salvation, but the esteem, of men ; but he spoke with the force and authority of truth, and with that divine simplicity which regards not the rank, but the necessities, of its auditors.

You are well aware that we require of you, neither the miracles nor the divine eloquence



of Jesus Christ : but we require talents capable of instructing the people, and of discharging with success, the various duties of your ministry ; and this is the last mark that should bear testimony to the truth of your vocation. Now what talents do you possess? You have, perhaps, been born with all the talents necessary for the world : employ then for the world, what you have received for it. You have, perhaps, those qualities which are requisite to please the world, and attract its admiration ; to live in it with delight and distinction, but what talents have you for the vineyard of Jesus Christ, to edify, to plant, to pluck up? to shine like a bright star, in the midst of a corrupt age? When Moses was about to erect the tabernacle, each one came to contribute to its construction, offering gifts of gold, of precious stones, of purple, and of the skins of animals.\* What can you offer on your part, for the construction of the celestial tabernacle, of the spiritual edifice of the church, for the formation of the mystic body of Christ Jesus? If you cannot contribute gold or precious stones, as all are not Apostles, all are not Evangelists ; at least, can you offer a moderate

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\* Exodus, c. 35.

gift? Something must be given; and it should be remembered, that what is the least shining, is not always the least useful.

Now in what manner can you render yourself useful to the church? Is it by your knowledge and your abilities? but born, perhaps, with a mind impatient alike of control and of labor, is it not either pure constraint or the ambition of going through your collegiate course with honor, that has attached you to your books? and do you not look forward to the priesthood as the happy term, which is to put an end to all your researches and all your studies? Is it by your talents as a speaker? but piety and a knowledge of religion, can alone render these talents useful to the church; and what fruit can she expect from your instructions, if you destroy the effect of them, by the example of your misconduct? Is it by the gravity, at least, of your morals? but if your whole person bespeaks a worldly air, if the fashion and the indelicacy of the world, are exhibited in every part of your dress and appearance, how will you edify the church, whilst you despise its rules, since you do not edify even the world which you imitate? Is it by your zeal? but are not the scandals and abuses of the world more likely to

in flame your passions, than to fill you with a holy indignation? will you not feel more desire to imitate, than to abolish or reprove, them? and have you the zeal and the skill necessary to gain the heart, and obtain the confidence of those whose conscience is a mass of crime, which has never yet been explored? but how do we know, whether you, yourself, do not bear in your own conscience, depths of guilt, into which you have not suffered the light, as yet, to penetrate? Is it by the solidity of your judgment, and your talent for governing your brethren? but if your whole life has been made up of irregularities; if your conduct ever changes, and never resembles itself; if the present moment can never answer for the moment that is to follow; if hitherto there has been nothing fixed or uniform in your character, except your inconstancy; if you have never rightly governed the house of your own heart; how will you govern the church of God?\* Is it by your name, and the consideration to which you are entitled in the world? undoubtedly a great name in a holy Priest, gives, as it were, a new

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\* Si quis autem domui suæ præesse nescit, quomodo Ecclesiæ Dei diligentiam habebit?—I. Tim. c. iii. v. 5.

weight and authority to his ministry : but, alas ! all the expectation which the church can form regarding you, is, that your name will be made the pretext of your luxury, of your extravagance, and of your bad use of the patrimony of Jesus Christ. Finally, is it by the dignities, of which your birth or your connexion seems to be a pledge, and which you cannot fail to obtain in the church ? but if this be the motive of your vocation ; if the credit alone of an earthly name or kindred with certain members of the hierarchy, is to elevate you to sacerdotal honors, if flesh and blood are to put you in possession of the priesthood of Melchisedec, who knew neither parents nor genealogy, your name and your alliance will serve only to render the scandal of your administration more striking and more public : you will carry into the sanctuary, the pride, the pomp, the spirit of the very world, which has placed you in it ; in defiance of all rule and of the holy discipline of former times, you will gather unto yourself, the goods and the dignities of the church, under the pretext that your profusion should be proportioned to the splendor of your name, or of your connexions, as if the patrimony of the poor were intended to minister to the pride of birth, and

the vanity of upstart insolence ; or that the church recognised in her ministers, something more exalted than the ministry itself.

What then can you offer to the church, which she can expect to employ for the advancement of God's honor and the salvation of her children ? these are the only objects which she has in view, in the selection of her ministers. The kingdom of Christ, as you are aware, is a field, into which no one should enter, who will not labour ; and to remain idle and useless in it, is unjustly to occupy a soil, which would have been cultivated by another. It is true, there are various works to be executed, but you must be prepared to perform some one of them : if you are unfit for all, the church has no need of your services ; far from being of any assistance to her, you would be only her embarrassment and reproach.

From all that I have hitherto said, you may easily collect, what should be the fruit of this discourse : it is, that each one of you should examine whether his vocation be marked with these four characters, namely, the testimony of the pastors, the testimony of the people, the testimony of his own conscience, and in fine, the testimony of his talents : that is to say, whether your mis-

sion resembles the mission of Jesus Christ, and whether he has sent you, as he was sent by his Father: *Sicut misit me Pater, et ego mitto vos.* If you do not find in yourself these holy marks; if you even doubt that you possess them; do not advance; be not so rash as to present yourself; wait at least till the Lord shall have declared his will more clearly in your regard. The consequences of entering into the holy ministry without a vocation, are truly terrible. For, first, if you enter into the priesthood without being called, you will not receive the grace of the imposition of hands: you will be marked with the sacred character, it is true; but it will be for you, a character of reprobation, and you will not receive with it, the effusion of the Holy Ghost, so essentially necessary to support you in the discharge of its various duties. Thus abandoned to your own weakness, your functions will be turned into so many occasions of your destruction: the tribunal will become the snare of your innocence: the pulpit, the theatre of your pride: the altar, the place of your sacrilegious crimes: the patrimony of Christ, the occasion of your extravagance or your avarice: the use of holy things, the source of your irreligion and impenitence:

solicitations will corrupt, and human policy will influence, your actions: the rules of the church must yield to your interests, and her truths will find in you a protector, only when it is your advantage, to defend them: if you are a pastor, you will be a hireling: if raised to dignity, you will be the man of sin, seated in the temple of the living God. And why? because in receiving the exterior unction of the ministry, you have not at the same time, received the interior unction of the Holy Ghost: the church, by the imposition of hands, has not conferred on you, that grace, which alone could enable you to support the sacred burden of the priesthood: the yoke will press you to the ground; you will fall at every step; all your functions will be so many profanations: those whom you are to conduct, you will lead to destruction, and in their perdition you will find your own. Saul, says Saint Gregory, though called by heaven, was reprov'd, because, when he was anointed prince over Israel, he received but a part of the grace of royalty; for the Lord commanded Samuel to pour on his head, merely a little vial of oil, the figure of the grace from above: *Tulit lenticulam olei.\** David, on the contrary,

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

becomes a king according to the heart of God, because the grace of his consecration is far more abundant ; for Samuel had orders from the Lord, to take a good measure of oil, and pour it on the head of the son of Jesse : *Imple cornu tuum oleo.*\* If the different measure of the grace of consecration, could produce so great a difference between the reigns and the virtues of these two monarchs ; if the former was re-proved ; if his reign was one continued series of misfortunes and of crimes, solely because he had not received, with the kingly unction, the plenitude of the grace of that royalty, to which, notwithstanding, he was called ; what is to be your lot ? you, whom God has not called to this sacred and sacerdotal royalty ; you, to whom he will consequently refuse the very least share of the grace of this holy state ; you, whose very consecration will be a crime, and on whom every drop of the holy unction that is poured, will be as so many burning coals, which the justice of God, heaps on your head, as if to devote you from that very moment, to the eternal flames : do you, yourself, judge, what are the frightful consequences, which you must expect

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\* 1. Kings. c. xvi. v. 1.



from a priesthood, received and commenced, under such horrible auspices.

A last reflection which I entreat you to make on the consequences of a bad vocation, to the priesthood, is, that it is very difficult to supply the defect of a vocation, in any condition of life; but in the priesthood, though I would not presume to say that it is impossible, for who would dare to limit the power and the mercy of the Almighty? yet, the ordinary rules of faith seem to inform us that it is entirely hopeless. For, I will not say, that a bad vocation is a crime, upon which, God permits us, to be, almost always, without remorse; and that out of so many Priests who enter every day, so unworthily, into the ministry, you have scarcely ever seen one that has known and acknowledged his intrusion, or even thought of a scruple on the subject; as if thy justice, O my God! could not sufficiently punish this enormous transgression, except by the fatal blindness which always conceals it from the eyes of the unfortunate individual, who has had the hardihood to render himself guilty of it. But I say, that even although you should feel some remorse about your vocation, still you will find so many false reasons to confound or pacify your conscience; you will see so many

others whose vocation appears not more certain than your own, that you will regard this remorse as the remains of those impressions which were made on you in the place of your retreat, where your guides and instructors represented things in whatever colour they pleased. Who, you will say, can fathom the secrets of the Most High? are we not all equally uncertain of his designs in our regard? and by this reflection, your remorse is appeased, and you will live tranquilly in that state, all the rules of which tell you, that God had never called you to it.

But I will suppose that the voice of conscience prevails, and that the intruder is compelled to confess his guilt, in secret, to God. For a Priest, there is a great distance indeed, between conviction and compunction: by a long intercourse with holy things, he falls into a frightful lethargy from which he can be no longer awakened; and it is certain, that a Priest is almost never converted to penance. But although you were to be truly touched, and that God were to grant to you the grace of compunction, which he rarely accords to a wicked Priest, still what measures can you adopt? what reparation can you make? or what remedies can we prescribe for your malignant and inveterate disorders? Is

it to tear you from the altar, where you have so often appeared before the assembly of the faithful? or to suffer you to remain against the command of God who rejects you? Must we disclose your ignominy, in stripping you of the sacred dignity, with which you are clothed? or must we dissemble the ignominy of the church in suffering you to continue to wear it? You have made engagements which you can no longer abandon; and can you be in the impossibility of working out your salvation? but on the other hand, how can you be saved in a profession which, as it is not that to which God has called you, cannot be for you, the way to salvation? Besides, will your repentance be so heroic, as to effect those violent separations; those signal renunciations; to produce that extraordinary change, the singularity of which, and the public astonishment, which it could not fail to excite; will deter you more, will act as greater restraints, than all the bonds of self love, which you would be necessitated to burst for its accomplishment? In fine, I say nothing of the numberless evils which your intrusion had caused in the church, and which you would be obliged to repair: your labors without benediction, your ministry without advantage; so many souls

whose salvation would have been secured by the labors of a faithful pastor, and who perished through your misconduct; so many abuses sanctioned by your example; so many others uncorrected through your negligence and want of zeal; so much condescension at the expense of your sacred obligations; so many just, scandalized; so many weak, seduced; so many sinners confirmed in their disorders; behold the gulph into which you are about to plunge, if contrary to the order of God, and without any mark of vocation, you present yourself to receive the imposition of hands. Can you be so far infatuated, so abandoned of God, as thus to expose yourself to certain destruction? Is your soul so stamped with the character of reprobation, so hardened against all the terrors of faith, as to advance; to brave, with audacious impiety, the orders of heaven; to choose the ministry of Christ, only to profane, with greater frequency and greater facility, his venerable mysteries, in his very temple; to enter into his fold, only to seize and slaughter with greater ease, those very sheep which his Father had given him, and which he redeemed by the shedding of his blood? No, my brethren, we entertain of you, sentiments more conformable to

the piety in which you have been educated, and to that sincere desire of learning the will of God in your regard, which has assembled you in this place : *Confidimus de vobis meliora et viciniora saluti.\** Profit then of these days of retreat and probation, to beg of the Father of lights to make known to you the way, in which, it is his holy will, that you should walk. Say often to him with the humility of Moses : Send, O Lord, whom thou wilt send : † do not permit us to be of the number of those unhappy prophets, who spoke in thy name without being sent by thee : ‡ who said, the Lord hath sent us, when the Lord had not sent them. Do thou thyself render us worthy of thy choice : form in our souls all those virtues which thou requirest, in those who are consecrated to thy ministry. Do thou thyself, O great God, turn us away from thy priesthood ; let thy hand repel us from thy altar, if it be not thy will that conducts us to it : rather let fire come forth, as formerly, from thy sanctuary, to drive us from its entrance for ever, than that we should present ourselves against thy commands, to offer thee a profane incense, which thou dost not require, and which

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\* Hebrews. c. vi. v. 9.      † Exodus. c. iv. v. 13.

‡ Jeremiah. c. xxiii. v. 32. Ezekiel. c. xii. v. 6.

thou wilt not receive. Make known to us, thy holy will in our regard, and do thou thyself accomplish it upon us. Yes, O Lord, happy is he whom thou hast chosen, and called to thyself; he shall dwell in thy everlasting tabernacles: *Beatus quem elegisti et assumpsisti: inhabitabit in atriis tuis.\** The cedars of Lebanon, which thou hast planted, shall be saturated with the dew of heaven, and the waters of grace: they shall fear neither the scorching heat of the sun, nor the raging fury of the storm or of the tempest: *Saturabuntur ligna campi, et cedri Libani quas plantavit.†* But woe to every plant, which thou hast not planted: it can expect no other lot, than to be plucked up and cast into the fire. May our Lord Jesus Christ grant, that we, my brethren, may not be of this number.—*Amen.*

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\* Psalm. 64. v. 5.

† Psalm. 103. v. 16.

# A DISCOURSE

ON THE

USE OF ECCLESIASTICAL REVENUES.

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Sed quia hæc locutus sum vobis, tristitia implevit  
cor vestrum.

*But because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow  
hath filled your heart.*

JOHN. chap. xv. ver. 6.

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**ALTHOUGH** the attraction of grace had the first and principal share, in the resolution taken by the Apostles, of abandoning their bark and their nets to follow Christ, nevertheless, this conduct was not, perhaps, at first so pure as to exclude certain views of self interest, and certain earthly and human motives, which the instructions of the Redeemer, and above all, the effusion of the Holy Spirit completely purified in the sequel. Educated in the prejudices of the syna-

gogue, they looked for the temporal glory of the Messiah ; they expected that he would re-establish the kingdom of Israel in more than its ancient magnificence, and fondly promised themselves, that he would make them sit in the twelve first places of this splendid but imaginary empire.

So when Christ to disabuse them of so dangerous an error, declares to them, this day, that in following him, they have nothing to expect but persecution and opprobrium : that they shall lead a life of poverty, hardship and suffering ; that their only support will be what men shall give them, in his name : when in aggravation of these melancholy disclosures, he enjoins them to banish all solicitude regarding the necessities of life ; not to have two coats in their journeys, nor treasure up riches upon earth, this grievous disappointment of their hopes, overwhelms them with sorrow and consternation, and the profound sadness of their heart renders itself visible on their very countenance : *Sed quia hæc locutus sum vobis, tristitia implevit cor vestrum.*

Would I be departing far from the gospel of this day, my brethren, if I were to tell you, that we have succeeded in this particular, to the er-



ror, as well as to the ministry, of the disciples of Jesus Christ ; and that what the church directs us to read, to day, of their weakness on this point, is precisely the history of our own mistakes and of our own weakness. I will suppose that the grace of God has guided our vocation like that of the disciples : is it not true, nevertheless, that in renouncing the age to follow him, we have like them, figured him to ourselves as a glorious Messiah, and imagined that his kingdom was of this world? Is it not true that when it was announced to us, on his part, that poverty was to be our glory, the cross our treasure, labors our portion, contempt and persecution our only recompence ; is it not true that these maxims, so discourasolate, yet so divine, and so worthy of our vocation, have found in us prejudices hard to be combated, and plunged our hearts in dejection and sorrow? *Sed quia hæc locutus sum vobis, tristitia implevit cor vestrum.*

We generally represent the ministry to ourselves, as a state of luxury and repose ; and it has been already proved to you that it was a state of labor and solicitude :\* we represent it

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\* Discourse on zeal against scandals.

to ourselves as a station of glory and pre-eminence ; and it has been already shewn you, that it was a real servitude and a continual exercise of humiliation :\* in fine, we regard it as an inheritance where more abundant comforts and greater riches are to be found than in the world ; and I am this day to demonstrate to you, that poverty is the most essential character of our ministry ; that the sacred revenues which we enjoy, ought to be employed only in religious uses ; and that the treasures of the temple, being the fruit of the cross, and the price of the Redeemer's blood, far from supplying the lavish expenses of luxury and the prodigal superfluities of vanity and effeminacy, should be taxed only for our necessary wants, should furnish no more than the daily bread of labor, of bitterness and sorrow : in a word, you have been fully instructed in the manner in which you ought to enter on a living ; and I am now to point out to you, the manner of life which you ought to lead in it, and the use which you ought to make of its revenues.

Now, for the success of this design, it is necessary to go back to the true source of the

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\* Discourse on the ambition of the Clergy.

evil to be avoided. It has always appeared to me, that mistake in this matter arose from one or other of three different errors : a fundamental error, if I may so speak ; an error of circumstances ; and an error of precautions. The fundamental error causes us to mistake the very nature of ecclesiastical goods, and to regard ourselves as the proprietors of a revenue of which we have but the simple dispensation : the error of circumstances, recognises indeed, that we are but the dispensers of the goods confided to us, but at the same time, causes us to deceive ourselves, in reference to the dignities to which we are raised, to the name which we bear, to the abundant income which we possess, to the profuse expenditure which we deem either necessary or becoming : in fine, the error of precautions, which disabused of the two preceding, turns our attention to the uncertainty of the future, to the various accidents of life, to unexpected expenses, and makes us find in those contingencies, an occasion of avarice, and a pretext for treasuring up gold, contrary to all the laws of charity and all the rules of the church.

My design, this day, is to oppose to those three errors, three capital truths, which seem to me to set this subject in its true light, and

to include those just and prudent rules which we ought to propose to ourselves, in the use of ecclesiastical revenues.

The wealth of the church is a religious deposit, a sacred alms : we are then but the depositaries and the dispensers of it : this first truth, I oppose to the first or fundamental error.

If the church permits us to use her goods, it is because she supposes us, poor ; our indigence and our labor alone authorize us to partake of them ; and we have no real title to them but in proportion as we have real wants. This second truth developes and condemns the error of circumstances.

Those sacred goods being given to us only because we are poor, they ought still in passing through our hands, to leave us always our character of poverty ; and never, by being reserved and amassed, monstrously place us in a state of certain opulence for the future. This third truth combats the error of precautions.

Let me repeat these truths, for the importance of the subject demands it : you regard the revenues of the church as your own property ; I shall prove that you are but the stewards of them : you look upon them as resources for the

support of the vain pomp of a name and of birth; I shall show you, that they are given to you only to support your indigence and supply your wants: you amass them, in order to provide against the accidents of life; and you shall see, that all foresight which prefers distant and imaginary necessities to the real and present necessities of the poor, is inhumanity and injustice. Do thou, O my God, bless this instruction and give to those who hear me, attentive ears and a docile heart.

#### FIRST REFLECTION.

The error by which we mistake the nature of goods consecrated to the Lord and regard them as our own possession and inheritance, is of the number of those, which to propound and unfold, is to confute.

For, in the first place, though I were to suppose with you, that goods consecrated to God, had nothing to distinguish them from ordinary property, and that you were the masters and proprietors of them, as you are of those goods which you receive by succession from your ancestors, it would still be always certain, that you received them from God alone; that they belong to him as first and Sovereign Lord; that

although he may have left to you the use of them, he has neither alienated their dominion nor proprietorship, since he can deprive you of them by death, by the injustice of men, by a thousand accidents which you cannot foresee, and remove you from the world, naked, as you entered it: that thus, in reality, you are but the depositary of them; you have to these goods, merely a subordinate right, which has its limits, its restrictions, its reservations, beyond which you cannot go without usurpation and ingratitude. Now from this single principle, you conclude at once, that God being the sole Lord of those goods which you receive from your fathers, you ought to use them only according to the plan and the views of the master who has entrusted them to you; that you are obliged to enter into the designs of his providence, that is to say, to use them solely for his glory, for your own sanctification, and for the relief of your brethren. For, in pouring out temporal favors upon you, he could have had no other intention than that you should find in them, the means of salvation. All employment of earthly goods, which conduces not to this end, is then an abuse of the gifts of God, and a dissipation of the property of another, for which we shall render a strict ac-

count. Thus although you had a right to use the revenues of the church, like the inheritance of your fathers, judge whether that right would be unlimited, whether you would be the absolute master of them, and whether your caprice alone should regulate the use of the benefits of the Lord.

But in the second place, although all earthly goods are his, there are some, which by being consecrated to him, are his by a double title, both because they have descended from him, and because they are the vows and the homage of the faith and of the piety of his people: there are some over which he reserves to himself a more absolute right, which form, as it were, his portion and his inheritance, and which are sanctified, separated from common uses, and by their consecration exclusively destined to his service and worship. Now these are what we call ecclesiastical revenues; and such are the goods of which you pretend to be the masters, and to have the right of using at your pleasure. Let us ascend to the source, and the better to understand their nature, let us seek it in their origin.

You are not ignorant that the Apostles were, in the beginning the depositaries of all the goods

of the faithful. Scarcely were they associated by baptism to the assembly of the Saints, when as though they had no other concern than to preserve the riches and grace of the spirit, which they had received, each hastened to lay at the feet of the disciples, the homage of his charity, and to discharge himself, by a voluntary sacrifice, of a remnant of servitude, that he might enjoy without alloy or interruption, the liberty of the children of God. Alas! it was then imagined that all things ought to be in common, among those who were to have but one heart and one soul; who had the same faith, the same hope, the same Father and a common right to the same inheritance; who were to use the world as though they used it not, and to possess all things as though they possessed nothing; and that the equal distribution of the favors of heaven should destroy all distinction as to the goods of the earth.

The goods thus confided to the disciples were distributed without delay, to the faithful, and the Apostles who made the distribution, assumed no other right than that of estimating the necessities, and apportioning the share, of each. Thus we see that Peter although the principal keeper of those pious deposits, frankly tells the



lame man at the gate of the temple, that he has neither gold nor silver: *Argentum et aurum non est mihi*;\* and Saint Luke relates this reply and the miraculous cure of the cripple, immediately after having informed us that all the substance of the faithful was entrusted to the care and disbursement of the Apostles; as if to indicate to us, that those pious funds of which they were the dispensers, not only had not enriched them, but had not even lifted them above the poverty of their former condition.

The number of the faithful increasing, this renunciation and community of property was no longer possible: the dispensation of temporal goods alone would have entirely occupied those pastors who were destined to dispense the mysteries of God, and to give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. The faithful contented themselves with carrying to the foot of the altar, a portion of their substance, to offer it to the Lord as a sacred first fruits, as a sacrifice of justice and charity, in order that the ministers of the altar might live by the altar; that the decency of religious worship might be maintained, and that the necessities of the flock,

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\* Acts. c. iii. v. 6.

best known to the pastor, might be more surely relieved through his ministry. The faith of those happy times was so active, their charity so abundant, that, as we read in Prudentius, their conduct attracted the notice and the animadversion of the Pagans, who reproached them that they found a cruel piety in despoiling their very children of their riches, to squander on the temples and on the clergy. *Hæc ocluduntur, said they, abditis Ecclesiarum in angulis, et summa pietas creditur nudare dulces liberos.\**

The generosity of princes in process of time, increased those pious funds; and as the church saw splendor and magnificence enter with the Cesars, into her worship, before, so unostentatious and obscure, she formed of the offerings of the faithful and of the pious largesses of sovereigns, a treasure of charity, in which the poor found the relief of their daily necessities, and the church, the means, of defraying the expensive erection of her temples, the decoration of her altars and the support of her ministers.

Until that time, the Bishop had been charged with the dispensation of all the revenues of the sanctuary: he was properly the only beneficed

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\* Saint Prudentius.

ecclesiastic of his church, that is, the sole dispenser of the goods which the piety of the faithful had consecrated to the service of religion : he alone by the ministry of his deacon, furnished the maintenance of virgins, of widows, of orphans, of confessors ; relieved the necessities of the rest of the faithful, and it was, upon him alone, that the subaltern ministers depended for subsistence.

I know that subsequently, either the avarice of pastors and the unfaithfulness of their dispensation, or the increase of the sacred revenues, or the multitude of the clergy, compelled the church to make a division. But these goods did not change their nature, by being divided ; the condition of the parts was the same, as of the principal ; each one taking to himself a portion of the inheritance of *Jesus Christ*, took also upon himself, a part of the obligations which were inseparable from it : in a word, the poor had a greater number of stewards, but the goods of the church had not therefore more masters.

This doctrine and this tradition being supposed, behold the reflections, which naturally spring from it. It is certain that the revenues of the church are pious gifts and alms : I admit that in confiding them to us, the faithful

intended to support our toils, and to return, as Saint Paul says,\* temporal blessings for the spiritual ones which they had received from us : I admit moreover that they owed this just retribution to our ministry, for no one combats at his own expense, according to the language of the same Apostle.†

But, in the first place, our right is founded on our wants alone : our necessities constitute our whole title. It was because the tribe of Levi did not share in the possession of the promised land with the other tribes, that they were obliged to contribute to its support. If providence has otherwise supplied us with temporal fortune, it is against natural equity, says Julian Pomerus, to convert the pious alms entrusted to us, to our own use : it is a usurpation of the property and of the right of the unfortunate : we rank first among the poor ; but we are nothing more.

In the second place, those sacred revenues are an alms, to which whoever is not poor, can have no claim : but they are also a salary which, whoever does not labour ought not to use or enjoy ; otherwise the recompence of the Apos-

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\* 1. Cor. c. ix.

† Ibid.

tieship, would be changed into an occasion of indulgence, and the pay and spoils of the holy warfare would be shared with those, who had not borne the fatigues and perils of the conflict. For, seriously, my brethren, what could have been the view of the faithful who despoiled themselves at the foot of the altar, but the advantage of the church? Did they not imagine that by increasing her temporal possessions, they were enlarging her spiritual kingdom, multiplying the faithful, by multiplying her ministers; extending the work of the gospel and facilitating new conquests, by rendering her more powerful? Now I ask you what benefit can accrue to the church, from supporting an idle and worthless pastor? what new glory can she acquire, by supplying the means of indulgence, indolence, sensuality, and pleasure, to a lazy and, oftentimes, dissolute Monk or Priest? is not this rather her shame and opprobrium? Do you, yourselves, judge whether the pious founders who enriched her, wished to dishonour her, or to favour the luxury and idleness of her ministers, by loading her with their benefits. Yet we can have no other title to sacred goods than that which we have received from the faithful, who have placed them in our hands. These pious do-

nations include a kind of holy treaty between them and us ; a treaty which has conditions and reservations, inseparably attached to the very nature of the goods which they have left us. If we violate the conditions of this treaty, we forfeit the right which we had, to these goods, in virtue of so holy and sacred a covenant. Now is it not true, that if they have preferred us to their relatives and friends, it was solely through a sentiment of religion ; merely to secure in our hands, the patrimony of the poor, which would have been unsafe amidst the revolutions and the cupidity of families. Why, in effect, deprive their relatives of a portion of their wealth, if it had been their intention to bestow on us a mere unconditional gift ; or why impoverish them, without any other object than to enrich us, with their spoils ? Alas ! these pious souls enjoy in heaven, the full fruit of their generous offerings : in return for the transitory goods which they so liberally consecrated, they find in the bosom of God an eternal and inexhaustible treasure, which the malice of men can no longer snatch from them ; which neither the rust nor the moth can corrupt. But if they could appear in the midst of us again, and see the use which the greater part of ministers make of the

goods which they had mancipated to our temples ; if they could come forth from their tombs and behold the very temples, in which they repose, whose altars they had adorned with so much magnificence, and in which they had flattered themselves that fervent prayers and sacrifices of expiation would be incessantly offered up to the Lord of life and death ; if they could behold those temples abandoned and almost in ruins ; those altars which they had erected with so much care, neglected and unworthy to receive the sacred offerings and serve for the ministry of the unbloody sacrifice ; if they could see, if they could behold the ministers charged with these prayers and with the care of these temples, scarcely heeding or recognising them, and squandering elsewhere, in idleness, in high-living and in pleasures, funds destined for so many pious uses ; were they to behold these abuses and these scandals, would they not cry out and demand justice against us ? would they not insist on resuming the possession of funds, which they imagined they had consecrated to religion and to piety, and which they would see dissipated in worldly, profane and vicious uses ? Animated with the same zeal which rendered them such illustrious benefactors to the church, would they

not, like the Redeemer, drive from the temples which they once raised and endowed with such splendid generosity, those idle and unprofitable pastors, who dishonour them by their morals and their worthlessness, and who turn those houses of prayer into the asylums of their pomp, their pride, their sensuality and their laziness?

And hence arises a second reflection. The revenues of the church, being offerings made to the altar, and goods consecrated to God, you must then, says the first council of Milan, employ them only in holy and religious uses: *Eam naturam et conditionem consecuti sunt, ut in alium quam sacrum et pium usum, eorum fructus converti nefas esset.* You owe them the same respect, says an ancient author, as to the sacred vases, the ornaments used at the altar, or the other gifts which the piety of the people has devoted in our churches. I do not say that, we cannot without sacrilege, render them subservient to iniquity, or change the fruits of piety and justice, into instruments of crime; no, that being common to other goods, is not peculiar to them. But I say, that after their consecration, you can no longer employ them in worldly, indifferent and unprofitable



uses: I say, that uses which may be innocent or indifferent, when there is question of ordinary goods, become so many sacrileges when those goods are holy; it is the impious profanation of the prince of Babylon, who used the vessels of the temple at the royal table, in revelry and banqueting: I say, that we ought to touch them with a kind of religious awe; to look upon them as yet wet with the tears of the faithful, of those pious penitents, who offered them as the ransom of their sins; embalmed, as it were, in their vows and their sighs; we ought to consider them as marked with the blood of Jesus Christ, and by a maxim altogether different from that of the Pontiffs and Doctors of the law, employ them in what regards the temple alone, because they are the price of innocent blood.

From the two foregoing reflections there arises this third, that since *our controul* over ecclesiastical revenues, is a mere stewardship; since they are, as it were, public funds, destined for the relief of public calamities; since our wants, estimated according to religion, being once satisfied, what remains is no longer ours, but merely the property of another, deposited in our hands; it follows that our adminis-

tration of them, is rather a burden than a benefit; that the more the amount exceeds our necessities, the more it should alarm our faith; that the difference between a rich and a poor living, is, that the possessor of the former has more of the goods of others to administer and distribute; that his stewardship is more troublesome and more dangerous without being more lucrative; in a word, that his temptations and perils are greater, without any increase of advantage. He is entrusted with larger property, but he is not therefore the richer: *qui multum non abundavit* :\* he has merely the opportunity of turning it to a worse use; for how difficult is it to have extensive wealth at our disposal, wealth for the possession or employment of which, no man can call us to an account, and not regard it as our own, and not detain of it for our necessities, a portion far different from that which the church herself would have awarded, in those days, when, as the Apostle assures us, it was sufficient for the ministers of the gospel to be provided with a frugal maintenance and mo-

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\* In præsentî tempore, vestra abundantia illorum inopiam suppleat: ut et illorum abundantia vestræ inopiæ sit supplementum, ut fiat æqualitas, sicut scriptum est: *Qui multum non abundavit: et qui modicum, non minoravit.*—2. Cor. c. viii. vv. 14. 15.

dest vesture: *Habentes autem alimenta, et quibus tegamur, his contenti simus.*\*

In fine, the last reflection is, that those maxims, which appear so harsh, so unreasonable, which are so universally violated, and which the corruption of custom and the laxness of the clergy seem to have almost entirely abolished, are, notwithstanding no more than a simple exposition of the doctrine of the Saints; that the language which I have used, is the language of every age, and still, at this day, the language of the church, and of all the expounders of her doctrine; that the most indulgent authors, those who had extenuated every other maxim of morality, and introduced a new and unknown language into the question of our duties, have respected this, and have treated it only as it was accustomed to be treated, in the purest ages of the church. The obligation then must be truly inviolable, since the relaxation which has discovered plausible reasons for softening down every other article, which puts a restraint upon the passions, has left to this, all its severity and all its force.

I have thrown out these reflections without art, and without giving them the regular form

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\* 1. Timothy. c. vi. v. 8.

of an address: there are certain truths which are most forcible when simply detailed. I have cited but little, because there was too much to be quoted. Read, yourselves, the regulations of the canons and the works of the Saints, and you will find a constant tradition of this doctrine from the days of the Apostles, to our own: you will find even under the Jewish law, that when the profane and rapacious Heliodorus attempted to plunder the treasures of the temple, the holy Pontiff Onias, who shewed them, declared that they were sacred deposits, and provisions for the subsistence of the fatherless and the widow: *Ostendit deposita esse hæc et victualia viduarum et pupillorum* :\* you will find that the Priests of the very Pagans, regarded the riches of their temples, as consecrated property, destined to be a resource against public calamities. And after such examples, you can be no longer surprised at the decree of one of the councils of Antioch, that a Bishop should have the administration of the goods of the church, solely to distribute them with fidelity and religion to the poor: *Episcopus habeat Ecclesie rerum potestatem, ut eas in omnes egenos*

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\* 2. Machab. c. iii. v. 10.

*dispenset cum multa cautione et timore Dei:* that he himself should share in them, if he were really poor; but that he should not appropriate more than the supply of his necessary expenses: *Ipsæ autem, earum sit particeps, si tamen indiget, ad suas necessarias expensas.* This single canon embraces the three principles, which we have been endeavouring to establish; that you are but the stewards of the goods of the church; that you have no claim to share in them but in right of your poverty; and that it is your real necessities alone that should regulate your application of them to yourself.

But all are agreed, you will say, on the principle of this doctrine: nobody has ever imagined that the clergy were the absolute masters of the goods entrusted to them, by the church: this is an error into which few fall; but in the actual disposal of them, is it not prudence that should explain these rules? are there not, in reference to persons, certain distinctions to be made, in the appropriation of sacred revenues? Every clergyman is, it is true, but a mere dispenser, but must all prescribe to themselves, the same limits? does not the church herself wish us to attend to a thousand circumstances? are the necessities of the simple clergyman, the same as those of the

Pontiff? and does not the rule, applicable to our wants, admit as many exceptions as there are ranks in the church, or conditions in the state? Behold what I have called an error of circumstances: all are agreed as to the rule, but many deceive themselves in its application: we have now to combat this abuse.

### SECOND REFLECTION.

Of the maxims which regulate the use of sacred revenues, we may say, as of those which direct the chief duties of a christian life, that though all are agreed on the principle, there is scarce one that does not err, and that does not find exceptions to mitigate their severity, when there is question of applying them to himself. The rule is always incontestable, but the application in reference to us, is always doubtful.

Now the circumstances, about which we commonly deceive ourselves, in the use of ecclesiastical revenue, may be reduced to four: first, the dignities to which we are raised; secondly, to the splendor and the distinction of the name which we bear; thirdly, to the abundant income which we enjoy; and lastly, to the superfluities which we deem necessary to our comforts or

suitable to our station. I ask, merely your attention, for on this occasion, I wish to speak to you in simple reflections, and to confine my instruction to the exposition of your undoubted duty, rather than inveigh against its abuse.

From the first circumstance, which has reference to the dignity to which we are raised, arises the most general illusion, on this subject. But in order to separate the true from the false, on a point of such constant practice, I readily admit that the church authorizes external distinctions; that the honor of the ministry demands a certain splendor in those who occupy its first places; that the ornaments prescribed by the law for the inferior Levites, did not equal the beauty and magnificence of the Pontiff's robes, nor did their portion of the sacrifices equal that reserved by the legislator, to the descendants of Aaron; and that thus, although the Apostles and first pastors were not distinguished from the inferior clergy, except by a more severe, a poorer and more laborious life, and although the church even at this day awards her honors and her recompences, in proportion only to the services that are rendered to her, and accords distinctions and privileges to her chief pastors solely for the advancement of the faith and the exten-

sion of the kingdom of Jesus Christ upon earth ; it is, nevertheless, true, that the necessities of her ministers increase in proportion to their rank, and that what might be esteemed a competency in a subaltern situation, does not suffice for those who are placed in the highest rank. This I admit ; and I had rather grant too much and not push the rule to its utmost limit, than weaken it, as always happens, by urging it too far.

But in the first place, let me request you to remark, that the honors of the sanctuary do not follow the same rule as the dignities of the world. The latter founded upon fear, upon the necessity of a bridle for the passions of men, and upon an external authority which must strike and impose upon the eyes and the senses, have need of external pomp to sustain them. The majesty of the law derives almost all its force, from the majesty of the sovereign and of his ministers : parade and splendor are necessary to render those titles, which elevate men above their fellows, respectable. The power of sovereigns comes from God alone : but it is pride that has invented the greater part of those titles, which create such an inequality among their subjects. Thus it is for pride to uphold



what pride alone has invented ; they are vain distinctions which must be encompassed with pageantry and magnificence, to hide their nothingness and give them a sort of reality. But it is innocence, sanctity, justice, modesty, poverty, zeal, toil, which constitute the splendor of the dignities of the sanctuary : they are founded on nothing but the contempt of the world and of all that sparkles to the eye of sense ; since their object is to give an example of this contempt to the faithful, and fill their hearts with the love of so holy a sentiment. The kings of the nations find their glory in domination and pomp, but it shall not be so among you, says Jesus Christ :\* it was in washing the feet of his disciples and commanding them to exercise the same office towards their inferiors, that he established them his Apostles, that is, the princes and rulers of his kingdom. Splendor is not the state of the church, upon earth : she is here a stranger, afflicted for the absence of her spouse ; bewailing the scandals that dishonour her, the persecutions that annoy her, the schisms that distract her, the domestic wounds that pierce her with a sword of grief, and whilst

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\* Matthew. c. xx. v. 25.

she is filled with bitterness and covered with mourning, and all her ways are sorrowful, her ministers ought not to insult her distress, by a magnificence so unseasonable and so alien to her spirit.

This is what I might have at first remarked to you : but in order to come to something more precise, I tell you, in the second place, that if the church authorizes some external distinctions in her ministers, she authorizes those solely, which may give credit and weight to the authority of the holy ministry ; that is to say, which may facilitate the success of our functions, prepare the minds of our people for respect and obedience, give efficacy to sacred obligations and cause the work of the gospel to fructify : she authorizes those only which put us more in a condition to maintain discipline, to uphold good order and a religious subordination among her ministers, to provide for the necessities of the faithful, to render the example of our modesty, our frugality, our disinterestedness and our charity, the more striking by the splendor of the distinctions which she grants us, and thus to be the more useful in proportion to our greater elevation. Whatever does not conduce to this end, is foreign to the views and the intentions

of the church: all that tends but to nourish complacency and pride ; to secure, to us, a vain and unmeaning consideration ; to make us appear in the temple of the living God, like the idols of the gentiles, which owed the worship and the homage of the people, solely to the gold and the vain magnificence with which they sparkled ; all that does not contribute to the salvation of souls, to the edification of the church and the progress of the faith, is but little suited to dignities that have been established but to sanctify the faithful : it is for us, to distinguish between what the glory of God demands and what cupidity inspires ; not to confound the interests of the church, with the cravings of our vanity, nor the innocent and useful splendor of a sacred dignity, with the gorgeous pageantry of a place in the world, and not to pretend to honour our ministry by an air of luxury and of ostentation, which dishonours the church that confided it to us, and which draws down on us, not the respect and veneration, but rather the contempt and censure, of the multitude.

I say, in the third place, that the more elevated you are, the more does the church expect that you will be the model of the flock, the nearer should your virtues approach to a level with the

pre-eminence of the place which you occupy ; and the more, says the council of Trent,\* ought you to regulate your exterior conduct in a manner that others may find in your morals, rules of temperance, of moderation, of rectitude and of that noble and christian humility, which renders us so agreeable to God, and respectable in the eyes of men. I say, that of consequence, your obligations increase with your rank ; that the greater the number of your people, the more miseries you have to relieve, and that thus, the less ought to remain to you of the revenues of the church, for the lavish extravagance of luxury and pride. I say, that the more exalted you are, the nearer does your sacred dignity approach you to Jesus Christ, the Prince of pastors, who in the labors which he underwent from his youth, was poor and had not whereon to recline his head, that the more you appear to be invested with his authority, the more ought you to appear animated with his spirit, and to represent his virtues as you represent his person ; to be like him, humble, modest, an enemy to luxury and pomp ; like him, concerned only for the glory of his Father and for the salvation

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\* Session 25.

of the lost sheep of the house of Israel ;\* full of tenderness towards the wretched and forlorn, and distributing the very bread which is necessary for yourself, to relieve their wants. Those, says the same council, whom the church has called to the honors of the sanctuary, ought to understand well, that they have not been clothed with that dignity, to seek their own interests, to amass riches or pass their lives in opulence and luxury ; but to labour without intermission, for the glory of the Lord, and to live in anxious solicitude and continual vigilance.

In the fourth place, you must not here, confound those expenses allowed by the canons of the church for the support of her dignitaries, with that profuse extravagance which the abuses of succeeding ages have introduced. The church, by a fatal necessity, all divine as she is, according to the fervor or the relaxation of her children, follows in her external state, the destiny of human things, and like them, experiences the vicissitudes inseparable from the condition of the present scene. But time which has changed our morals, has not altered the sacred rules, and the example of the greater number may indeed

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\* Matthew. c. xv. v. 24.

multiply abuses, but cannot authorize them. Read the sacred laws of our Fathers regarding the frugality even of those, who are honoured with the plenitude of the priesthood and the pre-eminence of authority. *After the example of our fathers assembled in the council of Carthage, we, says the same holy council of Trent, not only command that Bishops use modest furniture, and be content with a frugal table, but moreover, that in their whole conduct, in their houses and about their persons, nothing appear foreign to their holy institute, and which breathes not simplicity, the zeal of God, and the contempt of the vanities of the world. Ne quid appareat quod ab hoc sancto instituto sit alienum, quod que non simplicitatem, Dei zelum, ac vanitatem contemptum præ se ferat.* Such is the language of this holy council, which I cite expressly, in preference to so many others, because these laws have been made almost in our own days, and because we cannot therefore oppose to them the plea of prescription, or of difference of ages and manners. Now, my brethren, it is the laws of the church, and not the usages of a corrupt world, that should regulate the conduct of her ministers: it is for her, that has deposited her riches in your hands, to point out the use which

you are to make of them. If you depart from her spirit and her intentions, in the administration of her property, she secretly retracts the donation which she had made to you, of them : she regards you as an unfaithful steward ; and not being able to despoil you, of these sacred goods, here on earth, she awaits that day, when she will be able to make you account even for the last farthing, before the First Pastor and only Lord of that inheritance, which you have so iniquitously wasted. What, my brethren ? because the world authorizes in the ministers of religion, pomp and pride and profuseness, and morals opposed to the rules of the gospel, you would suppose that the church instead of contradicting the erroneous judgments of the world, deemed it right to relax those rules in order to make them accord with the false maxims of the world ? She weeps over the abuses which the world has carried into the very sanctuary, and the more inveterate they become and the more widely they spread, the more is she afflicted and the more does she detest the world. But I must be more correct. Let us do justice to the world, my brethren, and not accuse it of introducing or authorizing our abuses : this very world, all corrupt as it is, secretly reproaches, in the pastors

of the church, that pageantry and extravagance which it would seem to admire : it is the first and severest censor of the very abuse which appears to be its own work : all blind and unjust as it is, it has yet remaining sufficient respect for the majesty of religion, to comprehend that her ministers should honour her, rather by the sanctity of their lives than by the splendor of their style of living : it is fully sensible of the ridicule and the indecency of pomp in a holy state, and in the expenditure of funds consecrated to piety and to mercy : the most worldly themselves are scandalized and indignant, to behold the wealth of the altar ministering to luxury, to sensuality, to intemperance and to all the foolish or guilty vanities of the day : they accuse the simplicity of their ancestors for having devoted to religion, such ample revenues, to feed the pride and the effeminacy of her ministers, and for having diminished the inheritance of their families, only to augment the abuses and the scandals of the church : they say that those funds would be much more usefully employed, on the education of their children, and in putting them in a condition to serve their country, than in maintaining the pomp and idleness of clericks, equally useless to the church and to the state :



they complain that whilst every other rank suffers, and whilst the calamities of the times are felt by every citizen, the clergy alone abound in pleasures and in wealth. Schismatic violence when it seized, in a latter age, the property of the church alledged no other pretext for its usurpation : the profane use to which the greater part of the clergy converted the riches of the sanctuary, warranted those impious hands to tear them from the altar, and to restore to the world those goods, which their possessors employed only after the manner of the world. And who can say, whether the same abuse, which prevails amongst us, may not, one day, draw down on our successors a similar punishment, and whether the justice of God may not permit those sacred funds, the perversion of which has so much dishonoured his church, to be delivered to the enemies of his name, and to become, as amongst so many other nations separated from the unity of the faith, the prey of the heretic or of the infidel ? It was the base and sensual abuse which the sons of Heli made of the revenue of their priesthood, that delivered the Ark of the Covenant into the hands of the Philistines, and caused the libation and sacrifice to cease, for a season, in Israel. The profanation of holy things goes seldom un-

punished, and if Heliodorus, pagan as he was, be so severely chastised for laying sacrilegious hands on the treasures of the temple, what punishment ought not the ministers themselves of the temple, to expect, should they be impious enough to purloin and abuse them?

Thus, I may ask you, in the fifth place; do you really imagine that those pious christians, who formerly enriched our temples by their offerings, designed to establish places and dignities that might exhibit and support the proud pretensions of rank, the pomp and spirit of the world? What? they, who tho' engaged in the world, renounced its vanities, intended to introduce them into the holy place? What? the Paulas, the Marcellas, the Olympiades, and those pious widows who consecrated the inheritance of their ancestors to Jesus Christ, despoiled themselves of their worldly splendor only that it might decorate those, whose duty it is to preach the contempt of it, to all their brethren; could they who so much edified even the world itself, have wished to become a subject of scandal to the church of God? and can the eternal monuments of their disinterestedness and their zeal, be turned in our hands, into excuses for luxury and ostentation? It was the ardent charity and holy sim-

plicity of the first pastors, that secured those pious largesses to the church ; and if her ministers had, in those days, appeared proud and expensive, never would those pious souls have confided the administration of their bounty to stewards, who seemed more concerned about their pleasures and their ease, than about the necessities of the poor and suffering members of Jesus Christ. It is then to the sanctity alone of our predecessors, that we are indebted for the riches confided to us, and we are unworthy of succeeding to their administration, if we do not succeed to those virtues by which they obtained it.

But have not the dignities of the church, need of a certain degree of splendor, to attract and command the respect of the people ? Is it not to be feared that they would fall into contempt, unless they were supported by some of that external decoration, which is necessary for the maintenance of authority ? A stern simplicity might edify in those ages, when all the faithful were Saints ; but amidst the present corruption of our morals, and at a time, when the world is already too much disposed to contemn the clergy together with the authority of the priesthood, should we not encircle our office with a certain imposing grandeur, which may

render the worship of religion respectable, even to those who despise its laws?

But, my brethren, when was it that the world ceased to respect the clergy? was it not when they themselves, ceased to render themselves respectable? Whether is it the disorders of the world, or those of the clergy, that have turned into satire and contempt, that veneration in which the faithful once held persons, consecrated to the holy ministry? and do you imagine that a vain pomp and a costly exterior which even the world condemns, will supply the place of those virtues which alone command respect, or do honor to the church, which they afflict and scandalize? Is it, that sacred dignities are merely to impose on the eyes and the senses? are they not exclusively established to edify, to speak to the heart, to inspire a hatred of the world, and the desire and love of the goods of heaven? Does the church, to support herself, need the assistance of luxury and pride? It was by holiness and charity that she was established, and it is by them, that she will be maintained, and will continue and spread to the consummation of ages. What respect can accrue to her, from the pomp of her ministers? It has served as a pretext for entire kingdoms to separate themselves, from the

unity of the faith: it has torn from her bosom many nations, which she once gained by the blood of her Martyrs and her Apostles; it is, even at this day, the source of censures, of derisions and blasphemies against her: it scandalizes those who have remained in her pale; it shakes the faith of the simple; it confirms the infidel in his impiety, and consigns the widow and the orphan to indigence and despair: it causes to ascend to the throne of God's justice, the cries of the distressed and abandoned poor, whose misery and destitution call for vengeance on those barbarous stewards, who refuse to those wretched creatures, a fund which is their right, that they themselves may squander it in scandalous and cruel dissipation; such is the glory that results from it to the church: it is for you to say, whether you are disposed to reckon her schisms, her scandals, her shame, her losses and her grief among her trophies.

I acknowledge that the modesty of her ministers, ought to be exempt from every thing abject and contemptible. But a noble simplicity has a thousand times more dignity, in the eyes, even of the world, than all the vain parade of misplaced magnificence: there is nothing so mean, as to endeavour to obtain respect, by expedients,

unsuited alike to our profession and our duties : never were the ministers of the church more esteemed or more honoured, than in those ages, when their poverty and their modesty appeared most conspicuous. Cornelius, a centurion of the proud legions of imperial Rome, as yet a Gentile, throws himself at the feet of the chief of the Apostles ; but is he dazzled at the pomp and splendor by which Peter is surrounded? He finds him lodged near the sea-shore,\* in the house of an artisan from the dregs of the people : his dress, his retinue, every thing corresponds with the poverty and simplicity of his abode : it was the piety and virtue and something inexpressibly divine, which sanctity had poured over the face and person of the Apostle, which made Cornelius feel and reverence the greatness of the man and the excellence of his ministry. Were the honors which the officer of the Queen of Ethiopia did to Philip,† by taking him into his chariot, ascribable to the pomp which environed that minister of Jesus Christ? The man of God was on foot, bearing in the simplicity of his appearance and manner, the resemblance of a prophet, and by the celestial

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\* Acts. c. x. v. 32.

† Ibid. c. viii.

radiance which grace had shed upon his countenance, he is recognised by this officer, as an Angel of the Lord, sent to instruct him in the way of salvation. Whether did Leo, without any other decoration than his virtue and his priesthood, and Benedict in his solitude, arrest the ravaging fury of two barbarous kings, and compel them to respect in their persons, the presence of that God whose ministers they were, by the richness and magnificence of their equipage, or by the sanctity of their lives and the majesty of their virtues? No, my brethren, let us be holy and we shall be respected: let us do honor to our ministry and our ministry will make us honoured: let us not conform to the vain pomps of the world; this is our only means of gaining its homage or deserving its veneration: the world envies, more than it respects, our opulence; let us make a holy use of it, and it will esteem our charity and no longer envy our wealth. We mistake the nature and sanctity of our ministry, if we suffer ourselves to be persuaded, that there is any thing but virtue, that can render it respectable; but we mistake the world still more, if we hope to inspire it with respect for religion, by the very abuses which render her ministers contemptible. Saint

Augustine was simply clad, lived on nothing but vegetables, reserving the greater delicacy of flesh meat for the exercise of hospitality; yet what honors did he not receive from his age? Basil the great, always wore the same garment, and all the riches, says Saint Gregory Nazianzen, which he possessed at his death, was a simple cross: yet Basil was the oracle of the east, respected by the whole world, and even by the very Emperors whose errors he had combatted. Exuperius that venerable Bishop, carried his disinterestedness and his bounty so far, says Saint Jerome, that he was necessitated to carry the sacred Eucharist in a basket of twigs, and the blood of the Redeemer in a vessel of clay. O holy magnificence! O splendor truly episcopal, and truly worthy a minister of the cross! O spectacle of charity, a thousand times more deserving of the respect and the homage of men, than all the gaudy decorations of profane luxury and pomp. I will not say, look, and do according to this pattern: these great examples are no longer within reach of our manners: but I will ask you, whether the church lost any thing of her majesty, in the simplicity and the frugality of those illustrious pastors, and whether the dignity of the episcopacy was ever more venerated,



than when it shone only by the sanctity, the humility, and the evangelical poverty of those who wore it? The first circumstance then, by which we suffer ourselves to be deceived, is an error relative to our dignity.

The second is that which I have called an error of name. I admit first, that persons of exalted birth, from the manner in which they have been educated, need certain conveniences with which those of ordinary rank may dispense, and that the former have wants, which would be effeminacy and extravagance in the latter. But do you imagine that the church, which condemns in the very laity, that profane pomp which vicious usage has attached to the phantom of name and of birth, not only authorizes it in her ministers, but even wishes to support it, out of the property of the poor, out of the riches of the sanctuary, and pay the expenses of an abuse which she mourns and detests? Whether are you a minister of Jesus Christ, as noble? or as pious, faithful, vigilant, laborious, enlightened? Whether is it your name, or your virtue which has induced the church to choose, and consecrate you to the functions of the altar? Is it your birth, or your learning and piety, that can discharge the duties of the holy ministry? Why,

then, would you pretend that the church should accord increased remuneration, to what is useless for her purposes? Not he who is most noble and most illustrious, but he who labours most, is worthy, says Saint Paul, of double honor. Does a great name bestow on you, more zeal, more knowledge, more sanctity, more fidelity and application to your duties? What does it profit the church? Why then should she set any value on it, and why should a title which adds nothing to your services, increase her liberality in your regard?

Besides, be mindful of the principle already established, that whatever may be the distinction of your birth, the church supports you, only as one of the poor; the fund from which your maintenance is drawn, is the fund of the widow and the orphan, of the indigent and the wretched. Now the church in the distribution of her pious bounty, does not intend to award to a pauper of illustrious rank, all that might be necessary for him, to uphold the pride of his birth in the world, had his fortune corresponded with his name. A pauper of high rank may, indeed, be distinguished by a larger allowance; but it should be ever remembered that what he receives is an alms, and that alms do not restore

to the distressed, the enjoyment of all, that fortune may have snatched from them, but barely what may suffice to supply the necessities of nature. Hear the opinion of the pious Peter of Blois: if, says he, writing to the Bishop of Chartres, if, because you are the son of a grandee, or even because you can count kings among your ancestors, you pretend that it is necessary for you to live more lavishly than others, I tell you, on the part of God, that this pretended necessity must not fall on the patrimony of Jesus Christ: *Necessitas hæc, Christi patrimonium non contingat*: on the contrary, the modesty of a Bishop, should regulate and lessen the expenditure which you would have made, had you remained in the world, and thus turn your expenses into the support of the poor. Such is the language of the church, and such has been the practice of her faithful pastors, in every age. Did Paul, though a Roman citizen claim any outward distinction? or was he a greater burden to the church, than Peter, a fisherman? you know well, as he himself says, that he desired neither the gold nor silver nor vesture of any one: the labor of his own hands supplied his wants; he did not wish even to be an expense to the faithful whom he had brought forth to

Jesus Christ, and from whom he had a right to exact the honor and the recompence due to the ministers of the gospel ; and the only privilege of birth, about which he was solicitous, was that of labouring more than others, in the Apostleship, and of deriving less of temporal reward from his toils. Did the Ambroses, the Paulinuses, those great Bishops of illustrious descent, live with greater magnificence and profusion, than Augustine, the son of a simple citizen of Tageste? Paulinus sold his immense inheritance, to pour it into the bosom of the poor : Ambrose disposed even of the sacred vessels, to relieve the necessities of his people : my treasures said he are the poor of Christ ; my guards are the blind, the lame, the sick, the aged ; my only treasure their vows and prayers. Yes, my brethren, these holy pastors, putting off the ignominy of the secular habit, laid aside all those vain distinctions, which the world alone ought to know : they forgot the name of their ancestors and the house of their family, from the moment, in which they assumed the character and the name of pastors, that name so endearing, so humble, bespeaking so much tenderness and service for the people : from their entry into the priesthood of Melchisedec, they knew no

longer, any genealogy, persuaded that the church respects and recognises no name, in her ministers, but the august name of the ministry itself.

Moreover, my brethren, can a Priest and a Pastor alledge his name, as an excuse for his luxury and his pomp, whilst so many of the faithful whose father he is; whilst the members of Christ, which the church has confided to his care, mourn in affliction and in want, without help, without protection, without any other resource than their patience and their tears; abandoned and unknown even by him, who ought to know his sheep, to call them by their names; who ought to relieve them and not suffer one of them to perish? Can we honour our name or our birth, by inhumanity and the forgetfulness of mercy? Whether is it the expensive gratifications of luxury or the noble sentiments of the heart, that render us truly great? and what can be more mean and more vulgar, than to be insensible to miseries which we are bound to relieve; and to detain, that we may live in superfluous abundance, the property of a thousand wretches, who abide in suffering, and invoke death as the only remedy, and the happy termination, of their miseries? Should not nobility of blood itself, open

our hearts, on such occasions, and inspire us with the lofty and benevolent sentiments, worthy of a soul that was not born in the crowd? If birth were to place any distinction, between the two classes of the ministers of the church; if it were allowed to assign to each of them its distinctive prerogative: it would seem to be, that those who are born among the people, ought to be more harsh, more puffed up by their dignities, more jealous of that outward show and of those gaudy trappings, which might raise and decorate their meanness; whereas generosity, elevation of sentiment, tenderness for the wretched, a noble contempt of pomp and magnificence, more extensive charity, would appear to be the portion of those, who with an illustrious name derived from their ancestors, ought to have inherited sentiments worthy of their birth. Alas! my brethren, the rich man, in the gospel,\* is reproved, because whilst he was clad in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously, every day, he suffered Lazarus to beg and mourn without relief, at his gate: he was expending in his luxurious feastings, nothing but his own, a property which he had possessed from his family,

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\* Luke. c. xvi.

and of which, it would therefore appear, that he might dispose at his pleasure. But you, who under the vain pretext of your distinguished name, employ in a like use, the fund of the widow and of the orphan, the patrimony of those destitute and squalid Lazaruses whom you neglect; you, who add to the barbarity and the sensuality of the reprobate Dives, the injustice of depriving the poor of their sacred right, to squander it in silly and wicked dissipation, see whether your sentence will not be more rigorous, and the chastisements which the justice of God is preparing for you, more excruciating than those of this hardened and voluptuous man, in proportion as your crime infinitely surpasses the guilt of that, with which he is reproached.

In fine, that I may leave nothing unanswered, on a point so essential, let me grant, for a moment, that the laws of the church permit you to enjoy out of the sacred property, which she confides to you, the same comforts, and indulge in the same superfluities, in which you might have lived, from the patrimony of your ancestors, had you remained in the world. You, yourselves will agree that this assumption is ridiculous; but let us suppose it for a moment: would you have found in your portion of the

family estate, wherewith to uphold the empty splendor of a name, of which you carry the vanity and the prodigality to such an extreme, in the church? The last perhaps, of a numerous progeny, or at least excluded from the rights and the prerogatives of primogeniture, you would have seen yourself reduced to a small fortune, in the world, to the share of a younger son, which in the most illustrious houses, rarely exceeds a scanty mediocrity. Now, I ask you, do you expect to be more opulent, under the authority and the poverty of Jesus Christ, than you would have been as Saint Jerome says, under the empire of mammon? What? shall the church be compelled to raise those to luxury and abundance, whom the world would have suffered to remain in a slender competency? Shall you be more at your ease, out of the patrimony of the poor, than you could have been out of the inheritance of your ancestors? Your name would not have suffered in the world, from the obscurity and the paucity of your fortune, and yet it would suffer in the church from your charity, your frugality and your modesty? What? the world which has created the vain phantom of name and of birth, would not have supported in you, its own work, and the church which con-



demns and abhors it, shall be compelled to support its vanity and extravagance? The character of the world would not suffer from the inequality of your fortune to your name, and yet the decencies of the church would be violated, if the virtue, the disinterestedness, the temperance, the piety of your life, were to correspond with the sanctity and the poverty of your profession? answer, if you dare. O my God! if thou hast taught us that it is almost impossible for the rich of this world to enter into the kingdom of heaven,\* if the goods of this life, almost always, draw down a secret malediction on those who possess them; if it be so difficult to use them according to the rules of faith, of charity, of temperance and of christian poverty, what, O my God! must be the dangers attendant on the possession of sacred goods! what an obstacle in the way of salvation! what abysses of neglect, of superfluities, of prodigality and of profanation, over which general example spreads a fatal darkness, which we almost never penetrate, and about which we do not even think of entering into any examination with ourselves? Decide then whether the circumstance of your

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\*Matthew. c. xix. vs. 23. 24.

name and of your birth, ought to quiet your conscience, regarding the unjust dispensation of the revenues of the church.

But, perhaps, the error involved in the third circumstance, will be found more favourable to you : it turns upon the abundance or the mediocrity of the revenue which we enjoy. It seems, at first view, surprising, that the same error should spring from two sources so opposite : but experience does not permit us to indulge any doubt, upon the subject. If the revenue which we possess be considerable, we persuade ourselves, that our expenses should increase in proportion, and almost nothing remains for the poor : if it be small, we have scarce sufficient for ourselves, and the poor can have no longer, any pretension to share in it. These abuses are gross it is true ; but cupidity supported by custom, finds every where, some excuse.

In effect, my brethren, however abundant the revenue which the church has confided to you, and I do not here enquire, whether it be within the limits prescribed by the rules of discipline, or whether the greater part of the benefices which you possess and which swell your income so enormously, be conformable to the intentions and the spirit of the church, you know

they are not : but this subject must be reserved for another occasion : whatever then may be the extent of this revenue, it does not make you the richer ; I have already proved that you are merely charged with a greater dispensation ; you cannot then appropriate a larger portion to yourself.

For, let me ask you, whether in the beginning, when the Bishop alone held the whole revenue of his church, he was therefore the more expensive, the more pompous, the more profuse ? was the episcopacy then regarded as a post of greater wealth, of greater splendor, of more comforts, more favourable to the indulgence of vanity and pleasure ? You have but to go back to those happy times, to be convinced, that at no other period, had the church such poor, charitable, penitent, holy pastors. The Bishop was the universal steward, the inspector of all : he was burdened with a weightier solicitude but had not on that account, greater advantages : there passed more of sacred property through his hands, but more did not remain for himself. And truly, my brethren, does a property alter its nature, on account of its abundance ? Were a large treasure consigned to your care, ought you to be esteemed wealthier than another, who was the de-

positary merely of a small sum? If you are no more than a steward, what matters it, that you have larger sums to disburse? you are the guardian of the property of a more numerous poor, this is your only privilege; but your rights or your necessities, are not thereby augmented.

And we shall find a new proof of this truth, in ascending to the source and asking ourselves, why has the church attached larger revenues to certain benefices? was it to secure more gratifications and greater magnificence to the incumbents? You need not be told that such could not have been the intention of the church: it was because the burdens of those benefices were more considerable; the monastery filled with a greater number of pious monks; the poor who depended on it, more numerous; it was, in a word, because those more abundant revenues were necessary for a greater variety of holy uses: it was the necessities alone of the church, that swelled and multiplied the pious liberality of the faithful. The same wants may be no longer felt; but the church has still many others: that species of misery which the founders intended to relieve, may no longer exist, but as long as there shall be poor and destitute to be found, the same intention will always subsist; they

must replace those who preceded them, and participate in that bounty to which their misery gives them a right. Wants may vary at different periods, but sacred property does not change its condition ; its object and use are always the same.

But far from possessing an abundant income, yours, you will say, scarce affords a slender competency. To elucidate this article, we have but to pass to the fourth circumstance, which is the abuse of turning superfluities into wants. I shall not here enter into an invidious and useless detail, nor attempt to decide to a nicety, what ought to be esteemed necessary to each particular order of the church. Such decision depends on a thousand circumstances, which can be neither foreseen nor determined in a discourse ; it is sufficient that we establish the rule, the particular cases will afterwards readily decide themselves.

An incontrovertible maxim in this matter, and one which no abuse has ever attempted to combat or even to qualify, is, that the necessities of the clergy have much narrower limits, than those of the laity. In the wants of the laity, we reckon not only the necessaries of life, but also those decencies which the world has attached to their

state ; allowable recreations ; certain usages which universal custom has formed into laws ; a prudent provision for the establishment of a family : these things once secured, what remains is a superfluity, which belongs not to them, but to the poor. But in the wants of the clergy, as the property which the church confides to them, is sacred to the poor, and as she assigns to themselves, an allowance only in their quality of paupers, we must include no more than mere necessaries ; that is to say, what is requisite and sufficient to uphold the decency of their state, I mean a wise, christian, modest, ecclesiastical decency, not that luxury and pomp which the world honours with the name of decency, but which is highly indecent and highly unsuitable to the modesty and the simplicity of our holy ministry.

In effect, a second maxim as capital and as forcible as the foregoing, is, that you must not estimate your necessities by usage, or by the false and corrupt maxims, of the world, but, by the holy laws of the church, touching the morals and the expenses of the clergy. This rule, founded on the doctrine of the Fathers and the most ancient decrees of the church, is propounded and enforced by the first council of Milan in

the following words: "as to the limits," says this pious assembly, "which every clerick, in reference to his rank and profession, should prescribe to himself in the expenditure of ecclesiastical revenue; all should know that they are traced in the provisions of the holy canons touching the modesty and the frugality of the clergy." Behold many doubts cleared and many questions already decided. It is for you now to say, whether gaming, and those pleasures forbidden even to the common faithful, and vanity of dress, and luxury altogether pagan, and a sensual life, and the trappings of effeminacy and pride, so unseemly in a minister of Christ crucified, and a thousand expenses of mere taste or of pure caprice, and a thousand superfluities which offend the eyes, even of considerate worldlings, be conformable to those venerable regulations, or confined within the bounds which they prescribe to the indulgence of the clergy.

So, my brethren, the abuse of the property of the church is so universal; scandals, upon so essential a point, are so common and so accredited; the sacred canons which enforce the frugality of clericks and the religious use of the revenues of the sanctuary, are so frittered away by the pride and worldliness of the greater part

of the ministry, that we ought here *to change our tone*, like the Apostle, and be content to convey our exhortation in the following language: at least retrench in your style of living, all those expenses, which the gospel condemns in ordinary christians: we dare not require from you, a clerical poverty; but reduce yourselves at least to a christian moderation: we presume not to insist on your conforming to the regulations of the holy canons, but conform at least to those of the gospel: use the things of this world as though you used them not, nor put your trust in uncertain riches; do not make the kingdom of heaven consist in eating and drinking, nor shape your conduct by the maxims of this corrupt world; heap up to yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither the rust nor moth doth corrupt, nor thieves dig through and steal: remember that the reprobate are accursed in the gospel, only because they had not fed the hungry nor clothed the naked, nor visited the sick nor relieved the suffering, but wasted in gratifying their senses, the goods which providence had confided to them for the succour of the poor: hate your soul, and combat its depraved desires, if you wish to save it: bear your cross, and mortify your body, your pride and sensu-



ality by privations and retrenchments, if you will be the disciple of Jesus Christ: do penance or you shall certainly perish. Such are the rules which the gospel prescribes to the simple faithful, in reference to modesty, to charity towards the poor, and to the christian use of temporal goods; begin to recognise and observe them: close your eyes, if you will to those still more perfect rules, which Saint Paul lays down for the ministers of religion in his epistles to Titus and to Timothy: be christian in your use of the revenues of the sanctuary; we ask no more; beyond that we shall not now push your obligations. To be sure, this moderate estimate of your duty, is far below the just standard; of this, I am well aware, nor do the truths which you have already heard permit you to doubt it: but it is still too high for the greater part of those, who enjoy ecclesiastical revenues, and who consider the opulence of their dignities, as a title to sensuality, to idleness and prodigality. O my God! and dost thou suffer us to speak thus in a human manner of the divine laws of thy church? the force of custom has so far prevailed against them, that we scarce longer dare to propose them, in their naked severity: we must mitigate and qualify them, to accommo-

date them to the relaxation of our morals and to the authority of example. But, O my God! the torrent of generations and of ages rolls along at the base of thy divine immutability, and thou beholdest the lapse and change of ages, the vicissitudes of morals and of times, whilst thou remainest always the same: wert thou but the God of the present age, we might, perhaps, flatter ourselves that thou wouldst judge us by its usages and its morals; but thou art the immortal king of ages, the God of eternity, whose truth remaineth for ever; thou wilt judge us by it alone; and woe to every soul which shall rely upon usage and not upon truth, for its justification, in the terrible day of thy vengeance.

This would be the place to develop the third part of this discourse, which I have called the error of precautions, but the principles which we have already established are sufficient to overturn and condemn it.

I shall merely add, that the most monstrous and, at the same time, the most common of all the vices of pastors, is, under pretext of future necessities, to hoard up continually, without ever dispensing the slightest relief, and without exercising a single act of charity or mercy; that it is inhuman to prefer the chimerical apprehen-

sions of an insatiable cupidity, to the real and present miseries of the members of Jesus Christ; and that this desire of amassing money, and this sordid avarice which never thinks it has enough, seems to be a malediction upon the clergy. Worldlings themselves cover us with this reproach, and the *avarice of a Priest* is one of those satirical expressions, which among them, have passed into a proverb. But, my brethren, were new motives necessary to inspire you with all the horror of so shameful a vice, it would be sufficient to tell you, that it is a vice the most unworthy of a pastor of the church, and the most opposed to the spirit, and to the sublime and noble functions, of the holy ministry. An avaricious Priest, niggardly towards the poor, and even towards himself, his thirst becoming, every day, more insatiable and his desires of money increasing with his treasures, is one of those scandals which the libertine and the virtuous, the worldly and the pious, the infatuated and the wise, regard with equal indignation: nothing can render the sacerdotal character more truly despicable. Your thoughts are directed to a futurity, which is all uncertainty and which no man can ensure you: you hoard, and others shall gather, and greedy relatives will divide

among themselves, your sacred spoils ; nay they will even insult your cupidity, at the very time, in which they shall seize and devour its criminal and detestable fruits. But what shall these treasures of iniquity and inhumanity profit them, says the Holy Ghost ? their families shall bear the curse of them, to the fourth generation : they have brought the blood of the poor upon their heads, and it shall not cease to cry to heaven, for vengeance against them : they have blended up a deadly leaven with their inheritance, and it shall by little and little, ferment and corrupt the whole mass : they have carried a hidden but devouring fire into their habitations, which sooner or later, will kindle into a flame, and reduce them to ashes and desolation : this is a truth confirmed by the experience of every age. It is the offerings and largesses formerly made to the church, which have preserved the name and descent of some of our most illustrious families : the most ancient titles now remaining, of their nobility and greatness are to be found, in the sacred monuments of the church, which their ancestors founded or endowed : without those pious foundations the glory of their antiquity would be scarcely known, and all their noblest privileges either suspected

or denied; the goods then, bestowed on the church, have preserved the ancient greatness and titles of our most illustrious houses, from oblivion and doubt. But it is still truer, that the same goods, either usurped, or bequeathed to friends by avaricious incumbents, and expended in supporting the vanity and ambition of families, have proved the first cause of their decay; decked, as they were, in the rich spoils of the altar, we have seen their proud root wither: the usurpation of the property of the church, is a hidden worm, which gnaws into the very principle of their fertility, which corrodes all their greatness and brings down their glory in the dust, so that nothing remains but the mournful ruin of their past elevation. Yes, my brethren, of the riches of the ark, we may say as of the ark itself, that they bear death and disease and desolation into those houses, into which they are made to enter, contrary to the ordinance of the law.

Let us, my brethren, avoid these rocks; let us give to God what belongs to God. The more the church heaps her favors upon us, the more zeal let us feel for her necessities and for her glory; let us imitate, at least the generosity and gratitude of the children of the world. When

the prince has honoured them with his benefits and raised them to posts of distinction, they sacrifice their lives, in token of their gratitude: they reckon the fatigues and perils of war, as nothing: they generously employ for the service of their king, the rank and fortune which they hold from his liberality: the recompences bestowed on them, become new motives of zeal, and of devotion to the cause of their benefactor: they themselves proclaim aloud, that owing every thing to the favor of the sovereign, they cannot offer a better homage of their acknowledgments, than by employing all they possess, for his service: such, has always been the language of men illustrious in the state: they justify the profuse expenses to which they are compelled by their employments, and the fatigues and waste of health attendant on daily application to arduous business, by the necessity of gratitude and diligence in the high trust, with which they have been honoured by the favor of their master.

But, as to us, my brethren, the favors which the church heaps upon us, have no other effect than to render us insensible to her glory; to confirm and authorize our effeminacy and our estrangement from the painful duties of the mi-

nistry, which she has confided to us. And we, my brethren, diminish our services in proportion, as we are elevated by her. And we, my brethren, (and I say it with profound grief,) the more we receive of her riches, the less, we imagine, we ought to expend for her honor; the more, even do we employ against her interests and against her glory: we make use of her benefits, only to dishonour her: it would seem that they are arms which she puts into our hands, that we might the more openly and the more tauntingly, brave her authority and insult the wisdom, and the modesty, of her discipline. The distinctions and rewards of princes form zealous servants; the benefits of the church tend but to augment the unfaithfulness, the ingratitude and sloth of her ministers. Let us be, at least, as just and grateful as the children of the world: let us consecrate our talents, our vigils, our cares, our very lives to the glory of the church, which has made us all that we are; and which in confiding to us, her offices and emoluments, hoped to find in us, defenders of her doctrine and assertors of her laws. She is already but too much dishonoured and afflicted by the scandals and defection of so many of her children: let us not increase her reproach and her grief by

the additional scandal and infidelity of her ministers; nor put into her mouth the touching reproach of the Prophet, that those who taste of her banquet and share in her bounty, those friends for whom she reserves her sweetest and most delicious repasts, are the very first to turn their back upon her, and to repay her tenderness and charity by the most open contumely and ingratitude: *Qui simul mecum dulces capiebas cibos.\*...Qui edebat panes meos magnificavit super me supplantationem.†* Let us not suffer ourselves to be seduced by the example, which we behold around us, nor be ashamed, whilst we conform to the laws of our fathers, of a singularity which our obligations and the sanctity of our state, will always render creditable: let us examine the disorders and deviations of custom by the immutable principles of our duty; let us not consider the conduct of others, but inquire what our character demands of us: let us justify our vocation by our works, and employ for the honor of the church the wealth, which we have received only for her benefit. *Amen.*

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\* Psalm. 54. v. 15.

† Psalm. 40. v. 10.



# A DISCOURSE

ON

THE MANNER, IN WHICH THE CLERGY  
SHOULD CONDUCT THEMSELVES IN  
THE WORLD.

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Et murmurabunt Pharisæi et Scribæ dicentes: quia  
hic peccatores recipit et manducat eum illis.

*And the Pharisees and the Scribes murmured, saying:  
this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.*

LUKE. chap. xv. ver. 2.

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**I**F, my brethren, the hope of the applause of men, and of the public approbation of your conduct, has entered into the plan, which, in this holy place, you ought to have formed for your future life, it is a proof that you have known, neither the character of the world nor the destiny of virtue. The seclusion and austerities of the Baptist, did not escape the censure of the

Pharisees ; nor do the mildness and condescension of Jesus Christ, meet, on this occasion, greater indulgence at their hands. Take the most opposite courses : fly the world, because there is found in it, nothing but snares for virtue, and because the sanctity of your character necessarily estranges you from its maxims and its pursuits ; or enter into it, because your ministry often calls you thither, because your brethren have need of succour, and vice must be put to shame by holy example : your flight will be equally censured as your charity, nor will you ever succeed in pleasing, whilst you seek only to edify.

Yet we, are commanded, we particularly who are answerable to the church and to religion for a life without blemish, in the eyes of the public ; we are commanded to render ourselves irreproachable before men : to have a good reputation among the people, and as Saint Peter says, by the modesty of our deportment, and the purity of our morals, to force their very malignity to glorify God, and bless his power and the riches of his mercy, towards his servants. Those, whom the grace of a vocation to religion, separates from the rest of men, to consecrate them to the exercises of penance and the devotions of

solitude, are no longer accountable to the world: called to weep, in secret, before the Lord, over their own sins, or the sins of their brethren, they regard the things that are, as tho' they were not, and unknown to the age, they live known only to God: *sicut qui ignoti et cogniti*.\* Their lot indeed is enviable: their consolations more abundant; their prayers more pure; the truths of salvation make a more lively impression; the peace of the heart is more uniform; innocence less exposed; God more sensibly felt.

But we, whom the grace of the ministry, consecrates to laborious functions; we who must mingle with the multitude as a leaven of benediction, destined to sanctify the whole mass; we must learn to live piously amidst our people; the end of our vocation is not to fly, but to save, them. Thus we see in the gospel, that Christ gives to sinners, a ready access to his person; that he deigns to honour their houses and even their tables with his presence; and the calumnies of the Pharisees upon his conduct, are at once, both a lesson of instruction to those of us, whose irregularity of morals is justly

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\* 2. Cor. c. vi. v. 8.

visited with similar reproaches, and a consolation to such virtuous ministers, as incur, without deserving, the censures of the world.

I confess, as I stated in a late discourse,\* that we have every thing to fear from an intercourse with men ; and that the spirit of our ministry becomes extinct, amidst the vain assemblies and the licentious conversations of worldlings. Nevertheless, as our duties necessarily bring us among men, it would be of little use to exhort you to fly the world, without instructing you, at the same time, in the manner in which you are to conduct yourselves, when duty calls you to it.

The importance of the subject claims your earnest attention ; for upon the manner in which you shall enter into the world, depends the success of your functions, the honor of your ministry, the fruit of your clerical education, the decision of your lot for eternity. To reduce this discourse to two simple reflections, we have only to examine, first, what are the motives that should bring us among men, and then what are the rules to be observed that our converse among

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\* Discourse on the estrangement of the clergy from the world.

them may be worthy of the God by whom we are sent. Let us unfold the first reflection.

### FIRST REFLECTION.

I suppose first, that the order of heaven calls us to a certain place ; its dangers are for us much less, than for those who enter it, of their own choice, and the same circumstances in which their innocence would infallibly perish, would for us, be turned into occasions of merit and means of salvation. It is worthy of God, that his mercy should sustain the choice which his wisdom has made ; that his shield should cover those, whom he himself has exposed, that he should stretch forth his hand, as he did to Peter, to those who tread the depths of the abyss, only at his command ;\* and in a word that he should not refuse his protection to those, who are employed in doing only his own work. And his conduct in this particular, is so certain, that as election to glory is but a preparation of the means by which it is infallibly attained, so we may say, that the peculiar selections which he makes for certain enterprises, are but an allotment of the particular helps, fitted to ensure

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\*Matthew. c. xiv. v. 29. &c.

their success. Thus the Prophet that came from Judah to Bethel, preserves all his firmness before an impious king, to whom God had sent him, and he cannot guard himself from the snares of a false Prophet, to whom he had not been authorized to speak.\* All is danger for such, as expose themselves, and danger itself is turned into security for those, who walk only at the command of the Lord. This truth being supposed, our first care when we are about to appear among men, should be to ask ourselves, whether it be God that calls us. Now the order of God is marked, chiefly in the views which we propose to ourselves. Thus to know whether we are guided by this order, when we enter into the world, we have only to examine, whether the motives that lead us to it, are worthy of God and of the sanctity of our ministry.

Motives may be distinguished into three sorts: some are criminal, others indifferent, and finally, the last are holy and religious. You will agree, at once, that the world can be nothing but a fatal rock, to those who are led into it, by criminal views; and who having entered it through sin, can find in it, nothing but death. This

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\*3. Kings. c. xiii.

truth needs not to be proved, and I trust in the mercy of the Lord, that it does not regard those who now hear me. You have, perhaps, had but a too mournful experience of it, when before entering into this place of retreat, you were yet engaged in the dangerous follies of the age : *Et hæc quidem fuistis*. But you have been, since purified ; you have been sanctified by the entire renovation of your conscience, by the frequent participation of the holy mysteries, by the daily exercise of prayer, and by the help of constant and earnest instructions : *Sed abluti estis ; sed justificati estis* : you have been consecrated to God and to his altar by the choice of a holy state : *Sed sanctificati estis* ;\* and it is not, now, necessary to inspire you with a horror of the guilt and the disorders of the world, but to fortify you in the practice of virtue and of the sacred duties of your profession.

The second motives which may induce us to appear in the world, are those that seem to us indifferent : the becoming civilities of life ; the pleasure of intercourse, which it is so difficult to forego ; the tendency to relaxation, caused by vivacity of temperament, and a mind little fitted

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

to sustain long, the pressure of toil and the severity of retreat. I have already employed an entire discourse in combatting the illusion of those motives and in demonstrating to you, their utter incompatibility with the spirit of our ministry.

You will, perhaps, tell me that you cannot be always employed in serious duties, and that the more painful your functions are, the more do you, sometimes, need relaxation. I agree, that there are innocent and even necessary relaxations; that the sanctity of our functions leaving to us, still, the weaknesses of nature, does not forbid us to recur to their proper remedy; that too long and too severe an application injures the mind which it revolts, and the body which it exhausts, and that in fine, there are days intended for the repose of the mind, which if I may be allowed to say so, are as precious and as sacred, as those which religion itself has consecrated to the repose of the body.

But let me ask you, is the world a fit place of relaxation, to a minister of Jesus Christ? How shall we sing, said the children of the captivity to the inhabitants of Babylon, how shall we sing in a foreign land,\* where the God of

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\* Psalm. 136.



our fathers is unknown, where the covenant is despised, and the Prophets without honor; where the knee is bent, and the sacrifice ascends, to vain and empty idols, and where, in fine, every thing renews the memory of our exile, and awakens the desire of Sion, which the Lord has given to us for an inheritance? What, my brethren? can it be a relaxation to us to see religion forgotten or contemned; the maxims of Jesus Christ effaced or insulted; God unknown, disorders become matters of custom, and our brethren for whom Christ died, perishing before our eyes? Alas! what does the world present but this sad spectacle? David\* surrounded with the pleasures of royalty, complained that his sojourn was too much prolonged: the Prophet† asks a fountain of tears that he may weep over the excesses of Jerusalem: Moses‡ desired to be blotted out of the book of life, that he might no longer witness the prevarications of his people; Elias§ through grief, petitioned to die in the wilderness, because all Israel had bent the knee before Baal; and we, O my God! the successors of the prophetic ministry,

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\* Psalm. 119. v. 5.      † Jeremiah. c. ix. v. 1.

‡ Exod. c. xxxii. v. 32.      § 3 Kings. c. xix.

we would make an innocent relaxation, of what has made thy Prophets and thy servants weep in every age? No, my brethren, I do not say, that if we can find any pleasure in the world, but I say, that if we can even behold it, without grief, it is alas! perhaps, because we bear in our hearts the same dispositions, and a spring of the same vices, to which we appear so indifferent, and which neither alarm nor afflict us in others. But besides, if we have need of relaxation, must we therefore of necessity, seek it among worldlings? Permit me to address you in the words, which the Apostle used upon another occasion; what? you would deem it impossible, to find in the number of your brethren and colleagues in the sacred ministry, a wise, rational and agreeable man, of edifying conversation and easy manners, in whose company you could taste the pleasure of virtuous society and innocent relaxation? *Sic non est inter vos sapiens quisquam?*\* You could feel no joy, could find no amusement suited to your taste, except amongst the ungodly? The company of a pious and enlightened Priest, would not solace your fatigues nor enliven your listlessness; it

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

would be a burden to you? you must then have but very little relish indeed, for your state, since you have so little for those, who are an honor to it. What? so many respectable ministers, consummate in the science of the church, deeply versed in her discipline and history, adorned besides, with a thousand kinds of knowledge the best fitted, to furnish entertainment and improve the pleasures of society, appear to you dull and insipid; and you prefer calling the world to your assistance; and you can find no remedy for your tedium but in the very place, which ought rather to increase it and render it insupportable? If piety and regularity disgust you so much in your brethren, how much, alas! is it to be feared, that they are a troublesome burden to yourself: if it be so irksome and so disagreeable to you, to frequent the company of learned and virtuous Priests, how infinitely more so must it be to you, to imitate them! and if nothing but the world can cheer or unbend your mind, how fairly may it be presumed, that the world alone occupies your heart!

But moreover, if relaxations can be innocent only when they are necessary, and when they facilitate our application to our serious and essen-

tial duties ; let me ask you whether on quitting the world and those amusements, which you call innocent, you feel a renovated zeal for labor, and an increased relish for study and prayer ? are you in a better condition, to sustain the seriousness of your character and of your functions ; to devote yourself with greater courage, to the salvation of your brethren, to enter upon the most toilsome and the most disgusting labors, and approach the altar with greater fervor and greater recollection ? on the contrary, is it not true, that you bring back a faint and cowardly spirit that looks with horror, upon labor and pain ; a heart relaxed and, now, incapable of relishing any thing but what flatters it ? a soul filled with vain or dangerous images, and which every thing serious begins to dissatisfy ? in a word, a love of the world, which is disgusted with every thing that does not bespeak the feelings and the passions of the world ?

In fine, although all those inconveniences were less certain than they are ; yet could we innocently seek to recreate ourselves, amidst snares and temptations ? can there be innocence where there is danger ? can we delight ourselves, where we are, every moment, liable to perish ? does the pilot ever quit the port and regain the open

sea in the time of storm and tempest, merely to make merry and refresh himself, after the fatigues of a long voyage? Jonas trembles, he retreats and flies away from Nineveh;\* and notwithstanding the command of heaven, he dares not expose his innocence, and the dignity of his ministry, amidst the abominations of that criminal city; and we, without any order on the part of God, would enter into it without hesitation, merely to unbend ourselves, amidst its scandals and disorders? And do not tell me, that all those, who live in the world, are not therefore engaged in its vices, and that there are to be found in it, wise and regular individuals, in whose company we may enjoy the pleasures of innocent society. It is thus that the devil seduces us; and that not daring to propose guilt to us, all at once, he draws us gradually into the snare, by the innocence of the steps which he engages us to take. Yes, my brethren, this pretended wisdom of worldlings is still more dangerous to us, than their very disorders. We are on our guard against gross vices, but not so, against the appearance of probity and virtue: we trust ourselves to them without scruple: we

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\* Jonas. c. i. v. 3.

fancy ourselves secure with persons around whom, indeed, every thing breathes the spirit of the world, but in whose conduct nothing appears disorderly or indecent. Thus their easy maxims, weakened by little and little, our idea of our duty; their authority shakes us; their manners gain, their false wisdom seduces, us: by degrees, we form for ourselves a plan of life more conformable to theirs, and in proportion as we approach them, we depart from the sanctity of our duties and the gravity of our character. Now, my brethren, as you well know, from this, there is but another step; for when we forget the dignity of our state, we soon forget ourselves. Conclude then, from all these reasons, that the motives, which induce us to appear in the world, cannot be innocent unless they are holy.

Yes, my brethren, it is motives of this sort alone, that can lead the ministers of Jesus Christ, into the world, with safety: charity, the interests of our brethren, the indispensable duties of our own ministry. Christ appeared in the cities of Judea only to do the will, and execute the work, of his Father. If he goes to the marriage feast, it is but to manifest his power, and accredit his doctrine: if he enters the house of the publican,

it is to make him a child of Abraham : if he goes up to Jerusalem, at the solemn festival, it is not to exhibit himself to the gaze, and gain the applause, of the multitude, according to the carnal advice of his relatives, but to avenge the honor of his Father, which had been outraged by the profanations and irreverences committed in the holy place. When he sends forth his Apostles, he commands them, not to enter any house, except for the purpose of bringing in peace. So Peter visits Cornelius, only to draw down upon him and upon his household, the visible gifts of the Holy Ghost. Paul goes to the palace of Sergius the pro-consul, solely to undeceive him, by unmasking the impostures of Elymas the magician, and to strike that seducer with blindness : he appears in the streets of Athens, only to preach a God unknown to this superstitious people : he visits the brethren of Macedonia and Illyrium, only to impart to them, the riches of spiritual grace, and to console himself with them, by the mutual communications of holy faith. The beloved Disciple proposes to himself, to visit the holy lady Electa, solely to strengthen her in the faith, the charity and the doctrine, of Jesus Christ ; to confirm her against the artifices of false teachers, and give

to her a religious consolation. In fine, the illustrious Baptist tarries in the court of Herod, only to reproach the dissoluteness and incestuous commerce of that guilty prince, and to tell him, with a holy firmness, this you are not allowed to do : *non licet tibi*.

Behold our models : behold the only motives that ought to bring a Priest into the world : we can never enter it, in the order of God, unless we enter as his ministers, and to enter it as his ministers, we must hold his place there, and do his work. But, you will say, to reprove, to correct, to exhort, to advise those with whom we live in the world, would be to make ourselves odious and importunate ; it would excite a disgust of the piety which we wish to inspire, and expose us to the risk of rendering our zeal both ridiculous and contemptible. And it is for this very reason, my brethren, that a minister of Jesus Christ, is out of his proper place, in the world : it is for this very reason that he cannot appear there frequently, without finding himself compelled, either to applaud the errors of worldlings, by his silence, or to render himself troublesome and ridiculous, by reproofing them : for this reason, it is, that we ought not to appear in it, unless when duty calls and authorizes us to dis-



charge our ministry, to enforce the truth, to gainsay vice, to announce the words of salvation. We become useless to the world by frequenting it, and for this reason alone, it ought to be forbidden to us. We forfeit the right and the authority which our character gives us, to reprehend it, and thereby render the truth contemptible to it, in our mouth: can consequences so mournful, so humiliating to us, so disgraceful to our character, become an excuse for our conduct? Can we alledge the inutility of our remonstrances against the vices of worldlings, without saying to ourselves, that the world is not our proper place? and are we hence to suppose, that we may be the continual and innocent spectators of their disorders, without noticing them, lest we should render ourselves hateful and importunate; or rather ought we not to conclude, that it is our duty to fly them, since the only means of being useful to them and of reprovng them with success, is to see them rarely? When the envoy of a prince appears invested with the authority of his sovereign, and discharges the functions of his legation, he is listened to with respect; he may treat of important affairs, nor is any man offended, on hearing him announce the commands, and the wishes, of his master: his cha-

racter places his person in security, even in the midst of his enemies. But from the moment that he lays aside his office, and that he appears only as an ordinary man, things are changed in his regard: he speaks without authority; he is no longer heard, or is heard without attention; he has no right to treat of serious affairs, and even his person and his life are no longer in safety: similar is our destiny. We, according to the Apostle, are the ambassadors of Christ: *Pro Christo legatione fungimur*.\* Whilst we appear in the world, clothed with this august character and fulfil its sacred functions, the world hears us with respect and awe: we speak with authority, to men: we have a right to announce to them, the truths of the master whose envoys we are, and although we may be exposed to the snares and treachery of a world, the enemy of Jesus Christ, our soul is yet in security. But from the moment that we put off this sacred and venerable character, that we cease to discharge its functions, and that we appear in the world, like the rest of men, we lose all our authority; we have no right to speak to them, in the name of a master, who no longer sends us: scarce do

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\* 2. Cor. c. v. ver. 20.

they deign to hear us : we forfeit all peculiar claim to their attention and respect, nor is there now, any protection for us against the dangers by which we are encompassed. And what could be our protection? We walk in the midst of perils, where the Lord does not send us, and whither he does not follow us; where he neither watches over our weakness, nor supports our tottering steps. What are we, thus abandoned! we are, says Saint Jude, as a ship tossed on a stormy and rocky sea, without pilot or helm; as a child scarce able to walk, which plays without support, on the brink of a precipice; as a bird, yet weak, says the Prophet, which quits the nest and tries to fly, before its wings are yet strong, and which must become the prey of the first that passes by.

The inviolable rule then, whenever we are about to mingle amongst men, is, to examine before God, whether it be their spiritual interest that moves us: to ask ourselves, will God be glorified by this conduct? Is it his work that I am going to execute? is it my duty that I propose to myself? is it the charity, which seeks to console the afflicted, to strengthen the weak, to be edified with the just, to convert sinners? is it a zeal to mature in private, the fruits of

some public labor : to uphold an incipient conversion, by holy and seasonable exhortation ; to calm domestic strife by the soothing admonitions of meekness and wisdom ; to reconcile parents to their children, to bring back the husband's heart to his tender spouse, and diffuse joy and charity, and the peace of Jesus Christ, wherever we go ? Is it the priestly solicitude, which takes a part in every work of piety and mercy ; which goes about to controul licentiousness, to reform public abuses, to place exposed innocence in safety, or hide the scandal of its fall from the eyes of the people ? Is it the christian prudence which does homage to authority, to render it ancillary to the designs of God ; which pays respect to the great, to make them the protectors of truth, or at least, to prevent them from favouring error and opposing the work of the gospel ; which renders to all our brethren the indispensable duties of society, that we may avoid wounding their pride, and may at the same time, gain their esteem by innocent attentions ; that, in a word, we may not become useless, by first rendering ourselves odious ? We have, here, only to avoid illusion : not to conceal our own inclinations under an exterior of piety ; nor mistake the cravings of a restless, a curious and unmortified dis-

position, inimical to prayer and retirement, for the impulses of charity and zeal. We must not confound the desire of appearing in public, of pleasing, and of gaining confidence and esteem, with the charity which seeks only to edify: we must not confound the presumption which intermeddles in every thing, the ostentation which wishes to appear in every public transaction, the complacency which looks for the honor attached to good works, the restlessness which seeks only to appear; with the zeal which seeks only to be useful: we must not confound the christian prudence which cultivates the good will of the great, only to render them favourable to the church; with the secret ambition which seeks only to render them favourable to ourselves: in fine, we must not confound those attentions which we pay to worldlings, that we may not wound their pride, nor estrange them from us; with those duties which we render them, only to increase their vanity by our base adulation, and conciliate their esteem, by our forbearance and servility. So easy is it to deceive ourselves in this regard! to mistake our own desires, for the interests of piety, and persuade ourselves that we are seeking God, whilst, in fact, we are seeking only ourselves.

And hence, my brethren, the little success of our functions. Our zeal, far from bringing back sinners to the paths of virtue, furnishes them with matter of derision and censure against us: our charity appears to them, rather a desire to please, than to serve, them: our readiness to engage in every thing, rather a restless disposition, an abhorrence of repose, than a love of virtue; our cringing assiduities annoy and importune them, whilst they lower and degrade ourselves. Not but that the world sometimes forms the like judgment of the most faithful ministers, and exercises towards them, similar injustice: but it is the defects which I am now blaming, and which it has so often witnessed, that have given rise to its rash suspicions: it imputes to all, the weaknesses of some; and because it has often seen zeal misguided and equivocal, it concludes without further inquiry, that all zeal is unsteady and insincere. Thus, my brethren, let us not confirm the world in its unjust prejudices against us: let us rather compel it to acknowledge the wisdom and holiness of our conduct; to confess, that the desire alone of its salvation, directs and animates us; that our glory is not that, which comes of men, but that which men render unto God; that the sole

recompence we seek, is the fruit which our brethren may gather from our labors, not the empty praise which they lavish on our actions; that our views are as sublime and as pure, as our functions are elevated and holy; and that if we appear among them, 'tis but to combat their passions, not to exhibit our own. Such are the motives that should lead us to appear in the world: and here follow the rules which we ought to observe, whilst we are engaged in it.

#### SECOND REFLECTION.

Although the purity of our motives decides, almost always, on the whole tenor of our actions; and although whilst the eye is simple and clear the whole body of our conduct is lightsome, nevertheless, as we might easily deceive ourselves, as to the views on which we act; and as besides, through the weakness and mutability of the human heart, the most holy intentions are often forgotten in practice, and weakened or suspended by accidents or snares, which could not be foreseen, it is of importance to explain here, those precautions, which should accompany us into the world, even when our motives for appearing in it, are the most holy; and to

establish certain rules to be observed in the intercourse, which our functions may oblige us to have with men.

Now, it appears to me, that all that can be said on this subject, may be referred to these two points: the persons to be avoided; the rules to be followed towards those, whom we are permitted to see. The persons to be avoided are; first, those to whom we can be of no use; secondly, those who may be dangerous to us; thirdly, those to whom our cares are not due; fourthly, those to whom they cannot be rendered without scandal. The subject is truly important; do not refuse me your whole attention.

I say first, the persons to whom we can be of no use. For if nothing but zeal for the salvation of our brethren, ought to conduct us into the world, it is clear that we should have no intercourse with persons, in whose regard, our labors can produce no fruit. Wherever religion is despised, piety disregarded or misunderstood, and the very appearance of a virtuous man, disagreeable and importunate, there, a minister of Jesus Christ can have no just reason to appear: wherever vice must be applauded, error uncensured, where we must close our eyes upon scandals, or perhaps even approve them; in a word,



wherever the word of the Lord is bound up, where the pearls would be cast before unclean animals, there a Priest, that is to say, a man of God, is out of his place, and there religion is insulted by his very presence. Christ withdraws from Nazareth, and no longer appears among its inhabitants, because in his own country, he was a Prophet without honor. The Apostles shook the dust from their feet, and promptly quitted those houses and cities, in which there was no child of peace to be found, and in which the truth of the gospel could make no impression. Not, that when there is question of our functions, we must be sure of success, before we exercise them, or that the presumption or even the certainty, that they will be of no use, can be a lawful excuse for omitting them altogether. The sower scatters the holy seed, as well upon the stony and barren soil, where it produces nothing, as upon the good ground, where its increase is a hundred fold. The Lord sends his Prophets and his ministers as well for the condemnation of some, as for the instruction and conversion of others; as well to complete the blindness of those, who will not see, as to open the eyes of those, who desire and seek the truth; and if the gospel, in its progress, had not to

meet and contend with hardened and rebellious hearts, the church would have never had her confessors and martyrs. The contradictions and obstacles, which the world opposes to our zeal, as they are in the order of God, far from subduing, should only encourage and uphold, our generous efforts: they are promised to the discharge of our functions, and the Apostle regarded them as the most glorious and authentic proof of his Apostleship. It is necessary that the scriptures be fulfilled, and that the wisdom of the world be to the end, the enemy of the wisdom of the cross: the question, then, in this place, is not touching the functions of our ministry, but one that solely regards our commerce and our intimacies with men. Our ministry, we owe to all, to the foolish as well as to the wise, according to the example of the Apostle: it is for God alone to give the increase, by rendering it useful to our brethren: but the familiarity of our presence and society, we owe to those only, whom it may tend to edify. Alas! what, in effect, could justify our friendships with men intoxicated by their pleasures and their passions: friendships, which can have no other effect than to increase their contempt for virtue, and aggravate their guilt and their condemnation? thus

by a rule so just and reasonable, of forming no connexion with persons to whom we must be useless, how many pretences of duty, how many occasions of intercourse with the world, at once cut off?

Second rule: to avoid those who may be dangerous to us. Alas! how many of this character; either from the bent or the ascendancy of their minds, the propensities of their heart, the tendency and spirit of their profession, or the blandishments of their sex. From the bent of their minds: certain rash and daring spirits there are, who blaspheme what they do not understand; regarding the majestic authority of faith, as a popular credulity; led astray by their own thoughts; affecting a language of their own; treating whatever is most august and terrific, in the doctrine of Jesus Christ, with derision; priding themselves on a force of intellect and superiority of reason, peculiar to themselves; and not perceiving that the true source of their incredulity, is to be found, rather in the corruption of their hearts, than in the boasted strength of their superior understanding: *Et hos evita,\** writes Saint Paul to his disciple.

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\*2. Tim. c. iii. v. 5.

Men of this character have been multiplied, in these latter times, and with them, the evils and the scandals of the church have increased; and whilst pastors are contending among themselves, on the most abstract truths of faith, these impious men, profit of their divisions, to attack its very principle, and tear up the foundation laid by Christ himself; and their words uttered in secret, like a noxious poison, gain insensibly, and carrying infection all around, spread scepticism, blasphemy, and irreligion over the land. But not these alone should be as so many anathemas, in our eyes; there is still, my brethren, another sort of men to be met in the world, who are dangerous to us, by the ascendancy of their talents and their wit: worldlings, who possessing a natural eloquence, and superior endowments of mind, assume a ready empire over all who approach them; they disturb, confound, persuade, and drag along all, in their course; they abuse the gifts of God and an unhappy sprightliness and fluency, to turn virtue into ridicule, to give to vice the features of innocence, to justify the passions, to weaken the truths of salvation, or at least, to detract from whatever religion teaches to be important upon the subject; to censure the most essential duties, as excessive, foolish,

or impracticable : the eternal apologists of the world and of its disorders ; the enemies of the doctrine and of the cross of Jesus Christ ; men who live in the world, as if the gospel had changed nothing, as if the world were still to be our law ; who give an air of ridicule and meanness to whatever does not resemble themselves ; Apostles of the world and of the devil ; and who, from the charm which their facility and wit spread over their conversation, are desired, sought, and received every where, with distinction ; are the delight and ornament of worldly assemblies, have a ready access to the palaces of the great ; and in every place multiply the followers, and perpetuate among men, the corrupt doctrines, of the world. Such are the persons whom we ought to fear on account of the bent or the ascendancy of their talents or their wit.

On account of the propensities of their hearts, we must avoid the commerce of certain effeminate, soft and voluptuous men, dead or indifferent to every thing but pleasure ; eternally occupied in amusements ; incapable of any thing great, serious or solid, worthy either of a christian or a man ; and the more to be feared, because their dispositions are mild, their manners

open and engaging, their hearts tender, frank and capable of attachment, and because the placid tenor of their easy and inactive lives, is the most likely to insinuate itself into our affections, to enervate and corrupt us by the love of repose, and by rendering all labor and constraint insupportable. Of all the perils by which our path is beset, there is none more fatal to the spirit of our ministry, than the intimacy or the society of men of this character.

On account of the tendency and spirit of their profession. Yes, my brethren, above all, shun those worldly and dissipated ministers, to whom the relations of the same profession, would seem, in appearance, to unite you the more: the grace of the imposition of hands, is extinct in their souls, and the attempt, on your part, to revive it, would infallibly weaken and extinguish your own. They are, in the world, the opprobrium of the sacred ministry: do not, you, add to the shame and disgrace of the church by associating with them; rather vindicate her dignity and her cause, by carefully avoiding their society: rather disavow their disorders, by an entire separation, than countenance their scandals, by frequenting their company: shew to the world, that the church does not acknowledge them as

her ministers, and that by dishonouring their profession, they have rendered themselves unworthy of all intercourse with those, who respect their calling, and glory in the character of the priesthood. Cover them with confusion, by keeping them at a distance, that the disgrace of this anathema, may cause them to enter into themselves, or at least, may accustom the world to despise them, by teaching it, that although, indeed, they have gone forth from us, they are no longer of us: and never forget that their society is the most effectual means which the enemy could employ, to annihilate in you, all zeal for your functions, and extinguish the very spirit of your vocation. The Prophet whom I have already mentioned, preserved his dignity and his innocence amidst the dangers of the court of Samaria, yet on quitting it, the converse of a single false Prophet, causes him to fall. The world has not yet, at least, lost all respect for our consecration, and some lingering remains of modesty and decency, still restrain us, and oblige us to keep within certain bounds, before it, that we may not render ourselves altogether contemptible. But in the company of those who are united with us, in the same ministry, there is no longer any thing to controul us: the

example of their profanations fills us with confidence ; we no longer fear the presence of witnesses, who are our models in vice and our accomplices in guilt. The first sentiment with which they inspire us, is a contempt for our state, is to shake off the yoke of discipline, and the little constraint which even the world imposes on us ; to ridicule the piety, the regularity and zeal of our brethren ; to recal with derision, the instructions which we received in this holy place ; in a word, to add effrontery and impudence to disorder, and no longer to fear either God or man. Their society is the more dangerous to us on this account, that on our entrance into the world, we think it the most becoming and the most suitable to us ; that the same profession, oftentimes the same education, and connexions made in early life, had already united us ; and that being a society which we find already formed, it spares us the trouble of seeking any other.

But if identity of calling, is turned into a snare for us, difference of state is not less dangerous ; and in the number of persons whose commerce must be injurious to us, on account of their profession, we must reckon those, who from the engagements and habits of a military



life, so opposed to the meekness and sanctity of ours, feel only a thirst of tumult and slaughter, desires of glory, of elevation and fortune, and recognise neither honor nor merit, save that which springs from valor and the sword. They view with contempt, the tranquillity of the sanctuary, the modesty, the simplicity and gentleness of the Priesthood: whatever does not breathe fire and carnage, whatever breathes only the sweetness and charity of Jesus Christ, appears to them, cowardice and baseness of spirit. The holy repose of the temple and the altar, the sacred canticles, the praises of the Lord, the public supplications which are, every day, carried to the foot of his throne, to implore and bring down his mercy upon nations and upon kings, upon cities and armies, are, in their mind, tame and inglorious concerns; and the inheritance of those, who consecrate themselves to the church, they regard as the portion of the worthless and the fainthearted. They imagine that men were made, only to destroy one another; that it is far more glorious to desolate, than to sanctify, provinces; far more honourable to man, to inflict death, than to bestow life and salvation on his brethren; and that without war and bloodshed, there would be no real virtue in the world, al-

though it is in the ruthless and sanguinary struggle of armies, that almost all the vices and all the calamities of the earth have their source. Thus, forming ourselves, by degrees, to their sentiments, we begin to esteem our own state, less ; it appears to us, mean and obscure, and we would again wish to be the arbiters of our destiny, that we might change the ornaments of the Priest, for the arms of the soldier : we imagine that our friends have put us in the wrong place, when they dedicated us to the altar ; that they consulted their own interests, rather than our talents or inclinations, and that to secure the fortune of an elder brother, they have betrayed and blasted ours. So there are, every day, to be seen, in the world, ministers of religion more versed in the rules and tactics of war, than in the rules and duties of their profession ; better acquainted with the bloody encounters, that have shook the world, than with the errors and false doctrines, that have rent the church ; more alive to what passes in camps and armies, than to what passes in the sanctuary, and under the sacred habit, bearing on their person and their countenance, the boldness, fierceness and dissipation of persons engaged in a profane, military career. Such are the persons whose society

and converse must be fatal to us, on account of the tendency and spirit of their profession.

In fine, on account of the blandishments of their sex, and this is the most perilous rock of our ministry. A Priest, says Saint Jerome, ought to have a chastity and modesty, peculiarly his own: so that not only his body be exempt from stain, but that his eyes preserve that entire innocence, so necessary to prepare him to witness what passes in the Holy of Holies; and that his mind, intent only on the august and terrific prodigies which his ministry operates on the altar, be free even from those involuntary images of vice, which might disturb the tranquillity of his soul. Moreover, we, like Jesus Christ, are anointed and holy to the Lord, and thus whatever is not holy, a single indiscreet look, a single unguarded word, a single indecency of manner, one carnal feeling not promptly stifled, one sensual complacency, a single wish too human, defiles and profanes us. Now this angelical purity, which must be the fruit of retreat, of prayer, of watchfulness and mortification, this treasure which we carry in vessels so frail, how shall we preserve it, amidst dangers and rocks, where it is every day, so miserably shipwrecked? If in such perils, the ordinary chas-

tity enjoined to every christian, would surely perish, how shall the Priest be able to save that privileged and sacerdotal chastity, which is far more eminent, far more easily vitiated, and so tender, so delicate, that a single breath is sufficient to tarnish all its splendor, and all its beauty? For, my brethren, if the sacred character, which imposes on us the high obligation of purity and innocence, in stamping our soul with the seal of the holy ministry, had done away the fatal corruption, which the fall of Adam has entailed on all; if, in becoming Priests, we had ceased to be weak and frail men; if the sacred unction had extinguished that unholy fire which since the first sin, flows through man's veins with his blood, we might flatter ourselves that the privilege of our character, placed us in safety, and that what might be dangerous for the rest of the faithful, presented nothing that ought to excite our just alarms. But, alas! we have within us, the same fund of weakness and corruption, as the rest of men; nay, we carry about us the same frailties, whilst we are deprived of the same resources; and our character, far from inspiring us with confidence, ought to increase our fears, as it augments our danger: the obligation by which it binds us to continence, pro-

vokes and stimulates the passions of the flesh ; and deprived by the sanctity of our state of that remedy, which may serve to controul them in other men, we have nothing but flight and prayer to oppose to their fury : our sole remedy is in piety and faith ; in the rigid guard of the senses, which if suspended or neglected, for a moment, we are undone : as we bear with us, livelier passions into scenes of trial and danger, we must inevitably find in them, sin and death. All then is peril for a Priest, in the society of the other sex, nor can those visits and assiduities which the world deems the most innocent, be so for him : he would perish at the bare sight of an object, which a worldling would have regarded with indifference : a single freedom of discourse, a single immodesty of carriage, a single affectation or complaisance of manner, will defile him : in such company he is always on the edge of the precipice, and will rarely quit it, without falling into the sinful abyss.

You rely, perhaps, on the horror which you think you feel, of gross transgression : but who has told you that this is not presumption ; and are you ignorant that abhorrence of guilt, when it is sincere, not only alienates us from sin, but

from whatever might conduct us to it? and who has informed you, that it is not a snare of the tempter, who augments our confidence, in proportion as the danger of the occasion into which he has seduced us, is the more inevitable? or do you imagine, that all those who perish, every day, expected to have fallen! The devil has more than one resource, and he deceives and draws more into his toils, by the false appearances of innocence, than even by the attractions of crime. Is it not enough to fill us with fear, that we carry within us, what is more than sufficient to cause our fall; and can the rashness that seeks danger, become for us a security against that very danger itself? Alas! Saint Paul, fortified by so many graces, taught, in heaven, those ineffable secrets which neither the eye of man had seen, nor his ear ever heard; Saint Paul, so full of the love of Jesus Christ, that he could defy all creatures, and even death itself, to separate him from it, incessantly chastising his body and reducing it into subjection; living no longer according to the senses, but solely according to the life of Jesus Christ, crucified to the world, immolating himself for his brethren, running the career of his Apostleship, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness, persecutions

and shipwreck, Saint Paul amidst so many prodigies and so many heroic virtues, feels the sting of the flesh, and is compelled to sink down upon his knees, to humble himself, and confess his misery and his nothingness before the Lord, and to entreat him more than once, to destroy in him this body of sin, and deliver him from temptation. And we, my brethren, weak and unmortified, with violent inclinations for the world and for pleasure, with virtues moderate, languid, and mixed up with many imperfections, we would flatter ourselves, that our flesh will be always submissive and docile, and that we shall never experience the shame of its commotion and revolt, even amidst scenes and objects the most calculated to inflame it, and into which we run without precaution, without the command of God, and without distrust of ourselves? What illusion! what, my brethren! the most penitent anchorets were afraid of perishing in the depths of their deserts, and the dangerous images alone, of their past weaknesses, exercised their faith and innocence, and stimulated the penitential austerities of a long succession of years; and you, whose morals have nothing of that stern severity that would repel the demon of voluptuousness, would fancy your-

self in safety amidst those perils, the very recollection of which, had nearly overwhelmed those holy penitents? What? Job himself, covered with sores, become a carcass of stench and corruption, and feeling no longer the emotions of the flesh, save in the violence of his pains: Job in this state of disease and affliction, calls to mind the covenant which he had made with his eyes, that they should not even think on dangerous objects: and you, with flesh delicately pampered, and of which you know the weakness but too well; you, at an age when its strength and empire are most to be feared, you would allow yourself indiscreet familiarities; you would suffer your eyes to rest, every day, on objects the most capable of defiling you, and you would continue amidst such occasions, without dread, and with as much confidence as though you were already like to the angels, or as though your body had already put on incorruption and immortality. And hence, O Lord, thy church is every day, dishonoured by the scandalous falls of her ministers! thus it is, that we cause thy holy name to be blasphemed among the nations; that we betray thy service and abandon the majesty of thy sanctuary to derision and insult, and are ourselves become the



opprobrium and the scorn of thy people. We ought then to interdict to ourselves, and at once break off, all intimacy with persons, whose society may be for us, a subject of scandal and of sin.

In the third place, we must avoid those persons to whom we are not debtors by our ministry. Our functions attach us to certain places, to certain works, to a certain office; but, oftentimes, this is precisely what is not to our taste. We seek, beyond the limits of our mission, employments foreign to our duties: we neglect what God demands of us, for duties to which he had not destined us, and thus we derange the order of his designs both upon ourselves and upon our brethren. Piety is useful unto all things, but we render it unprofitable, when we do not make that use of it, which God prescribes: he does not require of each one of us, every sort of good: there is a certain measure beyond which our gift does not go, and solid piety consists in stopping there, without attempting to pass those bounds, which the very spirit of God has marked out to us. We imagine that there is a zeal in appearing in every place, where there is any good to be effected, and oftentimes there is nothing but rest-

lessness and vanity: our stated and ordinary functions are disagreeable and burdensome to us, because we are held to them by duty alone; foreign and voluntary ones, attract and awaken our zeal, because they gratify our taste, and minister to that secret complacency by which we are so much influenced: this is the ancient evil, which pride has implanted in the human heart; whatever tends to subjugate it, saddens and disgusts it; but when it has thrown off the yoke, and chosen for itself, the matter of its zeal, this liberty of choice flatters and animates it; and it flies in the very course, through which it would have dragged itself, slowly along, had it been traced out for it, by the tenor of its functions, or the command of a superior. Paul did not undertake to evangelize those cities, in which Christ had been already announced, lest he should be accused of stretching his Apostleship too far, or of raising the edifice of the faith upon the foundations of another: *Non quasi in immensum gloriantes in alienis laboribus.*\* His example conveys a severe reproof to indiscreet zeal: vanity wishes to undertake every thing, but *charity acts not rashly*. Even works of mer-

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\*2. Cor. c. x. v. 15.

cy have their dangers; in the performance of them, fervor becomes relaxed, piety dissipated, and the spirit of prayer is extinguished; and retreat, recollection, and meditation of the holy law, must supply and compensate what is wasted in those offices of charity; we must draw from the crucifix, that abundant source, graces which lose nothing by being communicated: these are indispensable precautions even for those whom God destines to those holy duties; without them, they themselves become weak, whilst they are endeavouring to strengthen their brethren; they fall away insensibly, their fervor cools, and by striving to diffuse itself too widely, becomes utterly extinct. Now, if these evils are so much to be feared, even when we act in the order of God, even when we are sent by him, judge what must be our danger, when instead of doing his work, we are merely doing our own: it is then a rule, founded on piety itself, not to proffer our ministry indiscreetly, to persons to whom we do not owe it.

In fine, the last precaution is, not to offer our services, even to those to whom we cannot render them, without some degree of scandal. The reputation of a Priest is something so dear to the church, so valuable to the public, so es-

essential to the success of his functions, so consoling for himself, that he ought to preserve it at the expense of every thing else. Not that we ought to abandon the work of God, through the fear of evil tongues, nor as Christ says, suffer a daughter of Abraham to die, because Pharisees, envious of every good, of which themselves are not the authors, will find in her cure, an unjust subject of murmuring and scandal.\* He listens, this day, without being moved, to the reproaches of those, who accuse him of eating and drinking with sinners, and of affording them a ready access to his person. There are scandals that are glorious to us, and murmurs that constitute our eulogy : but there are also others of a different character, which have their source not in the injustice of men, but in our own imprudence, in our weakness, and in our want of circumspection, or perhaps of virtue ; and it is here that caution cannot be too vigilant. The assiduousness of our services is never useful, when it is excessive : I will suppose that by it, you forfeit nothing of your innocence ; yet all is lost, from the moment that you inspire the slightest suspicion or attract the

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\* Luke. c. xiii. v. 11. &c.

censures of the public: I will admit that the superior virtue of those persons, or the resources which you find in their bounty, for the necessities of the poor, may justify your assiduities, before God; yet God condemns them from the instant, in which christian prudence and the rules of our state, cannot justify them before men; all that is lawful is not expedient, and whatever is not expedient in a public minister, ceases to be lawful for him. It is not sufficient for us, that we have nothing, wherewith to reproach ourselves, when we have imprudently exposed ourselves to the reproaches of our brethren: it is not enough, that the pious and edifying lives of those persons, and the succours which we draw from their bounty, to relieve the indigent and promote works of mercy, leave us nothing to scruple; whatever scandalizes our brethren, should not leave us a moment, in peace. When Christ, says Saint Chrysostom, commands us to pluck out the eye and cut off the hand, that is become a subject of scandal, he names only the noblest, or the most necessary parts of the body, as if he had intended to say to us: however splendid may be the virtue of this person; though she were to shine in the world as the eye shines in the human body, you must pluck her

out; though she were to be as necessary, as is your hand for your actions, you must cut her off. God does not require duties of you, at the expense of the honor of the church, which is ever inseparable from that of her ministers: charity can never be a lawful excuse for imprudence: the edification of our brethren is our first rule, and the most unequivocal fruit of true zeal. God is not glorified, by actions even the most holy, when they are capable of casting a just suspicion on our conduct: the good which we cannot effect without some sort of scandal, is as severely interdicted to us, as evil itself; and whatever may be the plea of utility, by which you may endeavour to justify your indiscretion, it cannot fail of being fatal either to your brethren, by the rash judgments which they will form of it; or to yourself, whose conduct will, perhaps, verify their suspicions but too well, in the sequel. It is not necessary to accredit this mournful prediction, by an appeal to facts; let us rather suppose, for the honor of the church, that they have never happened, and that the sole desire of your salvation and, the credit of your ministry, have caused me to apprehend evils, which I have not yet had the grief, of being compelled to deplore.

Such are the persons whom we must avoid; and in what has been already said, are included the rules to be observed towards those, whom we are permitted to see. The first is, to see them rarely: nothing so much sinks our character in the world, as an anxiety and habit of appearing in it. I have already said, that we have our weaknesses and our imperfections, and that distance alone can conceal them from the eyes of men. The world, as you are aware, esteems only what it does not know: whilst it sees us but afar, it regards us as extraordinary men, and as Prophets raised up by God, to announce to it, his will: it awards to us the homage of its admiration and respect, because it sees nothing in us, on which it could fasten its censures: but if you approach it often, the charm ceases, and your presence will quickly dissipate those favourable errors, to which, distance had given rise. How difficult is it to show ourselves often, and not appear what we really are! We always suffer something to be seen in our morals, that contradicts the holiness and severity of the doctrines which we announce: certain traits of the man discover themselves, and impede the progress of God's work; and the world, by a malignity natural to it, in our re-

gard, whilst it qualifies its own shameful transgressions with the simple name of weakness, fancies that it discovers guilt, in our most innocent foibles, and stigmatizes even our indifferent actions, with the odious epithet of crime: for us alone, it is a stern, cruel and inexorable judge. It resembles the wicked servant mentioned in the gospel;\* whilst it claims indulgence for its own most scandalous and crying prevarications, it exercises an excessive and barbarous rigor towards us, for the slightest debts.

The second rule is, to sustain in every place and on every occasion, the serious character of our ministry. The faithful must learn from us, how to converse piously, and in a manner worthy of God. The lips of the Priest are the depositories of doctrine and truth, and therefore must not be employed, in empty trifles and profane pleasantries. Saint Paul requires that they should be banished even from the conversation of the simple faithful: what prudence, what circumspection, what wisdom ought he not to exact of us! what holy and irreprehensible words! what plenitude of the spirit of God! We should not be one sort of men at the altar and in the discharge of our functions, and another, in fa-

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\* Mat. c. 18. v. 24. &c.



miliar intercourse, and the ordinary conduct of life. The Pontiff of the law always bore the ornaments of his high office, to remind him, as it would appear, that his priesthood accompanied him in every place ; that all his steps were actions of ceremony ; that the gravity of his deportment should be in accordance with that of his vesture ; and that as every thing was religious about his person, so every thing should be holy, in his conduct : thus it would appear that nothing but prayer, or sacrifice, or converse of edification, or works of mercy, is occupation serious enough for a Priest. So you are aware, that the sacred canons forbid us, those games and public amusements, which may be innocently enjoyed by the body of the faithful. The eyes of the people, accustomed to behold us prostrate, recollected, humbled like the angels of heaven before the throne of the Ancient of days, are wounded at seeing us elsewhere, with a different countenance, and with manners and habits like the rest of men : when, on quitting those vain entertainments, we ascend to the altar, and put on the recollection which the tremendous mysteries demand, the faithful, witnesses, but a moment before, of our dissipations, regard us rather as actors on a stage, who counterfeit solemn mysteries, than as ministers

of the living God, about to offer to him, gifts and sacrifices, and the vows and prayers of his people. In a word, our ministry calls us, indeed, among men, but it is, to be the salt of the earth, the light of those who are walking in darkness, the public fountains of holiness, the sweet odor of Jesus Christ.

Let us, my brethren, in conclusion, briefly direct our attention to the substance of all that has been said, and to the fruit to be gathered from this discourse. It is necessary, in the first place, that our communications with the world tend to inspire the faithful, with a high esteem for virtue; that our wisdom, our uprightness, and our circumspection, be calculated to give them an idea of piety, worthy of religion, and to dissipate that prejudice, so ridiculous, yet so common amongst worldlings, that piety is the portion of weak minds. In the second place, it is necessary, that our intercourse with men, fill them with a love and desire of virtue; that the modest and holy joy visible in our countenance, the sweet serenity that ever attends the virtuous and peaceful heart, make them acknowledge in secret, that the friends alone of God, are happy on earth, and at the same time, disabuse them of the gross and dangerous error,

that at a distance from pleasures, there can be no content, and that innocence and fidelity to God are of themselves, incapable of affording true enjoyment or permanent consolation.

The fruits which we, ourselves, my brethren, should gather from this instruction, are, first, a sovereign contempt of the world, of its pleasures and its cares: it is esteemed only when seen from afar; but enter into the detail, and examine the texture, of its life, its listlessness, its chagrin, its troubles, its perfidies, its caprices, you will be soon sensible of its emptiness and wretchedness; and you will pity those who are compelled, by the circumstances of their birth, or the engagements of their profession, to attach themselves to the service of so cruel, so unworthy, and so fickle a master. Secondly, an infinite esteem of our own state, which removes us from a place, where all is folly and affliction of spirit; where guilt itself must be purchased by sorrows and pain, and where the conduct that blasts our prospects for hereafter, renders us miserable even here below: a state, I say, which removes us from those scenes of strife and vexation, to consecrate us to the sacred ministry, to hide us in the depths of the sanctuary, and make of the house of the Lord, the place

of our security and peace; a state which provides for us, an asylum of delight and consolation; a dwelling of glory and holiness, to protect us from the perils and storms of the world, and leave us at leisure, to pour forth our gratitude to our Almighty deliverer, whilst we contemplate the sad fate, and weep over the mournful shipwreck, of our brethren.—*Amen.*

## A DISCOURSE

ON

### THE ZEAL OF THE CLERGY FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS.

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Quis infirmatur et ego non infirmor? quis scandalizatur et ego non uror?

*Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is scandalized, and I do not burn?*

2. CORINTHIANS. chap. xi. ver. 29.

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SUCH, my brethren, is the model of that zeal, which a minister of Jesus Christ, should feel for the salvation of the souls entrusted to him; and such are the sentiments with which his paternal bosom ought to be unceasingly agitated. A pastor who beholds, unmoved, the disorders of his people; who labors with indifference, and rather from motives of decency, than from a true zeal, to draw them from the evil of their ways;

who does no more than barely refuse to applaud the vices of which he is the witness ; in a word, who feels not the loss of the souls committed to his care, and who cannot say, with the Apostle, that the fall of the weak overwhelms him with affliction, or that the scandals by which they perish, kindle in his breast, a fire of devouring zeal and of holy indignation ; a pastor of this character is dead in faith, and has lost, or even perhaps, has never received, the grace of his vocation. Zeal then for the salvation of souls, is the first duty of the pastor : it is the duty of every day, and of every hour ; it should animate all his functions, support him under the most painful toils, regulate the exercise of his authority, be the measure of his labors and of his cares, the fixed and only object of all his projects ; and, in a word, the soul and consolation of his whole ministry.

It is in vain that his morals are, in other respects, without reproach ; for it is not enough for us, that we lead a life wise and orderly, in the eyes of men. If, with the exterior of regularity, we are not penetrated with a lively grief, on beholding the loss of the souls entrusted to us ; if, to draw sinners from the evil of their ways, we do not put on the zeal of charity and of

faith, and arm ourselves with the sword of the word ; if we neither exhort nor conjure ; if we reprehend not, in season, and out of season ; if, content with our own justice, we think it sufficient for our salvation, to disapprove by our example, or faintly to condemn, the vices of the people, we are not pastors but idols ;\* our pretended virtue, indolent, motionless, and lethargic, is a crime and an abomination before the Lord : we are no longer charged with the interests of God upon earth, we live in it, only for ourselves : we are no longer the envoys of Jesus Christ, to make up the things that are still wanting in his passion,† by rendering the shedding of his blood, and his redemption, profitable to our people ; we are idle and indifferent spectators of his opprobrium, and by our silence and our insensibility, we consent to the crime of those, who crucify him. No, my brethren, let us disabuse ourselves ; regularity of morals, so far from excusing the indolence of the pastor, renders it the more criminal, because his inactivity deprives his flock of the advantages of a zeal, which his conduct would have rendered

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\* O Pastor et idolum, derelinquens gregem :—

Zach. c. xi. v. 17.

† Coloss. c. i. v. 24.

the more respectable and beneficial. But, besides, I have said before, and I again repeat, that whatever be the apparent regularity of his life, he has but the semblance, without the reality, of piety : he seems to live, but in the sight of heaven he is dead ; men, perhaps, praise, but God curses, and rejects, him : his regularity lulls him to repose, but a terrible sound and the cries of the souls, whom he leaves to perish, will, one day, rouse him from his lethargy : he is tranquil, because, in the circle of his acquaintance, he can compare himself with many pastors, whose lives are less regular than his own ; but he will yet see, that his justice was but the justice of the Pharisee ; that charity alone is the foundation of true virtue ; and that his eternal lot will be the portion of the hypocrite and of the unprofitable servant.

What, my brethren, a minister of Jesus Christ, sent to do his work upon earth ; to enlarge his kingdom, to advance the building of the everlasting city, and the consummation of the Saints, shall see the reign of satan prevail over the reign of Jesus Christ, in the portion of the flock committed to his care, and yet his faith, and his charity, and his pretended piety, shall allow him to remain tranquil and unconcerned ?



and content that his conscience makes him no personal reproach, he shall feel no remorse on the subject of the disorders which he suffers in those of whom he has charge? and shall see Jesus Christ, whose place he holds, outraged, and yet persuade himself that he loves him, and is a minister according to his own heart, though he, every day, unmoved, beholds him crucified anew by the very people for whom he is to answer? But although these scandals were to take place elsewhere than amongst his people, if he were to witness them, and had yet remaining a single spark of faith, or of the love of God, he ought at least to weep over them in secret; to address himself to the Lord in the bitterness of his heart, to obtain for these wretches the spirit of compunction and of penance: what do I say? he ought to use the authority with which the dignity of the priesthood always invests him, to strive to inspire sentiments more worthy of religion into those perverse and corrupt men; and he would prove himself a coward, a prevaricator, a minister who betrays his trust, if a criminal insensibility, or the prudence of the flesh, were to close his mouth, upon such an occasion: and shall he believe himself innocent, and remain tranquil

in his pretended regularity, if witnessing the same scandals in the midst of his own people, he appear equally insensible? Can a father behold, without concern, his children perishing before his eyes? does the shepherd see his flock falling down the precipice, without striving to save, and, at least, making them hear his voice? Though but one were to stray, he ought to go in quest of it, far and wide, and thro' mountains and vallies, thro' toil and fatigue, bear it back on his shoulders to the fold. No, my brethren, such a one is not a father but a stranger; not a shepherd but a hireling; not a minister of Jesus Christ, but a usurper of that august title, and notwithstanding his vaunted regularity and his false justice, he is a vessel of ignominy and of reprobation, placed in the temple of the Lord.

But the people of the country are so rude, so ferocious, so untractable, that a pastor who would undertake to reform the abuses that abound amongst them, would expose himself to a variety of difficulties and vexations. What, my brethren? can the extremeness of the evil become the apology, or the palliation, of our indifference? Your people are rude and untractable? but it is for this very reason, that

you should redouble your care, your charity, and your labor, to soften and humanize their hearts: zeal would be uncalled for, if you had none but just and docile souls to conduct: it is because you see your people rebels to the truth, that you ought to permit yourself to enjoy neither repose nor consolation, so long as they shall continue in these criminal dispositions. What! because they have greater need of your pastoral solicitude, you would suppose yourself bound to nothing in their regard? what should enkindle your zeal, cools and extinguishes it, and you become an idle and unprofitable labourer, because of the abundance of the harvest? Would the gospel have spread throughout the universe, and the cross have triumphed over the Cæsars and the nations, if the Apostolic men who have preceded us, had paid any regard to the dispositions and the obstacles, which our fathers and the whole pagan world, opposed to the progress of the divine word? Where should we have now been, if difficulties unsurmountable to human prudence, had cooled their zeal and suspended their labors, and if in the persuasion of finding us, as we really were, stubborn and ferocious, they had unfortunately left us in the darkness of

our original ignorance? You fear difficulties: but what has a pastor to fear who fulfils his ministry, with edification? what? is it contempt, calumnies, and contradictions? but this is his glory, and ought to be the most consoling reward of his labor and zeal. What? is it abuse, outrage, and suffering? they would be the most honourable seal of your Apostleship. But thanks to the influence of truth, and to the milder spirit of latter years, you have not, like your predecessors, to resist unto blood: the sway and the vengeance of the tyrant are past away, and zeal may now form holy pastors, but it no longer leads the martyr to the scaffold.

Besides, my brethren, let us take a fair view of the case: these poor people whom you represent as so vicious and so stubborn, would not continue long so, under the care of a charitable and edifying pastor. They respect the virtue of a man of God, and in spite of their vices, there is to be found in these rough and ignorant souls, more of the fear of God, and a greater fund of religion, than in the polished and the powerful: their hearts and minds are not vitiated by those maxims of irreligion and immorality which infect the inhabitants of cities: they still fear and respect the God, whom they

offend; and the seeds of truth find in them, a thousand times a better soil, than in the wealthy and the great of the age. Far, then, from seeking an excuse for your indifference in the disorders and the pretended insensibility of such a flock, you should esteem yourself happy, in having to preach the gospel only to the little and the poor; for they have a better title than the rich, to the kingdom of heaven; to them the promises seem to have been made; to them, in particular, Christ appears to have been sent: *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me*;\* and in them the divine word finds far less of the opposition of flesh and blood, than in the rich and the great, in those souls, sunk in voluptuousness and effeminacy.

And do not tell me, my brethren, that, the morals of the people, have greatly changed; that their ancient simplicity has degenerated into licentiousness without bounds; that the corruption of cities has so entirely overflowed the country, that you no longer know how, or where, to begin reform, or in what manner to introduce the love of order and of the duties of religion; that in former times, two or three

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

scandalous livers were scarcely to be found, in a parish; that then the zeal of the Apostle, might be of use against a single incestuous sinner, and that a pastor might then expect some success from his labors; but that at the present day, when almost all flesh hath corrupted its way, and when disorder in the most secluded parts of the country, has gained every age and condition, a pastor must feel dejected, and cannot have courage to attempt either improvement or reformation. But were this the truth, my brethren, I might, at once, ask you, whence then proceeds so great a misfortune? whence proceed the vices that have inundated your people? why is the country no longer, as formerly, the abode of innocence and simplicity? Alas! my brethren, may not these evils be traced to ourselves? are they not to be ascribed to the indifference, the dissipation, and the inefficiency of pastors? You complain that disorder is general in your parishes: but examine yourselves at the foot of the cross, and see whether this will not be the most overwhelming charge, which Jesus Christ will, one day, utter against you? for where are the people without religion, without the fear of God, without any bounds in crime, but in parishes governed by bad Priests?

But thanks to the mercies of the Lord, we are far from having the grief of believing, that such a misfortune is general within this diocess. No, my brethren, we ourselves have seen, and seen with consolation, that vice, so far from being universal in parishes governed by holy pastors, is, on the contrary, very rare : we have seen that piety is in repute, and that many simple souls console their pastor by an innocent life ; that the duties of religion are practised with assiduity ; the sacraments frequented ; the word of God heard with edification ; and that if there be a scandalous sinner to be found, he stands apart from the flock, that he is looked upon with a kind of horror, and that his example, so far from seducing others, inspires them with a still greater abhorrence of vice. This is what we have seen, and what the presence of the many excellent pastors who now hear me, brings back to my mind, with new and additional consolation.

Besides, my brethren, were it true, that you had the misfortune of being set over a parish, in which, disorder had become general and public ; ah ! it is for this very reason, that you ought to believe, that God had selected and sent you, to these poor creatures, only to correct and

convert them. For why are we the salt of the earth, and the light of the world, unless it be to restore to soundness, the putrifying and the infected, and give light to those, who are abiding in darkness, and in the shadow of death? Can the multitude of sinners, because it multiplies our duties, authorize us to condemn and neglect them altogether? and can a cowardly and human fear, lest the remedies for the general distemper should prove unsuccessful, remedies which God himself puts into our hands; can such a fear, be pleaded before him, in excuse for the omission of the increased toils and more anxious exertions, which, in such circumstances, he requires from our ministry? Did Moses refuse his zeal and his services to the Jews, when that entire people, covered with the guilt of idolatry, lay prostrate before the golden calf? Did the holy Priest, Esdras, suppose that his care and his instructions would be fruitless, when he found his whole nation, and even the Levites themselves, defiled by intermarriage with the gentiles; or did he suffer himself to be disgusted and discouraged, or did he deem it vain to seek remedies for a disorder, so universal? No, he ceased not to announce the sacred ordinances of the law, till the repentance



and the tears of all Jerusalem, had testified the happy success of his labors and his zeal. The whole earth was filled with corruption, and religion itself had become a public prostitution, when the first ministers of the gospel received their commission; did they deliberate whether or not, they should go forth to preach Christ, and attack those passions and vices, which long usage had sanctioned, and which an impious worship had consecrated, among every people? It was from this general corruption, that they recognised the divinity and the necessity of their mission: they looked upon themselves, as instruments and ministers of salvation, whom the mercy of God, and the blood of Jesus Christ, sent forth to correct the errors, to cleanse the defilements, and heal the diseases, of all the earth. Have not we succeeded to their mission and their ministry, and can we believe that God wishes the destruction of those to whom he sends us? that in charging us with the same ministry, as the first disciples, his mercy did not design us to be to them, instruments and ministers of salvation? and that he is content that we should remain in a barbarous inactivity, till he shall have consummated their reprobation, and accomplished his judgments of wrath and

vengeance upon them? We would not then be sent to them as pastors and as fathers, but, as the mournful officers of public justice, to witness and approve the punishment of criminals condemned to die; and our ministry, far from being a ministry of life and salvation, would be turned into a frightful ministry of condemnation and death.

But moreover, my brethren, although out of the multitude of sinners of which we complain, it should be our lot to bring back to Jesus Christ, but a single soul, would not so valuable a prize be a sufficient reward for the toils and the anxieties of an entire life? and would we not be abundantly paid, in being, one day, able to present it to Jesus Christ, and in receiving its grateful acknowledgments through all eternity, in the assembly of the angels and the elect? Ah! why should we despair of the power of grace, over the sinful and the hardened? it is upon them that God loves to display the strength of his arm, and the riches of his unbounded mercy. We would have reason to be discouraged, at the sight of the disorders of our people, if we were to rely on ourselves alone: but by the grace of our mission, it is no longer we, it is Jesus Christ that works in us and by us:

the weakest instruments are frequently those, by which he is pleased to produce the greatest things: fulfil your ministry; it is all that he requires of you; it is for him to do the rest.

And in effect, my brethren, we often speak of the vices and the disorders of our people, as if all were lost, as if they were beyond the reach of conversion, and that there was, no longer, any hope of their salvation. But, my brethren, who has taught us to set bounds to the infinite mercies of the Lord? to him alone belongs judgment, as well as vengeance; and why should we condemn as irreclaimable those, whom he can, in an instant, convert? and yet, we ourselves hope that the Lord will, one day, show us mercy; that he will touch our hearts; that he will change our sloth into zeal, our worldly life into a priestly life of prayer, of mortification and retreat; and this we hope, in spite of repeated infidelities, rendered still more criminal by our superior knowledge, our remorse, and the sacred duties of our state. We hope, that in spite of the abuses which we have so often made of his graces, and of our functions, God will not deliver us over to impenitence and hardness of heart, although final impenitence is the most ordinary chastisement which he exercises upon

unfaithful Priests; and we would despair of the salvation, and regard as hopeless the conversion of a wretched people, whom ignorance, and the evils of a bad education, rather than real malice or irreligion, cause, every day, to sink more deeply into crime? And we would suppose that the bowels of the Almighty, ever merciful, are of iron, like our own, towards those rude but simple men, whose lives are made up of toil, of poverty and of wretchedness, and that after having rendered them miserable in this life, he destines them to eternal misery, in the life to come? Ah! it is towards them in particular, that he relaxes even the ordinary rigor of his justice; and touched with the hardships of their laborious life, and the destitution of their forlorn condition, it is for them that he reserves all his indulgence: *Parcet pauperi et inopi, et animas pauperum salvas faciet.*\* The rich he curses and rejects, and by the obstacles, which their state places in their path of life, he seems to leave them no hope of salvation: we, on the contrary, are forbearing and indulgent towards the rich and the powerful; we overlook their weaknesses, their luxury,

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\* Psalm 71. v. 13.

their passions; notwithstanding their vices, we allow them to hope every thing, from the mercies of the Lord. In the tribunal and elsewhere, our language towards them, is full of mildness and charity: however incorrigible they may be, we esteem ourselves honoured, in discharging towards them, the functions of our ministry, nor is the inutility of those functions, in their regard, ever made a pretext for rejecting their application and discontinuing our office: But for the poor and the weak, we reserve all our harshness; it is towards them alone, that we sternly exercise all the severity of the gospel; in them alone, we overlook nothing; it is in their regard, that every thing disgusts us, and that we imagine our labors useless, unless they are attended with an immediate effect.

In fine, you will, perhaps, say, that these are not the motives that restrain you, and that have hitherto prevented you, from using the authority of your ministry, in endeavours to destroy the public and too common abuses, which you know to prevail among your people. But you fear that you will not be supported, that you will pass for imprudent, and that your zeal will have no other effect, than to excite the hatred

of your parishioners, and ensure the reproach of your superiors.

I agree, my brethren, that there is a zeal of humor and of temperament, which is never far removed from imprudence. But the zeal that springs from charity is meek and patient; is neither proud nor irascible; it hates vice, but loves the sinner; it undertakes nothing lightly or unseasonably; it yields not to disappointment; it opposes patience to insensibility, and awaits the moments appointed by God, without disgust or despondence; it counts not its pains and its toils, and is less afflicted at labouring in vain, than at the danger of those sinners whose obduracy renders its labors ineffectual: after having been a thousand times unsuccessful, it returns to its holy purpose, with increased charity; it has recourse, by turns, to entreaties, to threats, to meekness, to a holy anger: zeal is ingenious, it tries every expedient, it discovers to us a thousand new ways, a thousand innocent artifices, for bringing back those, who are going astray. No, my brethren, let us not put humor in the place of zeal: let us show to our people, more of charity than of authority; let us not, through a false honor, make it a point to put them down, even when they are opposed

to our most laudable designs; let us seek rather to gain, than to subject, them; let us not mingle with the zeal of the minister, the passions and the harshness of the man: let us not undertake all things at once, lest we fail in all: let not our self-love urge too hastily a project, which a wise patience may better accomplish; and to every contradiction let us oppose a still meeker and more unruffled zeal. The work of God is always the fruit of pains and difficulties: let us not regard success as a glory that ought to be ours, it is a glory that belongs to God alone; for whatever we contribute on our part, is more calculated to retard, than to advance, the consummation of the holy work. Let us then await success with the tranquillity of faith, and with humble confidence; we shall hasten it more by our prayers and our sighs, than by the violent counsels of impetuous zeal. We must expect to disgust and revolt the sick, to whom we present only bitter remedies; but let us, at the same time, remember, that those sick are our children, and that our love for them, ought to increase, in proportion as their opposition to medicine, renders their disease the more dangerous. Your zeal will not be then taxed with imprudence: your good intentions will then

find the protection which they deserve: we ourselves will share in your pains and your troubles; and although, whic'. God forbid, we should be unjust enough to censure you, yet as it is not for us, nor to please us, but for the glory of Jesus Christ, that you labour to discharge the ministry that has been entrusted to you, you will have wherewith to console yourselves, in secret, before God, who is a more faithful witness, and a more equitable remunerator, of your sincerity and your toils, than the injustice of men.

Permit me then, to conclude, in saying to you with the Apostle: I conjure you to revive in yourselves, the grace of the ministry, if you have had the misfortune of suffering it to languish, or, perhaps, to become extinct; that grace of zeal, of charity, of patience, of vigilance, and of labor. Cease not to correct those who from a light and restless spirit, seem not only incapable of tasting the truths of salvation themselves, but who cause a disrelish for them in others; and whose murmurings and resistance are a perpetual obstacle to the cares and pious intentions of the pastor: make them sensible of the heavy judgments, which they are drawing down upon their own head: *Rogamus*



*vos, fratres, corripite inquietos.\** Be more mild and indulgent towards those, whose fall is more the effect of weakness and frailty, than of malice or contempt of religion; and be more moved than irritated, at their miseries: animate their faintheartedness by the hope of assistance from above, and make them understand that the weaker they are, and the less they rely upon their own strength, the more ought they to expect all from him, who is always pleased in manifesting the power of his grace, in our infirmity: *Consolamini pusillanimes.* Like the good pastor, bear upon your shoulders, the sick, who whilst they wish to be cured, do not yet fail to love the cause of their diseases: uphold the good desires which they unceasingly mingle with their transgressions: improve this spark of life, which grace still keeps alive in their hearts; point out the remedy, and labour to make it pleasing to them: distempers are never hopeless, so long, as the diseased themselves feel them and wish to be delivered: *Suscipite infirmos.* Above all, let no variety of cares, no difference of persons, change the equal tenor of your charity and of your patience: be the same towards the rich

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\* 1. Thessal. c. 5. v. 14. &c.

and the poor ; towards those who resist you, as towards those who receive your instructions with docility : *Patientes estote ad omnes*. Show the same serenity to all : let all behold in the holy joy of your countenance, the hope of conversion, if they are sinners, or the applause which their fidelity deserves, if they have returned to the ways of justice : let them ever find in you, the joy of a father delighted to see his children : let it appear to all, that their presence is your sweetest consolation ; and never repel even the sinners that approach you, by that gloomy and discontented air, which seems to announce to them, that their salvation is hopeless : *Semper gaudete*. In fine, let your cares be accompanied by prayer ; speak to God of the disorders of your people, still more frequently than to themselves : lament before him, more, over the obstacles, which your own infidelities put in the way of their conversion, than over those which arise from their obstinacy : at his feet, ascribe to yourself alone, the failure, or the little fruit, of your ministry : like a tender father, excuse, in his presence, the faults of your children, and accuse only yourself : bear them without ceasing, in your heart, when you present yourself before him ; let your

grief and your weeping over their transgressions, ensure the success of your instructions and of your cares ; and remember that you will always toil in vain, if constant prayer do not draw down upon your labors, that unction and those graces, which alone can render them useful : *Sine intermissione orate . . . Ipse autem Deus pacis sanctificet vos per omnia.—Amen.*

## A DISCOURSE

ON

### THE NECESSITY AND IMPORTANCE OF RETREAT TO THE CLERGY.

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Noli negligere gratiam, quæ in te est, quæ data est tibi, per prophetiam cum impositione manuum Presbyterii.

*Neglect not the grace that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with imposition of the hands of the priesthood.*

I. TIMOTHY. chap. iv. ver. 14.

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SUCH is the exhortation which Saint Paul gives, more than once, to his disciple Timothy ; and nothing appears to me better calculated to prevent that negligence, and that falling off, of which the Apostle speaks, than to consecrate, as you do, my brethren, a few days in the year, to recollection and retreat. Faults are inevitable in the discharge of the functions of your

ministry, and it is here that you call yourselves to an account for them, that you weep over them before God, and take the necessary measures to prevent them for the future : this shall be the first reflection. Fervor cools, the spiritual powers become impaired, the man assumes the ascendant over the minister ; and it is here, that you reanimate your languishing zeal, and renew yourselves in the first spirit of your vocation : this shall be the second reflection. In fine, the clergy of this extensive diocess have need of example ; and it is here that you give it, by manifesting to them, in the edifying exactness with which you come to recollect yourselves in this holy place, the precautions which they should take, that they may worthily fulfil their ministry : and this shall be the last reflection.

Such, my brethren, are the advantages inseparable from a retreat in this holy place, where I have so much consolation in beholding you assembled.

#### FIRST REFLECTION.

How holy, my brethren, are our functions ; how pure should be the dispositions which they demand, how worthy of the mysteries which we treat ! How difficult is it for the most, faith-

ful pastors to present themselves, every day, to perform them, with that faith, that zeal, that purity of soul, without which, God spews us from his mouth, and beholds us with disgust at the foot of his awful and sacred altar? Our daily defects in these virtues, neither awaken remorse, nor disturb our conscience: they diminish and destroy our tender affection towards God, and leave us still tranquil; they despoil us gradually, of those perfect gifts, which form holy pastors, and yet render us insensible to our losses. I speak not of patience, of meekness, of charity, which our functions put often to the proof, and in which it is difficult to be always on our guard, against ourselves. How many are the moments, in which, humor, roughness and impatience, take the place of charity and zeal! How many the occasions, in which disgust, idleness, nay, perhaps, secret antipathies, and personal dislikes, have made us refuse, or perform with a bad grace, and, as it were, in spite of us, those services, which the necessities of our people, and our own functions demanded of us! How frequently has false modesty, and the fear of appearing singular, or ridiculous, made us approve, and perhaps, imitate what we condemned, and caused us to for-

get, to a certain degree, the decorum and the sanctity of our ministry ?

Yet our external and unceasing occupations either hide this state of transgression from us, or leave us no leisure to inquire into its malice, and thus we do not even think of removing those obstacles, which our infidelities raise up against the success of our ministry, towards others, and against the course of God's mercies towards ourselves. By degrees we amass, unknown to ourselves, a treasure of wrath, a fund of infidelity, opposed to the designs of God upon us, which presenting nothing marked by grievous crime, disturbs not our false peace ; and as darkness is always the first punishment of those infidelities, the more they are multiplied, the more tranquil we become ; because the lights that should have opened our eyes to their enormity, are gone out. Such, my brethren, is the most ordinary source of the disorders, and of the entire defection of those, whom God calls to the holy ministry : there is scarce any fault that can be esteemed light in us ; the more God requires and expects from us, the more irritated is he, when we are wanting to his divine plans ; the more intimately we are consecrated to his service, the more does the slightest blemish de-

file and deform us, in his sight. We are the light of the people, a light which the thinnest cloud obscures, and renders dark in the eyes of him, who had established us as so many burning and shining lamps, amidst our brethren : our faults are eclipses, which confound the order of grace, in reference to the faithful, and which leave in darkness, that portion of the church, which we were set up to enlighten.

Now, my brethren, it is here, that those faults which had disappeared, as it were, amidst the bustle of our functions, rise again to our view. It is in this holy retirement, that in reviewing, by the light of faith, the whole course of our ministry, we discover the places, the occasions, the circumstances, in which our fidelity has failed : we perceive that, notwithstanding the opinion of men, and the applause which they lavish on our apparent regularity, we are far from being of the number of those holy and faithful ministers, who alone, are worthy to dispense the mysteries of God. The distance which we find between what we are, and what we ought to be ; between the sublime sanctity of our state, and the weaknesses, the miseries, and the tepidity of our lives, strikes, humbles and terrifies us. We weep over our past infidelities,



and form a thousand holy resolutions of amendment, a thousand purposes of a more pious, more active, and more sacerdotal life: we enter into all the details of our external conduct; we examine the times, the places, the conjunctures, in which our frailty has been surprised; we enter into ourselves, to inquire into the source of the evil, and discover those inclinations, which have conspired with dangerous occasions to effect our fall: we prepare, at a distance, the proper remedies for our vices, and take those wise precautions, which may prevent us from being again surprised: thus we return to our functions, to that holy warfare in which we serve, provided with new arms; and we resume the contest, with less of that confidence which always precedes defeat, but, at the same time, with more of that cool and determined courage, which ensures victory. A pilot who has escaped from the wreck of his ship, is less rash and adventurous; and made acquainted by his own perils with the rocks on which he has been cast away, he takes more vigilant measures to avoid them in every subsequent voyage. And what ought still more to endear this holy exercise to you, my brethren, and make you feel more strongly the predilection of God's mercy in this

instance, towards you, is the consideration, that infidelities are common, amongst those who are called to the holy ministry, and that those regrets and changes which a sincere and a tender piety produces, are very rare. The greater part live to the end of their course, as they had lived in beginning it; if they change, it is for the worse; for having at first exhibited some appearance of regularity and zeal, they quickly begin to disclose all those vicious inclinations, which a specious outset had concealed, and which, weary of further constraint, now burst forth with increased violence and greater scandal. We, every day, see, in the world, amongst the faithful, men who, visited by grace, change their lives, and from being great sinners, become the example and the edification of an entire city: but such changes are not to be found amongst the clergy; what they are once, they always continue to be: it would seem that, raised above the Angels by our functions, our first capital transgressions are, like theirs, beyond all hope of repentance and return. And why so, my brethren? it is because the abuse of holy things, which is almost always the infallible consequence of our disorders, draws down upon us, on the part of God, that anathema, and that hidden malediction,

which hardens a Priest into impenitence and irreligion ; this is a lamentable truth, over which we have had, more than once, to mourn : penalties and corrections become useless to these unfaithful ministers ; and with grief do we behold them quitting those retreats, into which our authority had forced them, without a single sentiment of piety or of repentance, and more determined than ever, to continue their disorders and their scandals. So when we publicly impose this holy exercise on them, it is rather to cover them with shame, than through any hope which we entertain of their amendment ; we wish to repair the honor of the church, by this public and signal reprobation of their notorious scandals, but we hope not for their conversion.

### SECOND REFLECTION.

But, my brethren, although we should be so happy as to live in the discharge of our ministry, exempt from those daily infidelities inseparable from human weakness, and even from the dissipations attached to our functions ; although we should have no need of coming here to recollect ourselves, that we might weep before God over our faults, and take more certain measures to avoid them for the future ; do we

not yet feel that our first fervor cools every day? that the tender piety which once was ours, wears away by the very use of holy things; that the sanctity of our duties makes on us, each day, less lively impressions; that what seemed to us, at first, indispensable obligation, appears now but a state of perfection, to attain which is not given to all; that, in fine, we walk more languidly in those ways, in which we once ran with such edifying swiftness and zeal? Now, it is in this place, my brethren, where we first tasted and imbibed the spirit of the priesthood, that we should come to renew and revive it, when it begins to decay: such is my second reflection.

Yes, my brethren, this decay of piety and fervor, to which even the most faithful pastors are liable, is like a hidden disease, which undermines and exhausts us, and by little and little conducts us to utter dissolution. It is one of those maladies, which do not manifest themselves by any visible or distinctive symptoms, but which yet, every day, waste away the strength, and nip the bloom of health; and for which the healing art knows no other remedy, than to send the languishing patient to his native air. Now, my brethren, it is here that we have been

born, in the priesthood; and in this holy place, is to be found, as it were, the native air of the ministry, which we must come to breathe when we feel that our strength is failing; that our piety begins to languish; that our zeal is relaxed, and that the derangement of our interior threatens the total dissolution of our spiritual life. The longer we delay this step, the more inveterate does the disease become, for the objects by which we are surrounded in this world, far from affording any remedy, tend but to augment and heighten its malignity: even the very exercise of our ministry, far from rousing us from our torpor, becomes as a medicine to which, our disorders have been long habituated, and which having lost its virtue by being often tried, almost always, rather aggravates than lightens their virulence: hence, through the want of those dispositions, and of that spirit of piety, which ought to sanctify all our duties, they are changed into abuses, and thus those resources of salvation are turned against ourselves. This state, my brethren, has its dangers, which are great in proportion as they affect and affright us the less. We suffer ourselves to repose undisturbed, in habitual weakness and languor, and think the death of our

souls, as yet at a distance : we calm those remorse, which conscience will sometimes put forth, and those desires of a more holy and a more faithful life, which sometimes shoot through our lethargy, but which, a moment after, suffer us to sink back into our accustomed insensibility. We think of ourselves, as the Apostles did of Lazarus, that our ailment is but a passing sleep, and that our salvation is not doubtful : *Si dormit salvus erit* ;\* but Christ who sees us as we are, judges of our state, perhaps, very differently : *Tunc dixit iis manifeste Jesus : Lazarus mortuus est.*† It is not the greatest crimes that we ought most to dread : a fund of religion, a pious education, an established name for regularity, a respect for the sanctity of our ministry, is sufficient to preserve us from shameful transgressions : but what is more dangerous, and more to be dreaded by us, is to allow that first fervor, that spirit of piety, so essential to our functions, to become extinct ; to sink into a life according to the senses, soft, easy and indulgent ; insensible to the things of heaven, accompanied, indeed, by an apparent regularity, but destitute of the true spirit of in-

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\* John. c. xi. v. 12.

† Idem. c. xi. v. 14.

terior life. We perceive in it no marked crime, nor do we advert that such a manner of life, particularly in a Priest, incessantly occupied in the most holy duties, is of itself, a grievous crime in the sight of God: we do not reflect that such a state estranges from us, the peculiar regard of God, and those special graces which he reserves for faithful pastors; and that if we still guard ourselves from gross transgressions, it is, perhaps, but an artifice of satan, who would fear by shameful sins, to awaken our remorse of conscience, and who prefers leaving us to perish more securely, in the sleep of death, into which he has cast us. The tumult of the world, in the midst of which we live, far from rousing us to a sense of our perilous condition, confirms our delusion: we there behold even amongst those who are our associates in the holy ministry, examples of disorders which increase our false peace, as we are exempt from them ourselves; and we fancy that God is content with us, because men are, or have reason to be, satisfied with our deportment. Witnessing the excesses of our clerical brethren, we say to ourselves, in the boastful language of the Pharisee, that we are not like to them: this secret comparison calms our conscience, perhaps, it

even flatters our pride; and although we are devoid of that interior life of faith, of that spirit of fervor and zeal, by which we were once animated, our self-love ceases not to remind us of our irreproachable morals, and to present to us a phantom of our regularity and virtue, which fills us with confidence, and lulls us to repose. It is to us, then, my brethren, that the word of the Holy Ghost may be addressed: *Surge qui dormis et illuminabit te Christus.*\* Come into this place of wakefulness and light, where your eyes will re-open to those truths, which you once knew, but which were beginning to be gradually effaced from your heart. Jesus Christ will again discover to you that piety, that fervor, that charity, that disinterestedness, which both your consecration and the sublimity of your functions, demand of you: you will find yourselves, in the eyes of God, so far removed from the sanctity which he requires of you, that you will regard the apparent regularity, the kind of virtue on which you relied, as a soiled and despicable rag: *Quasi pannus menstruatæ, universæ justitiæ nostræ.*† You will find yourself empty, without sap and without life before God:

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\* Ephes. c. v. ver. 14.

† Isaiah. c. lxiv. v. 6.



these new lights will disclose to you, the dangerous state of your soul, and begin to diffuse a warmth over its coldness : God will address you, and those dry bones will be reanimated at his word, as of old in the vision of the prophet : *Ossa arida audite verbum Domini.*\* You will become like men newly created : you will go forth from this holy place, like the Apostles from the supper-room, inflamed with heavenly fire : a holy intoxication, and the plenitude of the spirit of God, will make you despise all those earthly considerations and that human respect, which had heretofore chained down your zeal, and held the truth in captivity ; will make you burst asunder those unprofitable intimacies, which withheld you from your duties, and strengthen you against the bad example, and the dangerous occasions, which had overcome, or weakened, your piety : your success will be proportionate to the new fervor with which you shall re-enter upon your duties : you will see your flock awakened, as it were, and renovated with yourself ; and the spirit of God, diffused over the pastor and his people, may again say : *Ecce nova facio omnia.*† What a consolation, my bre-

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\* Ezek. c. xxxvii. v. 4.

† Apoc. c. xxi. v. 5.

thren, for a virtuous Priest, to see the word of the gospel fructify, in that portion of the field of Christ committed to his care ; to behold, every day, some souls delivered from the servitude of sin and of the devil, and restored to Jesus Christ! and on the contrary, what poignant and terrible remorse to a pastor, who has yet any faith remaining, to see that, during the course of a long ministry, he has not withdrawn a single soul from the ways of perdition ; that he has not corrected a single public or private disorder, in his parish ; nor produced in any instance the slightest emendation in the morals of his people! Can his life, however irreproachable in the eyes of men, quiet his fears relative to the long-continued unprofitableness of his functions? and ought he not seek the cause of their inutility, rather in the tepidity of his life, in the coldness of his piety, in the want of the spirit of God, which he has suffered to become extinct by refusing to come here to renew it, than in the hardness and impenitence of his flock? It was on quitting their holy retreat, that the Apostles, heretofore weak and timid, jealous of distinctions and half carnal, appeared new men ; and that, as burning and shining lamps, scattering themselves among every people, they inflamed and enlightened the whole universe with that di-

vine fire, which Christ came to kindle upon earth. It was on descending from his retreat upon the mountain, that Elias, with a holy firmness, reproached the kings of Israel, with the abomination of their calves of gold ; that he delivered the people from the multitude of false Prophets ; that he brought down rain from the heavens upon the earth ; that he gave life to the dead, and deserved to be transported from among men in a flaming chariot, and to be reserved to oppose, at the end of time, the devices of the man of sin. It was on coming forth, from the wilderness and from retreat, that Christ himself commenced his ministry : it was in withdrawing, from time to time, to pray alone, on the mountain, that he continued it and did those works which no other had done before him. He, surely, did not need those precautions, but he wished to leave us a model for our conduct, and to say to all, in the person of his Apostles, I have left you an example, that you may one day do, what you have seen that I myself have practised.

And truly, my brethren, the pious founders of the regular orders, in those wise and holy rules which they have given to their disciples of both sexes, have all prescribed that, every year, a certain time should be devoted to recollection

and retreat, to reanimate their fervor, and renew them in the spirit of their state. Alas! my brethren, those inspired men, those holy patriarchs of the monastic life, were of opinion that men subjected to an austere rule, separated from the world, consecrated to penance and prayer, stripped of all things, of property, of worldly hopes, and of their very liberty itself by the sacrifice of obedience; they were of opinion, that these men, in the depths of their seclusion, and surrounded by the succors of religion, would be likely to relax, to fall away from their first fervor, and languish in the holy career on which they had entered, if they were not enjoined to spend every year, some days in retreat, and still more perfect separation, in order to enter into themselves, to prevent transgressions yet more dangerous, and grow young, as it were, in the first spirit of their holy institute. And we, my brethren, exposed unceasingly to the contagion of the world, surrounded by a thousand perils, obliged to live amidst so many scandals, and so many bad examples, that weaken or seduce us: we, often left to ourselves in the retired parts of the country, solitary, unaided, without holy society to console and sustain us, having no support but ourselves, our languors, our indolence,

our inclinations of flesh and blood ; seeing nothing around us to make us think of ourselves ; we, my brethren, would pass our lives in this dangerous state, without apprehension ? We would imagine, that the precaution of devoting a certain portion of our time to recollection, a precaution esteemed so necessary to the most retired souls, is useless to us ? and would regard it as one of those indifferent practices, in which there is more of zeal than of necessity ? We, my brethren, occupied, with functions, the sanctity of which, oftentimes affects us but little, and the vanity and bustle of which, distracts and dissipates us ; we who are incessantly obliged to probe the wounds, and sound the corruption, of consciences, and to listen to those sinful details, which leave a thousand dangerous images in our mind ; we, in a word, who are charged with a ministry at which Angels would tremble, and finding ourselves from long use, daily less touched by what is most holy and most terrific in its functions, and consequently acquitting ourselves of our duties with less recollection and piety ; we would leave the benefits to be derived from retreat, to recluses who ought not to stand in need of it ; and amidst the innumerable perils of our state, would deem our-

selves secure, without, at least, taking time to consider them, or without examining whether our fidelity has ever failed in the hour of danger? we, my brethren, who are set up to be the pastors and the models of the regulars; we who are raised by our ministry, to a degree of grace and of authority, which demands of us greater perfection and superior sanctity; we, in fine, who are the shepherds and chiefs of the flock, of which they are but the members and the sheep.

### THIRD REFLECTION.

And finally, my brethren, to motives so interesting, and so capable of touching every minister consecrated to the priestly functions, permit me to add a new reflection, which peculiarly regards you. The more extensive this diocess is, the more it is to be feared, that the ancient spirit of the ministry, may become extinct in it by little and little. The distance of places deprives us of the knowledge of many disorders, and prevents us from applying the proper remedies; remoteness from the source, often causes the distant branches of the stream to languish for their proper supply: the evil gains insensibly, and the more destructively, as its progress is in secret and far from our eyes, and as it must break

forth into scandals and disorders of magnitude, before it can reach us. What remedy against a distemper which may become general, and by degrees infect all? The remedy is, my brethren, that God, who watches over this extensive diocess, over this ancient and distinguished portion of his church, towards which we must not doubt that the prayers of so many of our holy predecessors, prostrate before the throne of his glory, and incessantly occupied with the necessities of a flock, which to them, was once so dear, attract the peculiar regards of the divine mercy and protection; is, I say, that God always preserves in it a certain number of faithful pastors, venerable for their age and for their piety, punctual in coming to this sacred place, to enter into themselves, and renew in themselves, the spirit of their holy vocation: it is their example that animates the new ministers, and that holds out to them, that model and rule of conduct, to which they ought to conform. You are, then, my brethren, that precious leaven which the Almighty preserves in this large diocess, not only to save the whole mass from unsoundness and corruption, but to sanctify it by little and little; to spread itself more widely and to increase its own activity and benediction: from

you, it is, that the spirit of the priesthood flows upon the younger pastors. On their entrance into the ministry, they find in you, a public and respectable disavowal of the disedifying conduct of many of their brethren, by whose example they might have been seduced: it is a strong and immoveable barrier raised by the goodness of God, and by which the contagion is prevented from ever becoming general. Dispersed, by the secret order of providence, through the various parts of this large diocess, you are placed, as it were, by the hand of God, each in his peculiar situation, to preserve your neighbourhood, and contain by your example, your brethren, who surround you. If they do not imitate you, at least, they have continually before their eyes, what they ought to imitate; if your example does not induce them to fulfil the duties of their ministry, at least, it does not suffer them to remain ignorant of those duties. The shame of following a line of conduct so different from yours; the grace of their ordination which is not yet, perhaps, altogether extinguished; their education in this holy place, and the sacred truths in which they have been instructed; these have their effect sooner or later; they begin to follow your steps at a distance; they advance



and attain to the same virtues, and thus the spirit of the priesthood is preserved and perpetuated amongst us. Yes, my brethren, it is with the army of the church, as with that of the empire: in the latter, a small number of men, inured to the hardships and perils of war, in certain famous battalions, are sufficient to infuse into the new recruits, and perpetuate in a regiment, that ancient spirit of valor, and that martial renown by which they have been distinguished from other troops; it would seem, that on his very entrance into the band, the raw soldier catches the generous spirit which fires the bosom of the veteran: similar is the case of a diocess: a small number of tried and virtuous pastors, keeps alive and perpetuates in it that first spirit of the priesthood, and that reputation of regularity and discipline for which itself has been distinguished: the newly arrived clergy seem to breathe the noble sentiments and lofty devotion, as soon as they are aggregated to the body, of those veterans of religion: they would dread the reproach of cowardice, and the shame of being regarded as the opprobrium of the sacred host, were they to depart from the high spirit and devoted bravery, which appears to pervade and sway the ranks, to which they belong. We look upon

you then, my brethren, as charged with the precious deposit of the spirit of the priesthood, which in this diocess is preserved in your hands, and which passes from them to those, whom we, every day, associate to the holy ministry. Persevere then, my dearest brethren, and be not overcome in the Apostolic career, in which you have hitherto appeared at the head of those pastors who have been running with you : be mindful, that you are the chief pillars of the great edifice, which is confided to us, and that, should you wince or totter, it must be shaken to its very base. We speak to you here, as did Saint Cyprian to the holy virgins, the most illustrious portion of his flock ; we address you rather with the tenderness of a father, than with the authority of a superior : *Plus affectione quam potestate*. Your infidelities would be regarded and followed, as a safe model, by those, who seek only to justify to themselves, their own misconduct : the higher your reputation for regularity, the more should your habits bespeak a respect for the virtues of your state. Whatever you have been seen to neglect, in a single instance, they will always consider as not essential to their duties, and subtract in practice from their acknowledged obligations. Assist us then,

my brethren, to support the weight of the pastoral solicitude, under which we should yield, if you, who are our co-operators, did not bear with us a portion of its pressure: return to your churches, filled with that spirit, which has animated you, so long, and in which you have been, now again, renovated; and fill them with the abundance of those graces and of that piety, with which you are now replenished. Do not limit your zeal for the house of God, to your own people: animate your clerical brethren by your example, and by those sweet insinuations of charity which gain the heart: let them not look upon you, any longer, as their censor, but as their friend and brother: avail yourself of the advantages which your regularity gives you over them, only to become more mild and charitable towards them, more ready to excuse their weaknesses, and to commend whatever is praiseworthy in their actions; for it is thus that virtue is rendered amiable, even to those who seem to have strayed farthest from her paths. Attract by the kindness of friendship and of charitable forbearance, the confidence of those ministers, whose conduct corresponds not with the sanctity of their calling: let them become the more dear to you, in proportion as they err:

be not disgusted with them, though they should appear to repulse your tender remonstrances: charity is patient and beareth all things: force them, as it were, to love you, if as yet they will not imitate you, and ever remember, that in recalling a single Priest to his duty, you save an entire people. We sometimes make it a sort of duty to break off all intercourse with certain unedifying pastors: we shun them as so many anathemas, and avoid, with a kind of haughtiness, whatever might oblige us to hold any communication with them: it would seem that we gloried in making them feel the difference between them and ourselves: this is not the spirit of Jesus Christ, but the spirit of those two uninstructed disciples, who wished to bring down fire from heaven on a sinful and infidel city. I know that we must not authorize the disorders of our confreres, by an assiduity of intercourse that would seem to approve them: but there is pride and inhumanity in abandoning them because they are working their own perdition. Our tenderness for them ought to be redoubled, in proportion as their maladies approach the crisis; and we should make them feel, by acts of kindness, and by demonstrations of friendship, that they are

not yet without resource, and that their condition is not considered altogether hopeless. Hearts that are insensible to truth, are not always so to the tender offices of charity; we frequently aggravate the evil, by condemning it without reserve, and sometimes correct and bring back the disorderly, by supporting them with benignity. I have dwelt thus long on this point, my brethren, because it has appeared to me that a difference of morals and of conduct almost always creates a kind of alienation between the virtuous and the bad Priests; because the only resource for the latter is to frequent the society of faithful pastors; and because it is essential to facilitate to them that intercourse, in order that your example may become serviceable in their regard.—*Amen.*

**A DISCOURSE**

ON

**THE MODESTY OF THE CLERGY.**

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Modestia vestra nota sit omnibus hominibus.

*Let your modesty be known to all men.*

PHILIPPIANS. chap. iv. ver. 5.

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**WE** ought to be ever mindful, my brethren, that the Lord, whose ministers we are, observes and watches us, and is always near us; and that as we are charged with the interests of his glory, his eyes are continually upon us, lest we should suffer the slightest indecency to tarnish and dishonour his high commission.

So, my brethren, nothing is more strongly recommended in the sacred volume, or in the canons of the church, than the modesty of those

who are consecrated to the Lord. The same decency, the same circumspection, the same majesty that attends them to the altar, should accompany them in every place; and as they are, every where, the envoys of Jesus Christ, and every where represent his sacred person, they ought every where to sustain the dignity of this character, by the wisdom of their discourse, by the decency of their dress, and by the seriousness of all their actions.

#### FIRST REFLECTION.

I say, by the wisdom of their discourse. You know, my brethren, what the gospel exacts, in this particular, even from the simple faithful: Christ declares to them, without exception, that they shall render a rigid account, not only for those licentious words, which ought not even to be named, as Saint Paul says, amongst christians; not only for those low jests and discourses of buffoonery which, according to the same Apostle, are not becoming in Saints; not only for those words of malignity, of hatred, of bitterness and slander, which extinguish in us the spirit of charity, and render us the murderers of our brethren; not only for those words of anger, of passion and of rage, which deprive

us of that sweetness and meekness, to which is promised the eternal possession of the land of the living; but even of a single idle word: *De quocunque verbo otioso.\** This is not an exhortation designed merely to animate us to sanctify our discourse; it is a law to the infraction of which is attached the menace, that we shall one day, give a severe account of it. It is not a counsel: Christ did not say to the young man who would not sell his goods, and renounce all to follow him, that he would, one day, make him account for this refusal; but, he says to every christian, who shall waste his time in idle and useless words, that even one such shall be a subject of reproach, and shall be written in the terrible account which the sovereign judge will exact of each one of us. But, whence this severity so disproportionate, in appearance, to the weakness of man, and so inconsistent with the most innocent bonds of society? It springs from the very nature of the christian vocation: it arises from that primary principle, that all christians are Saints; that their conversation should be in heaven; that whether we speak, or act, we should do all for the name, and for the

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\* Matthew. c. xii. v. 3.



glory of Jesus Christ; that the time of the present life, is but a rapid moment, destined to ensure to us an immense and eternal weight of glory; and that we cannot, therefore, without prevarication, waste a single instant of it, in actions, or in discourses which have no reference to salvation.

Now, my brethren, if the law, which regulates the conversation of the simple faithful, is so severe; if the gospel prescribes such circumspection, such reserve, such modesty in discourse, as to impute to them, even one idle word as a transgression, what will it not exact from the ministers of Jesus Christ.

Can the mouth of the Priest, sanctified by the sacred words, which he utters every day at the altar, and consecrated by the body and blood of Jesus Christ, with which he is there nourished, open, on quitting the awful scene, to frivolous, foolish and profane discourses? he has just raised his tongue aloft to heaven, to the very bosom of God, to bring down the word made man, upon the altar, and can he, a moment after, trail it through the filth and ignominy of the earth, by employing it in vain and indecent words? *Posuerent in cælum os suum et lingua eorum transivit in terra.\** What

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\*Psalm. 72. v. 9.

should issue from a mouth, foaming as it were with the blood of Jesus, from a mouth, which has just descended from heaven, and brought thence down on the earth, the Lamb without spot, together with the myriads of celestial spirits that follow and adore him? What should issue from it, but sacred and heavenly words, the canticle of the host which incessantly attends the Lamb, words of praise, of benediction and gratitude? Besides, my brethren, the lips of the Priest, are the repository of knowledge; the law of God is put into our mouth that we may, without ceasing, announce it to the people; and when the spirit of God calls us to the holy ministry, it says to us, as it said of old, to the Prophet: behold I have put my words in thy mouth, that thou mayest plant the heavens and found the earth: *Posui verba mea in ore tuo. . . ut plantes celos et fundes terram:*\* that is to say, that you may make of the people confided to you, as it were, a new heaven, and a new earth; that you may accustom them to regard me as the only God worthy of their homage, and of their affections; that they may learn to consider themselves a holy people, entirely con-

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\*Isaiah. c. li. v. 16.

secrated to me ; that the heaven and the earth which they behold are, indeed, the works of my hands, but that they deserve neither their homage, nor their love ; and that I destine for them a heaven more bright and durable, an earth more holy and eternal, where they will enjoy in the society of the elect, delights which the eye has never seen, and which no mortal has ever tasted. Does it not hence follow, my brethren, that our tongue is no longer ours ? that it is consecrated to the law of God, and to the edification of the people ; that low humor, buffoonery and indecent discourse may be but illicit amusements in the mouth of the faithful, but that in ours, as it is said by a Father of the church, they are blasphemous and profane ? It is far from my intention, to interdict innocent gaiety and chearful relaxation : but what I wish to impress on you, my brethren, is, that our converse should be always stamped with a peculiar character of piety, of gravity and of modesty ; that in your intercourse with your clerical brethren, you ought to edify each other by holy joy, and animate one another by words of charity, of truth, and of benediction ; that you should banish from your conversation, all profane and immoderate mirth ; all low pleasantry ;

all the indecency of worldly discourse ; and not imagine, as too often happens, that because you are in a society of Priests, where there is no lay-man to be scandalized, you are permitted to indulge in those excesses of discourse, and in that extravagant mirth, of which you would be ashamed in the presence of the world ; as if you owed nothing to yourselves, or to the sacred character which you bear ; as if Jesus Christ, who sees you, were a spectator less to be feared and respected than men ; as if conversation were to become more innocent, and less unworthy of the sanctity of our state, merely because it is uttered before the very persons whom it dishonours most ; as if, in fine, it were permitted you, to use among yourselves, and at a distance from the world, language which the world itself, through respect for your character, would not allow itself to use in your presence : what I wish to impress on you, is, that by neglecting to measure your words, when you converse with your brethren in the ministry, you will accustom yourselves to practise the same indiscretion and licentiousness before the world ; some go so far as to take a lamentable pride in this ignominy, and fancy that they render their presence more acceptable, and give a new charm

to their discourse, when they cast aside that decorous reserve, and that holy gravity which even the world itself expects from them. Yes, my brethren, there are Priests to be seen, more worldly, more unrestrained, more indiscreet in discourse, than even worldlings themselves : nothing serious, nothing worthy of their state, nothing to edify ever issues from their lips : the world, the vanity, the disorders, which perhaps, lurk in their hearts, are, as it were, exhaled and manifested in their conversation. Are these, my brethren, the organs of the Holy Ghost? are these the mouths consecrated to Jesus Christ, and destined to bear his name and his law, before the people of the earth? are these the voices crying in the wilderness of this world, the heralds of heaven, sent to prepare the way of the Lord, and to make straight, the crooked paths of sinners? is this the salt of the earth, to purify and preserve from corruption? are these the envoys of Jesus Christ, to bear the word of reconciliation through the world? or rather, are they not the emissaries of his enemy—the prince of the world, to form followers to him, and extend the bounds of his cursed empire? What a crime, my brethren, for a Priest to profane his tongue, that was destined for functions so holy

and so sublime! What a crime, to make the venerable instrument of the people's salvation, the fatal occasion of their perdition or their scandal! What a crime, to convert the sword of the word, which God puts into the mouth of his ministers, to pierce the utmost depths of the soul's corruption, and secure its life, by cutting away its unsoundness, to convert it, I say, into a poisoned and murderous sword, which causes mortification and death: *Et posuit os meum quasi gladium acutum.\** And yet, my brethren, a minister, on quitting those disgusting exhibitions of buffoonery and licentiousness, will go up to the altar, and pronounce the awful words which Angels themselves are not permitted to utter? and will ascend the christian pulpit to announce to his people the chaste law of the Most High, and the weighty and sorrowful truths of the gospel? that mouth, a thousand times defiled by indecency and scurrility in discourse, will dare to express the words of salvation and holiness? But what grace will he have to exercise a ministry so solemn and so divine? From a mouth so dishonoured, what can proceed, to edify the faithful? to it the sweet ac-

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\* Isaiah. c. xlix. v. ii.

cents of charity are unknown, and the language of piety is a stranger. Alas! he will, perhaps, carry into the very chair of truth, the indiscretions of his accustomed discourse; perhaps, he will dishonour the majesty of the sacred word, by profane buffoonery; perhaps, he will mix up the meanness, the indelicacy, the worldliness of his ordinary expressions, with those sublime truths, which none but lips purified, like those of Isaiah by the fire of the Holy Spirit, are worthy to announce: and we have but too often wept over this scandal, which has, more than once, reached our ears; and it has but too frequently occurred, that pastors of low, indecent, and buffoonlike conversation, carry the very same language into the chair of doctrine and truth, and appear in it, rather as jugglers and mountebanks, than as the venerable ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ; so that the sacred word, destined to confound the sinner, and console and animate the just, is nothing in their mouth but an afflicting scandal for the one, and a subject of derision, and often of impiety, to the other. As our functions necessarily mingle us with persons of the world, let them never quit our society, without some word of edification; without a new respect for religion and

its ministers; without some new desire of a more christian life; let them learn in their converse with us, how to sanctify their intercourse with one another; let a holy joy, a wise and charitable circumspection in our language, an amiable indulgence towards the defects of others; let christian maxims touching the happiness of the virtuous, the miseries produced by the passions, the deceitfulness and inanity of the world, render our commerce more pleasing, our presence more desirable, our company more agreeable, than the license, the detraction, the indecency and trifling, of ordinary conversation. Let us not fear, my brethren, that we shall alienate persons of the world by observing these rules; they expect them from us. I admit that they will not seek us, to make us take a part in their amusements; and this omission will, at least, spare us one occasion of scandal and of fall: but they will seek us, when they look for edification; when, weary of the world, and of their passions, they shall form the resolution of beginning a more regular and a more virtuous life: when overwhelmed by adversity, they shall need consolation, when smitten, by the hand of God, with dangerous infirmities; they shall seek our ministry to appease his wrath, and expiate the



crimes by which they had provoked it : we shall not partake of their pleasures, but we shall be more useful to them in the day of their necessity. Such should be the modesty of the clergy in discourse.

### SECOND REFLECTION.

It would be superfluous to add, that their language would edify the faithful to little purpose, if the worldliness of their exterior were to become a new subject of scandal to the people. The rules of the church, and the precautions of the sacred canons touching the modesty of dress enjoined to the clergy, are commonly regarded rather as niceties, and details of little consequence, than as serious and essential duties. We flatter ourselves that there is a strength of mind in despising them ; and we leave the rigid observance of such regulations, to the scruples and exactness of the college. But, my brethren, were the venerable councils by which they were framed, capable of occupying themselves about trifling niceties? Could the spirit of God, that spirit of wisdom and of truth, which presided over their deliberations, give us rules, which we might without guilt, treat with indifference and contempt? Were the holy pastors who com-

posed them, the venerable depositaries of the faith and discipline of their age, and of whom the Holy Ghost made use to transmit them down to us; those pastors who have enriched the church with their immortal works, and left us so many precious monuments of their learning and their superior talents; were they unenlightened and narrowminded men, capable of attaching themselves to puerile details, and of imposing them on us, as serious duties, and canonical regulations? But, my brethren, did not God himself in the ancient law, regulate the shape, the colour, the whole exterior economy of the ornaments of the Pontiff, of the Priests, and of the Levites? was it worthy of the divine majesty to enter into such details? What could one form of vestment contribute, more than another, to his glory? is not the worship due to him, too noble and too sublime, to depend on so trivial and arbitrary an object? yet this trivial object, constituted an essential point of his worship, and the Priest who would have appeared at his altar, or in public, without being clothed in the prescribed robes, would have been regarded as guilty of a profanation, and be stoned, perhaps, for the sacrilege. Why all this exactness, my brethren? It is because what-

ever attacks the decency of her ministers, insults religion herself, and degrades the worship of the Almighty; it is because a Priest, should, in every place, appear, what he really is, and because he cannot put off the exterior of the priesthood, without criminal contempt, and without casting away its dignity and its spirit; it is because the clerical habit teaches the people to respect the minister, and the minister to respect his character; it is because his dress acts, as a monitor perpetually present, to restrain him and to make him blush, should he permit in himself any thing, unsuited to the gravity which it bespeaks; it is, in fine, because the clerical habit, is the uniform of the sacred host, the badge which unites and honours them; and that to be ashamed of it, and fling it away, is, to become a deserter, a runaway, and to declare ourselves unworthy to wear it. Alas! my brethren, men of every other state take a pride and an honor in bearing the external marks of their profession: the prince, the noble, the man of war, the magistrate, all are eager to display before the eyes of the public, those marks which distinguish them from the rest of society. The religious orders regard it as an essential duty, never to lay aside the habit, which their found-

ers have prescribed : they glory in it, and respect even its minutest peculiarities, and he who would show himself in public, under a different garb, would be regarded as an apostate, and treated as the opprobrium of his brethren. The founders of those institutes, were, indeed, men of rare and exemplary piety, but yet they were private individuals, whose laws seem to derive their force, from the free acceptance of those, who have voluntarily submitted to them, and vowed their observance. And for us, my brethren, it is the church at large, it is her rules and her canons, that prescribe to us the form of the clerical habit : it is not a question of the practices of piety peculiar to one community, but of the laws which the church imposes on every clerick : what can be more important, or more worthy of the most rigid, and the most religious observance? Yet, my brethren, whilst men of every other profession, take a pride in the marks, by which they are distinguished from the community, whilst the pious friar would deem it a sacrilege and an apostacy, to put off the dress which his rule prescribes ; we regard the obligation of wearing the clerical habit, an obligation enjoined by all the laws, ancient and modern, of the church, as an idle scruple ; and we distinguish

ourselves from every other rank of men, by the contempt in which we hold the external marks which bespeak our state, the most excellent, most sublime, and most honourable of all.

It would seem that the honor which the church has conferred on us, by associating us to the number of her ministers, is burdensome to us; we retrench its most striking and most respectable ornament, and conceive a higher opinion of ourselves, when we appear in a garb, that less attracts the respect and veneration of the faithful. Yes, my brethren, there are Priests to be seen, who scarce preserve, any longer, upon their person, any vestige of the form, or the colour of the ecclesiastical habit; who exhibit themselves in public, in companies, and in towns as men of the world, and who with the dress, assume all the manners, of worldlings: they are seen to glory in the insult which they offer to their state and to the laws of the church, and regard as narrowminded, and ignorant, all, who have not courage to imitate their degenerate and scandalous conduct: there are others to be seen, who, whilst they preserve the form of the ecclesiastical habit, display in their dress a degree of luxury, of splendor, and of costliness, as much opposed to sacerdotal modesty, as the

exterior of those whose habit is altogether secular. In fine, there are some, who falling into the opposite extreme, dishonour the priesthood by a sordidness, by an exterior so unseemly, so squalid, so unbecoming, that they are scarcely to be distinguished from those objects which solicit our charity on the highways or in the streets. In the retired parts of the country, these spectacles, so disgraceful to the dignity of our character, are but too often to be met; Priests, who, from the vilest avarice, or from baseness of mind, clothe themselves in coarseness or in rags, and thus expose their person, and their office to public derision and contempt. The rules of the church, my brethren, preserve a just medium; they banish alike despicable sordidness and the affectation of worldliness and refinement: they prescribe a modest decency, a noble simplicity, a dignified gravity; an exterior in which there is nothing remarkable; in which the dress is forgotten, in considering the person, and in which nothing strikes in the habit, but the sanctity of him who wears it. What is here incontestible, is, that he, who, without scruple, puts off the exterior of his profession, has long since put away its spirit and its piety; that the decency of the clerical habit, is embarrassing and

burdensome to him, only because it would be incommodious to him in the unclerical occupations in which he is engaged, or in the profane assemblies which he frequents; that living in the world, and like the world, and wishing to share in all its pleasures, a grave and becoming exterior, would indicate too strongly, that he is not in his proper place; and that a minister, who wishes to permit himself only such engagements as are conformable to his state, never feels himself straightened by bearing on his person, the marks of his profession. If our morals, my brethren, were as grave and as sacerdotal as they ought to be, if our functions were every day, our sole occupation, if our people were so dear to us, that we could not lose sight of them without regret, if after having given a few hasty hours to their concerns, we did not go elsewhere in search of amusement to relieve the tedium of living amongst them; if we loved to live amidst the flock, which the church confides to us, to tend, to guide, to assist and to serve it, the habit and exterior of a pastor would not be disgustful and burdensome to us: never departing from the duties, we should never think of casting aside the honourable marks, of our profession.

## THIRD REFLECTION.

The last reflection which I shall make on the subject of sacerdotal modesty, is, that a certain, decorum, a reserve, and seriousness, suitable to the sanctity of the priesthood, should pervade our very amusements. I am aware that the mind and body have need of relaxation; but the moments spent in restoring the exhausted powers of nature, are lawful and salutary, only in proportion as they dispose us for the performance, and facilitate the practice, of our duties. Repose is allowed only that we may gather new strength to continue our course: all those recreations which discourage and retard us, which estrange us from labor; and fill us with disgust for our functions, are forbidden by the church, as unbecoming or criminal: hence the chace, habitual gaming, long entertainments, dangerous or suspected company, are rigorously interdicted, by the rules which the church has established for the maintenance of clerical modesty: these are not the amusements in which the laborious pastor may legitimately indulge, they are unseemly occupations, which dishonour the ministry, whilst they render it inefficient. For, my brethren, besides the immodesty



inseparable from an avocation so indecorous in a Priest, as the chace, is it an exercise suited to the meekness and gravity of our profession? does a Priest with arms in his hands, breathing only blood and carnage, represent the divine pastor, peaceably conducting his flock, or rather may he not be likened to the ravening wolf prepared to ravage and destroy? The arms of our warfare, says Saint Paul, are spiritual, destined to combat pride, avarice, and voluptuousness, and to level every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God: faith is the buckler, zeal for the salvation of souls, the sword, which the church puts into our hands, when she associates us to her priesthood. Now, what an indecency that a Priest and a pastor should fling away those holy arms, and assume in their stead, the deadly arms of worldly warfare! He neglects his flock; he disdains to go to the assistance of the sheep, that are perishing, yet he runs like a madman after worthless animals, he attaches himself to the pursuit of a vile prey, and he despises the holy prey of a soul, which he might snatch from the power of the devil and secure to Jesus Christ. But on quitting so clamorous, and tumultuous an exercise, is he, any longer in a condition to collect

himself at the foot of the altar, to immolate the victim of peace and propitiation, to offer up the mystic blood of the lamb, and raise his pure hands to heaven, hands which he has so often stained by the effusion of profane blood? do not the recollection, the gravity, the awe, the holy fervor necessary for his functions, suffer, from the wild dissipation in which he is accustomed to indulge? does not he bear to the very altar, into the venerable stillness of the sanctuary itself, the fierce and martial air of that character which he has just laid aside? What veneration can the people feel towards a pastor, whom they see holding in his hands the sign and the pledge of salvation, the bread of life, the sacrament of peace and reconciliation, mysteries on which the Angels look with terror, and which the most collected piety cannot approach with sufficient reverence, after having seen, but a moment before, those hands destined to functions so divine, managing the weapon of death, and dealing fright and destruction on unoffending animals?

What has been said of the chace, may be well applied to habitual gaming. A Priest who is a professed gamester, is a kind of op-

probrium in the church. He wastes in gaming, a time that was destined to save and to sanctify his people; he squanders money that is not his, and that belongs to the poor, when it is not necessary for his own wants: he loses by it the relish of every thing that is holy and serious in his profession; he loses his soul by the passions inseparable from the chances of play; he forfeits the respect and the confidence of his people, the peace and tranquillity of his own mind; nay, what does he not forfeit, since he loses, at the gaming table, the spirit of his vocation, and blasts the fruit of his entire ministry? These are losses that are always certain, that can never be repaired, and that are a thousand times more to be lamented than the sums that may be lost by the gaming pastor.

As for you, my brethren, permit me to conclude this discourse in the words of the Apostle, as for you, I say, who are my glory, and my consolation, it is not thus you dishonour your ministry; it is not thus that you convert, into a scandal for your people, the sacred character which you have received from Jesus Christ for their salvation; such are not the maxims which he has engraven on your hearts, and in which

you have been nurtured, in the places of your education: *Vos autem non ita didicistis Christum.*\* Continue then, my brethren, to conduct yourselves before your people, in a manner worthy of the gravity and the holiness of your vocation. *Videte itaque, fratres, quomodo caute ambuletis, non quasi insipientes sed ut sapientes . . . quoniam dies mali sunt.*† Your reserve and circumspection, in every part of your conduct, cannot be too great: all that is lawful for you, is not always expedient: remember that the people by whom you are surrounded, are as so many censors, whose eyes are upon you, to pardon you nothing, and who are much more inclined to exaggerate the slightest dissipation into crime, than to excuse it as a necessary recreation. We are cast upon those times, in which the languishing faith of christians, the scandals so frequently exhibited by unfaithful ministers, and the licentiousness of public morals, leave us no other means of escaping the malignity of suspicion, and the contempt of the people, than a well regulated, severe and priestly life; than a true piety, a respectable gravity, a becoming modesty, in the entire detail of our

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\* Ephes. c. iv. v. 20. † Idem. c. v. vv. 15. 16.

conduct: *Videte quomodo caute ambuletis . . . . quoniam dies mali sunt.* Irreligion has so far prevailed, that the world is delighted to find a guilty Priest: it seems a triumph for it, when it can persuade itself, that we trample the duties of our state under foot. *Videte quomodo caute ambuletis . . . . quoniam dies mali sunt:* it perceives not, that the disorders of the ministers of religion, when they really exist, are the most terrible scourge by which God punishes the crimes of a people: their pastors are resources, which he renders useless in their regard: they are voices which he renders silent, and which ought to have called them aloud to sorrow and penance; they are mediators who ought to have reconciled them with God, and appeased that justice which their sins had provoked, and who are now become unprofitable, without influence in heaven, or respect on earth. Let us not, my brethren, increase the blindness of the world, in confirming its errors by our example: *Videte quomodo caute ambuletis . . . . quoniam dies mali sunt.* Let us not become stones of stumbling to the people of whom we ought to be the guides, in the ways of salvation; nor be ourselves the most grievous sore that disgraces and afflicts the church;

we, whom she honours with her choice, her authority, and her confidence, that we may be the guardians of her peace, the dispensers of her treasures, the depositaries of her secrets, her mysteries and her truths.—*Amen.*

# A DISCOURSE

ON

## THE JUBILEE.

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Pœnitementi igitur, et convertimini, ut deleantur  
peccata vestra.

*Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins  
may be blotted out.*

ACTS. chap. iii. ver. 19.

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**T**HESSE are the words of Saint Peter to the Jews, after the cure of the lame man, who sat begging alms at the gate of the temple: they were addressed to the multitude whom the miracle had collected, and who were overwhelmed with anguish and bathed in tears, when the Apostle reproached them with the blood, which they had impiously shed, and unfolded to their view the black enormity of the crime, which they had recently perpetrated. There yet re-

mains for you, one resource, my brethren, said this first dispenser of the favors of the church; your iniquities have filled up the measure of your fathers; you have rejected the gift of the Most High, and have separated yourselves as so many anathemas from the hope of Israel: the Lord now casts a look of mercy towards you; he is about to pour out of his spirit upon all flesh, upon his enemies as well as upon his servants; upon the workers of iniquity, as well as upon the souls of the just: heaven is about to open and send down its influence upon the earth; and in fine, prodigies of grace and of mercy are about to sanctify the whole universe: *Dabo prodigia in Cælo sursum, et signa in Terra deorsum.*\* Profit then, of this time of visitation and of mercy, to present yourselves with contrite and humble hearts, for the indulgence and forgiveness, which the bounty of the Lord now proffers; and prepare your souls by the afflictions of a salutary penance, for the abundant graces which we are now going to administer: *Pœnitimini igitur, et convertimini, ut deleantur peccata vestra.*

And such, my brethren, is our language to you, this day, in circumstances almost altoge-

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\* Acts. c. ii. v. 12.



ther similar. You have had the misfortune of forgetting God, of violating his holy law, of crucifying Jesus Christ anew in your body, by rendering your members subservient to criminal passions; but behold now a time of pardon and of reconciliation, in which all the graces of the church, come forth, as it were, to meet you: the gift of God, and the effusion of his Holy Spirit, are about to sanctify all flesh; forgiveness is now offered to every sinner; the church, touched by your miseries, opens her treasures, that she, herself, may pay the price of your deliverance: enter into the views of her mercy towards you; detest those crimes which have put you in the necessity of recurring to her indulgence; and rend your hearts\* in true repentance, which alone can render her bounty serviceable to you: the more she appears to relax her just rigor, in your regard, the more sensibly should you feel your own wretchedness, and the more firmly should you resolve to correspond with her kindness, and not turn her very favors into a motive of impenitence: *Pœnitimini igitur, et convertimini, ut deleantur peccata vestra.*

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\* Scindite corda vestra.—Joel. c. ii. v. 13.

In effect, the graces which the church is about to pour out on all the faithful, during these days of mercy, are not granted to spare our weakness, but to make up for its deficiency; not to dispense us from penance, but to aid us in its performance; not to diminish, but to reward, our compunction: let me then entreat you to observe, that they are but supplementary to our weakness, helps to penance, rewards of compunction. Let us develop those capital and important truths.

#### FIRST REFLECTION.

I say, first, that they are supplementary to our weakness: for it is an established truth, that man, by sin, becomes a debtor to the divine justice, and that he cannot be reconciled with God, except by undergoing the punishment due to his transgression. Every sin must be punished, in order to be pardoned; but as the entire life of a sinner, who has forgotten his God, should be a continual penance; as all the creatures which have ministered to his passions, should be turned into instruments of his chastisement; as all pleasures are interdicted him; as it is only through favor that he can enjoy even those gratifications, which are allowed to

innocence; as his body which has hitherto served unto sin, should hereafter serve but unto penance; and as his weakness oftentimes prevents him from finishing this long and toilsome course, and from repairing, by proportionate satisfaction, the enormity and inveteracy of his transgressions, the church, ever attentive to the wants of her children, gives them her hand, as it were, to support them, in the path of salvation, lest the ruggedness of the journey should overcome their resolution, and turn their steps from the road of life. She offers to the justice of God, the treasures of which she is the depository, and thus buys off a part of the maledictions to which the sinner had been condemned: she takes out of the superabundant merits of Christ and of his Saints, what is wanting in the deficient works of the weak and incapable penitent; and becoming all to all, in order to save all, she makes up for the weakness of the sinner by her indulgence, rather than overwhelm him, or cast him into despair, by enforcing the severe penalties of rigid justice.

The favors of the church, then, my brethren, are but supplementary, to your weakness. If your powers correspond to your crimes; if your body is capable of penance as it has been

of sin ; if your members can serve unto justice as they have served unto iniquity ; if you possess wherewith to satisfy the demands of an angry God, and yet criminally refuse to discharge them ; undeceive yourselves, my brethren, the church has no intention of paying your debts, nor of according to your degeneracy, favors which are destined for the fervent alone, nor of bestowing upon your abundance, sacred riches, which are designed only for the relief of the indigent and the necessitous. Her indulgences are a sacred alms, and to have a right to share in them, we must be poor, fervent, and in want: they are like the manna which was of old, sent down from heaven ; if you gather it for the purpose of making a hoard to indulge your sloth, and spare yourself the labor of collecting it day by day, it will be converted into worms and putrefaction ; and the bounty of heaven will become, in your regard, an odor of death, and a punishment rather than a benefit.

And when I say, my brethren, that it is our weakness alone that induces the church to complete our satisfaction out of the abundance of her treasures, I do not mean by weakness, that criminal effeminacy, which renders all mortifi-

cation intolerable and impossible to us; that sensual faintheartedness, which makes us tremble at the very name of austerity or suffering; that excessive attention to ourselves, which makes us imagine, that every thing that thwarts our cupidity, is injurious to our health; that habit of self-love, which changes every thing that is commodious or agreeable into a necessity: those are so many motives to penance, and not titles to indulgence. I do not mean a vain regard to rank or to birth, by which we persuade ourselves, that in public and elevated individuals, the obligations of the christian and the sinner, are diminished; as if the duties of any state were incompatible with those of the gospel, or that an elevation which has been itself, so often an occasion of crime, could exempt us from a penance which it renders but the more necessary and the more imperative.

I understand a real inability to support the length and rigor of penalties conformable to the rules and the spirit of the church; and I say, that in such case, the church, touched by the miseries of our state, by the eagerness which we ourselves feel, to expiate our crimes were our strength equal to our zeal, and taking the desire for the deed, relents from her just seve-

rity, and proffers to us the boon of her reconciliation and favor.

But do not imagine, my brethren, that even then, the church undertakes to supply every thing. She expects, that if we cannot offer the full atonement of our sins, we will offer at least, a part; she means that we should draw all we can from our weakness, and give according to our ability, and, if I may so speak, even beyond it: her intention is, that we shall employ all our efforts to satisfy the divine justice; that our whole life be a continual remembrance of our iniquities, and of the reparation to which they have condemned us; that all our actions exhibit some sign of our penitent condition, and that even our very pleasures be seasoned with the bitterness of penance.

For whatever may be our weakness, if we are sincerely touched and converted; if the spirit of God has produced in our hearts the grace of compunction and of penance; if the abhorrence of our past crimes has operated in us, those sentiments of zeal and of indignation against ourselves, which are the first fruit of repentance; ah! we shall still, readily find in ourselves, wherewith to offer to God, sacrifices and expiations to appease his justice: whatever may

be our weakness, we shall always have inclinations to mortify ; desires to overcome ; pleasures to sacrifice ; humiliations to suffer ; contradictions to support ; superfluities to retrench : whatever may be our weakness, we shall be still strong enough, to bear the denial of a thousand useless indulgences to our senses ; to cross our appetites in a thousand ways, which, without lessening our strength, will weaken our corruption, and thus make of our very infirmities the matter of our penance. Alas ! how far do we not go for the world, for wealth, for pleasure ? we wring from a feeble and ruined constitution, all the efforts of which it is capable, and even more ; we do ourselves violence ; we forego repose, we stifle the calls of exhausted nature, and imagine that by continually gaining on ourselves, we shall in the end, accustom our body to obey our wishes : ah ! my brethren, it is for heaven alone, that we attempt nothing, that we nicely balance our strength, that we exaggerate our weakness, and that every thing that is attended with pain, appears to us impossible.

And do not tell me that the favors of the church would be unnecessary and useless, if on our part, we were still obliged to use all

our efforts, to expiate our sins by the labors of penance. For, my brethren, however great our efforts, however long our penance, however rigorous our satisfactions, they will never be proportionate to our crimes: our sufferings will be always short of our sins; we shall always remain far distant from the point, which the justice of God requires of us to attain; we shall be ever like the useless servant mentioned in the gospel, obliged to beg time and loaded with a multitude of debts, which we have not been yet able to discharge.

For, alas! my brethren, can we believe that the tears of a few short days, that some slight self-denials, that a few easy fasts, expiate and efface before God, crimes which have deserved an eternity of torments? Do we believe that everlasting flames, that eternal despair, that the worm which never dies, that separation for ever from God; do we believe that this frightful and terrific sentence, which we have incurred, can be commuted for some momentary austerities, and that a debt so immense can be paid off, as it were, with a farthing? Formerly, the church herself, more indulgent certainly than the insulted and terrible Lord of all, since her only concern was to appease the sovereign



Judge and mitigate, by her canonical austerities the severity of his sentence, and since the punishments which she inflicted on her children, were those of a tender mother; the church herself, for a single crime, imposed formerly whole years of labors and penance: and what penance, my brethren! floods of tears, continual fasts, public humiliations, astonishing austerities, long and frequent prayers, separation from the altar, from the society of the faithful, and from every pleasure: what penalties then, will not the divine justice exact here on earth, of the impure and criminal soul? if the chastisements of a tender and compassionate mother appear to us so rigorous, what must be the severity of an offended and angry God?

I repeat it, then, my brethren, that whatever may be your penance, you will ever remain infinitely indebted to the divine justice: however zealous may be your penance, you will then always need the favor and the assistance of the church: it is necessary that her succours come to the aid of your weakness, and that she offer to God, the merits of Christ and of his Saints, to supply the deficiency of yours. Therefore, my brethren, whilst on your part, you employ every effort to satisfy the justice of God,

the favors of the church in those days of mercy and penance, will nevertheless be to you of infinite advantage: you will find in them wherewith to make that adequate reparation, which you yourself would otherwise never have been able to offer: by the abundance of the merits which she applies to you, she closes the immense chasm which your sins had placed between God and you, and which ages of penance, were you to live them, would not of themselves, have been able to fill up.

So, my brethren, nothing can be more opposed to the spirit of faith and of sound doctrine, than that false science, by which some would persuade themselves that at bottom, the favors of the church are of little value; that they neither lighten our burdens nor better our condition; and that a sinner truly penitent, is, in the eyes of God, as agreeable without them, as by their participation: this is an error as injurious to the blood of Christ, as it is disconsolate for the weakness of the faithful, and one which the church has more than once struck with her anathemas. The church does not indeed pretend to dispense us from penance, for the gospel declares that without penance there is for us, no salvation; and the unchangeable

order of divine justice, which sin has disturbed, cannot be restored, except by the punishment due to the transgressor: but considering that either our weakness disqualifies us for the performance of almost all the arduous exercises, which she formerly imposed upon sinners, or that such as that weakness will allow us to accomplish, can never correspond with the multitude and the enormity of our crimes, she supplies what is still wanting to our penance, out of the abundance of her treasures. Like to the prudent and charitable steward of the gospel, she remits the half of the debt, which we were not in a condition to discharge, and bids us write fifty, where we owed a hundred; and it is both a departure from her spirit, and a blasphemy of the gift of God, to regard her favors either as useless to our weakness, or favourable to our unrepentance.

### SECOND REFLECTION.

In effect, I have said that in the second place, they are helps to penance; and this, my brethren, is the reason why these days of propitiation, should be a time of consolation to penitent souls. For nothing is so distressing to faithful and pious souls as to reflect, in review-

ing their past transgressions, before God, that their passions had been active, ardent and continual; that they had pushed their pleasures as far as the cravings of corruption could suggest, and that their penance has been weak, languishing and imperfect: these recollections alarm and confound them: the judgments of God, so hidden, yet so terrific; the severity of his justice, so different from ours; even the example of so many holy penitents, who, after lives far less criminal than ours, have crucified themselves, with Jesus Christ, by the most astonishing austerities; these reflections confound and discourage them. They doubt of the safety of their state; their past penance appears but an illusion: they lose the peace and confidence which are the support and consolation of piety, and from dejection often pass to the dangerous state of inactivity and sloth.

Now the church, in the graces which she grants, at this time, to her children, offers a remedy for the disquietude and doubts of faithful and penitent souls, and undertakes to supply the defect of their penance; for however sincere it may have been, it is almost impossible that it has not been mixed up with a thousand imperfections.

I say, first, that it is imperfect in point of severity : alas ! our penance is always mixed up with a thousand self-gratifications, which defile it, which destroy almost its whole merit ; and oftentimes our retrenchments and self-denials, far from expiating our past misdeeds, hardly suffice to expiate even our own present tepidity and transgressions. The church comes therefore to our assistance ; she fills up the voids of our penance ; the multitude of our dissipations and weaknesses, she covers with the charity and the blood of Jesus Christ ; and, without regarding the defects of our expiations, she readily accepts them with all their imperfections, and supplies from her own stores, what is wanting in our penitential works.

Secondly, in point of activity and fervor. Yes, my brethren, our penances are always performed with great languor and disrelish : far from that holy zeal, which would side with God's justice, against ourselves ; far from that indignation of penance which would take up arms against our flesh, which has been the source and the occasion of all our crimes ; far from taking vengeance with a holy eagerness on our bodies, for the detriment which they have caused to our souls ; far from finding in

the tears and macerations of penance, that delight which we once drew from forbidden pleasures; alas! the slightest sacrifices which we make to God, cost us so much; we have to struggle with ourselves, so long, for the least of them; we bring to them, so much dislike and repugnance; we pay our debts so unwillingly and so imperfectly, that the languishing manner, in which we attempt to appease the justice of God for our past sins, becomes itself, often, a new crime. Whatever we do for God, wearies and disgusts us: the most just themselves, oftentimes feel their heart take part with the flesh against the spirit, in the career of penance; they feel their compunction diminished, horror of their past sins almost worn away, the remembrance of the benefits of God, awaken their gratitude but feebly: nothing is more ordinary than languor and decay of zeal, in the performance of the laborious works of penance. Its beginning is generally sincere and ardent; but those impulses of grace weaken insensibly; the objects of sense, by which we are surrounded, blunt the edge of our desires of salvation; we become less sensible of our past miseries: the mind itself, naturally incapable of fixing its attention long on objects which sadden and en-

bitter it, turns away, as it were, in spite of us, from the painful contemplation of its transgressions and of their penalties; and then being no longer sustained by a deep compunction, by a lively gratitude, by the ardent transports of a contrite heart to which nothing appears difficult; we slacken our pace, and drag ourselves slowly along in the ways of penance; we murmur, like the Israelites,\* at the length and difficulties of the journey through the dry and barren wilderness; our souls nauseate the light food, which the Lord hath prepared for us, and we regret, perhaps, in secret, the flesh-pots and delights of the land of Egypt.

Now, all these secret repinings, these insensible diminutions of faith and of grace, so incident even to the most faithful souls, lessen the value and the merit of our penance, before God. He subtracts from our satisfactions, whatever we ourselves abate from the fervor and the love with which we ought to perform them; for he regards not the offering but the heart that makes it; and of those works, which are not animated by the zeal of penance, he reckons but the half to our account. But as those defects are al-

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\* Numbers. c. ii. vv. 4. 5.

most inseparable from our corrupt and feeble nature, the Lord, who is ever rich in mercy, and who wills not the perdition, but the salvation, of the sinner, has left to his church, remedies and resources for the infirmities and the languors of penance itself: he wishes her to accept our imperfect sacrifices; to close her eyes to the infidelities by which they have been accompanied; to have more regard to the sincerity of our intentions than to the defectiveness of our works; to the weakness of our nature than to the imperfection of our faith; and to admit us into the number of those happy penitents, who have terminated the expiatory course, which she had appointed; to restore us to the participation of her prayers and her holy mysteries, from which we were excluded by our crimes; to re-establish us in all those rights which we had forfeited by sin, and out of the merits and the treasures of which she is the depository, to cover the stains of our crimes and the defects of our very penance.

Finally, a third sort of imperfection in our penances, is almost always found in our want of purity of intention. We are not, indeed, of the number of the hypocrites, who do their good works only to attract the notice and the



applause of the public ; who sound a trumpet, that they may not lose the merit and reward of their virtue, before men ; who love nothing in piety but its pageant and reputation, and who are, in reality, but penitents of vanity and of the world.

Yet, however sincere our intentions may otherwise be, there enters into all our penitential labors, a great deal of human complacency: we do not act to be seen by men ; but we are not displeased that they should see our actions: we do not propose to ourselves, the commendations of the public, as the recompence of our piety, but we are not sorry that it should be applauded: we desire to please but God alone, but yet we do not fail to set a great value on pleasing the world, in addition: our chief thoughts are directed towards heaven, but alas! how many of them are nevertheless, turned towards the earth? how many interested views to self? how often do we secretly prefer works, which cause us to be admired, to those which would tend only to purify us? how much imperceptible seeking after our own glory? how much secret concern about the opinion of men? what singular practices of virtue, in which we find nothing more agreeable, than the sin-

gularity itself, which distinguishes us from others and causes us to be remarked! We often fancy that it is the love of God that supports us in retreat; in our separation from the pleasures and the assemblies of worldlings; in our retrenchment of the expenses, and our abandonment of the fashionable indecencies, authorized by the world; and alas! it is but the love of ourselves, and the secret pleasure of not being like to others and of exciting the attention of men, by striking and singular actions: they would probably please us less, were every one to follow the same course: we would probably find them disgustful and insupportable, were public example and general practice to impose them upon us as so many duties: were the multitude, by imitating our example to confound us with the crowd; were we unable to say secretly to ourselves, that we deny ourselves pleasures, in which others indulge without scruple, and were there not this concealed but flattering comparison to sustain our self-love, and indemnify us for the bitterness of virtue, our best works of penance would probably soon be abandoned.

Alas! my brethren, I repeat it, pride enters imperceptibly into all we do; and in every place

and in every action, we are still the same. Now this fatal leaven is sufficient to ferment and corrupt the whole mass: this fund of self-love, which is found in all our justice, infects and defiles it. The God of holiness who weighs our actions even in our heart itself, finds them always alloyed with this base admixture, which deprives them of a part of their value and their weight: in estimating them, he rigorously separates what is divine and the product of his grace, from what is human and properly our own; the work of the Holy Ghost, from the work of man; the fruit of charity, from the fruit of cupidity; and oftentimes after this severe appropriation, after the chaff has been divided from the corn, there remains on the one side, scarce a few good grains, and on the other, heaps of husks and straw, that is, of works destined to be consumed by the fire; and assuredly, were he to judge us without mercy, our very justice would furnish matter for our condemnation. Behold, my brethren, the responsibilities from which we are freed, and the defilements from which we are purified, by the graces of the church. The blood of Christ, which her bounty pours over our penitential performances, renders them more pure and more brilliant: it

heals the remains of those wounds, which even the powerful remedies of ordinary penance, had left, as it were, still half open : it is a sacred fire which devours and consumes every thing that is human and unholy, in our sacrifice ; which refines the ore of our charity and repentance, and converts into precious gold the dross of our infirmities and our miseries.

Such is the benefit of the graces of the church. If you are a sinner they will support you in the toilsome course of your penance : if you are already a penitent, they will make up for your weakness, and supply the imperfections of your austerities ; if you are just, they will augment the merit of your labors ; if you are weak, they will be your succour : if you are strong, they will be the safeguard of your powers : if you are dejected, they will be the support and consolation of your troubles ; in a word, whatever you may be, you will find here, either the stay and security of your virtues, or the means and facility of expiating your crimes.

### THIRD REFLECTION.

It is true, that nothing but profound sorrow for our offences, and sincere and active repentance, obtain those precious favors, for they

are the recompence of compunction alone : this is the third reflection. In effect, the church in the long course of penance, which in ancient times, she imposed on the faithful, who after baptism had returned to the disorders of their former lives, whenever she remitted a part of her canonical rigors, had regard, says Saint Cyprian, to nothing but the sincerity and intensity of the grief which they manifested for their sins. Thus, when, among the number of public penitents, she found certain sinners more touched and dejected than the rest, by their enormities; more fervent in the laborious exercises of penance; more penetrated by the fear of God's judgments; more humbled at the sight of their weakness; more ardent for the boon of reconciliation; more afflicted at their state of abasement, of separation and anathema; in such circumstances, the church, imitating the indulgence of the Apostle, towards the incestuous Corinthian, lest the abundance and keenness of their sorrow should too much deject those contrite and disconsolate penitents, abridged the period of their punishments and exclusion; relaxed her severity; proffered them the blessing of peace and reconciliation; and rewarded the tears and the ardor of their grief by restoring

them to the society of the faithful, to a share in the prayers of their brethren, to the communion of her altar and her sacrifices, and in fine, to all the rights of which the grace of baptism had put them in possession.

It was the greatness alone, of their sorrow and repentance, that obtained for them, this distinction of favor and indulgence: it was necessary for them, by the abundance of their compunction, to have fulfilled, in a few days, the long years marked out for their penance: otherwise, when either the inconsiderateness of priests, or the too great facility of the martyrs, awarded these relaxations and graces, to such of the faithful as had not given distinguished proof of repentance; their reconciliation, says Saint Cyprian, was false, dangerous to those by whom it was granted, and useless to those by whom it was received: *Periculosa dantibus, et nihil accipientibus profutura*; it was like the untimely rain on the unripe fruit, which far from accelerating, retards, its growth, and renders it incapable of ever attaining flavor or maturity.

Now what consequences should we draw from this doctrine? The first is, that since the graces which the church dispenses, at this time, to

the faithful, are but the recompence of compunction; those souls which bring no sentiment of true penance to the holy tribunal, can have no just pretension to share in them: those souls which, after the abominations of a criminal life, approach the knee of God's ministers with a cold heart, an insensible conscience, a will almost quite determined to return to the vomit, are excluded from this favor. They are hardened hearts, over which the church weeps; lost children whom she deploras, but who, far from entering into a participation of her favors with the rest of the faithful, draw down upon themselves a new malediction, proportionate to the guilt by which they select the days of her greatest bounty, to profane her mysteries and her treasures, and turn her very indulgence into an occasion of sacrilege and ingratitude.

The second consequence is, that those sensual and worldly souls, who appear eager to share in the bounty of the church, only because they regard it as an easy path to heaven, and as an auxiliary to salvation, which dispenses them from penance; who come not to detest the enormity, but to seek the impunity, of their crimes: who fancy that all is done, and that the

past is entirely pardoned and forgotten, as soon as they have complied with certain exterior observances to which the church seems to attach the participation of her graces; whose whole sorrow for their sins, is nothing else than a secret hope that they shall find in the tribunal, a privilege that will exempt them from bewailing and punishing their disorders; souls so little disposed to appease the justice of God; so devoid of charity and faith; so far removed from the spirit of penance, which alone can obtain the pardon of heaven; are unworthy of the grace, and cut off from all hope, of reconciliation. What do they come to seek at the foot of the altar, in those solemn and holy days? it is the sacred asylum of true penitents; and the only mark of contrition, which they bring to it, is a carnal desire to be freed from penance: it is the refuge of tears and compunction; and they turn it into a resting place for cupidity and sloth: it is the goal of lengthened toils, or of the zeal that would still prolong its macerations; and they regard it as the prize of lazy sensuality, the term of labor, of mortification and penance. What illusion, my brethren! as if treasures which have had their source, in the bosom of a crucified and expiring God,



could themselves, become the incentive, and the reward, of effeminacy and corruption ! as if the fruit of the cross of Jesus Christ, should make void that very cross ! as if the blood of the martyrs and the tears of the just, should remain a deposite in the hands of the church, only to form degenerate and impenitent christians !

Third consequence. Since the church, in the dispensation of her favors, intends no more than to reward the abundant compunction of true penitents, those sinners who repent merely with their lips ; whose passions, after all their promises of amendment, survive and succeed their penance ; who have never placed more than a short interval, between their approach to the sacraments and their relapses into guilt ; who never bring to the tribunal, a sincere resolution of avoiding dangerous occasions, of bursting attachments that have been fatal to their innocence, of separating themselves from pleasures incompatible with their duties, of severing connexions and intimacies which operate as incitements to crime, of taking those wise measures and painful steps, which may vanquish their passions and expiate their sins ; who come to confession with only vague purposes of change, with wavering resolutions, with an

inconstant and irresolute heart, more determined to recur to the sacraments by the approach of the solemnity than by sorrow for their crimes: such souls must expect no share in the largesses of the church: they are of the number of those unclean animals which have returned a hundred times to the vomit; and whilst she bewails their destiny, she repels them from her altar, lest her holy things should be defiled by being cast before them.

In fine, the last consequence is, that since these favors are the price of abundant tears and of a new and superior sorrow, even those who bring to the tribunal, but a moderate and ordinary detestation of their crimes; who feel no additional, no marked, no truly heartrending anguish; whom the increased bounty of the church does not excite to a more tender sense, and a more lively acknowledgment, of the mercies of the Lord; to more acute feelings of their own misery: who are not more roused by all the touching accompaniments of this time of grace and propitiation; sinners of this character do not, perhaps, profane the sacrament of penance, but they can lay no claim to the additional graces, accorded at this season, by the church: they receive, perhaps, the ordinary

remission attached to the virtue of this sacrament; but who can say, that they receive those signal relaxations, which are superadded to it by the church, since those graces and indulgences are destined exclusively to solace the bitter grief, to reward the abundant tears and extraordinary fervor of penance.

No, my brethren, if your hearts be not filled with tender and fervent compunction; if the fulness of your sorrow does not correspond with the multitude of your crimes; if the ardor of your love and of your gratitude does not supply the absence of those works of satisfaction, which the weakness of the flesh puts it out of your power to perform; if your dispositions bear no proportion to the greatness of the favor which the church now grants you; if you are not humbled, and, as it were, indignant at your own infirmity and impotency: if you do not feel yourself unworthy of the graces and the indulgence of the church; if you are not sensible that, regard being had to your almost continual abuse of grace, you are a sinner the most deserving of her severity, and the least entitled to her favors; if you are not firmly resolved to use, on your part, every effort to appease the justice of the Almighty, to make every sacri-

fice of which your weakness is capable ; to bear, of the yoke of penance, whatever your strength will permit ; in a word, in your works of satisfaction, to consult faith and penance still more than the infirmity of the flesh, the church excludes you from all share in her bounty. It is in vain that her ministers attempt to pour her graces and favors upon you ; she withholds, or resumes, them, and disavowing their ministry, leaves you but the wretched portion of your own cowardice and tepidity.

Such, my brethren, are the dispositions of faith and of penance, into which you must enter, that you may participate in the graces of the church ; and, without doubt, my brethren, such are your sentiments, and those days of mercy and forgiveness will be for you, days of salvation ; those marks of repentance which you bear to the foot of the altar, will not be in vain ; the penitential terror which is visible on your countenance, is a pledge of change of heart ; those deep impressions of fear and hope, of joy and sadness, are a happy presage of the abundant graces which will be infused into your souls.

Be consoled then, my brethren, since the church opens to you, the treasury of her mer-

cies: approach the altar with confidence: and suffer me, in conclusion, to address you in the language which Esdras once used, in the temple, to the assembled Jews; after he had excited in them the bitterest remorse and the liveliest sentiments of penance, by unfolding to them the prevarications of which they had been guilty; and by promising, in order to console their sorrows, to restore them to the participation of the altar and the sacrifice. *Go*, said this servant of God, *eat fat meats and drink sweet wine . . . . and be not sad*:\* and I, this day repeat to you the same words, my brethren, in circumstances altogether similar: go and feed on that divine banquet which renovates the soul and renders the faint and languishing heart strong and vigorous: you have been already but too long deprived of it, by your fears or your crimes; go and be inebriated with that mysterious wine which is the parent and support of virgins; which causes man to forget the world and all its vanity; which overthrows the sway of worldly reason and substitutes the light of faith, in its stead—a light which raises the holiest transports in the faithful soul: re-

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\* 2. Esdras. c. viii. v. 10.

turn to the altar, from which you have been so long separated : go and be again united to your brethren, partake with them, of the holy mysteries, and enter again into the possession of those rights which you had forfeited by your sins : *Ite comedite pinguia et bibite mulsum.\**

Put off those garments of mourning and sadness : dry up those tears, which have already, flowed in sufficient abundance : the present is not for you, a time of affliction and bitterness, but of gladness and festivity : this is the day on which, all the graces of heaven descend upon the earth, to purify your soul, and restore to it again, its first justice : *Et nolite contristari, quia sanctus dies Domini est.†*

Never forget this happy day : let the joy of a being restored to the favor of the God of your fathers, be to you a new source of courage and of strength : let this termination of the wretchedness of your worldly life, and of the anxieties and miseries caused by your passions ; let the terrible remorse of conscience which are now appeased, and the troubles of iniquity which are changed into a sweet and delightful peace ; let the pleasures of the world which

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\*2. Esdras. c. viii. v. 10.

† Ibid.

are replaced by the participation of the holy mysteries, by the friendship of God and the consolations of his grace; let this new and happy state on which you are going to enter, console all the past sighs and bitterness of your penance: *Gaudium enim Domini est fortitudo nostra.*\*

Let the joys of sinners be to you, for the future, insipid; let the crimes over which you have wept, present themselves no more, except to excite you to further tears: to the last, conceal in your heart the treasure which you are going to receive, that the enemy may not snatch it away; be ever mindful of the favor of your present reconciliation; and bear into the presence of Jesus Christ, in the terrible day of vengeance, his blood, which the church now imparts to you, that in the tremendous judgment, it may be the price of your iniquities, the abolition of your debts, the everlasting pledge of your redemption and immortality.—*Amen.*

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\*2. Esdras. c. viii. v. 10.

**A DISCOURSE**

ON

**THE GOOD EXAMPLE WHICH PASTORS  
ARE BOUND TO GIVE THEIR FLOCKS.**

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Exemplum esto fidelium in verbo, in conversatione,  
in charitate, in fide, in castitate.

*Be thou an example of the faithful in word, in con-  
versation, in charity, in faith, in chastity.*

1. TIMOTHY. chap. iv. ver. 12.

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**T**HE sacred power, my brethren, which elevates us above the rest of the faithful, is not a power of domination, but of charity. We are not placed over the people as imperious masters, who seek only to make them feel their authority, but as charitable guides whom the church places at their head, to go before, and show them the ways of salvation: *Neque ut dominantes in cleris*



*sed forma facti gregis ex animo.\** It is chiefly, in being the first to tread these paths ourselves, and in animating the faithful to advance by our example, that we fulfil the august character of chiefs and conductors of the people of God. Jesus Christ himself did not descend from his glory, to find it again among men; he came on earth only to be our example; and what example, my brethren? of care, of labor, of meekness, of charity, of humiliation, of suffering: *Exemplum dedi vobis;*† and he has left us in his place, only that we might continue to be an example to the rest of men: *Ut quemadmodum ego feci vobis, ita et vos faciatis.*

Example is then, the first duty of our calling: without it, our functions either become useless, or they are an occasion of scandal and of fall to the people, whom the Lord, in his wrath, has consigned to our care.

### FIRST REFLECTION.

I say, first, that all the functions of a Pastor or of a Priest who does not edify, become unprofitable. Not that I am ignorant, my brethren, that the virtue of the sacraments does

\* 1. Peter. c. v. ver. 3.

† John. c. xiii. v. 15.

not depend on the virtue of their minister. I know that the graces, of which they are the channels, flow infallibly and without interruption, from the blood of Jesus Christ, and not from the ministry of man. Alas! my brethren, the inestimable benefits of God to his church, would be slender and uncertain indeed, had he made them depend on the fidelity of his ministers, or could our frailties arrest or suspend their course.

But, I say, that the piety, the instructions, the prayers of a faithful pastor prepare the flock to receive the graces of the church, with the dispositions to which the fruit of those graces is attached; whereas, a pastor who edifies not his people, dispenses, indeed, the same treasures and the same graces, but they fall upon an ungrateful soil, upon hearts, which not only are badly prepared for their reception, but which his example has even closed up against all the influence of grace: he sows, and reaps not; he waters, and there is no increase, and the sacred field committed to his care and cultivation, is struck with malediction and sterility. I say, that sinners quit his tribunal with as little compunction for their disorders, as he seems to feel for his own. I say, that they approach

the holy table, with the same irreverence, the same weaknesses, and consequently, with as little fruit, as they see himself do every day: I say, that the word of truth in his mouth, should he take the trouble of announcing it, will be as the sounding brass, and that his instructions must find his auditors quite determined not to reduce them to practice, but to disregard and despise them: I say, that if he undertake to console the wretched and afflicted, he has not the gift of assuaging those sorrows which religion alone can soften, nor of arresting those tears which the piety alone of the consoler, can hinder to flow: if he exhorts the dying, alas! his very presence reminds them of the world rather than of eternity, inspires them with the love of the present life much more than with the expectation or desire of that life which is not to end: I say, in fine, that his ministry is a frightful void, his church a dry and barren field which produces nothing but briars and thorns, himself an evaporated salt, incapable of preserving from corruption, and unprofitable for all those uses, for which it was, originally designed. What a misfortune to that flock, to which God in his wrath has given such a pastor! what a misfortune still greater, if this

flock should, under his guidance, be visited with those other passing calamities with which God sometimes afflicts men, such as storms, inundations, sterility, famine; and above all, what a misfortune if it does not feel that most lasting and terrible scourge with which God can strike a people, which is, to leave them to be conducted by a bad Priest.

And what is here still more lamentable, my brethren, is, that a Priest of this character, loving neither study, nor prayer, nor retirement, is obliged to dissipate himself continually abroad; and the more he shows himself to his people, the more useless he becomes in their regard; the more he shows himself, the more manifest does he render his worthlessness, and the more does he destroy the little of fruit, which his functions might otherwise produce. For, my brethren, what benefit can his people draw from his presence and conversation? what do they see in beholding him? they see nothing that bears them towards God, nothing to sustain their faith, nothing to remind them of the duties of religion, nothing to undeceive them, or guard them against the errors and prejudices which the passions have scattered through the world, and which damn the greater part of christians:

on the contrary, they behold every thing that can render them indifferent to salvation and estrange them from God, every thing to countenance their disorders, every thing to confirm them in error, every thing to stifle the first alarms of conscience, and harden them in guilt: in a word, the presence of a pastor who holds, in their regard, the place of Jesus Christ, is not for them a religious spectacle, but an object as common and as profane, as any other of the age.

Consider on the other hand, my brethren, the inestimable good which the example, and even the presence, of a holy pastor, effects in a parish. If he but appear, his life and his morals are a continual lesson to his people: there passes not a day, in which this living and venerable example, arrests not some sinner on the brink of guilt, inspires not some other with desires of conversion, makes not the libertine blush in secret, and hide at least the scandal of his vices, if it fail of inducing him to correct his irregular life: no day in which it sustains not, feeble and wavering souls, consoles not the piety of the just, and makes not virtue be respected even by those who live in crime. How boundless the good, my brethren,

which we could produce, were we but faithful to our vocation! and how terrible the account which the Sovereign Pastor will demand of us, if our licentious or unclerical morals oppose an obstacle to the growth of those abundant fruits, which he expected from our priesthood, and which a holy pastor would have matured to perfection, in our place. Let us often call to mind this terrible and humiliating truth: were a virtuous pastor set over the people, to whom I am a guide, and amongst whom, my ministry has hitherto operated no change for the better, no renovation of piety, how many souls would he not have gained to Jesus Christ? how many crimes would he not have prevented? how many inveterate sores would he not have healed? how many consciences led astray and tranquil in their errors, would he not have enlightened? how many souls, on the verge of the precipice, would he not have rescued from destruction? what glorious spoils, wrested from the prince of the world, would he not, on quitting this life, have presented at the throne of the Lamb? with what a holy confidence would he not have appeared at the bar of heaven, accompanied by those souls which would have been indebted to him for their salvation, and

which he would have offered to Christ Jesus, to whom they belonged by so many titles? It is thus that a holy pastor, in our place, would have ascended to heaven, and appeared in the presence of the Lord, surrounded by the trophies of his conquests over the powers of darkness, and leading, in triumph, the souls which he had delivered from the captivity of sin : *Expolians principatus et potestates, ascendens in cælum captivam duxit captivitatem.*

But, alas ! how shall the worthless pastor appear before the *Most High*, he whose example far from edifying his people, has, as we shall quickly see, but increased their disorders. How shall he appear in the presence of his Judge, he, without confidence or succour, alone, humbled, confounded, clothed with a sacred character which will then be turned into a dreadful title of condemnation ? And if he be followed by those souls that have been confided to his care, they will be souls which he had neglected ; souls that will cry aloud for justice against him, whilst they represent at the tribunal of the sovereign Judge, that had he, in his mercy, sent them a Priest according to his own heart, a pastor who would himself have been their model and their guide, they

would, like *Tyre* and *Sidon*, have long since, done penance in sack-cloth and ashes.

Thus, my brethren, as you already perceive, it is, of itself, a grievous misfortune that a pastor, failing to edify his flock by his example, does by that alone, render his functions useless in their regard: it is, as Saint Gregory says, a lamentable evil, that combating by his morals, the truths which he announces, he deprives them of their force and influence on the minds of his people; and that the preaching of the gospel, the principal means established by God for the salvation of the just and the conversion of sinners, becomes, in his mouth, utterly unprofitable to all those who hear him: it is a lamentable evil, that all the other aids of religion, of which he is the dispenser, lose, in his worthless hands, all that could render them available and salutary to a disorderly and necessitous people.

#### SECOND REFLECTION.

But, this is only the beginning of the misfortunes and calamities of this unfortunate people: *Initium dolorum hæc.*\* Not only does the ex-

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\* Mark. c. xiii. v. 8.



ample of this unedifying pastor render all his functions unprofitable to his people, but it becomes moreover, according to the Prophet Osee, a perpetual and almost inevitable occasion of transgression and ruin to this ill-fated flock: *Propheta laqueus ruinæ*.\* Not only is he a useless labourer in the field of Jesus Christ, but he destroys, he ravages, he makes it the habitation of devils: not only is he of no advantage to the flock, but he infects and poisons it, and spreads an odor of death through the fold. For, in good earnest, my brethren, what must be the impression made on a rude and simple people, by the unedifying life of a pastor whom it has always under its eyes? Alas! where can this wretched people, buried in fastnesses and solitudes, and, as it were, cut off from society, discover the beauties of religion and the duties which she imposes, if the very man who is by his state, charged with the interests of virtue among them, charged to announce, to protect, and inspire it, becomes by his morals an object of seduction and a model of vice? Ignorance and corruption, already too far justify to the people, their own disorders, and a faithful pas-

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\*Osee. c. ix. v. 8.

tor has the bitter regret of beholding his cares, his instructions, his example, long unavailing, against the force of their unfortunate prejudices : what remedy can remain for them when the unfaithful pastor justifies them by his own conduct? They expected from him an example of integrity, of charity, of modesty, of temperance ; they regarded him as a pious and severe  *censor*, incapable of tolerating amongst them, public disorders opposed to these virtues ; they were devising how to conceal them from his sight, and how to hide themselves whilst they indulged in them, that they might not awaken his zeal and expose themselves to his just indignation : what a welcome surprise to find him not only a tranquil spectator, but a public approver, and by his morals, even an accomplice in their guilt! what traces of religion or piety can then remain amongst this people? crime exhibits itself without disguise, and is indulged without scruple : all persuade themselves that there can be no danger in following a guide who knows more than themselves, and who is better instructed than they can be, in what religion forbids or commands ; and thus all anxiety ceases, and every remorse of conscience subsides into security, before this illusive and fatal persua-

sion. This unfaithful pastor is a living and continual apology for vice ; and if such be the corruption of man, that the virtuous minister who is perpetually struggling against it, cannot arrest its course, what must be the overflow of crime and depravity, over a parish, where the example of the vicious pastor but adds to the inundation ?

Alas! my brethren, if our people are oftentimes scandalized at our most innocent actions ; if they are more severe, more clear-sighted, more censorious in our regard, than towards the rest of men ; if we are frequently obliged to refrain from the most lawful and indifferent things, through fear of offending their weakness ; if whatever is not virtue in us, appears crime to them ; if we seem to them, guilty, when we are not saints in their eyes ; if the innocent repasts of Jesus Christ, made him pass in the mind of the Jews for a man addicted to wine and good living ; if that charity, which made him converse with men, loaded with crimes and extortions, to call them to repentance, obtained for him, from the Pharisees, the unjust title of friend of publicans and sinners ; if even innocence and piety are not beyond the reach of malicious suspicions ; and if

the people, in order to justify to themselves their own vices, endeavour to discover in the most virtuous and irreproachable conduct of the clergy, the criminal motives of avarice, of pride, of animosity; what must be their scandal at the suspicious familiarity, the public and criminal connexions, the gluttony, intemperance and sordid avarice of a bad Priest? If the unjust suspicions which they form of the virtue of a good pastor, confirm them in vice and render all his instructions unprofitable to them; what weight can the word of life have in the mouth of a scandalous Priest? not only is it without effect, but it becomes contemptible; it loses not only its force, but even its divine truth; and, instead of touching and converting sinners, disgusts and hardens them, and far from strengthening their faith and quickening their piety, renders them impious and incredulous. A rude and corrupt people regard, as so many fables, those truths and maxims announced by a Priest, who despises them in his own conduct: they persuade themselves that the pastor himself disregards them, and that his office, which obliges him to announce them, is a function of mere ceremony, a mummery set up to deceive and frighten the simple and the ignorant: they direct their attention to the morals and the con-

duct of their pastor; this is their religion and their gospel; his guilt is an argument to which there can be no reply, and which therefore decides them at once: after this, his exhortations appear to them as the idle harangues of the stage; they make a mockery of the pastor and of his ministry; they speak of him as of a contemptible mountebank, who has indeed performed his part well; and thus their hearts become every day more callous, their vices more impudent, and thus they are confirmed in their gross and brutal manner of thinking and speaking of whatever is most exalted and venerable, in religion itself. The altar, defiled by this scandalous pastor, seems to them not more sacred, nor more venerable than the pulpit which he dishonours: the whole economy of religion they regard as a human invention, devised for the sole interest of those who are its ministers, and who cull from its maxims, merely what accommodates themselves, and elevates them to consideration and honors.

These blasphemies shock you, my brethren, but it is we ourselves that occasion them, when the holiness of our lives corresponds not with the sanctity of our character. It is owing to the scandals alone, given by bad Priests, that

religion fails, and that impiety increases among the people: *Per vos nomen Dei blasphematur inter gentes.*\* The infidels of the age, the most hardened and dissolute sinners, assign no other cause for the tranquillity which they enjoy in their deplorable state, no other apology for their vices than the example of a bad Priest. This, as you well know, is the string on which an impious and depraved world never ceases to harp; and a vice so universal, so dishonouring to our office, so afflicting to faithful ministers, should make us sensible of the immense and terrible consequences that flow from the unedifying life of a pastor of the church. Alas! there is, perhaps, no crime committed among men which has not its origin in this fatal source: perhaps all those unfortunate souls who have heretofore belonged to the fold, and who are now in torments, separated for ever from God, owe their eternal misery to the scandalous disorders and cursed example of the pastors with whom they lived: perhaps, (and I say it with grief and terror,) perhaps, there are some in those dungeons of horror who can trace their damnation even to our own bad example. All those torrents of depravity and crime which

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\* Rom. c. ii. v. 24.

inundate and overwhelm the people of God, have their origin, says a Prophet, in the very depths of the sanctuary. And, my brethren, the mercies of the Lord must be great and peculiar towards a parish, conducted by a scandalous Priest, and the power of his arm must be visibly displayed in its regard, when a single soul is saved from the destructive contagion, or outlives the deadly influence of his wicked example.

Alas, my brethren, complaints are, sometimes, made, that those who are here entrusted with the education of the clergy, and with the scrutiny of their vocation, use too much severity in the examination of those, whom they present for holy orders! But, my brethren, if you could fully comprehend the frightful effects that result from the disorders and the example of a bad Priest; if the veil that conceals the secrets of conscience could be raised; if the mystery of iniquity which is done in secret, could be uncovered here on earth; how many crimes and blasphemies should we see, how much mockery and contempt, how many derisions and sacrileges against religion! how many timid sinners confirmed in guilt! how many souls born with sentiments of virtue, plunged into the abyss of vice! how many weakly and imperfect just, again dragged back into their first disorders!

how many innocent hearts poisoned in the morning of life! how many impious doubts raised against the sanctity of Christ's doctrine, and against the most sacred duties which it imposes! how many horrible maxims of irreligion and libertinism! all these monsters, nay, and so many others which the eye has never beheld, and which the tongue could not name without horror, we should see springing from this fatal source and scattering infection and death around. What precautions then can be deemed too great, when there is question of preserving the church from the intrusion of ministers whom God rejects, and who are, always, the unfortunate authors of these terrible misfortunes? Alas! my brethren, could you wish that earthly and frivolous considerations should, with us, bear down such grand and serious interests, or that we should suffer a false piety to prevail against the inevitable loss of so many souls, which the selection of a bad Priest, drags with himself into eternal perdition? and would we not deserve all the maledictions of heaven, if the first source of these afflicting scandals and of all the evils of the church, were to be found in our weak and fatal condescension, and in our base attention to the solicitations of flesh and blood.



No: my brethren, such is the destiny of a Priest, that raised from the earth by the pre-eminence of his dignity, he must, like Jesus Christ, the true serpent of brass, draw all upwards to himself, or like the dragon mentioned in the Apocalypse, precipitate into the abyss, both himself and the stars attached to him, that is to say, all the souls confided to his ministry. For a pastor there is no middle course: if he does not edify, he scandalizes; if he does not vivify, he kills; if his morals are not a model of virtue, they are a stumbling block of vice; if his whole conduct does not bespeak and breathe piety, it inspires, it authorizes and multiplies sin. Yet, the ministry, which charges us with the care of souls, and places us over a portion of Christ's flock, is a subject of terror to none of us; we desire and solicit it; and rejoice when we have secured it; we employ, for the obtaining of it, means condemned by the laws of the church, for all seeking, and even all desire of it, are contrary to her spirit, and she has, always, regarded them as intrusive and sacrilegious. Whoever is called by himself is an intruder, and has not entered by the door: there are none truly called, save those who are called by the church, and the surest mark of her vocation, is a holy fear of being crushed to the

earth under the heavy burden which she imposes on their shoulders. Alas! my brethren, we look upon the places of the ministry as earthly and temporal advantages; we desire them, as situations which ensure a fixed and easy competency, and as the final term of our ambitious and subordinate labors. We forget, or do not heed, the engagements, into which we enter, or the obligations which we contract towards the flock which the church commits to our solicitude. We become, as it were, security, for the salvation of all the souls whom Christ puts into our hands: if a single one perish, it will be for us to prove to him, that it was not through our want of care, of instruction, of example, or of prayer, that this soul, which he had confided to us in trust, was miserably lost. We hold his place amongst the flock, and shall we be able to say to him, as he said to his Father, that of those whom he gave us, one has not perished through our fault?

Permit me then, my brethren, in conclusion, to address you, in the words of the Apostle: *Itaque, fratres mei delecti stabiles estote et immobiles:*\* for such is the true nature of the

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\* 1. Cor. c. xv. v. 58.

case, that your example must decide on the success of your functions, on the entire fruit of your ministry, on the salvation of your people and of yourselves. You, in particular, my brethren, who fulfil with edification, the duties of your calling, never relax from your first fervor: *stabiles estote et immobiles*: let not the negligence and misconduct of some among your brethren, shake the firmness of your faith, nor cool your zeal, nor abate your exactness in the discharge of your ministry: let not the abuses upheld, oftentimes, by the conduct of the greater number of your clerical brethren, ever prevail with you, over the sacred laws that condemn them. Let not tepidity, dissipation, carelessness, and that attachment to perishable things, which almost every where, infects the ministry, make you forget the sanctity of your state; but, on the contrary, recal it incessantly to your mind, and let the abuses, of which you are the witnesses, but render your obligations the more present to you, the more dear, and the more respectable. Instead of looking around you, where you, too frequently, behold in the conduct of your brethren, subjects of seduction or of grief, direct your eyes, unceasingly, towards those holy and illustrious men, who first preached Jesus Christ in this land; those anci-

ent and venerable models of priestly excellence, pastors whose zeal, labor and sanctity, we are still far from daring to flatter ourselves that we shall ever be able to attain: *Itaque fratres mei stabiles estote et immobiles, abundantes in opere Domini semper.* Never, at any period of your life, never regard your office as the happy term of your labor, as a place of honourable repose; rather be mindful, that you cannot lose a moment in which you might not have gained a soul to Jesus Christ: be not satisfied with the discharging those public and ordinary functions of the ministry, by the performance of which the pastor too often imagines that he has done all that duty required; as long as you shall see among your people, sinners to be converted, abuses to be corrected, wounds to be healed, and weak to be supported, never think that you have fully acquitted yourself of your obligations: let zeal and charity impose cares on you, and urge you to actions which the mere letter of the law may not seem to prescribe, but which its spirit exacts: never measure your pastoral solicitude by common rules, but by the necessities of the flock which God has confided to your care: *Abundantes in opere Domini semper.* Let not age itself, nor the long discharge of those functions in which you

have grown old, appear to you a lawful reason for giving up the combat, and for resigning yourself, at last, to that repose, to which so many years of labor would seem to entitle you: rather renew your youth like the eagle; charity gives that strength, which nature seems to refuse; the precious remnant of your life is honourable to the ministry: be the *Eleazers* of the new law, nor let old age itself become a motive for indulging yourselves in any thing unworthy of a long life spent in the service of religion, or an example of remissness and neglect to young pastors who, not having witnessed your past fidelity, would take your present relaxation as the model of their conduct: *Abundantes in opere Domini semper*. Thus the nearer you advance to the goal, the more should your zeal be enkindled: you and I, my brethren, are rapidly approaching the moment that will consummate our course: what a misfortune then, if on the point of arriving at it, our strength and our courage should fail, and if, by a premature repose, we should lose the entire fruit of a life honourably spent in the virtuous cares and assiduous labors of the christian priesthood! *Amen*.

## A DISCOURSE

TO CHILDREN BEFORE CONFIRMATION.

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**MY DEAR CHILDREN:** the sacrament which you are going to receive may be considered as the perfection of your baptism: it is a sacrament of strength and of the fulness of the Holy Ghost. By baptism you became children of God, but by confirmation you will become perfect men; that is to say, this sacrament will produce on you, the same effects which it formerly produced on the first christians, if you receive it with the same dispositions.

First, they received with it, the gift of tongues and the power of miracles. Alas! my dear children, we do not expect that it will operate those wonders on you: those external gifts have become unnecessary for the church, and the faith does not now stand in need of those great testimonies. But what we have a right to expect is, that the Holy Ghost which you

are going to receive, will make you speak the language of God and of virtue, and that, for the future, all your conversations will be pious and holy ; that you will carefully avoid the profane discourse of the world, and all language of anger, of detraction, of untruth, of indecency and lewdness. You will thus speak a new language, and one that is unknown to the children of the world ; you will show that the Holy Ghost abides, and speaks, in you, and that if you have not received the gift of tongues, you have received one more excellent, which is the gift of making a holy use of your own.

In the second place, after the first christians had received the sacrament of the imposition of hands, which is that of confirmation, they became stronger in the faith, more courageous in confessing Jesus Christ, more intrepid before their persecutors and tyrants. You have no longer persecutors to dread, my dear children ; the time of suffering and martyrdom is past, and princes and magistrates now carry, in defence of the faith, that sword, which was formerly employed in combating it and in exterminating its disciples.

But you have other combats to maintain, even in the bosom of the church : the first against the world ; the second against yourselves ; and

that courage and firmness which are necessary to enable you to conquer, ought to be the visible fruit of this sacrament. First, my dear children, you have to combat the world: you will find in it, men of corrupt faith and vicious morals, who will endeavour to shake yours, who will speak the language of debauchery and impiety. Oppose to such discourses and attacks, a courage worthy of soldiers of Jesus Christ; defend the interests and the glory of your master, and confound the impious wretch, by the very horror which you will manifest, for his impiety. You would not suffer an enemy or a fool, to speak insultingly of your father, before you; and how can you suffer a profane wretch to outrage in your presence, that God from whom you derive your being; who is your first Father and who will be your eternal reward?

You will also find in the world, men who will turn piety into ridicule; who will deride the practices of religion, and stigmatize as a weakness, the observance of the duties which it imposes. After you shall have received the sacrament of courage and strength, my dear children, you will no longer dread those revilers of piety and virtue. If among those of your own age, there should be some found so cor-



rupt as to mock those who are faithful to God, their sinful railleries will not affect you; you will pity their blindness, and shame their folly, by boldly confessing Jesus Christ: you will despise that human respect, which often prevents cowardly christians from openly professing their faith and their piety before men, who wickedly and madly deride both: you will fear God, and disregard the censure and scorn of men. In fine, you will see every vice authorized by example, in the world; and you will, perhaps, find rocks even among your own relations and friends; their disorderly lives will be for you, a perpetual temptation to sin: to whatever side you turn, you will behold vice applauded and the worst passions defended and justified: you need courage, my dear children, to resist these bad examples; they are the tyrants and persecutors, whom you have to withstand, and whom the grace of confirmation, if you continue faithful to it, will give you strength to overcome. Remember, my dear children, that what is approved by the multitude, is almost always condemned by the law of God; that whoever has no other justification than the practice of the world, is equally criminal as the world; that to be a true christian, it is necessary to be the image of Jesus Christ, and

that you cannot resemble him, if you live according to the world.

In fine, the second combat which you will have to maintain, one more terrible and more dangerous than the first, will be against yourselves. Alas! my dear children, your passions will grow with your years: this fund of corruption, which we bear within us, will increase from day to day: perhaps it has already burst forth in you, even before the time of its usual overflow: perhaps the grace and beauty of innocence have already perished; perhaps you have already stained the white robe of modesty and justice, with which baptism had clothed your soul. If the beginning has been so corrupt, judge, my dear children, what will be the sequel? if the spring be already poisoned, what will be the whole current of your life? if your young and feeble passions are already stronger than you, what will become of you, when they shall attain their highest degree of strength?

Resist then, my dear children, in the beginning; this should be the effect of the sacrament of confirmation, which you now receive from the church: habituate yourselves to vanquish your passions, in your early years; and these first efforts will draw down on you, abundant graces from heaven, during the entire course of

your lives. God will be more careful to preserve you; you will live in the midst of the world without being defiled by its corruption; you will resemble the three Hebrew children, whom the Lord preserved in the flaming furnace at Babylon, because their first years had been agreeable in his sight. All depends, my dear children, on beginning well: if your youth be wise and regular, virtue and the fear of God will be your companions in every stage of your life; if you sow in benediction, you will reap also abundant benedictions: these pure first-fruits of your life will sanctify its whole tenor; God will accept them as the happy pledge of your salvation, and as the first offering of a victim, which belongs to him, and which your piety consecrates to his service. But should you be so unfortunate as to stray from your first paths, and to make no use of that grace of strength and courage, which you are going to receive; you will stumble at every step which you will take hereafter. The devil, seeing you despoiled of that grace of sanctity, which you received at your baptism, and of that grace of fortitude which you receive to-day, will find nothing in you that can resist his attacks: you will become the sport of his seductions and of your own weaknesses: you will advance in

crime, in proportion as you advance in years ; you had begun by forgetting God, and you will end by despising and hating his religion. He that soweth in the flesh, says the Apostle, of the flesh also shall reap corruption :\* if the root be vitiated, the shoots which spring from it, cannot be sound : you will prepare for yourself, criminal and miserable days, a troubled life of passion and remorse, an old age sad, disconsolate, and abandoned by heaven. Happy, my dear children, is he, who carries the yoke of the Lord from his childhood : God will pour out his blessings upon him ; his passions checked in their beginning, will be more tame, virtue will cost him less, his inclinations which were early bent towards his duty, will afterwards take that direction, of themselves ; his days will be tranquil and happy, his life virtuous, his old age honourable ; and his death corresponding to his life, will be but a passage to a blessed immortality.—*Amen.*

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\* Galat. c. vi. v. 8.



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