Bede's Genuine Homilies

The Venerable Bede (AD 673–735)

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FIRST BOOK. -- GENUINE HOMILIES. FIRST HOMILY. ON THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED MARY. LUKE I. At that time, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary, etc. The beginning of our redemption, dearest brothers, is commended to us in today's reading of the holy Gospel, which narrates the angel sent by God from heaven to the Virgin, to proclaim the new birth of the Son of God in the flesh, through which we, casting aside harmful oldness, might be renewed and counted among the Sons of God. Therefore, that we may be worthy to attain the gifts of the promised salvation, let us diligently endeavor to hear the beginnings thereof with attentive ears. It says, "The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph." Indeed, a fitting beginning for human restoration, that an angel was sent by God to the virgin consecrated by divine birth, because the first cause of human perdition was when the serpent was sent by the devil to deceive the woman with the spirit of pride: indeed, the devil himself came in the serpent, who stripped the human race of the glory of immortality by deceiving the first parents. Therefore, as death entered through a woman, fittingly also life returns through a woman. The former, seduced by the devil through the serpent, offered the taste of death to the man; the latter, instructed by God through the angel, brought forth the author of salvation to the world.

Therefore, the angel Gabriel was sent by God. However, we rarely read that angels appearing to humans are designated by name. But whenever that happens, it is indeed so that even by the name itself they may insinuate what they come to minister. For Gabriel means the power of God. And rightly does he shine forth by such a name, because he bears testimony to God about to be born in the flesh. Concerning whom the Prophet says in the Psalm: "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle" (Ps. 24). Namely, that battle in which he came to conquer the aerial powers and to deliver the world from their tyranny.

To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. What is said of the house of David pertains not only to Joseph, but also to Mary. For it was commanded by the law that each should take a wife from his own

tribe and family, as also the Apostle attests, who, writing to Timothy, says: "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel" (II Tim. II). For truly Christ was born of the seed of David, because His mother's incorrupt origin descended truly from the stock of David. But why did the Lord choose to be conceived and born not from a simple virgin, but from one espoused to a man? Many reasonable causes are advanced by the fathers, among which the greatest is that she might not be condemned as guilty of unchastity, if, having no husband, she had given birth to a son: and further, that she might be supported by a husband's assistance in those things which domestic care naturally required. It was fitting, therefore, for the blessed Mary to have a husband, who would be both the most certain witness of her integrity and the most faithful guardian of our Lord and Savior, born of her: and who would offer sacrifices at the temple according to the law for Him, and would take Him to Egypt with His mother and bring Him back when the time of persecution was at hand.

There are many other things, as well, which the fragility of the assumed humanity required to be minstered. Nor did it greatly harm if someone for a time believed Him to be her son, since, after His ascension, with the Apostles preaching and everyone believing publicly that He was born of a virgin, it became clear. Nor should it be overlooked that the blessed mother of God also gave testimony by her very name to her eminent merits. For it is interpreted as "star of the sea. And she herself, as an illustrious star, shone with the grace of a special privilege amid the waves of this fleeting world.

And the angel having entered to her, said: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women. This greeting, as unusual as it was in human custom, was as fitting to the dignity of blessed Mary. Truly she was full of grace, to whom it was granted by divine gift, that she might be the first among women to offer to God the most glorious gift of virginity. Therefore, she rightly deserved to enjoy at once the sight and speech of an angel, who strove to imitate the angelic life. Truly she was full of grace, to whom it was granted to bear Jesus Christ Himself, through whom grace and truth came into being, and afterwards, through the human nature, consecrated all fullness of divinity. Truly also blessed among women was she who, without example of female condition, rejoiced with the honor of motherhood along with the beauty of virginity, and who, as befitted a virgin mother, bore God the Son. When she was troubled after the manner of human frailty by the vision of the angel and the unusual greeting, the same angel soon encouraged her not to be afraid with repeated speech, and as is most accustomed to dispel fear, he called her by her own name as one well-known and familiar, and diligently explained why he called her full of grace.

Do not be afraid, he said, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you will call His name Jesus: He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High. The sequence of words is to be noted carefully, and it is to be impressed upon the heart all the more firmly because it is manifestly evident that in it the whole sum of our redemption consists. For it most manifestly proclaims the Lord

Jesus, that is, our Savior, as both true Son of God the Father and true Son of a human mother. Behold, he said, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son. Acknowledge this true man, having assumed from the virgin's flesh the substance of flesh. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High. Confess Him also as the true God from true God, and the Son of the eternal Father to be always coeternal. But when it is said in future time, He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, let no one understand it in such a way that the Lord Christ did not exist before the birth from the virgin, but rather let us understand this to be said, because the power of the divine majesty which the Son of God had eternally, this same man born in time received, so that there would be one person in two natures of our mediator and Redeemer.

And the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. The throne of David signifies the kingdom of the Israelite people, which David, by the command and assistance of the Lord, governed with faithful devotion in his time. Therefore, the Lord gave our Redeemer the throne of David his father, when He willed that He would be incarnate from the lineage of David, so that the people whom David ruled with temporal authority, He might elevate with spiritual grace to the eternal kingdom, about which the Apostle says: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love (Colossians 1). Hence it is that this same people, prompted by divine instruction, as He was approaching Jerusalem to suffer, joyfully sang in His praise: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel (John 12). And according to another evangelist: Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David (Mark 11). For the time had come when the world would recognize the King who redeemed them by His blood, not only the house of David, but also the entire Church, indeed the Creator and Ruler of all ages. Hence rightly the angel, after saying, And the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, immediately added, And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever.

For Jacob's house refers to the entire Church, which through faith and confession of Christ belongs to the heritage of the patriarchs, whether in those who derived their origin in the flesh from the line of the patriarchs, or in those who, born carnally from other nations, have been reborn in Christ through spiritual washing. In this house, He will indeed reign forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. He reigns in it in the present life, directing the hearts of the elect through faith and His love, and continuously guiding them with protection to receive the rewards of the heavenly retribution. He reigns in the future, when He brings the same ones, after the state of temporal exile is ended, to the dwelling place of the heavenly homeland: in which, always rejoicing in the vision of Him, they delight in doing nothing else than devoting themselves to His praises.

But Mary said to the angel: How will this be, since I do not know a man? How, she said, can it be that I will conceive and bear a son, I who have decided to complete my life in the chastity of virginity? Not, however, as an unbeliever in the words of the angel does she inquire how these things could be fulfilled, but certain that it must be fulfilled what she then heard from the angel, and had previously read was said by the prophet, she asks in

what manner it should be fulfilled: because evidently the prophet who predicted this future event did not say how it could be, but reserved it to be told by the angel.

Then the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born of you will be called holy, the Son of God. The Holy Spirit coming upon the virgin in two ways demonstrated the efficacy of His divine power: because He purified her mind so much, as human fragility permits, from all stain of vice, that she was worthy of the heavenly birth; and in her womb, by His sole operation, created the holy and venerable body of our Redeemer: that is, without any male touch, He formed sacred flesh from the flesh of the unblemished virgin. For He who first plainly called Him the Holy Spirit, also called Him the power of the Most High: according to what the Lord said, when He promised the coming of the same Spirit to His disciples: "And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you: but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24). The power of the Most High overshadowed the blessed Mother of God: because the Holy Spirit, when He filled her heart, tempered all the heat of carnal desire, purified her from temporal desires, and consecrated both her mind and body with heavenly gifts. Therefore, the child to be born of you will be called holy, the Son of God: because what you conceive by the sanctification of the Spirit will be holy.

The birth corresponds to the conception, so that you who conceive as a virgin against the custom of human condition, give birth to the Son of God beyond the measure of human custom. For all men are conceived in iniquity and are born in sins: but as many of us as are predestined by God to eternal life are reborn from water and the Holy Spirit. But our Redeemer alone, who deigned to be incarnate for us, was born holy at once: because He was conceived without iniquity. Indeed, in what is said, "And the power of the Most High will overshadow you," we can understand something deeper about the mystery of the Lord's incarnation. For we say we are overshadowed when, the midday sun burning, we place a tree's middle or any other type of shade between us and the sun, in order to make its heat or light more tolerable for us. Therefore, our Redeemer is not wrongly represented by the light or heat of the sun, who illuminates us with the knowledge of truth and enflames us with love; hence He himself says through the prophet: "But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise" (Malachi 4). The Blessed Virgin received the rays of this very sun when she conceived the Lord. But this same sun, that is, the divinity of our Redeemer, covered itself with the veil of human nature as with some shade, so that the womb of the Virgin could bear Him:

and thus the power of the Most High overshadowed her, while the divine power of Christ both filled her with His presence and, so that He could be contained by her, obscured itself with our fragility.

And behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age. Not as though he encourages to faith with examples as an unbeliever, but that she who had already well believed what she heard, might recall greater miracles of the divine dispensation, so that she, a virgin about to bear the Lord, would also know that the precursor of the Lord would

be born from an old and long barren parent. Nor is it to be wondered at according to history, that Elizabeth is called the cousin of Mary, since it is narrated above that she is of the house of David, and that woman is said to be descended from the daughters of Aaron. We read that Aaron himself, from the tribe of Judah, from which David sprang, took a wife, namely Elizabeth, the daughter of Amminadab, the sister of Naashon, who was the chief of the tribe of Judah in the desert, when they went out of Egypt. Again, when the descendants of David were reigning, we read that the high priest Jehoiada had a wife from the royal tribe, that is, Jehoshabeath, the daughter of king Joram. This Jehoiada was whose son Zachariah, a likewise very holy man, was stoned between the temple and the altar, as even the Lord Himself, mentioning the blessed martyrs, testifies in the Gospel. Hence both tribes, that is, the royal and the priestly, are always proved to be connected by kinship.

However, such a union could also occur in more recent times, given that women were given in marriage from tribe to tribe, so that manifestly the blessed Mother of God, who descended from the royal tribe, would be shown to have kinship with the priestly tribe, which most aptly aligns with heavenly services. For it was fitting that the mediator of God and men, appearing in the world, would have the origin of His flesh from both tribes, since indeed He was to have both the persona of a priest and a king in assumed humanity. Certainly, about His royal power, by which He grants His elect an everlasting kingdom, the present reading of the holy Gospel testifies: because He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end. Moreover, concerning His pontifical dignity, in which for our redemption He deigned to offer the sacrifice of His flesh, the Prophet bears witness, who says: Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm CX). Having received so great a grace, let us see in what height of humility the blessed Mary persists.

Behold, she says, the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word. Indeed, she holds great constancy of humility, who, while she is chosen as the mother of her Creator, calls herself his handmaid. She is proclaimed blessed among women by the angelic oracle, yet the mysteries of our redemption are still unknown to other mortals. However, she does not exalt herself singularly due to the uniqueness of her distinguished merit, but rather, mindful in all things of her condition and divine condescension, she humbly joins herself to the company of the handmaids of Christ. She devotes herself and performs what is commanded, saying: Let it be done to me according to your word. Let it be done that the Holy Spirit may come upon me and make me worthy of heavenly mysteries. Let it be done that the Son of God may take on the form of human substance in my womb and proceed as a bridegroom from his chamber for the redemption of the world. Following, as best we can, the voice and mind of her, dearest brothers, let us recall in all our actions and movements that we are servants of Christ. Let us ever commit all the members of our body to his service, and direct the whole attention of our mind to fulfill his will. Thus, gratefully acknowledging the gifts we have received, let us render thanks rightly, so that we may be deemed worthy to receive greater things.

Let us pray diligently with the blessed Mother of God that it may be done to us according to his word, that very word, whereby he, expounding the reason for his incarnation, says: For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John III). Nor should we doubt that he will deign to hear us more quickly as we cry out from the depths, for it was for our sake, even when we did not yet know him, that Jesus Christ our Lord deigned to descend into this deep valley of tears, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY II. ON THE FEAST OF THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED MARY. LUKE I. At that time, Mary arose and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah, and entered into the house of Zacharias, and greeted Elizabeth, etc.

The reading which we have heard from the holy Gospel proclaims to us the venerable beginnings of our redemption, and commends to us always the salutary remedies of imitable humility. For since the human race, touched by the pestilence of pride, had perished, it was fitting that immediately the first times of incipient salvation should foretell the medicine of humility by which it would be healed. And because through the recklessness of the deceived woman death had entered into the world, it was suitable that, as a sign of returning life, women should anticipate one another with the services of devoted humility and piety. Therefore, the blessed Mother of God shows us the path to the loftiness of the heavenly homeland by the example of humility, no less venerable for religion than for chastity. Indeed, the glory of a virginal and undefiled body hints at what the life of the heavenly city, to which we aspire, is like, where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God in heaven, and indicates the extraordinary strength of mind by which we ought to attain it.

For, as we learned from the preceding reading of the holy Gospel, after she was deemed worthy to be elevated by an angelic vision and address, after she learned that she was to bear a divine child, she did not lift herself up with pride as if due to heavenly gifts, but rather fixed her mind on the path of humility, so as to be more and more suited to divine gifts, responding to the archangel announcing to her: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to your word. But as we heard from today's reading, she also took care to show the same humility to people as she had displayed to the angel, and what is of greater virtue, even to those of lower rank. For who does not know that a virgin consecrated to God holds a higher rank than a woman devoted to God? Who doubts that the mother of the eternal King is to be preferred by right to the mother of a soldier? Nevertheless, she, mindful of the Scripture commanding, "The greater you are, humble yourself in all things" (Ecclus. 3), soon after the angel who spoke to her returned to heavenly matters, she arose and went into the hill country, bearing God in her womb, seeking the dwellings and conversations of the servants of God. And fittingly after the vision of the angel, she ascended into the hill country, which, having tasted the sweetness of the heavenly citizens, transferred herself to the heights of virtues with steps of humility.

Therefore, she enters the house of Zechariah and Elizabeth, whom she knew was to bear the servant and forerunner of the Lord, greets them, not as doubting the oracle she had received, but as one who would congratulate on the gift, which she had learned her fellow servant had received: not to test the word of the angel by the testimony of a woman, but that a young virgin should diligently offer her services to a woman advanced in age.

But when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. As the blessed Mary opened her mouth to greet, Elizabeth was immediately filled with the Holy Spirit, and John too was filled. Both being taught by the same Spirit, Elizabeth recognized who was greeting her and venerated with proper blessing as the mother of her Lord; John understood that it was the Lord himself who was carried in the womb of the virgin. And because his tongue was not yet able, he greeted with a rejoicing heart and indicated with the signs he could, the devotion and willingness with which he would fulfill his role as forerunner even before he was born at the coming of the Lord. For the time was at hand to fulfill the angel's word which had said: That he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb (Luke 1).

Elizabeth was therefore filled with the Holy Spirit, and exclaimed with a loud voice. Rightly with a loud voice, because she recognized the great gifts of God; rightly with a loud voice, because she felt that he who is known to be present everywhere was also physically present. For the loud voice is to be understood not so much as clamorous, but as devout. For she, who was burning with the fullness of the Holy Spirit, could not praise the Lord with a small voice of devotion: she who carried in her womb the one than whom no one born of women is greater. And she rejoiced that he had come, who conceived from the flesh of the virgin mother would be called the Son of the Most High and would be.

He exclaimed and said: Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Not only blessed among women, but among the blessed women, distinguished by a special greater blessing. Blessed is the fruit of your womb. He is not blessed merely in the general manner of saints, but as the Apostle says: Whose fathers, and of whom Christ came according to the flesh, who is over all God blessed forever (Rom. IX). The Psalmist also bears witness to His birth with mystical speech, saying: Indeed the Lord will bestow kindness, and our land will yield its fruit (Ps. LXXXIV). For the Lord bestowed kindness because He purposed to free the human race from the guilt of transgression through His only begotten: He bestowed kindness when He consecrated the temple of the virginal womb for its entry by the grace of the Holy Spirit. And our land yielded its fruit, for the same virgin who had a body from the earth, gave birth to a Son who was indeed divine and coequal with God the Father in divinity, but consubstantial with her in the reality of flesh. Regarding this, and foreseeing the time of human redemption, Isaiah says: In that day the branch of the Lord will be in majesty and glory, and the fruit of the earth will be exalted (Is. IV). For the branch of the Lord was in majesty and glory when the eternal Son of God, appearing temporally in flesh, shined brightly with the greatness of heavenly virtues upon the world.

The fruit of the earth was also exalted when the flesh, which God had taken from our nature to be mortal, was raised to the heavens, made immortal by the power of the resurrection. Properly it is said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. For she is incomparably blessed, who received the glory of the divine offspring, and preserved the crown of integrity. Blessed are you among women, through whose virginal birth the curse of the first mother among the offspring of women was excluded. Blessed is the fruit of your womb, through whom we have received the fruit both of incorruption and of the heavenly inheritance which we had lost in Adam. And truly and singularly blessed is He who, unlike us who receive the grace of blessing from the Lord after we are born, was blessed Himself to save the world, He who came in the name of the Lord.

And how is it to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? O how great in the mind of the prophetess is humility, how true is the word of the Lord which he spoke: Upon whom will my Spirit rest, if not upon the humble and quiet and one who trembles at my words? (Isa. LXVI.) Indeed the mother of the Lord, who had come to her, was soon recognized by her as she saw her: but finding no such merit in herself that she might be worthy to be visited by such a great guest, she said, "How is it to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" because certainly the same Spirit, who granted her the gift of prophecy, equally bestowed the gift of humility. Filled with the prophetic spirit, she understood that the mother of the Savior had come to her, but being circumspect with the spirit of humility, she deemed herself less worthy of his coming.

Behold, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the infant leaped for joy in my womb. Elizabeth understood, by the same Spirit with which she was filled revealing, what that exultation of her infant signified, that namely the mother of him of whom he would be the precursor and herald had arrived. And how wondrous, how swift is the operation of the Holy Spirit! For there is no delay in learning, where the Holy Spirit is the teacher. In one and the same moment, with the greeting voice, the joy of the infant is born, because while the voice reaches the bodily ears, the spiritual power entered the heart of the hearer, and inflamed both the mother and the offspring with the love of the coming Lord. Hence soon afterward, the mother of the preceptor of the Lord took care to openly proclaim to those who were present and listening the things which she had known in secret.

And blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment for those things which were told her from the Lord. For Elizabeth also learned from the Spirit what the angel had spoken to Mary, because she believed the one who immediately evangelized, that divine power was working such that everything would be fulfilled without any doubt. And in a miraculous way, the same Spirit, when it filled her, also endowed her with knowledge of present, past, and future things. She showed that she was informed about present things, for she called Mary blessed and the mother of her Lord, because she was carrying the Redeemer of the human race in her womb. Therefore, she also declared the fruit of her womb to be uniquely blessed. She indicated that she had received knowledge of past events as well, revealing that she knew both the angel's words to Mary and Mary's consenting belief. She also conveyed

that the knowledge of future things was not denied to her, revealing that the things said to her would be accomplished by the Lord. But, my brothers, who can sufficiently describe or estimate the grace of the Spirit of God that filled the mother at that time, when such great light of heavenly gift shone in the mother of the forerunner? Let us indeed hear the words she said, if by any chance we may slightly discern what she held inside.

Having heard the response of Elizabeth, where she proclaimed her blessed among women, recognizing her as the mother of her Lord, praised her strong faith, marked herself as filled with the Holy Spirit along with her son at her entrance, she could no longer remain silent about the gifts she had received, but disclosed with devout confession of the mouth what she always carried in her mind whenever she found the right time. For as befits virginal modesty, she covered the divine oracle she received with silence for a while; she venerated the hidden mystery of heaven in the secret of her heart, waiting reverently until the distributor of gifts would show what special gifts he had bestowed on her and what secrets he had revealed, whenever he wanted. But after she saw that the same graces bestowed on her were also revealed to others by the Spirit, she immediately disclosed the treasure of heaven which she had kept in her heart. Therefore:

My soul magnifies the Lord. And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. With these words, she truly first confesses the gifts especially granted to her, then she enumerates the general blessings of God by which He ceaselessly cares for the human race forever. But her soul magnifies the Lord, who dedicates all the affections of her inner man to divine praises and services, who constantly, by the observance of God's commandments, demonstrates that she is mindful of His power and majesty. Her spirit rejoices in God her Savior, who desires nothing earthly, is softened by no abundance of fleeting things, is broken by no adversity, but is delighted only by the memory of Him from whom eternal salvation is hoped, her Creator. Although these words rightly apply to all the perfect, it was above all fitting for the blessed Mother of God to utter them, who, by the privilege of singular merit, burned with the love of the Spirit, rejoiced in His bodily conception. Who rightly could exult in Jesus, that is, in her special Savior with special joy above all other saints, because she knew that He, the eternal author of salvation, would be born from her flesh in time, so that in one and the same person He might truly be both her Son and her Lord. She also teaches with the following words how lowly she considered herself, and that she received every good merit through heavenly grace, saying:

Because He has regarded the humility of His handmaid: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. She indeed demonstrates that she was humble, yet by the judgment of Christ, she declares that she was suddenly exalted by heavenly grace, and was glorified to the extent that her distinguished blessedness deservedly astonishes the voice of all nations. She added still the gifts of divine mercy, which she received miraculously, deserving of grateful praise. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. Therefore, she attributes nothing to her own merits, ascribing the entire greatness to His gift, who, being essentially mighty and great, is accustomed to making His

faithful strong out of the small and weak, and great. She rightly added, And holy is His name, to remind those listening, indeed all to whom her words would reach, instructing them to fly to the faith and invocation of the same name, so that they too might be participants in eternal holiness and true salvation, according to the prophetic word: And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Joel 2). For it is the name about which she said above, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. Hence she even more clearly adds:

And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. He calls the lineage both of the Jewish people and the Gentiles, or certainly of all the nations throughout the world, whom he foresaw would believe in Christ: because, as Peter says, God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation anyone who fears him and works righteousness is accepted by him (Acts X). These words of the blessed Mary are in harmony with the Lord's own words, by which he declared not only his mother, who deserved to bear him physically, but also all who would keep his commandments, to be blessed. For while he was teaching the people in a certain place and performing miracles, and all were astonished at his wisdom and powers, a certain woman in the crowd, raising her voice, said to him: Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that nursed you (Luke XI). But he, willingly accepting the testimony of truth that was spoken, immediately responded: Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it, so that that woman, indeed everyone who was listening, might be confident they would be blessed if they chose to obey the divine commands. As if to say openly: Although she has the singular privilege of blessedness, having been deemed worthy to carry, give birth to, and nurse the incarnate Son of God as a virgin, yet in that same eternal life blessedness will also be granted in an eminent way to those who conceive his faith and love in a pure heart, who bear in their minds the memory of his precepts with diligent care, who strive to nourish this in the minds of others with diligent exhortation. Moreover, since the venerable Mother of God taught that his mercy would be present to all throughout the world who fear him, it remains to indicate what the proud and those who despise the warnings of truth deserve.

He has performed mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who are proud in the thoughts of their hearts. By His arm, it signifies within the authority of His own power. For He does not need assistance from another to act, for as it is written, "to accomplish when He wills" is under His control. This pertains to our acts of good operation, not within the rights of our free will, but we perform virtue in God, and as it is written elsewhere: And their arm did not save them, but Your right hand, and Your arm, and the light of Your face (Psalm 43). And He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts, because the beginning of all sin is pride, by whose merit the Lord, casting out the human race from the stable habitation of the heavenly homeland, dispersed far and wide into the exile pilgrimage of this world: but also to those who do not fear to persevere in sins, He has reserved a heavier punishment of future dispersion.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones. He calls the same rulers whom He previously called proud. They are indeed called proud because they elevate themselves above the measure of their condition; rulers, however, not because they are truly powerful, but because they, confident in their own power, refuse to seek the help of the Creator. However, those are truly powerful who know to say with the Apostle: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Philippians IV). Concerning whom it is written: God does not reject the powerful, even though He Himself is powerful (Job XXXVI). Therefore, He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and has exalted the humble, because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled; and he who humbles himself will be exalted. Although it can also be rightly understood that sometimes those who by the merit of their pride were cast down by the Lord, through His mercy return to the grace of humility, and thus by the merit of devoted humility are raised to glory. Finally, Saul was brought down from the throne of legal teaching due to pride, but soon, because of the submission of humility, was raised to preach the faith of Christ.

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. Those who now perfectly hunger for the eternal, and ceaselessly strive with tireless diligence of righteous works to attain these things, will surely be satisfied when the glory of their Redeemer, which they desire, will appear. But whoever delights in preferring earthly riches over heavenly ones, at the time of the final judgment they are sent away by the Lord empty of all happiness, and hence are punished with the perpetual misery alongside the devil. This we see fulfilled to a large extent even in this life: that the humble, evidently, are filled with the nourishment of heavenly goodness and become rich with the abundance of celestial virtues; and those who, either boasting of earthly riches or exalted by the possessions as if they have them intrinsically, internally become empty of the light of truth. To each of these verses, which the blessed Mary uttered about the contrasting states of the proud and the humble, it must be added what she prefixed, "From generation to generation," because indeed, through all time of the passing age, the just and merciful Creator has been accustomed both to resist the proud and to give grace to the humble. Hence, after the general commemoration of divine mercy and justice, she rightly turns the words of her confession to the special dispensation of the new incarnation, by which he deigned to redeem the world, saying:

He has helped Israel his servant, in remembrance of his mercy. Israel, indeed, means "man seeing God." By this name, the entire assembly of redeemed men is designated, for whom, so that they may be able to see God, God himself appeared as a visible man among men. He took up Israel as a physician would take up a sick man to heal him, as a king would take up a people to defend them from the incursion of enemies, nay, to restore them free after defeating the enemy, and to grant them to reign with him perpetually. And he aptly added "his servant," signifying the humble and obedient, because no one can attain the lot of redemption except through the virtue of humility. Hence the Lord also said: "Unless you are converted, and become as little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. XVIII). He also aptly added, "in remembrance of his mercy," because that which God

assumed to redeem man was not the merit of human condition, but the gift of divine mercy. For what did we merit after the sin of transgression, if not the just wrath of the Creator? Hence, it follows that as many as are recovered to salvation and eternal life, we attribute this not to ourselves, but to his grace, to whom it is said: "In wrath remember mercy" (Hab. III).

Just as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed forever. Making remembrance of the fathers, blessed Mary rightly names Abraham specifically, because although many fathers and saints mystically bore witness to the Lord's incarnation, they (the fathers) were the first to openly predict the same incarnation and the arcana of our redemption. To them specifically was said: And in you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed (Gen. XII): which pertains to the Lord Savior whom no faithful doubt that he, to grant us eternal blessing, deigned to come to us from the offspring of Abraham. The seed of Abraham does not only denote those chosen who are bodily born of Abraham's progeny but also us who, gathered to Christ from the gentiles, are joined to those fathers by the bond of faith from whom we are separated by a great distance of carnal lineage. For we too are the seed and children of Abraham when we are reborn with the sacraments of our Redeemer who took flesh from the lineage of Abraham. We are children of Abraham when we diligently seek to see Him intently, whose day Abraham himself rejoiced to see, and saw and was glad. Hence the Apostle says: If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise. Rightly, it is added in conclusion, In saecula (forever), because the aforementioned promise of the heavenly inheritance will never be enclosed by any end.

For even until the end of this age, there will be those who by believing in Christ will become the seed of Abraham, and the glory of future happiness will remain perpetual to that same seed. Whence it is necessary for us, dearest brothers, to whom an eternal reward is promised by the Lord, to strive with indefatigable effort of mind for its attainment. It is necessary that we endeavor to obtain the good which we desire to have without end, without any interruption until we receive it. Let us then frequently meditate on the words of the evangelical reading; let us always retain in our minds the examples of the blessed mother of God, Mary, so that being found humble in the sight of God and also submitted to our neighbors with due honor, we may merit to be elevated perpetually together with her. Let us be diligently careful that the undue favor of those who praise us does not exalt us, seeing that she maintained unwavering constancy in humility among words of true praise. If the immoderate desire for temporal things delights us, let us remember that our judge sends the rich away empty; if temporal affliction disturbs the mind strongly, let us think that He also exalts the humble. Let us never despair of obtaining pardon for sins because his mercy is from generation to generation on those who fear him.

Let no one under the evils he has done be overcome by the heavier fault of impenitence, for God resists the proud and separates them from the lot of the blessed, dispersing them through various places of punishment according to the variety of their sins. It happens, through the Lord's bounty, that if we always recall the actions and words of blessed Mary

in us, both the observance of chastity and the works of virtue may persevere. And indeed the most excellent and salutary custom has grown in the holy Church that her hymn is daily sung by all with the psalmody of vespers praise, so that from this the minds of the faithful are kindled to the affection of devotion by the more frequent remembrance of the Lord's incarnation, and the examples of that mother often recalled confirm them in the solidity of virtues. And this has been fittingly arranged to be done at vespers, so that our minds, wearied and stretched with various thoughts during the day, might collect themselves at the time of approaching rest into the unity of their own contemplation; being healthily admonished, whatever superfluous or harmful things they had contracted by daily business, they might cleanse wholly through nocturnal prayers and tears anew at that time.

But as we have prolonged our speech, now turned to the Lord, let us ask His clemency that we may both venerate the memory of blessed Mary with fitting offices and merit to come with purified minds to the celebration of the Lord's nativity solemnities, he assisting us to perform spiritual works and receive heavenly gifts, who, for us willed to be incarnate, and to give a form of living among men to his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom he lives and reigns God in the unity of the Holy Spirit through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY III. ON THE COMING OF THE LORD. MARK. XIV. At that time John was in the desert baptizing and preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

John, preceding the advent of the Lord's preaching, as you have heard from the reading of the holy Gospel, dearest brothers, was in the desert baptizing and preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Where we should attentively observe the distinction of the words where it is said that he was baptizing and preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. For he indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance for the confession and amendment of sins, and preached the baptism of repentance to come in Christ for the remission of sins: in whose Baptism alone the remission of sins is granted to us, as the Apostle testifies, who says: One Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God (Eph. IV). It is rightly called the baptism of repentance because no one desires to be baptized in the fountain of life for any other reason than that he repents of being bound by the guilt of the first transgression with the death of both soul and body. But if we ask why John baptized, whose baptized could not have their sins forgiven; the reason is clear and open, because he was keeping the office of his precursor, just as he was to be born, preach, and die before the Lord; so he also ought to baptize: lest an envious contention of the Pharisees and scribes should carp at the Lord's dispensation, if he first gave baptism to men: but if they wanted to ask in what power he baptized, they would immediately hear:

The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven, or from men? (Mark II.) Because when they did not dare to deny it was from heaven, they would be compelled to acknowledge the works of him whom John preached as done from heaven. Yet, the baptism of John, although it did not forgive sins, was not wholly fruitless for those receiving it, because it was given, if not for the remission of sins, for a sign of faith and repentance: so that surely all who were initiated in this might remember to abstain from sins, to insist on almsgiving, to believe in

Christ, and to hasten to His Baptism wherein they would be cleansed for the remission of sins as soon as He appeared. But that John gave his baptism in the desert, and preached the baptism of Christ, indeed, he lived his whole life in the deserts from a boy: therefore, it is so that the highest teacher might confirm by example what he preached by words; and he who urged his listeners to depart from sins by repenting, might himself avoid the vices of sinners, not only by the purity of mind but also by the position of the body.

Typically, however, the desert in which John dwelt signifies the life of the saints separated from the allurements of the world, who, whether they live alone or mixed among crowds, always entirely scorn the desires of the present age with a watchful mind, prefer to cling to God in the hiddenness of the heart, and delight to place their hope in Him: which the Prophet, desirous of reaching the solitude of the mind most cherished by God, with the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit, said: Who will give me wings like a dove? and I will fly and be at rest (Ps. LV); and having immediately attained it with God's help, rejoicing, as if mocking the common entanglements of earthly desires, he adds: Behold, I have fled far away and lodged in the wilderness (Ibid.). Finally, the Lord, having freed the people by the blood of the lamb from Egypt, and led them through the Red Sea, first instructed them in the desert for forty years, and then led them into the promised land: because indeed the faithful people cannot immediately after baptism enjoy the heavenly homeland's joys, but first, having been exercised in the long struggles of virtues, must afterwards be rewarded with the perpetual gifts of heavenly beatitude. But the fruit with which John preached is shown by what follows, when it is said:

And all the region of Judea and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem went out to him, and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. The sense of the letter is evident, for those who were closer or more learned were the first to abundantly accept the word of salvation. But since Judea means confession, and Jerusalem means vision of peace, we can understand mystically those who have learned the confession of true faith, who have loved the vision of heavenly peace, to be designated under the appellations of Judea and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. For such people are mostly to be believed to have gone out to John in the desert for receiving baptism. Such people also now, upon hearing the word of God, depart from their former way of life and undertake the solitude of a spiritual life after the example of faithful teachers; for evidently, chastised daily by the new way of life, as if daily baptized in the Jordan by the tears of their compunction, they are purified from every contagion of creeping vices, according to him who says: I will wash my bed every night, I will water my couch with my tears (Psalm VI). Hence rightly the stream of the Jordan is interpreted as judgment: for the elect, the more diligently they examine their conscience by scrutinizing it, the more they pour out broader streams of tears from the depths of their heart, so that, finding themselves to be less perfect, they wash away the filth of their frailty with the waves of repentance.

And John was clothed with camel's hair, and a leather girdle around his loins, and he ate locusts and wild honey. As for the literal meaning of his garment and food, the humility

fitting for a solitary and a herald of penance is shown. But figuratively, the camel's hair, from which sackcloth is made, represents penance or continence, which he himself practiced and taught others. The leather girdle, taken from a dead animal, signifies that he mortified his earthly members and taught his hearers to do the same. It is well known that loins often signify lust: hence the Lord's command concerning this and for acquiring the glory of chastity is: "Let your loins be girded, and lamps burning in your hands" (Luke 12). He who has utterly vanquished lustful desires has surely girded his loins with a leather girdle. By the locusts, which quickly fly from the ground but soon return to it, and the wild honey which he ate with them, the brevity and sweetness of his preaching are intimated, for he was listened to gladly by the people when he preached, and quickly ended his preaching and baptizing with the coming of the Lord. If anyone wishes to interpret John's attire and diet as prefiguring the Lord Savior, believing it is appropriate that he signified by his life what he proclaimed by prophecy, this intention is to be gladly followed; understanding that camel's hair, on account of sackcloth, signifies those who cleanse their sins by penance, fasting, and weeping;

the leather girdle, on account of the death of the animal from which it is made, signifies those who have crucified their flesh with its vices and desires. And because it is written: "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3), when such people adhere to Christ with diligent love, they are clothed as it were with camel's hair and girded with a leather belt around their loins. The locust, because of its brief flight, suggests the fickle mind of the Jewish people, who wavered between the Lord and idols. Wild honey signifies the sweetness of natural talent by which the uncultivated people of foreign nations were refreshed. And while the Lord selects from both peoples those whom he teaches to join into the unity of his body, which is the Church, he is indeed fed by locusts and wild honey; for from those who eagerly sought heavenly things despite their instability, and those who only knew the taste of earthly philosophy, he converted many into his members. After describing John's place, ministry, attire, and food, the form of his preaching is immediately added.

And he preached saying: There comes one mightier than I after me. Indeed, he is very strong who confesses sins, stronger who baptizes in forgiveness; strong, who is worthy to have the Holy Spirit; strong, who bestows: strong, in whom no one born of women is greater; stronger, to whom a little lower than the angels, all things are subjected under his feet: strong, who first came to preach the kingdom of heaven; stronger, who alone could give it: Whose shoe latchet I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose (Mark I). And if he confessed himself worthy of this only ministry whereby he stoops to unloose the shoe latchet, it would indeed be an indication of great devotion; but now, because of the virtue of remarkable humility, he testifies that he is not even worthy to perform this ministry. But if we intend this in mystery, the decree of the law is clear: because he who, by the right of kinship, did not wish to take his owed wife himself, but allowed another to take her, was commanded to give his shoe loosed from his foot to the one who would take her as a sign of permission. And since the people rightly believed John to be Christ by his virtues, they believed him to be the

bridegroom of the Church. But John himself, to show who he is, says: He who has the bride is the bridegroom;

but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and listens to him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice (John III). Therefore he does not suffer himself to be believed the bridegroom, lest he lose the friendship of the bridegroom, which is to testify that he is not worthy to unloose his shoe latchets. Finally, when Moses and Joshua were set as leaders of the synagogue, they were commanded to loose their shoes, that they might understand that he who commanded these things should be believed to be the bridegroom, that is, the Lord of the synagogue, but themselves to be friends of the bridegroom, in that they were set over the same synagogue, they both should be called and should be.

I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. According to the evangelist Matthew, it is said that John said: "I indeed baptize you in water for repentance" (Mt. III). Therefore, John baptized with water so that all whom he could persuade to repent and believe in Christ, he might separate from the crowd of unbelievers and unrepentant with the mark of his Baptism: so that they would not think that this martyrdom would suffice for salvation, but rather hasten to the Baptism of Christ, he added: "But he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. Indeed, he baptizes with the Holy Spirit who forgives sins by the gift of the Holy Spirit; and upon receiving the remission of sins, he also bestows the grace of the same Spirit. For the very giving of the charismata in the baptism of the Spirit is rightly called the baptism of the Spirit, as testified by him who, about to ascend into heaven, promises his disciples, saying: "John indeed baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts I), signifying that the Holy Spirit would come down upon them on the tenth day of his ascension in flaming tongues. It is rightly asked whether the Lord, who baptizes all believers with the Spirit, also baptized anyone with water.

Neither should the ministry of baptizing be deemed unworthy of such majesty, which he might have exhibited through some of his disciples, by whom he propagated the gifts of baptism to the rest of his members, since he did not disdain the memorable office of washing the disciples' feet. But whether he then baptized with water personally or subsequently through his own, he alone baptizes with the Holy Spirit, who gives us the Spirit and works virtues in us. Let us always strive to keep his grace in us intact and uncorrupted, my brothers, always persisting in good works, but especially now when we must soon celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, being more diligent than usual, so that whatever negligence we find creeping into us, we may quickly strive to remove; whatever virtue we lack, we may more quickly seek to acquire, uprooting the thorns of discord, reproach, quarrels, murmuring, and other vices; and plant in ourselves charity, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faith, gentleness, self-control, and other fruits of the Spirit, so that on that day we may approach the Lord's altar with pure bodies and clear consciences and be deemed worthy to partake of his holy mysteries, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY IV. ON THE SECOND DAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT. JOHN. I. At that time John bore witness concerning the Lord and cried out, saying: This was he of whom I spoke, he who is coming after me was made before me, because he existed before me.

The forerunner of our Redeemer, bearing witness about him, proclaims with a clear voice the certainty of his humanity and the eternity of his divinity. For he cries out, saying, as your fraternity heard when the Gospel was read: This was he of whom I spoke, he who is coming after me was made before me, because he existed before me. For in saying, he who is coming after me, he alludes to the order of human dispensation in which he was born after him, was to preach after him, baptize, perform signs, and suffer death. But in what he adds, He was made before me, he designates the sublimity of that same humanity, which deservedly was to be preferred to all other creatures. For when he says, Before me, it pertains not to the order of time, but to a distance in dignity, just as it is written concerning Joseph's sons when Jacob was blessing them: And he put Ephraim before Manasseh (Gen. XLVIII), where it could rightly be said: Manasseh, who came after me, was made before me. That is, who was born after me surpassed me in the power of the kingdom. Therefore John says of the Lord, He who is coming after me was made before me: that is, who was coming after me to preach, excelled me in the summit of the eternal kingdom and priesthood. And why he who was to come after him would surpass him in dignity, he revealed when he added, because he existed before me, that is, because as the eternal God before the ages, he surpasses me in the glory of majesty even in assumed humanity, although born later. But with the testimony that the forerunner of the Lord gave about him having been explained, the evangelist immediately provides the testimony of his own assertion which he began to give to him.

And from His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For he had said above, because the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth (John I). When He had confirmed it with the testimony of His forerunner, who said: This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me has surpassed me, because He was before me (Ibid.); He again follows through what He had begun, saying: And from His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace (Ibid.). The Lord was indeed full of the Holy Spirit, full of grace and truth, because, as the Apostle says, In Him dwells the whole fullness of the deity bodily (Col.II); from whose fullness we have all received according to the measure of our capacity, because grace has been given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. For it could truly be said only of the mediator of God and men, the man Jesus Christ: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and piety, and He shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord (Is. XI). But all the saints receive from His fullness not the fullness of His Spirit, but as much as He grants. For through the Spirit, to some is given the word of wisdom;

to others, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another, faith by the same Spirit; to another, the gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another, the working of miracles; to another,

prophecy; to another, the discernment of spirits; to another, various kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, distributing to each one individually as He wills (1 Cor. XII). Because, therefore, from the fullness of our Creator we have received everything good that we have, it must be carefully guarded that no one presumptuously exalts himself because of a good deed or thought; lest, remaining ungrateful to the Giver, he loses the good he has received, and is justly reproved by this apostolic reprimand: What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? (1 Cor. IV). Therefore, the Apostle himself, since he could know or do nothing worthy if he did not receive from the fullness of Christ, elsewhere clearly testifies, saying: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God (II Cor. III). And in another place: And His grace towards me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me (1 Cor. XV). This very thought he diligently inculcates in his hearers to consider humbly; hence it is said:

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure (Phil. II).

But when the evangelist said that we all have received from the fullness of Christ, he immediately added and said: Grace for grace. Therefore, he testifies that we have received a double grace, one namely in the present, the other in the future: in the present indeed faith which works through love, in the future however eternal life. For the faith which works through the love of God is a grace of God; because as we believe, as we love, as we work good which we know, not through any preceding merits of ours, but we receive from Him, who says: You did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide (John XV). And that we may receive eternal life because of faith, love, and good works is a grace of God, because we always need Him as the guide lest we depart from the good way, who says: Lead me in your way, and I will walk in your truth (Psalm LXXXVI); as if it were clearly said: Unless you, guiding, I enter the way of truth which I have begun, I am by no means sufficient to hold. That we may not fail in good works, we ought always to lean on His help, who says: Because without me you can do nothing; whence well the Psalmist, to indicate that both the beginning of faith and good action is given to us by the Lord, says:

My God, His mercy will go before me (Psalm LIX). And to teach that the good things we do are to be completed with His help, he again says: And your mercy will follow me all the days of my life (Psalm XXIII). To show that the reward of eternal life, which is given for good works, is generously bestowed to us, he says: Who crowns you with mercy and compassion (Psalm CIII). By mercy and compassion indeed He crowns us, when for good works which He Himself mercifully granted us to perform, He gives the rewards of heavenly blessedness. And this is what is meant by receiving grace for grace, for surely for the grace of good conduct which He gave, and lest it might fail, He Himself preserving helps, He will give the grace of blessed remuneration, in which we may sing His mercies forever. Finally, the Apostle

did not doubt to call the very reception of eternal life, which certainly is given for preceding merits, a grace: who when he had first said that the wages of sin is death, he did not want to say on the contrary the wages of justice is eternal life; but said: The grace of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. VI). Not because it is not justly given for good merits by a just judge, but because those merits by which they are given are first freely granted by a gracious Savior.

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. The law was indeed given through Moses, in which it is divinely ordained what must be done and avoided; but what it commands is only fulfilled through the grace of Christ. It could indeed show sin, teach righteousness, and point out its transgressors as guilty; moreover, the grace of Christ, poured out by the Spirit of love in the hearts of the faithful, enables what the law commands to be fulfilled; hence what is written: You shall not covet (Deut. 5), through Moses it is law because it is commanded, but through Christ it becomes grace when what is commanded is fulfilled. But truth came through Christ, for the law had a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of things. And as the Apostle says elsewhere: All these things happened to them as a figure (1 Cor. 10); but instead of a shadow, Christ has shown the light of truth, instead of the figure of the law, the very image of the things foreshadowed, when he gave the grace of the Spirit, and opened the minds of his disciples to understand the Scriptures. The law was given through Moses when the people were commanded to be purified by the sprinkling of the blood of a lamb; grace and truth, prefigured in the law, came through Jesus Christ, when he himself suffered on the cross and washed us from our sins in his blood.

The law was given through Moses, who instructed the people with salutary precepts, declaring that if they observed them, they would enter the promised land and live there perpetually; otherwise, they would be overthrown by enemies. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ, for he gave the gift of his Spirit, enabling both the spiritual understanding and observance of the law, and introducing those who keep it into the true blessedness of heavenly life, signified by the promised land. But the evangelist manifests the sum of the grace and truth which came through Jesus Christ by adding:

No one has ever seen God. The only begotten, who is at the bosom of the Father, he has told us. For no greater grace can be given to men, no higher truth can be known by men, than that of which the only begotten Son of God narrates to his faithful: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt. V); and of which he prays to the Father, saying: "And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John XVII). Indeed, this most blessed perception of grace and truth, since it cannot occur in the life of this world, is rightly stated: "No one has ever seen God" (1 John IV), that is, no one still surrounded by corruptible and mortal flesh can behold the inexpressible light of divinity; whence the Apostle more clearly says: "Whom no one has seen or can see" (1 Tim. VI). For it is said that no man, no one yet burdened with human condition, fleeting in human conversation. Consequently, Moses, who saw God in the angel, desiring to see

him in his very nature, prayed: "If I have found grace in your sight, show me your glory" (Ex. XXXIII), and he heard: "You cannot see my face, for no man shall see me and live" (Ibid.). Nor should it be thought contrary to this assertion that sometimes the patriarchs or prophets are reported to have seen God.

For the Lord appeared to Abraham in the valley of Mamre. And Jacob said: "I have seen the Lord face to face" (Gen. XXXII). Similarly, Isaiah: "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up" (Isa. VI). But it is rightly understood in all such visions that holy men saw God not through the very aspect of his nature, but through certain images. Hence, the saints saw God through the created subjects, for instance, fire, angel, cloud, electrum; yet John truly testifies that "No one has ever seen God" (1 John IV). It is truthfully said to Moses: "For no man shall see me and live" (Ex. XXXIII); for enclosed in the fragile vessel of flesh, they can see him through defined images of things, but by no means are they able to see him through the indeterminate light of his eternity.

By what reason the evangelist must reach the vision of the unchangeable and eternal light, he explained as follows, saying: "The Only Begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him" (John XIV). Which is similar to what the Lord himself said: "No one comes to the Father except through me" (Mt. XI). And elsewhere: "No one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." Certainly, by his guidance we must come to the Father, by his teaching we must know the Father and the Son, as well as the Holy Spirit, one God and Lord; because indeed he, made man for us, speaking in human form, clearly revealed to us by the bright light what should be rightly thought about the unity of the Holy Trinity, how to be appropriated towards its contemplation by the faithful, and by which acts to reach this. He, clothing us with the sacraments of his incarnation, sanctifying us with the gifts of his Spirit, so that we may be able to come to this, he assists. He, completing the final judgment in human form, will sublimely introduce us to the vision of the divine majesty, and will wonderfully explain to us the secrets of the heavenly kingdom.

Indeed, what He says: "He who is in the bosom of the Father," signifies the secret of the Father. For the bosom of the Father is not to be thought of childishly, in the likeness of our own bosom which we have in our garments; nor is God, who is not bound together in the form of human members, to be thought of as sitting in the same manner as we do; but because our bosom is within, speaking in our manner, Scripture says that "He is in the bosom of the Father" to signify He who always remains in the secret of the Father, where the human gaze cannot reach. The only begotten Son will not only reveal God then, that is, the glory of the holy and undivided Trinity, which is one God, to men when He will introduce all the elect to the vision of His brightness after the universal judgment. But He also narrates daily, when He begins to fulfill what He promised to each of the faithful freed from the corruption of the flesh: "Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him" (John XIV). "I will manifest myself," he says, "to my lovers, so that they who know me in my mortal state can already see me in my nature equal to the Father and the

Holy Spirit. But it must be believed that this happens with apostles, martyrs, confessors, and others of a more austere and perfect life;

among whom one, conscious of his struggles, did not hesitate to testify about himself: "I desire to depart and be with Christ" (Phil. I). Moreover, there are many righteous in the Church who, after the dissolution of their flesh, are immediately received into the blessed rest of paradise, waiting in great joy, in the choirs of the rejoicing, when they will return with their bodies and appear before the face of God. But indeed some, although preordained to the lot of the elect because of good works, are severely punished by purifying flames after death because of certain evils with which they were stained when they departed from the body. And either until the day of judgment, they are cleansed from the filth of their vices by this prolonged testing; or certainly, sooner, through the prayers of the faithful friends, alms, fasts, tears, and offerings of the saving sacrifice, freed from their punishments, they too reach the rest of the blessed: to all of whom, however, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, will reveal God according to their capacity when He grants them the blessing at the time of the resurrection, that, following the law given to them, they who walk from the virtue of faith and hope to the virtue of contemplation may see the God of gods in Zion, that is, in unchangeable contemplation, whose benefits and eternal gifts merit praise and thanksgiving for all ages upon ages. Amen.

HOMILY V. ON THE VIGIL OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD. MATT. I. At that time, when his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. The birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, by which the eternal Son of God, who existed before all ages, appeared as the son of man in time, is described briefly yet with complete truth by the evangelist Matthew. After tracing the generations of the fathers from Abraham to Joseph, the husband of Mary, and showing all those begotten and begetting in the common order of human creation, he immediately speaks of him whose birth is distinct from the others in a revealing manner; because, indeed, others were born through the usual union of man and woman, but he was to be born through a virgin, fittingly since he is the Son of God entering the world. And indeed, it was wholly fitting that when God willed to become man for the sake of humanity, he would be born of no other than a virgin mother; just as it was fitting for the virgin to bear no other than the Son who is God.

He says, when his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. In what order or in what city this conception took place, the evangelist Luke sufficiently explains; since this is well known to your holiness, it is thus needful to speak briefly of what Matthew writes and to note first in that word which he says: Before they came together, the word "coming together" does not insinuate carnal union but the time usually preceding nuptials, when she who was first betrothed begins to be united in marriage. Therefore, "before they came together" signifies before they celebrated the nuptial solemnities in customary rite, she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, they later came together in the mentioned order, when Joseph, at

the command of the angel, took his wife, but they did not consummate, because it follows, and he did not know her. But she was found with child by none other than Joseph, who, having marital rights of a future wife, knew almost everything, therefore, with a curious look he immediately detected her swelling womb.

But Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not willing to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Seeing that his betrothed had conceived, which he knew well had not been by any man, and being just and wishing to act justly in all things, he thought it best neither to disclose this to others nor to take her as his wife, but, with a secretly altered intention of marriage, to allow her to remain in the condition of a betrothed as she was. For he had read in Isaiah that a virgin would conceive and bring forth the Lord from the house of David, and he also knew that Mary was descended from that house, and therefore did not doubt that this prophecy was to be fulfilled in her. But if he were to quietly dismiss her and not take her as his wife and she, being betrothed, were to give birth, very few would believe that she was a virgin and not rather think that she was a harlot. Hence, Joseph's plan suddenly changed into a better plan, namely that he would, to preserve Mary's reputation, take her as his wife in a celebrated marriage feast, but he would keep her chaste perpetually. For the Lord preferred that some might be ignorant of the manner of His generation rather than dishonor the chastity of His mother.

While he was considering this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying: Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son, and you will call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins. These words indeed teach the manner of conception and the dignity of birth; namely, because she conceived by the Holy Spirit and is going to give birth to Christ, whom the angel does not explicitly call Christ, but in explaining the etymology of the name Jesus, he shows Him to be the author of salvation and the Savior of the people, as he calls them His people. This clearly implies that He is Christ, to teach Joseph what he did not know, and to wholly remove any intention of contact with the Mother of God. However, he is ordered to take her as his wife for just reasons of necessity, so that she would not be stoned by the Jews as an adulteress, and that she would have a male companion while fleeing to Egypt, who, with domestic care, would be both protector of her female frailty and witness to her perpetual virginity. Catholic commentators also disclose other reasons why Joseph had to accept the Mother of God as his wife, which can be found in their proper places.

Additionally, the evangelist attributes an example of prophetic speech to the virginal birth, so that the miracle of such majesty would be more confidently believed, since it was proclaimed not only by him but also predicted by the prophet. For it is Matthew's custom to affirm everything he narrates with prophetic testimonies, having written his Gospel mainly for the sake of those who believed from among the Jews, but who, though reborn in Christ, could not be detangled from the ceremonies of the law; and he therefore endeavored to uplift them from the carnal sense of the law and prophets to the spiritual sense concerning Christ,

so that they would more securely receive the sacraments of the Christian faith, recognizing these as being what the prophets had foretold. Behold, a virgin will conceive, and will bear a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which is interpreted, God with us (Isa. VII). The name of the Savior, which the prophet calls God with us, signifies both natures in one person of Himself. For He who was born of the Father before time, God, is in the fullness of time Emmanuel, that is, God with us, made in the womb of the mother, because He deigned to take the frailty of our nature into the unity of His person, when the Word was made flesh and dwelled among us: marvelously beginning to be what we are, without ceasing to be what He was, thus assuming our nature without losing what He Himself was.

Rising from sleep, Joseph did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took his wife, but did not know her. He took her as his wife for the reasons we have previously stated, and did not know her in a conjugal act due to the mysteries he had learned. But if someone wishes to oppose this explanation and contend that the blessed mother of God was never taken as a wife by Joseph through a celebrated marriage, let him offer a better explanation of this passage of the holy Gospel, and equally show that it was lawful for Jews that anyone should cohabit carnally with his betrothed, and we will readily concede to his sound understanding: as long as we do not believe anything occurred towards the mother of the Lord that could be publicly defamatory. But what is added, "Until she gave birth to her firstborn son," should not be understood as if he knew her after she bore the son, as some perversely believe. Your fraternity should indeed know that there were heretics who believed Mary was known by Joseph after the birth of the Lord, interpreting this from the phrase "he did not know her until she gave birth to a son," and from there arose those whom the Scripture calls the brothers of the Lord, and they support their error with this, that the Lord is called the firstborn.

May God avert this blasphemy from the faith of all of us, and grant us to understand with catholic piety that the parents of our Savior were always illustrious for their intact virginity, and that not sons, but cousins, of theirs are called the brothers of the Lord by customary Scriptural usage; but the evangelist did not care to say whether he knew her after she bore a son, because he thought it should be questioned by none. And indeed it should be questioned by no one that the just spouses, to whom, while remaining in the purity of virginity, it was granted by singular grace for the Son of God to be born, could in no way transgress the laws of chastity because of it, and defile the sacred temple of God with the corruption of their seed. It is also to be noted that according to Scripture authority, all who open the womb first are called first-born, regardless of whether they are followed by other brothers or none. Yet the Lord can be understood as called the firstborn for a special reason, according to what John says of him in Revelation: who is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5). And the apostle Paul: for those he foreknew and predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers (Rom. 8:29).

He is called the firstborn of the dead indeed, because although he followed many brothers in the flesh, he was the first of all to rise from the dead and opened the way from death to heavenly life for believers. He is the firstborn among many brothers, because to those who received him, he gave the power to become children of God, and he is rightly called the firstborn of them all, for, though they are adopted children, he even takes precedence in dignity over those who were born before his incarnation. Indeed, they can most truthfully testify with John because he who comes after us has been made before us, that is, though born in the world after us, he is rightly called the firstborn of all of us due to the merit of virtue and kingdom. And in the divine nativity itself, he can not improperly be called the firstborn, for before he begot any creature by making, the eternal Father begot the Son coeternal with himself; before engendering some by redeeming them through the word of truth, the eternal Father begot for himself the Word coeternal with him: whence the Word, the Son of God, namely virtue and wisdom, speaks: I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, the firstborn before all creatures (Eccl. 24:5). Therefore Mary gave birth to her firstborn Son, that is, the son of her substance;

she bore him who was born God from God before any creature, and in the nature in which he was created, he rightfully precedes all creation.

And you shall call, he says, his name Jesus. Jesus in Hebrew is called Savior or Soter in Latin; whose calling by this name is made most certain by the prophets, from which are those sung with great desire of his vision: But my soul shall exult in the Lord, and shall delight in his salvation (Psalm XXXV). My soul has fainted for your salvation. But I will glory in the Lord (Psalm CXVIII). I will rejoice in the God of my salvation (Habakkuk III). And especially that: Save me, O God, by your name (Psalm LIII), as if saying: Glorify the glory of your name which is called Savior by saving me. Therefore, Jesus is the name of the son who was born of the virgin, as the angel explained, meaning that he himself saves the people from their sins. And the one who saves from sins will indeed also save from the corruptions of mind and body, which happened because of sins. But Christ is the term of priestly or royal dignity. For even priests and kings in the law were called Christ, from the chrism, that is, the anointing of holy oil, signifying him who appearing in the world as the true king and high priest was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. From which anointing, that is chrism, Christ himself; and the partakers of the same anointing, that is, spiritual grace, are called Christians. Who by the fact that he is the Savior, saves us from sins; by the fact that he is the high priest, reconciles us to God the Father; by the fact that he is the king, he deigns to give us the eternal kingdom of his Father, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns God through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY VI. ON THE DAWN OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD. LUKE II. At that time the shepherds spoke to one another: Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made and shown to us, etc.

When the Lord and Savior was born in Bethlehem, as the sacred history of the Gospel records, an angel of the Lord appeared with great light to the shepherds who were in the same region, keeping watch and guarding their flocks by night, declaring the rising of the Sun of righteousness upon the world not only by the heavenly voice of speech but also by the brightness of divine light. For nowhere in the entire series of the Old Testament do we find angels who appeared to the fathers with light, but this privilege was rightly reserved for the present time when a light arose in the darkness for the upright in heart, merciful and just is the Lord. To avoid the authority of one angel appearing small, after one taught the mystery of the new birth, immediately a multitude of heavenly hosts appeared, singing glory to God and also proclaiming peace to men, openly showing that through this birth men would be converted to the peace of one faith, hope, and love, and to the glory of divine praise. The shepherds mystically signify the teachers and rulers of the faithful souls. The night, during which they kept watch over their flock, indicates the dangers of temptations, from which all those who vigilantly keep watch do not cease to guard themselves and their subjects. And it is fitting that the Lord was born when shepherds were keeping watch over their flock. For He was born who says: I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (John 10). But the time also approached when this most good shepherd, having sent shepherds into the world, would call back his scattered sheep, which were wandering far and wide, to the ever-green pastures of heavenly life. He entrusted their care to the supreme shepherd: If you love me, feed my sheep (John 21). Explaining this more clearly, he said: Strengthen your brothers (Luke 22).

And it came to pass, as the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another: Let us go to Bethlehem and see this word that has come to pass, which the Lord has made and shown to us. And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. Those shepherds indeed hurried with joyful happiness to see what they had heard: and because they sought with ardent love, they deserved to find immediately the Savior whom they sought. But also the shepherds of the intellectual flocks, indeed all the faithful ought to show with their words and deeds how with the diligence of the mind they should seek Christ. Let us go, they say, to Bethlehem and see this word which has come to pass. Let us also go, most dear brothers, in our thoughts to Bethlehem, the city of David, and let us with love recall that the Word was made flesh in it, and let us celebrate His incarnation with fitting honors. Let us go, with carnal desires cast aside, with the full desire of the mind to the heavenly Bethlehem, that is, the house of the living bread not made by hands, but eternal in the heavens, and let us with love recall that the Word was made flesh. He ascended there in the flesh, there He sits at the right hand of God the Father. Let us follow Him there with all the diligence of virtues, and let us procure with earnest chastisement of the heart and body, so that whom they saw crying in the manger, we may deserve to see reigning on the throne of the Father.

And let us see, they say, this word that has come to pass. What a right and pure confession of the holy faith, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God! This word born of the Father, was not made, for God is not a creature. In this

divine birth, He could not be seen by men; but so that He could be seen, the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. Let us therefore see, they say, this Word that has been made, because before it was made, we could not see it. This the Lord has made and shown to us, that the Lord caused to be incarnate, and through this made visible to us.

And they came hastening and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. The shepherds came hastening and found God born as man, along with the attendants of His birth. Let us hasten too, my brothers, not by the steps of our feet but by the progress of good works to see that same glorified humanity with His attendants, rewarded with the worthy recompense of their service; let us hasten to see Him shining in the divine majesty of the Father and His own. Let us hasten, I say, for such great blessedness is not to be sought with idleness and sloth, but the footsteps of Christ are to be followed zealously. For He Himself desires to help our course with His hand extended, and delights to hear from us: Draw us after you, we will run in the fragrance of your ointments. Therefore, let us more quickly follow with the steps of virtues, so that we may merit to attain. Let no one delay in turning to the Lord, let no one defer from day to day, praying to Him in all things and before all things, that He may direct our steps according to His word, and that no injustice may have dominion over us.

Seeing this, they recognized concerning the word which had been spoken to them about this child. And we, dearly beloved brothers, let us, for now, earnestly perceive with pious faith and hasten to embrace with full love the things that have been spoken to us about our Savior, the true God and man, so that we may be able to grasp them with the vision of perfect knowledge in the future. For this alone is the true life of the blessed, not only of humans but also of angels, to perpetually behold the face of their Creator, which the Psalmist ardently longed for, who said: "My soul has thirsted for the living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?" (Psalm 42). He indicated that his desire could not be satisfied by any abundance of earthly things, saying: "I will be satisfied when your glory is manifested" (Psalm 17). Truly, because not the idle and sluggish, but those who labor in works of virtue, are worthy of divine contemplation, he carefully prefaced: "But I shall appear before you with justice." Therefore, the shepherds, seeing, recognized concerning the word that had been spoken to them about Christ, because the vision of God is knowledge of Him, and this is the sole blessed life of man, the very man himself saying and testifying, who, commending us to the Father, says among other things: "And this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17).

And all who heard marveled at those things which were spoken by the shepherds to them. The shepherds did not conceal in silence the secrets they had divinely learned, but told them to whomever they could; for indeed the spiritual shepherds of the Church are especially ordained for this, that they may proclaim the mysteries of the Word of God and show to their listeners the wondrous things they have learned in the Scriptures. Furthermore, it is not only the shepherds, bishops, priests, and deacons, or even the heads of monasteries, who should be understood, but also all the faithful who undertake the guardianship of their

own little household; they are rightly called shepherds, insofar as they watch over their own household with diligent vigilance. And whoever among you presides over at least one or two brothers with daily governance, should fulfill the duty of shepherd. For as far as it suffices, they are commanded to feed these with the feasts of the word: indeed every one of you, brothers, who even believes themselves to live a private life, holds the office of shepherd and feeds a spiritual flock, and keeps vigil over it by night, if he gathers to himself a multitude of good deeds and pure thoughts, endeavors to govern them with just moderation, nourish them with the heavenly pastures of the Scriptures, and to guard against the snares of unclean spirits with vigilant zeal.

But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart. Mary, preserving the laws of virgin modesty, chose not to reveal to anyone the secrets of Christ that she knew, but reverently waited for Him to divulge them when He wished and how He wished. Meanwhile, she diligently pondered these same secrets with a silent mouth but a vigilant heart. And this is what is meant by "pondering them in her heart. She compared what she saw happening with what she had read was to happen. For she saw herself conceived by the Holy Spirit in Nazareth, from the lineage of David, with the Son of God. She had read in the prophet: "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him. (Isaiah 11) She also read: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times. (Micah 5:2) She saw that she had given birth in Bethlehem to the ruler of Israel, who is eternal God born from the Father before the ages; she saw that as a virgin she had conceived and borne a Son, and that she had called his name Jesus. She had read in the prophets: "Behold, a virgin will conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14) She had read:

"The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib. She saw the Lord placed in a manger, where ox and donkey came to be fed. She remembered what the angel had said to her: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:35) She had read that the manner of His birth could only be known by angelic revelation, as Isaiah said: "Who can speak of his descendants? (Isaiah 53:8) She had read: "And you, O Tower of the Flock, the fortified stronghold of Daughter Zion, the former dominion will be restored to you; kingship will come to Daughter Jerusalem. (Micah 4:8) She heard that the angelic hosts, which are the daughters of the heavenly city, appeared to the shepherds in a place that from ancient times was called the Tower of the Flock, and is one mile to the east of Bethlehem, where even now the monuments of those shepherds are shown in a church. She knew that the Lord had come in the flesh, to whom belongs one and eternal power with the Father, who would give a kingdom to the Church, that is, the daughter of the heavenly Jerusalem. Therefore, Mary compared what she had read would happen with what she already knew had happened: yet she did not speak of these things with her mouth, but kept them closed in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told to them. Let us also, most beloved brothers, learn from the contemplation of the Lord's plan, by which He deigned to mercifully come to our aid, to always turn back giving thanks for His benefits. For if they, having known only His birth, returned glorifying and praising God in all they had heard and seen, how much more ought we, who have come to know the entire series of His incarnation, who have been imbued with His sacraments, glorify and praise Him in all things not only with words but also with deeds; nor ever forget that God was born as man so that by being reborn He could recreate us in the image and likeness of His divinity: for He was baptized in water, that He might fertilize the streams of water for the washing away of all our iniquities; He was tempted in the desert, that by overcoming the tempter He might grant us also the skill and strength to conquer; He died, that He might destroy the dominion of death; He rose again and ascended into heaven, that He might give us the hope and example of rising from the dead and reigning perpetually in the heavens. For each of these things, let us, returning to the contemplation of His most pious plan, glorify and praise God Himself and our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for all the ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY VII. ON THE LORD'S NATIVITY. GIOVANNA. I. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, etc.

Because we have recognized the temporal birth of the mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, which took place on this very day, as manifested by the holy words of the evangelists, namely Matthew and Luke, it is also fitting to scrutinize the sayings of the blessed evangelist John about the eternity of the Word, that is, his divinity, in which he remains always equal to the Father. John, through his unique privilege of chastity, deserved to grasp and simultaneously reveal the mystery of his divinity more profoundly than other writers of divine Scripture. For it is not in vain that he is said to have reclined upon the breast of the Lord Jesus at the supper, but this typifies that he drank more excellently than the others from the holiest fountain of the wisdom of that same breast. Hence he is deservedly compared to the flying eagle in the figure of the four animals. Indeed, the eagle is accustomed to fly higher than all birds and to fix its gaze more brilliantly than all living creatures upon the rays of the sun. And the other evangelists, as it were, walk on earth with the Lord, adequately describing his temporal generation and deeds and saying little of his divinity; but this one, as it were, flies to heaven with the Lord.

By recounting very little about his temporal deeds, he more sublimely recognized and more clearly contemplated the eternal power of his divinity, through which all things were made, mentally soaring and observing directly, and handed down to us in writing for our understanding. Therefore, the other evangelists describe Christ born in time, while John testifies that he was already in the beginning, saying: "In the beginning was the Word. The others recall that he suddenly appeared among men, while he declares that he was always with God, saying: "And the Word was with God. The others say that he was a true man, while he confirms that he is truly God, saying: "And the Word was God. The others describe him

as living temporally among men, while he shows him as remaining with God from the beginning, saying: "He was in the beginning with God. The others recount the great deeds he performed as a man, while he reveals that God the Father made every visible and invisible creature through him, saying: "All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made. And beautifully, blessed John at the beginning of his Gospel sublimely instructs the faithful about the divinity of the Savior, and powerfully surpasses the perfidiousness of heretics. For there were heretics who said: "If Christ was born, there was a time when he was not. He refutes them with his first words when he says:

In the beginning was the Word. He did not say, In the beginning the Word began to be, but in the beginning was the Word: so that he might show that the Word was not born in time, but was already existing in the origin of times, and thus was born of the Father without any beginning of time, according to what he Himself speaks in Proverbs: The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before He did anything from the beginning, from eternity I was established (Prov. VIII). There were also heretics who, denying the three persons of the holy Trinity, said: The same God is the Father when He wills; when He wills, He is the Son; when He wills, He is the Holy Spirit; yet He is one and the same. Refuting their error, he adds: And the Word was with God. For if one was with another, there are certainly two, the Father and the Son, and not one. The same is now the Father, now the Son, now also the Holy Spirit: as if the nature of the divine substance is changeable, whereas the apostle James most clearly says: With whom there is no change, nor shadow of change. (James I). There were also some authors of wicked doctrine, who, confessing that Christ was only a man, did not believe Him to be God at all: whom he strongly expresses (or oppresses), when he says:

And the Word was God. There were others who thought He was God indeed, but made God from the time of the incarnation, not eternal, born of the Father before the ages. Hence, it is remembered that one of such people said: I do not envy Christ made God, because I also, if I wish, can become like Him. And the evangelist refutes their wicked opinion when he says, This was in the beginning with God. That is, this Word, which is God, did not begin in time, but was God with God in the beginning. There were also enemies of the truth who did not deny that Christ existed before His birth from the Virgin, yet did not believe He was born of the Father as God, but made by the Father, and therefore lesser than the Father, because a creature. The Gospel speech also condemns these, which says:

All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made. For if nothing in creation was made without him, it clearly follows that he is not a creature through whom all creatures were made. The evangelist plainly teaches that creation, made indeed in time, was always ordained in the eternal wisdom of the Creator as to when and what kind of creation it would be. And this is what he says: What was made, in him was life. That is, what appeared in time, whether living or lacking life, all existed in the spiritual reason of the maker as if it always lived and lives. Not because what was created is co-eternal with the Creator, but because the reason of his will, in which he has eternally had and has what

and when he creates, how he governs the created so that it remains, to what end he leads each created thing, is co-eternal with him. Thus follows:

And life was the light of men. By this word it is clearly taught that this very reason of life, through which all things were ordered and governed, illuminates not every creature, but only the rational one so that it can gain wisdom. For humans, who were made in the image of God, can perceive wisdom, animals cannot. But even any human who is animalistic does not perceive the things of the Spirit of God. Hence, it rightly follows that when he said: And life was the light of men, he added, And of those who, by distancing themselves far from the honor of human condition, are compared to foolish beasts and have become like them, thus they are rightly deprived of the light of truth.

And the light, he says, shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not comprehended it. For the light of men is Christ, who illuminates, by his presence of knowledge, all the hearts of men that deserve to be enlightened. The darkness, however, are the foolish and wicked, whose blind hearts the light of eternal wisdom clearly recognizes for what they are, although they cannot at all grasp the rays of the same light through understanding: just as if some blind person were bathed in the sunlight, yet cannot see the sun, whose light bathes him. But divine compassion has not wholly disregarded such people; rather, it has offered them the remedy of salvation, by which they might come to see the light. For the same invisible light, the same wisdom of God, assumed flesh, in which it could be seen, appearing in the form of man and speaking to men, gradually, through purified faith, leading their hearts to the knowledge of its divine vision. Before him was sent a man of great merit, whose testimony would prepare all to hear, as soon as it appeared, the wisdom of God itself, to see the very sun of righteousness, now covered with the cloud of the body; that is, to see and hear the man who was God, full of grace and truth.

There was, he says, a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. He did not say, that all might believe in him, for cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm (Jeremiah XVII): but that all might believe through him, that is, that by his testimony they might believe in the light which they had not yet known how to see, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ, who testifies of himself: I am the light of the world: he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life (John VIII).

He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. And indeed holy men are rightly called light, as the Lord says to them: You are the light of the world (Mt. V), and the apostle Paul: You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord (Eph. V). But there is a great difference between the light that is illuminated and the light that illuminates; between those who receive the light by participation in the true light so that they may shine, and the perpetual light itself, which not only shines in itself, but also by its presence is sufficient to enlighten whoever it touches. Compared to the true light, not only are any of the least elect, but even John himself, than whom no greater has risen among those born of women, asserted not to

be light, to show that Christ is not what he was thought to be. For it is written: He was a burning and shining lamp (John V). Burning with faith and love, shining with word and action. The grace of light to pour into sinners belongs to him alone of whom it is said:

The true light which enlightens everyone was coming into the world. Everyone, that is, who is illuminated either by natural intellect or by divine wisdom. For just as no one can be from themselves, so no one can be wise from themselves, but by that one who illuminates, of whom it is written: All wisdom is from the Lord God (Ecclus. II). The evangelist describes both his natures, divine, in which he always remains whole everywhere, and human, in which he appeared born in time and included in a place, saying: He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world did not know him. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. For he was in the world, and the world was made through him, because he was God, because he was wholly present everywhere, governing by the presence of his majesty without labor, and holding together without burden what he made. And the world did not know him, because the light shines in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. By 'world' in this place he means those men deceived by the love of the world and clinging to the creature, turned away from knowing the majesty of their Creator. He came unto his own, because in the world, which he made through divinity, he appeared born through humanity: he came unto his own, because in the Jewish people he deigned to be incarnate, whom he had united to himself by special grace above other nations. Therefore, he was in the world, and came into the world. He was in the world through divinity, he came into the world through incarnation. To come or to go belongs to humanity, to remain and to be belongs to divinity. But let us see what follows:

He came unto his own, and his own received him not. For those who did not know him creating and governing all things in the power of his deity, did not want to receive him shining with miracles in the weakness of the flesh. And what is graver, his own did not receive him, namely, the men whom he himself created. The Jews, whom he had chosen as his peculiar people, to whom he had revealed the mystery of his knowledge, whom he had glorified by the wondrous acts of their fathers, to whom he had granted the doctrine of his law, from whom he had promised to be incarnated, and in whom he showed himself incarnate as he had promised, they for the most part refused to receive him coming. For not all refused, otherwise none would be saved. But now many have received him through faith from both peoples, of whom the evangelist following insinuates saying:

As many as received Him, He gave them the power to become the sons of God, to those who believe in His name. Let us consider, dearest brothers, how great is the grace of our Redeemer, how great is the multitude of His sweetness. The only one born from the Father did not want to remain alone; He descended to earth where He might acquire brothers for Himself to whom He could give the kingdom of His Father: God was born from God, and He did not want to remain only the Son of God; He also deigned to become the son of man, not losing what He was, but assuming what He was not, so that by this means He could transfer men into sons of God and make them co-heirs of His glory: so that what He always

had by nature, they might begin to have by grace. Let us consider how great is the power of faith, by whose merit the power is given to men to become the sons of God. Hence it is well written, Because the just man lives by faith (Hab. II). For the just man lives by faith, not the faith that is only professed by the lips, but that which works through love; otherwise, faith without works is dead in itself. Let no one despise himself; let no one despair of his own salvation: let us all run, each one of us, so that we who were far away may deserve to come near by the blood of Christ.

Let us see what is said, Because as many as received Him, He gave them the power to become the sons of God. As many as, he says, received Him: For God is not a respecter of persons, but in every nation, he who fears God and works righteousness is acceptable to Him (Acts X). And in what order believers might become the sons of God, and how much this generation differs from the carnal one, the evangelist subsequently designates.

Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. For our carnal generation of each individual took its origin from blood, that is, from the nature [alternative, seed] of male and female, from the union of marriage: but the spiritual one is administered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, which the Lord distinguishing from the carnal said: Unless one is born of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John III). What is born of the flesh is flesh; and what is born of the spirit is spirit, so that they may be made partakers of His virtue.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. Which is to say: And the Son of God was made man, and dwelt among men. For Scripture is accustomed sometimes to designate the whole man by the term soul, sometimes by the term flesh. By soul indeed, as it is written: For Jacob went down into Egypt with seventy souls (Gen. XLVI); by flesh, as it is again written: And all flesh shall see the salvation of God (Luke III). For neither could souls descend into Egypt without bodies, nor could flesh see anything without the soul; but here by soul the whole man is signified, there by flesh. So therefore in this place where it is said: And the Word was made flesh, nothing else should be understood than if it were said: God was made man, by putting on flesh and soul; so that just as each one of us consists of flesh and soul as one man, so Christ from the time of the incarnation consists of flesh [alternative, flesh of divinity] and soul as one man: God from eternity existing eternally as He was, the man assumed in time into the unity of His person as true, which He had not.

And we saw his glory, the glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. The glory of Christ which men could not see before the incarnation, they saw after the incarnation, beholding the humanity resplendent in miracles, and understanding the divinity lying hidden within, especially those who were deemed worthy to observe his brightness before the passion, transfigured on the holy mountain, with a voice descending to him from such magnificent glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Mt. XVII): and after the passion, with the glory of his resurrection and ascension being beheld, they were wonderfully refreshed with the gift of his Spirit; by all of which they clearly un-

derstood that such glory was not suitable for any saint, but only for that man who was the only begotten in divinity from the Father. And what follows:

Full of grace and truth. Full of grace was the same man Christ Jesus, to whom it was given by a singular gift beyond other mortals, that immediately from the time he was conceived in the womb of the virgin, and began to be man, he was truly God; hence also the same glorious ever-virgin Mary is rightly to be believed and confessed not only as the mother of the man Christ, but also of God. The same was full of truth, manifestly because of the divinity of the Word, which graciously assumed that uniquely chosen man, with whom he was one person in Christ, without changing any part of his divine substance into making the nature of man, as heretics claim; but remaining with the Father, assuming all that he was, taking upon himself the entire nature of true man from the seed of David, which he did not have. Hence, most dear brothers, it is necessary that we who today with annual devotion recite the human birth of our Redeemer, embrace with continuous and always love both his divine and human nature. The divine, through which we were created when we were not; the human, through which we were recreated when we were lost. And indeed the divine power of our Creator was sufficient to recreate us without assuming humanity; but the human weakness of the same our Redeemer could not without assuming it, and having divinity dwelling and working through it, recreate us.

And thus the Word became flesh, that is, God became man, and dwelt among us, so that by living with us in the known form of a man, conversing with us, instructing us by speaking to us, offering us the way of life, he could battle against the enemy for us, and by dying and rising again destroy our death: through the coeternal divine nature with the Father, he might inwardly raise us to divine things by vivifying us, grant us remission of sins together with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and after the perfecting of good works, not only bring us to see the glory of his glorified humanity, but also show us the immutable essence of his divine majesty, in which he lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY VIII. ON THE BIRTHDAY OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST. JOHN XXI. At that time Jesus said to Peter, Follow me. Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His chest at the supper and said: Lord, who is the one who will betray you? etc.

The reading of the Holy Gospel which was read to us, my brothers, ought to be considered by us with so much greater attention to each word, as it overflows with the great sweetness of heavenly grace. For the most blessed evangelist and apostle John commends to us the privilege of special love, by which he deserved to be honored more than the others by the Lord: he commends the testimony of the evangelical account, which, supported by divine truth, no believer is allowed to doubt: he commends the peaceful dissolution of his flesh, which he perceived with the Lord visiting him in a special way. But in order that we may be able to consider the beginnings of this perfect reading, it is pleasing to briefly attend to the earlier parts. The Lord appeared after the resurrection to seven disciples, among whom

were Peter and John, who had labored in vain fishing all night, and standing on the shore, he filled their nets with a large multitude of fish, and soon invited them, having come to land, to breakfast, and during breakfast, he asked Peter for the third time if he loved him; and to the third confession of love, because he had denied him three times, he entrusted him three times with feeding his sheep: and then, because he would reach martyrdom on the cross for the pastoral care of those same sheep, that is, the faithful souls, he intimated, saying:

Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and lead you where you do not wish. In the stretching out of the hands, he designated that he would be crowned with martyrdom through the death of the cross; in the girding by another, that he would be bound by the persecutor; in the leading where he did not wish, that he would suffer the torments of passion against the will of human frailty. But lest the foretold passion of the cross from the Lord should seem heavy to Peter, he immediately sought to alleviate it by his own example, so that the torment of martyrdom would be the lighter, the more he would remember to receive a sentence of death similar to his Redeemer. For after he indicated to him by what death he would glorify God, he immediately adds what we heard at the beginning of this reading.

And he says to him: Follow me. As if to say openly: Since I did not fear the sudden punishment of the cross for your redemption first, why do you dread to suffer the cross for the confession of my name? You will be glorified with a more illustrious palm of martyrdom because in earning this you follow the path of the master. Now indeed the evangelist does not add what the Lord and the disciples did after these words, but it is nevertheless implied from what he adds, Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following. It is clear that when he said to Peter, Follow me, that is, imitate me by enduring the cross, he rose from the place of the feast and began to depart. Peter followed him even with his steps, desiring to fulfill what he heard, Follow me. The beloved disciple whom Jesus loved also followed. For he did not consider himself to be excluded from following Christ, who knew that he was embraced by Christ with no lesser grace of love. Nor is it unbelievable that both disciples followed the Lord's steps with their physical steps, for they had not yet understood what it meant when he commanded Peter [or, to Peter] to follow him. However, it is known to your fraternity who that disciple whom Jesus loved was, namely John himself, whose birthday feast we celebrate today, who wrote this Gospel, and therefore preferred to indicate his person by the signs of events, rather than by his own name.

However, Jesus loved him not uniquely to the exclusion of the others, but more familiarly above the others whom he loved, made worthy of greater affection by the special prerogative of chastity. For he proves that he loves all indeed, to whom he speaks before his passion: As the Father has loved me, I also have loved you. Abide in my love (John XV). But he loves this one above all, who, chosen by him as a virgin, remained a virgin forever. For histories record that he called him from the weddings when he wanted to marry; and therefore, because he

turned him away from carnal desire, he gave him the sweeter gift of his own love. Finally, dying on the cross, he commended his mother to this one, so that a virgin might care for a virgin, and after his death and resurrection ascending into heaven, there would not be lacking to his mother a son, whose chaste life would care for her with chaste service. Blessed John also gives another sign of his person, adding: Who also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, who is it that will betray you? How this happened, earlier parts of this Gospel show more fully; because indeed at the supper, which the Savior had with the disciples before his passion, in which he washed their feet, and handed over the mysteries of his body and blood to be celebrated, that disciple whom he loved reclined upon his breast.

And when he had said to them, Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me, that disciple responded, indicating to Peter to ask and say to him, Lord, who is it? The Lord said [Or, At], it is he whom I shall give the dipped bread. But that disciple who reclined upon the master's breast, was not only a sign of present affection, but also of the mystery of the future. For the Gospel that the same disciple was to write was already foreshadowed, which would comprehend more fully and loftily the secrets of divine majesty than the other pages of sacred Scripture. For in the breast of Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, he deservedly reclines upon his breast whom he endowed with the singular gift of greater wisdom and knowledge. For we know the other evangelists spoke more of the miracles of our Savior, fewer of his divinity: but John, writing very little of human acts, rather devoted himself to explaining the divine mysteries, clearly implying how great a flow of heavenly doctrine he had drawn from the breast of Jesus, which he expressed to us.

When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?" Because blessed Peter had heard that he was to glorify God by suffering on the cross, he also wished to know about his brother and fellow disciple, by what kind of death he himself would pass into eternal life.

Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me. He said, that he did not wish him to be perfected by the suffering of martyrdom, but to wait for the last day without the violence of a persecutor, when He Himself, coming, would receive him into the abode of eternal happiness. And what is that to you? Just remember that you should follow me by undergoing the suffering of the cross. Indeed, the brethren at that time interpreted the Lord's response as if John would never die. But John himself took care to explain that it should not be understood in this way, who, having remarked that this saying went out among the brothers, that the disciple would not die, carefully added and said: "And Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, 'If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?'" Therefore, it should not be thought that the disciple did not die in the flesh, because neither did the Lord predict this about him. And the Psalmist said: "What man can live and not see death? (Psalm 89). It should rather be understood that, while the other disciples of Christ were perfected by suffering, he awaited in the peace of the Church for the coming of his calling. This is what the Lord said:

"If I want him to remain until I come," not that he did not endure many labors and pressures of evils for the Lord beforehand, but because he completed his old age in peace, having

founded the churches of Christ through Asia far and wide. For in the Acts of the Apostles, he is also found to have been whipped along with the other apostles, when they went away rejoicing from the presence of the council, because they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus. And, thrown into a vat of boiling oil by Emperor Domitian, as narrated in ecclesiastical history, he yet emerged as unscathed, protected by divine grace, as he was free from the corruption of carnal desire. Not long afterward, the same prince exiled him to the island of Patmos due to his unstoppable perseverance in preaching the gospel. Though deprived of human comfort there, he was frequently consoled by divine visions and conversations: hence, on the same island, he wrote down the Apocalypse by his own hand, which the Lord revealed to him about the present or future state of the Church. Thus, it is clear that the promise that he would remain until the Lord came does not pertain to him living in the world without the toil of struggle, but rather that he would pass out of the world without the pain of suffering.

For, as we find in the writings of the Fathers, when he knew that the day of his departure was near, exhausted by long old age, having summoned his disciples, giving them final exhortations and celebrating Mass, he bid them farewell: then, descending into the grave he had dug for himself, and having offered a prayer, he was placed with his fathers, found as free from the pain of death as from the corruption of the flesh. And thus, the truthful sentence of the Savior was fulfilled: that he wished him to remain until He Himself came. Moreover, we can mystically understand in the things predicted by the Lord about Peter and John, and what happened in them, the two lives of the Church in which she is exercised at present: namely, the active and the contemplative life, of which the active life is the common way of living for the people of God. However, to the contemplative life, very few ascend, eminent after the resurrection of holy action. For active life is for the diligent servant of Christ to persist in just labors, first keeping himself unspotted from this world, restraining mind, hand, tongue, and other members of the body from every act of wrongful temptation, and perpetually subjecting them to divine services.

Then also addressing the needs of his neighbor according to his abilities, providing food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothing to the cold, receiving the needy and the wandering into the house, visiting the sick, burying the dead, delivering the oppressed from the hand of the stronger, protecting the poor and needy from their robbers; but also showing the way of truth to those in error, and dedicating himself to the services of brotherly love, and even contending for justice unto death. But the contemplative life is when someone, having been taught by long practice of good action, fortified by the sweetness of prolonged prayer, accustomed by the frequent contrition of tears, learns to be free from all the affairs of the world, and to focus the eye of the mind on love alone, and to begin to taste ardently in the present life the joy of everlasting beatitude which he is to experience in the future; and sometimes also, as far as is permitted to mortals, sublimely to soar in the contemplation of the rapture of the mind. This contemplative life of divine speculation most especially embraces those who, after long preliminary training in monastic virtue, know how to live secluded from men, having a mind freer to meditate upon heavenly things as they are sepa-

rated from earthly disturbances. For indeed, as we have said, the active life proposes to be entered upon not only by monks in the monastery but by the entire people of God in general.

Both apostles, namely Peter and John, while placed among men, were perfect in both lives because of the summit of their excellence in grace, yet one life is designated by Peter and the other by John. For in what the Lord says to Peter, "You will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and lead you where you do not wish to go," the perfection of the active life is expressed, which is usually tested by the fire of temptations. Whence He says elsewhere more clearly: "Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice's sake. Fittingly he adds, saying: "Follow Me," because undoubtedly, according to Peter's own words, Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. But what He says about John, "So I want him to remain until I come," indicates the state of contemplative virtue, which is not to be ended by death like the active life, but is to be perfectly completed with the Lord coming after death. For indeed, active labor ceases with death, going to receive the eternal reward after death. Who in that life gives bread to the hungry, where no one is hungry? Who gives water to the thirsty, where no one thirsts? Who buries the dead, where the land is of the living? Who performs other works of mercy, where no one is miserable? There is therefore no labor of action there, but only the perpetual fruit of past action remains.

The contemplative happiness, which begins here, is perfected endlessly there, when the presence of the heavenly citizens and of the Lord Himself will be seen not through a glass nor in a riddle, as now, but face to face. Whence aptly about it, under the figure of the disciple whom He loved, and who leaned on His bosom, the Lord says: "So I want him to remain until I come. As if He openly says: I do not want the taste of the sweetness of contemplation, which I especially love in my saints, those hoping in the protection of my wings, those made drunk with the abundance of my house, to end with the condition of death like the laborious use of action, but after death to be more sublimely completed by my appearing and bringing them into the sight of my majesty.

This is that disciple who testifies about these things and wrote these things. And we know that his testimony is true. Now clearly blessed John designates himself by office, which he avoids designating by name. However, it should not be passed by what is said: He who testifies about these things and wrote these things. Indeed, he bore testimony by preaching the word of God, he bore testimony by writing, he bore testimony again in teaching the same things he had written: he also testifies now by the Gospel, which he described for the churches to be read, by explaining. From the time of the Lord's passion, resurrection, and ascension into heaven until the last times of the principate of Domitian, over about sixty-five years, he preached the word of God without any written aid. But when he was sent into exile by Domitian, who was the second persecutor of Christians after Nero, heretics burst into the Church, like wolves into the sheepfolds deserted by the shepherd, Marcion, Cerinthus, and Ebion, and other Antichrists, who denied that Christ existed before Mary, tarnished the simplicity of the evangelical faith with perverse doctrine.

But when he, after the death of Domitian, permitted by the pious prince Nerva, returned to Ephesus, he was compelled by almost all the bishops of Asia at that time and the delegations of many churches to speak more deeply about the coeternal divinity of Christ with the Father, because in the writings of the three evangelists, namely Matthew, Mark, and Luke, they seemed to have sufficient testimony about his humanity and the things he performed as a man. To this, he responded that he would not do otherwise unless all in common would fast and pray to the Lord, so that he might be able to write worthily. And having done this, instructed by revelation and inebriated with the grace of the Holy Spirit, he dispelled all the darkness of the heretics with the light of the unveiled truth. "In the beginning," he said, "was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And making his entire speech similar to the beginnings, he taught our Lord Jesus Christ with very clear assertion, both true man, truly made from man temporally, and also true God, truly born from God the Father eternally, truly always existing with the Father and the Holy Spirit, indeed he revealed the secrets of divine truth and true divinity as no other mortal was permitted. And this privilege was rightly reserved for the virgin, so that he himself might reveal the mysteries of the incorruptible Word with an incorrupt heart and body.

He himself also took care to show how no one should doubt the truth of his words, who having said, "This is the disciple who testifies about these things and wrote these things," immediately added, "And we know that his testimony is true. Therefore, because we also know with the other faithful that his testimony is true, let us strive in every way to understand rightly by faith, and to practice rightly by action what he taught, in order to reach the eternal gifts which he promised, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY IX. ON THE FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS. MATT. II. At that time, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph, saying: Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, etc.

The sacred reading of the Gospel just recited to us, dearest brothers, is about the precious death of Christ's innocent martyrs, in which nevertheless the precious death of all Christ's martyrs is foreshadowed. For the fact that infants were killed signifies that through the merit of humility, one comes to the glory of martyrdom, and because unless a person is converted and becomes like a little child, they cannot give their soul for Christ. That they were killed in Bethlehem and in all its borders shows that not only in Judea, where the origin of the Church began, but also in all the borders of that same Church, wherever it has spread throughout the world, there will be persecutions by the wicked, and the patience of the pious is to be crowned. They who were killed from two years old and under signify those perfected in doctrine and action; they who were killed below that age indicate the simple or unlearned, yet having steadfast constancy in true faith. That they indeed were killed, but Christ, who was sought, escaped alive, implies that although the bodies of martyrs can be killed by the impious, Christ, for whom the whole persecution rages, cannot be taken away from them, either while they live or after they are killed, but they truly attest that whether

we live, we live to the Lord, or whether we die, we die to the Lord. For whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

That, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah, a voice was heard in Rama, that is, high up, lamentation and great mourning (Jer. XXXI), plainly announces the grief of the holy Church, which grieves over the unjust death of its members, not as enemies murmur in vain yielding to empty despair, but rising up to the throne of the supreme Judge; and just as the blood of the protomartyr Abel, so too the blood of other martyrs cries from the ground to the Lord, according to the words of the wise man: Do not scorn the prayers of the orphan, nor the widow when she pours out her complaint. Do not the tears of the widow run down her cheek, and her cry against him that causes them to fall? From the cheek they ascend even to heaven, and the Lord the hearer does not rejoice in them (Ecclus. XXXV). That Rachel is said to have wept for her children and would not be comforted because they were not, signifies the Church mourning the removal of the saints from this world, but not wanting to be consoled in such a way as to bring back to the struggles of this world those who have conquered it through death, because they cannot be called back to this world, from whose trials they have once escaped, crowned with Christ. For Rachel, who is said to mean 'sheep' or 'seeing God,' figuratively demonstrates the Church, whose whole intent watches to be worthy to see God.

And she is the hundredth sheep which the good shepherd, leaving the ninety-nine sheep of angelic virtues in heaven, went to seek on earth, and found placed on his shoulders, and so brought it back to the fold. It may be questioned, however, how Rachel is said to have wept for her children, since the tribe of Judah, which held Bethlehem, was not from Rachel but from her sister Leah. Here the answer is easy, for not only in Bethlehem, but in all its borders, all the infants were slaughtered. The tribe of Benjamin, which was from Rachel, was close to the tribe of Judah. Hence it is rightly believed that the blow of the most cruel slaughter involved not a few children of Benjaminitic lineage, whom the offspring of Rachel, raised with a loud cry, wept for. It may also be understood differently because Rachel was buried near Bethlehem, as indicated by the title of her monument remaining to this day, to the west of the city, beyond the road leading to Hebron: hence it is rightly said that she who was present in body and name in that place prophetically cried out for what was happening there. The fact that the Lord Himself was taken by His parents to Egypt to avoid being killed by Herod signifies that the elect must often be taken away from their homes due to the wickedness of evil men or even condemned to exile.

This also serves as an example to the faithful, so that they do not hesitate to evade the rage of persecutors by fleeing when it is opportune, remembering that their God and Lord did this. For He who was to command them, "When they persecute you in this city, flee to another," first did what He commanded by fleeing as a man, like a man on earth, whom shortly before a star from heaven had shown [to be divine]. The fact that Herod died not long after he had killed the children for the sake of the Lord, and that Joseph, warned by an angel, brought the Lord and His mother back to the land of Israel, signifies that all persecutions launched

against the Church will be avenged by the death of the persecutors. When these persecutors are dealt with, peace will be restored to the Church, and the saints who had been hiding will return to their own places. Herod also, as a figure of the devil, rages and groans over losing the kingdom of his iniquity when people convert to Christ. Thus, if he kills infants, he seems to himself to be killing Jesus. He continuously tries to accomplish this by seizing the Holy Spirit from the newly reborn and attempting to extinguish the infancy of tender faith.

We can also understand Herod's hatred in wanting to destroy Jesus as representing the persecutions in Judea during the times of the apostles, especially when the preachers of the word, due to the great power of envy, were nearly all expelled from the province and scattered far and wide to preach among the gentiles. Thus, it happened that the gentiles, symbolized by Egypt, which was once darkened by sins, received the light of the word. This signifies that taking the child Jesus and His mother to Egypt through Joseph means that the faith in the Lord's incarnation and the fellowship of the Church were entrusted to the gentiles through the holy teachers. The fact that they stayed in Egypt until the death of Herod figuratively indicates that the faith of Christ would remain among the gentiles until the fullness of the gentiles comes in, and so all Israel will be saved. Indeed, Herod's death marks the end of the malicious intent that now rages against the Church by the Jews. The slaughter of the infants signifies the death of the lowly in spirit, whom the Jews killed after driving away Christ. But when Herod died, and [the Lord] returned to the land of Israel, it denotes the end of the world when, with Enoch and Elijah preaching, the Jews, the flame of modern envy extinguished, will accept the faith of the truth.

It is fitting that when He departs from Judea, it is said to be at night, but when He returns, no mention of night or flight is made, because those whom He once left due to the darkness of their sins, He now revisits because of the light of their faith, seeking Him. Even though Herod is dead, Joseph, fearing Archelaus, Herod's son, dared not go to Judea, where he had his metropolis. Warned by an angel, he withdrew to Nazareth in Galilee. This signifies the end times of the present Church when, due to the present universal blindness of that nation, which persecutes Christians to the utmost of its power, a fiercer persecution by the Antichrist will arise in some places. And indeed, many, through the preaching of Enoch and Elijah, will turn from perfidy, but others, under the influence of Antichrist, will fight against the faith with all their might. Therefore, the part of Judea where Archelaus ruled represents the followers of Antichrist, while Nazareth in Galilee, where the Lord was taken, represents that part of the nation that will then embrace the faith of Christ. Hence, the transfer to Galilee is well executed, and Nazareth, meaning "flower" or "shoot," symbolizes it. Because as the holy Church migrates with greater ardor from worldly things to achieve heavenly ones, it flourishes more abundantly in the bloom and sprout of spiritual virtues. Therefore, beloved brothers, since we venerate the first martyrs in today's feast, let us diligently think about the eternal feast of martyrs in heaven.

By following their footsteps as much as we can, let us also strive to be participants in that heavenly feast, as the Apostle testifies: "If we are partners in sufferings, we will also be partners in consolation. Let us not mourn their [unjust] death as much as we rejoice in their just reception of the palm [of martyrdom]. Each one of them, when driven by torment from this life, was followed with lament and tears by Rachel, that is, the holy Church that mourns, but departing from here, they were soon received by the heavenly Jerusalem, our mother, with joyful ministers, and were introduced into the eternal joy of their Lord, to be crowned perpetually. Thus says John: "They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands" (Rev. 7). For now, those who once lay tormented before the thrones of earthly judges now stand crowned before the throne of God. They stand before the Lamb, unable to be separated from the sight of His glory, from whose love here they could not be torn away by any punishment. They shine in white robes and have palms in their hands, because they have rewards in their deeds, while the bodies which were torn for the Lord by fire and beasts, consumed by lashes, dissolved by precipices, scraped by claws, suffered by every kind of severe punishment, receive glorified bodies through the resurrection. And they cried out, he says, with a loud voice saying:

Salvation to our God, who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb (Rev. VII). With a loud voice they sing of salvation to God, who with great thanksgiving they recall, not by their own strength but with His help, they overcame the struggles of attacking tribulations. He again describes their past combats and eternal crowns: These are the ones who came out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes, and whitened them in the blood of the Lamb (Ibid). For the martyrs washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, while their bodies, which to the eyes of the unwise seemed to be defiled by the squalor of punishment, rather thus by the blood poured out for Christ, cleansed from all impurities: moreover, they made them worthy of the blessed light of immortality, which is to have washed and also whitened the robes in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are, he says, before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. The service is not laborious, but loving and desirable, to always stand in the praises of God: for day and night do not signify the alternation of time properly, but symbolically signify perpetuity. For night will not be there, but one day in the courts of Christ better than thousands, in which Rachel does not weep for her children, but God wipes every tear from their eyes;

giving the voice of joy and eternal salvation in the dwellings of the righteous to Him who lives and reigns God forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY X. ON THE FESTIVAL DAY OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE LORD. LUKE II. At that time, when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the child, he was named Jesus, as was spoken. The evangelist comprehends the holy and venerable memory of the present feast in a few words indeed, but he left it pregnant with the power of heavenly mystery. For having set forth the birth of the Lord, whose joys the angels immediately celebrated with worthy praises, the shepherds celebrated with devout visitation, and all who heard at that time marveled, we also, according to our measure, as much as we could,

with Christ the Lord granting, performed with solemn hymns of the masses, he added and said:

And after eight days were completed for his circumcision, his name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. These are the venerable joys of today's festival, this is the sacred solemnity of the day, these are the most sacred gifts of divine piety, which the Apostle commending to the hearts of the faithful says: Because, when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons (Galatians IV). For with great dispensation of piety for the redemption of the human race, God the Father deigned to send not an angel, nor an archangel, but his only-begotten Son. Whom we cannot see in the form of his divinity, he again with great art of love provided that he was made of a woman, that is from the substance of maternal flesh, conceived without male admixture, to be brought forth as true man to human sight: who, remaining in divine power and substance through all things he was, assumed true weakness of mortal nature, which he did not have. And to commend to us the necessary virtue of obedience by the supreme example, God sent his Son into the world, made under the law:

not because he owed anything to the law, who alone is our teacher, alone is legislator and judge, but that he might aid those who were placed under the law who could not bear the burdens of the law, with his compassion, and might lead those who were rescued from the condition of servitude under the law to the adoption of sons, which is through grace, with his own generosity. Therefore, he accepted circumcision ordained by the law in the flesh, who appeared without any stain in the flesh at all, and who came in the likeness of sinful flesh, not in the flesh of sin itself, did not reject the remedy by which the sinful flesh used to be cleansed: just as he also underwent the wave of Baptism, by which he wanted to cleanse the peoples from the filth of sins with the grace of the new law, not out of necessity, but as an example. For your fraternity ought to know that circumcision in the law acted against the wound of original sin in the same way as Baptism now in the time of revealed grace customarily acts, except that they could not yet enter the gate of the heavenly kingdom until he who gave the law would come and give the blessing, so that God of gods might appear in Zion, as they, consoled by blessed rest in Abraham's bosom after death, would await the entry into heavenly peace with happy hope. For the same one who now cries out terribly and salutarily through his Gospel:

Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John III); he the same one long ago through his law cried out: A male whose foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant (Genesis XVII), that is, because the covenant of life commanded to men in paradise was broken by Adam's transgression, in which all sinned: he will perish from the assembly of the saints, unless he is aided by a saving remedy. Therefore, both purifications, namely of circumcision in the law and of Baptism in the Gospel, were established for the grace of removing the first transgression. Those also who from the beginning of the world until the time of given circumcision

or after given circumcision, from other nations were pleasing to God, either by offerings of sacrifices, or certainly by the virtue of faith alone, commending their souls and those of their people to the Creator, took care to loosen them from the bonds of the initial guilt. For without faith it is impossible to please God: and as it is written elsewhere: The just shall live by faith (Habakkuk II). But coming in the flesh, the Son of God, who contracted only the nature of the flesh, but no contagion of sin from Adam, and since conceived and born of the Virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit, stood in need of no renewing grace:

He deigned to accept both types of purification, being circumcised by His parents on the eighth day of His birth, and baptized by John in the thirtieth year of His age. Indeed, He did not refuse the third service of the sacrificial victim, being offered up in the temple by the Lord of the temple Himself. Whose thirty-third day, with the help of the Lord, your charity is about to hear and celebrate the mystery. All, I say, both legal and evangelical purification, which He did not need, the Lord did not despise to undertake, so that He might teach the decrees of the law already to be most beneficial, and show to all the faithful the remedies of the coming Gospel as equally necessary to undergo. And in this, too, that on the same day of His circumcision He received the name of Jesus, He did it in imitation of the ancient observance, which we believe was taken from the fact that the patriarch Abraham, who first received the sacrament of circumcision as a witness to his great faith and the divine promise to him, was also on the same day of his circumcision and that of his people blessed with an enlargement of name along with his wife, so that he who was formerly called Abram, exalted father, was then called Abraham, that is, father of many nations: "because," as it says, "I have made you the father of many nations.

This most faithful promise has now been so widely fulfilled throughout the world that even we ourselves, called from the Gentiles to the devotion of his faith, rejoice to have him as our spiritual father, the Apostle saying to us: "If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3). And Sarai, your wife, you shall not call Sarai, but Sarah, that is, not my princess, but princess: manifestly teaching that she who became a participant and companion of such great faith should not be properly called the princess of her own household, but absolutely the princess, that is, of all rightly believing women, and be recognized as their parent. Therefore, the blessed Apostle Peter, addressing believing women from the Gentiles to the virtue of humility, chastity, and modesty, makes fitting mention of our same mother Sarah with due praise. "As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror" (1 Peter 3). These things, brothers, I have taken care to remind your love, so that each of you may remember that you also, having received the faith of Christ, have merited the fellowship of a noble name with the patriarchs if, having received purification in Christ, you rejoice in having borrowed the surname derived from Christ's saving name and strive to keep it firm and unblemished to the end, rejoicing that in you Isaiah's prophecy has been fulfilled:

"And His servants shall be called by another name" (Isaiah 65), that is, by the name Christian, with which all the servants of Christ now delight to be distinguished. For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Wherefore the prophet continues: "In whom he blesseth himself on earth shall bless himself in the God of truth" (Acts 4). He also elsewhere speaks of the same, addressing the Church to be multiplied even from the Gentiles: "The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord will name" (Isaiah 62). The reason the child who was born to us and the Son who was given to us received the name Jesus, that is, Saviour, is not to be understood by our reasoning but requires careful and vigilant meditation, so that we too may be saved by participation in the same name. For we read, as interpreted by the angel: "For He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1). And we undoubtably believe and hope that He who saves us from sins will also save us from the implications resulting from sins and from death itself, as the Psalmist testifies, who says: "Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases" (Psalm 103). For our complete healing will come with the forgiveness of all our iniquities and the manifestation of resurrection glory, when the last enemy, death, will be destroyed.

And this is our true and complete circumcision when, in the Day of Judgment, being stripped of all the corruptions of soul and body, having completed the judgment, we shall enter to see forever the Creator's face, signifying the typical presentation of circumcised infants to the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem with acceptable offerings of praise. For he who is cleansed by true circumcision enters the temple of the Lord with gifts, and being purged from all stain of mortality by the glory of the resurrection, ascends with the fruits of good works to the everlasting joys of the heavenly city. "You have broken my bonds," he says, "I will offer you the sacrifice of praise. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the courts of the house of the Lord, in the presence of all his people, in the midst of you, Jerusalem" (Psalm 115). The most desired time of celestial entrance is indicated by that eighth day on which circumcision is celebrated. For there are six ages of this world distinguished by the well-known intervals of the times, in which it is necessary to labor for God and to work temporarily for the attainment of eternal rest. But the eighth age is the day of the resurrection, blessed without any end of time, when the true glory of circumcision shines forth in all ways, and the body, which corrupts, no longer burdens the soul;

earthly habitation does not depress the mind thinking of many things, but the already incorruptible body gladdens the soul, and the heavenly habitation lifts up the whole man cleaving to the vision of his Creator. The Prophet expounds the blessedness of this eternal day in that Psalm which we mentioned above, stirring up his soul and all the affections of his inner man to bless the Lord and to remember all His rewards: "Who redeems your life from ruin," he says, "who satisfies your desire with good things, who crowns you with compassion and mercy, your youth will be renewed like the eagle's. Therefore, dearest brothers, it is necessary that we, who desire to reach the rewards of this most beautiful renewal, as the ultimate circumcision, in the meantime care for the preliminary circumcision and renewal, which must be undergone daily in the exercise of virtues as in a form of remedy. Let us lay

down the old man, according to the former conduct, who is corrupted according to deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of our mind, and put on the new man, who is created according to God in justice and holiness of truth. Neither let us believe that it is sufficient to chasten ourselves by hearing circumcision only in one member of our body: but as the Apostle warns elsewhere: "Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement and pollution of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Cor. VII);

let us read the Acts of the Apostles, see the most blessed proto-martyr Stephen thundering terribly at the Jews who are persecuting him with the Lord: "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. Therefore, if the uncircumcised in heart and ears are those who resist the Holy Spirit's admonitions, there is certainly a circumcision of the heart and ears. And if there is a circumcision of the heart and ears, there is also one of all the senses of our outer and inner man. For he who has seen a woman to covet her, who has lofty eyes, has uncircumcised sight: to whom it is said by the voice of Truth: "He who is of God hears the words of God. Therefore, you do not hear, because you are not of God" (John VIII). They are uncircumcised in ears, uncircumcised in tongue and hands are those whose mouth has spoken vanity, and their right hand is the right hand of iniquity: "who speak peace to their neighbor, but evil is in their hearts, and their right hand is filled with bribes. They are uncircumcised in taste, whom the prophet rebukes, saying: "Woe to those who are strong to drink wine, and men of strength to mix drunkenness" (Isaiah V). Uncircumcised by smell and touch, who are smeared with ointment and various perfumes; who follow the embraces of a harlot, sprinkling their bed with myrrh, and aloes, and cinnamon. Uncircumcised in their steps, of whom the Psalmist mentions:

Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known (Psalm XI). But those who with all guard keep their heart, who turn their eyes away so that they do not see vanity, who fence their ears with thorns so that they do not hear the evil tongue, who taste and see how sweet the Lord is, how blessed are the men who trust in Him, who keep their paths so that they do not sin with their tongue, who, as long as there is breath in them, and the Spirit of God in their nostrils, do not speak with iniquitous lips, nor does their tongue meditate deceit, who lift up their hands to the commands of God which they love, who prevent their feet from every evil way so that they keep the word of God, all these show that they have their senses circumcised by the spiritual rock of exercise. For we read that circumcision is done with flint knives: but the rock was Christ, by whose faith, hope, and love, not only in baptism but in every truly devoted action, the hearts of the good are purified.

And this continuous circumcision of ours, which is the daily purification of the heart, never ceases to celebrate the sacrament of the eighth day, because it customarily sanctifies us in the example of the Lord's resurrection, which took place on the eighth day, that is, after the seventh of the Sabbath, so that as Christ rose from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we may also walk in newness of life, provided by God who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY XI. ON THE FEAST DAY OF THEOPHANY. MATT. III, MARK. Io, LUKE III, JOHN I. At that time, Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him, etc. The reading of the Holy Gospel, which we have just now heard, brothers, gives us a great example of perfect humility both in the Lord and in the servant. In the Lord indeed, because, although he is the Lord, he deigned not only to be baptized by a human servant but also himself to come to this one to be baptized. In the servant, however, because although he knew that he was designated to be the forerunner and baptizer of his Savior, mindful nevertheless of his own frailty, he humbly excused the office enjoined upon him, saying: I ought to be baptized by you, and do you come to me? But because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and everyone who humbles himself will be exalted, and the Lord, who in the form of a man appeared humble for the instruction of mankind, was soon exalted by God the Father above men, nay even above angels, and above all that is created, as it was made manifest by the voice descending upon him from magnificent glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And that most faithful and humble servant John, who preferred to be baptized by the Lord rather than to baptize the Lord, and who was deemed worthy to see the Spirit descending upon him with the eyes of his mind opened above other mortals. But since we have briefly touched upon these matters, let us now consider at greater length the very beginning of the sacred reading.

Then Jesus came, he said, from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. The Son of God came to be baptized by a man, not out of an anxious necessity of washing away any of his own sin—He who did no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth—but out of a pious dispensation to wash away the contagion of all our sin, we who all offend in many ways, and if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. He came to be baptized in the waters, the creator of the waters themselves, so that to us who are conceived in iniquities and born in sins, He might insinuate the mystery of the second birth, which is celebrated through water and spirit. He deigned to be washed in the waters of the Jordan, He who was clean from all stains, so that He might sanctify the streams of the waters for washing away all the stains of our sins. But since we have recognized the most humble dispensation of the Lord from the gospel reading, let us also intently observe the most humble obedience of the servant.

But John forbade Him, saying: I need to be baptized by You, and You come to me? He was terrified that He, who had no fault to be washed away by baptism, would come to him to be baptized with water, indeed He who by the grace of His Spirit would take away the entire fault of the world for believers. Hence it is rightly understood that what John says here, I need to be baptized by You, is that which is narrated in the Evangelist John when he says: Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sins of the world (John 1). For we all ought to be baptized by Him who came into the world for this purpose, to take away the sins of the world. Even John himself needed to be baptized by Him, that is, to be cleansed from the contamination of original sin, who, although no one born of women was greater [or, none were greater], nevertheless, as born of a woman, did not lack the stain of sin. Therefore, with other children of women, he needed to be washed by Him who was

born of a Virgin, who appeared as God in the flesh. For it is written: What is man that he should be clean, and he who is born of a woman that he should appear pure (Job 15)? Justly, therefore, the man, although holy but born of a woman and not immune from the stain of guilt, feared to baptize the Lord, whom he knew to be born of a virgin and to have no stain of guilt whatsoever. But because true humility is itself that which obedience does not desert, what he first feared to do, he humbly fulfilled.

But Jesus answering said to him: Allow it now, for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness: then he allowed him. That is, then he finally allowed, then he agreed, then he permitted him to be baptized by him, when he understood that all righteousness ought to be fulfilled in such an order. Allow it now, he said, allow me now, as commanded, to be baptized by you in water, and afterward you will be baptized by me in the spirit for what you seek. For thus it becomes us to set an example of fulfilling all righteousness, so that the faithful may learn that no human can exist perfectly just without the wave of Baptism, and that the duty of life-giving regeneration is necessary for all living innocently and justly, knowing that I, who was conceived and born by the work of the Holy Spirit, underwent the second birth, or rather that I consecrated the washing to myself. Let no greater person disdains to be baptized by my humble self in remission of sins, when he remembers that the Lord, who usually forgives sins by baptizing in the Holy Spirit, submitted his head to the hands of the servant to be baptized in water.

But Jesus, having been baptized, immediately went up from the water: and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and coming upon Him. And this pertains to the fulfillment of all righteousness, as the heavens were opened to the baptized Lord, and the Spirit descended upon Him, so that our faith may surely be confirmed through the mystery of sacred Baptism, opening to us the entrance of the heavenly fatherland, and the grace of the Holy Spirit being granted. For is it to be believed that the secrets of heaven were first revealed to the Lord, when true faith holds that He had remained in the bosom of the Father, and held the heavenly throne, not less in the time when He conversed with men, than before and after that? Or, did He receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit from the thirtieth year of His age, when He was baptized, who from His conception was always full of the Holy Spirit? Therefore, beloved brothers, these mysteries were celebrated for us. Because the Lord dedicated the washing of Baptism to us by the sacred immersion of His body, He also showed to us that, after receiving Baptism, the entrance to the heavens is open, and the Holy Spirit is given. And fittingly so, because the first Adam, deceived by an unclean spirit through the serpent, lost the joys of the heavenly kingdom;

the second Adam, glorified by the Holy Spirit through the dove, unlocked the gates of that same kingdom, and extinguished the flaming sword, by which the Cherubim, the guardians, had shut off the entrance to paradise after the first Adam was expelled. The second Adam on this day showed that through the water of the regenerating washing it should be extinguished, so that where he (the first Adam) was defeated by the enemy along with his spouse,

the second Adam would return victorious over the enemy with His holy Church, namely His bride, and even bestow more significant gifts of immortal life redeemed from sin, as the father of the future world, the prince of peace, gave gifts that the father of our present world, the prince of discord, having been sold under sin, lost for himself and his offspring. For that most blessed life that Adam abandoned, though glorified in incomparable light and peace and frequent vision and conversation of God and the angels, was nevertheless established in earthly places of this earth, though nourished by fruits procured without labor: but this life which Christ grants is in the fortress of the heavens, eternal life, not in frequent but in continuous light of divine contemplation. The first blessed life of man was thus immortal, so that man could not die in it, if he cautiously kept himself from the seduction of sin; but the second life will be thus immortal, so that man cannot die in it, nor be tempted by any seduction of attacking sin.

But rightly, the reconciling Spirit appeared in the dove, which is a very simple bird, to show through the nature of this animal the simplicity of His own nature. For the Holy Spirit of discipline will flee deceit, so that He teaches the one upon whom He descends to be mild, gentle, and a minister proclaiming heavenly mercy to the world; and simultaneously, He admonishes all who are to be renewed by His grace to be simple and pure in heart, according to what is written: Think of the Lord with goodness, and seek Him in the simplicity of heart. For into a malicious soul wisdom will not enter, nor dwell in a body subject to sins (Wisdom 1). Hence Simon, who chose to remain in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, could not have a part and lot in this Spirit. Indeed, he was full of that spirit who appeared to men in the serpent, infecting hearts with the pestilence of malice and deceit. But as the Spirit descended upon the Lord, let us see what follows:

And behold, a voice from the heavens said: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. The Son of God is baptized in human form, the Spirit of God descends as a dove, God the Father is declared in the voice of the holy and undivided Trinity in the mystery of the Baptism. Indeed, it is fitting that He who would command His ministers to teach all nations and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, should first personally reveal the entire Trinity at His own baptism. When the paternal voice says, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," it speaks in contrast to the earthly man, suggesting that God the Creator was, in some way, displeased with man when he sinned, as it is said: "It repents Me that I have made man on the earth" (Gen. VI). Repentance does not indeed befall God, but He speaks in our way, we who are accustomed to remorse when we see our works turn against our wish. He said it repented Him to have made man on earth, seeing him deviating from the rectitude of His creation by sinning. But in His only begotten Son, He was singularly well pleased, for He knew that this man whom He had assumed would be kept free from sin. And in this voice of the Father, as in the other mysteries of our Lord's baptism, the completion of all righteousness is declared.

The co-eternal and consubstantial Son to the Father, with the Spirit descending upon Him, is revealed to men, so that by this they may learn that through the grace of baptism, having

received the Holy Spirit, they can move from being children of the devil to being children of God, as the Apostle teaches, speaking thus to the faithful: "You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans VIII). And the evangelist John says: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John I). Therefore, beloved brothers, recalling as He Himself granted, the baptism of our Savior, let us return to ourselves, and since we have heard the humility and obedience of both the baptizer and the baptized, let us strive to preserve the baptism we received through humble obedience, cleansing ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Thus, humbly urging those who have not yet been initiated into these mysteries to undergo and keep them, and all of us who have been promoted by priestly rank to dispense these sacraments, let us humbly fulfill the office enjoined upon us. Let us all diligently strive so that we do not close against ourselves the gate of the heavenly homeland, which has been opened to us by divine mysteries, through human enticements.

For the Lord is not recounted by the evangelist Luke as having prayed after being baptized by John, and thus with the heavens opened, the Spirit and the voice of the Father could be heard, who also, after being baptized by three concurring evangelists, immediately undertook a solitary fast of forty days; but he surely taught and informed us by his example that after receiving remission of sins in baptism, we should devote ourselves to vigils, fasts, prayers, and the other fruits of the Spirit, lest the unclean spirit, which was expelled from our hearts at baptism, should find us sluggish and less vigilant, return, and finding us empty of spiritual wealth, suppress us with a sevenfold plague, and our last state becomes worse than the first. Let us be extremely careful not to kindle a fire for ourselves, which may obstruct our path of life, frequently igniting kindling of our vices. For the flaming sword, whatever it may be, which guards the gates of paradise, is extinguished for every faithful person at the font of baptism, so they might return. However, it remains ever immovable for the unfaithful. Even for the falsely called faithful, who are not elected, as they do not fear to entangle themselves in crimes after baptism, it is as if the same fire is rekindled after extinction;

so they do not deserve to enter the kingdom sought with a deceitful and double heart, more fraudulent with a serpent's tooth than with the simplicity of the dove's eye, which the Lord has shown he greatly loves in his church, who in the Song of Love says: "Behold, you are beautiful, my friend, behold you are beautiful: your eyes are doves" (Songs 1). Hence, because the form of the dove is proposed to us to learn the simplicity pleasing to God, let us more diligently observe its nature, so that by the examples of its innocence, we may adopt principles for a more correct life. This bird is entirely free from the malice of gall. Likewise, let us be alienated from the gall of malice, and let all bitterness, wrath, and indignation be taken away from us, along with all malice. Thus, it harms none with either beak or claws, nor does it seek even the smallest fish or worms, on which almost all other birds feed themselves and their chicks. Let us observe whether our teeth are weapons and arrows, lest by biting and devouring one another, we be consumed by each other. Let us restrain our hands

from plunder; let him who stole, no longer steal. But rather, let him labor, working with his hands what is good, so that he may have something to give to those in need. For the dove is often found to feed the young of others as if they were its own.

It feeds on the fruits and seed of the earth. Let us hear the apostle: "It is good not to eat meat, and not to drink wine" (Romans 14). And the apostle Peter says: "supply virtue in your faith; and in virtue, knowledge; and in knowledge, self-control; and in self-control, perseverance; and in perseverance, piety; and in piety, brotherly love" (2 Peter 1). It substitutes a coo for a song. Let us be miserable, and mourn, and weep before the Lord who made us. Let our laughter be turned to mourning, and our joy to gloom. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. It is accustomed to sit upon the waters, so that, foreseeing the shadow of an approaching hawk reflected in the waters, it avoids it. And let us be clean and purified, diligently attending to the streams of the Scriptures, by the mirrors of which we can learn to discern and guard against the traps of the ancient enemy. The Church indeed, which is the bride of Christ, loves the Scriptures, singing in the praises of her beloved: "His eyes are like doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set" (Song of Solomon 5:12). The dove is accustomed to nesting in the hollows of the rock, in the crevice of the wall. The rock is Christ, whose hands were pierced with nails, and his side with a spear while on the cross, from which immediately flowed blood and water—the mystery of our sanctification and cleansing.

The wall is his strength collected from the saints, the crevice in it is the bosom of paternal affection, where, fostering the tender souls of the faithful for the perfection of faith, hope, and love, they open up a place for nesting doves as it were. Hence, let us, who are still small in faith, humbly come under the protection of these stronger aids, always striving to be sanctified by the sacraments of the Lord's Passion. The Lord seeks such a manner of living for all of us, wishing to see the life of each of us devoted to such pursuits, rejoicing to have his praises proclaimed and sung by such voices. "Arise," he says, "my friend, my beautiful one, and come, my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall. Show me your face, let your voice sound in my ears" (Song of Solomon 2). Let it suffice to have recounted these seven virtues of the dove. And it is rightly so, perhaps, because the grace of the Holy Spirit, who descended in the form of a dove, is sevenfold. However, from all that human ingenuity can morally interpret from its nature, one remains that sacred history narrates of its mystical act.

For when the Lord, by means of the waters of the flood, washed away the crimes of the original world in the figure of future baptism, after the purification had been accomplished and desiring Noah to know how the face of the earth was, He sent out a raven, which scorned to return to the ark, signifying those who, although washed by the water of baptism, yet negligently persist in the blackest habit of the old man by not serving better, and not deserving to be renewed by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, they immediately depart from the inner unity of catholic peace and quiet, following outward things, that is, the desires of the world. He sent out after it a dove; she came to him in the evening, carrying a branch of olive with

green leaves in her beak. I believe you notice, brothers, and anticipate my speech with your understanding, that the branch of olive with green leaves is the grace of the Holy Spirit abounding with the words of life: of whose fullness resting upon Christ, the Psalm says: "God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions" (Psalm 45). Of whose gift given to the companions of Christ John speaks: "You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things" (1 John 2). And with a very beautiful comparison, the shadow of truth harmonizes. The dove of flesh carried the olive branch washed by the waters of the flood into the ark;

the Holy Spirit in the form of a bodily dove descended on the Lord baptized by the water of the Jordan. We also, members of Christ and the Church, whom not only the men who were in the ark with Noah but also the animals which the ark contained, and even the woods from which the ark itself was made, represent, after having received the washing of the water of regeneration: by the anointing of the sacred chrism we are sealed with the grace of the Holy Spirit, which may He who gave it, Jesus Christ our Lord, deem worthy to keep inviolate in us, who lives and reigns eternally. Amen.

HOMILY XII. ON THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY. Luke 2. At that time, when Jesus was twelve years old, ascended with them to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast day, and having completed the days, when they were returning, the boy Jesus remained in Jerusalem, etc.

The reading of the holy Gospel has been recited to us, dearest brothers, and there is no need for us to speak in explanation of it. For it describes the infancy and childhood of our Redeemer, by which He deigned to become a partaker of our humanity: it recalls the eternity of the divine majesty, in which He has always remained equal to the Father; so that, with the humility of His incarnation brought to mind, we might also strive to practice the medicine of true humility against all the wounds of sin, always remembering with a pious soul how much we ought to humble ourselves for divine love, and for our own salvation, we who are earth and ashes, if that highest Power did not disdain to humble Himself for us in order to descend to receiving the weaknesses of our frailty. Also, having heard, believed, and confessed the divinity of the Lord Savior, by which He always remains consubstantial and coeternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, let us hope that through the sacraments of His humanity with which we have been imbued, we might be able to reach the contemplation of His divine glory, which He Himself promises to His faithful servants with faithful piety, saying: He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me: and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him (John XIV).

"I will manifest Myself," He says, that is, not as I appear to everyone, as even unbelievers can see and crucify Me, but as in His own beauty the King of ages can be seen only by the pure eyes of the saints, I will show Myself in this manner to those who love Me, as a return of love. Therefore, let us hope, as we have said, that through the sacraments of His humanity we might ascend to see the form of His divinity, if indeed we keep those sacraments unstained

with the worthy honor of justice and holiness and truth, as we have received them, if we humbly follow the examples of His human life, and the teachings which He delivered to us through man. For who, if he disdains to follow the footsteps of His humility, with what temerity does he hope to penetrate to the joys of His glory? Therefore, what the Lord did every year with His parents, coming to Jerusalem for the Passover, is undoubtedly a sign of human humility. For it is for man to hasten to offer spiritual sacrifices to God, and to reconcile himself to his Creator with prayers and tears profusely poured out. Therefore, the Lord, born as a man among men, did what God had commanded men to do through angels. He himself observed the law he gave, so that he might show us, who are mere men, that everything God commands must be observed in all things.

Therefore, let us follow the path of his human conversation, if we delight in beholding the glory of divinity, if we desire to dwell in his eternal house in the heavens all the days of our life, if we find joy in seeing the delight of the Lord, and being protected by his holy temple (Psalm 26). And, that we may not be struck by any wind of evil in eternity, let us remember to frequent the house of the present Church with the necessary gifts of pure prayers. That he sat in the temple at the age of twelve in the midst of the doctors, listening to and questioning them, is an indication of human humility, or rather, an eminent example of learnable humility. Indeed, the power of God, the eternal wisdom of God, which speaks divinely: "I, wisdom, dwell in counsel, and I am among learned thoughts. Counsel and justice are mine, prudence is mine, strength is mine; by me kings reign, and law-makers decree what is just. Blessed is the man who listens to me, who watches daily at my doors, who waits at the posts of my doors" (Proverbs 8). Clad in human form, she deigned to come to listen to humans, to undoubtedly provide the form necessary for learning the word to people, however gifted they may be with supreme talent: lest any who refuse to become disciples of truth turn out to be teachers of error.

And fittingly, he who was to undertake the office of teaching while young, even as a little boy, listens and questions the elders, so that by their provident dispensation he curbs the audacity of those who, not only unlearned but even immature, rush to teach rather than submitting themselves to learning. Let us follow the path of his humanity, if the dwelling of divine vision delights us, always mindful of that precept: "Listen, my son, to the discipline of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother, so that grace may be added to your head, and chains around your neck" (Proverbs 1). Through the listening to paternal discipline and the observance of maternal law, grace is indeed added to our head, and chains to our neck: because the more one is attentive to listening to divine precepts, the more diligently one strives to observe them in the unity of Mother Church, the more worthily one will ascend now to the honor of preaching, and in the future, to the highest beatitude of reigning with Christ without end. But lest anyone suppose that the Lord and Savior resorted to listen and question the teachers due to any need of ignorance, let us see what follows:

All who heard him were amazed at his prudence and responses, and seeing him, they were astonished. For the same one who was truly man and truly God, to show that he was man, humbly listened to human teachers, and to prove that he was God, responded to them loftily. His mother seeking and saying:

"Son, why have you done this to us? Behold, your father and I were searching for you in sorrow. He responded: "And why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in the things of my Father? This was a sign of divine majesty, of which he says elsewhere: "All things that the Father has are mine"; and therefore he rightly testifies that the temple pertains to him no less than to the Father. Found in the temple, he says that he must be in his Father's things: because indeed, of those whose majesty and glory are one, their seat and house are also one; not only the material house of God, which is made temporarily for worshiping Him, but also the intellectual house which is built for praising Him eternally, belongs equally to the Father and the Son, indeed even to the Holy Spirit. Hence, the same Son of God who promises to his beloved about himself and the Father: "We will come to him and make our home with him (John 14)," says of the Spirit: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever, the Spirit of truth, who will remain with you and will be in you (Ibid.). Because, indeed, the dwelling of the same Holy Trinity, whose nature of divinity is one and indivisible, cannot be otherwise within the hearts of the elect.

Therefore, what the Lord says while sitting in the temple, "I must be in my Father's things," is a declaration of coeternal power and glory with God the Father. But what he was submissive to his parents when returning to Nazareth, is a sign of human truth, as well as an example of humility. For in that nature he was subject to men, in which he is lesser than the Father. Hence, he himself says: "I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I"; in which he is also made a little lower than the angels (John 14). But in that in which he and the Father are one, in which he does not go to the Father in time, but always is in him, all things were made through him, and he is before all. Greatly to be admired is the dispensation of his great mercy, who, seeing that his parents could not yet grasp the mystery of his divine majesty, showed to them the humility of human subjection, so that through this, he might gradually lead them to the recognition of his divinity. For when he said, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's things? and they did not understand the word that he spoke to them, as the evangelist following insinuates:

He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was submissive to them. Thus He revealed the secret of His divine power to His parents through His human frailty, to His true mother of His flesh, and to His most chaste guardian of His chastity, who at that time, not yet enlightened by the light of the Gospel, was almost universally estimated and called by those who knew them both as her husband by carnal union, and as the carnal father and guardian of the Lord and Savior Himself. He said to them, I must be about My Father's business. When they could not comprehend the heights of such a mystery, nor could they understand Him being involved in what truly belonged to His Father, He came down to

accompany them in their ordinary conversation, and began to dwell in the things that were theirs: and He was submissive to them for pious reasons, until they could recognize how much He was to be preferred above all creatures. Let us consider briefly what our pride does in this regard. Certainly, when we realize that simpler brothers cannot understand the mysteries of Scripture we speak of, which we have learned with the Lord's help over time and not eternity, we tend to become proud and look down on them, and boast about our unique and extensive knowledge, as if there were not many much more learned than us.

And although we do not want to be despised by the more learned, we ourselves enjoy despising and even mocking those less learned than us. We do not care to remember that it is not to those who only comprehend the mysteries of faith or the commandments of their Creator by meditation, but rather to those who exercise what they have been able to learn through action, that the gates of the heavenly kingdom are open. Furthermore, it is sin for one who knows to do good and does not do it. And as the Lord Himself witnesses, to whom much is given, much is required from them (Luke 12). Therefore, let knowledge not inflate us, but let charity rather edify us: let us follow the example of the Son of God appearing as a human, who submitted Himself with benign humility to those He saw were not yet able to follow Him to the heights of knowledge, so that by His example, their minds imbued with heavenly grace would be made capable of receiving the heavenly mysteries.

And his mother, he said, kept all these words, pondering them in her heart. All the things that the Virgin Mother knew were said or done concerning the Lord or by the Lord, she diligently kept in her heart, carefully committing all things to memory, so that when the time finally came to preach or write about His incarnation, she would be able to fully explain everything as it happened to those who sought to know. Let us also, my brothers, imitate the pious mother of the Lord, keeping all the words and deeds of our Lord and Savior fixed in our hearts, repelling the troublesome incursions of worthless and harmful thoughts through daily and nightly meditation on them: through frequent reflection on them, let us also endeavor to chastise ourselves and our neighbors from useless and ill-sweetened conversations of detraction and to incite to the frequenting of divine praise. For if, dearest brothers, we desire to dwell in the house of the Lord in the blessedness of the world to come and praise Him forever, it is certainly necessary that we diligently show in this world what we seek in the future by frequently visiting the thresholds of the Church, not only by singing the praises of the Lord in it but also by striving through words and deeds in every place of His dominion for those things that contribute to the praise and glory of our Creator.

And Jesus, it says, increased in wisdom, age, and grace before God and men. It indicates the nature of true humanity, in which He desired to grow over time, who in divinity is the same, and His years will not fail. According to the nature of man, He increased in wisdom, not by becoming wiser over time, who from the very hour of conception remained full of the spirit of wisdom, but by gradually demonstrating to others over time the same wisdom of which He was full. According to the nature of man, He increased in age, because He

advanced from infancy to childhood, from childhood to youth, through the customary order of human growth. According to the nature of man, He increased in grace, not by receiving what He did not have through the passage of time, but by revealing the gift of grace which He had. And rightly, when it was said that Jesus increased in wisdom, age, and grace, it was added, before God and men; because as He increased in age, He gradually revealed to men the gifts of wisdom and grace inherent in Him, and so He took care to always rouse them to the praise of God the Father, fulfilling what He commanded others to do: Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matthew V). And thus He is said to have increased in grace and wisdom not only among men, in so much as they could recognize His wisdom and grace, but also before God, in so much as they reported the wisdom and grace which they recognized in Him to His praise and glory: to whose eternal blessings and gifts be praise and thanksgiving forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY XIII. ON THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY. JOHN. II. At that time there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there, etc.

Our Lord and Savior, having been invited to the wedding, not only deigned to come but also to perform a miracle there to gladden the guests, confirming rightly the faith of believers by means of the figures of heavenly sacraments, even according to the letter. Furthermore, it indicates how damnable the disbelief of Tatian, Marcion, and others who disparage marriage is. For if there were guilt in an undefiled bed and marriages celebrated with due chastity, the Lord would by no means have wished to come to these, or to consecrate them with the beginnings of His signs. But now, because conjugal chastity is good, widowhood's continence is better, and virginal perfection is the best, He deigned to be born from the inviolate womb of the Virgin Mary to validate the chosen status of all degrees while distinguishing the merit of each. Immediately after His birth, He is blessed by the prophetic lips of the widow Anna; as a youth, He is invited by those celebrating weddings and honors them with the presence of His power. But now let us return to the higher joy of the heavenly figures. For the Son of God came to the wedding to perform miracles on earth, to indicate that He Himself is the one of whom the Psalmist foretold under the symbol of the sun: "And He like a bridegroom coming out of His chamber rejoiced as a giant to run His course; His going forth is from the end of heaven" (Ps. 19:5-6). He also said elsewhere concerning Himself and His faithful:

"Can the children of the bridechamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and then they will fast" (Matt. 9:15). For indeed from the time when the incarnation of our Savior began to be promised to the patriarchs, it was awaited with many tears and mourning of the saints until it came. Similarly, since His ascension to the Father after the resurrection, all the hope of the saints depends on His return. But in the time He lived among men, they could not weep and mourn because they had Him with them physically whom they loved spiritually. Therefore, Christ is the bridegroom, His Church is the bride, and the children of the bride-

groom or the wedding are each of His faithful: the time of the wedding is that time when through the mystery of the incarnation He united to Himself a holy Church. Thus, by no accident but by the grace of a certain mystery, He came to a wedding celebrated in a carnal manner on earth, Who descended from heaven to earth to bind the Church to Himself with spiritual love; whose chamber indeed was the unstained womb of the mother, in which God was joined to human nature and from which He proceeded as a bridegroom to associate with His Church.

The first site of the wedding was in Judea, where the Son of God deigned to become man, to consecrate the Church with the participation of His body, and to confirm it in faith with the pledge of His Spirit. But when the Gentiles were called to faith, the joyous celebration of these same weddings extended to the ends of the earth. Nor is it without mystery that it is reported that the wedding took place on the third day after the events previously described by the Evangelist, but it designates that in the third age of the world the Lord came to unite the Church to Himself. For the first age of the world was under the exemplars of the patriarchs before the law, the second under the writings of the prophets within the law, and the third under the grace proclaimed by the evangelists, shining upon the world as the light of the third day, in which our Lord and Savior appeared born in the flesh for the redemption of humanity. But even the fact that the wedding took place in Cana of Galilee, that is, in the zeal of a completed transmigration, typically announces that those are especially worthy of Christ's grace who burn with the zeal of pious devotion, and emulate greater charisms, and know to migrate from vices to virtues, from earthly to eternal desires, by good deeds, hoping and loving.

As the Lord reclined at the wedding, the wine ran out, so that with the wine made better by His miraculous order, the glory of the hidden God in the man might be manifested, and the faith of believers in Him might grow stronger. And if we seek the mystery: at the manifestation of the Lord in the flesh, the sweet meaning of the old law began to gradually fail due to the carnal interpretation of the Pharisees, which He soon converted to spiritual doctrine, and by the power of evangelical heavenly grace altered the entire surface of the legal letter, which is to make wine from water. But first let us attempt to understand what it means when the wine ran out, and the mother of Jesus said to Him:

"They have no wine." He replied: "What is that to you and to me, woman? My hour has not yet come." For He would neither dishonor His mother, who commands us to honor father and mother, nor deny that she is His mother, from whose virginal flesh He did not disdain to take flesh, even with the Apostle as a witness who says: "Who was made to him from the seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom. 1:3). How could He be from the seed of David according to the flesh, if not from the body of Mary according to the flesh, who descended from the seed of David? But in saying, while about to perform a miracle, "What is that to you and to me, woman?" He signifies that He did not receive the beginning of His divinity, by which the miracle was to be accomplished, from His mother temporally, but always had eternity from the Father. "What is that to you and to me, woman?" He says, when the

divinity, which I always had from the Father, is not shared with your flesh, from which I took flesh. But the hour will come when He will show what He had in common with His mother, when, dying on the cross, He took care to commend the virgin to the virgin disciple. For suffering the weakness of the flesh, He piously commended His mother, known by this, to the disciple whom He loved most, while pretending not to recognize her as if unknown when about to perform divine things, because He acknowledges that she is not the author of His divine birth.

There were, however, six stone water jars set there for the purification of the Jews, each holding two or three measures. Water jars are called vessels prepared to receive water: for in Greek, δωρ is called water. Water, however, designates the knowledge of the sacred Scriptures, which is accustomed both to cleanse its listeners from the filth of sins and to quench them from the fountain of divine knowledge. The six vessels in which the water was contained are the devoted hearts of the saints, whose perfection of life and faith has been proposed as an example for right living and believing to the human race through the six ages of the passing world, that is, up to the time of the Lord's Passion. And well are the vessels stone: because the hearts of the just are strong, as it were solidified by the faith and love of that stone which Daniel saw cut out of the mountain without hands, made into a great mountain, and filled the whole earth, and of which Zechariah says: "In one stone, seven eyes are fixed" (Zech. III); that is, in Christ the entirety of spiritual knowledge dwells: to whom also the Apostle Peter refers, saying: "Coming to Him, a living stone, you are being built up as living stones" (1 Pet. II). Well were the water jars placed according to the purification of the Jews only, because to the people of the Jews only was the law given through Moses.

For the grace of the Gospel and the truth were made not less to the Gentiles than to the Jews through Jesus Christ. He says, each holding two or three measures, because the authors and ministers of the sacred Scriptures, the prophets, sometimes speak only of the Father and Son, as in: "You have made all things in wisdom" (Psalm 104). The power of God in wisdom is Christ: sometimes they also make mention of the Holy Spirit, as in the Psalmist's word: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made firm, and all their power by the spirit of His mouth" (Psalm 33). Understand by the word of the Lord and the spirit, the whole Trinity, who is one God. But as much as the difference between water and wine, so much is the difference between the understanding by which the Scriptures were comprehended before the advent of the Savior, and that which He Himself revealed to the apostles when He came, and which their disciples were left to follow perpetually. Indeed, the Lord could have filled the jars with wine, who at the beginning of human creation made all things from nothing; but He preferred to make wine from water, typically teaching that He had come not to dissolve and disapprove the law and the prophets, but rather to fulfill them, and to do and teach nothing through the grace of the Gospel other than what the legal and prophetic Scriptures indicated He would do and teach.

Therefore let us see, brothers, six water jars filled with the saving water of the Scriptures, and let us see that same water turned into the most delightful smell and taste of wine. In

the first age of the world, the righteous Abel was killed by the envy of his brother: and for this very reason, blessed with the eternal glory of martyrdom, he received the praise of righteousness even in the Gospel and Apostolic writings, and the impious fratricide suffered the penalties of eternal curse. Whoever, hearing these things, fears to be condemned with the wicked, desiring to be blessed with the righteous, will cast away the spark of all hatred and envy, and take care to please God through the sacrifice of righteousness, modesty, innocence, and patience, they find a vessel full of water in the Scripture from which they may rejoice to be washed and quenched wholesomely. But if they understand that Cain, the murderer, is the perfidy of the Jews, and the killing of Abel is the passion of the Savior, and the earth that opened its mouth and received his blood from the hand of Cain is the Church, which received the blood of Christ shed by the Jews in the mystery of its renewal, they surely find water turned into wine, because they understand the sacred sayings of the law more sacredly.

In the second age of the world, the world was destroyed by the waters of the flood because of the magnitude of sins, but only Noah was saved because of his righteousness with his household in the ark. Upon hearing about the horrible devastation of this plague and the marvelous liberation of the few, whoever begins to live more uprightly, desiring to be freed with the elect and fearing to be exterminated with the reprobate, surely finds the water jar by which he would be cleansed or refreshed. But indeed, when he begins to look more deeply, and understands the Church in the ark, Christ in Noah, the water that deluged the sinners as the water of Baptism, which washes away sins, the various differences of those baptized in the men and animals the ark contained, the dove, which after the flood brought the olive branch into the ark, as the anointing of the Holy Spirit with which the baptized are imbued, he marvels indeed at the wine made from water, because in the old history of the event he contemplates his own cleansing, sanctification, justification being prophesied. In the third age of the world, God, testing Abraham's obedience, commanded his only son whom he loved to be offered as a burnt offering to Himself. Abraham does not delay to do what he is commanded, but a ram is sacrificed instead of his son, yet he is endowed with the inheritance of eternal blessing because of his extraordinary virtue of obedience. Behold you have the third jar.

Hearing how great the virtue of obedience is, how great the reward it receives, you yourself strive to learn and have obedience. But if you understand the sacrifice of the beloved only son as His passion, about whom the Father says: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Mt. III); in which, because the divinity remained impassible, only the humanity suffered death and pain, the son is as if offered, but the ram is slaughtered. If you understand the blessing which was promised to Abraham, to be fulfilled in you through the faith of the nations, surely for you He has made wine from water, because He has opened the spiritual sense, the new fragrance of which inebriates you. At the beginnings of the fourth age, David is chosen for the salvation of the kingdom of the Israelite people, humble, innocent, and meek, an exile for him whose unjust persecution he endured for a long time. Behold, the fourth jar is filled with the fountain of salvation. Anyone hearing this and striving to

humility and innocence, and beginning to repel pride and envy from his own heart, finds it like a draft of the clearest water, by which he is refreshed. But if he understands that Saul represents the Jews persecuting, and David represents Christ and the Church, perceiving that due to their infidelity both their carnal and spiritual kingdom has been destroyed, but the kingdom of Christ and the Church is always to remain, surely he senses the cup of wine made from water;

since he knows himself and his life and kingdom, but even the very king, where previously he read it as if of others in the old history. In the fifth age of the world, the sinning people are carried off into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon: but after seventy years, penitently and corrected, they are led back to their homeland by Jesus the great priest, where they rebuild the house of God that was burned and the holy city that was destroyed. Reading or hearing this, anyone who takes heed of the fear of sinning and runs to the remedy of penance, is washed with the purifying water of the jar. But if he has learned to understand Jerusalem and the temple of God as the Church of Christ, Babylon as the confusion of sins, Nebuchadnezzar as the devil, Jesus the great priest as Jesus Christ the true and eternal high priest, seventy years as the fullness of good works which are granted through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, namely for the sake of the Decalogue and the sevenfold grace of the same Spirit, and sees this happening daily, some being snatched from the Church by the devil through sin, others being reconciled through Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit through repentance, he has wine made from water;

because, understanding that what is written pertains to him, he immediately, with great fervor of contrition, as if heated by new wine, demands to be liberated through the grace of Christ from whatever sin of captivity he finds in himself. At the beginning of the sixth age of the world, the Lord appearing in the flesh, on the eighth day of his birth according to the law He was circumcised, and on the thirty-third day after this He was brought to the temple, and the legal offerings were made for Him. Intuiting these things to the letter, we openly learn with how great diligence the mysteries of evangelical faith are to be undertaken by us, when He Himself, bringing the blessing of grace, who gave the law of the letter, first cares to be consecrated by the ritual ceremonies of old, by which He consecrates all things divinely, and thus to simultaneously undertake and deliver the new sacraments of grace. Behold, the sixth jar brings water purer than the others, to wash away the contagions of sin, to drink the joys of life.

But if in the circumcision of the eighth day you understand baptism, which in the mystery of the Lord's resurrection redeemed us from the death of sins, and you recognize it as prefigured in the presentation in the temple and the offering of a cleansing sacrifice, you know that the faithful are to enter from the baptistery to the holy altar and should be consecrated with the unique victim of the Lord's body and blood, symbolized by the wine made from water, a most excellent gift indeed. Furthermore, if you interpret the day of circumcision as the general resurrection of the human race, when the mortal offspring will cease, and all mortality will be changed into immortality, and you understand that the circumcised are

brought into the temple with sacrifices, then after the resurrection, when the universal judgment is fulfilled, the saints, now made incorrupt, will enter to contemplate perpetually the visage of divine majesty with the gifts of good works: indeed, you will marvel that wine is made from water, whose creator you rightfully proclaim and say: And your cup inebriating, how splendid it is! Therefore, the Lord did not wish to make wine for the joys of the wedding out of nothing, but commanding that the six jars be filled with water, He miraculously converted this into wine, because He granted the six ages of the world the largesse of saving wisdom, which however, He himself, coming, enriched with the power of superior understanding. For what the carnal minded carnally understood, He revealed to be understood spiritually.

Do you want to hear, brothers, how He made wine from water? He appeared after His resurrection to two disciples walking on the road, and He went with them, and beginning from Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Do you want to hear again how they were inebriated with the same wine? Later, recognizing who it was who imparted to them the word of life, they said to each other: Was not our heart burning within us while He spoke on the road and opened the Scriptures to us? (Luke 24).

Jesus then says to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. What do the servants who are commanded to do these things signify, if not the disciples of Christ, who filled the jars with water? Indeed, they did not themselves fill past ages of the world with legal and prophetic writings, but by wisely understanding and faithfully revealing, because the Scripture, which was ministered by the prophets, was both beneficial for drawing heavenly wisdom and useful for the correction of actions. They filled them up to the brim because they rightly understood that no age of the world was devoid of holy teachers, who by words, examples, or even Scriptures, would open the way of life to mortals. And he says to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." And they took it. The master of the banquet is someone learned in the law of that time, perhaps Nicodemus or Gamaliel, or his disciple then Saul, but now Paul the apostle, the teacher of the whole Church. And when the word of the Gospel, which was hidden in the letter of the law and the prophecy, is entrusted to such people, wine made from water is indeed offered to the master of the banquet. Hence it is fittingly stated that the master of the banquet, having called the bridegroom, said:

"Every man sets out the good wine first, and when they have become drunk, then that which is worse. But you have kept the good wine until now." Because it is the mark of teachers to know the distinction between the law and the Gospel, between truth and shadow, and to offer the new grace of evangelical faith and the eternal gifts of the heavenly homeland, in comparison to all old institutions and all earthly kingdom promises.

This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory. He manifested by this sign that He was the King of Glory, and therefore the Bridegroom of the Church, who would come to the marriage as an ordinary man, but as the Lord of Heaven

and Earth, would change the elements as He willed. The beautiful harmony of events is that He, at the beginning of the signs which He was to show to mortals while He was still mortal, changed water into wine: He, by the beginning of the signs which He, having become immortal through the resurrection, was to show to those pursuing the studies of immortal life alone, imbued their previously carnal and as it were insipid minds with the flavor of heavenly knowledge. For at first remaining on earth, by the gift of His Spirit, He opened their understanding so that they might understand the Scriptures: and afterwards, sending the same Spirit from Heaven, He infused their hearts with greater fervor of heavenly love and spiritual wisdom, additionally giving them the knowledge of all languages, by which they might adequately offer to the whole world the grace of life which they had received. These, therefore, are the nuptials of Christ and the Church, dearest brothers, which were then prefigured in one city, and are now celebrated throughout the whole world, let us love with all our mind, and let us diligently unite ourselves with the heavenly joys of these, by intent of indefatigable good works.

Since by faith we have been called into the world of love, let us strive to celebrate, and let us carefully wash away the stains of our actions and thoughts before the day of the final judgment by examining them; lest perchance the King entering then, who made the marriage feast for His Son, if He sees us not having the wedding garment of love, cast us out, and binding our feet and hands from good actions, send us into outer darkness. Let us cleanse the strong vessels of our hearts by faith according to the purification of the heavenly precepts, let us fill them with the water of saving knowledge, by frequently attending to sacred reading. Let us ask the Lord to warm with the fervor of His love the very grace of knowledge He has bestowed upon us (lest perhaps it puff up), and to convert it to the seeking of higher things alone and wisdom, so that being spiritually intoxicated, we too may with the Prophet sing: You have made us drink wine of compunction (Psalm 59). Thus it comes to pass that, as we too make good progress, both now partially as we are able to contain it, and in the future perfectly, Jesus may manifest His glory to us, in which He lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY XIV. ON THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY JOHN. I, MATT. III, MARK. I, LUKE III. At that time, John saw Jesus coming to him and said: Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sins of the world, etc. John the Baptist, the forerunner of our Lord and Savior, whom he had long predicted by word to the people as coming, now, as you heard from the reading of the holy Gospel, brothers, as it was being read, immediately pointed out with his finger, saying:

Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sins of the world. Behold the Lamb of God, behold the innocent one and free from all sin, as indeed the bone from the bones of Adam and flesh from the flesh of Adam, but who took not any stain of guilt from sinful flesh. Behold Him who takes away the sins of the world, behold Him who is righteous among sinners, meek among the impious, that is, appearing as a lamb among wolves, who has the power to justify even sinners and wicked. And how He takes away the sins of the

world, in what order He justifies the ungodly, the apostle Peter shows, who says: You were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1). And in the Apocalypse, the apostle John, whose Gospel this is: Who loved us, he says, and washed us from our sins in His own blood (Rev. 1). Not only did He wash us from our sins in His blood, when He gave His blood on the cross for us, or when each of us was washed in the water of Baptism by the mystery of His sacred passion, but He also takes away the sins of the world daily.

He therefore washes us from our sins daily in His blood when the memory of His blessed passion is repeated at the altar, when the creation of bread and wine is transferred into the Sacrament of His body and blood by an ineffable sanctification of the Spirit: and thus His body and blood are not poured out and slain by the hands of infidels to their own destruction, but are taken by the mouth of the faithful to their salvation. The paschal lamb in the law rightly showed the figure of this, who, having once liberated the people from the Egyptian bondage, through the annual sacrifice in memory of that same liberation, used to sanctify the same people, until He came to whom such a witness was given by this sacrifice, and offered to the Father for us as a sacrifice and a sweet-smelling savor, transferring the mystery of His passion into the creation of bread and wine by being offered as a lamb, made a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

John, bearing witness about the Lord, says, "This is he of whom I said: After me comes a man who ranks before me because he was before me." After me comes a man, born after me in the world, who will begin to preach to the world after me, who was made before me, who surpasses me in the majesty of power as much as the sun outshines the morning star, though appearing after, because he was before me, because 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' After me comes a man, understand the time of human birth in which he comes later than John. Who was made before me, consider the primacy of royal power, in which he also presides over angels. Because he was before me, understand the eternity of divine majesty, in which he is equal to the Father. After me comes a man who was made before me, because he was before me. After me comes in humanity, who therefore surpasses me in dignity, because he was before me in divinity.

And I did not know him, he says. It is certain that John knew the Lord, to whom he was sent to bear witness, whom he proclaimed coming as the judge of all, saying: "His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will thoroughly clear his threshing floor" (Mt. III); he testified that the Holy Spirit would be given by him, saying, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit," from whom he desired to be cleansed, saying: "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" How then does he say: "And I did not know him," unless it be that he whom he had known before he recognized more perfectly when he was baptized? Whom he had known as the Savior and judge of the world, he recognized more deeply the power of his majesty when the Holy Spirit descended upon him. For it is not to be doubted that blessed John, when he deserved to see the Holy Spirit in bodily form, when he deserved to

hear the voice of the Father sounding corporally, gained much from this vision and hearing, and received much of the excellence of divine power revealed to the eyes of his mind from heavenly knowledge from God, so that in comparison with the understanding with which he began to be illuminated, it seemed to him that he had altogether been ignorant of how great he was before. Bearing witness to the Lord diligently, he adds:

"But that it might be made manifest in Israel, therefore I came baptizing in water. Which is to say openly: I did not come baptizing in water because I could take away the sins of the world by baptizing, but that by baptizing and preaching I might make manifest to the people of Israel him who baptizes in the Holy Spirit for the taking away of sins not only of Israel but of the whole world, if they are willing to believe in him, who baptizes in repentance, that by thus baptizing I might prepare the way for him who baptizes in the remission of sins.

And John bore testimony, saying: Because I saw the Spirit descending like a dove from heaven, and it remained upon him. Well did the Spirit descend in the form of a dove upon the Lord, so that the faithful might learn that they cannot otherwise be filled with his Spirit unless they are simple, unless they have true peace with their brothers, which the kisses of the doves signify. Yet ravens also kiss, but they wound, which the dove never does: signifying those who speak peace with their neighbor, but evil is in their hearts. The nature of the dove, which is innocent of wounding, well fits those innocent ones who follow peace with all and holiness, being careful to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And therefore the Spirit descending as a dove not only denotes his own innocence and simplicity, or that of him upon whom he descended, but also equally of those who in goodness feel of him, and in simplicity of heart seek him. The Lord himself, praising such unanimous piety and gentleness bestowed by spiritual grace, speaks: My dove is one, my perfect one, unique to her mother, elect to her who bore her (Cant. VI). For the Spirit calls the mother and parent of the Church by grace, by which she was inspired to rightly also be called a dove. Finally, in the Hebrew language in which the holy Scripture was written, spirit is called by a feminine gender. Therefore it is fitting that the Church, one dove of Christ, is called chosen for her mother and parent: because evidently, just as it is gathered into the unity of the Christian faith from many peoples, just as it rejoices in mutual dove-like peace, just as it is blessed among the elect, it has not of its own merit, but received it as a gift of spiritual grace."

And I, he says, did not know him. One understands as subtly as the Spirit descending upon him, I recognized.

But he who sent me to baptize with water, he said to me: Upon whom you will see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. The Lord baptizes with the Holy Spirit by the grace of the Holy Spirit, forgiving sins. For whether he himself first baptized some of his disciples with water, through whom the river of the Baptist would flow to other faithful ones, he also baptized them with the Spirit, forgiving their sins and bestowing the gifts of the Spirit, or whether his faithful ones, invoking his name, baptized the chosen ones with water, and anointed them with sacred chrism, he

nonetheless baptizes the same with the Holy Spirit because no one besides him can loosen the bonds of sins or bestow the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Hence, the evangelist John, after saying: The Pharisees heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, immediately added: (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but his disciples), clearly saying [or explaining] that even if Jesus' disciples baptize with water in his name, he is to be understood as the one who truly baptizes, who forgives sins. Moreover, the Lord baptizes with the Holy Spirit when, through the inspiration of the same Spirit, he enkindles the hearts of his faithful with the fervor of his [or their] brotherly love. For love, he says, is diffused in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

He baptizes with the Holy Spirit when he gives to any of the chosen ones the manifestation of the Spirit unto the profit of working virtues. Thus, before his ascension into heaven, he said to his disciples: But you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence (Acts I). However, it is worth contemplating carefully because when he said: Upon whom you will see the Spirit descending, he added, And remaining on him; for indeed the Spirit descends upon his saints. But because, as long as they are in the body, they cannot be free from sin, because they cannot always fix the eye of their mind on heavenly contemplation but often turn it to the care of earthly conversation, undoubtedly the Spirit comes to and leaves their hearts at times. Hence it is said: The Spirit breathes where he wills, and you hear his voice, but you do not know where he comes from or where he goes (John III). For indeed the Spirit comes to and goes from the saints so that, not being able to have him always, they may be refreshed by the frequent light of his returning presence. However, in the only mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, the Spirit truly and perpetually remains, in whom he finds no stain of impure thought that he would avoid. Moreover, he remained entirely in him not only from the time when John saw him descending upon him but from the time he began to be conceived through his ministry and work.

Hence, he has the power of giving the Spirit to men no less than the Father himself, as attested by him who says: But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things (John XIV). And in another place, he shows that he himself sends him, saying: For if I do not go, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you (John XVI). For indeed, one is the substance in divinity, the inseparable operation of the Father, and the Son, and the same Holy Spirit. For concerning the Holy Spirit himself, that he comes where he wills at his own will and operates what he wills by his own power, the Son bears witness when he says, as I mentioned above: The Spirit breathes where he wills. Moreover, all these things, says the Apostle, are worked by one and the same Spirit, distributing to each one individually as he wills (I Cor. XII). Therefore, the Spirit is shown to descend upon him who is always to remain in him at baptism, so that both the Baptist himself might now recognize him more clearly whom he proclaimed [or predicted], and he might give a sign to the believers that they could not merit the martyr without being baptized by the same Spirit.

Meanwhile, it must be examined how it could be a special sign of recognizing the Son of God that the Spirit descended and remained upon him, when he even promises to the disciples, saying: And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete, to remain with you forever, the Spirit of truth (John XIV). And shortly thereafter: For he will remain with you and will be in you. If indeed he remains with God's chosen servants and will be in them, what great thing is it for the Son of God that the Spirit is affirmed to remain in him? And it should be noted that the Holy Spirit always remained in the Lord, but in holy men, as long as they bear the mortal body, he remains partly forever, partly withdrawing to return. For he indeed remains with them so that they may persist in good deeds, love voluntary poverty, acquire meekness, mourn for eternal desire, hunger and thirst for righteousness, embrace mercy, purity of heart, and the tranquillity of peace: and also they do not fear to suffer persecution for the sake of observing justice, desiring to persist in almsgiving, prayers, and fastings, and other fruits of the Spirit. However, he withdraws for a time, so they may not always have the power to heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons, or even prophesy. He remains always so they may have the virtue to live marvellously;

he comes for a time so that through signs of miracles he may shine forth to others as such within.

And I saw, he said, and I bore witness that this is the Son of God. Above he said, After me comes a man who was made before me, now he bears witness that this is the Son of God, clearly indicating the truth of both natures, namely human and divine, in one and the same person of Christ. Let the Manichean blush hearing, A man comes; let Photinus be silent hearing, This is the Son of God. Let the meek hear and rejoice, for a man comes after John stronger than John, who baptizes in the Holy Spirit, and because this is the Son of God. For because we humans withdrew from God through pride, the Son of God through mercy was made man, so that in the same person he might be suitable both to the Father through divinity, and to us through humanity: through humanity like us, to fight for us against the enemy, through divinity consubstantial to the Father to worthily recreate us to the image and likeness of God, which we lost by sinning: to destroy through the death of our fragility him who had the power of death, and through the impassible power of his divinity to reconcile us to God the Father, with whom he lives and reigns as God in the unity of the Holy Spirit, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY XV. ON THE PURIFICATION OF BLESSED MARY. LUKE II. At that time, after the days of Mary's purification according to the law of Moses were fulfilled, they brought Jesus, etc.

The solemnity of today's celebration, which we venerate on the fortieth day of the Lord's nativity with due offices, is especially significant in its dedication to the humility of the same Lord our Savior and His undefiled mother, as pointed out by the sacred reading of the Gospel. It explains that those who were not indebted to the law submitted themselves in all things to fulfill the legal decrees. For as we heard when the Gospel was read, "When the days of her purification were fulfilled (that is, of His mother) according to the law of

Moses, they took Him 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. The law commanded that a woman who had received seed and given birth to a son would be unclean for seven days, and on the eighth day should circumcise the boy and give him a name. After that, she should abstain from the temple and from her husband's bed for thirty-three more days, until on the fortieth day of the nativity she would bring her son to the Temple of the Lord with offerings. Every firstborn male was to be called holy to the Lord, and thus all pure things should be offered to God, while impure ones should be exchanged for or killed in place of the pure, and every firstborn human must be redeemed with five shekels of silver.

If a woman gave birth to a female, she was commanded to be unclean for fourteen days, and for sixty-six more days to stay away from the temple, until on the eightieth day of the nativity, which was called the day of her purification, she would come to sanctify herself and her offspring with offerings, and thus finally return to her husband's bed free. Let us, dearest brothers, ponder more diligently the words of the law that we have proposed, and we will see very clearly how the most blessed Mother of God and perpetual Virgin Mary, together with the Son she bore, were entirely free from all subjection to the law. For when the law states that a woman who has conceived seed and given birth is declared unclean, and for long periods must be cleansed with the progeny she bore through offerings of sacrifices, it indeed shows clearly that the one who bore as a virgin without receiving male seed, together with the Son who was born to her, is neither declared unclean nor taught to be cleansed through the saving sacrifices. But just as our Lord and Savior, who gave the law of divinity, appearing as a man, chose to be under the law so that He might redeem those who were under the law and that we might receive adoption as sons; so too, His blessed Mother, who by singular privilege was above the law, did not shun to submit to the legal institutions, to show an example of humility, according to the wise man's saying:

"The greater you are, the more humble yourself in all things" (Eccli. III).

"And to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. This was the offering of the poor. For the Lord indeed commanded in the law that whoever could afford it, should offer a lamb for a son or daughter, along with a turtledove or a pigeon; but whoever could not afford a lamb, should offer two turtledoves or two young pigeons. Therefore the Lord, ever mindful of our salvation, not only became man, though he was God, but also, though he was rich, he deigned to become poor for us, so that through his poverty and humanity, he might make us partakers of his wealth and divinity. But it is fitting to consider briefly why these particular birds are commanded to be offered as a sacrifice to the Lord. For it is read that even the patriarch Abraham, long before the time of the law, offered these birds in a holocaust to the Lord, and in several ceremonies of the law, he who was to be cleansed was commanded to be purified through these birds. Hence, the dove signifies simplicity, and the turtledove indicates chastity; for the dove is a lover of simplicity, and the turtledove of chastity, to such an extent that if it accidentally loses its mate, it does not care to seek another. Therefore in the praises of the Church the

Lord says: 'Thy cheeks are comely as a turtledove's' (Cant. I). And again: 'Behold, thou art fair, my love;

behold, thou art fair, thine eyes are as doves.' (Cant. IV). One has cheeks like those of a turtledove, who keeps himself pure and free from every stain of unchastity; and has eyes like those of doves, who, desiring to harm no one, regards even his enemies with simple love. But both mentioned birds, because they are accustomed to produce a cooing sound for their song, designate the weeping of the saints in this world, of which the Lord remembers, saying: 'Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.' (John XVI). And again: 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.' (Matthew V). Thus deservedly are the turtledove and the dove offered to the Lord as a sacrifice: because the simple and chaste conduct of the faithful is indeed a pleasing sacrifice of righteousness to Him; for he who toils in his groaning, who washes his couch with tears every night, indeed sacrifices the most acceptable victim to God. Moreover, since both these birds, on account of their habit of mourning, represent the present laments and heavenly desires of the saints, yet they differ in that the turtledove is accustomed to mourn solitary, while the dove mourns in flocks; and therefore the former indicates private tears of prayer, the latter public assemblies of the Church. And rightly was the boy Jesus circumcised first, and then after some days brought to Jerusalem with a sacrifice;

for He, now a young man, first overcame every corruption of the flesh by dying and rising again, and then after some days ascended to the joys of the heavenly city with the same now immortal flesh which He had offered as a sacrifice to God for our salvation. And each one of us is first washed of all sins in the true circumcision of baptism, and thus with the advancing grace of the new light, enters the holy altar to be consecrated by the life-giving sacrifice of the Lord's body and blood. For even the singularly simple and chaste humanity of our Savior, offered to God the Father for us, can be fittingly expressed figura-tively by the sacrifice of a dove or turtle-dove. At the end of the world, the whole Church too, after the common resurrection, will cast off all the dross of earthly mortality and corruption, and thenceforth, commended to the Lord by the sacrifices of good works, will be transferred into the kingdom of the heavenly Jerusalem. Now, that Simeon and Anna, that venerable man and woman of advanced age, received the Lord with devout acts of confession, recognizing Him as small in body but great in divinity, surely symbolizes the synagogue of the Jewish people;

which, having been long fatigued by the expectation of His incarnation, promptly received Him as He came, exalting and magnifying Him with pious actions and sincere voices, crying out to Him saying: 'Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation, and I have waited for you all day long.' (Psalm XXV). But this too must be said, that rightly both sexes rejoiced at His coming, who appeared as the Redeemer of both. Indeed, my brothers, the words with which the same Simeon prophesies to the Lord and speaks to His mother must be listened to with great fear:"

Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against. And a sword shall pierce through your own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. For it is much desired to be heard, that the Lord is set for the resurrection of many, because as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive; for he also says: I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die (John XI). But it sounds no less terrifying what is said before, Behold, this child is set for the fall. For it is quite unfortunate, who after recognizing the glory of the resurrection falls more grievously, who after seeing the light of truth is blinded by heavier clouds of sins. Therefore, it must be our utmost concern to always remember to practice in our deeds what we know to be right, lest it be said of us that which was said by the apostle Peter: For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

And for a sign, he adds, which shall be spoken against. Many of the Jews often oppose the sign of the cross outwardly, many of the Gentiles contradict it; many, which is more serious, false brethren follow this inwardly under the pretense of profession, but through the truth of perverse actions deeply persecute it, saying that they know God, but denying Him by their deeds. And a sword shall pierce through your own soul also. He calls the sword the effect of the Lord's passion and death on the cross, which pierced Mary's soul: for she could not see her crucified and dying son without bitter grief, though she never doubted that he would rise again as God, yet she grieved, fearing his death as if he were born from her flesh.

So that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. Before the Lord's incarnation, the thoughts of many were veiled, nor was it widely apparent who burned with love for the eternal, who preferred temporal goods in mind over heavenly: but with the birth of the King of heaven on earth, each pious person immediately rejoiced, but Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. While preaching and performing miracles, all the crowds both feared and glorified the God of Israel: but the Pharisees and the Scribes rabidly attacked his saving words and deeds. When he suffered on the cross, the impious were filled with foolish joy, the pious with just sadness; but upon rising from the dead and ascending into heaven, the joy of these was turned from mourning, and the sadness of those was changed to eternal joy: and thus, according to the prophecy of blessed Simeon, with the Lord appearing in the flesh, the thoughts of many hearts were revealed. This revelation of different thoughts was not only carried out then in Judea, but even now it is believed to occur among us. Even now, with the appearance of the Lord, the thoughts of many hearts are revealed, as when the word of salvation is read or preached, some of the listeners gladly listen, rejoicing to complete in action what they learned by hearing; others, disdaining what they hear, strive not to carry it out but rather to insult and counter it.

Therefore, it is fitting, brothers, that whenever we feel that some contrary thing suffers from hard [our] listeners, we imitate the sadness of heart of those who held the word of God in the flesh with worthy pain of compassion: and whenever we see the same word rise in the

minds of faithful listeners through love, and advance to the glory of our Creator through good works, let us rejoice with those who happily saw Christ rise from the dead and ascend into heaven. Indeed, as we have known that chaste, simple, and lamenting birds were accustomed to be offered to the Lord, which signifies our sobriety, simplicity, and heart compunction always to be offered to our Author, one must look more diligently: for it is not by chance that two turtledoves or two young pigeons, with one from these to be offered for a sin, and the other as a burnt offering, are commanded. There are indeed two kinds of compunctions, with which the faithful sacrifice themselves to the Lord on the altar of the heart: for surely, as we have received from the sayings of the Fathers, the soul thirsting for God is first pierced with fear, then with love. First, it afflicts itself with tears, because when it recalls its evils, it greatly fears to suffer eternal punishments, which is to offer one turtledove or young pigeon for sins;

but when the prolonged anxiety of sorrow has consumed the fear, a certain security from the assurance of pardon is born, and the mind is inflamed with the love of heavenly joys. And he who wept first lest he be led to punishment begins afterward to weep most bitterly because he is delayed from the kingdom, which is to make a burnt offering from the other turtledove or young pigeon: for burnt offering is called entirely burnt. And he makes himself a burnt offering to the Lord, who, having despised all earthly things, finds it sweet to seek this alone through mourning and tears, to burn with the desire alone for supernal beatitude. For the mind contemplates what those choirs of angels are, what that society of blessed spirits is, what majesty of the eternal vision of God is, and weeps more because it lacks the eternal good things than it wept before when it feared eternal evils. May he deign to accept both of our compunction offerings gratefully, who both mercifully forgives errors to those who mourn and are afflicted for sin, and refreshes with the light of his eternal vision those fervently intent for the entry into heavenly life, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY XVI. ON LENT. GIOVANNA. V. There was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

The reading of the holy Gospel today gives us two miracles of human healing together; one invisibly through angelic administration, the other through the visible exhibition of the Lord's presence: but we must briefly explain the mysteries of both, lest a lengthy explanation of a lengthy reading may perhaps be burdensome to anyone. The pool called Bethesda, which was surrounded by five porches, represents the Jewish people, fortified on all sides by the custody of the law, lest they should sin. For the law described in the five books of Moses is aptly represented by the number five: and the people who in some respects preserved the purity of life, but in others were accustomed to be agitated by the temptations of unclean spirits, are appropriately signified by the water of the pool, which sometimes was calm and still, and at other times used to be stirred up by the winds. And it is fitting that the same pool is called Bethesda. For in Greek probaton means sheep: because in that people who knew how to say to the Lord: We, however, thy people and the sheep of thy flock, will give

thanks to thee for ages (Ps. 79). Commonsensically, however, the pool is called Bethesda, i.e., the sheep's pool, because in it the priests used to wash the sacrifices.

The multitude of the sick lying in the mentioned porches signifies the crowds of those who, hearing the words of the law, lamented that they could not accomplish it by their own strength, and therefore implored the help of the Lord's grace with all the affections of their soul. They were blind who did not yet have the perfect light of faith; lame who could not fulfill the good that they knew by their steps of action; withered who, although having the eye of knowledge, were nevertheless lacking in the nourishment of hope and love. Such lay in the five porches, but none were healed except in the pool when an angel descended, because through the law comes the knowledge of sin, but the grace of remission is made not otherwise than through Jesus Christ. For the angel clothed in flesh, that is, the messenger of the Father's will, came down among the Jewish people and moved the sinners by his deeds and doctrine, so that he himself, by his own bodily death, could not only heal the spiritually sick but also revive the dead. The stirring of the water signifies the Lord's passion, which was accomplished when the people of the Jews were stirred and agitated. And because believers were redeemed from the curse of the law through that same passion, they were, as it were, healed by descending into the stirred water of the pool, who had lain sick in the porches.

Indeed, the letter of the law, which taught those ignorant of what was to be done and avoided, but still did not help the instructed to accomplish its decrees, kept them, as if brought out of the seats of former ignorance, within its porches, and did not heal the sick. However, the grace of the Gospel, which through faith and the mystery of the Lord's passion heals all the ailments of our iniquities, from which we could not be justified in the law of Moses, casts the sick thrown out of the porches of the law into the stirred water of the pool, so that they could be healed: because from the sins which the law showed through the water of Baptism, it washes, as the Apostle testifies, because as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death. For we are buried with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so, we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6). It is well said that whoever first descended after the stirring of the water was made whole from whatever sickness he was held by, because one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God is present: and whoever is imbued with the mysteries of Christ in Catholic unity is made whole from whatever sickness of sins he is held by: whoever, however, disagrees with this unity cannot attain the salvation which is from one.

Having spoken of the first miracle of the Gospel reading which the Lord gave, let us now speak of the second which he gave to your fraternity: in which also a person healed is commended, not because the omnipotent goodness of the Savior could not heal all those found sick there, but to teach that outside the unity of the Catholic faith, no place of salvation is open to anyone.

There was a certain man there, it is said, who had been in his infirmity for thirty-eight years. This man, detained by infirmity for many years, represents any sinner oppressed by the enormity or multitude of sins, whose guilt the duration of the time he was ill fittingly

signifies. For he had been in his infirmity for thirty-eight years. The number forty, however, which is accomplished by multiplying ten by four, is commonly received in the Scriptures for perfect right conduct; because whoever has performed the works of perfect conduct certainly fulfills the decalogue of the law through the four books of the Holy Gospel: two of which perfection he lacks, who, void of the love of God and neighbor which the writings of the law and the Gospel alike commend, walks. This the Lord also mystically taught by healing the infirm man, when he said: Arise, take up your bed, and walk. When it is said, Arise, shake off the lethargy of sins in which you have long lain, and rise to the exercise of virtues, by which you may be saved perpetually. Take up your bed: carry your neighbor diligently, patiently tolerating his weaknesses, as he, still oppressed by the burden of temptations, long and patiently bore you. For one another's burdens bear, and thus you will fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. VI). And as it says elsewhere: Bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. IV). But walk:

love God with all your heart, soul, and strength; and that you may be worthy to attain to his vision, progress daily in good works, from virtue to virtue, not abandoning your brother whom you lead by enduring, out of love for Him to whom you are going, nor letting the love of your brother cause you to deviate in your pursuit of Him with whom you desire to dwell; but that you may be perfectly saved, Arise, take up your bed and walk, that is, leave your former sins, assist the needs of your brothers, and in all that you do, take care not to fix your mind on this world, but hasten to see the face of your Redeemer. Arise by doing good deeds, carry the bed by loving your neighbor, and walk by expecting the blessed hope and the coming of the glory of the great God. But the madness of the faithless is astonishing, who, at such an unexpected healing of one who had long languished, should have believed and been spiritually healed, yet instead were scandalized, and contrived slanders against both the healed and the Healer: against the healed, because he carried his bed on the Sabbath; against the Healer, because he commanded healing and carrying the bed on the Sabbath, as if they knew better concerning the Sabbath than such great power of divinity.

Therefore, the Jews said to the one who had been healed: "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed. They foolishly defended the letter of the law, ignoring the dispensation of Him who, once decreeing the edicts of the law through His servant, now coming Himself, intended to change the same law by grace, so that what carnally-minded people observed carnally according to the letter, spiritual-minded people might henceforth recognize should be observed spiritually. Indeed, under the carnal Sabbath, which was kept according to the letter, the people were commanded to rest from all servile work on the seventh day; the spiritual Sabbath, however, is in the light of spiritual grace, which is considered septiform (sevenfold), not on one but on every day, we are commanded to rest from all disturbance of vices. For if according to the word of the Lord, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin, it is clear that sins are rightly understood as servile works, from which, as on the seventh day in the perception of spiritual grace, we are commanded to walk immune: not only refraining from evil but also persisting in good works. This the Lord also typologi-

cally showed in this reading, when He commanded him who had languished for thirty-eight years to rise on the Sabbath day, not only to rise but also to carry his bed and walk:

evidently insinuating that those who wither away long with the languor of vices, and void of the love of God and neighbor, as if they lack two from the perfect sum of virtues, can through the gift of the Holy Spirit rise up from vices, and having cast off their sluggishness, should with the burden of fraternal love draw close to the vision of their Creator. Moreover, the fact that he who was healed recognizes Jesus, not while still among the crowd, but later in the temple, mystically instructs us that if we truly wish to recognize the grace of our Creator, if we wish to be strengthened by His love, if we wish to reach His vision, we must diligently flee the crowd not only of disturbing thoughts and depraved affections but also of wicked people who can hinder our sincere intention, either by showing their evil example or by ridiculing or even preventing our good works. We should assiduously seek refuge in the house of prayer, where, invoking the Lord in secret liberty, we both give thanks for the benefits received from Him and humbly pray for those yet to be received: indeed, let us also take care to exist as a holy temple of God, in which He may deign to come and make His abode, hearing from the Apostle that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you (1 Cor. 6).

Among these, my brothers, we should most diligently consider that when the Lord found the healed man in the temple, He said to him: "Behold, you have been made well, sin no more, lest something worse happens to you. By these words, it is openly shown that he languished because of sins, and could not be healed unless they were forgiven: but He who healed from the infirmity outside also saved within from wickedness: whence He cautiously admonished that by sinning no more, he should not bring upon himself a sentence of more severe condemnation. This is not to be understood as if everyone who is infirmed is infirmed because of sins, for indeed, in five ways in Scripture, bodily infirmity is found to be given: to sinners, that they may either be corrected through penance, or if they don't merit correction, it may also appear in this life how they are to be condemned to eternal death; to the righteous, that they may either receive a greater palm of patience or instructed by infirmities they may guard more humbly the merit of justice. To many, however, bodily infirmity is given at times so that in their healing either the glory of the Lord Savior or of His saints or of both may be more widely manifested. For that sinners are punished with bodily infirmity to seek the health of the mind, today's reading bears witness, where the healed man who was languishing heard: "Behold, you have been made well, sin no more, lest something worse happens to you.

This also bears witness when the Lord, healing the paralytic, said: "Take heart, son, your sins are forgiven you. That those ensnared in more serious crimes, deserving not to attain pardon, sometimes also in the present receive the beginning of eternal condemnation, is indicated by the punishment of King Herod, who for the sin of blasphemy, consumed by worms before the eyes of the living, expired, evidently appropriating afterward where his worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. That the righteous are afflicted with bodily

pains to amplify the palm of their patience is indicated by the blessed Job's story, whom, with none like him on the earth, endured the severest bodily pains the cruel adversary could devise, not for discharging sins but for augmenting merits, overcoming with wondrous constancy of virtue. That the righteous are also struck with illness as a discipline to guard humility is shown by the Apostle who said: "And lest I be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me" (2 Cor. 12). Wherefore, again he says: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (ibid. 9). That some often languish to show forth the glory of the Creator and His saints, Christ Himself manifests when, concerning the man born blind, to the disciples asking, He said:

"Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9). And concerning Lazarus's sickness to the sisters, He said: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (John 11). However, because it is uncertain to us whether we are punished to augment our good merits or to diminish our evils, it must be most carefully regarded that whenever we are struck by bodily distress, we immediately return to examine the internal matters of our mind, and whatever we find we have done against the will of our Creator, let us cleanse with a fitting penance; nor should we seek healing for the body before we know we have reached the purity of the inner man, lest perhaps external healing of the flesh should be hindered by the latent internal faults of the mind. Let us learn to humbly submit to the scourges of the pious Creator, considering that we suffer less than we deserve, always remembering the sentence: "Blessed is the man whom the Lord corrects" (Job 5). And He said in Revelation: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Rev 3).

However, after the old man, sick inwardly and outwardly, was healed, being saved both from the whips of open punishment and from the sins that deserved these, the Jews, contrarily, now began to fall into a worse sickness in their opposition, persecuting Jesus because He did these things on the Sabbath. They were persecuting Him, as if following both the authority of the law and the examples of divine operation: for both the Lord completed the creation of the world in six days and rested on the seventh day from all His works, and commanded the people to work for six days and to rest on the seventh, not understanding that the carnal decrees of the law were gradually to be changed by a spiritual interpreter, with Him appearing who is not only the lawgiver but also the end of the law, Christ, for righteousness to everyone who believes: nor considering that the Creator on the seventh day ceased not from the work of worldly governance and annual, rather everyday, maintenance of created things, but from a new creation of beings; nor understanding that great mystery of the Sabbath, in which, either the Lord Himself, having been crucified on the sixth day and having worked our salvation in the midst of the earth, that is, the flesh He had assumed, was to rest in the tomb on the seventh, until He rose on the eighth, or in which the saints, after the six ages of this world in which they labor by doing good works, perceive the seventh of the rest of souls in another life, until they are endowed with the incorruptible reception of bodies also in the eighth of the resurrection. But let us hear what the Author of grace and

the law Himself responds to these unlearned defenders of the law, by which He may break their stubbornness with the strength of His reason.

My Father, he said, works until now, and I also work. Which is not to say, as though with the Father working, he would then begin to work after the Father; but rather that from the beginning of creation, with the Father always working, he himself likewise always works the same deeds together with him. For to know that God the Father works not only in the first six days, but until now, read that which is written to the prophet: Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you (Jerem. I). And in the Psalm: He who fashions their hearts individually (Psalm XXXIII). And elsewhere: Who covers the heavens with clouds, prepares rain for the earth, makes grass grow on the mountains (Psalm CXLVII), and similar others. Indeed, note that he did not use past tense verbs by saying: Who covered, prepared, produced, but present, covers, prepares, produces, to show that the Father works daily, no less on the Sabbath than on other days. So that you do not doubt that the Son works all things together, recall that of the Psalmist: He spoke, and gnats and flies came. He spoke, and locusts and caterpillars came. He spoke, and the stormy wind stood (Psalm CV). For if he spoke and they were made, he indeed made them through the word. The word of the Father is the Son, of whom John says: All things were made through him (John. I).

Likewise, the Psalmist, when attributing not only the original creation of the world but also the daily governance of creation to the praise of the Creator, said among other things: You made all things in wisdom (Psalm CIV). But if we confess Christ as the power of God and the wisdom of God rightly, and God made and rules all things in wisdom, it is certainly evident that the Father works until now, and so does the Son. Therefore, my Father, he said, not only worked previously during six days as you suppose, but he works until now (John V), not by instituting a new kind of creation, but by propagating what he created in the beginning so that they may not fail. And I too work, it is understood until now, governing, guiding, increasing all those things, as if plainly saying: Why do you envy me? Why do you criticize me, blind legislators, for having performed the salvation of one man on the Sabbath in human form, when in the nature of divinity, together with God the Father, I always quietly work the entire human race, indeed the whole machinery of the world, and all visible and invisible things? But they themselves were less capable of understanding such a great mystery, therefore they sought all the more to kill him, because not only did he break the Sabbath, but also called God his Father, making himself equal to God. They were especially upset because, to those who recognized him truly as a man in the weakness of the flesh;

he wished to be believed as truly the Son of God, that is, not adopted by grace like the other saints, to whom the Prophet says: I said, you are gods, and sons of the Most High all of you (Psalm LXXXII); but by nature equal in all things to the Father, namely the one about whom the Father himself speaks in the presence of his children, that is, the prophets, adopted into sons by grace. He called upon me: You are my Father, my God, and the support of my salvation. And I will make him my firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth (Psalm

LXXXIX). For the Jewish slayers of Christ understood what the confessors of the name of Christ, the Arians, cannot understand when Christ said: My Father works until now, and I work (John V), that he declared himself equal to God the Father, because those whose work is the same, their majesty is also equal. Truly, the impiety of both tends to one end, of those who, understanding what the Lord said, denied he spoke the truth: the others indeed admit that the Lord testified truly about himself, but refuse to follow and understand the sense of the truth in these words. To avoid their dreadful end, it is necessary for us, most beloved brothers, to both believe the words of our Savior as full of truth, and strive to understand them rightly, moreover to place all our hope of salvation in them.

Truly let us believe he proclaimed himself equal to the Father in power, glory, eternity, and kingdom; and by living well, let us strive to come to the one vision of both: about which, when Philip asked and said: Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us (John XIV), the Lord himself answered, saying: He who sees me, sees my Father also. Certainly, it should be noted that the phrase making himself equal to God is said from the perspective of the Jews, who thought the Lord Jesus was proclaiming himself to be what he was not, and not truly intimating what he was. But we, brothers, who are imbued with the teachings and sacraments of the Catholic faith, let us believe and confess our Lord Jesus Christ, made in humanity equal to us by nature, and in divinity always equal to the Father. Neither in either nature did he pretend to be what he was not; but in both, he truly proclaimed what he was, who may deign to lead us to see perpetually the glory of his majesty, in which he lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.

OMILIA XVII. POST TEOFANIAM GIOVANNA. I. At that time Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and he found Philip, and Jesus said to him, Follow me. We have heard from the reading of the Gospel, dearest brothers, the kind grace of our Redeemer, for he not only mercifully calls us to follow him, but also graciously receives those who come and piously guides them to the knowledge of the brightness of his divinity. We have heard the devoted faith, charity, and actions of the disciples, in which indeed the entire perfection of the present Church consists, for without faith it is impossible to please God, and faith without works is idle; and whatever virtues one may possess, however much he may advance in faith, if he has not charity, it profits him nothing. For Philip not only followed Jesus who called him, but also preached to Nathanael to follow him. This is surely faith working through love: it is faith, because he did not delay to believe in Jesus, whom he recognized as Christ; it is the work of love, because he immediately showed by following how much he loved him whom he recognized; he also taught how much he burned with love for his neighbor by evangelizing to him. Likewise, his neighbor Nathanael showed how much care and love he had towards the master of truth. Immediately called, he did not delay to come; he intimated how much his faith comprehended the perfection of greatness: he confessed with an open voice that he was the Son of God and king of Israel, that is, Christ.

Jesus wanted, he said, to go into Galilee, and he found Philip, and said to him, Follow me. It is already evident from the preceding passages why Jesus wanted to go into Galilee, namely

from Judea, where John was baptizing and bearing witness to him as the Lamb of God. He encouraged two of his disciples to follow him, one of whom, Andrew, also brought his brother Peter to him. It is clear in a spiritual sense, and your fraternity's frequent exposition has already recognized what it means to follow the Lord. For one who imitates follows the Lord; one who, as much as human frailty allows, does not abandon the examples of humility shown by the Son of God in his humanity, follows the Lord. One who, by becoming a companion in suffering, diligently desires to attain fellowship in his resurrection and ascension follows the Lord. But it is not without a certain reason for the mystery that it is said Jesus wanted to go into Galilee, saying to Philip, Follow me. For Galilee is called a place of migration, signifying the progress of the faithful, either migrating from vices to the height of virtues or gradually making progress in virtues themselves, and striving day by day from lesser to greater things until they reach the summit of heavenly joy from this valley of tears with the Lord's help.

In that it signifies revelation, it suggests the very blessedness of eternal life, for which they labor at present, both of which interpretations the Psalmist encompasses in one verse, where he says: They shall walk from strength to strength, the God of gods shall be seen in Zion (Psalm 84). This vision is also referred to by the Apostle: But we, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3). Therefore, it is fitting that when he was about to call a disciple to follow him, he wanted to go into Galilee, that is, into a place of migration or revelation, so that just as he, as the Gospel testifies, advanced in age and wisdom and grace before God and men, just as he suffered and rose again and thus entered into his glory, so also he might show his followers that they should advance in virtues and, through transitory sufferings, migrate to the gifts of eternal joys.

Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. The evangelist is not to be thought to have mentioned the name of the city from which Philip came without reason or mysteriously, and to have shown that it was the same for Andrew and Peter as well; but through the name of the city, he typified what kind of soul Philip would have then, what kind of duty he was going to undertake, and what kind of persons Peter and Andrew also would be. Bethsaida indeed is called the house of fishermen, and they were surely fishermen who heard from the Lord: "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men" (Mt. IV). He who was so intent on catching souls for life even before he was appointed to the office of preaching by the Lord, soon showed his intent by preaching voluntarily. For he found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth. Let us see how much the net of faith, woven with the meshes of devoted preaching, encircles his found brother, whom he eagerly desires to capture for eternal salvation. He says they have found him whom Moses and the prophets marked as to come in their writings, so that it is understood by all following him that he is the one to whose coming all the writings of the ancients served in proclaiming. Therefore he names him, because the oracles of the prophets foretold the name of Christ to come.

Habakkuk, wishing to be saved by his grace, says, "But I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Habak. III). And Zechariah, making mention of the trial in which he overcame the devil, also showed, "And he showed me Jesus the great priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right to oppose him" (Zach. III). Also Jacob the patriarch, greeting the mystery of his incarnation from afar and expecting it, says, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord" (Gen. XLVIII). For in Hebrew, "Jesus" means "Savior" or "Salvation" in Latin. Likewise, the Psalmist, promising his eternal vision to the faithful people, says in the person of God the Father, "With length of days I will satisfy him, and show him my salvation" (Ps. XC). Also, Simeon, that venerable old man and prophet of the New Testament, when he took him in his arms as a small child, but with his mind recognized him great in divinity, instructed by the same spirit, gave thanks thus: "Now let thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for my eyes have seen thy salvation" (Luke II). He calls him the son of Joseph, not to assert that he was born from the union of a man and a woman, whom he had learned from the prophets would be born of a virgin; but he teaches that he came from the house and family of David where he knew Joseph was born according to the prophecies of the prophets.

Nor is it surprising if Philip calls him the son of Joseph whom he knew was the husband of his immaculate mother, since even the immaculate mother herself, always a virgin following popular custom, is recorded to have spoken thus: "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you sorrowing" (Luke II). He also adds the homeland of Nazareth to indicate that he is the one about whom they had read in the prophets that he would be called a Nazarene. Therefore, it is no wonder that Philip quickly captivated Nathanael to believe and come to Christ, surrounded by so many nets of truth, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets wrote, Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth" (John I). Nor is it undeservedly asserted that he was from Bethsaida, that is, the house of fishermen, who is shown to have received such care and grace of the dearly loved hunting by God.

And Nathanael said to him: Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Nazareth means cleanliness, or its flower, or separated. Therefore, agreeing with the words of the evangelist Philip to him, Nathanael said, Can anything good come out of Nazareth? As if he were openly saying: Can it be that something of great grace is arising for us from a city of such a name? Or it is indeed the Savior of the world, the Lord who is singularly holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and who speaks in the Song of Songs, I am the flower of the field and the lily of the valleys; and of whom the prophet said, a rod shall come forth from the root of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1), and the Nazarene, that is, a flower from its root, shall spring forth, or certainly some exceptional teacher, who was sent to proclaim to us the flower of virtues and purity of holiness. We can also rightly understand this passage in such a way that, with Philip saying, whom Moses wrote about in the law and the prophets we have found Jesus, son of Joseph from Nazareth, Nathanael properly understood, but wondered how he could say that Christ had come from Nazareth, whom the prophets had proclaimed would come from the house of David and from Bethlehem, the city where David was; and therefore he

answered with amazement from Nazareth; but immediately recalling how even the name Nazareth corresponded with the mysteries of Christ, he cautiously agreed with the preacher, saying, Can something good be from there? What follows may fit both meanings:

Philip said to him: Come and see. For he was urging him to come and see for himself, so that if any ambiguity remained in his heart regarding the words of the preacher, this would be entirely dispelled by the sight and conversation of the one whom he was preaching. And the pious listener did not delay in diligently seeking the preached light of truth and earnestly knocking, so that he might deserve to receive it by perseverance: whereupon the Lord, hastening to satisfy his desire for blessings, rewarded his wholesome beginnings with provident praise, so that he would gradually raise him to seek and grasp higher things.

He saw him coming to him and said of him: Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit. It should be noted here that God, who knows the hearts, praises not the man as sinless but as without deceit. For there is no just man upon earth that does good and sins not: many, however, are read to have walked without deceit, that is, to have lived with a simple and pure heart: indeed, all the faithful are taught to live in such a manner, as the Scripture says, "Think of the Lord in goodness, and seek him in simplicity of heart" (Wis. I). And the Lord himself says, "Be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Mt. X). Such was the example of patience Job, of whom it is written: "That man was simple and upright" (Job I). Such was the patriarch Jacob, of whom it is said: "Jacob was a simple man, dwelling in tents" (Gen. XXV); because he deserved by the purity of a simple conscience to see God, he was also called Israel, that is, a man seeing God. Behold one who truly draws his lineage from the God-seeing patriarch, in whom, as in the patriarch himself, no duplicity of deceit is found. O how beautiful an omen for one coming to God and desiring to see Him! Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Mt. V).

And this one, desiring to see God, is praised as pure in heart and an Israelite, that is, declared to be descended from a man seeing God, not by another but by God himself, who examines the reins and hearts. O how great a hope of salvation is opened to us too in this saying of our Redeemer, we who come to the faith from the Gentiles! For if he is truly an Israelite who walks without deceit, then the Jews have already lost the name of Israelites, however much they may be carnally born of Israel, insofar as they have degenerated from the simplicity of their patriarch with deceitful hearts, and we ourselves have been adopted into the seed of Israelites who, although having the fleshly lineage from other nations, yet follow in the faith of truth and the purity of mind and body the footsteps of Israel, according to the Apostle: "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Rom. IX), that is, not those who are children of the flesh are children of God; but those who are children of promise are counted as seed.

Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me? Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you. Nathanael answered him

and said, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel. Because Nathanael recognized that the Lord saw and knew what was happening elsewhere, that is, how and where he was called by Philip when he himself was not physically there, considering here the insight of divine majesty, he immediately confessed him not only as Rabbi, that is, teacher, but also as the Son of God and the King of Israel, that is, Christ. And it is pleasing to observe how prudent a confession responds to the Lord's praise of the servant. He, having truly affirmed this Israelite, that is, a man capable of seeing God, because he was without deceit; this one acknowledges him not only as a teacher who commands useful things, but also as the Son of God who grants heavenly gifts, and the King of Israel, that is, of the people seeing God, with religious devotion, so that by this confession he also signifies this as his king and himself as a soldier of his kingdom.

However, this saying of the Lord, where he said he saw Nathanael under the fig tree before he was called by Philip, can be mystically understood concerning the chosen of spiritual Israel, that is, the Christian people, whom the Lord, not yet seeing him, not yet called to the grace of faith through his apostles, but still hidden under the covering of pressing sin, condescended to see mercifully, as Paul attests, who said: "Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love" (Eph. I). And indeed, the fig tree sometimes in Scriptures insinuates the sweetness of heavenly love, whence it is written: "He who keeps the fig tree eats its fruit; and he who guards his master will be honored" (Prov. XXVII); but because our first parents, confused by the guilt of transgression, made for themselves coverings of fig leaves, the fig tree can not incongruously signify the sweetened habit of sinning in humanity, under which his chosen ones are still placed, but not yet recognizing the grace of their election, almost as if placed under the fig tree, the Lord saw Nathanael who did not yet see himself. For the Lord knows those who are his; to whose salvation also the name of Nathanael fittingly applies.

For Nathanael means "gift of God," and unless someone is called by the gift of God, he can never escape the guilt of the first transgression, never the deceitful shades of daily sins enticing him, never deserves to come to Christ for salvation. Whence the Apostle says: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. II).

Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." What is greater, of which he speaks, he himself later reveals by promising the opening of the heavenly kingdom to those who believe and foretelling to the world both natures of his one person, which indeed is a much greater mystery than that which he foresaw, that we, still placed in the shadow of sin, would be enlightened by him. For it is greater that he filled us with the grace of his knowledge, that he opens to us the joys of heaven, that he spread preachers of his faith throughout the world, than that he foresaw us to be saved by the power of his majesty before the ages.

Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. Filled with the fulfillment of this promise of marmalade, we have seen heaven opened, for after heaven, God made man penetrated, even we, believing in His name, acknowledge that the way to the heavenly homeland is opened to us. We see the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man, because we know that holy preachers proclaim both the sublimity of Christ's divinity and the weaknesses of his humanity. Angels ascend upon the Son of Man when teachers teach that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John I). Angels descend upon the Son of Man when they proclaim that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. It is not without reason that holy preachers are typified as angels, who are usually given the name of evangelists derived from angels, so that just as these are messengers, so are those who are called good messengers because of the supreme duty of preaching. And it should be noted that the Lord calls Himself the Son of Man, while Nathanael proclaims Him the Son of God. This is similar to what is recorded in other evangelists, when the Lord asks His disciples whom men say the Son of Man is; and Peter answered, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. XVI).

And indeed it was done by the proper administration of dispensation, that while both substances of the same mediator, God and our Lord, ought to be mentioned either by the Lord Himself or by a pure man, God, man would declare the frailty of the humanity He assumed, and the pure man would assert the strength of the eternal divinity in Him; He declared His humility, and the man declared His exaltation. It is also to be noted that the Lord, who calls the blessed Nathanael a true Israelite, in this word which He says, "You will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (John I), recalls the vision of the patriarch Jacob who was called Israel by blessing. For when he wished to rest in a certain place and had put a stone under his head, he saw in his dreams a ladder standing upon the earth, and its top reaching to heaven; and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it, and the Lord leaning upon the ladder, saying to him, I am the God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac; and rising in the morning, and with due reverence giving praise to the Lord, he took the stone and set it up as a pillar, pouring oil over it. The Lord therefore makes mention of this place, and manifestly testifies that it prefigured Himself and His faithful ones.

The ladder seen is the Church, born from the earth, yet having its conversation in heaven, by which angels ascend and descend as the evangelists sometimes announce to perfect listeners the secrets of His divinity's superiority, and sometimes to the still unlearned the frailties of His humanity. Or indeed they ascend when they pass in mind to contemplate heavenly things. They descend indeed when they instruct their listeners on how they ought to live on earth. The stone under Jacob's head is the Lord, on whom we ought to lean all the more intently, as it is clear to us that without Him we can do nothing. Jacob anointed the stone and set it up as a pillar, for the true Israelite understands that our Redeemer was anointed by the Father with the oil of gladness above His companions; from which anointing, that is, the chrism, Christ derives His name, whose mystery of incarnation is indeed the title of

our redemption. And it is rightly stated that when the stone is anointed on earth and set up as a pillar, the Lord is revealed in heaven, because certainly He appeared in time among men as a man, who remains eternal with the Father as God; who, having conquered death, ascended above the heavens to the East, He remains as the symbol of our salvation with us all the days until the consummation of the world, transferring from the earth to heaven the body he assumed, but encompassing both earth and heaven with the presence of His divinity.

Therefore, the Lord, expounding to us the ancient history of Israel, shows that the simplicity of the faithful people represented by Nathanael was prefigured; He reveals that in the stone upon which the angels ascended and descended, He Himself was signified, whose dual nature is in turn proclaimed by spiritual teachers. For Israel as if anoints the stone with oil when Nathanael confesses how God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and power, saying, Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel (John I). It is now clear, after the reading of the holy Gospel has been explained, my brothers, that it was not without reason the great mystery was foretold at the beginning of it that Jesus wanted to go out to Galilee, and then it was added how he called Philip and how Nathanael, called by him, accepted and was instructed by the light of truth. For indeed, as we said, Galilee is interpreted as Transfiguration or Revelation. And it is rightly said that He wanted to go out to Galilee when He deigned to reveal the sacraments of His majesty to the faithful:

to whose perfect knowledge, which is the only blessed life of man, we will then ascend all the more sublimely, since we now diligently strive to migrate from earthly things to heavenly things, and to advance by the steps of virtues, with the aid of Him who is accustomed to ascend, promote, and crown the desires of the good, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY XVIII. ON THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT. MATT. XVII, MARK IX, LUKE IX. At that time, Jesus took with Him Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain alone, and He was transfigured before them. Since our Lord and Redeemer has intended to lead His chosen ones through the labors of this life to that life of future blessedness which knows no labor, He sometimes describes in His Gospel the efforts of temporal struggles, and sometimes the reward of eternal victories: so that, having heard the necessity of struggles, they may remember not to seek rest in this life; and having heard again the sweetness of the future recompense, they may more lightly bear the passing evils, which they hope to be rewarded by eternal good. For when He had just mentioned His and His followers' sufferings a little earlier, He immediately added what we have now heard as it was being read, saying:

For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Where most aptly [some manuscripts: most openly] He designates the day of the final judgment, when He will come in great power and majesty to judge the world, who once came in humility and lowliness to be judged by the world. When with judicial scrutiny He will seek the perfection of works from those to whom, by

the generosity of His mercy, He has granted the grace of His gifts. When He will reward each according to his works, He will lead the chosen into the kingdom of His Father and will cast the reprobates with the devil into eternal fire. And it is beautifully said that the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father. For the Son of Man will come in the glory of God the Father, because He who is lesser than the Father in human nature is in divinity of one and the same glory with the Father, true man in every respect and true God. Rightly, therefore, He delights the pious and rightly terrifies the obstinate with what follows. And then He will reward each according to his works: because those who now doing good are afflicted by the injustices of the wicked, eagerly await that time when through a just judge they will not only be freed from the injuries of the unjust but also receive the reward of their righteousness and patience.

But those who live wickedly and consider the patience of the judge as negligence, rightly [some manuscripts: righteous] when they repent too late, are struck by the sentence of eternal damnation. This evangelical sentiment is in harmony with what the Psalmist says: I will sing of mercy and judgment to you, O Lord (Psalm 101). First, he declares that he will sing of mercy, and then of judgment: because indeed the Lord, who in His first coming generously bestowed mercy upon us, will strictly exact it in His second coming. But any perverse person who despises the mercy of the generous One justly fears the judgment of the scrutinizing Lord. But he who gratefully remembers to have received the grace of mercy, joyfully awaits the trial of judgment, and thus with free modulation sings of mercy and judgment to his judge. However, since the time of universal judgment is uncertain to all, and the hour of each one's departure is uncertain, and the present affliction might seem long to those not knowing when the promised rest will come, the merciful teacher wished to premonstrate the joys of the eternal promise to some of His disciples still living on earth: so that those who had seen it and all who could hear might more readily endure present adversities by often recalling to mind the promised reward they await. Following this:

Amen, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. For the disciples saw him coming in his kingdom, because they saw him shining on the mountain in that brightness, in which he will be seen by all the saints in his kingdom after the judgment has been carried out. But what the mortal and bodily eyes of the disciples could not yet bear, then through the resurrection made incorruptible, the whole Church of the saints will be able to powerfully behold, of which it is written: "Their eyes will see the king in his beauty" (Isaiah 33).

And after six days Jesus took Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain. To show His glory to the disciples, He leads them up a high mountain, to teach all who desire to see this, not to lie in low pleasures, not to serve carnal allurements, not to cling to earthly desires, but always to be raised to the heights by the love of eternal things: angelic purity, piety, peace, love, and the life of justice, as far as is possible for mortals, should always be imitated according to Him who said: But our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. III). To show

the glory of His majesty, He leads the disciples to the mountain, so that they might learn themselves, and that all who thirst to see this might learn, not to seek it in the depth of this world, but in the kingdom of heavenly blessedness. And well He said, because He leads them up a high mountain, He added separately: because the just, although now oppressed by the proximity of the wicked, are in soul and with full intent of faith separated from them, and in the future are completely separated from them, when He will hide them in the secret of His face from the disturbance of men, He will protect them in His tabernacle from the strife of tongues.

But the six days after which He promised the disciples the revelation of His vision of glory, signifies that the saints in the day of judgment will receive the kingdom that was promised to them by Him who does not lie, before the secular ages. Indeed, the secular ages consist of six periods, which being completed, they will hear Him saying: Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Mt. XXV). The six days of the promised vision of the Lord and the glory of good works can signify [other: denote] the perfection [other: perfectionment] of good works, without which no one can attain to the contemplation of the majesty of his Maker. For as the Lord created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day from His works, rightly through six days good works are expressed, through which we must reach rest. And because he who desires to see God, who longs to reach the glory of the blessed resurrection, ought to do good which he knows, rightly after six days He shows the glory of His kingdom, which He promised to the disciples.

And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun: and his garments became white as snow. The Lord was transfigured before the disciples and signified the glory of his body which was to be illuminated by the resurrection, and he manifested how great the brightness of the bodies of all the elect will be after the resurrection. For elsewhere, he also says of these: Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Mt. XIII), and here in example of the future glorification, his face shone like the sun. Not because the brightness and glory of the Lord and his saints can be equal, as the Apostle says of these same saints: One star differs from another star in brightness, so also is the resurrection of the dead (I Cor. XV): but because we know nothing brighter than the sun, the glory of the Lord's resurrection, and that of the saints, is compared to the appearance of the sun, since something brighter than the sun from which an example could be given to men could not be found. However, no one in the judgment of the reprobate is thought to see this glorious majesty of the Lord's body, this brightness of the bodies of the saints. They will only see the one whom they pierced, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him.

But when judgment is completed, the wicked being removed so that they do not see the glory of God, then the righteous, transfigured in the light of incorruption to the extent of their capacity, will enter to the perpetual contemplation of the glory of his kingdom: whence the Apostle says: He will transform our humble body to be like his glorious body (Philip. III). But if anyone inquires what the garments of the Lord, which became white as snow,

typically signify, it is reasonable to understand that his saints' Church is shown through these, about which Isaiah says: You will put them all on as an ornament (Isa. XLIX): and the Apostle: For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Galat. III). In the time of the resurrection, they are purified from all stains of iniquity and from all obscurity of mortality. Hence the evangelist Mark fittingly says about the garments of the Lord: That they became radiant, extraordinarily white as snow, such as no fuller on earth can make white (Marc. IX); because it is evident to all, no one can live without corruption and pain on earth. It is clear to all wise men, though heretics contradict. No one can live without the touch of any sin on earth.

But what no fuller, that is, teacher of souls or someone of exceptional bodily purity can effect on earth, the Lord will accomplish in heaven, cleansing the Church, namely his garment, from all defilements of flesh and spirit, and refashioning it with eternal beatitude and light of flesh and spirit.

And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, speaking with him. What they appeared like, and what they spoke with him, Luke writes more clearly, saying: But Moses and Elijah appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). Therefore, Moses and Elijah, who spoke with the Lord on the mountain and discussed his passion and resurrection, represent the prophecies of the law and prophets which are fulfilled in the Lord and now are evident to the learned, and will be more manifest to all the elect in the future. They are rightly said to be seen in glory, because at that time the full dignity of all the divine utterances will be openly seen, not only in meaning but also in word: although in Moses and Elijah all who will reign with the Lord can be rightly understood. In Moses who died and was buried, those who will be resurrected from death at the judgment; in Elijah, who has not yet paid the debt of death, those who will be found alive in the flesh at the coming of the judge. Both groups will together be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air at the same moment, and, once judgment is completed, they will be led into eternal life. It is fitting that Moses and Elijah are said to have been seen in glory; for through the excellence of the glory, the honor of the reward by which they are to be crowned is shown.

It is also fitting that they are remembered to have spoken of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem: because the passion of the Redeemer universally serves as a matter of praise for his faithful; the more they have deserved to be redeemed by his grace, the more they continually remember their restoration with devoted minds and testify with devout confession. Truly, as anyone tastes more of the sweetness of heavenly life, they become more disdainful of all things that delighted them in the lower world, and therefore Peter, having seen the glory of the Lord and his saints, suddenly forgets all the earthly things he knew and desires to adhere perpetually to what he has seen, saying:

Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, let us make here three tabernacles, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. And indeed blessed Peter, as another evangelist testifies (Luke 9), did not know what he was saying, in that he thought tabernacles should

be made for the heavenly conversation. For in that glory of heavenly life, a house will not be necessary, where, with the light of divine contemplation making all things peaceful, no aura of any adversity will remain to be feared, as the Apostle John testifies, who describing the clarity of that same heavenly city, among other things says: "And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple" (Rev. 21). But he well knew what he was saying when he said: "Lord, it is good for us to be here," because truly the only good for man is to enter into the joy of his Lord, and to stand by contemplating Him forever. Hence deservedly we must think that he never had any true good, who by his demanding guilt happens never to see the face of his Creator. If then blessed Peter, having contemplated the glorified humanity of Christ, is so affected with joy that he never wants to be separated from His sight, what do we think, dearest brothers, of the blessedness of those who have merited to see the height of His divinity?

And if he judged it the greatest good to see the transfigured form of Christ on the mountain with only two holy men, Moses and Elijah, what words can explain, what mind can comprehend, how great the joys of the just must be when they draw near to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, Jerusalem, and the company of many thousands of angels, and behold the very Maker and Founder of that same city, not through a glass in enigmas as now, but face to face? About this vision, Peter himself says, speaking to the faithful of the Lord: "In whom, though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1).

While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice from the cloud said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to him. Because they sought to build tabernacles, they were reminded by the overshadowing bright cloud that in that heavenly abode of life, houses are not necessary, where the Lord protects all things eternally with the shadowing of his light. For He who spread a cloud for forty years to protect the people walking through the desert, so that neither the sun by day nor the moon by night would strike them, how much more will He protect those dwelling in the tabernacle of the heavenly kingdom through the ages under the covering of His holy wings? For we know, as the Apostle teaches: "For if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5). Because they desired to see the resplendent face of the Son of Man, the Father was present in the voice, teaching that the same is His beloved Son, in whom He is well pleased: so that from the glory of His humanity, which they saw, they might learn to yearn for the contemplation of the presence of His divinity, equal to that of the Father. And the Father's voice said about the Son, "In whom I am well pleased," signifying what the Son elsewhere testifies: "And He who sent me is with me;

he has not left me alone, because I always do what pleases Him" (John 8). And when He added, "Listen to him," it reminded them that He is the one about whom Moses, giving the law to the same people, had forewarned: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers; you shall listen to him in everything he tells you" (Deut.

18). He does not forbid listening to Moses and Elijah, that is, the law and the prophets, but He suggests that the listening to the Son, who came to fulfill the law and the prophets, should be preferred, implying that the light of the evangelical truth should be set above all the figures and enigmas of the Old Testament. And indeed by a pious dispensation, the faith of the disciples, so that they might not stumble when the Lord is crucified, is strengthened, while at the very moment of the impending cross His humanity is shown to be lifted up by heavenly light through the resurrection: and because the Son is coeternal in divinity with the Father, it is proved by the heavenly voice of the same Father, so that when the hour of passion arrives they might grieve less for Him dying, remembering that after death He would be immediately glorified in humanity, and that in divinity He is always glorified by God the Father. However, the disciples, still as if carnal and of fragile substance, being frightened by the voice of God, fell on their faces.

But the Lord, as the compassionate teacher in all things, consoled and lifted them up with both word and touch.

And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying: Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead. He commanded the vision of His revealed majesty to be kept silent for a time, lest, if it were openly spread among the people, they might either oppose His passion's dispensation by resisting, which would delay the effect of human salvation that was to come through His blood, or those who believed the vision after hearing it might be scandalized at the reproach of the cross. After His passion, resurrection, and ascension into heaven were accomplished, and the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, it was preached so that all who wished to be initiated into His sacraments might not only believe in the effect of the resurrection but also learn the manner of the same resurrection from those who had seen [or, had seen it], and also that they might unanimously preach and love the eternity of the divine nativity which they had heard from the Father, as something to be believed and loved by all. Therefore, having expounded the reading on the Lord's transfiguration, let us return, most beloved brothers, to our own conscience, and if it pleases us to see the glory of the Lord, let us, transcending carnal desires, ascend the mountain of virtues. If we wish to be counted among the white-clad of the Lord's raiment, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

If we desire to hear the voice of God the Father, if we wish to behold the majesty of His consubstantial Son, let us strive diligently to avoid perverse and useless words of mortals; let us strive to turn our eyes away from the superfluous spectacles of the world, so that in the shining glory of our resurrection, we may also be fit to see and speak of the marvels of our Creator, who grants this, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.

HOMILY XIX. ON THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT. MATT. XV, LUC. XIX, MARCO. VII. At that time Jesus went out and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman came from those borders, and cried out, saying to him: Have mercy

on me, Lord, son of David: my daughter is badly vexed by a demon, etc. In the reading of the holy Gospel, which has now been read to us, dearest brothers, we have heard of the great faith, patience, constancy, and humility of the woman. Whose devotion of mind is all the more admirable, whereby although she indeed, as a Gentile, was utterly secluded from the teachings of divine words, yet she is not deprived of the virtues which the same words proclaim. For she had a great perfection of faith, who, imploring the mercy of the Savior, said:

Have mercy on me, Lord, son of David. For when she calls Him Lord, son of David, it is clearly evident that she believes He is truly man and truly God. When she prays for her daughter, she does not bring her with her, nor does she ask the Lord to come to her, it is very clear that she trusts that He can give salvation by His word, without requiring His physical presence. But in this, that she finally adores Him prostrate after many tears, saying: Lord, help me, she shows herself in no way uncertain about His divine majesty, the power of which she learned to be worshipped as of God. She has no small virtue of patience, who does not cease from her prayers when the Lord does not respond to her first petition, but with greater urgency implores the help of His piety that she had begun. The Lord delays responding to her, not because the merciful doctor despises the prayers of the wretched, of whom it is very truly written: The Lord has heard the desire of the poor (Psalm IX), but to show us the endurance of the woman, always to be imitated, who the more she seemed to be scorned by the Lord, the more fervently she persisted in her prayers. He delays responding, to provoke the merciful hearts of His own disciples (who, as men, were embarrassed by the public cries of the woman following them) to pray together with her. For He Himself knew the measure of His mercy, who has arranged all things in measure, and number, and weight. He delayed responding, lest an occasion be given to the Jews for slander, that He preferred the Gentiles in teaching or healing; therefore they might justly refuse to accept His faith. And this is what He means when He says:

I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Because by himself alone he taught the Jews, who through his disciples also called the Gentiles to the grace of faith, of whom he says elsewhere: And I have other sheep that are not of this fold, and I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd (John X). Hence it is that he was about to heal a single Gentile girl in person, but he did not do this before the unparalleled faith of the mother was proven to all. This same mother also has a remarkable distinction of steadfastness and humility, who, though compared to dogs by the Lord, did not desist from her persistence in prayer, nor did she withdraw her mind from hoping for the gift of mercy, but having willingly embraced the insult she received, she not only did not deny herself similar to dogs, but even equated herself to the little dogs, and by a prudent argument confirms the Lord's statement, and does not desist from the persistence of her request which she had begun. For she confirms the Lord's statement, to whom he says:

It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs, she replied: Yes, Lord. That is, truly as you say, it is so: because it is not good to take the salvation destined from heaven for the people of Israel and give it to the Gentiles; but when she adds: For even the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table. She most wisely demonstrates how much humility, how much inner steadfastness of heart she bears, who is indeed unworthy to be refreshed by the whole teachings of the Lord, which the Jews used as a feast, but she thought that any small grace imparted to her by the Lord could profit her for salvation. Hence rightly by the pious Savior, who did not dismiss her prayers with proud disdain, but wisely deferred them for a time, she deserved to hear:

O woman, great is your faith; let it be done for you as you desire. For she indeed had great faith, who, knowing neither the ancient prophecies nor the recent miracles of the Lord himself, commands or promises, yet perseveres in her prayers despite being repeatedly ignored by the Lord: and whom she had learned to be the Savior only from public rumor, she does not cease to implore by pleading. Therefore, she also achieves the great effect of her petition, for the Lord says, "Let it be done for you as you wish," and her daughter is healed from that hour. Moreover, with good reason, this woman, though a Gentile by nature but steadfast and credulous in heart, signifies the faith and devotion of the Church gathered from the Gentiles, which the holy preachers expelled from Judea imbued with the word and mysteries of divine grace. For if we reread the earlier passage of the holy Gospel, we will find that the scribes and Pharisees coming from Jerusalem violently attacked the Lord and his disciples with their infidel tumult, whom he soon left after reproaching them with well-deserved invective. And having left there, he withdrew to the regions of Tyre and Sidon. Here, it is clearly prefigured that after his passion and resurrection, the Lord would leave behind the faithless hearts of the Jews in his preachers and withdraw to the regions of the Gentiles. Tyre and Sidon, which were cities of the Gentiles, signify the monuments of Gentile doctrine and life, in which fools trust.

Hence, it is fitting that the woman who faithfully implores the Lord is said to have come from those regions, for unless she had abandoned the empty dwellings of old behavior, she would never have joined the Church of Christ; unless she had anathematized the dogmas of ancient error, she could in no way receive the new grace of faith. Thus, the blessed Paul, having advanced in Judaism, afterward, when called, progressed further in the Church of God than his contemporaries. The demon-possessed daughter, for whom she petitions, represents any soul in the Church, more enslaved by the deceptions of evil spirits than obedient to the precepts of its Creator: for whom it is necessary that the mother Church diligently intercede with the Lord, that what she herself cannot correct externally by advising, beseeching, and reproaching, he may correct internally by inspiring, and turning it from the darkness of errors to the recognition of true light. Indeed, even if at the first tears of the beseeching Church, the Lord delays to respond, that is, to grant the requested health of mind to the erring ones, yet one must not desist from asking, seeking, and knocking, nor should despair be undertaken in obtaining; but rather, one should persevere with such insistence, frequenting the Savior with such obstinate clamor, and seeking the intercessions

of his saints with such entreaties, until they too plead with the Lord from heaven for the Church to be heard.

Thus, it happens that if the mind does not change from its fixed purpose, it will not be deprived of the fruit of its petition; but whether one intervenes for his own frailty or for others, he will attain the desired effect. For if any of us has a conscience polluted by the filth of avarice, pride, vain glory, indignation, wrath, or envy, or the uncleanness of other vices, indeed he has a daughter badly harassed by a demon, for whose healing he must run suppliantly to the Lord: because the thought begotten from the heart endures madness by the devil's art, whose correction must be beseeched from the merciful Creator with frequent, indeed continual laments and prayers. If anyone has defiled the good he has done with the pestilence of perjury, theft, blasphemy, detraction, quarrel, or even bodily impurity, or other suchlike, he has a daughter tormented by the furies of an unclean spirit, because the action that he had rightly performed by laboring well, he has now foolishly ruined by serving the deceits of the devil. Therefore, it is necessary that, when one recognizes their guilt, they should immediately flee to prayers and tears, frequently seeking the help of the intercessions of saints, who, praying to the Lord for [the soul's] salvation, might say: "We pray, Lord, compassionate and merciful, patient and of great mercy (Psalm 85), forgive it, for it cries after us: forgive the guilt, and grant grace, [they seek] our innermost support with intimate affection.

It is necessary, with due submissive humility, that they no longer judge themselves worthy of the company of Israelite sheep, that is, of pure souls, but rather should consider themselves comparable to and unworthy of heavenly gifts. Yet nevertheless, in hope, they should not desist from the persistence of praying, but with an undoubting mind, have confidence in the goodness of the highest giver: for the one who could make a confessor out of a thief, an apostle out of a persecutor, an evangelist out of a publican, and sons of Abraham out of stones, can also convert the most shameless dog into an Israelite sheep: to whom He graciously grants the pasture of eternal life along with the gift of chastity, that is, He deems worthy to make the sinner turned away from his evil path righteous, whom He, by the merit of good action, leads to the heavenly kingdom. And seeing such fervor of our faith, such persistent perseverance in praying, the Lord will finally have mercy, and grant us what we desire: namely, that with the disturbances of vicious thoughts expelled, the chains of sins abandoned, and pure serenity of mind and perfection of good deeds may be restored to us. In the meantime, it should be noted that this persistence in praying deserves to be fruitful only if what we pray for with our mouth, we also meditate in our mind, and neither the clamor of our lips is split from the focus of our thoughts.

For there are those who, entering the church, recite many words of psalmody or prayer, but with their heart attentive elsewhere, they neither recall what they say: praying indeed with their mouth, but wandering outside in their mind, they deprive themselves of all fruit of the prayer: thinking their prayer is heard by God when they themselves, who utter it, do not hear it, a fact which no one can fail to observe is done by the instigation of the ancient

enemy. For knowing the utility of praying and envying humans the grace of obtaining it, he throws many kinds of light and sometimes even vile and harmful fantasies at humans, with which he impedes prayer, so much so that sometimes we endure such great waves of wandering thoughts while prostrated in prayer, as we would not know how to endure lying on our backs in bed. Hence, dearly beloved brothers, it is necessary to overcome the recognized malice of the devil; and that we guard our minds as much as we can from those clouds which the enemy delights to scatter, and solicit the perpetual aid of the pious Defender, who is powerful to grant the grace of pure and perfect praying even to unworthy sinners [or, petitioners]. The purity of prayer greatly helps, however, if we abstain from illicit acts in every place and time; if we always discipline both our hearing and language from idle talk; if we habituate ourselves to walk in the law of God, and to search His testimonies with all our heart.

For whatever things we are accustomed to do, speak or hear often, it is necessary that the same frequently recur to the mind as if to their usual and proper seat; and as pigs frequent muddy wallows and doves clear springs, so impure thoughts disturb an unclean mind, while pure ones enrich a chaste mind with sanctifying spirit. Certainly if we persist in praying and remain steadfast like the Canaanite woman, the grace of our Creator will be present, which will correct all our errors, sanctify the unclean, and calm the turbulent within us. For He is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, if we cry out to Him with the constant voice of our mind, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY XX. ON THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT. JOHN. VIII. At that time Jesus went to the Mount of Olives, and early in the morning he again went to the temple, and all the people came to him, and sitting down, he taught them.

We must consider this reading from the holy Gospel with great attention, dearest brothers, and always remember how greatly it commends the grace of our Creator to us. Behold, as we have heard, when the impious accusers brought before him a sinful woman, instead of immediately stoning her as prescribed by the law, he first instructed the accusers to consider themselves, and then to give a judgment against the sinner, so that by recognizing their own fragility, they might understand how they ought to show mercy to others. But since it is customary in the Scriptures for some things to be expressed from the state of time, others from the state of place, and others from both, the Evangelist, about to relate the tempering of the law's strictness by the mercy of the Redeemer, first stated that Jesus went to the Mount of Olives, and early in the morning he again went to the temple. Indeed, the Mount of Olives signifies the height of the Lord's piety and mercy because in Greek, olive means mercy, and an olive grove is called oleon, and the very anointing of oil used to bring relief to weary and aching limbs. Likewise, because oil both surpasses in strength and purity, and whatever liquid you pour upon it, it immediately repels and rises above it, it not inappropriately symbolizes the grace of heavenly mercy, of which it is written, "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works" (Ps. 144).

The time of early morning also indicates the rise of this same grace, by which the shadow of the law being removed, the light of evangelical truth was to be revealed. Therefore, Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives to declare that the citadel of mercy consists in him; he then comes again early in the morning to the temple, to signify that this same mercy was to be dispensed and offered to the faithful with the dawning light of the New Testament, namely in his temple.

And all the people came to him, and sitting, he taught them. The sitting of the Lord indicates the humility of his incarnation, for which he deigned to have mercy on us; hence it is also commanded to us: Arise after you have sat down (Psalm 126), as if it is said openly: Not before, but after you have humbled yourselves truly, hope to receive the reward of heavenly exaltation. It is well said that when Jesus taught sitting, all the people came to him: because after he became close to humans by the humility of his incarnation, his word was more willingly received by many: by many, I say, his word was received, for it was scorned by many with proud impiety. For the meek heard and rejoiced, magnifying the Lord with the Psalmist, and exalting his name together. The envious heard, and were dissolved, but they were not pierced; they tested him and mocked him, gnashing their teeth at him in derision. Thus, testing him, they brought a woman caught in adultery, asking what he would command to be done to her; because Moses had ordered such a one to be stoned, so that if he too decided that she should be stoned, they would mock him as though he had forgotten the mercy he always taught; if he forbade stoning, they would gnash their teeth at him and condemn him as a supporter of crimes and as contrary to the law, as though deservedly. But far be it that earthly foolishness should find what to say, and heavenly wisdom should lack what to answer. Far be it that the blind justice fulfilled should resist so that the sun of justice would not shine over the world.

But Jesus, bending down, wrote on the ground with his finger. Through Jesus' inclination, humility is expressed; through the finger, which is flexible due to the joints' arrangement, subtlety of discernment is expressed; moreover, the ground signifies the human heart, which is accustomed to yielding the fruits of either good or evil actions. Therefore, when the Lord was asked to judge the adulteress, he did not immediately give a judgment, but first, bending down, he wrote on the ground with his finger, and only afterward, because he is earnestly asked, does he judge: teaching us symbolically that when we see any errors of our neighbors, we should not immediately judge by condemning them, but first, humbly returning to our conscience, we should skillfully carve it with the finger of discernment, and diligently weigh what is pleasing or displeasing to our Creator in it, according to the Apostle's statement, "Brothers, if a man be overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (Galatians 6).

But when they persisted in questioning Him, He straightened up and said to them: "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." Because on this side and on that the Scribes and Pharisees were laying snares of traps for the Lord, thinking He

would either be unmerciful in judging or unjust: He, foreseeing their deceits, as if passing through the threads of a spider's web, and showing the judgment of justice in all things, and the gentleness of mercy: it was fulfilled in them that which we have said of the Psalmist, that they were dissolved, and were not pricked at heart (Psalm 35). They were dissolved, indeed because they could not trap the Lord in their snares; nor were they pricked at heart to follow Him in the duties of love. Do you want to hear the temperance of mercy? "Let him who is without sin among you." Do you want again to hear the justice of judging? "Let him be the first to throw a stone at her." If Moses, he says, commanded you to stone such a woman, see that it was not sinners but the just whom he ordered to do this. First, fulfill the justice of the law yourselves, and so, innocent in hands and pure in heart, go forth to stone the guilty. First, perfect the spiritual edicts of the law—faith, mercy, and love—and then divert to judging the carnal.

Having given judgment, the Lord again bent down and wrote on the ground. Indeed, according to the custom of human practice, it can be understood that the Lord wished to bend down and write on the ground before the wicked tempters, so that by turning His face elsewhere, He might give them the free will to leave, whom He had foreseen would depart more quickly struck by His response rather than were He to question them further.

Finally, hearing this, they went out one by one, starting with the eldest. He symbolically reminds us in that which he, before and after pronouncing judgment, bends down and writes on the ground, that before we rebuke a sinning neighbor and after we have given the duty of rightful chastisement, we should examine ourselves with a worthy investigator of humility, lest perhaps we be entangled in the same offenses which we reprehend in them, or in other offenses whatsoever. For it often happens that those who judge a murderer for publicly sinning, do not feel the worse evil of hatred by which they are devoured in secret; those who accuse a fornicator, do not understand the plague of pride by which they are exalted about their own chastity; those who condemn a drunkard, do not see the venom of envy by which they themselves are consumed. What remedy, therefore, remains for us in such dangers, what means of salvation? Except that when we see another sinning, we immediately bow down, that is, humbly recognize how low we are, based on the frailty of our condition, if divine mercy does not sustain us. Let us write with our finger on the ground, that is, accurately deliberate with judgment whether we can say with blessed Job, "for neither does our heart reproach us in our whole life" (Job 27); and remember diligently that if our heart reproaches us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

We can also rightly understand that the Lord, about to grant forgiveness to the sinner, wants to write on the ground with his finger to show that He is the same one who once wrote the Decalogue on stone with his finger, that is, with the work of the Holy Spirit. And well was the law written on stone, which was given to subdue the hearts of a hard and stubborn people. Well did the Lord write on the ground, about to grant the grace of remission to the contrite and humble of heart, who could bear the fruit of salvation. Well did He bend down and write on the ground with His finger, who once showing Himself high on the mountain

wrote with His finger on the stone, because through the humbling undertaken in humanity, He infused the Spirit of grace into the fruitful hearts of the faithful, who once appearing exalted in an angel, gave hard commands to hard peoples. Well He who bent down to write on the ground, stood up to proclaim words of mercy, because what He promised through the companionship of human infirmity, by the power of divine virtue He bestowed upon men the gift of piety.

Rising up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they who accused you? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." No one dared to condemn the sinner, because each one had begun to see in themselves what they recognized should be more condemned. But let us see with what gift of mercy He, who drove away the crowd of accusers by the weight of justice, lifts up the accused. Thus:

Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on sin no more." Here is fulfilled the sentence of the Psalmist, who sings in the praises of the Lord: "Prosper and reign, because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and your right hand shall guide you wondrously" (Psalm 45). For He reigns for the sake of truth, because by preaching the way of truth to the world, He enlarges the glory of His kingdom to the multitude of believers. He reigns for the sake of meekness and righteousness, because more people subject themselves to His kingdom because they know Him to be meek in liberating those repenting of sin, and just in condemning the stubborn for sin: meek in granting the grace of faith and heavenly virtues, just in rendering an eternal reward for the struggle of faith and heavenly virtues. His right hand guided Him wondrously, because God dwelling in a man showed Him to be wondrous in all He did and taught; but He always showed Himself to lead with wondrous prudence against the traps that the cunning enemies could devise. Neither do I, investigate, condemn you. Go, and sin no more with contradictions. Since He is merciful and gracious and loves righteousness, He forbids sinning further. However, because some might doubt whether Jesus, whom they knew to be truly man, could forgive sins, He deigns to show more openly that He divinely holds this power. For after repelling the wickedness of the tempters, after loosing the guilt of the sinner, He speaks to them again saying:

I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Where it clearly teaches, not only by what authority he forgave the sins of the woman; but also what he figuratively expressed by going up to the Mount of Olives, by coming again to the temple at dawn, by writing on the ground with his finger: namely that he is the citadel of mercies, and the God of all consolation, at once the herald and bestower of unending light, the giver of the law and of grace. I am, he says, the light of the world. As if he were openly saying: I am the true light, which illuminates every man coming into the world: I am the sun of righteousness who rises for those who fear God, though I seem to be covered for a time by the cloud of flesh. For I am covered by the cloud of flesh, not to be hidden from those who seek, but to be tempered for the weak. Let them heal the eyes of their mind, let them purify their hearts with faith, so that they may deserve to see me: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Mt. V).

Who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Whoever now obeys my commands and examples will not fear the future darkness of damnation, but rather will have the light of life, where he will never die at all, by nature. Therefore, let us follow, brothers, now the light of righteousness by faith which works through love, so that we may then be worthy to attain it by sight, which the merit of love both rewards and adds, attesting himself, who said: But whoever loves me, will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him (John XIV). Let us come with all attentive mind to him who has a place on the invisible Mount of Olives: for God, his God, anointed him with the oil of gladness above his companions, so that he may also deem us worthy to be partakers of the same anointing, that is, of spiritual grace. This we will indeed not deserve to attain any other way than by loving justice and hating iniquity.For also concerning him, the Psalm which speaks of these things preceded: You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity (Ps. XLIV), so that by proclaiming the glory of the head, he might show how the members should conduct themselves to pertain to this. Let us remember that he himself came to the temple at dawn, and while teaching, absolved the sinner from guilt, and let us strive to be a temple of our Creator, let us strive to advance in the light of virtues by dispelling the darkness of vices, so that even our hearts may be visited by the Lord, that he may instruct us with heavenly disciplines, and deign immediately to cleanse whatever he finds filthy in us, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for all ages of ages.

HOMILY XXI IN LENT. JOHN VI, LUKE IX, MARK VI, MATTHEW XIX. At that time Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw the signs which he did on those who were diseased, etc.

Those who read or hear the signs and miracles of the Lord and Savior correctly do not pay attention so much to what externally amazes them but rather look at what they should do internally by the example of these things, and what they should perceive as mystical in them. Behold, as Passover was approaching, the feast day of the Jews, the Lord was uplifting the multitude following Him with the word of salvation and likewise with the help of healing. For as another evangelist writes, He was speaking to them about the kingdom of God, and He was healing those who were in need of care, and having completed this teaching and healing, He abundantly fed them from a small amount of food. And so, dearest brothers, following this example as Passover, the feast day of our redemption approaches, let us follow the Lord with our whole heart along with the gathered crowd of brothers, and let us carefully observe the path of His actions so that we may deserve to follow His footsteps. For he who says he abides in Christ ought to walk as He walked. Whatever harmful ignorance we find in ourselves, let us wash away with frequent hearing of His word, and whatever vices of the tempting disease, namely spiritual, we feel to be internally ravaging us, let us ask to be cleansed by the usual gift of His mercy.

But even if we behold ourselves united to Him by the sweetness of heavenly life, let us request His grace that He may deign to satisfy us with the gifts of necessary contrition and

other spiritual virtues so that at the time of His most holy resurrection, adorned appropriately inside and out, we may partake of the sacraments of our salvation with pure body and heart together. But since we have briefly touched upon these matters, let us more diligently look at the entire sequence of the holy reading and let us uncover whatever mystical insight we can investigate in it for your charity.

Jesus crossed over the Sea of Galilee, which is Tiberias. First, it must be said, according to history, that the Sea of Galilee, which is distinguished by many names due to the diversity of the surrounding regions, is called Tiberias only in those places where it displays the city of Tiberias to the west, as they say, inhabited with beneficial hot waters. Indeed, with the Jordan flowing through it, it extends eighteen thousand paces in length and five in width. Mystically, however, the sea signifies the turbulent and swelling waves of this age, in which any wicked, unjustly delighted, like fish immersed in deep waters, do not uplift the mind to heavenly joys. Hence, this same Sea of Galilee is aptly named, that is, the wheel; because surely the allure [or labor] of the passing age sends hearts into a whirl, which prevents them from being uplifted to the desires of eternal life. Concerning these matters, the Psalmist says: "In the round, the wicked walk" (Psalm XI). But a great multitude was following Jesus as He crossed the Sea of Galilee, because they were receiving the supreme gifts of heavenly teaching, healing, and nourishment from Him. For before the Lord appeared in the flesh, only the Jewish nation followed Him by believing; but after He came by the dispensation of His incarnation, He approached, trampled, and crossed over the waves of mortal life, and immediately a great multitude of nations followed Him, desiring to be spiritually instructed, healed, and satisfied, praying with the Psalmist: "Lord, I have fled to You;

teach me to do Your will"; and "Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am weak; heal me, Lord, for my bones are troubled" (Psalm I, II). And again, confident of receiving from Him the nourishment of eternal life, "The Lord is my shepherd, and I shall not want; He makes me lie down in green pastures" (Psalm XXIII). But when Jesus went up the mountain, there He sat with His disciples, and when the multitude came to Him, He descended and refreshed those in the lower places whom He had shortly before healed in the higher places. Let us by no means believe this happened in vain, but to signify mystically that the Lord distributes His teachings and gifts according to the capacity of the recipients. To the spiritually weak and immature, indeed, He gives simpler sacraments; to the more advanced, He reveals more profound mysteries and secrets of higher wisdom. Promising higher rewards of heavenly gifts. Finally, to a certain person asking what he should do to gain eternal life, as if to someone still on a lower level, he bestowed common gifts of his generosity, saying: "You shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, honor your father and mother.

To the same person, when later seeking greater things, and as if wishing to ascend to the mountain of virtues, he said, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell all that you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come follow me. The Lord not only taught this in the flesh through his own moderation, but even now continues to display it

through the ministers of his word. Hence, concerning these things under the persona of a good servant, it is testified that there should be given to fellow-servants the appropriate measure of wheat in due time, that is, to wisely and timely dispense the food of the word according to the capacity of the listeners. The fact that the Lord teaches, heals, and feeds the crowds as Passover approaches can be mystically interpreted this way: Passover signifies "passage," and whoever the Lord recovers with the internal sweetness of his gifts, he indeed prepares for a healthy passage, so that they transcend the lusts of the flesh with the sublime nature of the mind, and trample the vain desires of the world, both favorable and adverse, with heavenly hope and love.

Even though the soul and flesh might not yet fully reach the heights above, since this is clearly promised in the future, whatever those bound by the flesh appear to grasp as lofty things, they regard them as almost nothing in comparison to the eternal, emulating the one who, seeing the dominion elevated and exalted above the cedars of Lebanon, overlooked temporal things by contemplation and saw them as not existing, foreseeing their quick removal. That Jesus lifted up his eyes and saw the multitude coming to him is a sign of divine compassion, because for all those seeking to come to him, he is accustomed to grant the grace of heavenly mercy if they seek it truthfully. And to prevent them from erring in their search, he habitually illuminates those seeking with the light of his Spirit, the seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent into all the earth (Revelation 5). When the Lord tested Philip, saying, "Where shall we buy bread so these may eat? he did this with provident dispensation, not to learn what he did not already know, but to make Philip recognize his own lack of faith by being tested, and be corrected by the miracle performed.

For surely he should not have doubted, in the presence of the creator of all things, who brings forth bread from the earth and wine that gladdens the heart of man, that the bread of a few denarii could suffice for the thousands in the crowd, so that each could take adequately and go away satisfied. The five loaves with which he fed the multitude are the five books of Moses, opened with spiritual understanding, and with an increasingly abundant sense and multiplied, daily refresh the faithful hearts of the listeners. Those who are deemed to have been good barley, evidently because of the harsher edicts of the law and the coarse coverings of the letter, which concealed the inner spiritual sense as if it were marrow [hidden]. The two fish he added, without difficulty, signify the writings of the psalmists and the prophets, one of which sang and the other spoke to their listeners about the future sacraments of Christ and the Church. And rightly are the preachers of that age represented by aquatic animals, in which the faithful people could not live at all without the waters of baptism. The boy who had five loaves and two fish, but did not distribute them to the hungry crowds, but offered them to the Lord to distribute, represents the Jewish people with a childish literal sense, who kept the sayings of the Scriptures closed among themselves.

These, however, the Lord appearing in the flesh took, and showed what utility and sweetness they had inside, revealed how they overflowed with the multiple grace of the Spirit, which appeared few and despicable, and handed these over to all nations through his apostles and

the successors of the apostles, by ministering them. Hence, well do some evangelists report that the Lord gave the loaves and fish to the disciples, and the disciples ministered to the crowds. For when the mystery [or ministry] of human salvation began to be narrated by the Lord from those who heard it, it was confirmed in us by them. The disciples set before the crowds, when they went forth and preached everywhere, with the Lord working with them and confirming the word through accompanying signs. The grass on which the crowd is reclining and is refreshed represents the desire of the flesh, which should be trodden down and pressed by anyone who desires to be satisfied with spiritual nourishment. For all flesh is grass, and all its glory is like the flower of grass. Therefore, let everyone who desires to be refreshed by the sweetness of the living bread and to be renewed by the heavenly banquet, lest they perish in the lowest state of old, strive to crush the flower of the grass, that is, to subdue their body and bring it into service, subdue the pleasures of the flesh, and restrain the wantonness of luxury.

The five thousand men who ate signify the perfection of those who are refreshed by the word of life. For by the name of men those in the Scriptures are typically represented who are more perfect, and whom no effeminacy corrupts, such as the Apostle desires them to be when he says: Watch, stand firm in the faith, act manfully and be strong (1 Cor. 16:13). Moreover, the number of a thousand, beyond which no further calculation of ours extends, is usually used to indicate the fullness of the matters discussed; and the number five expresses our five well-known bodily senses, namely, sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. In each of these, those who strive to act manfully and be strengthened, living soberly, righteously, and piously, that they might be worthy to be refreshed by the sweetness of heavenly wisdom, are typified as the five thousand men whom the Lord satisfied with mystical feasts. Nor should it be overlooked that he gave thanks before feeding the multitude. For he gave thanks to teach us always to give thanks for the heavenly [or divinely] received gifts, and to intimate how much he rejoices in our advancements, and rejoices in our spiritual refreshment. Do you wish to know, brothers, how much he rejoices in our salvation?

The Evangelist Luke recounts that he gave the disciples the authority to tread on all the power of the enemy and indicated that their names are written in the heavens, and immediately adds, "In that very hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.'" It is therefore clear that he rejoices in the salvation and life of the faithful, for he praises the Father, giving thanks, because he has revealed the secrets hidden from the proud to the humble in spirit. And when he ordered the disciples to gather the leftover fragments after the multitude was satisfied, lest they perish, it clearly signifies that many things in the divine words are hidden from the senses of the common people, some of which the less learned cannot reach by themselves, but can understand when explained by the more learned. Therefore, it is necessary that those who are able to diligently gather these things by careful examination should bring them to the education of their lesser brothers through speech or writing, lest the nourishment of the

word perish through their neglect and be taken away from the people. They gathered them, he says, and filled twelve baskets with fragments.

Because the number twelve is usually used to signify any sum of perfection, it is rightly expressed by the twelve baskets full of fragments, representing the whole chorus of spiritual doctors, who are commanded to gather the obscure things of Scriptures, which the crowd cannot reach by themselves, and to keep what they have gathered by meditation and written word for their own use and the use of the crowd. The apostles and evangelists did this, inserting many mystical sayings of the law and prophets into their writings with explanations added by their interpreters. The Church teachers in the whole world, who followed them, also discussed some entire books of both Testaments with more diligent explanation—even if they are despised by men, they are fruitful with the bread of heavenly grace. For servile works are usually done with baskets. Hence, about the people who once served in clay and bricks in Egypt, the Psalmist says, "His hands served in the basket" (Psalm 80). Therefore, those people, when they saw what sign he had done, said, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world. They rightly said that the Lord was a great prophet, the herald of great salvation about to come to the world. For he himself deigned to call himself a prophet, where he says, "For it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem. But they were not yet advancing in full faith, for they did not know to call him Lord.

Therefore, those seeing the sign that Jesus had done, said, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world. We, with more certain knowledge of the truth and faith, seeing the world that Jesus made and the signs with which he filled it, let us say, "This is indeed the mediator of God and men, who fills the world with divinity, and the world was made through him, who came to his own to seek and save the human race that perished, and to renew the world that he made, who is with his faithful in the world through the presence of divinity all days until the end of the age, who at the end of the age will come through humanity into the world to render to each according to their works: casting the impious and sinners into eternal fire, and bringing the just into eternal life, in which he lives with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY XXII ON THE SECOND MONDAY OF LENT. JOHN II. At that time Jesus went down to Capernaum, He, and His mother, and His brethren, and His disciples, and they continued there not many days. It is often a cause of perplexity to some that in the beginning of this reading from the Gospel it is said that when the Lord went down to Capernaum, not only His mother and disciples followed Him, but also His brethren. Nor have heretics been lacking who believed that Joseph, the husband of the ever-blessed Virgin Mary, had begotten those who the Scripture calls the brethren of the Lord by another wife. Others, in even greater perfidy, thought that these were begotten by Mary herself after the Lord was born. But we, most beloved brethren, must know and confess without any scruple of doubt that not only the blessed Mother of God, but also Joseph, the most blessed witness and keeper of her chastity, always remained wholly free from any conjugal act; and that those called the brothers and sisters of the Savior, in the customary manner of the Scriptures, are

actually called relatives. Finally, Abraham speaks to Lot in this way: 'I pray that there be no strife between me and thee, and between my shepherds and thine; for we are brethren.' And Laban to Jacob: 'Because thou art my brother, shouldst thou serve me for nothing?' (Gen. XXIX.) And indeed it is certain that Lot was the son of Aran, Abraham's brother, and Jacob was the son of Rebecca, Laban's sister, but because of kinship they were called brothers. Therefore, by this rule, common in the holy Scriptures, as I said, it must be understood that the relatives of Mary or Joseph are called the brothers of the Lord.

And he found, it says, in the temple those selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money-changers sitting. And when he had made a kind of whip out of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, including the oxen and the sheep, and he poured out the money of the money-changers and overturned their tables. Oxen, sheep, and doves were bought for the purpose of being offered in the temple. The money-changers sat at the tables so that there might be a ready exchange of money between buyers and sellers of the offerings. Therefore, it seemed lawful to sell in the temple what was bought for the purpose of being offered in the same temple to the Lord; but the Lord himself, unwilling that any earthly business, not even that which might be considered honest, should be conducted in his house, drove out the unjust traders and expelled them all along with the things they traded. What then, my brothers, what do you think the Lord would do if he found dissenters in disputes, those indulging in idle talk, those dissolving in laughter, or entangled in any other crime, who saw buyers in the temple purchasing sacrifices to be offered to him, and hastened to eliminate them? We say this because of those who, having entered the church, not only neglect to be intent on prayer but even increase the matters for which they ought to pray, and moreover follow those who argue with foolishness, insults, and hatreds, or even slanders:

thus adding sin to sin, weaving as it were a very long cord by their reckless augmentation, not fearing to be condemned by the judgment of the strict judge. For twice indeed in the holy Gospel we read that the Lord, coming into the temple, drove out such traders, now, that is, in the third year before his passion, as we recognize from the subsequent writings of the Gospel, and in the very year he suffered, when five days before Passover, sitting on a donkey, he entered Jerusalem. But whoever is wise understands that he performs the same action in the temple of the holy Church through daily examination: hence these things are very dreadful, dearest ones, and must be feared with due reverence, and must be carefully avoided with diligent effort, lest, coming unexpectedly, he find any perverse thing in us for which we should rightly be scourged and expelled from the church: and especially in that which is particularly called the house of prayer, we must observe that we do not perform anything inappropriate, lest we hear with the Corinthians from the Apostle, "Do you not have houses to eat and drink in, or do you despise the church of God? And from the prophet with the Jews: "My beloved has committed many crimes in my house" (Jeremiah 11). And indeed it is to be rejoiced that we ourselves have become the temple of God through baptism, as the Apostle testifies who says: "For the temple of God is holy, which you are" (1 Corinthians 3).

We are the city of the great king, of which it is sung: "Its foundations are in the holy mountains" (Psalm 87), that is, the foundations of the Church in the solidity of the faith of the apostles and prophets; but it is very dreadful, because the Apostle has said beforehand: "If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him" (1 Corinthians 3). And the just Judge himself says, "I will destroy from the city of the Lord those who work iniquity" (Psalm 100). It is to be rejoiced, because in us the solemnity of Passover is celebrated, when we strive to pass from vices to virtues. Easter indeed is called the Passover. We must rejoice because the Lord is visiting our hearts, that is, His own city; because it is fitting that He illuminates the presence of our good deeds with His piety. But we must fear sufficiently lest He finds us in His city doing something other than what He loves, and He shows Himself to us as a stern judge, rendering us what we do not love, lest He finds in His temple money changers or sellers of oxen, sheep, or doves and condemns us. For oxen signify the doctrine of the heavenly life, sheep signify works of purity and piety, and doves signify the gifts of the Holy Spirit. For surely, with the help of oxen, the field is accustomed to being plowed.

The field, however, is the heart of the Lord cultivated with heavenly doctrine and duly prepared for the seeds of God's word. Innocent sheep provide their wool for clothing men. The Spirit descended upon the Lord in the form of a dove. But they sell oxen, who dispense the word of the Gospel to listeners not out of divine love, but for the purpose of earthly gain, the kind of people whom the Apostle reproached because they preached Christ insincerely. They sell sheep, who perform acts of piety for the sake of human praise, about whom the Lord said: because they have received their reward (Mt. 6). They sell doves, who give the received grace of the Spirit not freely, as commanded, but for a price, who grant the laying on of hands by which the Spirit is received, if not for financial gain, yet for public favor, who conferring sacred orders not for the merit of life, but for the granting of favors. They give money in exchange in the temple, who serve not heavenly matters, but openly serve earthly matters in the Church, seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But the Lord shows what reward awaits these deceitful workers when He drove them all out of the temple, having made a whip of cords. For they are cast out from the lot of the saints, who act either deceitfully or openly do evil works. He also drove out the sheep and oxen, showing that the life and doctrine of such people are alike reprobate.

The cords with which He drove out the impious from the temple are the small pieces of their wicked actions, from which the material for the severe condemnation of reprobates is given to the strict judge. Hence Isaiah also says: Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity (Isa. 5). And in Proverbs Solomon says: His own iniquities capture the wicked, and he is bound with the cords of his sins (Prov. 5). For he who accumulates sins upon sins for which he will be severely condemned, extends as it were the cords by which he is bound and scourged, increasing them little by little. He also poured out the money of the money lenders and overturned the tables, because in the end, He will also take away from the reprobate the very essence of the things they loved, according to what is written: and the world passed away and its lust.

And to those who sold doves, he said: Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade. He commanded the selling of doves to be removed from the temple, because the grace of the Spirit, which is received without payment, should be given freely: hence Simon Magus, who wanted to buy this with money, so that he could sell it for a higher price, heard: May your money perish with you, you have no part or share in this matter. However, it should be noted that not only those who sell doves and turn the house of God into a house of trade are condemned, but also those who seek the sacred orders by giving money or inquiring about the price in terms of praise or even honor. Moreover, those who exercise the spiritual grade or grace in the Church, which they have received through the generosity of the Lord, not with simplicity but for any human reward, go against the word of the apostle Peter: Whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies, so that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 4). Therefore, whoever such people may be, if they do not want to be driven out of the Church by the coming Lord, they should cast these things out of their actions, so that they do not make the house of God a house of trade.

And it should not be overlooked that Scripture diligently commends to us both natures of our Savior, both human and divine. To understand that he is truly the Son of God, let us hear what he says: Do not make my Father's house a house of trade. Clearly, he shows himself to be the Son of God the Father, who calls the temple of God his Father's house. And again, to recognize that he is truly the Son of Man, let us recall that at the beginning of this reading, descending to Capernaum, he is said to have a mother.

His disciples remembered that it was written: "Zeal for your house will consume me." With zeal for the house of the Father, the Savior drove the impious out of the temple. Let us also, dearest brothers, be zealous for the house of God, and as much as we can, strive that nothing corrupt happens in it. If we see a brother who belongs to the house of God swollen with pride, habituated to detraction, serving drunkenness, weakened by luxury, troubled by anger, or subjected to any other vice, let us strive as much as our ability allows to correct, to rectify the corrupt and perverse, and if we cannot amend anything of such, endure it not without the sharpest pain of mind, and especially in the very house of prayer, where the body of the Lord is consecrated, where the presence of angels is always undoubtedly present, let us ensure with all our might that nothing improper is done, nothing that would impede our or our brother's prayer.

The Jews then answered and said to him: "What sign do you show us, seeing that you do these things?" Jesus answered and said to them: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Evangelist revealed of what temple he spoke, evidently of the temple of his body, which was destroyed by them through his passion but which he raised up from death after three days. Therefore, because they sought a sign from the Lord as to why he ought to cast out the usual trade from the temple, he responded that he rightly expelled the impious from the temple because that temple symbolized the temple of his body, in which there would be no stain of sin at all. Nor did he undeservedly cleanse the typical temple from

crimes, who could by divine power raise the true temple of God, dissolved by men through death, from the dead.

The Jews therefore said: This temple has been built in forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days? As they understood, so they responded: but lest we also should understand the Lord's spiritual word carnally, the Evangelist explained the temple he was speaking of: What they say, the temple was built in forty-six years, signifies not the first, but the second building of it. Solomon first perfected the temple in seven years of work in the great peace of his kingdom, which, having been destroyed by the Chaldeans, began to be rebuilt after seventy years at the command of Cyrus the Persian, the captivity having been relaxed: but the sons of the captivity, the work they were doing under the leaders Zerubbabel and Joshua, could not complete in forty-six years because of the attack of neighboring nations. This number of years appropriately matches the formation of the Lord's body. For natural writers say that the form of the human body is completed in the same number of days, because in the first six days from conception it has the semblance of milk; in the following nine days it converts to blood, then in twelve days it solidifies; in the remaining eighteen days it forms until all the features of the members are perfected; and then in the remaining time up to the moment of birth it increases in size.

Six, nine, twelve, and eighteen make up forty-five, to which if we add one, that is, the day on which the body begins to take shape through the separated members, there are just as many days in the construction of the Lord's body as years were found in the building of the temple. And because that temple built by hands prefigured the Lord's most holy flesh which he took from the Virgin, as we learn from this place; because equally his body, which is the Church, signifies the body and soul of each of the faithful, as we find in many places of the Scriptures, it is fitting to recall something of the building of that temple, by which your fraternity may recognize how all things written about it pertain to Christ and the Church. It was oriented towards the east, having a door facing the sunrise, which immediately upon rising bathed all its interior with its light. And the holy Church directs the whole intention of its mind to his grace, of whom Zechariah says: The sunrise from on high has visited us to shine on those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death (Luke 1). And always mindful of his promise when he says, Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it (Psalm 80); gladly responds: I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed for your commandments (Psalm 119); which means:

I opened the devotion of my heart, and I deserved to draw in the light of your spirit, because I learned to observe nothing else in the world than the observance of your commandments. Outside, it appeared built of white stone; inside, the ceilings, walls, floor, beams, doors, and whatever vessels there were, were covered with overlaid gold. And the Church indeed outwardly shows to all the strength of perfect action; but it teaches only those who have learned to consider it piously to understand how much it excels inwardly in the virtues of each soul, how greatly each of these is adorned with the light of charity. The gold plates themselves are attached to cedar boards or fir, or certainly prepared from olive wood: all of

which are clearly considered excellent woods. And the splendor of the Lord's love, through the memory of His most holy passion which was completed on the precious wood of the cross, is imprinted in the hearts of the faithful, lest it be forgotten. The temple itself is divided by a veil of the middle wall, and it is called the sanctuary on the outside, but on the inside where the ark of the covenant was placed, it was called the holy of holies. And the Church partly journeys on Earth away from the Lord, partly reigns with the Lord in the heavens.

For the middle wall itself is understood to be heaven, the ark of the covenant is the Lord, who alone, conscious of the secret things of the fathers, has penetrated the innermost parts of heaven. The ascent that led to the upper and third room was made through the recesses of the southern wall as if by an invisible step, so that only the beginning of the same ascent from the eastern corner of the mentioned wall was seen, but the progress of the ascent itself was known only to the one who ascended it, of which Scripture thus remembers: "The door for the middle chamber was in the right side of the house: and they went up with winding stairs into the middle chamber, and out of the middle into the third" (1 Kings 6). With the Lord suffering on the cross, one of the soldiers opened His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. This is the water of Baptism by which we are washed, and this is the blood of the Lord's chalice by which we are sanctified. Through these sacred mysteries of the side, by the merit of invisible faith, we ascend from the present life of the Church, which sojourns on Earth, into the life of heavenly blessedness, in which the souls of the just enjoy, freed from bodies. But also from that life, with bodies received back in the resurrection, up to the supreme glory of eternal happiness, we pass by the guiding faith of the same Lord's passion;

of which glory indeed Isaiah speaks: "In their own land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be theirs" (Isaiah 61), that is, in the land of the living, which alone is the land of the saints, with the eternal joys of both flesh and soul enjoying happiness. Therefore, the lower house signifies the present conversation of the saints, the upper the rest of souls which is received after this life, and the highest glory of the resurrection which will never ever be changed; the door of the middle side, situated on the right side of the house and opening the way to the upper parts, is the faith in the passion of Christ, whose right side pierced on the cross emanated the sacraments for us, by which imbued we may ascend to the joys of heavenly life. In seven years and as many months the first structure of the temple was completed, but in the eighth year, and in the eighth month from when it began to be built, the dedication ceremony followed; and the Church throughout the entire present age, which revolves in seven days, continues to take spiritual increases of its members until the times of the future eternal resurrection, when with the peaceful King it will enter the feast of its dedication. For since the Lord rose on the eighth day, that is, after the seventh of the Sabbath, from death, rightly does this number also designate the future joys of our resurrection.

It is sufficient to have mentioned these few things out of many regarding the creation, so that it may appear more clearly how all things shine with spiritual understanding. But as

we conclude the discourse, let us return to the Lord's statement, where he says to the Jews seeking a sign: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John II), and let us give thanks to his mercy, who has revealed the mystery of his passion and resurrection from the dead, which he expressed in veiled terms to the unbelievers who tested him, now in clear light to us who already believe in him. And because the time is near when we desire to celebrate with an annual solemnity both the destruction of this venerable temple by the faithless and the resurrection, which he miraculously exhibited on the third day as he promised, let us cleanse the temples of our bodies and hearts, so that the Spirit of God may deign to dwell in us, and according to the Apostle's admonition, let us cast aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light, walking honestly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envy, but clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. XIII), who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God before all ages. Amen.

HOMILY XXIII. ON PALM SUNDAY. MATT. XXI, MARK XI, LUKE XIX, JOHN XII. At that time, when Jesus came near to Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage at the Mount of Olives, he then sent two of his disciples, saying to them: Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me, etc.

Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who came down from heaven to earth to suffer for the salvation of the human race, as the hour of his passion approached, desired to approach the place of his passion, so that it would be clear that he suffered not unwillingly but willingly. He desired to come on a donkey and to be called and praised by the crowds as king, so that anyone who was taught this would recognize him as the Christ, whom the prophecy had long foretold would come in this way. He wished to come five days before Passover, as we learn from the Gospel of John, to show that he is the spotless Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. Indeed, the paschal lamb, whose sacrifice freed the people of Israel from Egyptian servitude, was commanded to be sacrificed five days before Passover, on the fourteenth day of the moon, in the evening. This signified Him who, redeeming us with his blood, five days before Passover, that is, on this very day, came into the temple of God with great joy and praise from the crowds preceding and following. Daily he was teaching in the temple. On the fifth day, having completed the observance of the old Passover, he gave to his disciples the new sacraments to be observed thereafter.

Having gone out to the Mount of Olives, he was seized by the Jews, and crucified in the morning, redeeming us on that very day from the dominion of the devil, the same day the ancient Hebrew people were freed from Egyptian servitude by the sacrifice of the lamb. Therefore, like the paschal lamb, the Lord went to the place of his passion five days before he began to suffer, to show that he is the one of whom Isaiah prophesied: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth" (Is. 53). And a little above: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, and by his stripes we are healed. Yet, the envious hearts of the leaders preferred to persecute him

in all the things he justly did, rather than to believe in him, and they were more miserable in giving the author of life to death than in seeking life through him. However, leaving aside the blindness of the faithless, let us rather follow the examples of those who faithfully praised the Lord, and, as is fitting, let us mystically examine his mystical journey. The donkey and its colt on which he rode to Jerusalem signify the simple hearts of both peoples, the Jew and the Gentile, over whom he presides, leading them from harmful situations to the vision of heavenly peace by his command. For Jerusalem is interpreted as the vision of peace.

And it is fitting that when the Lord came to the Mount of Olives, he sent disciples to bring these animals, because we reach him not by our own merits but by his grace alone, as John testifies, saying: "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us first" (1 John 4). The Mount of Olives suggests the height of the Lord's love, by which he mercifully deigned to enlighten and save us; not only because in its nature it is a minister of light and solace in labors and pains, but also because, whatever it is mixed with, it excels all other liquids. And the Apostle, when speaking about love, says: "And yet I will show you a more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12). So the Lord, coming to the Mount of Olives, commanded that donkeys be brought for him on which he might go to Jerusalem, figuratively indicating what he says elsewhere openly: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3). He sent two disciples to bring the animals to signify that preachers would be sent to both peoples, the circumcised and the uncircumcised. Or certainly he sent two to warn that the same preachers must be perfect in both doctrine and action: so that neither would ignorant words mix error with truth, nor would they negate what they rightly taught by living perversely.

You will find, he said, a donkey tied and a colt with her, untie and bring them to me. Other evangelists also attest that the colt was tied. For both peoples were encompassed by the ropes of sins and needed divine release; one by misusing the law he received, the other by never receiving it had sinned. Hence the Apostle rightly says: Because there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, justified freely by his grace. And fittingly, the other three evangelists, who wrote to the Gentiles, mention only the colt brought to the Lord. But Matthew the evangelist, who wrote the Gospel from the Hebrews and in Hebrew language, adds mention of the donkey, with provident dispensation for both, so that by writing they may seek the salvation of those, and mystically teach that they are foreshadowed to be saved by the Lord.

And if anyone says anything to you, he said, say that the Lord needs them, and immediately he will send them. And it is instructed to the teachers that if any adversity opposes them, if anyone prohibits sinners from being released from the snares of the devil and brought to the Lord through the confession of faith, they should not desist from preaching, but steadily indicate that the Lord needs such people for building the Church. For though the persecutor is cruel and brutal, he cannot prevent the salvation of those whom the Lord knows as his own, for he has preordained them to eternal life. The testimony of the prophet is also applied

to this fact, to show that the Lord indeed fulfilled all that was written about him, but the scribes and Pharisees, blinded by envy, were unable to understand what they were reading.

Say to the daughter of Zion, Behold, your king comes to you, meek, and sitting upon a donkey, and a colt the foal of a donkey. The daughter of Zion is the Church of the faithful, pertaining to the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all, of which a not insignificant portion was among the people of Israel, having a meek king: for he does not customarily give earthly things to the cruel, but heavenly kingdoms to the meek, saying: Learn from me, for I am meek and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls (Mt. XI). Of whom the Psalmist says: The meek, he says, shall possess the land, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace (Psalm XXXVI). The meek king indeed grants the land of peace to the meek, that is, to those humble in heart, whom once a cruel king, that is, the devil, laid low with the wound of pride in the land of war and tribulations. Sitting, he says (Isaiah LXVI), upon a donkey and a colt the foal of a donkey, because he rests in the hearts of the humble and quiet and those who tremble at his words, whether they who in the synagogue know how to bear the yoke of the law: or those who, long lawless in pagan freedom, are turned by the urgency of the same synagogue to the grace of faith and truth.

However, the disciples, bringing the donkey and the colt, placed their garments on them, and made the Lord sit above them. The garments of the disciples are works of justice, with the Psalmist as witness, who says: Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness (Psalm CXXXI). The disciples pave the donkeys, which they find naked, with their own garments, and thus place the Lord above, when the holy preachers find anyone empty of the habit of holiness, and with examples of their virtues, they instruct them to receive the faith and love of their creator. For the Lord did not wish to ascend a naked donkey, nor a naked colt, because whether Jew or Gentile, unless adorned by the words and deeds of the saints, cannot have the Lord as guide, but rather sin reigns in his mortal body to obey its desires. A very large crowd spread their garments on the road. This large crowd designates the innumerable army of martyrs, who gave their bodies, the coverings of their souls, for the Lord, so that they might make smoother the path of righteous living for the elect who follow: so that those indeed might not hesitate to place the foot of good action in peace, where they saw many have already gone before in the battle of martyrdom.

Others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The branches of the trees are said to be the examples of the preceding Fathers. And whoever discloses what the prophets, apostles, or other saints said or did, as an example of right believing or working, truly cuts branches from the trees, with which he smooths the path of the Lord bearing the donkey, because he extracts sentences from the books of the saints, through which he builds up the hearts of Christ's simple ones in the way of truth so that they may not wander. The crowds that went ahead and those that followed shouted, saying: Hosanna to the Son of David! With one and the same voice of confession and praise, they exalt the Lord, both those who go before and those who follow: because there is indeed one faith of those who were proven before the Lord's incarnation and those afterward, although they had different

sacraments according to the times, as Peter attests, who says: But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus we shall be saved, even as they (Acts 15). And what they say, Hosanna to the Son of David, this is what is read in the psalm: The salvation of the Lord is, and upon your people is your blessing (Psalm 3), this is, what in great devotion of praise the chorus of saints resonates in the Revelation: Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb (Rev. 7).

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. In the name of the Lord signifies in the name of God the Father, which He elsewhere says to the unbelieving Jews: I have come in the name of My Father, and you did not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive (John V). For Christ came in the name of God the Father, because in all that He did and said He took care to glorify the Father and proclaim Him as to be glorified by men. The Antichrist will come in his own name, who, although the most wicked of all men and full of the devil as his companion, will not disdain to call himself the Son of God: for he opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped. But the crowds take up a verse of praise from the one hundred and seventeenth psalm, which no one doubts is sung about the Lord. Whence it is beautifully stated about Him in the same psalm: The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; because indeed Christ, whom the Jewish builders rejected with their decrees of traditions, has become the foundation of the believing people, namely the Jews and the Gentiles. For what is called the cornerstone in the psalm is Christ, who is praised in the Gospel by the voices of the preceding and following crowds.

And what is furthermore added in the prosecution of the same praise, Hosanna, that is, salvation or save, in the highest, clearly teaches that the advent of the Lord in the flesh is the salvation not only of the human race on earth but also of the angels in heaven: because while we, being redeemed, are led to the heights, their number, which was diminished by the fall of Satan, is surely filled. For this Paul says that all things in heaven and on earth are restored in Christ (Eph. I). Therefore, rightly is Hosanna in the highest sung in His praise, whose whole dispensation of incarnation was present for the fulfillment of the glory of the heavenly fatherland. Hence it is necessary, my brothers, that with full devotion of mind we strive toward the promised fatherland, always remembering that, although the way by which we enter is difficult, the dwelling place to which we hasten is blessed. For it is more fortunate to be led through a rough path to the kingdom than through a pleasant and smooth one to punishment. It is happier to earn everlasting joy through the restraint of the flesh than to achieve eternal punishment for a brief period of lasciviousness. Behold, with the Lord's help, we have already mostly completed the Lenten fast, as each one's conscience bears witness; for as much as one remembers having more strictly dedicated themselves to the Lord during these holy days, so much more joyfully does one expect the holy time of the Lord's resurrection.

But if perhaps someone feels that their conscience accuses them of being less perfectly chastised, there is no doubt that they await the arrival of such a great solemnity in fear and

trembling. Yet, let such a one not despair of salvation, nor be confounded by the multitude or enormity of their sins, lest they fall into the abyss of despair, according to that word of Solomon: "When the wicked man comes into the depth of evil, he despises" (Prov. XVIII); but let them consider carefully that if the time of the annual festival of the resurrection of our Creator affects the chaste with joy and the impure with fear and confusion, much more so will the time of the strict judgment, when the general resurrection of all is celebrated, and the sentence of the judge is already heard, bring joy to those with a clear conscience and condemn forever those whose guilty conscience accuses them. Therefore, dearest brothers, whoever, armed with the weapons of the restraint of the flesh, began to struggle against the proud tempter at the beginning of Lent, let them watch carefully not to abandon what they have begun, until, having overthrown the enemy, they are rewarded with the ministries of angels. But those who have not yet donned the armor of virtues, let them begin today;

today let them join with those faithful crowds in taking up the works of faith, implore the mercy of Him who brought blessing to the world in the name of the Father, proclaiming "Hosanna in the highest," and beg to be saved in the heavenly homeland. Let them spread their garments on the way, that is, humble the members of their body in the present, that God may exalt them in the future, remembering that Davidic word: "The bones that have been humbled will rejoice. Let them cut branches from the trees and spread them on the way, that is, earnestly recall to memory the writings of the saints, which encourage those standing to not fall, exhort the fallen to not lie prostrate any longer, instruct those rising to be exercised in virtues, and uplift those exercised in virtues to hope for heavenly rewards. Thus, let them protect their actions so that they do not strike against the stone of offense and the rock of scandal, and thus follow the footsteps of their Redeemer with the other faithful, and with a pure mind worthy of honoring the mysteries of His passion and resurrection, He who granted to all His chosen members a remedy for their wounds and also a pledge of heavenly joys, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY XXIV. ON MONDAY AFTER PALM SUNDAY. JOHN XII. At that time, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus had been dead, whom Jesus had raised, etc.

It is the custom of the wise not only to learn the virtue of prudence from those things which they have rightly and prudently understood but also to learn it from those things they have known to be done or said otherwise, so that they may imitate these by following and avoid those by shunning. Which indeed, beloved brothers, reason compels us to do in today's reading of the holy Gospel, not only to learn by example the devotion of those who love Christ but also to consider the faithlessness of the persecutors and avoid it more quickly by considering it. For it is necessary for us to follow the prudence of those women whom we have known to have adhered to the Lord with such faith and love; let us flee the foolishness of the chief priests and Pharisees, who sought to circumvent and kill the wisdom of God with treachery; let us beware of the madness of those who went up to Jerusalem to be sanctified

for the Passover, but, forgetful of sanctification, were plotting the death of the Savior in the very house of prayer. The Passover was approaching, at which it was necessary for everyone who had been sanctified and purified to come to the eating of the lamb: and those who had gone up to the temple to be sanctified came down more defiled by the conspiracy to shed blood. Let us carefully attend, for the time of our Passover is approaching.

When it comes, let us, being sanctified, approach the Lord's altar, not to eat the flesh of the lamb, but to partake of the holy mysteries of our Redeemer. Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Let no one turn the house of prayer into a den of thieves, let no one lay snares of death for the members of Christ, let no one who still remains in death presume to approach to receive the mysteries of life: for he who does not love remains in death. Let us love Christ in himself, and let us love him in his members, let us seek the Lord, and our soul shall live, but let us seek him, not as the wicked do to kill, but as the faithful do to enjoy forever. For it is said, they sought Jesus and spoke among themselves standing in the temple. What do you think, that he will not come to the feast day? For the Jews sought Jesus, but wrongly: they sought him to kill him coming to the feast day. But let us seek him standing in the temple of God, and persisting unanimously in prayer, and let us speak among ourselves in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, asking in grace for him to come to our feast day, and deign to illuminate us with his presence, and sanctify us with his own gifts.

But the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, they should inform them, so that they might arrest him. Let us also, brothers, give each other orders, that if any one of us knows in whose heart more abundant are the bowels of mercy, greater humility, kindness, modesty, power, and a more abundant supply of other virtues — the evident signs of Christ present — let him immediately inform where such a person is, so that by faithfully imitating we may hold to the footsteps of Christ found in him. But knowing that the Jews had conspired to kill him, the Lord did not flee the hands of the plotters, but certain of the glory of the resurrection, he first came to Bethany, a town near Jerusalem, where he had raised Lazarus from the dead, and then to Jerusalem where he would suffer and die: that he himself might die there. But he came to Bethany so that the memory of the resurrection of Lazarus might be more closely impressed upon everyone's memory, and so that the impious rulers, who did not fear to kill him who could raise from the dead, would be more and more confounded and proven inexcusable, since, neither provoked by the benefits of the resurrection nor terrified by the divine power of the one raising, they did not draw back their minds from unjust murder.

And lest the plotters of slanders say that Lazarus had been fantastically raised, a dinner was made there for the Lord, and he himself was one of those reclining at the table with him, so that while they saw or heard him living, speaking, feasting, and conversing familiarly with his own, they might either recognize the power of the one raising and receive grace, or, refusing to assent to the truth with an obdurate heart, incur punishment. Mystically, however, this dinner of the Lord, where Martha served and Lazarus reclined with others,

is the faith of the Church which operates through love: whence elsewhere the Lord says to the disciples of the people who would believe in him: I have food to eat which you do not know about (John IV). And explaining this, he added: My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish his work. In this dinner Martha serves when each faithful soul offers the labor of their devotion to the Lord; Lazarus, however, becomes one of those reclining with the Lord, when even those who have been raised to righteousness after the death of sins, along with those who have remained in their righteousness, exult in the presence of the truth, penitents together with the innocent are nourished by the gifts of heavenly grace. And this dinner is well celebrated in Bethany, which is a city on the side of the Mount of Olives, and means house of obedience.

The house of obedience indeed is the Church, which faithfully obeys the commands of the Lord: and it is the city, which situated on the mount of mercy, can never be hidden, and also constructed from the side of the Redeemer, that is, imbued with the water of washing and the blood of sanctification, which flowed from the side of the one dying for it: where also the other sister of Lazarus, Mary, as a sign of great love, as the following passages of the evangelical reading show, took a pound of costly pure nard ointment, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair. By this action, she not only gives an indication of her own devotion but also marks the piety and service of other faithful souls to God. But it should be noted first that, as we have learned from the narrations of Matthew and Mark, Mary anointed not only the feet of the Lord but also His head with nard. Nor should it be doubted that she is the same woman who, as the Evangelist Luke reports (Luke 7), came to the Lord with an alabaster flask of ointment, once a sinner, and standing behind Him at His feet, began to wet His feet with her tears, wiping them with her hair, kissing His feet, and anointing them with the ointment.

Thus, she is the same woman, but there she only anointed the feet of the Lord, bowing in repentance and amidst sorrowful tears, whereas here she does not hesitate to anoint His feet and even to raise herself to anoint His head amidst the joys of righteous action. Therefore, there it signifies the beginnings of repentance, here it designates the justice of perfected souls, from which it is rightly said the amount of ointment is not mentioned then, but now it is said to be a pound. For what is expressed by a pound of ointment if not the perfection of justice? Then, the type of ointment was kept silent; now it is indicated as being of pure nard, that is, faithful and not adulterated with foreign substances but precious, so that the chastity of perfect faith and action may be intimated. Through the head of the Lord which Mary anointed, the sublimity of His divinity is expressed; through the feet, the humility of His incarnation. We anoint His feet when we rightly proclaim with due praise the mystery of the received incarnation; we anoint His head when we reverently venerate the excellence of His divinity with a worthy expression of word. For what is signified by ointment if not the good fragrance of opinion? As Paul attests, who says: "Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ Jesus and manifests the aroma of His knowledge through us in every place" (2 Corinthians 2).

The head of the Lord, who is the mediator between God and humans and who is the head of the Church, may also be rightly signified; the feet can be understood, without inconsistency, as any of His least members, about whom He will say at the end: "As long as you did it to one of these least brothers of mine, you did it to me" (Matthew 25). We anoint the head of the Lord when we embrace the glory of His divinity and humanity with the sweetness of worthy faith, hope, and charity, when we expand the praise of His name by living well. We anoint the feet of the Lord when we console His poor with the word of consolation so that they may not despair in tribulations. We wipe the same with our hair when we share what is surplus to us with the needy: and it happens to us as follows.

And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. Because in our measure the world is filled with the reputation of devotion, in which we are proven to worship and affectionately love God and our neighbor with a simple and pure heart: and so it happens what the bride in the Song of Love boasts, while the king was at his table, my nard gave its fragrance. Where it is clearly shown what Mary did once, typically however what the whole Church, what every perfect soul always does. Therefore one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was to betray him, said: Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor? Woe to the wicked traitor, woe to the accomplices of his wickedness, even now persecuting the members of Christ, who do not cease to envy their neighbors for the reputation of virtue which they do not deserve to have! And indeed we might think that Judas spoke out of concern for the poor, but a truthful witness unmasked his mind, saying:

He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having the money box, he carried what was put in it. Therefore Judas did not perish only when he betrayed the Lord for money, but already lost he was following the Lord, having the Lord's money bag, not only carrying what was put in it for ministry, but also accustomed to stealing from it. For seeing the Lord that Judas's heart was polluted with the foul stain of greed, foreseeing it would be further stained with the fouler stain of betrayal, entrusted to his care whatever was in the bags, and allowed him to do what he wished with it, that either the honor given or the memory of the money held might recall his mind from selling him. But because a greedy person is always in want, and never remembers benefits, the wicked person advanced from stealing the money that he carried to betraying the Lord who entrusted him.

Jesus therefore said: Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. To Judas, who was questioning innocently, the Lord explained simply and meekly where Mary's service belonged: because he was to die and be anointed with spices for burial. Therefore, it was granted to Mary, who although she greatly desired it, could not arrive to anoint his dead body, to offer the service to him while he was still alive, which she could not do after his death, as she was prevented by his quick resurrection. Hence Mark rightly testifies that the Lord said about her: She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial (Mark 14). Which is openly to say: Because she could not touch my body when it

was already deceased, she did what she could now, she anticipated giving the office of burial to me while still alive.

For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me. And here, with great moderation and patience, the Lord did not accuse Judas of avarice, nor of speaking about money for the sake of the poor, but reasonably showed that those who ministered to him from their resources when he was living among men should not be blamed, since he would remain corporally in the Church for such a short time, but the poor, to whom alms could be given, would always be there.

A great crowd of Jews knew therefore that he was there, and they came not only for Jesus, but so that they might see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. Curiosity brought them to Jesus, not love. But we, brethren most beloved, if we know where Jesus is, where he dwells, where Bethany is, that is, the house of the obedient soul in which he resides, let us come there through contemplation, not only for the man whom he has raised from the death of the soul and granted to live spiritually, but so that by imitating the good life of the man we may through this merit to reach the vision of Jesus: because we have certainly known where Jesus is. For he has risen after death and ascended into heaven, there he has a perpetual dwelling. This is the true Bethany, the heavenly city, which no one can enter except the obedient. Let us strive therefore to come there with the inward affections of the heart, let us yearn there for the same founder of that house, let us all ask, each of us ask, that we may dwell in his house all the days of our life, not so that we might see Lazarus whom he has raised from the dead there, but so that we, raised from the dead with Lazarus and the other saints, may see the will of the Lord, and be protected in his holy temple.

Moreover, the chief priests thought to kill Lazarus also; because many went away on account of him from the Jews, and believed in Jesus. O wretched craftiness of the blind, to wish to kill the one who was raised, as if he who could raise the dead could not raise the slain! And indeed he proved that he could do both, who raised both Lazarus who was dead and himself who was slain. But we, brethren, leaving behind the malice of the faithless, let us follow the devotion of the faithful, let us depart from the company of the impious, let us not sit in the council of vanity, and let us not enter with those who do wicked deeds; let us believe in him who not only saves the body but also the soul from death, and let us hold to what we believe by our works, so that believing we may have eternal life in his name, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY XXV. ON THE LORD'S SUPPER. JOHN XIII. Before the feast day of the Passover, Jesus knowing that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, etc.

The evangelist John, about to write about that memorable mystery of the Lord, wherein he deigned to wash the feet of his disciples during the Passover before he went to his passion, first took care to explain what the very name Passover mystically signified, thus beginning:

Before the feast day of the Passover, Jesus knowing that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. For Passover indeed means passage, having an old name from this, that the Lord passed through Egypt, striking the firstborn of Egypt and liberating the children of Israel, and because the children of Israel themselves passed that night from Egyptian servitude to come to the land of the promised inheritance and peace. Mystically, however, it signifies that in it the Lord would pass from this world to the Father, and that by his example the faithful ought to pass with continuous efforts of virtues, having cast away temporal desires and the servitude of vices, to the promise of the heavenly country. And how Jesus passed from this world to the Father, the evangelist John beautifully shows, when he says: Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end, that is, he loved them so much that by that very love he would temporarily end his corporeal life, immediately to pass from death to life, from this world to the Father. For no one has greater love than this:

to lay down one's life for one's friends. Wherefore rightly both the legal and the evangelical passage were consecrated by blood. The former by the blood of the paschal lamb, the latter by the blood of him of whom the Apostle says: For even Christ our passover is sacrificed (I Cor. V). The latter being shed on the cross, the former sprinkled on the doorposts and lintel in the manner of a cross.

And, during the supper, he says, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas, Simon Iscariot, to betray him, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come forth from God and was going to God, he rises from supper, and lays aside his garments. Speaking about the greatest humility assumed by humanity, he first recalls the eternity of divine power, so that he may show that he is both true God and man, and remind us of this precept, that the greater we are, the more humble we should be in all things. For he was truly man, who could touch and wash the feet of men, be betrayed by a man, and be crucified by men: he was truly God, to whom the Father had given all things into his hands, because he had come forth from God and was returning to God. The Lord therefore knew that the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas to betray him; he knew that the Father had given all things into his hands: among all these things, both the betrayer himself and those to whom he was to be betrayed, and the death he was to suffer, so that of all these things he might do what he wished, and by his power turn their evil into good.

He knew that through the humility of the incarnation he had come forth from God, and through the victory of the resurrection he was about to return to God, not leaving God when he came forth, nor deserting us when he returned. He indeed knew all these things, and yet, as an indication of his great piety and as an example of our great humility, he rises from supper, lays aside his garments, and washes the disciples' feet, fulfilling the office not of a Lord God, but of a servant man, so that he might also wash humbly the feet of the one whose hands he knew would be brazenly polluted in betraying him. But if it delights to explore this very humble mystery of our Savior with a higher investigation, this

sacred supper, at which the Lord reclined with the disciples, signifies the whole time during which, corporally abiding in the Church, he fed all far and wide with the feast of the saving word and the sweetness of his miracles, and he himself was fed by the faith and love of the listeners: for as many as he converted to the grace of truth, he indeed made increase of his own body, which is the Church, as in the manner of those eating. He, however, rose from supper and laid aside his garments when, ceasing to converse temporally with men, he laid down the members of the assumed body on the cross.

He girded himself with a towel when, having taken the command from the Father to suffer, he surrounded his members in the exercise of that suffering for us. For a towel, which is made through various labors of torment, represents suffering through affliction. And the Lord, laying aside his garments, girds himself with a towel, to signify that the habit of the body he had put on, he would lay down not without the pressure of pains, but with the prolonged tribulation of the cross. He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded, when, dead on the cross, he poured water together with blood from his side onto the earth, by which he would cleanse the works of believers, and he deigned to sanctify those works not only by the sacraments of his passion but also to confirm them by its examples. But as for the saying, when the washing of feet had begun, he then came to Simon Peter, it is not to be understood as if he came to him after others, but because he began with him who was first among the apostles, and he did not want to frustrate such a ministry with horror, because he did not know the mystery. Indeed, it is not doubted that any one of them would have acted in this way if they had not been terrified by that sentence which was spoken to Peter:

If I do not wash you, you will have no part with me. Here it is openly shown that this washing of the feet signifies a spiritual purification of the body and soul, without which one cannot reach communion with Christ. Therefore, Peter, hearing this, immediately seized with his customary fervor of divine love, responded, Lord, not only my feet but also my hands and my head. As if to say openly: Because, now I understand, as you teach, that by washing my feet you signify cleansing my sins, I offer you not only my feet but also my hands and head to be washed; for I do not doubt that I commit many things by walking, acting, seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching, that ought to be forgiven by you. But let us hear what the Lord replies to the fervent lover, and how He gradually brings him to an understanding of the mystical washing.

He who is bathed, he says, does not need to wash except for his feet, but is entirely clean. He clearly announces that the washing of feet signifies indeed the remission of sins, but not the kind given once in baptism, rather the kind by which the daily guilt of the faithful, without which one does not live in this life, is cleansed by his daily grace. For the feet, with which we walk and touch the earth, and for which we cannot keep them free from the contamination of dust unlike the rest of the body, signify the very necessity of earthly habitation, by which daily sloth and negligence affect us, just as even the greatest men of the highest conduct are diverted from the heavenly contemplation they cherish most, so that if we say, "We have no

sin," we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1). He who is bathed, therefore, does not need to wash except for his feet, but is entirely clean; for he who is washed by the font of baptism for the remission of all sins does not need to be washed again in the same way, but only the daily contaminations of worldly conduct need to be cleansed by the daily indulgence of his Redeemer.

For he is clean in the whole of his actions, except for those which cling to the mind out of the necessity of temporal care, on account of whose daily defilement and simultaneous cleansing we daily say in prayer, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6, Luke 11). Indeed, this was said of the apostles and their like: "Blessed and immaculate are they who walk in the way of the Lord, fearing God" (Ps. 119). But for us, who often forget divine fear and walk in the crooked path, we cannot be freed from the filth of our errors by the mere daily formality of prayers, but a greater stain must be cleansed by a greater practice of prayers, vigils, fasting, tears, and alms; namely, by Him who internally cleanses the vestiges of our heart, who sits at the right hand of God and daily intercedes for us in the habit of assumed humanity. After the Lord washed the disciples' feet, he took his garments and, having reclined again, further explained by word the ministry of washing, which he had just shown to them in deed without their yet understanding. For after he consecrated for us the washing of remission by suffering on the cross, he took up again the immortal members which he had laid down as mortal;

and having appeared to the disciples after the resurrection, and having conversed familiarly with them in companionship for forty days, he explained to them the utility of his passion, the mystical power of which they did not know but whose outcome they greatly feared (Acts 1).

If therefore, he says, I, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet. This statement indeed is correctly understood and should be devoutly fulfilled both in the literal and mystical sense: literally, that through charity we serve one another, not only in washing the feet of our brothers but also in helping them in any of their needs; mystically, that just as the Lord used to forgive our sins when we repented, so too we should hasten to forgive the sins of our brothers against us (Mt. VI, Mark XI). Just as He washed us from our sins by interceding with the Father for us, so too, if we know that our brother sins a sin not leading to death, let us ask that life may be given to him who sins not unto death (1 John. V). And as the Apostle James admonishes us, Let us confess our sins to one another, and pray for one another, that we may be saved (James V): just as He laid down His life for us, so too we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers when the moment demands it (1 John. III). It follows, Amen, I say to you, the servant is not greater than his master, nor is the apostle greater than the one who sent him. He said this because the Lord had washed the feet of His servants, and He who sent was the same as the one who sent those whom He sent.

Apostle in Greek, in Latin means sent, to show that what the exalted one did in humility, the humble and weak ought much more to do in humility. But as in this place He warned

of the spiritual understanding, because if He who did no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth (1 Pet. II, Isa. LIII), intercedes for our transgressions, much more ought we to pray for one another. But even if He forgives us, He to whom we have nothing to forgive, much more ought we to forgive one another our debts. This the Apostle also commands, saying, Be kind to one another, merciful, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you (Eph. IV).

If you know these things, he said, you will be blessed if you do them. This saying of our Savior is very salutary and ought to be thought about diligently, because we will be blessed by knowing heavenly precepts, if, however, we follow by doing what we have come to know. For he who neglects to keep His known commandments cannot be blessed; he who even scorns to recognize these things is much further shut out from the lot of the blessed. It agrees with its Psalmist who, weighing the hearts of mortals, perceiving equally that all love beatitude, but seeing few seek it where it is, has himself clearly declared what the greatest beatitude of man is in this life, saying, Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord (Ps. 119). And lest it be thought that this way of the undefiled and blessed could be comprehended haphazardly by the unskilled and unlearned, he has added and said, Blessed are those who search out His testimonies; who seek Him with all their heart. Therefore, dearest ones, let us ask His clemency, who commanded His commandments to be kept exceedingly, that He may direct our ways to keep His justifications, and after keeping His commandments, Jesus Christ our Lord may lead us to the blessedness of His perpetual vision, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.