Commentary on Mark

The Venerable Bede (AD 673–735)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

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Introduction

Translated from Migne’s Patrologia Latina, In Evangelium S. Marci, Vol 92

Letter to Bishop Acca

About to write the exposition of the Gospel according to Mark, with the help of the same evangelical grace, we considered it proper to first briefly indicate the reason why Mark wrote the Gospel. When the clear light of the true God had arisen for the city of Rome through the preaching of the blessed Apostle Peter, the word of truth so pleased the minds of all with its agreeable hearing that there was never any satiety for those who listened to him daily. Hence, the hearing alone did not suffice for them, but they beseeched Mark, his disciple, with all prayers that he would commit to writing what he preached by word, to have it as their perpetual reminder so that they would continue in the meditations of such a word, both at home and abroad. Nor did they cease from beseeching until they obtained what they had prayed for. When Peter recognized through the Holy Spirit that he had been divested by this pious theft, he was delighted. Considering their faith and devotion through these things, he confirmed the deed and handed the Scripture over to the churches to be read perpetually. Clement, in the sixth book of his Dispositions, describes these events in such a manner. Likewise, the bishop of Hierapolis, named Papias, gives similar testimony. He says that Peter, in the first epistle he wrote from the city of Rome, mentions Mark, in which he tropically named Rome as Babylon, saying:

”The church that is in Babylon, elected together with you, greets you, and so does Mark, my son. Therefore, having taken the Gospel which he himself had written, he proceeded to Egypt, and first announcing Christ in Alexandria, he established a church with such doctrine and purity of life that he compelled all followers of Christ to his example. Finally, Philo, the most eloquent of the Jews, observing the first church in Alexandria still adhering to Jewish ways, wrote a book about their life as if in praise of his own people. And just as Luke recounts that the believers in Jerusalem had all things in common, so Philo recorded that this happened in Alexandria under Mark’s instruction. They furthermore report that he was of Israelite origin, born from a priestly lineage, and after the passion and resurrection of the Lord Savior, imbued with the evangelical faith and sacraments through the preaching of the apostles, and count him among those of whom Luke writes, ”A great number of the priests obeyed the faith” (Acts 6). Therefore, being taught

by the legal ordinances, he demonstrated the best way of life for the people he called to faith. He also showed the canonical observance of Easter, which was to be imitated by all the churches of Christ.

In this Gospel, dear bishop Acca, and at your and other numerous brothers' urging, I will write according to what the Lord has granted, chiefly collecting what we have found in the venerable examples of the Fathers, here and there. But I will also interpose some original thoughts in imitation of their sense where it seems appropriate. I humbly beseech the reader that if he considers these our small works worthy of copying, he carefully preserves the annotation of names given above, just as it is confirmed to have been done in the exposition of the blessed Luke's Gospel which we composed many years ago with the help of God's grace. May the heavenly grace always protect your holiness praying for us. And before everything, I beseech all who may read this to intercede for my physical and spiritual frailties before the merciful Judge.

Chapter 1

[Mark 1:1] -- The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, etc. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet. The beginning of the Gospel of Mark should be compared to the beginning of Matthew, where he says: The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, etc. And from both, our one Lord Jesus Christ is to be understood as the Son of God and man. And fittingly the first evangelist calls him the Son of Man, the second the Son of God, so that our understanding may gradually rise from the lesser to the greater, and through faith and the sacraments of assumed humanity, ascend to the recognition of divine eternity. Fittingly, he who was to describe human genealogy began with the Son of Man, namely David or Abraham, from whose lineage he assumed the substance of flesh. Fittingly, he who was to start his book from the beginning of the evangelical preaching wished to call our Lord Jesus Christ more as the Son of God, because it was in accordance with both aspects: the human nature from the lineage of patriarchs or kings of flesh, and the divine power to preach the Gospel to the world. Indeed, the Gospel is called the good news. And what is better news than: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. III)? Therefore, it is human to be born humanly, but it is of God to preach the entry of the heavenly kingdom to the repentant.

And thus Matthew rightly calls him the Son of David, whom he asserts to come in the flesh. Mark rightly calls him the Son of God, whom he designates at the very front of his writing as the author of the Gospel and the sponsor of the eternal kingdom. It is noteworthy that the holy Evangelists, who left us the written dispensation of the Lord’s incarnation, were indeed fired by one spirit in their approach to their writing duty, but each set a different beginning and a different endpoint for their narrative. Matthew, taking his beginning from the nativity of the Lord, carried the sequence of his narration up to the time of the Lord’s resurrection. Mark, starting from the beginning of the evangelical preaching, reached up to the time of the Lord’s ascension and the preaching of his disciples to all nations over the world. Luke, beginning from the nativity of the forerunner, ended his Gospel in the ascension of the Lord, when the disciples returning to Jerusalem were expecting the advent of the Holy Spirit in divine praises. John, taking his beginning from the eternity of the Word of God, by whom all things were made, himself reached

up to the time of the Lord's resurrection by evangelizing. Therefore, intending to write the Gospel, Mark aptly first of all puts forth the testimonies of the prophets by whom this was long ago foretold to happen.

So that he might indicate to all that the things he was writing were to be received as true and without a scruple of doubt, because he showed them to have been foreseen and foretold by prophets filled with the Holy Spirit, and at the same time in the same beginning of his Gospel instructs both the Jews, who had received the Law and the Prophets, to also receive the sacraments of the Gospel which their prophets had foretold, and the Gentiles, who had come to the Lord through all the proclamations of the Gospel, to also receive and venerate the authority of the Law and the Prophets, lest anyone, like the heretics, should accept either only the Old Testament or only the New, and thus remain alien to the testament of God.

[Mark 1:2] -- Behold, I send my angel, etc. The angel is called John, not by the association of nature according to the heresy of Origen, but by the dignity of the office. For angel in Greek is called messenger in Latin. By which name, rightly, that man could be called who was sent by God to bear witness to the light (John I), and to announce to the world the Lord coming in the flesh. Nor should it be wondered at mystically that one who is greater than all born of women (Matt. XI) should be called an angel, when it is universally accepted that all who rightly perform the duty of the priestly rank can be called angels because of their duty to evangelize, as the prophet says: The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth, for he is the angel of the Lord of hosts (Mal. II).

[Mark 1:3] -- A voice crying out in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord, etc. It is clear that the only-begotten Son is called the Word of the Father, as John attests, who says: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1). And we know from our speech itself that the voice sounds first, so that the word can be heard afterward. Therefore, John is called a voice by the prophet because the word precedes. Thus, the voice is said to precede the Lord's coming because through his ministry the Word of the Father is heard by men. He also cries out in the desert because he announces the consolation of redemption to the forsaken and desolate Judah. What he cries out, however, is revealed when it is added: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Whoever preaches true faith and good works, what else does he do but prepare the way for the Lord to enter the hearts of the listeners, so that the power of grace may penetrate, the light of truth may shine, and make straight paths for God, by forming pure thoughts in the mind through the word of good preaching? Indeed it must be noted that from the prophetic testimonies which Mark has placed, one is only found in Isaiah, while the other is found in Malachi.

Yet the evangelist should not be thought to have erred or been deceitful, who says this was written in Isaiah which Isaiah did not write, but rather it should be under-

stood that even if the words placed from Malachi are not found in Isaiah, the sense of them is found in Isaiah, and in several other places, and more clearly in what he himself added here: A voice crying out in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. For who does not see how great the agreement is in both statements? For what Malachi said, that an angel should be sent before the face of the Lord who would prepare his way, is indeed the same as what Isaiah said, that a voice crying out should be heard in the desert, who said: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Because just as John could rightly be called an angel, because he preceded the face of the Lord by preaching, so he could rightly be called the voice, because he preceded the Word of God by sounding it, as was stated above. But in both statements the way of the Lord is similarly preached to be prepared. Therefore, the evangelist is not mistaken, who writes this said by Isaiah: which even if not in the same words, nevertheless he finds written by him in the same sense. However, it could have happened that in the mind of Mark writing the Gospel, Isaiah occurred instead of Malachi, as happens.

But he would without any doubt correct this, at least being admonished by others who could read this while he was still living in the flesh, unless he thought that the name of another prophet occurred to his memory, which was governed by the Holy Spirit, not without reason, because the Lord ordained it to be written thus. But why the Lord ordained it so, that most useful cause should be easily thought of, namely, that it is thus hinted that all the holy prophets spoke by one spirit in wonderful agreement, which is much greater than if all the sayings of all the prophets were spoken by the mouth of one man. And therefore, whatever the Holy Spirit said through them should be undoubtedly accepted, and each one's words belong to all, and all to each one. Therefore, what has been said through Isaiah is as much Malachi's as Isaiah's, and what has been said through Malachi is as much Isaiah's as Malachi's, what need was there for Mark to correct when reading to himself what name occurred for another? And rather, following the authority of the Holy Spirit, by whom he certainly more than us felt his mind was governed, thus he would leave this written as it is? For the Lord had ordained to instruct him in this way to show us that there is such great harmony in his words among the prophets, that we should most fittingly even attribute what is found said by Malachi to Isaiah.

[Mark 1:4] -- John was baptizing in the desert, etc. It is known by all peoples that John not only preached the baptism of repentance but also administered it to some, yet he could not grant baptism for the remission of sins. For the remission of sins is granted to us solely in the baptism of Christ. Therefore, it must be noted what is said, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, because he could not grant the baptism that absolves sins, he preached it, so that just as he preceded the incarnate Word of the Father with the word of preaching, so he might precede the baptism of repentance, by which sins are absolved, with his own baptism, by which sins cannot be absolved. And they were baptized by

him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. An example of confessing sins and promising a better life is given to those who desire to receive baptism, just as while Paul was preaching in Ephesus, many believers were coming confessing and proclaiming their deeds, so that, having renounced their old life, they might merit to be renewed in Christ. Hence, also, it was said to blessed Peter, when various kinds of animals were shown to him in a heavenly sheet: Rise, Peter, kill and eat (Acts X). Which is clearly to say: Kill the unbelievers from what they were before, from renunciation of sins and the promise of pious religion, and thus, having been imbued with the sacraments of the Christian faith, convert them into the members of the holy Church.

[Mark 1:6] -- And John was clothed with camel's hair, etc. He says, with hair, not wool. One is a sign of austere clothing; the other of softer luxury. But the leather belt with which Elijah was girded is a sign of mortification. Furthermore, the following: And he ate locusts and wild honey, is fitting for an inhabitant of solitude, so that he might fulfill the necessity of human flesh, not the pleasures of food. His clothing and his diet can also suitably express the quality of his internal conduct through their significance. For he used harsher garments, just as the Lord bore witness in his praises, saying to the Jews: What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses (Matthew XI), because he did not foster the life of sinners with flattery, but rebuked them with the vigor of harsh exhortation, saying: O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come (Matthew XXIII)? He had a leather belt around his loins, because he crucified his flesh with its vices and desires, which we have learned to be characteristic of those who are of Jesus Christ, as the Apostle attests. He ate locusts and wild honey, for his preaching seemed indeed sweet to the crowds, with the people imagining and all thinking in their hearts about him, whether he might be the Christ. But that opinion quickly vanished, when his listeners learned that he was not the Christ, but the precursor and prophet of Christ. For in honey there is sweetness, in locusts there is an energetic flight, but one that is quickly fleeting.

[Mark 1:7] -- And he preached, saying: One mightier than I is coming, etc. Among the ancients, it was customary that if one did not wish to take as a wife the one who corresponded to him, the one who would be closest by kinship would loose the shoe strap of that man. What then did Christ appear among men, except as the bridegroom of the holy Church? About whom the same John also says: He who has the bride is the bridegroom (John 3). But since men thought that John was the Christ, which the same John denies, he rightly announces himself to be unworthy to loose the strap of his shoe. As if he openly says: I am not able to uncover the footsteps of the Redeemer, because I unworthily do not assume the name of bridegroom. However, this can be understood in another way. For who does not know that shoes are made from dead animals? The incarnate Lord, coming, indeed

appeared as if shod, who in his divinity assumed our mortal decay. But the mystery of this incarnation the human eye cannot penetrate. It can by no means be investigated how the Word is embodied, how the highest and life-giving Spirit is animated within the mother's womb, how he who has no beginning and exists is conceived. The strap of the shoe, therefore, is the binding of the mystery.

John, therefore, is not able to loose the strap of his shoe, because even he cannot investigate the mystery of the incarnation, which he recognized through the spirit of prophecy. I baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. John does not yet openly proclaim the Lord as God or the Son of God, but rather only a man stronger than himself. For their listeners, being still unrefined, were not yet capable of grasping such great mysteries, that the eternal Son of God, taking on man from the Virgin, was born again into the world, but they had to be gradually introduced through the recognition of glorified humanity to faith in divine eternity. However, in a certain hidden and veiled manner, he declares this one to be the true God, while confirming that he will baptize with the Holy Spirit. For who can doubt that no other than God can give the grace of the Holy Spirit? But as time went on, when he saw that his listeners were more capable of understanding, he also openly preached him as the Son of God, saying: "But he who sent me to baptize with water said to me: Upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.

We are baptized by the Lord in the Holy Spirit, not only when on the day of baptism we are washed in the font of life for the remission of sins, but also daily when we are kindled by the grace of the same Spirit to do the things pleasing to God.

[Mark 1:9] -- And it came to pass in those days, etc. The Savior received baptism from John for three reasons. First, because He was born a man, He might fulfill all righteousness and humility of the law. Second, that by His baptism He might approve the baptism of John. Third, that sanctifying the water of Jordan, through the descent of the dove, He might show the coming of the Holy Spirit in the washing of believers.

[Mark 1:10] -- And immediately ascending out of the water He saw the heavens opened, etc. The mystery of the Trinity is demonstrated in the baptism of the Lord. The Lord is baptized, the Spirit descends in the form of a dove, and the voice of the Father bearing witness to the Son is heard. The heavens are opened, not by the unbinding of elements, but by spiritual eyes, with which Ezekiel too at the beginning of his book recalls them as opened. Also, a dove sat upon Jesus' head, lest anyone should think that the voice of the Father was made to John, and not to the Lord. Rightly did it say: And the Spirit like a dove descending, and added, and remaining on Him. For this indeed is the special gift conferred upon the Mediator of God and men, that the Holy Spirit, once filling Him, should never depart but remain

perpetual in Him. For to His faithful, for the performance of notable virtues and miracles, the grace of the Spirit is sometimes given, sometimes withdrawn. Yet it is never absent to them for the work of piety and justice, for maintaining the love of God and neighbor. Hence of that Spirit it is promised, the Lord saying to them: You know Him because He will remain with you and be in you (John 14). But in the Lord particularly, the Spirit remains always, not as in His elect according to the measure of faith, but as John says:

We have seen His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1). But the Spirit remains in Him, not from the time only when He was baptized in the Jordan, but rather from the time when He was conceived in the virginal womb. For that the Spirit appeared to descend upon Him at His baptism was a sign of the spiritual grace to be conferred upon us in baptism, to those regenerated from water and the Spirit for the remission of sins, the fuller grace of the same Spirit is customarily given by the heavenly imposition of the bishop's hand. Also, the fact that He saw the heavens opened after baptism, was done for our benefit, by which the gate of the heavenly kingdom is opened through the washing of the regenerating water, which was closed to the whole human race, with cherubim and a flaming sword interposed, when the first parents sinned and were driven from paradise. For this flame is quenched for each faithful person, when he is dipped into the vital waters. He is reconciled to the angelic spirits, when he returns to the peace of his Creator, so that if he keeps the sacraments of faith with a pure heart and body, he may soon, loosed from the flesh, enter the heavenly kingdom. Otherwise, how then were the heavens opened to the Lord, who, when He became man and dwelt with us on earth, equally contained heaven and earth by divine power?

But also, the paternal voice was revealed from heaven: You are My beloved Son, in You I am well pleased, not teaching the Son what He did not know, but showing to us what we should believe: that He who came to be baptized with others by John was indeed the true Son of God; not only the Lord of John but of the whole world, and therefore truly able to baptize in the Holy Spirit. The same voice also taught us that by the water of purification and the Spirit of sanctification we could be made sons of God. For as many as received Him, He gave them power to become sons of God (John 1). Also, the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove, because it is a very simple animal, and alien to the malice of gall, to figuratively suggest to us that He seeks simple hearts, and does not deign to dwell in impure minds, as was Simon to whom Peter said: You have neither part nor lot in this matter; for I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity (Acts 8).

[Mark 1:12] -- And immediately the Spirit drove him out into the desert, etc. Similarly, Matthew, after describing the Lord's baptism and the voice from the heavens saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," immediately added:

”Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (Matt. IV). However, lest anyone come into doubt as to by which spirit he was led or driven into the desert, Luke first wrote that Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan; and then he added: ”And was led by the Spirit into the desert,” so that it might not be thought that the unclean spirit had prevailed against him, who, full of the Holy Spirit, went about where he wished and did what he wished. The forty days and nights during which he was tempted represent the entire time of this age, during which his members, namely, the holy Church, are never ceased to be tempted. For the world is divided into four parts, in which we serve the Lord. There are also ten commandments, by whose observance we, serving the Lord, strive against the unceasing malice of the enemy. Ten times four make forty. Therefore, the whole time of our military service is aptly contained in the number of forty days and nights.

Thus, the Lord, after being baptized, is driven by the Spirit into the desert and is tempted by Satan, to provide a model of life for his faithful, who, after the remission of sins received in baptism, should not only be prepared to perform works of virtue, but also to endure persecution for righteousness’ sake. He thus withdraws into the desert to teach us to forsake the allurements of the world and the company of the wicked, and to serve the divine commandments in all things. He is tempted alone by the devil to signify that all who desire to live piously in Christ suffer persecution, and that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God (Acts XIV). He is tempted for forty days and forty nights to indicate that as long as we live here serving the Lord, whether favorable times entice us (which corresponds to the days), or adversities strike us (which corresponds to the figures of the night), the adversary, who walks through the whole world, is always present attempting to hinder our journey. And he was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him. He dwells among the beasts as a man, but uses the ministry of angels as God. So too, when we, in the desert of holy conversation, endure the bestial behaviors of men with a pure mind, we merit the ministry of angels, by whose service we are transferred from the body to eternal joys in heaven.

[Mark 1:14] -- After John had been arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, etc. With John having been arrested, it was appropriate that he himself began to preach. With the law ceasing, consequently the Gospel arises. If, however, the Savior preaches the same things which John the Baptist had previously said, he shows himself to be the son of the same God, of whom that one is a prophet. Let no one think, however, that the tradition of John into prison happened immediately after the forty-day fast and the temptation of the Lord. For anyone who has read the Gospel of John will find that before his arrest the Lord both taught and performed many miracles. After all, you have in his Gospel: ”This beginning of miracles Jesus did in Cana of Galilee” (John 2). And again: ”For John was not yet cast into prison” (John 3). They say, moreover, that

when John read the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, he indeed approved of the text of the history and confirmed them as speaking the truth, but maintained that they narrated the history of only one year, in which he also suffered, after the imprisonment of John. Therefore, passing over the year whose events had been expounded by the three, he narrated the deeds of the previous time, before John was shut up in prison, as it will be clear to those who carefully read the four volumes of the Gospels.

This matter also resolves the discordance that seemed to be with John compared to the others. When Mark had stated that Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, he added and said: And saying, ”The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel. The time is fulfilled, he says. Namely, that which the Apostle says: ”But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those who were under the law” (Galatians 4). Therefore, the times are fulfilled, repent. How long it has been since this has been proclaimed, and may it someday be heard: The times are fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has drawn near! Repent and believe in the Gospel. Renounce dead works, believe in the living God. What does it profit to believe without good works? It was not the merit of good works that brought you to faith, but faith begins, so that good works might follow.

[Mark 1:16] -- And passing along the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, etc. These were the first to be called to follow the Lord. Fishermen and unlearned men are sent to preach, so that the faith of believers would not be thought to rest in human eloquence and learning but in the power of God. It is possible, however, to ask how He called the fishermen two by two from their boats: first Peter and Andrew, then moving a little further, the other two sons of Zebedee, as Matthew and Mark recount, while Luke says their two boats were filled with that great catch of fish, and he mentions James and John, the sons of Zebedee, as Peter’s partners called to help, when they could not pull in the nets due to the fullness, and all marveled at the multitude of fish that had been caught, and He said only to Peter: Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men (Luke 5), yet they followed Him with their boats drawn up on land. From this, it is understood that what Luke suggests first happened indeed, and that they were not yet called by the Lord at that time, but it was only foretold to Peter that he would catch men. This was not said as if he would never catch fish again. For after the Lord’s resurrection, we read that they went fishing. It was said, therefore, that henceforth he would catch men, not that he would no longer catch fish.

Thus, according to Luke, we understand they went back to fishing customarily, so that later what Matthew and Mark recount happened, when He called them two by two, and He commanded them to follow Him, first the two of Peter and Andrew, then the two sons of Zebedee. For then, without dragging their boats to shore as if

preoccupied with returning, they followed Him as one who called and commanded them to follow. And they entered Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath, He entered the synagogue and taught them. That He frequented the very gifts of His teaching and healing on the Sabbaths, He teaches that He is not under the law but above the law, who also came to fulfill the same law, not to dissolve it; not to choose the Jewish Sabbath, on which it was neither permitted to kindle a fire nor to move hand or foot, but the true Sabbath, and the rest beloved to the Lord, if we dedicate ourselves to the salvation of souls, abstaining from servile work, that is, from all illicit actions.

[Mark 1:22] -- And they were astonished at his doctrine, etc. For they taught the people those things that were written in Moses and the prophets: but Jesus, as God and the Lord of Moses himself, out of the freedom of his will, either added those things which seemed less in the law, or changing, preached to the people, as we read in Matthew: It was said to the ancients, but I say to you (Matt. V).

[Mark 1:23-26] -- And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, etc. This is not a confession of the will, which follows the reward of confessing, but an extortion of necessity, which compels the guilty to confess. And just as if runaway slaves, after a long time, see their master, they fear nothing but whips, so also the demons, seeing the Lord suddenly dwelling on earth, believed that he had come to judge them. The presence of the Savior is torment for demons. And Jesus rebuked him saying: Be silent, and come out of the man. For by the envy of the devil death entered into the world (Wisdom XII), therefore against the author of death itself, the medicine of salvation ought to work first: first the serpent's tongue, so that it may not spread poison further, be shut; then the woman, who was first seduced, be cured from the fever of carnal desire; thirdly, the man, who heard the words of his badly advising wife, be cleansed from the leprosy of his error, so that the order of restoration in the Lord may be the same as the fall in the first parents: And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. Luke says of the unclean spirit that it came out of the man without harming him. Therefore, it can seem contrary, how according to Mark, he convulsed (or as some manuscripts have, threw him down), yet he did not harm him according to Luke.

But Luke also says: And having thrown him in the midst, the demon went out of him, and did not harm him (Luke IV). Hence, it is understood that Mark said convulsing him, or throwing him down, in the same sense that Luke said he threw him in the midst, so that what Luke follows with, and did not harm him, is understood that this tossing and vexation of the limbs did not injure him, as demons usually exit, even tearing away or dislocating some limbs.

[Mark 1:27] -- And they were all amazed, such that they questioned among themselves, etc. Seeing the virtue of the miracle, they marvel at the newness of the

Lord's teaching, and are stirred to inquire about the things they had heard through the things they had seen. For certainly the signs that either the Lord himself did in the assumed man, or that he gave to the disciples to do, were done so that through these, faith in the Gospel of the kingdom of God, which was being preached, might be more certain, while those who promised future heavenly joys to the earthborn demonstrated heavenly and divine works on earth. Truly, the disciples conducted everything as pure men with the Lord granting. But the Lord himself singularly operated in the virtue of power and worked healings and miracles, and spoke in the world what He heard from the Father. For even before (as the Gospel testifies) he was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes (Matt. VII). And now, with the crowd attesting, he commands the unclean spirits with authority, and they obey him (Mark I).

[Mark 1:29] -- And immediately, leaving the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon, etc. If we have said that the man freed from the demon signifies a mind cleansed from impure thoughts, consequently a woman afflicted with fever but cured by the command of the Lord shows the flesh restrained from the fervor of its concupiscence by the precepts of continence. For all bitterness, and wrath, and indignation, and clamor, and blasphemy (Ephesians IV), is the fury of an unclean spirit. Indeed, fornication, impurity, lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness (which is idolatry [Ephesians V]), are to be understood as the fever of seductive flesh. And immediately they told him about her, and approaching, he lifted her up, taking her by the hand. In the Gospel of Luke, it is written that they asked him on her behalf, and standing over her, he rebuked the fever. For sometimes the Savior, when asked, sometimes voluntarily heals the sick, showing himself always to grant the prayers of the faithful against the passions of vices, and sometimes to give to them not understanding what they are asking, or to grant them what they piously ask for even if not understood, just as the Psalmist requests: Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults, O Lord (Psalm XIX).

[Mark 1:31] -- And immediately the fever left her, and she ministered to them. It is natural for those recovering from a fever to grow weary at the onset of health and to feel the discomfort of the illness. However, the health conferred by the command of the Lord returns wholly at once. Not only does it return, but it is also accompanied by such strength that she immediately is able to minister to those who helped her, and, according to the laws of typology, those members that had served impurity unto iniquity to bear fruit unto death, now serve righteousness unto eternal life. [Mark 1:32] -- But when evening had come and the sun had set, they brought to him, etc. The setting of the sun signifies the passion and death of him who said: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John IX). And when the sun sets, more demoniacs than before, more sick are healed. Because while temporarily living in the flesh, he taught a few Jews, but after the defeat of the kingdom of death, he transmitted the gifts of faith and salvation to all

the peoples of the world. To whom the Psalmist sings as if to the heralds of life and light: ”Prepare the way for him who rides upon the sunset” (Psalm LXVII). For the Lord ascends over the sunset, because from where he lay in suffering, from there he manifested his greater glory by rising.

[Mark 1:34] -- And he cast out many demons, etc. Luke writes more openly about these things: ”Indeed, demons were coming out of many, crying out and saying: ’You are the Son of God.’ And he rebuking them, would not allow them to speak, because they knew him to be the Christ” (Luke IV). Therefore the demons confessed the Son of God; and they knew him to be the Christ, because the devil knew him as a man fatigued by a forty-day fast, but could not ascertain by temptation whether he was also the Son of God; now through the power of signs he either understood or rather suspected he was the Son of God. He did not persuade the Jews to crucify him because he thought he was neither Christ nor the Son of God, but because he did not foresee that he would be damned by his death. Indeed, the Apostle says about this mystery hidden from ages that none of the rulers of this age knew it. For if they had known, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor. II). But the Psalmist makes clear why the Lord prevents demons from speaking, saying: ”To the sinner, however, God said: Why do you declare my statutes and take my covenant in your mouth? You have hated discipline” (Psalm XLIX), and so on. Lest anyone following the preacher hears the errant. For the devil is an evil teacher, who often mixes falsehood with truth, so as to cover the testimony of deceit with the appearance of truth.

[Mark 1:35] -- And rising very early in the morning, he went out to a deserted place, etc. If the setting sun expresses the death of the Savior, why should not his resurrection be indicated by the returning dawn? With the light having appeared, he went to the desert of the nations, and there he prayed among his faithful ones, for he stirred their hearts to the power of prayer through the grace of his Spirit. And he was preaching in their synagogues and throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons. In this preaching, which he describes him as having had throughout all Galilee, is also understood that sermon held on the mount, which Matthew commemorates. For Mark follows thus:

[Mark 1:40] -- And there came to him a leper beseeching him, etc. Concerning this leper who was cleansed, it connects that he should be understood as the one whom Matthew mentions as being cleansed when the Lord came down from the mountain after that discourse. For thus Matthew says: When he had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him (Matt. VIII). And behold, a leper came and worshipped him, saying: Lord, if you will, you can make me clean, etc. And because the Lord said: I have not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it (Matt. V), he who was excluded by the law, presuming to be cleansed by the power of the Lord, judged that grace exists not from the law but above the law, which

could wash away the stain of the leper. However, just as the authority of power is declared in the Lord, so in him is the constancy of faith. He fell on his face, which is an act of humility and shame, as everyone should be ashamed of the blemishes of his life; but shame did not suppress confession. He showed his wound, requested a remedy, and it is a confession full of religion and faith. If you will, he says, you can make me clean. He attributed the power to the will of the Lord. But concerning the will of the Lord, he did not doubt not as one incredulous in piety but as one conscious of his own foulness, he did not presume.

However, Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched forth his hand and touched him, and said to him: I will, be clean. And when he had said it, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. There is nothing intermediate between the work of God and the command, because the work is in the command. Finally, he spoke, and they were made (Ps. XXXII). You see, therefore, that it cannot be doubted that the will of God is power? Therefore, if his will is power, they who assert the unity of will, assuredly assert the unity of power. Therefore, as one who has the power of healing, and the authority of commanding, he does not avoid the testimony of working. For he says 'I will' because of Photinus, he commands because of Arius, he touches because of Manichaeus. And indeed the law prohibits touching lepers; but since the Lord is the lawgiver, he does not obey the law but makes the law. Therefore, he did not touch because he could not cleanse without touching, but to prove that he was not subject to the law. He did not fear contamination as humans do, but because he could not be defiled who was liberating others, the leprosy flees at the touch of the Lord, which used to contaminate the one touching. Together with this wonder, he healed in the same manner in which he had been entreated. If you will, you can make me clean. He says, I will, be clean.

You have the will, you also have the effect of piety. Therefore, (contrary to what many Latins think) it should not be joined and read "I will to make you clean," but separated, so that first he says 'I will', then he commands, 'be clean.'

[Mark 1:43] -- And he immediately threatened him and cast him out, etc. Why is it commanded to tell no one, except to indicate that our benefits are not to be publicized, but kept hidden, so that we refrain not only from the reward of money but also from praise.

[Mark 1:44] -- But go and show yourself to the chief priests, etc. He is ordered to show himself to the priest so that the priest might understand that he was cured not by the order of the law, but by the grace of God above the law. However, he is to offer a sacrifice to show that the Lord did not overthrow the law but fulfilled it, who, walking according to the law, healed those above the law whom the remedies of the law had not healed. And he well added: As a testimony to them, that is, if they believe in God, if the leprosy of impiety departs. If it troubles anyone how

the Lord seems to approve the Mosaic sacrifice when the Church has not accepted it, let him remember that the holy of holies sacrifice, which is His body, had not yet begun. For He had not yet offered His holocaust in His passion. But it was not fitting that symbolic sacrifices be taken away before that which was signified was confirmed through the testimony of the apostles preaching and the faith of the believing people. Because this man typically designates the human race weakened by sins, it is rightly described not only as a leper but also, according to the Gospel of Luke, as full of leprosy. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. III).

That is, as the hand of the Savior, that is the incarnate Word of God, extended and touched human nature, they might be cleansed from the variety of ancient error, and be able to hear with the apostles: You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you (John XV), and those who were abominable from the people of God, secluded from the camps, might once again be returned to the temple and offered to the priest, indeed to Him to whom it is said: You are a priest forever (Psalm CIX), hearing from the Apostle: For the temple of God is holy, which you are (1 Cor. III); and they might offer for their cleansing as Moses commanded, that is, present their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God (Rom. XII).

[Mark 1:45] -- But he, having gone out, began to proclaim and to spread the word, so much so that he could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to him from everywhere. The perfect salvation of one compels many crowds to the Lord: for as he showed himself to be healed both inwardly and outwardly, by no means did he conceal the benefit received as he had been commanded by the one from whom he received it: on the contrary, having performed the duty of an evangelist, he immediately began to proclaim and spread the word once he had gone out. Hence it is rightly questioned why the Lord commanded certain deeds to be hidden, and yet they could not be hidden even for an hour. For did the only-begotten Son, coeternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, wish something in this regard that he could not fulfill? But it should be noted that our Redeemer, through his mortal body, provided us with an example in all actions that he performed. For making a miracle and commanding it to be kept quiet, and yet it couldn’t be kept quiet. So that his elect, following the example of his teaching, should indeed wish to hide in humility the great things they do, but to benefit others, they are unwillingly revealed, so that it is both of great humility to desire one’s works to be kept silent, and of great sublimity that their works cannot be silenced. Thus, the Lord did not wish to do anything that he could not achieve, but he provided an example by the teaching of what his members should desire, and what will happen to them even against their will.

Chapter 2

[Mark 2:1] -- And again he entered Capernaum, etc. The Savior of all, God, with saving step, surveys all things. And sometimes in deserts, now in the city, now by the sea, he ministers to the crowds the gifts of heavenly doctrine and virtues. Sometimes he alone prays on the mount, sometimes he assists those laboring at sea so that they may not perish. Everywhere, he imparts the gifts of salvation, so that he demonstrates all ranks and conditions pertain to his grace. According to the mystical understanding, after performing a miracle in the city, he withdraws to the desert, and there receives the crowds coming to him with kind piety, to show that he prefers a quiet life, remote from the cares of the world, and, due to this pursuit, takes care to heal bodies. Indeed, in a human manner, as if avoiding the crowd seeking him, he did not want to enter the city openly. But allegorically, it teaches that truth does not exhibit an open manifestation of itself to tumultuous carnal minds, but generously infuses the light of its gifts to those whom it sees to be detached from the allurements of temporal things. Yet because heavenly piety does not forsake even the carnal, but also grants them the grace of its visitation, through which also they may become spiritual, the Lord returns to the city after the desert: speaking the word to many converging there, and by healing the paralytic, he provides many the occasion for internal healing which is in faith.

Now, teaching the Lord and the house being so full that they didn't have room, not even at the door, specifically designates our salvation who have come to faith from the Gentiles, that when the Lord preached in Judea, we were not yet able to enter to hear. But to us, nonetheless being outside, he made the words of his doctrine arrive, because he himself collected us through the mouths of holy preachers, and although found outside the synagogue where he preached, made us participants of his Gospel. And they came carrying a paralytic to him, because he was carried by four. The healing of this paralytic designates the salvation of a soul after a long inertia of carnal allure desiring Christ, which first of all needs ministers who uplift it and bring it to Christ, i.e., good teachers who suggest hope of healing and aid of intercession. They are rightly said to have been four, either because the strength of all preaching and every word is established by the four books of the holy Gospel, or because there are four virtues by which the confidence of the

mind is raised to deserve health. Of these is said in the praise of eternal wisdom: ”For she teacheth temperance and prudence, justice and courage, which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in life” (Wisdom VIII). Some call them prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice by different names. And when they could not bring him in through the crowd, they uncovered the roof where he was.

They desire to offer the paralytic to Christ, but being obstructed on all sides by the crowd, they are shut off because often the soul, after the laziness of a sick body and desiring to be renewed by the remedy of heavenly grace, is hindered by the obstacle of ancient habit. Often even within the delights of secret prayer, and as it were sweet conversation with the Lord, a crowd of thoughts intervening obstructs the keenness of mind so that Christ is not seen. And what is to be done amid these things? Certainly not to remain below outwardly where the crowds rage, but ascend to the roof of the house where Christ teaches, that is, the loftiness of Sacred Scripture must be sought, and the law of the Lord meditated upon day and night as the Psalmist says. In what does the young man correct his way? In keeping your words, he says (Ps. 119). And uncovering it, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. When the roof is uncovered, the sick man is laid down before Jesus, because, with the mysteries of the Scriptures opened, one comes to the knowledge of Christ, that is, descends to his humility with the piety of faith. And indeed the house of Jesus is found covered with tiles according to another evangelist’s narrative, because under the contemptible covering of letters, if there is one who uncovers, the virtue of spiritual grace will be found.

The uncovering of the tiles in the house of Jesus is the revelation in the vileness of the letter of the spiritual sense and heavenly secrets. What indeed is laid down with the bed signifies that Christ ought to be known by man still constituted in this flesh.

[Mark 2:5] -- When Jesus saw their faith, etc. The Lord, about to cure a man of paralysis, first dissolved the bonds of sins, to show that he was condemned due to the bonds of sins by the dissolution of his limbs, and that he could not be restored to health in his limbs unless these bonds were relaxed. Likewise, to that paralytic, who was waiting in vain by the pool of Bethesda for the movement of the water for a long time, it is said by the Lord, healed: ”Behold, you have been made well; do not sin anymore, lest something worse happen to you.” (John XIV). [Mark 2:5] -- ”Son,” he said, ”your sins are forgiven you.” O wondrous humility! He calls ”son” the despised and weak man, dissolved in all his limbs, whom the priests would not deign to touch. Or rightly ”son” because his sins are forgiven him. It should indeed be considered how much the faith of each person is worth before God, since the faith of others was so great that a whole man, that is, was suddenly saved both outwardly and inwardly, and the errors of some were loosed by the merit of others.

[Mark 2:6] -- Now there were some of the scribes sitting there, thinking in their hearts, etc. The scribes speak truly, that no one can forgive sins but God alone, who through them also forgives, to whom He has granted the power to forgive. And therefore Christ is proved truly to be God because He can forgive sins like God. They bear true witness to God but are deceived by denying the person of Christ. The Jews thus err, who although they believe that Christ both is God and can forgive sins, yet do not believe that Jesus is the Christ. But the Arians err much more foolishly, who, while conquered by the words of the Gospel, do not dare to deny that Jesus is the Christ and that He can forgive sins, nevertheless they are not afraid to deny Him as God. But He, desiring to save the faithless, manifests Himself to be God by both the knowledge of hidden things and the power of deeds. For it follows: As soon as Jesus perceived in His spirit that they thus reasoned within themselves, He said to them: Why do you think these things in your hearts? He shows Himself to be God who can know the hidden things of the heart. And in a certain way, He speaks silently: With the same majesty and power by which I observe your thoughts, I can also forgive sins to men. Understand from yourselves what the paralytic gains. What is easier to say to the paralytic:

”Your sins are forgiven,” or to say: ”Rise, take up your bed, and walk”? There is a great difference between saying and doing. Whether the paralytic’s sins are forgiven only the one who forgave knows. But ”Rise and walk,” both he who rose and those who saw him rising could approve. Therefore, a carnal sign is made that the spiritual might be proven; although it is of the same virtue to forgive the faults of both the body and the soul. And it is given to us to understand that many bodily weaknesses occur because of sins. And for this reason perhaps sins are forgiven first, so that the causes of the weakness being removed, health may be restored. Indeed, there are five differentiations of causes for which we are afflicted with bodily troubles in this life. For we are either burdened with the infirmity of the just body to increase merits through patience, as the blessed fathers, Job and Tobias and countless martyrs in both Testaments. Or, to protect the virtues received, lest they perish by the temptation of pride, as the apostle Paul, to whom a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan was given to buffet him, lest he be exalted by the abundance of revelations. Or, to understand and correct our sins, as Mary the sister of Aaron in the desert was struck with leprosy for her audacity and prideful words. Or, as the paralytic of whom we speak, who could only be healed of his weakness after his sins were first forgiven.

Or, for the glory of God who saves, either by Himself or through His servants, as the man born blind in the Gospel, who neither sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. Like Lazarus, whose sickness was not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Or, for the commencement of eternal damnation, belonging to and being proper to the reprobate, like Antiochus and Herod, who both in their time resisting

God, showed to all by their present afflictions the miseries they were to suffer in perpetual hellish torments. To whom agrees the prophet's word: Crush them with double destruction. Hence it is necessary in all temporal adversities we endure, with humility to give thanks to the Lord, and being conscious of our infirmity, to rejoice in the remedies bestowed on us. It is necessary to diligently explore our works and thoughts upon returning to our conscience, and whatever we find we have sinned in, let us cleanse with worthy punishment; whatever we discover that, by pride, we have believed to be rightly done but is lost to this faulty vanity, let us likewise chastise with humble satisfaction. For this often becomes a cause of scourges for us. However, it is the characteristic of the perfect and a special gift of men to be scourged for the increase of rewards. But to be driven by temporal blows to eternal torments is the punishment of the impenitent reprobate.

[Mark 2:10] -- But that you may know that the Son of man has power, etc. If he is also God according to the Psalmist, who as far as the east is from the west has removed our transgressions from us, and the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, therefore he himself is both God and the son of man, so that Christ as man can forgive sins through the power of his divinity, and the same God Christ, through the frailty of his humanity, can die for sinners. Spiritually, to arise from the bed is to draw the soul, which lay sick due to carnal desires, away from them. But to take up the bed is to also subdue the flesh, corrected by the bridle of continence, and to separate it from earthly delights through the hope of heavenly rewards. To go home after taking up the bed is to return to paradise. For indeed, this is our true home, which first received man, not rightfully lost, but through deceit, ultimately restored by him who owed nothing to the deceitful enemy. Alternatively, the man who was healed carries the bed home, when the soul, having received the forgiveness of sins, returns with the body to the inner vigilance of itself, lest it admit anything after pardon for which it may be justly struck again. And immediately he rose, and taking up the bed, he went before all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this.

How marvelous is the power of divine authority, where, without any intervening delay of time, the swift healing follows the command of the Savior! Rightly those who were present, condemning the javelins of blasphemy, turn their amazed hearts to the praise of such majesty. And he went out again to the sea, and all the crowd came to him, and he taught them. Teaching in Capernaum, the Lord demonstrated the heavenly power of his doctrine through the healing of the paralytic. After this, he went out to the sea, to not only instruct the civil life of men in the way of truth, but also to preach the gospel of the kingdom to the inhabitants of the sea, teaching them to scorn the wavering motions of passing things and to overcome them with the firmness of faith. Finally, he teaches the great crowd that comes to him there. There he makes an apostle and evangelist of a tax collector called from the toll booth. There he deems many sinners corrected through penance worthy of his

supper, making them hearers of his secrets, and leading them away from swelling waves and the deceiving leviathans of desires to the solidity of a peaceful life, which is in the hope of heavenly goods. For it follows:

[Mark 2:14] -- And as he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, etc. At the custom house, he says to the care and duty of collecting taxes; for τέλος in Greek is called tax in Latin: moreover, the same Levi is also Matthew. But Luke and Mark, out of respect and honor for the evangelist, did not want to put the well-known name. However, Matthew himself, according to what is written, a righteous man is his own accuser: in the beginning of his discourse, he names himself Matthew and a publican; to show those reading that no one who is converted should despair of salvation, since from being a publican he was suddenly changed into an apostle, from a tax collector into an evangelist.

[Mark 2:14] -- And rising, he followed him. In the Gospel of Luke, it is written more fully: And leaving all, he rose and followed him (Luke 5). Therefore Matthew, understanding what it truly means to follow the Lord, leaves all things and follows. To follow indeed is to imitate. And so, in order to follow the poor Christ not so much in steps as in affection, he left what was his own, who was accustomed to seizing what belonged to others. And giving us a perfect form of renunciation of the world, he not only left the profits of taxes but also disregarded the danger that could come from the leaders of the world, because he left the accounts of the taxes unfinished and disordered. For he was led by such a great desire to follow the Lord that he retained no regard or thought for this life at all. Indeed, the Lord himself, who outwardly called him with human speech to follow him, inwardly kindled him with divine inspiration to follow immediately when called, and he taught invisibly how it ought to be followed. On account of this, he rightly became a faithful steward of the Lord’s talents while abandoning human affairs with disdain.

[Mark 2:15] -- And it happened that as He reclined in the house, many tax collectors, etc. The evangelist Luke writes that Levi held a great banquet for Him in his house, which aptly aligns with the figures of mysteries. For whoever receives Christ in the inner residence is nourished with the greatest delights of overflowing pleasures. Thus, the Lord willingly enters and reclines in the affection of the one who has believed. And this is the spiritual banquet of good works, at which the rich people are in need, and the poor feast. Tax collectors, as their name even shows, are called those who collect public taxes or those who are contractors of the treasury’s taxes or public goods, as well as those who pursue the profits of this world through businesses, are designated by the same term. Therefore, the tax collector, having seen that by turning from sins to better things, he found a place of repentance, and for that reason, they also do not despair of salvation. Neither do the tax collectors who come to Jesus remain in their former vices, as the Pharisees and scribes, who grumble, but they repent, as the subsequent statement of the evangelist indicates,

saying: ”For there were many who also followed Him.” The Lord, however, went to the banquets of sinners so that He might have the opportunity to teach and offer spiritual food to His hosts. Finally, even though they often describe Him going to a banquet, nothing else is reported except what He did or taught there, so that both the humility of the Lord in going to sinners and the power of His teaching in the conversion of penitents are demonstrated.

[Mark 2:16] -- And the scribes and Pharisees seeing that he was eating with sinners, etc. If through Matthew’s choosing and calling the faith of the publicans is expressed of the gentiles, who first coveted the gain of the world, but now are refreshed with the Lord at the feast of charity and with diligent devotion of good works, surely the pride of the scribes and Pharisees indicates the envy of the Jews, troubled about the salvation of the gentiles. He speaks to them: Amen I say to you, that the publicans and prostitutes will precede you into the kingdom of God.—Hearing this Jesus said to them: The healthy do not need a physician, but those who are ill. For I did not come to call the righteous but sinners. He reproaches the scribes and Pharisees, who, thinking themselves righteous, shunned the company of sinners. He calls himself a physician, who by a marvelous kind of healing was wounded for our iniquities, and by his bruises we are healed (Isaiah 53). Moreover, he calls healthy and righteous those who, ignorant of God’s righteousness, and wanting to establish their own, have not subjected themselves to the righteousness of God (Romans 10); who, presuming on the law, do not seek the grace of the Gospel. Furthermore, he calls the ill and sinners those who, overcome by the consciousness of their fragility, and seeing that they cannot be justified by the law, submit their necks to the grace of Christ by repenting.

[Mark 2:18] -- And the disciples of John were there, etc. Others recount that the evangelists themselves questioned the Pharisees and the disciples of John about this with the Lord. Here, however, the evangelical message seems to sound as if some others, moved by this concern, posed this question to him. From which it must be gathered that this question was posed to the Lord by many, namely by the Pharisees and the disciples of John, and by the guests or by others who were moved by this: why do the disciples of John and the Pharisees fast; but the disciples of the Savior do not fast. However, in a mystical sense, it can be explained thus: that the disciples of John and the Pharisees fast, but those of Christ do not fast, because everyone who either boasts of works of the law without faith, or, which is more serious, follows the traditions of men, or even certainly hears the preaching of Christ with the ear of the body only and not with the faith of the heart, abstaining from spiritual goods, with a fasting heart, withers away. But he who is faithfully incorporated by love into the members of Christ cannot fast, who feasts on his flesh and blood. Otherwise, John does not drink wine and strong drink, the Lord eats and drinks with publicans and sinners, because he increases merit through abstinence when there is no power in nature.

The Lord, however, who naturally possesses the ability to forgive sins, why would he avoid those whom he could make even purer by abstaining? But Christ also fasted, so that you would not evade the precept, he ate with sinners, so that you would perceive grace, recognize power. And Jesus said to them: Can the children of the marriage feast fast, as long as the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then they shall fast on that day. In Matthew, it is thus placed: Can the children of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? (Matt. IX). The bridegroom is therefore Christ; the bride is the Church. From this holy and spiritual union, the apostles are created. They cannot mourn and fast, as long as they see the bridegroom in the wedding chamber and know that the bridegroom is with the bride. But when the nuptials are over and the time of passion and resurrection has come, then the children of the bridegroom will fast. According to the laws of allegory, it must be understood that as long as the bridegroom is with us and we are in joy, we can neither fast nor mourn. But when he has withdrawn and flown away because of sins, then fasting must be prescribed, then grief must be taken up. No one sews a patch of unshrunken cloth on an old garment.

Otherwise, the new patch takes away from the old, and a worse tear is made. When the Lord was asked why his disciples did not fast, he responded that those who are still carnal and not yet solidified in the faith of his passion and resurrection cannot endure the more severe precepts of fasting and continence, lest through excessive austerity they also lose the faith which they seemed to have. Hence, he still calls the disciples old garments, to which a new patch, that is, any piece of doctrine pertaining to the temperance of a new life, is unfitly sewn, because if this happens, the doctrine itself is, in a way, torn, whose part that pertains to fasting from food is untimely handed down, since it teaches a general fasting not only from the desire for food but from all temporal delights. Whose like a patch, that is, some part that pertains to food, he says should not be imparted to men still bound to old customs, because from there also a kind of tearing seems to happen, and it does not fit with the oldness itself.

[Mark 2:22] -- And no one puts wine, etc. He also compares them to old wineskins, which he says are more easily burst by new wine, that is, by spiritual precepts, than being able to contain it. However, they were already new wineskins when, after the ascension of the Lord, they were renewed by praying and hoping for the desire of His consolation. For then they received the Holy Spirit, when, filled with it, they spoke in all tongues, it was said by the Jews who did not understand but nonetheless truly witnessed: These men are full of new wine (Acts 2). For new wine had already come into new wineskins, that is, the fervor of the Holy Spirit had filled the hearts of the spiritually new. Otherwise. A teacher must be cautious not to entrust the secrets of new mysteries to a soul not yet renewed but still

enduring in the oldness of wickedness. But if anyone asks what the difference mystically is between new wine and a new garment, it is easily apparent, because we are internally refreshed and intoxicated by wine, whereas we are externally clothed by a garment. But while both pertain to the significance of spiritual life, the garment indeed insinuates our good works which we perform outwardly and by which we shine before men. However, new wine expresses the fervor of faith, hope, and charity, by which in the sight of our Creator we are inwardly renewed in the newness of our mind.

[Mark 2:23] -- And again it happened on the Sabbath, etc. We read in the following passages that there were many who came and went, and they did not even have time to eat, and thus they were almost hungry like men. But what they rub the ears of grain with their hands, and console their hunger, is an indication of a more austere life, seeking not prepared feasts, but simple foods. However, the Pharisees said to him: Behold, why are your disciples doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath? Note that the first apostles of the Savior destroy the letter of the Sabbath against the Hebionites, who, while accepting the other apostles, reject Paul as a transgressor of the law. Mystically, however, the disciples pass through the fields, namely those about which the Lord said: Lift up your eyes and see the regions, for they are already white for harvest. And he who reaps receives wages (John IV), as holy teachers observe with the care of pious concern those whom they seek to instruct in the faith of truth, and with diligent consideration ponder how each one should be drawn to salvation and in what order. And therefore it is understood that nothing is better than hungering for the salvation of men, which the first of the reapers, once hungering among the prayers, soon when offered the dainties he desired, heard: Arise, Peter, kill and eat (Acts X).

And there is wonderful harmony of the sacrament, for there too animals ordered to be slain and eaten are sent from heaven, and here the disciples, consecrating the ears of corn with the Lord looking on, are said, according to the accounts of the other evangelists, to have rubbed them with their hands and eaten. For this is what the Apostle says: Mortify your members that are upon the earth, and put off the old man with his deeds (Coloss. III). For no one can otherwise pass into the body of Christ, nor otherwise nourish the teacher with the fruits of their progress, than if, having renounced the old desires, one becomes a new man with the new commandment of love. Therefore, to pluck the ears of grain is to draw men away from earthly intentions, where they had fixed, as it were, the root of their minds; but to rub them with hands is, through examples of virtues, to strip away, as it were, the husks and coverings of the chaff, even from the very desires of the flesh, the purity of the mind. To eat the grains is to be incorporated into the members of the Church, each one cleansed from the filth of vices, through the preaching mouths. And it is well remembered that the disciples did this while going before the Lord,

for the teacher's word must precede, and thus the grace of the supreme visitation illuminates the following heart of the listener.

Well on the Sabbath, for the holy teachers both labor in preaching for the hope of future rest, and equally admonish their listeners not to insist on superfluous works for the love of the world, but rather to labor hard for eternal rest in good works. Again, they walk through the fields with the Lord, who, striving to obey divine commands, delight in diligently meditating on the sacred words. They hunger in the fields, desiring to find the bread of life in the same sacred words they read through, that is, they care to reach those words by which they may kindle in themselves a greater love for their Creator. And this on the Sabbath, when they rejoice to be free from the turbulent thoughts with a calm mind, and to see how sweet the Lord is, and how blessed the man who hopes in Him (Psalm XXXIII). And assuming the habit of piety and humility, they strive to reach the rest of their souls. They pluck the ears that perhaps occur, and turn and purify them with their hands until they reach the food, when they take up the testimonies of the Scriptures which they reach by reading, and discuss them with diligent investigation until they find the marrow of love that seemed to be hidden in them.

For just as the grains of wheat which refresh are veiled by the roughness of the chaff which bristles, so often under what seemed the usefulness of the letter are hidden the gifts of divine love, which feed the hungry and thirsty minds of the faithful with the dainties of inner sweetness. But this refreshment of minds indeed displeases the foolish defenders of the Sabbath, but is approved by the Lord of the Sabbath, for those who follow only the surface of the letter neither know true refreshment of minds nor reach the inner rest of souls. Hence their recklessness is rightly confounded by the mouth of Truth, while it is added:

[Mark 2:25] -- And he said to them: Have you never read, etc.? To refute the Pharisees' accusation, he recalls an old story, when David, fleeing Saul, came to Nob and was received by the priest Abimelech, and asked for food (1 Samuel 21). Since he did not have ordinary bread, he gave him consecrated bread, which only priests and Levites were allowed to eat. He only asked if the young men were pure from women: and when he answered from yesterday and the day before, he did not hesitate to give the bread, considering it better (as the prophet says, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice [Hosea 6]) to free men from the danger of hunger than to offer a sacrifice to God. For the acceptable sacrifice to God is the salvation of men. Therefore, the Lord argues and says: If both David is holy and Abimelech the priest is not blamed by you, but each of them transgressed the commandment of the law with reasonable excuse, and hunger is the cause, why do you not approve the same hunger in the apostles which you approve in others? Although, in this matter, there is much difference. These rub the ears of grain in their hands on the Sabbath, those ate Levitical bread. There, even at the solemnity of the Sabbath,

the days of the new moons illuminated it, and in the feasts when he fled from the royal court.

Figuratively speaking, when it is said that David and his men received the consecrated bread, it shows that the food of the priesthood would pass into common use, either because we all ought to imitate the priestly life, or because all the children of the Church are priests. For we are anointed into a holy priesthood, offering ourselves as spiritual sacrifices to God. We have spoken more fully about this whole story according to our understanding in the exposition of the book of Kings, and about the table and the bread of the presence, in the book on the exposition of the tabernacle and its vessels. As for why the Lord calls Abimelech the chief of the priests instead of Abiathar, there is no discrepancy. For both were there when David came and asked for and received the bread, namely Abimelech the chief of the priests, and Abiathar his son. After Abimelech was killed by Saul, along with eighty-five priests of his household, Abiathar fled to David and became his companion throughout his exile. Later, when David reigned, he received the office of high priest and remained in the pontificate throughout his reign, surpassing his father in much greater excellence. Therefore, he was worthy of being remembered by the Lord as the high priest even while his father lived. And he said to them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Greater care is due to the health and life of a man than to the observance of the Sabbath.

For the Sabbath is commanded to be observed in such a way that if there is necessity, one is not guilty of breaking the Sabbath. Therefore, circumcision on the Sabbath is not prohibited because it is necessary. For Joshua also circled the walls of Jericho with his army for seven days. And the Maccabees fought on the Sabbath out of necessity. Hence, if the disciples were hungry, what was not permitted by the law became permitted out of the necessity of hunger. This is a similar case to that which exists today in legal fasts: where if anyone breaks the fast because of illness, he is by no means guilty. Therefore, the Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath. If, he says, David the king fed with priestly food is excusable, and according to another evangelist’s account the priests violate the Sabbath by temple service and are without blame, how much more is the Son of Man, who is the true king and the true priest, and therefore the Lord of the Sabbath, not guilty of plucking ears of grain on the Sabbath?

Chapter 3

[Mark 3:1] -- And he entered again into the synagogue, etc. The man who had a withered hand indicates the human race withered in the fertility of good works, but cured by the Lord’s compassion. His right hand, which had withered in the first parent when plucking the forbidden tree’s fruit, was restored to the health of good works’ juices by the Redeemer’s grace when He stretched out innocent hands on the tree of the cross. And fittingly, the hand was withered in the synagogue, because where the gift of knowledge is greater, there the danger of inexcusable guilt is more severe. And they watched him whether he would heal on the Sabbath, that they might accuse him. Because the Master had excused the breaking of the Sabbath which they blamed in the disciples by a likely example, now they want to accuse the very Master by watching, so that if He heals on the Sabbath, they may charge Him with transgression; if He does not heal, they may accuse Him of cruelty or impotence. And he said to the man with the withered hand: Stand forth. And he says to them: Is it lawful on the Sabbaths to do good or to do harm? The Lord, predicting the calumny the Jews with faithless minds had prepared for Him, reproaches them because they violated the precepts of the law by a wrongful interpretation, thinking even from good works to rest on the Sabbath, while the law commands abstention from evil, saying:

You shall not do any servile work on it, that is sin. For everyone who commits sin is a servant of sin. By this precept, He also foreshadows the form of the future age in the present: where those who have done good through the six ages of this world, will have rest in the seventh age, not from good works, but only from evil. For even if secular works rest, nevertheless the act of good work in the praise of God is not idle. To save a life or to kill? This is, to heal a man, or not? It is the same as He had said before, To do good or to do harm? Not that the supremely good God can be the author of evil or perdition for us, but that Scripture customarily speaks of not saving as killing. Just as He is said to have hardened Pharaoh’s heart, not that He made a soft heart hard, but that He did not mercifully soften it, hardened by preceding merits. And when we pray, Lead us not into temptation (Matt. VI), by immediately adding, But deliver us from evil, we plainly are taught that to lead

into temptation by Him is nothing other than not to free from evil, and to destroy a soul is not to save from perdition.

If anyone is moved, why the Lord, when He was about to heal a body, asked about the salvation of the soul, let him understand either that the soul by the custom of Scriptures is put for the man, as it is said: These are the souls which came out of the loins of Jacob (Exod. I), or that these miracles were done for the sake of the soul's salvation, or that this healing of the hand signified the salvation of the soul, which, ceasing from good works (as I have said), seemed to have a withered right hand. But they were silent. And looking around at them with anger, grieved at the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man: Stretch forth your hand. And he stretched it out; and his hand was restored. The withered hand is ordered to be stretched out for healing, because in no better order is the fruitless weakness of the soul cured than by the largesse of alms. Therefore John the Baptist, when questioned by the crowds about what they should do so as not to be cast into fire like withered trees, commanded only this: He who has two coats, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise (Luke III). And in Ecclesiasticus it is said: Son, let not your hand be stretched out to take, but drawn back when it comes to giving (Eccli. IV).

For in vain does he stretch out his hands to God in prayer for sins, who does not extend them to a begging widow to confer a benefit.

[Mark 3:6] -- But the Pharisees went out and immediately took counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him. He refers to the Herodians as the ministers of Herod the tetrarch, who, on account of the enmity which their lord exercised against John, also plotted against and hated the Savior whom John preached. However, it was of great foolishness for those who greatly needed salvation to take counsel about the death of the Savior. Their zeal for wickedness is shown when they even consider it a crime that he stretched out the hand of the one who was sick to heal it at his word, as if none of them had ever done greater works on the Sabbath, such as carrying food, offering a cup, and performing other necessary tasks for sustenance. For indeed, he who said "Let there be," and it was made, could not be convicted of working on the Sabbath.

[Mark 3:7] -- And Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea. He withdrew as a man fleeing the snares of those who persecuted Him, because neither had His hour of suffering yet arrived, nor was the place of His suffering outside Jerusalem. He withdrew, fleeing from those who persecuted Him out of hatred; but He went to a place where He found many following Him out of love. For it is added: And a large crowd from Galilee and Judea followed Him, and from Jerusalem and Idumaea, and beyond Jordan, and those around Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, hearing what He was doing, came to Him. Behold, the Pharisees and Herodians, namely the teachers of the people and the king's ministers, sought to destroy the Lord

with unanimous counsel. But the unlearned crowd and the masses gathered from everywhere followed Him with unanimous love. They, seeing the works of His virtues and hearing the words of His teaching, wanted to learn nothing more than to persecute Him. These, led only by the reputation of His virtues, came in a great throng to hear Him and to demand the help of salvation. Hence, they soon deserved to achieve the effect of their will and desire, with many healed by the Lord, as is read in the following. Where He also set an example for His followers, if they suffered persecution in one city, to flee to another. Finally, Paul, instructed by the Lord's example and precept, fled from Damascus, where he was threatened by the snares of the wicked.

But having left there, he found countless people elsewhere who followed him to piety. Truly according to the laws of allegory, the Lord in that He went out from the synagogue, withdrew to the sea, everywhere encountering a large multitude coming to Him to be healed and taught, manifestly prefigured our salvation, to whom He deigned to come through faith, leaving Judea due to their perfidy. Rightly indeed are the incredulous nations, long tossed by the diverse windings of errors, compared to the instability, bitterness, and darkness of the fluctuating sea. But the Lord came to the sea with His disciples, and a large crowd from various provinces followed Him, because the hearts of the nations came to Him as the Apostles preached. And after He kindly consecrated in them a home dear to Himself, He already received many coming to Him generously and granted them to possess the desired salvation. To them aptly fits what follows: And He told His disciples to have a small boat ready for Him because of the crowd, lest they crush Him. For He healed many, so that they pressed upon Him, that they might touch Him. The small boat serving the Lord on the sea is indeed the Church, gathered from the nations, and crossing the waves of the passing world by the virtue of a free mind.

The more the bosom of the heart expands to receive the grace of its Creator, the higher it rises above all the volumes of transient things, as a small boat tossed by the winds on the waves of a swelling sea. However, there is a difference between compressing the Lord and touching Him. For he touches Him who receives His faith and love with a true heart. They compress Him who disturb the peace of those in whom the truth used to dwell with carnal thoughts or even deeds. Therefore, it is aptly said that those who touched Him were saved, because indeed true faith and love are accustomed to generate eternal salvation. Because of the crowd, lest they compress Him, the Lord ascended into a boat, because fleeing the troubled minds of the carnal, He rejoices to come and make His abode with those who have learned to despise both the fleeting glory and the abasement of the world.

[Mark 3:11] -- "However many had plagues, unclean spirits, when they saw him, would fall down before him." Both groups would indeed fall down before the Lord, that is, both those who had plagues of physical infirmities and those who were af-

flicted by unclean spirits: but the sick, with a simple intention of obtaining health, and the demoniacs, or rather the demons dwelling in them, compelled by the force of divine fear, not only to fall down before him, but also to confess his majesty. For struck by the presence of his power, and exceedingly terrified, they dared not hide who they had already recognized was the Son of God. It is greatly to be wondered at, or rather deplored, the blindness of the Arians who, after the glory of his resurrection and ascension, after the faith of the Gospel had been spread throughout the whole world, after churches had been established among all nations, and the name of the Lord the Savior had been praised from the rising to the setting of the sun, suddenly deny that he is the Son of God, whom even the demons, while he was still clothed in mortal flesh, openly acknowledged to be the Son of God. For thus it continues: And they cried out, saying, 'You are the Son of God.' And he sternly ordered them not to make him known. But why he forbade unclean spirits to speak about him, the Psalmist makes clear, who says: To the sinner, however, God said, 'Why do you declare my statutes and take my covenant in your mouth? You hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you' (Psalm 49).

[Mark 3:12] -- Therefore, the sinner is forbidden to preach the Lord, lest anyone follow the erring while they preach. For the devil is a deceitful teacher, who often mixes falsehoods with truths, so that he may conceal the testimony of deceit under the appearance of truth. Moreover, it was not only the demons, who confessed unwillingly, that were willing to be silent about Christ, but also those who, healed by him, willingly wanted to confess. Indeed, even the apostles, who were to preach him throughout the whole world after his resurrection, were commanded to remain completely silent about him before his passion, lest the proclamation of his divine majesty prevent the dispensation of his passion, and with the passion delayed, the salvation of the world, which was to come through it, be denied."

[Mark 3:13-14] -- And going up into the mountain, he called to himself those whom he wanted, and they came to him, and he made it so that there were twelve with him. That mountain on which the Lord chose the apostles signifies the height of justice, by which they were to be instructed and which they were to preach to men. For because he was going to send them to preach the Gospel of the heavenly kingdom, he rightly wished to remind them, by the height of the place where they were chosen, not to dissolve their mind in low desires, but always to raise it to desire and seek higher things. Thus also, intending to give the law to his former people, he appeared on a mountain; from the mountain he thundered what was to be done. Indeed, because it was not yet time to say: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4), but only to say, "Honor your father and your mother so that you may live long on the land which the Lord your God is giving you" (Exod. 20), these same words, however, typically promise us the eternal kingdom, which is in the land of the living: the people could not approach the Lord speaking on the mountain, but heard from below what was being said, because they did not yet know how

to ascend with a mind capable of understanding the mysteries being mentioned; Moses alone, because he had learned to hear the law spiritually, ascended the summit of the mountain where God was. It is well said, that ascending the mountain, the Lord called to himself those he wanted. For it was not by their choice and zeal, but by divine will and grace, that they were called to apostleship. Hence, he also says to them elsewhere: ”You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you” (John 15).

[Mark 3:14] -- And he made it so that there were twelve with him. Certainly, for the sake of the mystery of grace, so that they might commend the salvation of the world, which they were to preach by word, also by their number. Indeed, three times four makes twelve. And three times four are the apostles sent to preach, so that they might baptize the nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit through all the regions of the fourfold world. Whence it is also written concerning the holy city, Jerusalem, descending from heaven from God, that it had three gates on the east, and three gates on the north, and three gates on the south, and three gates on the west (Rev 21). Where it is shown figuratively that, with the apostles and their successors preaching, all the nations throughout the world would enter the Church in the faith of the Holy Trinity. In which sacrament as well, the children of Israel once encamped around the tabernacle, so that on every side, in a square, three tribes would remain (Num 1). For undoubtedly the early Church which was in Judea was, surrounded on all sides by believing nations from the whole world, going to set up spiritual camps to God in faith and confession of the Holy Trinity.

[Mark 3:14-15] -- And to send them to preach the Gospel, He gave them the power to heal diseases and to cast out demons. After He forbid the unworthy spirits to preach, He chose the saints, who would cast out the impure spirits, and they themselves would preach the Gospel with a pure mind and tongue. To whom (as the evangelist Matthew writes) He also conferred the power of healing other sicknesses, and even of raising the dead, so that the greatness of the promised heavenly things might be attested by the greatness of the deeds, and the power shown might give faith to the words, and those who preached new things might also do new things. Whence also now, when the number of the faithful has grown, within the holy Church there are many who hold to the way of virtues without having the signs of virtues. For a miracle is displayed in vain outwardly, if there is lacking the work accomplished inwardly. For according to the voice of the master of the nations, tongues are a sign not for the faithful, but for the unbelievers (1 Cor 14).

[Mark 3:16] -- And he gave Simon the name Peter. Not now for the first time did he name Simon Peter, but long before when, as he was brought to him by his brother Andrew and looked at him, he said: You are Simon son of John; you shall be called Cephas, which means Peter (John I). But when the Evangelist wanted to list the

names of the twelve apostles, he had to say Peter, he took care to briefly mention that he was not called this before, but that the Lord had so named him, although not then, but when John recorded the very words of the Lord, clearly making the listeners attentive. For if he had been called this before, you would not see the mystery of the rock in the same way, thinking that he was called so by chance, not by the providence of God. Therefore, he wanted him to be called something else first, so that from the very change of name, the vitality of the sacrament would be commended. The same Peter, then, in Greek or Latin, which is Cephas in Syrian. And in both languages, the name is derived from the rock: no doubt from that about which Paul says: And the rock was Christ (I Cor. X). For just as the true light, Christ, granted to the apostles to be called the light of the world, so also he bestowed on Simon, who believed in Christ the rock, the name of Peter. With another allusion to the etymology, he said:

You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my Church (Matt. XVI). But truly Simon, setting aside lamentation, or hearing sadness, is interpreted for that time when, after the resurrection, having seen the Lord, he set aside the sorrow of that death or his denial: but he immediately heard the sadness of his own death, with the Lord saying: But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish (John XXI).

[Mark 3:17] -- And James, the son of Zebedee, and John, the brother of James (it is understood from the previous verses that he called them to him when he went up into the mountain). And he gave them the names Boanerges, which means sons of thunder. They were aptly named sons of thunder, as one of them, resounding with that theological voice from heaven, which no one had known how to utter before, said: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, etc. (John I). It left such weighty power within it, that if he ever desired to thunder more, the world itself could not contain it. And both often deserved to be led apart and into the mountain by the Lord, and at times to perceive the terrifying sound from the cloud: This is my beloved son, listen to him (Mark IX). They also bore names most fitting to their merits. For James means supplanter. John, in whom is both grace, or the Lord's grace, as he is called. For he rejoiced to supplant the care of the flesh when the Lord called, and to despise the flesh itself when Herod killed him; and the latter, because of the grace of special love which he deserved through virginal glory, reclined on the chest of his Redeemer at the supper.

[Mark 3:18] -- And Andrew and Philip and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas. Andrew is a Greek name, and it means manly, from the fact that in Greek, a man is called Ἀνήρ. This name is most fittingly adorned for him who, upon John's preaching, promptly ensured he followed, saw, and listened to the Lamb of God, and later, when called himself, left everything to follow Him and adhere to Him continually

without delay. Philip is interpreted as the mouth of a lamp or lamps. And rightly so, because called by the Lord, he received the light of grace, which enlightened and kindled his heart, and promptly sought to share it with his brother through the service of his mouth, saying: We have found Him whom Moses wrote about in the Law and the Prophets, Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth (John I). Bartholomew is a Syriac, not Hebrew name, and it means the son of the one who suspends the waters, which evidently sounds like the Son of God, who lifts the minds of His preachers to contemplate heavenly things, so that as they soar more freely aloft, they may more fruitfully intoxicate the hearts of earthly men with the drops of their words. Matthew is called donated, namely because by the great gift of the Lord, he, from being a tax collector and a publican, was deputed to the office of apostle and evangelist. Thomas means abyss or twin, which in Greek is Δίδυμος, both of which interpretations suit his condition.

Didymus he could rightly be called, because of his doubtful heart in believing the fact of the Lord's resurrection. He could equally justly be called an abyss when with sure faith he penetrated the depth of the Lord's power celebrated in the resurrection. Indeed, it should be noted that listing the apostles by name, the evangelist Matthew places them thus: Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas, and Matthew the publican. Therefore, the other evangelists, when naming them together, place Matthew first and then Thomas, and they do not designate him as a publican, lest recalling his former manner of life, they seem to reproach the evangelist. But he himself indeed puts Thomas before him and calls himself a publican, so that where sin abounded, grace might much more abound (Romans V). And James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus. James the son of Alphaeus he listed with an additional identifier, to distinguish him from James the son of Zebedee. He is the one who in the Gospels is called the brother of the Lord, and in the Epistle to the Galatians: since Mary the wife of Alphaeus was the sister of Mary the mother of the Lord, whom John the evangelist surnames Mary of Clopas, perhaps because either the same Alphaeus was also called Clopas or Mary, after Alphaeus's death following the birth of James, married Clopas. For since James could rightly be called the son of Alphaeus, meaning learned, the apostles themselves attest, who immediately after the Lord's passion, appointed him to govern the church of Jerusalem.

Thaddaeus is the same whom Luke in his Gospel and in the Acts of the Apostles names Judas of James. He was indeed the brother of James the brother of the Lord, as he writes in his Epistle. Therefore he was also called the brother of the Lord, as attested by his fellow countrymen, who, marveling at his virtues, said: Is this not the carpenter's son and Mary's, brother of James and Joseph, and Judas, and Simon (Matthew XIII)?

[Mark 3:19] -- And Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And these he listed with an addition, to distinguish Simon Peter and Judas

James. But Simon the Canaanite received his surname from the village of Cana in Galilee, which the evangelist Luke translated as Simon the Zealot. Indeed, Cana means zeal. The Canaanite is called Zealot, that is, emulator. But Judas Iscariot, either from the village where he was born or from the tribe of Issachar, took his name as a premonition of his damnation. Indeed, Issachar, which means reward, hints at the price of betrayal. Iscariot, which is interpreted as a memory of death, shows that he was not persuaded suddenly but had long contemplated the crime of betraying the Lord. He was chosen among the apostles not by imprudence, but by providence. For how great is the truth, which even the service of an adversary does not weaken? How great is the morality of the Lord, who preferred to risk His judgment among us rather than His affection? For He had taken on the fragility of man, and therefore did not refuse these parts of human weakness. He wanted to be abandoned, He wanted to be betrayed, He wanted to be handed over by His apostle, so that you, abandoned by a companion, betrayed by a companion, may bear moderately that your judgment was in error, your benefit was lost. When He had ordained the apostles on the mountain, to send them forth to preach the Gospel, He aptly added:

[Mark 3:20] -- And they come to the house. For He led the apostles chosen on the mountain back to the house, as if silently admonishing them that after receiving the rank of apostleship, they should return to their conscience, and that the greater care they have taken on of teaching the people, the more diligently they should consider and penetrate the dwelling places of their own minds, and lest anything be found there that might offend the eyes of the hidden inspector, they should seek it out with diligent examination. For thus, each one rightly governs his neighbor if he first thoroughly explores and purges from his own heart whatever wickedness was within. [Mark 3:20] -- And again the crowd gathered, so much so that they could not even eat bread. Oh, how happy is the occupation of the Savior, how blessed is the multitude of the gathering crowd, to whom there was so much eagerness to hear the word of God, so much care to obtain salvation, that to the author of salvation and to those who were with Him, not even the hour of eating remained free from the solace of imparting life to the needy! Would that, Lord Jesus, in our times as well, you might grant as much grace to your faithful, who, by their studiousness in learning, hinder their teachers not only from the desire for carnal pleasures but sometimes also from the very reception of daily bread. But let us see how much the external crowd esteems the presence of their relatives. It follows,

[Mark 3:21] -- And when his own people heard of it, they went out to seize him, for they said, ”He is out of his mind.” Truly, as he himself says elsewhere, ”A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.” For those whom others desire to approach, see, and hear as the author of life and the wisdom of God, his relatives decide that he must be bound as if he were out of his mind. Since they could not grasp the depth of the wisdom they heard, they believed that

he spoke with an alien mind: akin to the example of those who could not bear the sacrament of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, and said, ”This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” And consequently, they went away, and no longer walked with him. Allegorically, however, in that the crowd frequently convenes to him, and he is scorned by his own as if he were mad, the salvation of the believing from the Gentiles is approved, and the envy and treachery of the Jews is noted. Of whom John says, ”He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” (John 1:11) There is indeed a great difference between those who do not understand the word of God because of the dullness of their minds and those who deliberately blaspheme and persecute what they understand. For there still remains a hope of salvation for these if perhaps they understand; but for those who are unwilling to understand to act well, and devise iniquity on their bed, what hope of salvation remains any longer, when they strive to reject by detesting and persecuting what they have rightly understood for the salvation of their souls? For consider what follows.

[Mark 3:22] -- And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, ”He has Beelzebub,” and, ”By the prince of demons he casts out demons. It is not without reason that those who brought such blasphemy against the Lord are said to have come down from Jerusalem; but it surely foreshadowed that he would be persecuted by the citizens of that place unto death. Indeed, we read above that a great crowd from Galilee followed him, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea and beyond the Jordan, and those around Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, having heard what he was doing, came to him. Therefore, the crowd coming from Jerusalem followed the Lord, as also from other regions of the Jews, or even of the Gentiles. For who does not know that Idumea, Tyre, and Sidon were provinces or cities of the Gentiles? But the scribes coming down from Jerusalem persecuted him with dreadful blasphemies, because it was clearly to be in the time of his passion, that a crowd of the Jewish people would bring him to Jerusalem with palms and praises, the Gentiles would desire to see him, but the scribes and elders of the people would plot his death.

Therefore, to the crowds, who seemed less instructed, always marveling at the deeds of the Lord, they endeavored to either deny these things, or to corrupt those which they could not deny with a sinister interpretation, as if these were not the works of Divinity, but of the filthiest spirit, that is Beelzebub, who was the god of Ekron. For Beel is indeed Baal, but Zebub is called a fly. Nor according to certain faulty copies is the letter k or d to be read at the end of the name, but b. Therefore Beelzebub is interpreted as Baal of the flies, that is the man of the flies, or having flies, due indeed to the filth of sacrificial blood, from whose most vile rite or name they designated the prince of demons.

[Mark 3:23] -- And calling them together, he said to them in parables: How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. A kingdom and city divided against itself cannot persist. But just as small things grow through harmony, so the greatest things fall apart through discord (Sallust). Therefore, if Satan fights against himself, and a demon is an enemy of another demon, the end of the world should already have come so that adversarial powers would not have a place in it, since war among them means peace for humans. But if you think, O Scribes and Pharisees, that the departure of demons is due to obedience to their prince, to deceive ignorant men with fraudulent simulation, what can you say about the health of bodies, which the Lord has brought about. It is one thing if you assign to demons also the weaknesses of members and the signs of spiritual powers. And if Satan has risen up against himself, he is divided, and he cannot stand, but has an end. By saying this, he wanted to be understood from their own confession that by not believing in him they had chosen to be in the kingdom of the devil, which surely could not stand divided against itself. Therefore, let the Pharisees choose what they will. If Satan cannot cast out Satan, they could find nothing to say against the Lord. But if he can, they should more carefully consider themselves, and depart from his kingdom, which cannot stand divided against itself.

[Mark 3:27] -- No one can enter the house of the strong man and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house. He calls the strong man the devil, his goods, the men deceived by him; his house, the world which lies in wickedness. In which until the coming of the Savior, he exercised a wretchedly pacified dominion, because he rested quietly in the hearts of the unbelievers without any contradiction. But the Lord bound the strong man, that is, he restrained the devil from deceiving the elect, and then plundered his house, because he united to the members of his Church those whom he foresaw would be rescued from the devil's snares and whom he designated to various orders of dignity within it. Or certainly, he plundered his house because he distributed all the parts of the world, over which the ancient enemy once ruled, to the successors of the apostles, so that each in his own province would lead back the people converted from error to the way of life. The Lord therefore showed through the parable, but now very clearly, that he did not free men from demons through a deceitful operation in agreement with them, as they slandered, but with a completely different and opposing power of divinity: and thus they committed a great crime who said that what they recognized to be of God was from the devil.

[Mark 3:28] -- Amen, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter. All sins and blasphemies are not indiscriminately forgiven to all men, but to those who perform worthy repentance for their errors in this life. Nor has the perverse assertion of Novatian any place, so as to deny pardon to the penitent who have lapsed in martyrdom; nor Origen, so as to assert

that after the universal judgment, even granted the immense number of passing ages, all sinners and blasphemers will obtain forgiveness of sins and be led to the heavenly kingdom. This error is also refuted by the following words of the Lord, when he adds:

[Mark 3:29] -- Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, has no forgiveness forever, but is guilty of an eternal sin. Therefore, whoever understandingly and manifestly denies the works of God, spurred by envy, calumniates, and says that Christ, the Word of God, and the works of the Holy Spirit are of Beelzebub, to him it will not be forgiven neither in this age nor in the future. Not that we deny that if he desires to repent, he can be forgiven by Him who wishes all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth; but we believe that the blasphemer who believes in the Judge and Giver of pardon, who says this blasphemy is never to be forgiven, admits his merits require that he never reaches forgiveness nor the fruits of worthy repentance. As John the Evangelist most truthfully wrote about some who were blinded due to the merit of their blasphemy: ”Therefore they could not believe, because, again Isaiah said: He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them” (John XII). Therefore, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, by which anyone, in the likeness of the devil and his angels, does not shrink from attacking the majesty of the Deity against his conscience, has no forgiveness forever, but is guilty of an eternal sin, as the evangelist clearly declares, who, having placed this testimony of the Lord, adds and says:

[Mark 3:30] -- Because they were saying, ”He has an unclean spirit.” For those who neither believe in the Holy Spirit nor believe He is God, nor believe He is indeed God but less than the Father and the Son, and confess this, being led by human ignorance rather than devilish envy, are held by the crime of unforgivable blasphemy: specifically those Jewish leaders and others corrupted by a similar pestilence of envy, blaspheming against majesty, will perish without end. However, what is said according to Matthew, that whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, or speaks a word against the Holy Spirit, will not have forgiveness either in this age or in the future, is given to be understood that some faults are forgiven in this age, while others in the future. For what is denied about one fault, the consequent understanding is clear because it is granted about some. Nevertheless, it should be believed that this can happen with small and minor sins, such as continual idle talk, immoderate laughter, or the sin of concern for familial matters, which is rarely conducted without fault even by those who know how to avoid blame, or in not serious faults by the error of ignorance, all of which still weigh after death if not forgiven while still in this life. However, it should be known that no one will obtain any purification for even the smallest sins unless, while still in this life, they merit to obtain it through good deeds.

[Mark 3:31] -- And his mother and his brothers come, and standing outside, they sent to him, calling him. And a crowd was seated around him, etc. The brothers of the Lord, not to be thought sons of the blessed ever-virgin Mary, according to Helvidius, nor sons of Joseph by another wife, according to some, but rather to be understood as his relatives. Surely, the fact that the Lord, when requested by his mother and brothers, does not leave his duty of preaching, is not a rejection of his mother's pious duty, whose commandment is, Honor your father and your mother, but instead, he shows that he owes more to the paternal mysteries than to maternal affections: instructing us by example as well as by word, when he says, Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me (Matt. X). He does not contemptuously disregard his brothers, but, preferring the spiritual work to the kinship of the flesh, he teaches that the more religious bond of the hearts is greater than that of the bodies. Mystically, however, the mother and brothers of Jesus are the Synagogue, from whose flesh he is born, and the people of the Jews, who, while the Savior is teaching inside, coming, are unable to enter: they spiritually neglect to understand his words. For the crowd, having preoccupied, enters his house to listen to his words, as the evangelist Matthew declares: because, with Judea hesitating, the Gentiles flocked to Christ and, by faith growing nearer, received the inner mysteries of life with so much more capacity of mind. According to what the Psalmist says, Come to him, and be enlightened (Psalm XXXIII).

[Mark 3:32] -- And they say to him: Behold your mother and your brothers are outside seeking you. And responding to them, he said: Who is my mother and my brothers? Inside is the word, inside is the light. Therefore elsewhere, he says, so that those who enter may see the light (Luke VIII). If then, those standing outside are not recognized even as parents, and perhaps they are not recognized for the sake of our example, how will we be recognized if we stand outside? For those standing outside, his kin, unwilling to see the Lord, while the Jews, not seeking the spiritual sense in the law, fixed themselves outside to the keeping of the letter, and as if compelling Christ to go out to teach carnal matters, rather than consenting to enter to learn the spiritual. [Mark 3:34] -- And looking around at those who were sitting around him, he said: Behold, my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother, and sister, and mother. When he who does the will of God is called the sister and brother of the Lord, it is not surprising due to both sexes being gathered to faith. But it is very astonishing how even mother is also said. For he deigned to call his faithful disciples brothers, saying: Go, announce to my brothers. Whoever, therefore, is able to become the brother of the Lord by coming to faith, it must be asked how he can also be mother. But we must know that he who is the brother and sister of Jesus by believing, becomes a mother by preaching. For he as it were births the Lord, whom he has infused into the heart of the listener. And he becomes his mother if the love of the Lord is generated in the mind of the neighbor through his voice.

Chapter 4

[Mark 4:1] -- And again he began to teach by the sea. If we look at the Gospel of Matthew, it is clear that this teaching of the Lord by the sea took place on the same day as the previous sermon celebrated in the house. For when that sermon was finished, Matthew immediately added, saying: On that day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea, and large crowds gathered around him, etc. (Matthew XIII). Not only the deeds and words of the Lord, but also the journeys and places where he performs miracles and preaches, are full of heavenly mysteries. After giving a sermon in a house, where he was said to have a demon, he began to teach by the sea, to show that, having abandoned Judea because of the fault of unbelief, he would go to save the Gentiles. Indeed, the proud and unbelieving hearts of the Gentiles are rightly likened to the swollen and bitter waves of the sea. Who does not know that the house of the Lord was an unbelieving Judea? But, having left the house in which he suffered the blasphemies of the wicked, he began to teach by the sea, because, having abandoned the Synagogue due to its unbelief, he came to gather the multitude of the Gentile people through the apostles. Hence it is aptly first put forward that while he was preaching in the house, his mother and brothers stood outside and were not recognized by him, and thus, leaving the house, he went to teach by the sea, because after the Synagogue fixed itself firmly outside on the preservation of the letter and preferred to put the figures of the law before the inner secrets of the faith of the Lord, the Lord conferred the sacraments of salvation, which it had rejected, to the foreign nations throughout the world.

[Mark 4:1-2] -- And a great crowd gathered to him, so that he got into a boat and sat in the sea, and the whole crowd was on the land by the sea; and he taught them many things in parables. The fact that a great crowd gathered to the Lord while he was teaching by the sea signifies the multitude of people flocking to the faith of truth through the preaching of the apostles. But the fact that he got into a boat and sat in the sea prefigured the Church to be built among the nations that were unbelieving and contradictory. For it is as if the Lord sits in the boat placed in the middle of the sea, when he enlightens the minds of the faithful, who dwell among the faithful, with the grace of his visitation, and consecrates his beloved dwelling among them. Furthermore, the crowd which was on the land by the sea, listening

to the words of the Lord, such that they were neither touched by the waves of the sea nor sitting with him in the boat above the waves, most aptly represents those who have recently gathered to hear the word. Indeed, they are separated by the piety of their minds from the bitterness, obscurity, and instability of the reprobate, but they are still not yet imbued with the heavenly mysteries they desire.

[Mark 4:3] -- And he said to them in his teaching: Listen; behold, a sower went out to sow. The Lord himself, in the following, explaining this parable, asserts that the seed is the word of God, and that the sower is himself. But when he says that a sower went out to sow, he left it for us to inquire. Therefore, the sower went out to sow because the Lord, coming forth from the bosom of the Father, came into the world, and the word of truth, which he saw with the Father, he sowed to the human race either by himself or by those he appointed, according to what Habakkuk says in his praises of him, You went out to save your people, to save your anointed ones (Habakkuk 3:13), that is, those whom you deign to consecrate with the anointing of your Spirit and make participants in your holy name. Or certainly he went out to sow when, after calling the chosen portion of the synagogue to faith, he also poured out the gifts of his grace to the gathering of the nations. He also signified this by his journey, when after preaching at home, he went out to the sea to teach. Finally, while preaching at home, he abandoned some for the unforgivable crime of their blasphemy; he called others his mother and brothers because of their devotion to piety. This clearly expresses the difference in the Jewish nation, in which many were rebellious to the Lord, yet some were worthy of divine adoption.

[Mark 4:4] -- And while he was sowing, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it. In the Gospel of Luke, it is written about this seed: Some fell beside the path, and it was trampled, and the birds of the air ate it. Therefore, whatever the Lord deigned to explain in this parable must be received with pious faith. But what he left silent for our understanding, must be sought and briefly summarized with an equally pious intention. The seed that fell along the path was destroyed by a double injury, both trampled by those passing by and snatched by the birds. The path, therefore, represents the mind worn and dry from the incessant passage of evil thoughts, so that it is incapable of receiving and germinating the seed of the word. And thus, whatever good seed happens to fall near such a path perishes, trampled by the passage of wicked thought and snatched away by demons. Rightly are these called birds of the air, either because they are of a heavenly and spiritual nature or because they fly through the air.

[Mark 4:5] -- But some fell upon rocky places, where it had not much earth; and it immediately sprang up, because it had no depth of earth. And when the sun was risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And the Lord explains the mystery of this seed. In this exposition, we learn that these things are not always allegorically placed in the same significance. For stone indicates

the hardness of a stubborn mind, earth the gentleness of an obedient soul, and the sun the fervor of a raging persecution; although elsewhere he places the sun in a good light, saying the righteous will shine in the future like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. And in the construction of the spiritual house, he teaches that digging deep, earth must be removed, and stone laid in the foundation, that is, the earthly thoughts are to be cleansed from the innermost recess of the heart, and the strength of invincible faith to be laid in the foundation of good works. In this instance, the depth of earth properly cultivated should have received the seed of the word, the uprightness of a soul exercised in heavenly disciplines and regularly trained in listening and obeying divine words. But rocky places, covered with thin soil, can quickly germinate the received seed, yet do not have the strength to set roots;

these are, without a doubt, hearts untrained in the studies of discipline, softened by no trials of temptation, delighted only for a moment by the sweetness of the heard word and celestial promises, but fall away in time of temptation; for when they present the fleeting sweetness of the heavenly oracle to their inherent austerity, as if a place designated for the holy seed, they cover a great heap of stones with a thin layer of soil. Therefore, they cannot reach the fruit of righteousness because of the little amount of saving desire inherent in them to conceive the seed of life, and the abundance of harmful hardness that obstructs the fruit of salvation.

[Mark 4:9] -- And he said, ”He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” As often as this admonition is interposed either in the Gospel or in the Revelation of John, it is insinuated that what is said is mystical and is salubrious for hearing and learning. For the ears for hearing are the ears of the heart, and the inner senses, the ears for obeying and doing what has been commanded. [Mark 4:11-12] -- But to those who are outside, everything is done in parables, so that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest they turn and be forgiven their sins. It should be noted in these words of the Lord that not only what he said but also what he did were parables, that is, signs of mystical things, since it is said that those to whom everything was done in parables neither could lead what they saw and heard to understanding. For what would hinder those looking at his deeds or journeys from understanding, if something more than what is apparent to the eyes of the flesh was not intended to be spiritually understood? Therefore, to those who are outside and do not approach the feet of the Lord to receive from his teaching, everything is done in parables, both the deeds and words of the Savior, because they are neither able to recognize him as God in the things he worked with power, nor in the mysteries he preached. Therefore, they do not deserve to attain the remission of sins which is to be obtained through the grace of his faith.

[Mark 4:15] -- These are those who are beside the way where the word is sown. And when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that was

sown in their hearts, etc. In this explanation of the Lord, the entire distance of those who could hear the word of salvation but cannot reach salvation is comprehended. For there are those who do not deign to grasp the word they hear with any faith, understanding, or even any opportunity for trying usefulness. In whose undisciplined and hard hearts the sown word is immediately snatched away by unclean spirits, like birds seizing the seed from the trampled path of life. There are those who both recognize the usefulness of the heard word and taste the desire, but they are hindered from reaching what they approve by others who terrifyingly oppose the way, while others by flattering prosperity delay. The Lord compares the former to rocky ground and the latter to thorny ground. Clearly, the Gentiles are excluded, who do not even deserve to hear the words of life. And it should not seem strange why the Lord compared riches to thorns, since thorns fight and riches delight. They are rightly called thorns, because they tear the mind with the pricks of their thoughts. And when they lead to sin, they wound it like an inflicted wound causing it to bleed. But even apart from the stings of vices, the desire for riches devastates the mind greatly and does not allow it to be secure.

For when someone vigilantly and anxiously watches by what order or art to acquire what they do not yet have, or by what foresight to preserve what they have already acquired, or finally by what glory and dignity to enjoy the abundance of acquired things, how necessary is it that the miserable mind is ulcerated by the stings of cares every hour? Hence, the Lord aptly, intending to call riches thorns in the exposition, preceded with miseries, saying: ”Others are sown among thorns, these are those who hear the word: and the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. ”The cares,” he says, ”of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. For whoever is deceived by the vain desire for riches, it is necessary that the accompanying or even preceding continuous misery of cares afflict him. For what is more miserable than those who, the more they have, the more they need, and the less they seem to have of themselves? According to what a certain poet mocking the lovers of money said: ”Love of money grows as much as money itself grows. (Juvenal) And how much happier are those not only in the desire for true riches but also in the very contempt of false ones, who truly confess themselves to be as having nothing and yet possessing all things? Well did he say: ”And the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches,” and added:

”And the desires for other things. For the Scripture commands: ”Desiring wisdom, keep the commandments, and God will provide it for you. And again it says: ”Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, he greatly delights in his commandments. (Psalm 112) On the other hand, whoever, neglecting wisdom and despising the commandments of the Lord, wanders by desiring other things, can neither receive the fruit of wisdom nor attain the joy of true blessedness. For such desires choke the word because with their importunate thoughts they strangle the throat of the

mind. And while they do not allow good desire to enter the heart, they kill as it were the passage of vital breath. Whence by just judgment it happens that as much as they desire other things, so much they are far from that poverty of spirit and desire by which they long to be dissolved and to be with Christ (Philippians 1). But rather, the wretched one fears that it will truly happen to him, to be dissolved from this life and to be with the devil.

[Mark 4:20] -- And these are the ones sown on good ground: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, one thirty, and one sixty, and one hundred. Good ground, that is, the faithful conscience of the elect, opposes all the evil yields of the earth, for it both willingly receives the seed of the word entrusted to it and, preserving it consistently among adversities and prosperities, maintains it until the time of fruition. And it bears fruit, producing one thirty, one sixty, and one hundred. Thirty, specifically, when it instills the faith of the Holy Trinity in the hearts of the elect. Sixty, when it teaches the perfection of good work. For, since the adornment of the world was completed in the number six, good work is rightly designated by this number. One hundred, when in all our actions it shows us the rewards to be sought in the heavenly kingdom. For one hundred, which are transferred to the right hand by counting, are rightly set in the significance of eternal happiness. For although thirty and sixty are still contained in the left hand, one hundred pass to the right. Although the great faith which reveals to us the knowledge of our Creator is significant, and the great works by which faith is fulfilled, lest it be idle, are significant, both are necessary in this life; the reward of faith and works exercised through love is to be hoped for in the life to come.

[Mark 4:21] -- And he said to them: ”Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not to be set on a stand? For there is nothing hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. Because he had previously said to the apostles and those who were with them: ”To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those outside, everything is in parables,” now he shows through them that the same mystery is to be revealed to others at some point as well, and that the hearts of all who are going to enter the house of God are to be illuminated by the flames of faith. With these words, he symbolically teaches the confidence of preaching, lest anyone hide the light of knowledge they know out of fear of physical discomforts. For with the terms ‘basket’ and ‘bed,’ he designates this present life and the flesh in which we live; but with the term ‘lamp,’ he designates the word by which we are enlightened. For since the time of our life is contained within a certain measure of divine provision, it is rightly compared to a basket. And who does not see that the body, in which the soul temporarily dwells and rests, can rightly be called a bed? Hence it is said to a certain healed person:

”Rise, take up your bed, and go to your house” (Matthew 9). Which is clearly to say: Rise from the body of negligence; and raise up the body, in whose desires you lay for a long time, towards the practice of good works diligently: and thus enter the house of eternal habitation, where you will receive the rewards of good works. Therefore, whoever, out of love for this temporal life and carnal allurements, hides the word of God, covers the lamp with a basket or a bed, because they place the desires of the flesh above the revelation of truth, which they fear to proclaim. But he places the lamp on a stand, who subjugates his body to the service of God, so that the preaching of truth is superior, and the service of the body is inferior: yet through that very service of the body, the superior doctrine shines forth, which through bodily actions, that is, through voice and tongue and other movements of the body, is imparted to those learning through good works. Therefore, he places the lamp on a stand when the Apostle says: ”I do not box as one beating the air, but I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9).

[Mark 4:22] -- For nothing is hidden, except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret, except to come to light. He says, do not be ashamed of the Gospel of God, but among the darkness of persecutors, raise the light of the word upon the candlestick of your body, retaining with a steadfast mind that day of ultimate recompense, where the Lord will illuminate the hidden things of darkness, and will reveal the thoughts of hearts. For then both praise from God awaits you, and eternal punishment for the adversaries of the truth. [Mark 4:23] -- If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. If anyone has the understanding to perceive the word of God, let him not withdraw, let him not turn his hearing to fables, but diligently lend his ear to examining those things which the truth has spoken, diligently employ his hands in fulfilling those things which he has already understood, diligently subject his tongue to preaching those things opportunely and inopportunely.

[Mark 4:24] -- And he said to them: Take heed what you hear. With the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and more will be added to you. If you diligently (he says) strive to do all the good you can, and to share it with your neighbors: divine grace will assist you, both presently, by giving you the understanding to grasp higher matters, and the ability to accomplish worthier deeds; and in the future, beyond what you know to hope for, it will truly add to you the gifts of eternal recompense. [Mark 4:25] -- For whoever has, to him more will be given. And whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. He said, with full intention, give effort to the word that you hear, by remembering and examining: because whoever has love for the word, even the sense of understanding what he loves will be given to him. But whoever does not have love for hearing the word, even if he seems to excel either by natural talent or by exercise in letters, will enjoy none of the sweetness of true wisdom. And although it seems to have been especially said about the apostles, to whom it was given to know the mystery of

the kingdom of God more by charity and faith, and about the perfidious Jews, who, seeing in parables, did not see; and hearing, did not understand; namely, that they would lose the letter of the law in which they boasted: it can however also be generally understood that sometimes an ingenious reader by neglecting deprives himself of wisdom, which one slow in talent but studious, by laboring, tastes.

[Mark 4:26-27] -- And he said to them: Such is the kingdom of God, as if a man casts seed upon the earth and sleeps; and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows while he does not know it. For the earth produces fruit by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the fruit has brought itself forth, he immediately wields the sickle, because the harvest is at hand. A man casts seed upon the earth, when he instills good intention into his heart. And after he has cast the seed, he sleeps, because he already rests in the hope of good work. But he rises at night and by day, because he progresses among adversities and prosperities. And the seed sprouts and grows while he does not know it; because even when he cannot yet measure his growth, the virtue once conceived leads to progress. And the earth produces fruit by itself, because with grace preceding itself, the human mind spontaneously rises to the fruit of good work. But this same earth first brings forth the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. To produce the blade, indeed, is to still have the tenderness of good initiation. But the blade reaches the ear when the virtue conceived in the mind draws itself to the progress of good work. And the full grain in the ear fructifies, when the virtue already progresses so as to be of robust and perfect work.

And when the fruit has produced itself, he immediately wields the sickle, because the harvest time is at hand. For the Almighty God, with the fruit produced, wields the sickle and cuts off His harvest, because when He has led each one to perfect works, He cuts off their temporal life by His sent judgment, to bring His grain to the heavenly granaries. Therefore, when we conceive good desires, we cast seed into the earth. But when we begin to act rightly, we are the blade. However, when we grow to the perfect work of goodness, we reach the ear. When we are solidified in the perfection of the same operation, we already bring forth the full grain in the ear. Hence no one should be seen still in the tenderness of the mind for good purpose, because the grain of God begins from the blade to become grain.

[Mark 4:30] -- And he said: To what shall we liken the kingdom of God, or with what parable shall we compare it? It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown in the ground, is smaller than all the seeds that are on the earth. The kingdom of God is the preaching of the Gospel and the knowledge of the Scriptures which leads to life, and about which it is said to the Jews: The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation producing its fruits. Therefore, the kingdom of this kind is like a mustard seed which, according to the Gospel of Matthew, a man took and sowed in his field (Matthew XIII). The man who sows is understood by many to

be the Savior, who sows in the hearts of the believers. By others, the man himself sowing in the earth or his field, that is, in himself and in his heart. Who is it that sows if not our understanding and mind? Which, receiving the seed of preaching and nurturing the sown with the moisture of faith, makes it sprout in the field of his heart.

[Mark 4:31] -- When it is sown in the ground, he says, it is smaller than all the seeds that are on the earth. But when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all garden plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests under its shade. The preaching of the Gospel is the smallest among all disciplines. For the first teaching indeed does not hold the truth of faith, proclaiming a man, Lord God, dead and the scandal of the cross. Compare such teaching to the doctrines of philosophers, and their books and the splendor of eloquence and the composition of words, and you will see how much lesser the sown seeds of the Gospel are. But when those have grown, they show nothing biting, nothing vivid, nothing vital. Everything swells, flaccid and withered, into vegetables and herbs, which dry up and crumble. However, this preaching which seemed small in the beginning, whether sown in the soul of the believer or in the whole world, does not rise into vegetables, but grows into a tree, as is said very clearly by the other Evangelists. Therefore the mustard seed sown in the land or the field of the Lord arises and is transformed from a vegetable into a tree, whose nature is to surpass the nature of all herbs in height, breadth, and longevity. Great indeed is the height of this tree, because the preaching of the Gospel lifts up the minds of its hearers to desire heavenly things.

It is spread out with branches, because it has occupied the ends of the whole world through preachers born from it. It surpasses in longevity, because the truth it proclaims will never be obliterated by any end. Under its shade, the birds of the heavens dwell, for the souls of the faithful that are accustomed to fly to heavenly things with desire, and to have their heart above, neglecting the desires of temporal things, according to the voice of the Psalmist: In the protection of the wings of the Lord they will hope (Psalm 90). Hence the bride in the Song of Songs, that is, the Church gathered from many souls of the saints, boasts and says: Under the shadow of him whom I desired, I sat, and his fruit was sweet to my throat (Song of Solomon 2). Which is to say openly: Under the protection of him whom I desired to see, I, deprived of the comfort of others, subjected myself, and the joy of his sight and presence was sweet to my heart, compelling me to despise, indeed to disdain, whatever is outside him.

[Mark 4:33] -- And with many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable he did not speak to them. But privately he expounded all things to his disciples. This is not said as if he spoke no plain words to the crowds, but that he spoke to them only in parables: rather, it is be-

cause almost no speech of his can be found in which something of parables is not interwoven.

[Mark 4:35] -- And he said to them that day when evening had come: Let us cross over. And dismissing the crowd, they took him along in the boat just as he was, and other boats were with him. In this passage, the Lord deigns to show both natures of his one and the same person, when he, who as a man sleeps in the boat, calms the fury of the sea with a word as God. Furthermore, by allegory, the sea which he desires to cross with his own is taken as the dark and bitter turbulence of the present world. But the little boat he boards is best understood as the wood of his most holy passion. By whose benefit, all the faithful, aided, rise above the waves of the world and reach the abode of the heavenly homeland, as if to the stability of a secure shore. However, the other boats said to have been with the Lord, but not brought into the deep or reported to have endured any storm, clearly signify those who, having been imbued with the faith of the Lord's cross, have not yet been struck by the whirlwind of tribulations, and only preserve the mysteries of faith received in the peace of the Church; or indeed, those who, after repeated gales of temptations, use a little granted calm of peace for a time. It is uncertain whether those boats, recently made, were brought into port or returned to port after experiencing the dangers of the sea. Hence, they can rightly denote both those who have not yet been tested by temptations, and those who, after frequent examination by tribulations for Christ, now, with temptations somewhat stilled, enjoy the tranquility of things.

[Mark 4:37] -- And a great storm of wind arose, and the waves were beating into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. And he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. While the disciples were sailing, Christ fell asleep, because when the faithful trample the world underfoot and meditate on the peace of the future kingdom in their minds, and, whether by the favorable breath of the Holy Spirit or by the rowing of their own effort, they eagerly cast behind their backs the infidelity of worldly pride, the time of the Lord's passion suddenly arrived. Hence it is fitting to mention that this event took place in the evening, to signify not only the sleeping of the Lord but also the very hour of the setting of the true sun. But as he ascended the stern of the cross, where he would take the sleep of death, the waves of persecutors, stirred by demonic storms, rose up. Yet it is not his patience that is disturbed by these, but the weakness of the disciples that is shaken, trembles, and is imperiled.

[Mark 4:38] -- And they woke him up and said to him: Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? And the disciples woke the Lord, so that they would not perish by the savagery of the waves while he slept, because they most eagerly sought his resurrection, whose death they had seen, lest their minds perish forever in spiritual death if he himself were to sleep in the death of the flesh any longer. Hence it well

follows: [Mark 4:39] -- And rising, he rebuked the wind, and said to the sea: Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. Indeed, rising, he rebuked the wind, because he subdued the pride of the devil, who had the power of death, while celebrating his resurrection. He also commanded the sea to be silent and restored calm, because by overcoming death and rising from the grave, he subdued the mad rage of the Jews, who had shouted, shaking their heads: If he is the Son of God, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him (Matt. 27). It is noteworthy according to the letter that all creatures are aware of their Creator. For those to whom he rebukes and commands, they feel the One commanding. Not by the error of heretics, who think that all things are living beings, but by the majesty of the Creator. For those things that are insensible to us are sensible to Him.

[Mark 4:40] -- And he said to them: Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith? They are rightly reproached, who were afraid with Christ present, since certainly whoever adheres to him cannot perish. This is similar to when, after the sleep of death, he appeared to the disciples and reproached their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen him after he had risen (Mark 16). And again he said to them: O foolish ones and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? (Luke 24) As if by the metaphor of a ship he were to say: Was it not necessary for Christ to be asleep, while waves from everywhere beat upon the ship in which he was sleeping, and thus, having been awakened, with the surging waves immediately calmed, to reveal the power of his divinity to all? And they feared with great fear, and said to one another: Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him? Matthew writes it thus: And the men were amazed, saying: What kind of man is this? etc. Therefore, not the disciples, but the sailors and the others who were in the ship were amazed, and doubted about the person to whom the wind and the sea obeyed.

But if anyone contentiously wants to say that those who were amazed were the disciples, we will respond that they are rightly called men because they had not yet known the power of the Savior. And we too, each individually, imbued with the sign of the Lord’s cross, intending to leave the world, indeed board the ship with Jesus, we try to cross the sea. But though he who watches over Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps, yet he often seems to sleep while we sail, as among the roars of the sea itself, when amid the persistent efforts of virtues, or of unclean spirits, or of few men, or even by the force of our own thoughts, the brightness of faith becomes obscured, the height of hope melts away, the flame of love grows cold. Yet amid such storms, it is necessary for us to run to that helmsman, to rouse him diligently, who does not serve but commands the winds. Immediately he will calm the storms, restore tranquility, and grant the harbor of salvation.

Chapter 5

[Mark 5:1] -- And they came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. Gerasa is a notable city of Arabia beyond the Jordan, attached to the mountain of Gilead, which the tribe of Manasseh held, not far from the lake of Tiberias, into which the swine were cast. It signifies, however, the nation of the Gentiles, which after the slumber of the passion and the glory of his resurrection, the Savior deigned to visit through the preachers he sent. Hence Gerasa, or Gergesenes (as some read), well interprets as ”casting out the colonist,” or ”the approaching stranger”; namely, indicating that the gentile people both expelled the hostile inhabitant from their heart and who were far, became near by the blood of Christ. [Mark 5:2] -- And when he had come out of the ship, immediately a man with an unclean spirit met him from the tombs, who had his dwelling among the tombs. This man, who was vexed by an unclean spirit and was mad to the Lord but soon to be healed, holds the figure of the gentile people, who, up to the time of the Lord’s incarnation, deluded by demonic doctrines, worshiped idols as God. He had his dwelling among the tombs because he delighted in dead works, that is, in sins. For what are the bodies of the faithless if not certain sepulchres of the dead, in which the word of God does not dwell, but a soul dead in sins is enclosed?

[Mark 5:4] -- And no one was able to bind him anymore, not even with chains, for he had often been bound with fetters and chains, and he had torn the chains apart and smashed the fetters: and no one could tame him. By chains and fetters are signified the severe and hard laws of the Gentiles, by which sins are restrained even in their republic. And with the chains broken (as Luke writes), he was driven by the demon into the wilderness, who, having also transgressed those laws, was led by desire to those crimes that already exceeded common custom. [Mark 5:5] -- And always, night and day, he was in the tombs and in the mountains, crying out and cutting himself with stones. Always, night and day, the demoniac raged because paganism, whether struggling with the adverse circumstances of things or any peace and prosperity of a flattering world might smile, he never knew how to shake off the yoke of serving evil spirits from the neck of his mind. Through the foulness of his deeds, he lay as if in the tombs, wandered on the mountain peaks through the act of pride, and through the words of the hardest infidelity,

as if frenziedly seizing stones, he cut himself. But with John the Baptist bearing witness, the Lord raised children for Abraham from the stones, while he turned the hard hearts of infidels to the grace of piety.

[Mark 5:6] -- But seeing Jesus from afar, he ran and worshipped him, and crying out with a loud voice, he said: What do you have to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? How great is the madness of Arius to believe Jesus is a creature and not God, whom the demons believe to be the Son of the Most High God and tremble! What impiety of the Jews it is to say that he cast out demons by the prince of demons, whom the demons themselves confess to have nothing in common with him! This very thing that they shouted in the frenzy of the demoniac then, they did not cease to say and confess later in the shrines of idols, namely that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Most High God, and that they have no peace or fellowship with him. [Mark 5:7] -- I adjure you by God, do not torment me. For he was saying to him: Come out of the man, unclean spirit. The enemy of human salvation considers it no small torment to cease harming a man, and the longer he used to possess him, the harder he agrees to let him go. Hence, it must be earnestly studied that if at any time, as humans, we are overcome by the devil, we should immediately strive to escape his snares, lest, by resisting his strength somewhat tardily, it becomes more laborious at some point to expel him.

[Mark 5:9] -- And he asked him, ”What is your name?” And he said to him, ”Legion is my name, for we are many.” He inquires not as one ignorant of the name, but so that, once the plague that tormented the man had been publicly confessed, the virtue of healing might appear more gracious. Even the priests of our time, who know how to cast out demons through the grace of exorcism, are accustomed to say that the afflicted can only be healed to the extent that they can disclose, by confessing openly, everything that they have suffered from unclean spirits through sight, hearing, taste, touch, or any other sense of the body or mind, whether awake or asleep. Now, what the spirit said, ”Legion is my name, for we are many,” signifies that the people of the nations are not subjected to any one individual but to countless and various rites of idolatry. Against this, it is written that the multitude of the believers were of one heart and one mind (Acts IV). Hence, well in the construction of Babylon, the unity of languages was shattered by the spirit of pride, while in Jerusalem, the diversity of languages was united through the grace of the holy. And that confusion, this vision of peace, because evidently in various languages and nations, one faith and piety fortifies the elect throughout the world, bringing about peace. But for the reprobates, several sects, more than languages, dissociate and confuse them.

[Mark 5:10] -- And he pleaded with Him greatly, that He would not send them out of the region. In the Gospel of Luke, it is written thus: And they begged Him not to command them to go into the abyss. Therefore, the demons knew that at

some time in the future they would be sent into the abyss by the coming of the Lord, not foreseeing the future themselves, but recalling what the prophets had said about them. And so, the glory of the Lord's coming, which they marveled at, they feared would extend to their own condemnation. [Mark 5:11] -- There was a large herd of pigs feeding near the mountain. And the spirits implored him, saying: Send us into the pigs, that we may enter them. And Jesus immediately granted them. Therefore, he allowed what they were asking for, that through the destruction of the pigs, an occasion for salvation might be offered to humans. For the shepherds, witnessing these things, immediately reported them to the city. Let the Manichaean be ashamed. If the souls of humans and beasts are from the same substance and author, how can two thousand pigs be drowned for the salvation of one person? In their destruction, however, men who are unclean, devoid of voice and reason, are judged figuratively, who, feeding on the mountain of pride, delight in filthy actions. For demons can dominate over such through the worship of idols. For unless someone lives like a pig, the devil will not take power over him, or only to test him, but not even to destroy him.

[Mark 5:13] -- And the unclean spirits, coming out, entered into the pigs, and with great force, the herd rushed into the sea, about two thousand of them, and were drowned in the sea. This signifies that once the Church is glorified and the people of the Gentiles are freed from the domination of demons, those who refused to believe in Christ engage in their sacrilegious rites in secluded places, submerged in blind and profound curiosity. And it should be noted that the unclean spirits would not have gone into the pigs unless the gentle Savior had granted it to those who were asking, whom he could certainly consign to the abyss. Wishing to teach us something necessary, namely, that they were much less able to harm humans by their own power, who could not even harm any kind of cattle. This power, however, the good God can give us by hidden justice, he cannot give unjustly.

[Mark 5:14] -- But those who fed them fled, and reported it in the city and in the fields. That the shepherds of the pigs, fleeing, reported these things, signifies that even some leaders of the impious, although they flee from the Christian law, nonetheless proclaim its power among the nations with awe and wonder. [Mark 5:14-15] -- And they went out to see what had happened. And they came to Jesus and saw the man who had been possessed by demons sitting, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid, etc. It is written in the Gospel of Luke, "Sitting at his feet." It signifies that the multitude, delighted by their old life, honors indeed but does not want to endure the Christian law, saying that they cannot fulfill it, yet admiring the faithful people who have been healed from their former lost way of life. To sit at the Lord's feet is for him from whom demons had exited, just as those corrected from sins with fixed intention of the mind, to stare at the tracks of their Savior which they follow. To be clothed again is to receive with a sound mind the pursuit of virtues that the insane had lost. This figure fits aptly with that

parable of the Lord in which the prodigal and extravagant son, returning to the father, is immediately dressed in the first robe with a ring, clearly indicating that whoever truly repents with a heart for what was lost can, by the grace given by Christ, recover the first works of righteousness they had fallen from, along with the ring of unbroken faith.

[Mark 5:17] -- And they began to ask him to depart from their region. The Gerasenes, aware of their own frailty, judged themselves unworthy of the Lord's presence, not grasping the word of God, nor yet able to bear the weight of wisdom with their still weak minds. This is also read to have happened to Peter himself upon seeing the miracle of the fish: and to the widow of Zarephath, who recognized that her hospitality was blessed by the presence of the blessed Elijah, nonetheless felt burdened, saying: "What do you have against me, man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to kill my son" (1 Kings 17).

[Mark 5:18-19] -- And when he was entering the ship, the man who had been vexed by the demon began to beseech him that he might be with him; and he did not admit him, but said to him: Go to your house, to your own people, and announce to them how much the Lord has done for you, and has had mercy on you. These words can rightly be understood from that saying of the Apostle when he says: To dissolve and to be with Christ is far better, but to remain in the flesh is necessary for your sake (Philippians 1); so that everyone understands that after the remission of sins, one should return to a good conscience and serve the Gospel, for the salvation of others too, so that afterwards he may rest with Christ, and not neglect the ministering suitable to the redemption of the brethren, by wanting too prematurely to be with Christ. But when Matthew mentions two being healed from the legion of demons, whereas Mark and Luke mention one, you should understand that one of them was a person of some higher and more renowned position, whom that region grieved most deeply for, and for whose salvation they were most anxious. This is what the two Evangelists, wanting to indicate, decided to mention only him, whose fame from that deed had spread more widely and more famously. But also, the climax of the allegory agrees, because just as one possessed by a demon, in the same way two gentile peoples do not inconveniently express the type. For when Noah generated three sons, only the family of one was received into the possession of God, from the remaining two, different nations who were enslaved to idols were procreated.

[Mark 5:22] -- And there came one of the rulers of the synagogue, named Jairus, and seeing him, he fell at his feet, etc. In this reading, where the ruler of the synagogue asks for the salvation of his daughter, but as the Lord goes to his house, a woman with an issue of blood precedes and seizes health, and then the daughter of the ruler attains the health she wished for, indeed called back to life from death, the salvation

of the human race is shown, which the Lord coming in the flesh so dispensed, that first some from Israel would come to faith, then the fullness of the Gentiles would enter, and thus all of Israel would be saved. Who then is this ruler of the synagogue, who comes to the Lord to ask for his daughter, better understood as Moses himself? Hence he is well called Jairus, which means enlightening or enlightened, because he received the words of life to give to us, and by these words he enlightens others, and he himself is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, which enabled him to write or teach vital instructions. Seeing Jesus, he fell at His feet, because foreseeing in the spirit the Lord coming in the flesh, he surrendered himself to His power with a humble heart: he thus recognized that at the end of the age the man would be incarnate, understanding that He existed as God eternally before all ages. For if the head of Christ is God, what is more fitting than to accept His feet, which touched the earth of our mortality, as His assumed humanity? And the ruler of the synagogue falling at the feet of Jesus means that the lawgiver with the whole offspring of the patriarchs recognizes and admits, along with the Apostle, that the weakness of God is stronger than men (1 Cor. 1:25).

[Mark 5:23] -- And he earnestly begged Him, saying: “My daughter is at the point of death; come, lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.” In the Gospel of Luke, it is written that she was his only daughter about twelve years old, and she was dying. Therefore, the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue is the Synagogue itself, uniquely composed by legal institution, as if it were the only one born of Moses. And this girl, as if in the twelfth year of life, that is, as the time of puberty approached, was dying, because nobly brought up by the prophets, after having reached the years of understanding and after she should have generated spiritual offspring for God, suddenly struck by the weakening errors, hopelessly abandoned the paths of spiritual life, and if not assisted by Christ, would have completely fallen into dreadful death.

[Mark 5:24] -- And he went with him, and a great crowd followed him and pressed upon him. The Lord, proceeding to heal the girl, is pressed by the crowd, because while offering salutary teachings to the Jewish people, by which he might lift up their conscience sick with vices, he was burdened by the harmful habits of carnal people. [Mark 5:25] -- And a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years. The woman flowing with blood, but cured by the Lord, is the Church gathered from the Gentiles, which was polluted by the innate flow of carnal pleasures and was already separated from the congregation of the faithful, but while the word of God was determined to save Judea, she seized salvation with certain hope, already prepared and promised to others. It is noteworthy that both the daughter of the synagogue ruler was twelve years old, and this woman had a flow of blood for twelve years; that is, at the same time when the former was born, the latter began to be ill. For at nearly the same age of this world, both the Synagogue in the patriarchs was born, and the nation of the foreign Gentiles began to be defiled by the foulness of

idolatry throughout the world. For the flow of blood can be rightly understood in two ways, that is, both concerning the pollution of idolatry and concerning those things that are done with the delight of flesh and blood.

[Mark 5:26] -- And she had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all she had, and was no better, but rather grew worse. Understand physicians either as false theologians, or as philosophers and secular law teachers, who, disputing about virtues and vices very subtly, promised to offer useful precepts for living and believing to mortals, or certainly those unclean spirits themselves, who, like consulting men, pushed themselves to be worshiped as gods. By eagerly listening to them, the Gentiles wasted the powers of natural industry all the more, but were no less able to be cleansed from the filth of their iniquity. But when she recognized that the Jewish people were sick and the true physician from heaven had arrived, she also began to hope for and seek a remedy for her illness.

[Mark 5:27-28] -- When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, ”If I just touch His clothes, I will be healed.” And immediately the source of her bleeding dried up. The Church comes and touches the Lord when it approaches Him through the truth of faith. However, it comes from behind, or as He Himself said: ”If anyone serves me, he must follow me” (John 12). And elsewhere it is commanded: ”You shall walk after the Lord your God.” Or, because not seeing the Lord present in the flesh, after the mysteries of His incarnation had been fulfilled, it reached the grace of faith and recognition of Him. Thus, by the participation in His sacraments, it deserved to be saved from sins, as if by the touch of His garments, it dried up the source of her blood. For the source of blood is the origin of sin. The source of anyone’s blood is the beginning of impure thought, from which all sin is born. But the Lord, with His evangelical words, not only sought to restrain evil deeds and words but also to uproot the root of wicked thoughts, granting that both be cleansed by evangelical sacraments, as if He endowed His garments with the power to dry up the source of filth.

[Mark 5:30] -- And immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself the power that had gone out from Him, turned to the crowd and said: ”Who touched My garments?” He asked not to learn what He did not know, but that the power He clearly knew, indeed which He Himself had given, might be declared in the woman, and by the declared and recognized power of faith, many might reach salvation. [Mark 5:31] -- And His disciples said to Him, ”You see the crowd pressing against You, and You say, ’Who touched Me?’” The crowd pressing around Him in every direction, one believing woman touches the Lord, because those burdened by various disordered heresies or perverse habits, only the heart faithfully venerating the Catholic Church, is honored. For just as some seeing do not see, and hearing do not hear, so too those touching do not touch, who touch Christ not with a simple but with a doubtful or feigned heart. Therefore, to a certain one loving but not yet fully believ-

ing, He Himself says: ”Do not touch Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father (John 20). Clearly stating what it means to truly touch Him, namely to believe Him equal to the Father.

[Mark 5:32] -- And He looked around to see her who had done this. The Lord does not forget His faithful, nor does He cease to look upon those who hope in Him, but judges all who merit salvation as worthy of His regard and compassion. This poor man called, and the Lord heard him. [Mark 5:33] -- But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had been done in her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him the whole truth. Behold where the questioning of the Lord was directed, namely that the woman openly confessing the truth of her long-standing infirmity, sudden belief, divine propitiation, and the healing given to her, would herself be more firmly confirmed in faith, and would provide an example of salvation and life to many. Finally, it follows.

[Mark 5:34] -- He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has saved you; go in peace and be healed of your affliction.” He did not say, “Your faith will save you,” but “has saved you.” For in the fact that you believed, you are already saved. While he was still speaking, people came from the synagogue leader’s house, saying, ”Your daughter has died; why bother the teacher any further?” As the woman was cured of the flow of blood, the daughter of the synagogue leader was immediately reported dead, because while the Church is cleansed from the stain of sins and called a daughter due to the merit of faith, the Synagogue, filled with both disbelief and jealousy, is dissolved in mourning. Disbelief, because it did not want to believe in Christ. Jealousy, because it grieves that the Church believes. For it is written in the Acts of the Apostles: “On the next Sabbath, almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and they began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him.” (Acts 13). And what the messengers said to the synagogue leader, ”Why bother the teacher any further?” is still said by those today who see such a desolate state of the synagogue that they do not believe it can be restored, and thus do not consider it necessary to ask for its resurrection. But what is impossible with human beings is possible with God (Mark 10); hence it fittingly follows:

[Mark 5:36] -- “But Jesus, overhearing the word that was spoken, said to the synagogue leader, ‘Do not be afraid; only believe.’ ” The synagogue leader is understood as the teacher of the law, about whom the Lord says, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat” (Matthew 23). For if he himself is willing to believe, the Synagogue subject to him will also be saved. [Mark 5:38] -- And they come to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and see the tumult, and they weep and wail greatly. And, he says, let all who hope in you rejoice, they will exult forever, and you will dwell in them. However, because the Synagogue deservedly lost this joy of the Lord’s indwelling due to unbelief, it lies as if dead among those who weep and

wail. Yet, heavenly mercy does not allow it to perish utterly, but rather, towards the end of the age, according to the election of grace, it restores its remnants to salvation and life. Whence it is aptly added:

[Mark 5:39] -- And entering, he said to them: Why are you troubled and weeping? The girl is not dead, but sleeping. To men she was dead, who could not raise her, but to God she was sleeping, in whose arrangement, the soul was received and lived, and the body rested to be resurrected. Hence, the Christian custom has prevailed that the dead who are undoubted to be resurrected are called sleeping; as the Apostle says: We do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who sleep, so that you may not grieve as the rest who have no hope (1 Thess. 4). But also in part of the allegory, while the soul that sins itself shall die, however that which the Lord foresees to be about to be resurrected and to come to eternal life, though dead to us, could not incongruously be said to have slept to Him.

[Mark 5:40] -- And they laughed at him. But he, having ejected them all, takes the father and mother of the girl, etc. Because they preferred to mock the word of the one raising rather than to believe, they are deservedly excluded outside, as unworthy to see the power of the one raising and the mystery of the one rising. Likewise, the crowd is ejected outside so that the girl may be raised, because if the importunate crowd of secular cares is not first expelled from the innermost parts of the heart, the soul which lies dead within will not rise. For while it scatters itself through countless thoughts of earthly desires, it cannot collect itself back to the consideration of itself at all. [Mark 5:41] -- And holding the hand of the girl, he said to her: Talitha cumi, which is translated: Little girl, I say to you, arise. A diligent reader might ask why the truthful Evangelist, explaining the words of the Savior, added from his own: I say to you, when in the Syrian language he used, nothing more was said than: Little girl, arise. Unless perhaps he thought it necessary to convey the force of the Lord’s command, aiming to express the meaning of the speaker rather than the exact words to his readers. For it is known to be customary for the Evangelists and apostles, when they take testimonies from the Old Testament, to place greater emphasis on the prophetic sense rather than the words. And the Lord, holding the hand of the girl, raised her, because unless the hands of the Jews, which are full of blood, are first purified, their synagogue, which is dead, will not rise.

[Mark 5:42] -- And immediately the girl rose and walked. Well, she rose and walked. For whomever the heavenly hand of mercy touches to revive from the dead due to sins, not only must he rise from the filth and lethargy of crimes, but he must also immediately advance in good works, evidently according to the psalmist, entering without blemish and practicing works of justice.

[Mark 5:42] -- And they were amazed with great astonishment. And He strongly commanded them that no one should know this. And He commanded that some-

thing should be given her to eat. As a testimony of true resurrection, He commanded that food be given to the girl, lest it be thought by unbelievers to be not truth but a phantom that appeared. But also, if anyone has risen from spiritual death, it is necessary that they are soon fed with heavenly bread, and indeed become partakers of the divine word and the sacred altar. For according to the moral understanding, those three dead whom the Savior raised in the bodies signify three kinds of resurrection of souls. Indeed, some, by giving consent to evil pleasure, cause death to themselves by the hidden thought of sin. But implying that such people should be revived, the Savior raised the daughter of the synagogue leader, who was not yet carried out but died at home, as if harboring the vice secretly in the heart. Others, not only consenting to harmful pleasure but also committing the evil wherein they take pleasure, bring their dead out, as it were, beyond the gates. And demonstrating that these too can be resurrected if they repent, He raised the young man, the son of the widow, carried out beyond the city's gates, and restored him to his mother, because He restored the soul repenting from the darkness of sin to the unity of the Church.

Some, however, not only by thinking or doing illicit things, but also by the very habit of sinning, corrupt themselves as if by burying. Yet neither for these to be raised is the virtue and grace of the Savior lesser, if indeed there are thoughtful souls devoted to Christ who watch over their salvation like devoted sisters. For to indicate this, He raised Lazarus, who had been in the tomb for four days, and because his sister testified that he already smelled bad, as indeed notorious acts of vice are usually accompanied by a bad reputation. It must be noted, however, that the graver the death of the soul, the more intensely the fervor of penance must persist for it to deserve to rise. For lighter and daily errors can be cured by lighter penance. Wanting to secretly show this, the Lord resurrected the girl lying in the room with a very easy and brief word, saying: Girl, arise. And due to the ease of resurrection, He denied she was dead. But the young man carried out was resurrected with more words, as he had to be emphasized with: Young man, I say to you, arise. The four-day dead, however, needed that Jesus, groaning in spirit, troubled Himself, weep, groan again, and cry out with a great voice: Lazarus, come forth. And thus at last the one who was considered hopeless, shunning the burden of darkness, was restored to life and light.

But it is also noted that since public offense requires public remedy, but lighter sins can be removed by lighter and secret penance, the girl lying at home arises with few witnesses, and it is strongly commanded that they disclose it to no one. The young man outside the gate is resurrected while accompanied and watched by many. Lazarus, called from the tomb, became known to such an extent that due to the testimony of those who saw, many people met the Lord with palms, and many Jews went away and believed in Jesus because of him. The Lord heard of the fourth dead man announced by a disciple, but since there were no living people to pray

for his resurrection, He said: Let the dead bury their dead (Luke 9), that is, let the wicked weigh down the wicked with harmful praises: and because there was no just person to correct in mercy, let the oil of the sinner make their heads fat.

Chapter 6

[Mark 6:1] -- And he went out from there and came into his own country, and his disciples followed him; and when the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing him were amazed at his teaching, saying: Where did this man get all these things? And what wisdom is this that is given to him, and such mighty works performed by his hands? He calls his country Nazareth, in which he was brought up. But how great is the blindness of the Nazarenes, who, if their minds were not obtuse, could have recognized him as the Christ through his words and deeds, yet they despise him solely because of knowing his family. They refer wisdom to teaching and power to healings and miracles that he performed. Which distinction the Apostle recalls aptly and beautifully, saying: Jews demand signs, and Greeks seek wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1). In this context, he refers power to signs because of the Jews and wisdom to teaching because of the Greeks, that is, the Gentiles.

[Mark 6:3] -- Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, Joseph, Jude, and Simon? Are not his sisters here with us? And they took offense at him. The scandal and error of the Jews are our salvation and the condemnation of the heretics. For they so clearly saw the man Jesus Christ, that they called him the carpenter, and according to another Evangelist, the carpenter's son; they also testified that his brothers and sisters were with them. Yet these are not to be considered as the actual children of Joseph or Mary, according to the heretics, but rather, according to the custom of sacred Scripture, they must be understood as their relatives, in the same way that Abraham and Lot are called brothers, although Lot was the son of Abraham's brother. And you have many such examples. [Mark 6:3] -- However, not without the provision of a certain sacrament did the Lord, appearing in the flesh, wish to be considered and called a craftsman and the son of a craftsman: but rather, even through this, He taught that He was the son of Him before the ages, who, as the maker of all things, in the beginning created heaven and earth (John I). For although human things are not comparable to divine things, yet the type is perfect, because the Father of Christ works by fire and spirit. Hence also

His precursor said about Him as the son of a craftsman: He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matthew III). He who in this great house of the world fabricates vessels of different kinds, or rather, by softening the vessels of wrath with the fire of His spirit, transforms them into vessels of mercy: but the Jews are ignorant of this sacrament: they look down upon the works of divine power out of contemplation of carnal lineage.

[Mark 6:4] -- And Jesus said to them, a prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own relatives, and in his own house. It is testified in the Scriptures that the Lord Jesus Christ is called a prophet, and Moses, predicting His future incarnation to the children of Israel, said: The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet from among your brothers, like unto me, you shall listen to him. Not only He who is the head and Lord of the prophets, but also Elijah and Jeremiah, and the other prophets, were held in less honor in their own country than in foreign cities, because it is almost natural for citizens always to envy their fellow citizens. They do not consider the man's present works, but remember his frail infancy, as if they themselves had not also come to mature age through the same stages of life.

[Mark 6:5] -- And He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief. Not that He could not perform many miracles even among the unbelievers, but that in doing many, He might condemn the unbelievers. However, it can also be understood otherwise, that Jesus is despised in His house and country, that is, among the Jewish people, and therefore He performed few signs there, lest they become utterly inexcusable. Greater signs, however, He performs daily among the nations through the apostles, not so much in the healing of bodies as in the salvation of souls. As for the Lord being said to marvel at their unbelief, it is not as if He marvels at something unexpected and unforeseen, He who knows all things before they happen, just as He did not begin to marvel at the faith of the centurion as something new and previously unknown when He heard the words of his pious confession and said: "I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel" (Luke VII). But He who knows the secrets of the heart shows that He marvels before men, indicating what is to be marveled at by men. Indeed, the faith of the centurion was marvelous, who, without a human teacher, without the eloquence of the Scriptures, without angelic oracles, recognized through miracles by divinely illuminated natural understanding that He who appeared as human in the frailty of humanity was truly God.

Conversely, the unbelief of the Nazarenes was no less astonishing, who, despite having an abundance of teachers and divine words in which the coming of Christ was preached, and having Christ Himself present among them, pressing the knowledge of Himself on them through both words and signs, still persisted in their dis-

belief. But in one instance, the blindness of the Jews is noted as marvelous, who were unwilling to believe in their own prophets about Christ, nor in Christ Himself born among them. In the other instance, the faith of the Gentiles is crowned, who, even though Christ was born among the Jews and cast out by them, deserved to receive Him, the mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ, with the sacred oracles.

[Mark 6:7] -- And he went around the villages in a circuit, teaching; and he called the twelve and began to send them two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits. The kind and merciful Lord and master does not envy his servants and disciples his own virtues; and just as he had healed all sickness and all infirmity, he also gave his apostles power, to heal all infirmity and all sickness. But there is a great difference between having and giving, granting and receiving. He, whatever he does, acts by the power of the Lord; those, if they do anything, confess their own weakness and the power of the Lord, saying, like Peter: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk (Acts III).

[Mark 6:8] -- And he commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff only. No bag, no bread, nor money in their belt, but be shod with sandals, and not put on two tunics. Such a preacher ought to have trust in God, that even if he does not provide for the needs of this life, he should surely know these things will not be lacking. Lest his mind be occupied with temporal things, he would provide less for others eternals. However, it is often questioned how Matthew and Luke recall that the Lord said to the disciples not to carry a staff, while Mark says: And he commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff only. This is resolved by understanding that the staff, which according to Mark is to be carried, is understood under a different signification than that which, according to Matthew and Luke, is not to be carried: just as temptation is understood under another signification in the saying, God tempts no one, and in another is said, The Lord your God tempts you, to know whether you love him. The former is of deception, the latter is of probation. Thus both sayings are to be taken as spoken by the Lord to the apostles, and to not carry a staff, and to carry nothing except a staff. For when he said to them according to Matthew: Do not possess gold, nor silver, etc.; he immediately added: For the laborer is worthy of his food.

This clearly shows why he did not want them to possess or carry these things. Not that they are not necessary for the sustenance of this life, but because he was sending them out in such a way that he demonstrated these things would be owed to them by those to whom they proclaim the Gospel and believe. It is clear, however, that the Lord did not command these things in such a way that evangelists should not live from anywhere else than from those to whom they preach the Gospel. Otherwise, the apostle who sustained himself by the labor of his hands so as not to burden anyone would have acted against this precept; but he gave the authority by

which they knew these things were owed to them. When, however, something is commanded by the Lord, unless it is performed, it is a fault of disobedience. When authority is given, it is permissible for anyone not to use it and to relinquish their right. Therefore, the Lord ordaining this, which the apostle says he ordained, that those who proclaim the Gospel should live from the Gospel, spoke to the apostles so that they, secure, would not possess nor carry the necessary things for this life, neither great nor small. Therefore, he added, Nor a staff, showing that all things are owed by his faithful to his ministers, requiring nothing superfluous. Thus by adding, For the laborer is worthy of his food, he completely revealed and clarified the source of these words.

Therefore, he signified this authority by the name of the staff when he said to take nothing for the journey except a staff only, so it is understood that through the authority received from the Lord (which is signified by the name of the staff), even things not carried will not be lacking. This is also to be understood about two tunics, that nothing besides the one he wears should be thought necessary to be carried by him, concerned that it would be needed, since it could be received by that authority. Therefore, Mark, by saying they should be shod with sandals or shoes, suggests that this footwear has some mystical signification, so that the foot is neither covered nor naked to the ground, that is, neither the Gospel should be hidden, nor should it rely on earthly comforts.

[Mark 6:9] -- And what is not to be carried or worn as two tunics, but more explicitly is forbidden to be put on, saying; and not to be clothed with two tunics, what does it admonish them, unless to walk not doubly, but simply? Otherwise. In the two tunics, it seems to me to show a double garment, not that in places of Scythia freezing with icy snow, one should be content with a single tunic; but that in the tunic we understand the garment, so that we do not keep another reserved for ourselves out of fear for the future. Allegorically, however, by the purse, the burdens of the world, by the bread, temporal delights, by the money in the belt, the hidden wisdom is designated. For he who has the word of wisdom, but neglects to share it with his neighbor, holds the money shut in a belt: and it is written: Hidden wisdom and concealed treasure, what is the use in both? (Ecclesiasticus 41). Therefore, apostles should not carry a purse, nor bread, nor money in their belt, because whoever has received the office of a teacher, should neither be weighed down by the burdens of secular affairs, nor be dissolved by carnal desires, nor hide the entrusted talent of the word in the leisure of sluggish laziness.

[Mark 6:10] -- And he said to them: Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave from there. In Matthew it is written thus: Whatever town or village you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave (Matthew 10). He gives a general command of constancy, that they should observe the laws of hospitality, asserting that it is unbecoming for the preacher of the kingdom of

heaven to rush from house to house and lose the rights of an inviolate hospitality. Nor is it idle according to Matthew that the house into which the apostles should enter is to be chosen, so that the reason for changing hospitality and violating the bond of hospitality does not stand. [Mark 6:11] -- And whoever does not receive you or listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them. Dust is shaken off the feet as a testimony of one's work, showing that they have entered the city and that the apostolic preaching has reached them. Or the dust is shaken off so that nothing is taken from them, not even what is necessary for sustenance, by those who have rejected the Gospel.

[Mark 6:12] -- And they went out and preached that people should repent, and they cast out many demons, etc. The Apostle James says: "Is any one among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him" (James 5). Hence it is clear that this custom of the holy Church has been handed down by the apostles themselves, that the possessed or any other sick persons should be anointed with oil, consecrated by episcopal blessing.

[Mark 6:14] -- And King Herod heard of it, for His name had become known, and people said, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead." The extreme malice and furor of the Jews against the Lord are taught to us from almost every place in the Gospel; behold, they believed John, of whom it was said that he performed no sign, could have risen from the dead, without any witness. But Jesus, a man approved by God with deeds and signs (Acts 2), at whose death the elements trembled, whose resurrection and ascension were eagerly proclaimed by angels, apostles, men, and women alike; they preferred to believe not that He had risen, but that He had been stolen away secretly. When they said that John had risen from the dead, and that for this reason unexpected powers or actions were manifest in him, they correctly understood about the power of the resurrection, that the saints would have greater power when they have risen from the dead than they had when burdened with the weakness of the flesh. But they also showed that the miracle of the resurrection is not unbelievable, as they believed it of their own accord without any teaching, yet they proved by their own blindness and envy that they had not believed the credible truth in the Lord.

[Mark 6:16] -- When this was heard, Herod said: "John, whom I beheaded, has risen from the dead." Luke wrote about this in this way: "Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John was risen from the dead; by some, that Elijah had appeared, etc." (Luke IX). It must be understood, therefore, either that after this perplexity he confirmed in his mind what was said by others when he said: "John, whom I beheaded, has risen from the dead"; or these words must be pronounced in such a way as to indicate that he was still doubtful. For if he were to say: "Is this indeed, or is

this perhaps John the Baptist?" there would be no need to remind anything about pronunciation, because he would be understood as doubting and hesitating. Now, since these words are lacking, it can be pronounced in both ways, so that we can understand him to have spoken, confirmed by the words of others, or still (as Luke recounts) hesitating.

[Mark 6:17] -- For Herod himself sent and seized John, and bound him in prison because of Herodias. The old story relates that Philip, the son of the elder Herod, under whom the Lord fled to Egypt, and the brother of that Herod under whom Christ suffered, had married Herodias, the daughter of King Aretas. Afterward, however, because of certain disputes against his son-in-law, her father took his daughter and, to the grief of her former husband, married her to his enemy. But who this Philip is, the Evangelist Luke teaches more fully: "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, Philip his brother tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis" (Luke III). [Mark 6:17-18] -- Thus John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah, with the same authority with which Elijah had rebuked Ahab and Jezebel, reproved Herod and Herodias for having an unlawful marriage, and that it was not permitted, while his brother was alive, to marry his brother's wife, preferring to risk his safety with the king rather than to be forgetful of God's commandments for the sake of flattery.

[Mark 6:21] -- And when a convenient day had come, Herod on his birthday made a supper for his lords, etc. Herod and Pharaoh alone among mortals are read to have celebrated their birthdays with joyful festivities; but each king defiled his own festival with blood under ill-omened auspices. However, Herod with much greater impiety, since he killed a holy and innocent teacher of truth, and the herald of life and the heavenly kingdom, and this at the request and petition of a dancer, neither was he ashamed to present the head of the slain man before the guests. For Pharaoh is not read to have committed such madness, but only ordering a sinful eunuch to be deprived of life. So far as he strayed from the cult of true religion, so much lighter is his transgression in violating his own festival. Nevertheless, from the example of both it is proven, it is more useful to us to recall frequently in fear and chaste behavior the day of future death, rather than to celebrate the day of birth in revelry. For man is born to labor in the world (Job 5), and the elect pass unto rest through death from the world.

[Mark 6:22] -- And when the daughter of Herodias had come in and danced, and pleased Herod. Herod is not excused for having committed murder unwillingly and reluctantly because of an oath, since he perhaps swore for the purpose of preparing the machinery for the future killing. Otherwise, if he claims to have done it for the sake of an oath, if she had asked for the death of his father or mother, would he have done it, or not? What therefore he would have repudiated in his own case, he

ought also to have contemned in the prophet. [Mark 6:24] -- When she had gone out, she said to her mother: ”What shall I ask?” And she said: ”The head of John the Baptist, etc.” Herodias, fearing lest Herod should at some point come to his senses, or become a friend of her brother Philip and dissolve the illicit marriage with divorce, advised her daughter to immediately ask for the head of John at the very banquet, a work worthy of the dance, a prize worthy of blood!

[Mark 6:26] -- And the king was distressed, because of the oath and because of those who were reclining at the table, he did not want to sadden her, but having sent an executioner, he commanded that her head be brought on a platter, etc. It is the habit of Scriptures that the historian recounts the opinion of many just as it was believed by all at that time. Just as Joseph is called the father of Jesus even by Mary herself, so now Herod is said to be distressed because those reclining at the table thought this. For, a pretender of his mind and a skilled murderer, he showed sadness on his face while he had joy in his mind. And he excused his crime by an oath, so that under the pretense of piety, he would become impious. But when it is added: And because of those reclining at the table, he wanted all to be partners in his crime, so that in a luxurious and impure banquet, bloody food would be served.

[Mark 6:28] -- And he brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. This can be understood literally, but we even today perceive in the head of John the prophet, that the Jews lost Christ, who is the head of prophets. Alternatively: The beheading of John indicates the reduction of his fame, by which Christ was believed by the people, just as the exaltation on the cross of the Lord Savior marked the advancement of faith, because before he was thought by the crowds to be a prophet, the Lord of prophets, and Christ the Son of God was acknowledged by all the faithful. Thus, John was diminished by his beheading, and the Lord was exalted on the cross, because, as the same John said, it was necessary for him to grow, but for John to diminish. And it was fitting that he who was esteemed as a prophet be recognized as Christ, and he who was considered Christ because of the height of his virtues be understood to be the prophet and precursor of Christ. This very distinction of the time at which each of them was born has been clearly signified, because John, who was to decrease, was born when the divine light begins to wane. But the Lord, who is the true light of the world, at that time of the year when days begin to grow longer, bestowed on us the shining gifts of his nativity.

[Mark 6:29] -- Upon hearing this, his disciples came, took away his body, and placed it in a tomb. Josephus reports that John, being bound, was taken to the fortress of Machaerus, where he was beheaded. Ecclesiastical history narrates that he was buried in Sebaste, a city of Palestine, which was once called Samaria. But in the time of the leader Julian, pagans, envying the Christians who piously visited his tomb, attacked the monument, scattered the bones across the fields, and, upon

gathering them again, burned them with fire and once more dispersed them across the fields. At that time, there were monks from Jerusalem present there, who, mingling among the pagans as they collected the bones, gathered the majority of them and brought them to their father Philip in Jerusalem. And he sent them to the blessed Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, where they were kept until the time of Theophilus, bishop of the same city, when, by the order of Prince Theodosius, all the shrines of the nations were destroyed. Then, after the temple of Serapis was cleansed of impurities, they were placed there, and the basilica was consecrated in honor of Saint John in place of the shrine of Serapis. Read the eleventh book of Ecclesiastical History.

[Mark 6:30] -- And the apostles, gathering together, reported to Jesus all that they had done and taught. Not only did the apostles report to the Lord what they had done and taught themselves, but also what John suffered while they were engaged in teaching, or his own disciples or those disciples of John reported to him, as Matthew describes. Hence follows that which comes next: [Mark 6:31] -- And he said to them: Come apart into a desert place, and rest a little while, etc. Not only for the sake of their rest, but also for the mystical significance, because indeed Judah, having abandoned, which had taken away the head of prophecy from itself by not believing, in the desert of the Church which had no husband, the food of the word would be for the believers, as if to bestow feasts of bread and fish. For there the holy preachers, who in unbelieving and opposing Judea, were for some time pressed by the heavy burden of tribulations, found rest from the grace of faith bestowed upon the nations. And what need there was to grant rest to the disciples is subsequently shown, when it says:

[Mark 6:31] -- For many were coming and going, and they had not even time to eat. Where the great happiness of that time is demonstrated by the labor of the teachers and the zeal of the learners, which would that it return in our time, so that such great crowds of faithful listeners throng to the ministers of the word, that they have no free time for tending to the body. For when the necessary hour for tending to the body is denied, how much less is there opportunity for indulging in the allurements of soul or flesh? Rather, from whom the word of faith and the ministry of salvation is sought timely and untimely, the spirit of these men is consequently kindled always to do and think of heavenly things, lest by their actions they contradict what they teach with words. [Mark 6:32] -- And getting into the boat, they went away to a desert place apart. Not the disciples alone, but taking the Lord with them, they got into the boat and sought a desert place, as the evangelist Matthew clearly shows.

[Mark 6:33] -- And they saw them going away, and many recognized them, and they ran afoot from all the towns, etc. By saying that they outstripped them on foot, it is shown that the disciples with the Lord did not reach another shore of the sea or

Jordan by ship, but having crossed a certain strait or lake, they went to the nearby places of the same region, which the natives could reach on foot.

[Mark 6:34] -- And going out, Jesus saw a great crowd and had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he began to teach them many things. How He had compassion on them, Matthew explains more fully by saying: And He had compassion on them, and healed their sick. For this is truly to have compassion on the poor and those without a shepherd, to open the way of truth to them by teaching; and to remove bodily ailments by healing; but also to refresh the hungry, revitalizing them to the praise of divine generosity. The following parts of this reading also commemorate Him doing these things. Moreover, He tests the faith of the crowds and, having tested it, rewards it with a worthy recompense. For by seeking solitude, He explores whether they care to follow. They, by following and not with beasts of burden or various vehicles, but by taking the path of the desert with their own effort of feet, show how much they care for their salvation. Again, He, as the powerful and compassionate Savior and healer, by welcoming the weary, teaching the ignorant, healing the sick, refreshing the hungry, indicates how much He delights in the devotion of believers. According to the laws of allegory, Christ sought the deserts of the nations, and many bands of the faithful, leaving the confines of their old way of life, neglecting the support of various doctrines, followed. And He who was first known in Judea, after the teeth of the Jews became weapons and arrows, and their tongues a sharp sword (Psalm 57), God was exalted above the heavens, and His glory over all the earth.

[Mark 6:35] -- And when the hour was now late, His disciples came to Him saying: The place is deserted, and the hour is already past. Send them away so that going into the nearby villages and towns, they may buy themselves food to eat. The late hour signifies evening time, as Luke testifies, who says: But the day began to decline, and the twelve came to Him saying: Send the crowds away, etc. (Luke 9). When the day declined, the Savior refreshes the crowds, either because the end of times is near, or when the Sun of Righteousness set for us, we were saved from the long decay of spiritual famine.

[Mark 6:37] -- And he answering said to them: Give them something to eat. He provokes the apostles to the breaking of the bread, so that by their testifying they have nothing, the greatness of the sign might be better known: at the same time insinuating that daily through them our fasting hearts must be fed, clearly when we are roused to love heavenly things either by their examples or their writings. Note, however, that the evangelist John, writing about this miracle of the loaves, prefaced it with the announcement that the Passover, the feast day of the Jews, was near. However, Matthew and Mark recall that this happened immediately after John was killed. From this, it is inferred that John was beheaded at the approach of this same Paschal festival, and the mystery of the Lord’s Passion was completed in

the following year, when the Paschal time returned again. And therefore, signified in the book of the Sacraments is his nativity on the fourth Kalends of September, and in the Martyrology, which is adorned with the names of Eusebius and Jerome, it is read: on the fourth Kalends of September, in the city of Edessa in the province of Phoenicia, the nativity of John the Baptist, the day on which he was beheaded: this does not specifically denote the day of his beheading, but rather the day on which his head was found in the same city of Edessa and placed in a church.

Indeed, as the Chronicles of Marcellinus testify, in the time of Emperor Marcian, two eastern monks came to Jerusalem to worship and see the holy places; to whom the same precursor of the Lord, standing by revelation, commanded to go to the dwelling of Herod the king and seek his head there, and upon finding it, to place it in honor. Found by them and taken, but soon lost through negligence, it was brought to Edessa by others and placed in a certain cave in an urn underground, ignobly for a considerable time, until John again showed himself and his head to a certain pious abbot and priest named Marcellus, when he lived in the same cave. Clearly, it was found by the bishop of that city, named Julioramus, through the aforementioned priest. From that time, the beheading of the blessed precursor began to be celebrated in that city on the day when his head was found or lifted. You will find this written more extensively in the aforementioned book of Chronicles.

[Mark 6:38] -- And he says to them: How many loaves do you have? Go and see. And when they knew, they said: Five, and two fish. By the five loaves of the Apostles, and two fish, the whole scripture of the Old Testament is signified. By the five loaves, namely the five books of the Mosaic law, by which the knowledge of divine eternity, the creation of the world, the course of the passing age, and the true religion of serving God became known to mankind. By the two fish, the psalms and the prophets are represented, which fed the people educated in the law of God with the new sweetness of grace from the promise of the Lord’s incarnation. By this threefold distinction of sacred Scripture, we are taught by the Lord’s authority that the entire series of the old instrument is comprehended. For appearing to the disciples after the resurrection, the Lord himself said that it was necessary that all things that were written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms concerning me should be fulfilled (Luke 24). And when he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and to hand them over, spiritually understood, to the faithful listeners, as though blessing the apostolic loaves and the fish, and multiplying them with the gift of internal sweetness, he ordered them to be distributed to the crowds.

Well, according to the Gospel of John, the loaves, which signify the law, are reported to have been barley loaves, which is mainly the food of animals and mostly of rustic servants, because to those just beginning and not yet perfect listeners, harsher and more coarse precepts must be entrusted. For the natural man does not receive the

things that are of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2). And therefore the Lord, giving gifts according to each one's strength and always provoking toward more perfect things, first feeds five thousand with five loaves, second four thousand men with seven loaves, third entrusts the mystery of his flesh and blood to the disciples: at last he grants the great gift to the elect, that they may eat and drink at his table in his kingdom.

[Mark 6:39] -- And he commanded them to make them all sit down in companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties. The different groups of those reclining signify the distinct gatherings of the churches around the world, which make up one catholic. The Lord commanded them well to recline by hundreds and by fifties, so that the crowd of the faithful, both distinguished by locations and united by morals, might receive their food. Indeed, the rest of the jubilee is contained in the mystery of the number fifty, and fifty is doubled to reach a hundred. Therefore, because one first rests from evil work, so that later the soul rests more fully in thought, some recline by fifties, others by hundreds, because there are some who have rest from corrupt actions, and there are some who already have rest in mind from perverse thoughts. They also reclined well on the green grass. For it is written, All flesh is grass (Isa. XL). And those reclining on the green grass are fed with the Lord's food, who, through the zeal of continence and trampling down the allurements of carnal desires, devote themselves to listening and fulfilling the words of God.

[Mark 6:41] -- And taking the five loaves and the two fishes, looking up to heaven, he blessed and broke and gave to his disciples to set before them; and he divided the two fishes among them all. The Savior, to the hungry crowds, does not create new food, but accepting what the disciples had, blesses it; because coming in the flesh, he did not preach other than what was foretold, but shows how the writings of the Law and the Prophets are laden with the mysteries of grace. He looks to heaven to teach that the gaze of the mind must be directed there and that the light of knowledge is to be sought there. He breaks and distributes to the disciples to set before the crowds because he revealed the sacraments of prophecy to the holy teachers who preach these throughout the world. [Mark 6:43] -- And they all ate and were satisfied, and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. What is left over for the crowds is lifted by the disciples; for the holier mysteries that the unskilled cannot grasp are not to be negligently omitted, but are to be sought by the perfected. For the twelve baskets symbolize the apostles, and by the apostles, all the choirs of following teachers are represented, indeed despised outwardly by men, but inwardly filled with the remnants of the saving food to nourish the hearts of the humble. For it is known that servile work is usually carried out with baskets, but He Himself filled the baskets with fragments of bread, Who chose the weak things of this world to confound the strong.

[Mark 6:44] -- Now those who ate were five thousand men. Because there are five senses of the outer human being, the five thousand men who followed the Lord signify those who, though still in a secular condition, know how to use well the external things they possess. They are rightly fed with five loaves, because such people must still be instructed by legal precepts. For those who completely renounce the world and are four thousand, and are fed with seven loaves, that is, they are elevated by the evangelical perfection and are inwardly taught by spiritual grace.

[Mark 6:45] -- And immediately he compelled his disciples to get into the ship and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd, etc. Why he compelled his disciples to get into the ship, and he himself, after dismissing the crowd, went up into the mountain to pray, John clearly declares, who, after completing that celestial refreshment, immediately added: ”Jesus therefore, knowing that they would come and take him by force to make him king, fled again into the mountain himself alone” (John VI). Here he shows us a necessary example of living, that in the good things we do, we should avoid the retribution of human favor, and the exercise of spiritual virtues should not turn us to the desire for temporal pleasures. For it happened to some, that while they were admired for the merit of a higher life in their habits and were thought rightfully worthy of honor, upon receiving money or estates, they lost the rudiments of justice they had begun, and careless, they were corrupted by carnal seductions and avarice, and even by those who honored them for their good deeds, they became, due to their evil actions, not only despised but also hated. It is much less dangerous to be worn out by the wickedness of opponents in the things we do rightly than to be soothed by the favor of those who honor us. For the latter often corrupts a more secure mind, while the former always makes one circumspect and cautious.

Hence the Lord, initiating the path of life for us to follow, when those who admired his virtues wanted to make him king, fled into the mountain to pray. But when those who envied his virtues intended to deliver him to death, he promptly faced them and offered himself to be bound and crucified by the furious, teaching us by an evident example to be ready to endure the adversities of the world and to be cautious to avoid its flatteries when they might ensnare us; and lest the world’s prosperity decieve us by softening us, we should implore the Lord with frequent prayers. The disciples preceded the Lord across the sea to Bethsaida, which is a city in Galilee of the apostles Andrew, Peter, and Philip, near the lake Gennesaret, as we find in books about places. Here he rightly advises how Mark says, after the miracle of the loaves, the disciples came across the sea to Bethsaida, while Luke seems to say that the memorable miracle and the celestial refreshment took place in the regions of Bethsaida. For he says: ”Taking them, he withdrew privately to a deserted place, which is Bethsaida. But when the crowds found out, they followed him, and he received them” (Luke IX). And other things followed, up to

the completion of the sacred refreshment history. Unless perhaps we understand by what Luke says, to a deserted place, which is Bethsaida, not the vicinity of the city itself, but the deserted places pertaining to it.

For Mark openly states that they preceded him to Bethsaida, where the boundaries of the city are clearly marked. But Luke, who does not say ”to the deserted place, which is Bethsaida,” but ”which is Bethsaida,” can rightly be understood, unless I am mistaken, as not referring to the city itself but to the deserted place pertaining to it, that is, adjacent to its boundaries. However, the Evangelist John narrates that the crowds ate bread near Tiberias, and the disciples getting into the ship came across the sea to Capernaum, both of which are cities in Galilee near the lake of Gennesaret, which is also called Tiberias from the city of Tiberias.

[Mark 6:46] -- And when he dismissed them, he went into the mountain to pray. Not everyone who prays ascends into the mountain; for there is prayer that commits sin. But he who prays well, who seeks God by praying, this one, progressing from earthly things to higher things, ascends the summit of higher care. However, he who prays concerned about riches, or worldly honor, or certainly the death of an enemy, lying in the lowest parts himself, sends vile prayers to God. The Lord, however, prays not to petition for himself, but to intercede for me. For although he has placed all things in the power of his Son; nevertheless, the Son, to fulfill the form of a man, thinks it proper to petition the Father for us, because he is our advocate. For the Apostle says, “We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ” (1 John 2). If he is an advocate, he ought to intervene for my sins. Therefore, he prays not as weak, but as pious. Do you want to know that he can do all things he wills? He is both advocate and judge. In one is the duty of piety, in the other is the insignia of power.

[Mark 6:47] -- And when evening was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. And seeing them toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary to them. The labor of the disciples in rowing, and the wind being contrary to them, signifies the various labors of the holy Church, which, among the waves of the opposing world and the foul flows of spirits strives to reach the rest of the heavenly homeland as if to the safe station of the shore. Where it is well said, that the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. Because sometimes the Church, by such pressures of the pagans, is not only afflicted but also defiled to such an extent that (if it could be done) its Redeemer seems to have entirely deserted it for a time. Whence comes that voice of it amidst the waves and storms of sweeping temptations, and seeking the help of his protection with groaning clamor, “Why, O Lord, have you withdrawn far off? You despise in times of necessity, in tribulation” (Ps. IX)? Which likewise exposes the voice of the persecuting enemy, adjoining the following of the Psalm: “For he has said in his heart, God has forgotten; he has turned away his face, that he see not to the end” (Ibid.).

But indeed He does not forget the prayer of the poor, nor does He turn away his face from those who hope in Him:

rather, He both helps those struggling with enemies to overcome and crowns the victors forever. Whence also here it is openly said, that he saw them toiling in rowing. For the Lord saw them laboring in the sea, although he was himself placed on the land, because even if sometimes he seems to delay imparting help to the troubled, nonetheless he supports them with the regard of his mercy so they do not fail in tribulations, and sometimes even with manifest help, having conquered adversities, as if treading upon and calming the waves, he liberates, as here also it is subsequently insinuated when it is said:

[Mark 6:48] -- And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. Military stations and watches are divided into periods of three hours each. Therefore, when it says that the Lord came to them in the fourth watch of the night, it shows that they were in danger all night, and help was given to them at the end of the night. [Mark 6:48] -- They struggle through the entire dark time of the night, but as dawn approaches and the morning star promises the rise of the sun and day, the Lord comes, walking over, and subdues the swelling waves of the sea. For when human frailty, beset with pressures, considers its own weakness, it sees nothing concerning itself but the darkness of distress and the heat of fighting enemies. But when it lifts its mind to the light of heavenly protection and the gifts of perpetual reward, it sees, as it were, the sudden appearance of the morning star among the shadows of the night, which announces the coming day. For the morning star, for the most part, is said to illuminate three hours of the night, that is, the entire morning watch. And the Lord will come who, when the dangers of temptations have been lulled, will grant full confidence of freedom through His protection. It follows:

[Mark 6:48] -- And he wanted to pass them by. But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought he was a ghost, and they cried out. For they all saw him and were troubled. Even now heretics think the Lord was a ghost and did not truly take on flesh from the virgin. Indeed, Theodore of Pharan, once a bishop, wrote that the Lord did not have physical weight according to the flesh but walked on the sea without weight and body. But the Catholic faith professes that he had weight according to the flesh, a corporeal burden, and walked on the waters with weight and bodily burden without sinking his feet. For Dionysius, an eminent writer among the ecclesiastical, in his works on the Divine Names, speaks thus: For we do not understand how from the virgin’s blood by a law beyond natural formation, and how with feet set without sinking, bearing bodily weight and material burden, he walked on the wet and unstable substance. But how the Lord wished to pass by them, as if strangers, whom he had come to deliver from the peril of shipwreck, except that, disturbed and frightened for a moment, but immediately freed, they

might marvel all the more at the miracle of their deliverance and give greater thanks to their deliverer? For even in the tempests of persecutions which arise for the constancy of faith from the faithless, such divine providence is sometimes shown.

For often the heavenly piety seemed to desert the faithful placed in tribulation so that it might seem as if Jesus wished to pass by the struggling disciples on the sea. Hence it is also in the psalmist, sweating in the struggle of the Church's martyrdom: Why have you forgotten me, why have you rejected me, and why do I go about mourning while the enemy afflicts me? While all my bones are being broken, etc. But the terrifying enemies say, Where is their God? (Psalm XLII) as if threatening shipwreck to the weary apostles. Their God himself says: When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and the rivers will not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you (Isaiah XLIII). Hence it is rightly added here:

[Mark 6:50] -- And immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. The first aid to those trembling and in danger is to banish fear struck into their hearts. The second is to quench the fury of the storms with the power of His presence. Nor is it to be wondered at that, when the Lord ascended into the boat, the wind ceased. For in whatever heart God is present by the grace of His love, soon all the battles of vices, and the opposing world, or evil spirits, are repressed and calmed. [Mark 6:51] -- And they were even more astounded within themselves. For they had not understood about the loaves. For their hearts were hardened. Indeed, the Lord showed that he was the creator of things in the miracle of the loaves: and in walking upon the waves, he taught that he had a body free from all the heaviness of sins: and in calming the winds and subduing the rage of the waves, he demonstrated that he ruled over the elements. But the disciples, still cardinal, did not yet recognize this to be God. And indeed, they were astonished at the magnitude of His virtues: yet they were not yet able to recognize in Him the truth of divine majesty.

[Mark 6:53] -- When they had disembarked from the boat, they immediately recognized him: And running through that whole region, they began to carry those who were ill on mats to wherever they heard he was. They recognized him by reputation, not by face: or certainly because of the greatness of the signs he performed among the people, very many knew him by appearance as well. And see how great is the faith of the people of the land of Gennesaret, that they are not content with the salvation of those who are present only, but send out to other cities around, so that all may run to the healer. [Mark 6:56] -- And wherever he entered into villages, cities, or the countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him to let them touch even the fringe of his garment. And all who touched him were healed. Those who are unwell should not touch the body of Jesus, nor his

whole garment, but the outermost fringe. And whoever touches it will be healed. Understand the fringe of his garment as the least commandment, which if anyone breaks, he will be called least in the kingdom of heaven: or the assumption of flesh by which we come to the word of God, and afterwards enjoy his majesty.

Chapter 7

[Mark 7:1] -- And the Pharisees and some of the scribes from Jerusalem gathered around him. And when they saw some of his disciples eating bread with unclean hands (that is, unwashed), they found fault. Oh how true is that confession of the Lord to the Father, because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to the little ones. The men of the region of Gennesaret, who seemed less learned, not only come themselves but also bring their sick; indeed, they carry them to the Lord so that they might deserve to touch even the fringe of his garment to be healed. Hence, they immediately obtain the reward of the desired healing. But indeed the Pharisees and scribes, who ought to have been the teachers of the people, come to the Lord not to hear the word, nor to seek a cure, but only to stir up debates, and they blame them for not washing their hands, in whose works, whatever is done by hands or other members of the body, nothing defiling of impurity could be found; whereas they ought to blame themselves more, who, having hands washed with water, bore a conscience defiled with malice. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands often, holding to the tradition of the elders, and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they purify themselves.

[Mark 7:4] -- It is a superstitious tradition of men to wash frequently before eating bread, once washed, and not to eat unless they baptize themselves from the market. But the doctrine of truth is necessary, which orders those who wish to participate with the bread of life descending from heaven to often cleanse their works with the washing of alms, tears, and other fruits of righteousness, so that they may be able to communicate with heavenly mysteries with a pure heart and body. It is necessary to purge the defilements that anyone has contracted from the cares of temporal business with the following diligence of good thoughts and acts, if he desires to enjoy the feasts of internal refreshment. But the Pharisees, taking the spiritual words of the prophets carnally, which commanded them concerning the chastisement of heart and works, saying: Wash yourselves, be clean, and be purified, you who bear the vessels of the Lord (Isa. I), these only observed the washing of the body. But Pharisees in vain, all Jews in vain, wash their hands, and are baptized from the market, as long as they despise being washed by the fountain

of the Savior. In vain do they keep the baptisms of vessels, who neglect to cleanse the filth of their hearts and bodies: since it is certain that Moses and the prophets who ordered the vessels of the people of God to be either washed with water, or purged by fire, or sanctified with oil for whatever reason, did not command in this the cleansing of material things, but rather the chastisement and holiness of minds and works, and the salvation of souls.

[Mark 7:5] -- And the Pharisees and the scribes questioned him: Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with common hands? The stupidity of the Pharisees and scribes is astonishing. They argue with the Son of God, why he does not observe the traditions and precepts of men. The hands, that is, works, of course, not the hands of the body, but of the soul, must be washed, so that the word of God may be done in them. [Mark 7:9] -- And he said to them: Well do you make void the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. He refutes the false accusation with a true reply. Since (he says) you neglect the commandments of the Lord for the sake of human tradition, why do you think my disciples deserve to be reproached for disregarding the commands of the elders, so that they may keep the decrees of God?

[Mark 7:10] -- For Moses said: Honor your father and your mother. And he who speaks evil of father or mother, let him surely die. In Scripture, honor is not felt so much in greetings and the rendering of services as in alms and the giving of gifts. Honor (says the Apostle) widows who are truly widows (1 Tim. 5). Here honor is understood as a gift. And in another place: Elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and teaching (Ibid.). And by this commandment, we are ordered not to muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain, so that the worker is worthy of his wages (Ibid.).

[Mark 7:11] -- But you say: If a man says to his father or mother, ”Corban” (which means offering), whatever benefit you might have received from me, you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother. The Lord had commanded, considering the weaknesses, ages, or needs of parents, that children should honor their parents even by providing life’s necessities. The Scribes and Pharisees, wishing to undermine this most provident law of God and to introduce impiety under the guise of piety, taught the wicked children that if anyone wishes to dedicate what ought to be offered to parents to God, who is the true Father, the offering to the Lord takes precedence over gifts to parents. Or certainly, the parents themselves, avoiding consecrated items to prevent committing sacrilege, would be impoverished; and thus, the offering of the children could under the guise of the temple and God flow into the profits of the priests. This terrible custom of the Pharisees arises from such a circumstance. Having many indebted persons unwilling to repay their loans, these persons transferred their debts to the priests, so that, once the money was collected, it would serve the temple’s ministries and their uses. Fur-

thermore, this may briefly be understood as: ”Whatever gift is from me benefits you.” He implies, you compel children to say to their parents: ”Whatever gift I was to offer to God, I spend on your food, and it benefits you, O father and mother,” so that they, fearing to accept what they saw dedicated to God, would prefer to lead a life of poverty rather than eat from consecrated things.

[Mark 7:15] -- And calling the crowd again, he said to them: Listen to me, all of you, and understand: There is nothing outside a man that entering into him can defile him. But the things that come out of a man, those are what defile a man. The word ”defile” properly belongs to the Scriptures, and is used in ordinary speech. The people of the Jews, boasting that they are part of God, call common the foods which all men use. For example: pork, oysters, hares, and such animals that do not split the hoof, nor chew the cud, nor are scaly among fishes. Hence it is written in the Acts of the Apostles: What God has sanctified, do not call common (Acts X). Therefore, that which is common, that is open to all men, and as if it is not a part of God, is called unclean. Nothing (he says) outside a man entering into him can defile him. But the things that come out of a man, those are what defile a man. A prudent reader may object and say: If what enters into the mouth does not defile a man, why do we not eat meat sacrificed to idols? And the Apostle writes: You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons (I Cor. X). It must therefore be known that the foods themselves, as creatures of God, are by themselves clean, but the invocation of idols and demons make them unclean.

[Mark 7:17] -- And when he had entered into the house from the crowd, his disciples asked him about the parable. And he said to them: Are you also without understanding? What had been said openly, and was clear to hear, the apostles thought was spoken in a parable, and in a manifest matter they seek a mystical understanding. And they are reproved by the Lord for thinking that what was spoken plainly was said as a parable. From this we observe that it is a fault of the listener who wishes to understand clearly spoken matters obscurely or obscure matters clearly.

[Mark 7:19] -- Do you not understand that everything entering from outside into a man cannot defile him because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is expelled into the latrine, purging all foods? All the passages of the Gospels among heretics and the perverse are full of scandals. And from this little statement, some accuse that the Lord, ignorant of physical disputation, thinks that all foods go into the stomach and are digested in the latrine, whereas the infused foods are immediately spread through the limbs, veins, and marrow of the nerves. Hence, we also see many who, due to a stomach defect, continually vomit, immediately expelling what they ingested after meals, and yet are corpulent because the more liquid food and drink spread through the limbs at first touch. But such men, in their desire to criticize another’s lack of skill, show their own. Although the thinnest

humor and liquid food, when it has been concocted and digested in the veins and limbs, descends to the lower parts through hidden pathways of the body, which the Greeks call πόρους, and goes into the latrine. He was saying, however, that what comes out of a man defiles the man. For from within, from the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, and others. ”From the heart,” he says, ”come evil thoughts. Therefore, the principal part of the soul, not according to Plato in the brain, but according to Christ in the heart, is.

And those are to be refuted from this assertion who think that thoughts are instilled by the devil and not born from one’s own will. The devil can be an assistant and inciter of evil thoughts, but he cannot be an author. If, however, he, always lying in wait, inflames the light spark of our thoughts with his kindlings, we should not believe that he also scrutinizes the secrets of the heart, but judges from the body’s condition and gestures what we are pondering inwardly. For example, if he sees us looking frequently at a beautiful woman, he understands that the heart is wounded by the dart of love.

[Mark 7:24] -- And from there, rising, he went to the regions of Tyre and Sidon. Leaving behind the scribes and Pharisees, who were detractors, he crossed into the parts of Tyre and Sidon to cure the Tyrians and Sidonians. [Mark 7:24] -- And entering a house, he did not want anyone to know, but he could not be hidden. It is rightly asked how it is said that the Lord did not want anyone to know his journey, yet could not be hidden. For what is it that he could not do, who, even while placed among men temporally, invisibly arranged everything that happened outside inwardly with the Father? Or for what reason is he thought to have entered the regions of Tyre and Sidon, except to free the daughter of the Syrophoenician from a demon, and through the faith of the Gentile woman to refute the disbelief of the scribes and Pharisees? But it must be faithfully and piously believed that not at all did what he did not want happen to him in this matter, but that it was shown primarily in his good works which the faithful following his journey should wish to do. For upon entering the house, he commanded the disciples not to reveal to anyone in the unknown region who he was. Nonetheless, he himself made known this entrance to the Gentile woman and to whomever he wished among the wise, he himself kindled her heart with an invisible prompt to seek salvation from him, so that by her example they might learn to whom the grace of healing the sick should be conferred in the exhibition of miracles, to avoid, as much as possible, human glory and favor, yet not cease from the pious work of virtue, whenever these deeds were justly deserved by the faith of the good or necessarily compelled by the unbelief of the wicked.

[Mark 7:24] -- And he could not, he said, remain hidden. For a woman, as soon as she heard about him, whose daughter had an unclean spirit, entered and fell at his

feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophoenician by birth. Typically, however, this Gentile woman, coming to the Lord with faith, represents the Church gathered from the Gentiles. She begs the Lord for her demon-possessed daughter, as for the people who do not yet believe, so that they too may be freed from the deceptions of the devil, she entreats the divine mercy. She, according to Matthew, went out from her borders, but in this Gospel, it is said that she entered to the Lord and fell at his feet, so that from both assertions it may be gathered that only those faithfully and rightly pray for the erring who abandon the dwellings of their former unbelief and transfer themselves with pious devotion into the house of the Lord, namely the Church.

[Mark 7:26] -- And she asked, he said, him to cast out the demon from her daughter. He said to her: Let the children be filled first. As if he was speaking more clearly: It remains that even you who are of the Gentiles will attain salvation; but first it is necessary that the Jews, who by merit of the ancient election are accustomed to be called by the name of the children of God, be filled with the heavenly bread, and thus finally the food of life be given to the Gentiles.

[Mark 7:27] -- For it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. And she answered and said to him: Yes, Lord. For even the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the children's table. The wondrous faith, patience, and humility of the Church under the persona of the Canaanite woman is being proclaimed. Faith, by which she believed that her daughter could be healed. Patience, by which she perseveres in prayers despite being ignored so many times (as Matthew writes). Humility, by which she compares herself not to dogs but to little dogs. She says, I know I do not deserve the children's bread, nor can I take whole meals, nor sit at the table with the father; but I am content with the leftover scraps of the little dogs, so that by the humility of the crumbs I may come to the greatness of the whole bread. Wondrous reversal of things, once Israel was the son, not dogs, the order of names is changed due to the diversity of faith. Concerning them it is later said: Many dogs have surrounded me (Psalm 21). And: Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision (Philippians 3). Concerning us, turned from the barking of blasphemous contradiction to the grace of piety, he himself says elsewhere: And I have other sheep that are not of this fold, I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice (John 10).

It must be noted indeed that the believing woman speaks mystically, because little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs. The table is indeed Holy Scripture, which provides us the bread of life. Thus the Church says from here: You prepared a table before me in the presence of my enemies (Psalm 22). The children's crumbs are the inner mysteries of the Scriptures, with which the hearts of the humble are usually refreshed. About which elsewhere it is promised to the holy Church, the Prophet saying of the Lord: He makes peace in your borders,

and fills you with the finest of the wheat (Psalm 147). Therefore the little dogs do not eat crusts, but crumbs of the children's bread, because those converted to the faith who were despised among the nations seek not the surface of the letter in the Scriptures, but the marrow of spiritual senses by which they might be able to progress in good deeds. And this under the table of the masters, while humbly submitted to the word of the sacred discourse, they subject all their heart and body to fulfilling what is commanded, so that by means of the merit of due humility they may be raised to hope for the rewards promised by the Lord in heaven.

[Mark 7:29] -- And he said to her: For this saying, go. The demon has gone out of your daughter. Because of the humble and faithful saying of the mother, the demon left her daughter. Here is given an example of catechizing and baptizing infants, because evidently through the faith and confession of the parents in baptism, infants are freed from the devil, who are not yet able to know or do anything good or evil by themselves. [Mark 7:31] -- And again, leaving the borders of Tyre, he came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the borders of Decapolis. Decapolis is (as the name itself proves) a region of ten cities across the Jordan to the East around Hippos and Pella and Gadara, opposite Galilee. Therefore, it is said that the Lord came to the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the borders of Decapolis, which does not mean that he entered the very borders of Decapolis. For it is not said that he crossed over the sea, but rather that he came up to the sea, and reached the place which looked toward the midst of the borders of Decapolis far across the sea.

[Mark 7:32] -- And they bring to him a deaf and mute man; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. The deaf and mute man is one who neither has ears for hearing the words of God, nor opens his mouth for speaking, such as those who have already learned to speak and hear the divine words through long practice must needs be offered to the Lord for healing, so that those whom human frailty cannot heal, he himself by the right hand of his grace may save.

[Mark 7:33] -- And taking him aside from the crowd, He put His fingers into his ears. The first door of salvation is for the infirm man to be taken aside from the crowd by the Lord. For He takes the infirm man aside from the crowd when, illuminating the mind weakened by sins through the visit of His mercy, He calls him away from the customary manners of human conversation, and provokes him to follow the paths of His commandments. He puts His fingers into his ears when, through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, He opens the ears of the heart to understand and receive the words of salvation. For the Lord Himself testifies that the Spirit is called the finger of God, when He says to the Jews: "But if I cast out devils by the finger of God, by whom do your sons cast them out?" (Luke 11:20). Another Evangelist explains this saying: "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God" (Matthew 12:28). By this same finger, the magicians in Egypt were overcome by Moses, saying: "This is the

finger of God" (Exodus 8:19); and the law was written on stone tablets because, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, we are both defended from the snares of men or evil spirits, and are taught the knowledge of God's will. Therefore, the fingers of God inserted into the ears of him who needed healing are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, by which He reveals to the hearts that had deviated from the path of truth the understanding and learning of the knowledge of salvation. And because the light of truth once known should be followed by confession, it is aptly added:

[Mark 7:33] -- And spitting, he touched his tongue. The Lord indeed touches the tongue of the sick with spittle, when he instructs the mouths of catechumens towards the confession of faith. The spittle of the Lord signifies the taste of wisdom, which, as testified by the wise man, speaks: "I came from the mouth of the Most High, the firstborn" (Eccli. XXIV). And hence elsewhere, when his spittle mixed with earth, the man born blind was illuminated. The spittle which comes from the head of the Lord signifies his divine nature which is from God; the portion of earth with which the spittle is mixed signifies the human nature taken from men. And through the medicine composed of his spittle and earth, he opened the eyes of the man born blind, because the human race is released from the innate darkness of their errors through the confession of his two natures. Thus, the Lord, spitting, touches the tongue of the mute to enable him to speak, when he instructs mouths long silent to bring forth words of wisdom by the contact of his piety. Hence it is aptly added:

[Mark 7:34] -- And looking up to heaven, he sighed; and said to him: Effeta, which is to say, Be opened. He looked up to heaven to teach that speech to the mute, hearing to the deaf, and healing to all infirmities, should be sought from there. He sighed, not because it was necessary for him to ask anything from the Father with a sigh, he who with the Father grants all things to those who ask, but to give us an example of sighing, when we invoke the aid of heavenly piety for our sins or those of our neighbors. But when he says: Effeta, that is, be opened, it pertains specifically to the ears. For the ears are to be opened for hearing, while the tongue needs to be freed from the bonds of its slowness to be able to speak; and hence it is added:

[Mark 7:35] -- And immediately his ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak correctly. Here, both natures of the one and same mediator between God and humans are clearly distinct. For, ascending into heaven as a man, he sighed to pray to God, but soon with one word, as divinely powerful in majesty, he healed. Rightly, it is said of him, whose ears the Lord opened, and whose tongue's bond he loosed, because he spoke correctly. For only he speaks correctly, whether confessing God or preaching to others, whose hearing divine grace unlocks so that he can listen to and obey heavenly commands, and whose tongue the Lord instructs in speaking by the touch of wisdom, which he

himself is. Such a one can rightly say with the Psalmist: Lord, you will open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise (Psalm 50). And with Isaiah: The Lord has given me an instructed tongue, to know how to sustain the weary with a word. He wakens me morning by morning; he wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed (Isaiah 50).

[Mark 7:36] -- And he commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he commanded them, the more they proclaimed it, and they were exceedingly astonished, saying: He has done all things well, he makes the deaf hear, and the mute speak. If he knew they would proclaim it even more as he had the present and future wills of humans known, why then did he command this except to show the lazy how much more fervently and eagerly they ought to preach, whom he commands to preach when those who were forbidden could not keep silent?

Chapter 8

[Mark 8:1] -- In those days, when again there was a great crowd and they had nothing to eat, He called His disciples and said to them, ”I have compassion on the crowd, because they have now been with me for three days and have nothing to eat, etc. In this reading, we must consider in the one and same Redeemer our the distinct operation of divinity and humanity; and the error of Eutyches, who presumes to teach only one operation in Christ, must be thoroughly expelled from Christian borders. For who does not see that the fact that the Lord has compassion on the crowd, lest they faint either from hunger or the labor of a long journey, is an affection and compassion of human frailty? But that He fed four thousand men with seven loaves and a few small fish is the work of divine power? Mystically, however, this miracle signifies that we cannot otherwise pass safely through the path of this present world unless the grace of our Redeemer refreshes us with the nourishment of His word. Typologically, the difference between this feeding and that of the five loaves and two fishes is that there the letter of the Old Testament, full of spiritual grace, was signified; here, however, the truth and grace of the New Testament is shown to be ministered to the faithful.

Surely, both feedings occurred on a mountain, as the narration of other evangelists declares, because the rightly understood Scriptures of both Testaments command us to the height of heavenly precepts and rewards, and both proclaim in a harmonious voice the height of Christ, who is the mountain of the house of the Lord at the summit of the mountains. For He who exalts the city or house of the Lord built upon Himself, that is, the Church, in the height of good works and makes it manifest to all nations, He refreshes it, abstracted from lowly pleasures, with the bread of heaven, and kindles it to the appetite for supernal sweetness by giving the pledge of spiritual food.

[Mark 8:2] -- I have compassion on the crowd, he said, because they have already been with me for three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. Why the crowd waited for the Lord for three days, Matthew explains more fully, who says: And when he went up on the mountain, he sat there. And large crowds came to him, bringing with them

the mute, the blind, the lame, the crippled, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them (Matt. XV). Therefore, the crowd waited for the Lord for three days because of the healing of their sick, just as the elect, illuminated by faith in the Holy Trinity, continually beseech the Lord with perseverance for the sins of their own and their neighbors', namely, the sicknesses of the soul. Likewise, the crowd waits for the Lord for three days when a multitude of the faithful, turning away from the sins they have committed through repentance, turn to the Lord in deeds, in speech, and in thought. The Lord does not want to send them away hungry to their homes, lest they faint on the way, because converted sinners in the way of present life faint if they are sent away in their conscience without the nourishment of holy doctrine. Therefore, lest they grow weary in the journey of this pilgrimage, they must be nourished with sacred admonition. But we must deeply ponder the pious sentence that proceeded from the mouth of truth, which says:

[Mark 8:3] -- Some of them have come from afar. For there is one who, having experienced no deceit and no corruptions of the flesh, hastened to the service of the Almighty God. He did not come from afar, because through incorruption and innocence he was near. Another, tainted by no impurity, no disgrace, but having experienced only marriage, turned to spiritual ministry. Neither did he come from afar, because though he used the granted union, he did not err through illicit means. However, others return to repentance and turn to the service of the Almighty God after deeds of the flesh, others after false testimonies, others after thefts committed, others after inflicted injuries and violence, others after perpetrated murders. These, indeed, come to the Lord from afar. For the more someone has erred in wicked deeds, the further he has retreated from the Almighty Lord. Therefore, let nourishment be given also to those who come from afar, because repentant sinners must be given the foods of holy teachings, so that they restore their strength in God, which they lost in their vices. Similarly, Jews who believed in Christ came to Him from nearby, because they were instructed about Him by the writings of the Law and the Prophets. Believers from the Gentiles, indeed, came from afar to Christ, because they were not forewarned of His faith by any monuments of the holy pages.

[Mark 8:5] -- And he asked them: How many loaves do you have? They said: Seven. The seven loaves are well placed in the mystery of the New Testament, in which the septiform grace of the Holy Spirit, more fully revealed to all the faithful, is both believed in and given. They are not found to be of barley, like those five loaves, with which five thousand men were fed, lest again, as in the law, the vital food of the soul be hidden by bodily sacraments. For the marrow of barley is tightly covered by a very tenacious husk. [Mark 8:6] -- And he commanded the crowd to recline on the ground. Earlier, during the feeding of the five loaves, the crowd reclined on the green grass; now, when they are to be fed with seven loaves, they are commanded to recline on the ground, because through the Scripture of the law

we are ordered to tread and suppress the desires of the flesh. For all flesh is grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass (I Peter I). However, in the New Testament, we are commanded to forsake even the very land and temporal goods. Or certainly because the mountain on which the crowd was fed with the Lord's loaves signifies (as we said above) the height of our Redeemer, there they are fed on grass, here on the ground. For there the loftiness of Christ is covered because of carnal men and earthly Jerusalem, with carnal hope and desire; but here, with all carnal desire removed, it contained the guests of the New Testament, the foundation of lasting hope, like the solidity of the mountain itself, with no grass interposed.

[Mark 8:6] -- And taking the seven loaves, giving thanks, he broke them and gave to his disciples to set before the crowd. The Lord, taking the loaves, gave them to his disciples so that they might distribute them to the crowd, because, bestowing the spiritual gifts of knowledge upon the apostles, he wanted the nourishment of life to be distributed through their ministry to his Church throughout the world. However, the breaking of the loaves which he gave to his disciples signifies the opening of the sacraments, by which the world was to be nourished unto eternal salvation. For when the Lord himself says: And 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 (Matt. 11), what did he show us except that the bread of life was to be opened to us through him, when we could not penetrate it by ourselves? The prophet, lamenting the pitiable hunger of some, said: The children asked for bread, but no one broke it for them (Lam. 4). Which is to say in other words: The unlearned sought the food of the word of God, to be strengthened and restored to the virtue of good works, but, with teachers lacking, there was no one to reveal the secrets of the Scriptures to them and to instruct them in the path of truth. But taking the loaves to break, the Lord gives thanks, to show how much he rejoices over the salvation of the human race, and to teach us always to give thanks to God when, either with earthly bread for the body or with heavenly grace from above granted, we are refreshed.

[Mark 8:7] -- And they had some small fishes, and he blessed them and ordered them to be set before them. If in the seven loaves is signified the Scripture of the New Testament, in the reading of which we find internal feasts for the mind through the grace of the Holy Spirit, what do we accept in the small fishes which the Lord blessed and likewise ordered to be set before the crowd, except the saints of that time, when the same Scripture was composed, or whose faith, life, and sufferings that very Scripture contains? Who, having been rescued from the turbulent waves of this world and consecrated by divine blessing, have provided us with internal refreshment, so that we do not fail in the passing journey of this world, by the example of their life or death.

[Mark 8:8] -- And they ate and were satisfied. They eat of the Lord's loaves and fishes, and are satisfied, those who, hearing the words of God and observing examples, hasten to be stirred and to rise to the advancement of a more correct life through these things. To whom the saying of the Psalmist aptly fits: The poor shall eat and be satisfied, and those who seek him shall praise the Lord. Their hearts shall live forever and ever (Psalm XXI). Which is plainly to say: The humble shall hear the word of God and do it, and to the praise not of themselves, but of the supreme giver, they shall refer all the good things they perform. Hence deservedly they shall reach the eternal life of the inner man, being satisfied with the bread of life. To whom, on the contrary, it is reproached through the prophet: You have eaten and are not satisfied. For they eat and are not satisfied, who taste the bread of the word of God by hearing it, but by not doing what they hear, they receive nothing of the internal sweetness by which their hearts may be confirmed in the memory of the mind.

[Mark 8:8] -- And they took up the fragments that were left, seven baskets full. The apostles took up what was left over after the crowds were fed, and they filled seven baskets, because the higher precepts of perfection, or rather exhortations and counsels, cannot be reached by the general multitude of the faithful by keeping and fulfilling them. The execution of these properly pertains to those who, filled with a greater grace of the Holy Spirit, transcend the general conversion of the people of God in the sublimity of mind and work. To such ones it is said: "If you want to be perfect, go, sell all that you have" (Matthew 19), etc. Hence it is fittingly that the baskets in which the fragments of the Lord's food were stored are mentioned as being seven due to the sevenfold grace of the spirit. For baskets are usually woven from rush and palm leaves, and they are rightly placed as a symbol of the saints. For the rush is accustomed to grow above the waters, while the palm adorns the victorious hand. And the chosen ones are rightly compared to the vessels made of rushes, as they place the root of the heart in the very source of life, lest it wither from the love of eternity. They are also likened to those woven from palm leaves, as they retain in their pure heart the memory of the eternal reward. And it is fittingly narrated that although the crowd could not contain the remnants of the Lord's meal, it is said to have eaten and been satisfied. For there are some who, even if they cannot leave all their possessions, nor fulfill what is said of virgins: "He who can accept this, let him accept it" (Matthew 19), and other such things, are still filled with righteousness when they hunger and thirst, and by hearing the commandments of God's law, they reach eternal life.

[Mark 8:9] -- Now those who ate were about four thousand, and He sent them away. Well, four thousand, that even in the number itself they might show they were fed with evangelical food. [Mark 8:10] -- And immediately getting into the boat with His disciples, He came to the region of Dalmanutha. For in Matthew we read: "And after sending away the crowd, He got into the boat and came to the

region of Magadan" (Matthew 15). It is not to be doubted that it is the same place under either name. For many Codices do not have, even according to Mark, except Magadan.

[Mark 8:11] -- And the Pharisees went out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, tempting Him. Thus they seek a sign, as if what they had seen were not signs. But what they seek is shown when it is said: Seeking from Him a sign from heaven. Either they desired fire to come down from above in the manner of Elijah, or like Samuel in the summer season, they wished for the thunder to roar, the lightning to flash, and rains to fall, as if they could not also slander those and say that they happened from hidden and various passions of the air. But you who slander what you see with your eyes, hold with your hands, feel with utility, what will you do about those things which come from heaven? Certainly, you will answer that magicians in Egypt also performed many signs from heaven. Or surely they seek a sign from heaven, so that He who fed many thousands of people with a few loaves would now, in imitation of Moses with manna sent from heaven and scattered everywhere, sustain the whole people for a long time. Which we read in the Gospel of John that after the eating of the loaves, the crowds sought from Him, saying: What sign then do you do so that we may see and believe you? What do you work? Our fathers ate manna in the desert (John 6), as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat (Ibid.).

[Mark 8:12] -- And sighing deeply in spirit, he said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, if a sign will be given to this generation. He, who above thanked the crowd believing for heavenly benefit to be restored, now sighed and was saddened over the foolish petition of the Pharisees who did not believe and tempted, because truly bearing the nature of man, with real feelings of human nature, just as he rejoices over the salvation of men, so too he grieves and sighs over their errors. Hence also elsewhere, when many were led to salvation through the preaching of the apostles, it is written about him: "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 prudent, and have revealed them to little children'" (Luke 10). And when he was about to rebuke Judas' deed, he was troubled in spirit, as John writes, and he testified, and said: "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray me" (John 13). But what he says, "If a sign will be given to this generation," means it will not be given, according to that in the Psalm: "Once I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David" (Psalm 89), that is, I will not lie to David. Hence Saint Augustine, speaking of the harmony of the evangelists, bears witness that it is thus written in Mark:

"And no sign will be given to it. Therefore, no sign will be given to that generation, that is, to those tempting the Lord and rejecting his words. Certainly a sign such as the tempters were seeking, this is to say, from heaven. Nevertheless, many

heavenly signs he gave them on earth. Besides, to the generation seeking the gift, requiring the face of the God of Jacob, he showed a sign from heaven, when, with the apostles watching, he ascended into heaven, when, with the Spirit sent from above, he filled the primitive Church, when at the imposition of the hands of the apostles in Samaria, Caesarea, Ephesus, and many other cities and places, he ministered the grace of the Holy Spirit to the believers from heaven.

[Mark 8:13] -- And dismissing them, he ascended the boat again and went across the strait. And they forgot to take bread, and they had nothing with them on the boat except one loaf. Someone may ask and say how they did not have bread, who, immediately after filling seven baskets, ascended the boat, and came to the borders of Magedan, and there heard the sailors that they should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. But Scripture testifies that they forgot to take them with them. However, that they forgot to take provisions with them before they were about to sail across the strait indicates how little they cared for the flesh in other respects, for whom the very necessity of replenishing the body, which naturally exists in all mortals, had escaped their minds due to their attention to following the Lord. But the one loaf they had with them on the boat mystically signifies the bread of life itself, namely the Lord and Savior. Because they were always inwardly refreshed in heart by His love, they cared less for the earthly bread with which the body is usually fed.

[Mark 8:15] -- And he was instructing them, saying: See and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. The leaven of the Pharisees is to place the decrees of divine law below human traditions, or certainly to preach the law in words while opposing it in deeds. Their leaven is to test the Lord, neither believing in His teachings nor in His works, but mocking and asking for other things in which they could believe. The leaven of Herod is adultery, homicide, rashness in swearing, false pretenses of religion, and what is the head and origin of all crimes, hatred and persecution against Christ and His precursor and first proclaimer of the heavenly kingdom. From which leaven of either, even the Apostle, not prohibiting, says: Therefore let us celebrate not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (I Cor. V).

[Mark 8:16] -- And they reasoned among themselves, saying: We have no bread. Which knowing, Jesus said to them: Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet understand or comprehend? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, do you not see, and having ears, do you not hear, nor remember when I broke the five loaves among five thousand, and how many baskets full of fragments you took up? etc. Because of the command which the Savior had given, saying: Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod, he teaches them what the five loaves and the seven, or the small fish, mean, and the five thousand men and the four thousand who were fed in the wilderness. Though the greatness of the

signs is clear, yet something else is shown by spiritual understanding. For if the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees and the leaven of Herod signify not physical bread but perverse traditions and heretical doctrines, why should not the food with which the people of God were fed signify true and complete doctrine? This kind of leaven, which must be avoided by all means, Marcion and Valentinus and all heretics have had. Leaven has this power, that if it be mixed with flour, what seemed small grows larger and attracts the whole mixture to its taste. Likewise, heretical doctrine, if it casts even a small spark into your heart, in a short time will grow into a huge flame and draw the whole possession of a man to itself. This is what the Apostle also speaks of: A little leaven corrupts the whole mass (Gal. V).

[Mark 8:22] -- And they came to Bethsaida, and they brought to him a blind man, and begged him to touch him. All the diseases healed by the Lord are signs of the spiritual diseases by which the soul draws near to eternal death through sin. For just as in the deaf and mute healed by the Lord the restoration of the mind is implied of those who neither knew how to hear the word of God nor to speak, and soon in the feeding of the hungry crowd who had followed the Lord that sweetness is foreshadowed with which he usually feeds the hearts of those who love and seek him, so in this blind man gradually healed by the Lord the enlightenment of the foolish hearts, and those straying far from the path of truth is designated. They begged him to touch him, knowing that the touch of the Lord could cleanse the leper, and also could illuminate the blind. But we touch the Lord when we cling to him with whole-hearted and sincere faith. Indeed, we learn that his touch is most beneficial to us by the example of the woman who in happy boldness touched the hem of his garment. The Lord touches us when he illuminates our mind with the breath of his spirit, and kindles in us the recognition of our own weakness and the pursuit of good action.

[Mark 8:23] -- And taking the blind man’s hand, he led him out of the village. He took the blind man’s hand to strengthen him for the performance of good work which he had not known due to the prolonged darkness of his heart. He led him out of the village to separate him from ordinary life, so that, freed from distractions, he might more freely seek with a diligent heart the will of his creator, by which he might merit to be enlightened. For whoever desires to see the light of eternity must always follow, not the examples of the crowds, but the guidance of his redeemer.

[Mark 8:23] -- And spitting on his eyes, and laying his hands on him, he asked him if he saw anything. And looking up, he said, ”I see men, for I see them like trees, walking. Then again he laid his hands on his eyes, and he began to see and was restored so that he saw everything clearly. Therefore, the Lord healed this man gradually and not immediately at once, though he could have healed him with a single word if he wished, to show the magnitude of human blindness, which usually comes to the light of divine vision gradually and through certain stages of progress, or to

give us frequent indications of His grace, through which each of our increments towards perfection are aided so that they can progress and not fall short. It has often been said that the spittle of the Lord's mouth signifies the grace of His spirit. Concerning the touch of His hands, which insinuate the power of His assistance, there is no doubt. For spittle proceeds internally from the head of the Lord; the hands, however, are members placed on the exterior of the body. Thus, the Lord, spitting on the eyes of the blind man, lays His hands on him so that he may see, because He cleansed the blindness of the human race both through the invisible gifts of divine compassion and through the outwardly manifested sacraments of assumed humanity.

At first, the one who was being healed saw men as trees walking, that is, indeed seeing the form of bodies among the shadows but unable to discern any features of the limbs with his vision still dim, just as densely grown trees appear to those looking from afar or certainly in dim light, so that it is not easy to distinguish whether it is a tree or a man. Because undoubtedly, the first entrance into virtue for everyone is to observe the life and morals of other men, so that whatever good he sees anywhere, he may imitate, and whatever evil, he may avoid and detest. But whoever is so foolish and depressed by the darkness of a long time that he still cannot distinguish between good and evil, faith and perfidy, sincere works of piety and the simulation of justice, sees men walking like trees, because he sees the actions of the multitude without the light of discretion. And what remains for such people, except that divine favor, which granted him the care of observing man, may also confer upon him the gift of discerning which way of life among men is to be followed, whose teaching should be heeded? Hence, it is aptly said that with the second laying on of His hands, the Lord restored clear sight to him.

For he indeed sees everything clearly who was once blind, when one who deserved to be inwardly illuminated has clearly learned how to believe, how to live, and what rewards for the faith of truth and the practice of justice are to be hoped for in the future.

[Mark 8:26] -- And he sent him to his home, saying: Go to your home: and if you enter the village, say to no one. That He ordered him to go to his home mystically admonishes all who are enlightened by the knowledge of truth to return to their hearts and consider with anxious mind how much has been granted to them, and responding to the benefits conferred upon them with the worthy execution of deeds. That He commanded him to cover his healing with silence, as He did for many others whom He healed, provides an example to His followers not to seek the favor of the crowd for their miraculous deeds, but to be content to please only divine eyes, where the reward for works remains. [Mark 8:27] -- And Jesus and His disciples went out to the village of Caesarea Philippi. This Philip is the brother of Herod, of whom we spoke before, tetrarch of the regions of Ituraea and Trachonitis, who

in honor of Tiberius Caesar named Caesarea Philippi, which is now called Paneas, and it is in the province of Phoenicia; imitating Herod his father, who in honor of Augustus Caesar named Caesarea, which was previously called Tower of Straton, and built Libyad beyond the Jordan in the name of his daughter. This place is Caesarea Philippi, where the Jordan arises at the roots of Lebanon, and it has two sources, one named Jor, and the other Dan, which mixed together create the name Jordan.

[Mark 8:27] -- And he questioned his disciples along the way, saying: Who do men say that I am? They answered him, saying: Some say John the Baptist; others, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets. The Lord rightly, intending to test the faith of the disciples, first inquires about people's opinion, lest their confession seem founded not on the recognition of truth but on the opinion of the crowd, and lest they be thought to believe not from what they have learned, but to hesitate like Herod from what they have heard. Therefore, to Peter confessing him as Christ, according to Matthew, he says: Because flesh and blood did not reveal it to you (Matthew 16), that is, human teaching did not teach you the truth of faith. Those who hold a different opinion about the Lord are also rightly noted by the name of men. For those who faithfully and devoutly recognize the truth of his power deserve not at all to be called men, but gods. The Lord shows that the apostles were such as these with his second question. For he continues:

[Mark 8:29] -- Then he says to them: But who do you say that I am? Note, prudent reader, from the following text that the apostles are not at all called men, but gods. For when he had said: Who do men say I am, he added: But who do you say that I am? To them who are men giving human opinions, he says: But you, who are gods, who do you think I am? [Mark 8:29] -- Peter answered, saying: You are the Christ. Although the other apostles knew, Peter responded before the others. He encompassed everything, expressing both nature and name, in which is the summit of virtues. Do we indeed discuss questions about the generation of God? When Paul indicated knowing nothing except Christ Jesus, and him crucified, and Peter thought nothing more than that Christ should be confessed as the Son of God, do we examine with human frailty when and how he was born, and how great he is? Therefore, the end of my faith is Christ, the end of faith is the Son. I am not permitted to know the sequence of the generation, but I am not permitted to be ignorant of the faith of the generation.

[Mark 8:30] -- And he warned them not to tell anyone about him. And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, etc. For this reason, he did not want to be proclaimed before his passion and resurrection, so that afterward, when the sacrament of his blood was completed, he could more appropriately say to the apostles: "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of

the Holy Spirit." Because it would not benefit to preach him publicly, and to reveal his majesty to the people, whom in a short while they would see scourged and crucified, suffering many things by the elders, scribes, and the chief priests. And note that he who must suffer many things and be killed, and rise again, is called the Son of Man, because, although Christ suffered in the flesh, he remained divinely impassible.

[Mark 8:32] -- And Peter, taking him aside, began to rebuke him. Matthew explains more clearly how he rebuked him, saying: "And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying: 'God forbid, Lord, this shall never happen to you' (Matt. XVI). We have often said that Peter was of excessive fervor and had the greatest love for the Lord Savior. Therefore, after his confession in which he said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,' and the reward from the Savior where he heard according to Matthew: 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven' (Matt. XVI), he suddenly hears from the Lord that he must go to Jerusalem, and there suffer many things from the elders, scribes, and chief priests, and be killed, and on the third day rise again: he does not want to see his confession destroyed, nor does he think it possible that the Son of God could be killed; and he took him into his affection, or led him aside separately, so that he would not seem to argue with the teacher in the presence of the other disciples. And he began to rebuke him with the affection of love, and wishing to say: "God forbid, Lord," or (as it is better translated in Greek), "Be merciful to yourself, Lord, this shall not happen to you;" that is, it cannot happen, nor can my ears receive that the Son of God is to be killed.

[Mark 8:33] -- When he had turned and saw his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying: Go behind me, Satan. Satan is interpreted as adversary or contrary. Because you speak contrary (he said) to my will, you should be called adversary. Many think that it was not Peter who was corrected, but the adversarial spirit that suggested these things to the apostle to say. But to me, an apostolic error, arising from the affection of piety, will never seem to be the incentive of the devil. Go, Satan, is said to the devil: Go behind me. Peter hears: Go behind me, that is, follow my judgment. [Mark 8:33] -- For you are not mindful of the things of God, but of the things of men. It is of my will, and of the Father's, whose will I have come to do, that I should die for the salvation of men. Considering only your will, you do not wish the grain of wheat to fall into the ground, that it might bring forth much fruit.

[Mark 8:34] -- And having called the crowd with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone wishes to follow me, let him deny himself, etc. After showing his disciples the mystery of his passion and resurrection, he urges them together with the crowd to follow the example of his passion. And to all who suffer tribulation for his sake, he promises future salvation of their souls, but not to all, rather to the more perfect: how much he was to suffer, and that he would rise from the dead, he re-

vealed. Here he established the form of teaching for the ministers of the word, so that, considering the capacity of their listeners, they might remember to instruct each one according to their ability, and not entrust deeper mysteries than they can comprehend to weak listeners. ”If anyone wishes” (he says) ”to follow me, let him deny himself. Now we deny ourselves when we avoid what we were through our former way of life and strive for that to which we are called through renewal. Let us consider how Paul had denied himself, who said, ”And the life I now live, I live not by my own power” (Galatians 2). For that fierce persecutor had died and the pious preacher had begun to live. For if it were he, he would certainly not be pious. But let him who denies living by his own power, say whence it comes that he proclaims sacred words through the teaching of truth. Immediately he adds, ”But Christ lives in me” (Ibid.).

As if to say openly: Indeed, I am dead to myself, for I do not live carnally; yet I am not essentially dead, for I live spiritually in Christ. Let, therefore, Truth say, let it say, ”If anyone wishes to follow me, let him deny himself. For unless someone withdraws from himself, he does not approach the one who is above him. Nor can he grasp what is beyond himself if he does not know how to mortify what is within him. But now, he who denies himself from vices must seek virtues in which he may grow. For when it is said, ”If anyone wishes to follow me, let him deny himself,” it immediately adds:

[Mark 8:34] -- And let him take up his cross and follow me. For indeed, the cross is taken up in two ways: either through the affliction of the body by abstinence, or through the affliction of the soul by compassion for one’s neighbor. Let us consider how Paul bore his cross in both ways, who said: ”I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified” (I Cor. IX). Behold, in the affliction of the body we heard the cross of the flesh; now, in the compassion for one’s neighbor, let us hear the cross of the mind. He says: ”Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn?” (II Cor. XI) Indeed, a perfect preacher, to give an example of abstinence, carried the cross in the body. And because he bore the sufferings of others in himself, he carried the cross in his heart.

[Mark 8:35] -- For whoever wants to save their soul will lose it. But whoever loses their soul for my sake and the gospel will save it. Thus it is said to the faithful: Whoever wants to save their soul will lose it. But whoever loses their soul for my sake and the gospel will save it. As if it were said to a farmer: If you save the grain, you lose it; if you sow it, you renew it. For who does not know that when grain is sown, it disappears from sight, perishing in the ground? But from where it rots in the dust, it springs forth in renewal. Because the holy Church has different times of persecution and peace, our Redeemer designated those times in his teachings. For

in times of persecution, the soul is to be laid down. But in times of peace, earthly desires, which can dominate more, are to be broken. Hence now it is said:

[Mark 8:36] -- For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? When persecution from adversaries is absent, the heart must be guarded much more vigilantly. For in times of peace, since it is allowed to live, it is also allowed to desire. Often, however, we overcome avarice, but there remains an obstacle because we guard the ways of righteousness with less custody, to perfection. For often we despise having everything, but yet we are still hindered by the use of human respect, so that we cannot yet express in voice the righteousness which we keep in mind. And we neglect the face of God for the defense of justice as much as we fear human faces against justice. But the fitting remedy is also added to this wound when the Lord says:

[Mark 8:38] -- ”For whoever confesses Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also confess him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” But behold now men say to themselves: ”We no longer are ashamed of the Lord and His words, because we openly confess Him with our voice.” To which I reply that in this Christian populace there are some who confess Christ because they observe that all are Christians. Therefore, the voice of profession is not sufficient proof of faith, which is defended from shame by the profession of generality. And yet, let each person examine himself, so that he may truly prove himself in the confession of Christ, if he does not already feel ashamed of His name, if he has fully subdued human shame to the virtue of the mind. Indeed, in times of persecution, the faithful could feel ashamed to be stripped of their possessions, to be deposed from their dignities, to be afflicted with scourges. But in times of peace, since these things are absent from our persecutions, there is another way to show ourselves. We often fear being despised by neighbors, we disdain to tolerate verbal injuries. If perhaps a quarrel happens with a neighbor, we feel ashamed to be the first to make amends. For the carnal heart, while seeking the glory of this life, rejects humility.

Chapter 9

[Mark 9:1] -- And he said to them: Truly I say to you, that there are some standing here who will not taste death until, etc. The Kingdom of God in this place is called the present Church. And because some of the disciples were going to live in the body to the extent that they would see the Church of God constructed and raised up against the glory of this world, it is now said as a comforting promise: There are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God coming in power. But since the Lord was issuing commands about enduring the death so great, what was necessary that he suddenly came to this promise? If we attentively consider this, we shall recognize how great a dispensation of piety takes place. For something needed to be promised even to the unlearned disciples regarding the present life, so that they might be more strongly established for the future. Thus the Israelite people, being freed from the land of Egypt, are promised the land of promise, so that while they were to be called to heavenly gifts, they might be persuaded by earthly promises. Hence it is rightly said through the Psalmist: He gave them the regions of the Gentiles, and they possessed the labors of the peoples, so that they might keep his statutes and seek his law (Psalm 105).

Thus, in this place, Truth speaking to the unlearned disciples promises that they will see the kingdom of God on earth, so that it might be more faithfully presumed by them in heaven. But if we wish to receive the Kingdom of God by this saying as the future beatitude in heaven, certain ones of those standing there saw it not many days later on the mountain. This indeed was done by pious foresight so that by the contemplation of the always enduring joy, even if grasped quickly and briefly, they might more strongly endure the present adversities of the passing world. With very fitting language, the saints are testified to taste death, for indeed the death of the body is tasted by them as if by sipping, while truly the life of the soul is possessed by holding.

[Mark 9:2] -- And after six days Jesus took Peter and James and John, and led them up into a high mountain apart by themselves, and he was transfigured before them. In the Gospel of Luke it is written thus: ”And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to

pray" (Luke IX). and so forth: But on the eighth day the Lord revealed to the disciples the glory of the promised future blessedness, so that by showing the sweetness of the heavenly life, he might refresh the hearts of all who could hear this, and by the number of eight days, he might teach that true joy of the resurrection would come at the due time. For on the eighth day, that is, after the sixth day of the Sabbath on which he ascended the cross, and the seventh day of the Sabbath on which he rested in the sepulcher, he rose from the dead, and we, after the six ages of this world in which we rejoice to suffer and labor for the Lord, and the seventh day of the Sabbath of souls, which in the meantime is carried on in another life, will rise again in the eighth age.

For what Matthew and Mark say, that the Lord was transfigured after six days, they do not differ either in the order of time or in the reason of the mystery from Luke, who says eight days, because they only include the days in between, hence they recount absolutely that it happened after six days. He adds both the first day on which the Lord promised this, and the last day on which he fulfilled his promise. And so more temperately he states about eight days. And in the mystical reasoning there, it is significant for the saints to rest from all labor after the six ages of the world, but here it signifies that they will rise again at the eighth time. Hence the sixth psalm is beautifully inscribed for the octave, with the beginning: "O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger," because indeed through the six ages when it is allowed to work, one must persist in prayers, lest in the eighth time of retribution we be rebuked by an angry judge. Therefore the Lord himself wanted to teach us in this place by showing the example of his prayer, which according to Luke, says he went up into the mountain to pray. For he went up into the mountain to pray and was transfigured in such a way to show that those who expect the fruit of the resurrection, who desire to see the king in his beauty, should dwell in the heights of mind, and be devoted to continuous prayers.

He takes only three disciples with him either because many are called, but few are chosen (Matt. XX), or because those who now preserve with incorrupt mind the faith they have received in the Holy Trinity, will then deserve to rejoice in his eternal vision.

[Mark 9:3] -- And he (says) was transfigured before them, and his garments became exceedingly radiant white like snow. The transfigured Savior did not lose the substance of true flesh but showed the glory of his or our future resurrection. He, as he then appeared to the apostles, will appear likewise to all the elect after judgment. For at the very time of judgment, he will be seen by both the good and the wicked in the form of a servant, so that the ungodly may recognize him whom they despised, the Jews him whom they denied, the soldiers him whom they crucified, and Pilate and Herod him whom they judged. The garments of the Lord, rightly, are understood as his saints, as the Apostle testifies, who says: For as many of you

as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Galatians III). These garments, indeed, seemed despised and similar to others while the Lord was on earth; but when he ascends the mountain, they shine with new brightness because now indeed we are children of God, but it has not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he appears, we shall be like him. For we shall see him as he is (1 John III). Hence it is well added about these same garments: Such as no fuller on earth can whiten. For it is understood that the fuller is to be interpreted as him whom the penitent Psalmist prays to: Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin (Psalm L). He cannot give to his faithful on earth the brightness that remains preserved for them in the heavens.

[Mark 9:4] -- And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. Moses and Elijah, one of whom we read was dead and the other taken up into the heavens, were seen in majesty with the Lord (as Luke writes), signifying the future glory of all the saints in Him. Evidently at the time of judgment, some will be found alive in the flesh, or also, having previously tasted death, will be resurrected and will reign together with Him. As the Apostle testifies: The dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord (1 Thess. IV). Alternatively, Moses and Elijah, that is, the legislator and the eminent prophet, appear and speak with the Lord coming in the flesh, to show that He is the one whom all the oracles of the law and the prophets promised. However, they appear not in the lowly places, but on the mountain with Him, because, indeed, only those who transcend earthly desires in their mind perceive the majesty of Holy Scripture, which is fulfilled in the Lord. Finally, even the sons of Israel saw Moses, but they did not deserve to follow him as he went up to God on the mountain, and they saw him turned back to them not without a veil. They knew Elijah, but it was only Elisha who with the sons of the prophets contemplated his triumphant ascent. Because many of us widely read the words of Scripture; but how exalted it shines in the mysteries of Christ, very few more perfect ones understand.

[Mark 9:5] -- And responding, Peter said: Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. For he did not know what he was saying. They were indeed terrified with fear. Oh, how great is the happiness to be present to the vision of divinity among the choirs of angels perpetually, if only the transformed humanity of Christ, along with the company of the two saints seen for a moment, delights so much that Peter wishes to establish them, lest they depart, though in his awe of human fragility, he doesn’t know what he is saying, but the affection planted in him gives an indication! For he did not know what he was saying, who forgot that the kingdom of God was promised by the Lord to the saints, not somewhere on earth, but in the heavens. Neither did he remember that he and his fellow apostles, still surrounded by mortal flesh, could not yet attain the state of immortal life, as he exceeded in mind, which in the house

of the Father that is in heaven, necessarily is not a house made by hand. But even now, he is noted for incompetence, whoever desires to make three tents for the law, the prophets, and the Gospels, when these cannot be separated from each other at all, having one tabernacle, that is, the Church of God.

[Mark 9:7] -- And a cloud overshadowed them. He who sought a material tabernacle received the overshadowing of a cloud, that he might learn that in the resurrection the saints are to be protected not by the covering of dwellings, but by the glory of the Holy Spirit. From which the Psalmist says: But the children of men will trust in the shelter of your wings (Psalm 35). And in his Apocalypse, John says: And I saw no temple in it (Rev. 21), for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

[Mark 9:7] -- And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ”This is my beloved Son; listen to him. Because they had asked foolishly, they were not worthy to receive a response from the Lord; but the Father answers on behalf of the Son, so that the word of the Lord might be fulfilled. ”I do not speak for myself, but the Father who sent me speaks for me” (John V). The voice of the Father speaking from heaven is also heard, bearing witness concerning the Son, and teaching Peter, with error removed, the truth: indeed, through Peter, teaching the other apostles. ”This,” he says, ”is my beloved Son; it is to him that a tent must be built, it is he who must be obeyed. This is the Son; they, Moses and Elijah, are servants. They also must prepare a tent for the Lord within the innermost parts of their hearts, along with you. Indeed, this place in the Gospel agrees with the words of Moses himself, with which bearing witness to the Lord’s incarnation he said: ”The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren; you shall listen to him just as you listen to me, according to all that he tells you. But it shall come to pass: Every soul that does not listen to that prophet will be cut off from the people” (Deut. XVIII).

Therefore, whom Moses foretold would come in the flesh and should be listened to by every soul that wishes to be saved, God the Father now shows to the disciples as having already come in the flesh and marked him as his Son with a heavenly voice. And as if more clearly expounding the faith concerning his arrival to them, he says: ”This man, this is he whom this Moses promised to you would be born in the world many times. Listen to his words according to the commandment of Moses, and command all true lovers to listen. And it should be noted that just as when the Lord was baptized in the Jordan, so also on the mountain where he was glorified, the mystery of the whole Holy Trinity is declared. Because indeed the glory of him which believers confess in baptism, we will behold and praise in the resurrection. And it is not in vain that the Holy Spirit appears here in a bright cloud, as another evangelist mentions, whereas there he appeared as a dove, because those who now keep with a simple heart the faith they have received, will then with clear light behold what they have believed, and they will be perpetually protected by that very grace with which they have been illuminated.

[Mark 9:8] -- And immediately looking around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with them. When the Son began to be designated, the servants soon departed, lest the father's voice be thought to have been directed to them. Otherwise, when a voice was made over the Son, he was found alone, because when he has revealed himself to the elect, God will be all in all; indeed he himself with his own will shine as one through all, that is, the head with the body. For this unity he said elsewhere: And no one has ascended to heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven (John 3). [Mark 9:9] -- And as they were coming down from the mountain, he instructed them not to tell anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. The foreshadowing of the future kingdom and the glory of the triumphant one had been shown on the mountain. Therefore, he did not want this to be preached among the people, lest it be unbelievable due to the greatness of the matter, and after such great glory, the following cross might be a scandal to the minds.

[Mark 9:11] -- And they asked him, saying: Why then do the Pharisees and Scribes say that Elijah must come first? It is a tradition of the Pharisees, according to Malachi the prophet, who is the last of the twelve, that Elijah will come before the advent of the Savior and will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, and restore all things to their former state. Therefore, the disciples suppose this transformation of glory they had seen on the mountain to be the fulfillment, and they say: If you have already come in glory, how is it that your forerunner does not appear? Especially because they had seen Elijah depart. But when the scribes add and say that Elijah must come first, by saying first they imply that unless Elijah comes, there is no second advent of the Savior.

[Mark 9:12] -- And He answering said to them: Elias when he comes, will first restore all things. He will restore all things, indeed those which the prophet has previously shown by saying: Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, and he will turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers (Malachi 4). He will also restore that which is due to death, and which he has postponed by living long. This the Lord also subsequently intimated here, when He forthwith added: [Mark 9:12] -- And how it is written of the Son of Man, that he must suffer many things and be despised. That is, just as many prophets have variously written many things about Christ's passion, so also Elias, when he comes, will suffer many things, being despised by the impious. Therefore, he will restore all things, first namely the hearts of men of that age, instructing them to believe in Christ, and to resist the perfidy of the Antichrist; then himself by putting down his own soul for the martyrdom of faith in Christ. About whom is more fully narrated in the mystical discourse in the Apocalypse.

[Mark 9:13] -- But I say to you, that Elias also came, and they did to him whatever they wanted, as it is written of him. He who is to come in the second advent of the Savior in bodily form, now came through John in spirit and power. They did to him whatever they wanted, that is they despised him, and beheaded him. [Mark 9:14] -- And coming to his disciples, he saw a great crowd around them, and scribes disputing with them. And immediately all the people, seeing him, were amazed, and they were afraid. And running to him, they greeted him. Notable in all places is the difference in the mind of the scribes and the crowd. For the crowd was with the disciples, and also the scribes; but, when the Lord came, immediately all the crowd was amazed and afraid, and running to greet him. The scribes are said to have shown nothing of devotion, faith, humility, or reverence to him. But what the crowd or the scribes were disputing with the disciples of the Lord, the evangelist does not say. However, it can, I believe, be rightly understood to be a question that was raised, why they, being disciples of the Savior, could not save the demoniac who was placed in the midst. This can be inferred from the following words of the Gospel, when it is said:

[Mark 9:16-18] -- And he asked them: What are you discussing among yourselves? And one from the crowd answered: Teacher, I brought my son to you, who has a mute spirit; and wherever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams, and grinds his teeth, and becomes rigid. And I spoke to your disciples to cast it out, and they could not. It is noteworthy that the places always correspond to the circumstances. On the mountain, the Lord prays, is transformed, and reveals to his disciples the secrets of his majesty. Descending to the lower parts, he is met by the crowd and struck by the tears of the wretched. Above, he unveils the mysteries of the kingdom to his disciples; below, he reproaches the sins of infidelity of the crowds. Above, he reveals the Father’s voice to those who can follow him; below, he expels evil spirits from those who are tormented. He still continues to do so now according to the quality of merits, letting some ascend while ceaselessly descending for others. For those who are still carnal and beginners, he strengthens, teaches, and chastises, seeking the low places. But he glorifies the perfect, whose conversation is in heaven, by exalting them more highly, instructing them more freely about the eternal matters, and often teaching them things that cannot even be heard by the crowds. As for this demoniac whom the Lord cured when descending from the mountain, Mark indeed recounts him as being deaf and mute, but Matthew recalls him as being a lunatic.

It signifies those of whom it is written: The fool changes like the moon. They never remain in the same state, changing now to these, now to those vices, and growing and diminishing. They are mute for not confessing the faith: deaf for not even hearing the word of truth. They foam while they waste away in folly. For it is of fools and the languid and the dull to send foam of saliva from the mouth. They grind their teeth when they blaze with the fury of anger. They become rigid

when they languish in laziness and live weakly without the zealous pursuit of virtue. But what he said: And I spoke to your disciples to cast it out, and they could not, secretly blames the apostles, since the inability to heal sometimes pertains not to the weakness of those healing, but to the faith of those who are to be healed, as the Lord says: Let it be done to you according to your faith (Matt. II).

[Mark 9:19] -- And answering them, he said: O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you? Not that he was overcome by weariness, meek and gentle as he was, who did not open his mouth like a lamb before its shearer, nor did he burst forth into words of fury, but rather in the likeness of a doctor, if he sees a sick person acting against his precepts, he might say: How long shall I come to your house? How long shall I waste the industry of my art, with me ordering something and you accomplishing the opposite? But to this extent he was not angry at the man but at the vice, and he reproved the Jews through one man for their unbelief, that he immediately said: [Mark 9:19] -- Bring him to me. And they brought him. And when he saw him, immediately the spirit troubled him, and throwing him to the ground, he rolled about foaming. The spirit troubles and throws the boy brought to the Lord to the ground, because often when we try to turn to the Lord after sins, we are assaulted by greater and new attacks from the ancient enemy. This, indeed, the cunning adversary does, so that either he may instill a hatred of virtue, or vindicate the injury of his expulsion. Hence, indeed (to pass from the particular to the general), that at the beginnings of the holy Church he inflicted so many grievous struggles of persecutions because he grieved that losses of souls had suddenly been inflicted upon his kingdom.

[Mark 9:21] -- And he asked his father: How long has it been since this happened to him? And he said: From childhood. And often it cast him into the fire and into the water to destroy him. Let Julian be ashamed who dares to say that all men are born in the flesh without any contamination of sin, and as innocent in every way as Adam was when he was created. For what did this child have that he should be tormented by the bitterest demon from childhood, if he was not held by any bond of original sin, who is agreed to have not yet been able to have any personal sin? Let the Catholic confess, because no one is born immune from the stain of the first transgression, and let him invoke the grace of God, by which he is delivered from the body of death through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let the scribe learned in the kingdom of heaven understand that in this demoniac cured by the Lord is designated the salvation of all the faithful, who come into the world bound by the guilt of original fault, and are saved only by the faith and grace of one Redeemer Jesus Christ. But what was said: And often it cast him into the fire and into the water, designates the greatest crimes of human folly. For the burning of the fire must be referred to the fervor of anger. Water to the pleasures of the flesh, which by delights are wont to dissolve the mind. Or certainly the demoniac

is carried into the fire, wherein the hearts of adulterers are inflamed, and into the waters which are wont to extinguish charity.

[Mark 9:22] -- But if you can do anything, help us, have compassion on us. Jesus said to him: If you can believe, all things are possible to the one who believes. The Lord renders a fitting answer to the petitioner. For he himself said: If you can do anything, help us. And the Lord: If you can, he said, believe, I can have compassion and help you, for true faith deserves to obtain all that it healthily asks for. To which the leper who cried out faithfully: Lord, if you will, you can make me clean (Luke V), received a response suitable to his faith: I will, be clean (Ibid). [Mark 9:24] -- And immediately the father of the child cried out with tears, saying: I believe, Lord; help my unbelief. No one becomes supreme suddenly: but in good conduct, everyone begins from the smallest things, so as to reach the great. For the beginnings of virtue are one thing, progress another, and perfection yet another. For if faith itself were not led to its perfection by certain stages, this one, when asked if he believed, would not answer: I believe, Lord; help my unbelief. For if he believed, why did he speak of unbelief? And if he knew he had unbelief, how did he believe? But because faith grows through the hidden inspiration of grace by the steps of one's merits, at one and the same time the one who did not yet believe perfectly both believed and was unbelieving.

[Mark 9:25] -- And when Jesus saw the crowd running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it: You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again. The rebuke of the Lord is the power of the divine command. But he rebuked not the boy who was suffering harm, but the demon who was inflicting it. For whoever desires to correct a sinner must indeed exterminate the vice by rebuking and cursing it, but nourish the man by loving him. And well did the Lord who drives out the unclean spirit from the man at the same time command it not to enter him again. For he is truly freed from demonic domination, who avoids returning to the sins from which he was once cleansed by repenting by living poorly. [Mark 9:26] -- And crying out and greatly convulsing him, it came out of him. The unclean spirit, about to depart from the man, convulses him, and terrifies the onlookers with a frantic cry. For often the devil, while being expelled from the heart, generates sharper temptations in it than he had previously stirred up when he possessed it quietly.

[Mark 9:26] -- And he became as dead; so that many said, he is dead. But Jesus, taking his hand, lifted him up, and he rose. Him whom the impious enemy had already been forced to flee and had struck down, rendering him like unto the dead, this pious Savior raised up with his gentle right hand touch. He showed by the power of saving that He was truly God, and also demonstrated by the manner of the human touch that He truly possessed the nature of flesh. For the insane Manichaeus denies that He was truly clothed in flesh: but He, by raising, cleansing,

and enlightening so many with His touch, condemned that heresy even before it was born.

[Mark 9:28] -- And when He had entered into the house, His disciples asked Him privately: Why could not we cast him out? And He said to them: This kind can go out by nothing but by prayer and fasting. While teaching the apostles how the most wicked demon should be expelled, He instructed all to life, so that we may know that all the gravest temptations of either unclean spirits or men are to be overcome by fasting and prayers. The wrath of the Lord, when kindled in vengeance of our sins, can also be appeased by this singular remedy. Generally, fasting is not only to abstain from food but also to refrain from all carnal temptations, indeed, to contain oneself from all passions of vices. Likewise, general prayer is not solely in the words with which we invoke divine clemency, but also in all things which we do in devout faith as service to our Creator, as the apostle testifies, saying: Always rejoicing, pray without ceasing (I Thess. V). For how can anyone invoke God with words at all hours and moments without ceasing? But then we pray without ceasing when we conduct those works alone which commend us to the piety of our Creator. By which fasting and what prayer, with the Lord's help, we will vanquish and repel all the snares of the ancient enemy.

[Mark 9:30-31] -- And departing from there, they passed through Galilee, and he did not want anyone to know. But he was teaching his disciples, and saying to them, "The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And after being killed, on the third day he will rise again." He always mixes sorrow with prosperity, so that when they suddenly come, they will not terrify the apostles, but their minds will endure them by premeditation. For if it grieves them that he is to be killed, it ought to gladden them that he will rise again on the third day. [Mark 9:32] -- But they did not understand this saying, and they were afraid to ask him. This ignorance of the disciples is born not so much from their slowness of mind as from the love of the Savior, who, while still carnal and ignorant of the mystery of the cross, could not believe that he whom they knew as true God would die. And because they were used to hearing him often speak through figures, fearing the event of his death, they wanted to interpret what he spoke plainly about his betrayal and passion as figuratively signifying something else.

[Mark 9:33] -- And they came to Capernaum. When they were in the house, he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" But they kept silent. For they had been disputing among themselves on the way about who was the greatest. The disciples' dispute seems to have arisen about primacy because they had seen Peter, James, and John taken apart onto a mountain, and it was believed that some secret had been entrusted to them there. But also, to Peter, according to what Matthew narrates, the keys of the kingdom of heaven were promised, and the Church of the Lord was to be built upon the rock of faith from which he had taken his name.

Therefore, they were questioning whether those three, or Peter alone among all the apostles, was preeminent.

[Mark 9:35] -- And sitting down, he called the twelve and said to them, ”If anyone wants to be first among you, he will be the last of all and the servant of all.” And taking a child, he set him in the midst of them. And embracing him, he said to them, ”Whoever receives one such child in my name, receives me. Seeing the disciples’ thoughts, the Lord heals the desire for glory by the struggle for humility and warns that primacy is not to be sought: first he gives a gentle command of humility, and then he teaches by the example of childlike innocence. For he said, ”Whoever receives one such child in my name, receives me;” either simply Christ’s poor, he shows are to be received by those who intend to be greater for his honor’s sake, or certainly he advises that they themselves be without malice like little children so that they preserve simplicity without arrogance, charity without envy, and devotion without anger. But in embracing the child, he signifies that the humble are worthy of his embrace and love, and such people, when they fulfill what he has commanded: ”Learn from me, because I am gentle and humble of heart” (Matthew 11), can rightly boast and say: ”His left hand is under my head, and his right hand will embrace me” (Song of Songs 2). Now well did he add, after saying, ”Whoever receives one such child,” ”in my name,” so that clearly the form of virtue, which, with nature as their guide, a child observes, they themselves might follow for the name of Christ, with the help of rational industry. But since he taught that he is received in children, clearly as the head in his members, he added and said:

[Mark 9:37] -- ”And whoever receives me, does not receive me, but him who sent me.” Wanting himself to be believed as such and as great as the Father is. ”So much so,” he said, ”is there no difference between me and him that whoever receives me, also receives him who sent me.”

[Mark 9:38] -- John answered him, saying: Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, who does not follow us, and we forbade him. John, loving the Lord with supreme devotion and therefore worthy of being loved in return, thought that he who does not use the office should be excluded from the benefit, but it is taught that no one should be barred from the good which he partially possesses, but rather should be encouraged towards that which he does not yet have. For it follows: But Jesus said: Do not forbid him; for there is no one who does a mighty work in my name who will be able soon after to speak evil of me. For whoever is not against you is for you. Taught by this sentence, the Apostle says: But whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice (Philippians I). But although he rejoices, even in those who proclaim Christ insincerely, and such persons doing signs in the name of Christ for the salvation of others are considered not to be forbidden, yet to such persons by these signs, their conscience is not rendered secure. Rather, on that day when they will say:

Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many mighty works (Matthew VII)? They will receive the answer: I never knew you; depart from me, all you workers of iniquity (Ibid.). Therefore, in heretics and evil Catholics, it is not the common sacraments, in which they are with us and are not against us, but the divisions contrary to the peace of truth by which they are against us and do not follow the Lord with us, that we must detest and forbid.

[Mark 9:41] -- For whoever gives you a cup of cold water to drink because you belong to Christ, truly I tell you, he will not lose his reward (Psalm 140). We read in the prophet David: To excuse excuses in sins, that many presented quasi-just excuses for their sins, so that they seem to sin out of necessity what they willfully commit. The Lord, the searcher of hearts and minds, who foresees future thoughts in each individual, had said: Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me. Someone could argue and say: I am hindered by poverty, my meager state restrains me so that I cannot practice hospitality. And He dispels this excuse by the simplest precept, that we should wholeheartedly offer a cup of water, and this cold, according to Matthew. He says cold water, not hot, so that the opportunity of poverty and shortage of firewood in heating would not be sought as an excuse. The Apostle instructs similarly to the Galatians: Let him who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches (Gal. 6). And he encourages disciples towards the refreshment of their teachers. And because anyone could plead poverty and evade the command, he solves the imminent question before proposing it by saying: Do not be deceived; God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap (Ibid.).

[Mark 9:42] -- And whoever shall cause one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck, and he were cast into the sea. Although this general sentence can be applied against all who cause someone to stumble, yet according to the context of the speech, it can also be understood as said against the apostles, who, disputing among themselves over who was the greatest, seemed to be contending over dignity with each other. And if they had remained in this vice, they could lose those whom they called to faith through their scandal, while seeing the apostles fighting among themselves over honor. What he said: It is better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, speaks according to the custom of the province, where among the ancient Jews the punishment for greater crimes was that they were drowned in the deep with a stone tied around them. And indeed it is better for an innocent person, however atrocious the temporal punishment, to end his bodily life, than by harming a brother, to deserve eternal death of the soul. And rightly, someone who can be scandalized is called little. For whoever is great, whatever he may see, whatever he may suffer, he does not depart from the faith. But whoever is little in mind and small, he seeks occasions to be scandalized.

Therefore it is necessary for us especially to take care of those who are small in faith, lest by our occasion they are offended and withdraw from the faith, and fall from salvation. It is to be noted certainly, that in our good work, sometimes the scandal of our neighbor must be avoided: but sometimes it is to be utterly disregarded. For in as much as we can avoid the scandal of our neighbors without sin, we ought to. But if scandal arises from the truth, it is more useful to permit scandal to arise, than to abandon the truth. Also, by the millstone, the circular and laborious nature of secular life is expressed, and by the depth of the sea, final damnation is designated. Therefore, whoever has been brought to the appearance of holiness, or destroys others by word or example; truly, it was better for this person to be bound to earthly deeds under an outward appearance until death, than to demonstrate to others the sacred duties in fault as something to imitate. For certainly if he alone fell, somehow the more tolerable punishment of hell would torture him.

[Mark 9:43] -- And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire. Because he had previously taught not to cause those who believe in him to stumble, he now consequently admonishes us how much we should avoid those who cause us to stumble, that is, who strive by word or example to drive us to the ruin of sin. Indeed, he calls our necessary friend our hand, whose work and daily assistance we need. But if such a one wishes to harm us concerning our soul, he is to be excluded from our company, lest if we wish to share a part with the lost in this life, we perish with him in the future life. Which is also added: [Mark 9:44] -- Where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. By the worm he designates the rottenness of hell, just as by the fire he designates the burning, or by the worm he means the late repentance of crimes, which will never cease to sting the conscience of the afflicted in torments: so that the fire is the punishment raging externally, the worm the pain accusing internally.

[Mark 9:45] -- And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter eternal life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell, the unquenchable fire, etc. In the foot, as in the hand, he teaches that dear ones who are incorrigible should be alienated from us, lest through the uncleanness of those whom we cannot correct, we too are polluted and perish. But just as the hand is necessary for us for our work, so such people are called feet because of their service and usefulness in our engagements.

[Mark 9:47] -- And if your eye scandalizes you, cast it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire. In plucking out the eye because of scandal, our same carnal friends, truly spiritual adversaries, are meant. But when we need their counsel and provision, and they try to deceive us with bad advice and turn us onto the path of error, their

company must be entirely abandoned by us. Indeed, the Greek word ”scandal” refers to what we might call a stumbling block or ruin and an occasion of being tripped. Some say ”scandal” in Greek, in Latin ”scruple”. Therefore, he offends his brother who gives him an occasion of ruin by a less correct word or deed. It can also simply be said: If someone seems as necessary to us as a hand, foot, or eye, being useful, diligent, and sharp-sighted, yet causes us scandal and drags us into hell through discordant morals, we should not use or be refreshed by his temporal benefits, to the danger of our souls. Because the Lord has mentioned the worm and eternal fire thrice, it remains to say how we can avoid the stench of the worm and the torment of the fire. It continues:

[Mark 9:49] -- For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. For the stench of worms is usually born from the corruption of flesh and blood. Therefore, fresh meat is seasoned with salt so that, once the blood moisture is dried out, worms cannot breed. Thus, flesh and blood create worms, for carnal pleasure, which is not resisted by the seasoning of continence, generates eternal punishment for the luxurious. Whoever wishes to avoid this stench should strive to season both the body with the salt of continence and the mind with the seasoning of wisdom to restrain it from the stain of error and vice. It is remarkably said: ”For every one shall be salted with fire. What is salted with salt wards off the decay of worms. But what is salted with fire, that is, seasoned with flames sprinkled with salt, not only drives away all contagion of worms but also consumes the very flesh that is so salted. The decrees of the divine law declare it to be usual in the matter of sacrifices that were burned on the altar, where in every sacrifice and offering it was commanded that salt be offered. Thus, salt signifies the sweetness of wisdom, and fire signifies the grace of the Holy Spirit. ”For every one shall be salted with fire” because every chosen person ought to be cleansed from the corruption of carnal desire by spiritual wisdom, so that they may be made a fitting sacrifice for the divine altars.

Thus it is fitting that, after saying ”For every one shall be salted with fire,” it added ”And every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. For he truly exists as the sacrifice of the Lord who, by purifying his body and soul from vices through the love of the Holy Spirit, consecrates himself to God. Not only is such a sacrifice sprinkled with salt, but it is also consumed by fire when not only the contagion of sin is driven away, but even the pleasure of the present life, which is in the flesh, is taken away from the minds of the chosen, and they long with a focused mind for the conversation of future life. Was not the sacrifice salted with sacred fire who said, ”But our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. III)? From where also we expect the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will reform the body of our lowliness, conformed to the body of his glory (Ibid.). For those who, with the most certain hope of future immortality, looked upon their frail body as already reformed in the likeness of the Lord’s resurrection, lived as consecrated victims to God through spiritual fire even

in the present, according to the word of the same apostle: ”I beseech you, brothers, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Rom. XV). We can rightly understand what is said: ”For every one shall be salted with fire.

And every sacrifice shall be salted with salt” (Mark IX), that the altar of God is the heart of the chosen, and the sacrifices to be offered on this altar are the good works of the faithful. In every sacrifice, salt should be offered because no good work exists that does not salt wisdom, cleansing it of all corruption of vain praise, and other perverse or superfluous thoughts. For the care of continence punishes the enticements of the flesh. The fire that consumes sacrifices on the altar is certainly the one of which John said: ”He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Ibid. III); through whom our good works are helped so they may either commence or be perfected, or surely the fire of tribulation through which the patience of the faithful is exercised so that it may have perfect work. Therefore, everyone shall be salted with fire, and the sacrifice shall be salted with salt (Ibid. IX), because every faithful person who wants to avoid the eternal worm of torment must be chastened either by the fire of spiritual grace or by the tribulations coming from outside, so they can become a worthy sacrifice to God. This passage relates to the preceding parts, where the command was given to cut off the scandalizing members: for this is also to be salted with fire, that is, to be exercised by temptations, to deny those close to us and loved ones for the love of Christ.

[Mark 9:50] -- Good salt. But if the salt becomes insipid, with what will you season it? It is good to hear the word of God more frequently, to season the secrets of the heart with the salt of spiritual wisdom, indeed to become the salt of the earth with the apostles themselves, that is, to suffice for the minds of those still wise in earthly matters to be saturated. But if someone, once restored by the seasoning of truth, returns to apostasy, by what other teacher is he corrected, who rejected the sweetness of wisdom he himself tasted, either terrified by the world or enticed by its prosperity? To him aptly fits the saying of the wise man: Who will heal the enchanter struck by the serpent? Certainly, by this opinion, Judas Iscariot and his companions are not unreasonably believed to be specially designated, who, corrupted by greed, did not hesitate both to lose the rank of apostleship and to betray the Lord. Yet, because there are some who, while greater knowledge elevates them, are separated from the fellowship of others, and as if the more they know, the more they depart from the virtue of concord, it is rightly added:

[Mark 9:50] -- Have salt in yourselves, and have peace among yourselves. For by salt indeed is designated the wisdom of the word. Therefore, he who strives to speak wisely should greatly fear lest his eloquence confound the unity of listeners. For salt without peace is not a gift of virtue, but an increase of damnation. For the

better one knows, the worse he sins. And hence without excuse he will deserve punishment, who prudently, if he willed, could have avoided sin.

Chapter 10

[Mark 10:1] -- And from there rising up, he comes into the regions of Judea beyond the Jordan. Up to this point the evangelist Mark narrated those things about the Lord which he did and taught in Galilee. Here he begins to narrate those things which he did, taught, or suffered in Judea. And first indeed beyond the Jordan to the east, then also on this side of the Jordan, when he came to Jericho, Bethany, and Jerusalem. For while the whole province of the Jews is generally called Judea to distinguish it from other nations, more specifically its southern region is called Judea, to distinguish it from Samaria, Galilee, Decapolis, and other regions in the same province.

[Mark 10:1] -- And again the crowds came together around him, and as was his custom, he again taught them. And the Pharisees approached him and questioned him if it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife, testing him. And here one must note the difference in mindset between the crowds and the Pharisees. These came together to be taught and to have their sick healed, as the evangelist Matthew clearly recalls. But those approached to deceive the Savior and Teacher of truth by testing him. Nor is this surprising. For devotion of piety brought these, the goad of envy brought those. They ask, therefore, whether it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause, so that they might trap him in a sort of cunning argument, and whatever he answers, he will be subject to an accusation. If he says that a wife may be divorced for any reason and that others may be taken, the preacher of chastity will seem to be teaching contrary to himself. But if he answers that a wife should not be divorced for any cause, he will be held as guilty of sacrilege and acting against the teaching of Moses and through Moses of God. Therefore, the Lord tempers his response in such a way that he avoids their trap, invoking holy Scripture as testimony and opposing the natural law and the original sentence from God to the secondary one, which was granted not by God’s will but by the necessity of sinners.

[Mark 10:3-5] -- ”What,” he said, ”did Moses command you?” They replied, ”Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.” To which Jesus responded, ”It was because of the hardness of your hearts that he wrote you

this, etc.” What he says is this: Can God be contrary to himself, commanding one thing at first and then breaking his own decree with a new command? It should not be thought so. But Moses, when he saw that due to the desire for subsequent wives, who might be wealthier, younger, or more beautiful, the first wives were either being killed or leading a miserable life, chose to allow discord rather than for hatred and murders to continue and be perpetrated. At the same time, notice that he did not say, because of the hardness of your hearts, God permitted you, but Moses; that, according to the Apostle, it may be seen as the counsel of a man, not a command of God.

[Mark 10:6] -- From the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. This is written in the beginning of Genesis. By saying male and female, He showed that second marriages are to be avoided. For He did not say male and females, as was sought from a prior divorce, but male and female, so that they might be bound in the companionship of one spouse. [Mark 10:7] -- For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife. Similarly, He said, Cleave to his wife, not to wives. [Mark 10:8] -- And the two shall become one flesh. Therefore now they are no longer two, but one flesh. The reward of marriage is that two become one flesh. Chastity joined to the spirit becomes one spirit. [Mark 10:9] -- What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. What God has joined, making one flesh out of man and woman, man cannot separate, except perhaps God alone. Man separates when, due to the desire for a second wife, he dismisses the first. God separates whom He has joined, when by mutual consent, for the service of God, because the time is short, thus we have wives as though we had none.

[Mark 10:10] -- And in the house again, His disciples asked Him about the same matter. And He said to them: Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery. In Matthew, it is written more fully: Whoever divorces his wife except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery (Matthew V). [Mark 10:12] -- Therefore, there is only one carnal cause, fornication: and one spiritual cause, the fear of God, so that a wife may be dismissed, as many are read to have done for the sake of religion. But no cause is prescribed by God’s law, for the one who is left to marry another while she lives. [Mark 10:13] -- And they brought little children to Him that He might touch them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Not that they did not want them to be blessed by the voice and hand of the Savior, but because, not yet having complete faith, they thought He would be worn out by the importunity of those who brought them.

[Mark 10:14] -- When Jesus saw them, He was indignant and said to them, ”Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” He said significantly, ”to such as these,” not ”to these,” to show

that it is not age that reigns, but character; and that the reward is promised to those who have similar innocence and simplicity. The Apostle also agrees with this sentiment: ”Brothers, do not be children in understanding, but in malice be children, and in understanding be perfect.” [Mark 10:15] -- Amen, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. As a child does not persist in anger, does not remember harm done, does not delight in seeing a beautiful woman, does not think one thing and speak another; so you, unless you have such innocence and purity of mind, cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Otherwise, we are commanded to receive the kingdom of God, that is, the teaching of the Gospel, like little children, because as a child does not contradict his teachers in learning, nor constructs arguments and words against them resisting, but faithfully receives what is taught, and with fear obeys and is quiet; so we too in obeying must simply and without any objection act according to the words of the Lord.

[Mark 10:16] -- And embracing them and laying His hands on them, He blessed them. By embracing, He blessed the children to signify that the humble in spirit are worthy of His blessing, grace, and love. [Mark 10:17] -- And as He went out onto the road, a certain man ran up, knelt before Him, and asked Him, saying, etc. I believe that this seeker of eternal life had heard from the Lord that only those who wish to be like little children are worthy of entering the kingdom of heaven, and therefore, being careful, he sought to know more surely, not through parables but openly, by what merits of deeds he might obtain eternal life.

[Mark 10:18] -- But Jesus said to him, ”Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.” Because he had called the teacher good and had not confessed him as God or the Son of God, he learned that, although a holy man, in comparison to God, no one is good, about whom it is said, ”Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good” (Psalm 106). However, the one God who is good is not to be understood as the Father alone, but also the Son who says, ”I am the good shepherd” (John 10); and also the Holy Spirit, because the Father will give the good Spirit from heaven to those asking him (Luke 11), that is, the one and indivisible Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is the only and one God, who is good. Therefore, the Lord does not deny that he is good, but signifies that he is God; he does not deny that he is a good teacher, but testifies that no teacher is good except God. This is the chastity of youthful innocence, which is set before us to be imitated if we want to enter the kingdom of God. It should indeed be noted that justice, kept to the time of the law, not only conferred the good things of the earth but also eternal life to its practitioners.

[Mark 10:20] -- And he, answering, said, ”Teacher, I have observed all these things from my youth,” etc. This man should not be thought to have tempted the Lord with any vow (as some have thought), nor to have lied about his life when he said

that he had kept the commandments of the law, but simply to have confessed how he lived. Because if he were held guilty of lying or hypocrisy, by no means, having looked into the secrets of his heart, would Jesus be said to love him. For the Lord loves those who keep the commands of the law, although lesser; but nonetheless, he shows them what in the law was lesser, to those who wish to be perfect because he did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill. To which indeed pertains what is consequently joined here. [Mark 10:21] -- Go, sell whatever you have, and give, etc. Whoever wishes to be perfect ought to sell what he has, and not sell part of it like Ananias and Sapphira, but sell everything, and when he has sold it, give everything to the poor, and thus prepare for himself a treasure in the kingdom of heaven. Nor is this sufficient for perfection unless, after despising riches, he follows the Savior, that is, having forsaken evil, he does good. For it is easier to despise a purse than a will. Many, leaving behind riches, do not follow the Lord. However, he follows the Lord who is His imitator and walks in His footsteps. For he who says he believes in Christ ought to walk as He walked.

[Mark 10:22] -- He who, saddened by the word, went away grieving. For he had many possessions. This is the sadness that leads to death. The cause of the sadness is rendered, because he had many possessions, that is, thorns and thistles arising, which choked the Lord's seed. [Mark 10:23] -- And looking around, Jesus said to His disciples: How difficult it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom, etc. It is clear indeed that those who strive here to multiply riches neglect to seek the joys of another life: but there is much difference between having and loving riches. Many indeed, having them, do not love; many, not having them, love. Similarly, others both have and love. Others rejoice neither to have nor to love the riches of the world, whose state is safer, because they can say with the Apostle: For to us the world is crucified, and we to the world (Gal. V). Hence Solomon does not say, he who has, but he who loves riches will not enjoy their fruits (Eccl. V). And the Lord Himself, explaining to the disciples who were amazed at the words of this sentence, added saying:

[Mark 10:24] -- Little children, how difficult it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God. Where it must be noted that he did not say, how impossible, but how difficult it is. For what is impossible cannot be done at all. What is difficult can be done with toil. For it can indeed be done, but with great labor, with the help of God's grace, that those who have riches, or trust in riches, divesting themselves of the fetters of avarice, may enter the gate of the heavenly kingdom: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle," etc. (Matt. XIX). If it is easier for a camel, with its large and enormous limbs, to penetrate the narrow eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, then no rich man shall enter the kingdom of God. And how is it that in the Gospel, Matthew, Zacchaeus, and Joseph, or in the Old Testament, many rich men entered the kingdom of God? Unless perhaps because they learned, by the inspiration of the Lord, to consider

riches as nothing or to forsake them completely from their whole heart. For did David trust in the riches of his kingdom? Who also sings of himself: ”For I am poor and needy” (Psalm XXIV); and exhorts others, ”If riches increase, do not set your heart on them” (Psalm LXI). I believe he did not dare to say, do not receive them.

Is it believable that Abraham preferred his wealth to the Lord, for whom he did not hesitate to strike his only heir? In a higher sense, it is easier for Christ to suffer for the lovers of the world than for the lovers of the world to be converted to Christ. For by the name of the camel, he wanted himself to be understood, who willingly bore the burdens of our humility and infirmity. For in whom is it more clearly understood than in him, what is written: ”The greater you are, humble yourself in all things” (Eccli. III)? By the needle he signifies the nails, by the nails the sufferings endured in his passion. Therefore, he says the eye of the needle is the straits of his passion. By which torn, he condescended to mend, that is, to restore as it were, the garments of our nature; so that after the fall, being better reformed, we may rejoice at the testimony of the Apostle saying: ”For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. III).

[Mark 10:26] -- And they were more astonished, saying to themselves, ”And who can be saved?” To which this response refers, although the crowd of the poor, which could have been saved by the ruin of the rich, is incomparably greater, unless they understood that all who love riches, even if they cannot obtain them, are counted among the number of the rich. [Mark 10:27] -- And Jesus, looking at them, said, ”With men it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.” It is not to be understood that the greedy and proud, who were signified by the name of that rich man, will enter the kingdom of heaven with their greed and pride: but it is possible for God, that through His word, as we see both to have been done and to be done daily, that they are converted from the greed for temporal things to the love of eternal things, and from pernicious pride to salutary humility.

[Mark 10:28] -- Peter began to say to Him, ”Behold, we have left everything and have followed You.” Great confidence—Peter was a fisherman, he was not rich, he sought food by hand and skill, and yet he speaks confidently, ”We have left everything.” And because it is not enough only to leave, he adds what is perfect: ”And have followed You.” We have done what You commanded, what then will You give us as a reward?

[Mark 10:29-30] -- Jesus responded and said: Amen I say to you: There is no one who has left house, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or fields for my sake, and for the sake of the Gospel, who will not receive a hundred times as much now in this time, houses, and brothers, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and fields, with persecutions, and in the age to come, eternal life. Some, using this kind of statement as an occasion, propagate the Jewish fable of a thousand-year reign after the resurrection of the just, during which all that we

have given up for God's sake will be repaid to us a hundredfold, and eternal life will be granted besides. And the foolish do not see that, even if in other matters the promise is worthy, the remuneration of wives a hundred times over, according to other evangelists, would appear scandalous, especially since the Lord Himself testifies that in the resurrection there will be no marrying, and asserts that those things given up for His sake will be received in this present time with persecutions. But those Chiliasists confirm that all those persecutions, like other contrary things, are wholly absent from their millennium. Therefore, this is the sense: Whoever has left carnal things for the Gospel of Christ will receive spiritual goods, which, in their worth and merit, will be as if a hundredfold number were compared to a small number.

Because clearly, from the brothers and associates of his purpose, who are bound to him in spiritual glue, he will receive much greater affection even in this life. Read the Acts of the Apostles, where it says that the heart and soul of the multitude of believers were one, and all things were common among them, and there was no needy person among them (Acts 4), who had left their own for the Lord's sake. Of whom also the Apostle says, "As having nothing, and yet possessing everything" (2 Cor. 6). Certainly, what he says, "He will receive a hundred times as much now in this time, houses, and brothers, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and fields with persecutions" (Mark 10), could be understood as a deeper signification. For the number one hundred, transferred from the left to the right, although it seems to hold the same figure in the bending of the fingers which ten had in the left, it greatly surpasses in magnitude. Because indeed, those who despise temporal things for the kingdom of God, even in this life full of persecutions, taste the joy of the same kingdom with certain faith, and in the expectation of the heavenly homeland (which is rightly signified in the right hand), they enjoy the most sincere love of all the elect equally.

But because many do not complete the pursuit of virtues with the same intention of piety with which they begin, but either cool down after receiving the love of virtues or completely relapse into the mire of crimes, a terrifying sentence is immediately added.

[Mark 10:31] -- "But many that are first shall be last, and the last first. For example, see Judas, who turned from an apostle into an apostate, and you will say that many that are first shall be last; see the thief on the cross, who became a confessor, and on the same day he was crucified for his sins, rejoicing in paradise with Christ by the grace of faith, and you will say that the last shall be first. But also every day we see many in lay attire excelling in the great merits of life, and others who, from their earliest age, have been fervent in spiritual zeal, yet at the end become sluggish in idleness, growing weak, and finishing in the flesh what they began in the spirit with lazy foolishness. [Mark 10:32] -- And they were on the way going

up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going ahead of them, and they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. Therefore, the disciples, proceeding with the Lord towards Jerusalem, were amazed and afraid because they remembered his word in which he had predicted that he would suffer much from the chief priests and scribes and would be killed, fearing that they themselves might be killed with him, or at least that he whose life and teaching they rejoiced in, would fall into the hands of his enemies.

[Mark 10:32] -- And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was going to happen to him. 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and will deliver him to the Gentiles, and they will mock him, and will spit on him, and will scourge him, and will kill him, and after three days he will rise again.' Our Redeemer, foreseeing that his passion would disturb the spirits of his disciples, foretold to them both the penalty of his passion and the glory of his resurrection well in advance, so that when they saw him dying (as had been foretold), they might not doubt that he would also rise again. Here he most clearly refutes the madness of the pagans, who are accustomed to ridicule his cross, when he shows both the time of his approaching passion as if he were foreseeing future events, and approaches the place of his death as if he were unafraid."

[Mark 10:35] -- And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come to him, saying: Master, we desire that whatsoever we shall ask, thou wouldst do it for us. And he said to them: What will you that I should do for you? And they said: Grant to us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. Matthew writes that their mother asked the Lord for this on their behalf; but Mark, wishing to reveal their desire and counsel to the readers, omits the intervening mother, and says rather that they themselves asked, which he knew had been asked at their request through the mother. Finally, the Lord, according to both Evangelists, replied not to the mother but to them: [Mark 10:38] -- You know not what you ask. Can you drink of the cup that I drink of, or be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized? And they said to him: We can. They know not what they ask, who seek from the Lord the seat of glory which they had not yet deserved. Indeed, the summit of honor was already pleasing to them, but first they had to traverse the path of labor. They desired to reign on high with Christ, but first they had to suffer humbly for Christ. For by the term of the cup or baptism, he designates the passion of martyrdom, through which it became fitting for both him and them to be perfected. Hence, elsewhere, he speaks of his passion: But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished (Luke 12)? And as he approached his passion, he prayed, saying: Father, if thou wilt, remove this cup from me (Mark 14).

[Mark 10:39] -- But Jesus said to them, ”You shall indeed drink the cup that I drink of, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you shall be baptized. The question arises, in what manner did the sons of Zebedee, that is, James and John, drink the cup of martyrdom, or how were they baptized with the baptism of the Lord, when Scripture narrates that only the Apostle James was beheaded by Herod; however, John ended his life by natural death. But if we read the ecclesiastical histories, in which it is reported that he too, for martyrdom, was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil, and then emerged as a champion to receive the crown of Christ and was immediately exiled to the island of Patmos, we will see that his spirit did not lack martyrdom, and that John drank the cup of confession, which the three youths drank in the fiery furnace, even though the persecutor did not shed his blood. But he adds:

[Mark 10:40] -- To sit at my right hand or at my left hand is not mine to give to you, but to those for whom it is prepared, is thus to be understood: The kingdom of heaven is not for the giver, but for the receiver. For there is no respect of persons with God (Romans II), but whoever presents himself worthy of the kingdom of heaven, he will receive what is prepared not for the person, but for the life. If therefore you are such as who will attain the kingdom of heaven, which my Father has prepared for those who triumph and are victorious, you too shall receive it. Likewise, it is not mine to give to you, but to those for whom it is prepared. It is not mine to give to the proud, for this is what you still are. But if you wish to receive it, cease to be what you are. It is prepared for others, and you be those others, and it shall be prepared for you. What does it mean, be others? First humble yourselves, who now wish to be exalted.

[Mark 10:41] -- And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant about James and John. The ten apostles did not become indignant with the mother of the sons of Zebedee, nor did they attribute the audacity of the request to the woman, but to the sons, who, unaware of their own measure, were inflamed with excessive desire. To whom also the Lord had said: You do not know what you are asking. [Mark 10:42] -- But Jesus, calling them, said to them: You know that those who are considered to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it is not so among you, etc. Humble and meek teacher, he neither reproaches the two asking with excessive greed, nor does he rebuke the remaining ten with indignation and envy, but he sets such an example, by which he teaches that he is greater who is lesser, and that he becomes the master who is the servant of all. Therefore, in vain do those ask immoderately, or do these ones grieve over the desire for greatness, since one comes to the pinnacle of virtues not by power, but by humility. Finally, he proposes his own example, so that if his words were lightly esteemed, they might blush at his deeds. And he says:

[Mark 10:45] -- For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Note what we have often said, that he who serves is called the Son of Man, and to give his life as a ransom for many; when he assumed the form of a servant, to shed his blood for the world. And he did not say, to give his life as a ransom for all, but for many, that is, for those who were willing to believe.

[Mark 10:46] -- And they come to Jericho. And as he was going out of Jericho with his disciples and a large crowd, Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, a blind man, was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, etc. Matthew, in this place, says two blind men were sitting by the roadside and crying out to the Lord, who were illuminated. But Luke says that as he approached Jericho, a blind man was illuminated by him in a similar order. No wise person should assert that the Evangelists write contrary to each other, but rather that one writes more fully what the other omits. Indeed, Matthew reports that the Lord illuminated two blind men, while Mark chose to mention one being illuminated, yet does not deny the presence of the other, which should be understood as one of them being particularly notable. This is also sufficiently clear by the fact that Mark mentioned both his name and his father's name, which rarely happens with those healed by the Lord, and only because Jesus also expressed by name Jairus, the synagogue leader, whose daughter Jesus raised. It shows further by this that the synagogue leader was notable in that place. Undoubtedly, therefore, Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, having fallen from some great fortune, was of very well-known and famous misery, who not only was blind but also sat begging.

Hence, Mark wanted to mention only him, as his illumination brought such fame to the miracle as his notable calamity. Therefore, the blind whom the Lord illuminated by calling out to him are people ignorant of the true light (which is Christ), but, given to recognize and confess their blindness and to seek the light of truth. Jericho, which is said to be interpreted as "moon," signifies the defect of our mutability and mortality. This is clarified especially by that parable in the Gospel where a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho fell among robbers, and, wounded and stripped by them, was brought back to health through the compassion of the Samaritan, signaling that humankind, falling from the vision of supreme peace into the deadly desire of this world, is brought back through the Savior to the life which it had lost by erring. Therefore, the Lord approaching Jericho restored vision to the blind, because coming in the flesh and approaching passion, he brought many to the faith and confession of divine knowledge. For it was not in the early times of his incarnation, but a few years before he suffered, that is, after he began to be thirty years old, he exhibited to the world the ministry of the word by which it was illuminated. Yet, departing from Jericho, he illuminated the blind because, rising from the dead and ascending to heaven, he sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles and dispersed them to illuminate all the nations of the world.

Moreover, approaching Jericho, he illuminated one, and departing from Jericho, he illuminated two. This typifies that before his passion, he preached to only one people, the Jews, but after his resurrection and ascension, he more openly revealed through the apostles both to Jews and Gentiles the mysteries of his eternal divinity and the humanity he assumed. And Mark writes that he illuminated one, looking specifically to the salvation of the Gentiles, who were utterly deprived of the light of truth. Thus, as notable as was the blindness of their infidelity, so notable became the grace of the Savior illuminating them. And rightly, Mark, who was writing the Gospel among the Gentiles, says one was illuminated, matching the figure of those he was teaching to faith and salvation. Matthew, however, who wrote his Gospel for believers from the Hebrews, which was also to come to the knowledge of the Gentiles, rightly says two were illuminated, to teach that the same grace of faith pertains to both peoples. This is also maintained in the ensuing reading of the donkey on which the Lord deigned to sit. Matthew, who evangelized to the faithful from the Jews, reports both a donkey and its colt brought to the Lord. The other three Evangelists, however, who wrote for the Church gathered from the nations, mention only the donkey brought to the Lord, entirely silent about the mother. They simply figure the faith of the Gentiles; while Matthew also indicates by the order of his narrative that the faithful Gentile people were born from the faithful synagogue.

Therefore, as the Lord and his disciples, and a large crowd, were departing from Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging; because with the Lord ascending to heaven, many faithful following, and indeed all the elect from the beginning of the world entering with him into the gate of the heavenly kingdom, immediately the Gentile people, long blind in unbelief, having heard of the coming of the Savior, began to have the hope of their salvation and illumination. It is said appropriately that he was sitting by the way begging. For one begs sitting by the way who, not yet entering the path of truth or knowing it, strives with diligent intention and desire for salvation to reach it, and persistently investigates what true religious worship is. This is especially shown in the story of the centurion Cornelius, who, by frequent prayers, prayed to the God he worshiped to deign to illuminate him. What does it mean to hear in passing, but to restore light while standing, if not that by his humanity he pitied, and by the power of his divinity he dispelled the darkness from us? For he who was born and suffered for us, who rose and ascended into heaven, as it were passed; because this action was temporal. But standing, he illuminated the blind because the eternity of the Word does not pass as that dispensation did, but remains renewing all things. To stand of God is to arrange all things in unchangeable thought.

Therefore, he who heard the voice of the petitioner in passing, restored light standing. For although he endured temporal things for us, he nevertheless gave us light

from that which does not know the change of mutability. But he who worshiped God, prayed frequently to deign to illuminate him.

[Mark 10:47-48] -- When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, ”Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.” And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, ”Son of David, have mercy on me.” Hearing Jesus, the blind man prays for mercy, and many were trying to prevent him from calling out, but he does not desist. For the people of the nations, having recognized the fame of the name of Christ, sought to become His partakers; many opposed, first the Jews, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, then also the Gentiles frequently exerted a sharper and stronger persecution so that the world, destined to receive light and healing from Christ, would not call upon Him. Nevertheless, the insane fury of those attacking could not deprive those who were predestined to eternal life of the salvation arranged for them.

[Mark 10:49] -- And Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Here stands He who previously was passing by. In this matter, the Lord intimates something from which knowledge of His humanity and divinity can be usefully understood. For He heard the blind man crying out while passing by, but standing, He exhibited the miracle of illumination. And they called the blind man, saying to him, ”Take heart; rise, He is calling you.” The Lord calls the blind man crying out to Him, when to the people of nations desiring the knowledge of truth, He entrusts the word of faith through holy preachers. Truly, those who call the blind man, tell him to take heart, to rise, and come to the Lord. When preaching the word to the untaught, they tell them to have hope of salvation, to arise from the lethargy of vices, and to equip themselves for the pursuit of virtues by which they may merit illumination. Saying with the prophet: ”Approach him and be enlightened” (Psalm 34); and again: ”Arise, you who sleep, and rise from the dead, and Christ will illuminate you” (Ephesians 5). And because the early Church from the Gentiles was so fervent with the desire for the promised light in Christ, that many, having forsaken the world’s resources, followed the evangelical life naked, in order to merit to have eternal treasure in heaven, it is rightly added about the blind man being illuminated:

[Mark 10:50] -- Throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to him. Indeed, he throws off his cloak and springs up so that, arriving, he might be illuminated by Christ, who, casting off the fetters of the world, hurries toward the giver of eternal light with an unencumbered mind. [Mark 10:51] -- And Jesus, responding, said to him: What do you want me to do for you? The blind man said to him: Rabboni, that I may see. Did the one who could restore light not know what the blind man wanted? But he wants this to be requested, which he foresees that we should ask and that he should grant. For he persistently urges us to prayer and says: For your Father knows what you need before you ask him (Matthew 6:8). Therefore, for this reason,

he requires that it be asked; for this, he requires that the heart be stirred to prayer. Hence also the blind man immediately adds: Rabboni, that I may see. Behold, the blind man asks light from the Lord, not gold. He considers it of little value to seek anything outside the light, for even if a blind man can possess anything, without light he cannot see what he has. Let us imitate him whom we have heard to be saved both in body and mind. Let us not seek false riches, not earthly gifts, not transient honors from the Lord, but light. Indeed, that light which we can see with the holy angels, which neither a beginning initiates nor an end confines. To that light indeed the way is faith. Hence rightly and by illuminating the blind man, the response is given at once.

[Mark 10:52] -- Go, your faith has made you well. And immediately, he said, he saw, and followed him on the way. He sees and follows, who does what he understands to be good. He sees, however, but does not follow, who understands the good indeed, but disregards doing it well. For he follows Jesus the Lord, who imitates. Hence He says: If anyone serves me, let him follow me (John XII). Therefore, let us consider the path He walks, so that we may deserve to follow. Behold, although He is the Lord and creator of angels, about to assume our nature which He created, He came into the womb of a virgin. Nevertheless, He did not wish to be born in this world among the rich, He chose poor parents, and thus the lamb which was to be offered for Him was absent, the mother found young doves and a pair of turtledoves for the sacrifice. He wished to prosper in this world, endured reproaches and mockery, spits, lashes, slaps, a crown of thorns, and the cross. And because we fell from internal joy through the delight of corporeal things, He showed with what bitterness we may return there.

Chapter 11

[Mark 11:1] -- And when they were approaching Jerusalem, and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, and said to them: Go into the village opposite you. Bethany is a small village or town on the slope of the Mount of Olives, about fifteen stades from Jerusalem, as the evangelist John manifests, where Lazarus was raised from the dead, whose tomb is now demonstrated there with a constructed church. Bethany, moreover, is called the house of obedience. And suitably the Lord, about to come to Jerusalem and redeem the world with his blood, first elevated Bethany by the dignity of his presence, and there he was anointed with mystical chrism by a devout woman, because undoubtedly, before his passion, teaching many, he made for himself a house of obedience where he would dwell through the Spirit of grace, and being delighted by their pious action, he himself was anointed as if with a fragrant ointment. Hence this city is said to be situated on the Mount of Olives, to designate that the Church by the grace of its founder is to be saved, who refreshes us with the anointing of spiritual charisms and the eternal light of knowledge and piety. From whence elsewhere, when he said: A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, he immediately added: Neither do they light a lamp and put it under a bushel (Matt. V).

Because the same Mount of Olives, that is, the highest distributor of spiritual graces, who elevates his city to be prominent, also anoints it with the oil of gladness so it can shine, lest it fail. And because he did not want the light to be placed under a bushel, he sent the disciples into the village opposite them, that is, he sent teachers who would penetrate unlearned and barbarous places of the whole world, like the walls of a village set opposite, by evangelizing. And rightly two are sent, either for the knowledge of truth and purity of action, or for the sacrament of twin love, namely of God and neighbor, to be preached throughout the whole world.

[Mark 11:2] -- And immediately upon entering it, you will find a colt tied, upon which no man has yet sat. Untie it and bring it. And if anyone says to you: What are you doing? say: Because the Lord needs it, and immediately he will send it here. Entering the world, the holy preachers found the people of the nations ensnared by the bonds of perfidy. For each was bound by the cords of their sins;

not only of the nations, but also of the Jews. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. III). Therefore, in Matthew, the donkey together with the colt is found tied. The donkey, indeed, which was yoked and tamed, represents the Synagogue that bore the yoke of the law, while the colt of the donkey, untamed and free, signifies the people of the nations. Upon which no man has yet sat, because no rational teacher had yet applied the restraining bridle of correction, by which he might compel the tongue to refrain from evil or to go on the narrow path of life, or provided the garments of salvation by which they would be spiritually warmed, through beneficial advice for the people of the nations. A man would sit upon it if any rational person corrected its foolishness by suppressing it. Therefore, not unreasonably can the two disciples assigned to present the animals to the Lord be understood as the two orders of preachers, one directed to the Gentiles, the other to the circumcision.

[Mark 11:4] -- And going, they found the colt tied outside the gate at the crossroads, and they untied it. The colt is rightly found outside the gate at the crossroads. The gate, indeed, is He who says: I am the gate for the sheep. Through me, if anyone enters he will be saved, and he will go in and out and find pasture. This colt, that is, the people of the nations, lacked these pastures of life, as they still stood tied outside this gate at the crossroads. And rightly at the crossroads, because they did not hold a certain single path of life and faith, but followed many uncertain and erring paths of heresies. [Mark 11:5] -- And some of those standing there said to them, ”What are you doing untying the colt?” In the Gospel of Luke, it is written thus: ”So those who were sent went and found it just as He had told them, a colt standing there. As they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, ’What are you untying the colt for?’ ” And quite appropriately. For it had many owners, since it was not given to one doctrine and superstition, but miserably carried off into various and diverse errors at the whim of unclean spirits, proceeding to mute idols as led. Hence, by a certain customary usage of Scripture, it is said to be common, which is unclean. Just as the voice from heaven says to Peter, ”What God has cleansed, you must not call common” (Acts 10). Because he who is holy belongs to God alone and is shared with no one. But he who is a sinner and unclean belongs to many. For many demons possess him, and thus he is called common.

[Mark 11:7] -- They said to them as Jesus had commanded, and they let them go, and they brought the colt to Jesus. Those who had opposed untying the colt quieted upon hearing the name of the Lord. Because the masters of errors, who resisted the teachers of the gentiles coming to salvation, defended their darkness until, with miracles attesting, the power of the true owner and Lord shone forth. But after the power of the Lord’s faith appeared, with the complaints of the adversaries giving way, the assembly of believers was freely brought to God, whom they carried in their hearts. [Mark 11:7] -- And they put their garments on it, and He sat on it. The garments of the apostles can be understood as the doctrine of virtues, the

explanation of Scriptures, or certainly the varieties of ecclesiastical doctrines, by which those hearts of men, formerly bare and cold, are covered so they may be made worthy of Christ as the rider.

[Mark 11:8] -- But many spread their garments on the way. When the Lord was borne on a donkey, many spread their garments on the way, because the holy martyrs, stripping themselves of their own fleshly clothing, prepare the way for the simpler servants of God with their blood, so that, with an unhindered step of mind, they may proceed to the walls of the heavenly city where Jesus leads. Likewise, our Savior tends towards Jerusalem sitting on a donkey when he, ruling the soul of each believer, that is, his beast of burden, leads to the inner vision of peace. He also sits on the beast when he universally presides over the holy Church and inflames it with a desire for heavenly peace. But many spread their garments on the way, for they subjugate their bodies through abstinence to prepare the way to the mind, or they present good examples to those who follow.

[Mark 11:8] -- But others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them on the road. And those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting: Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. They cut branches or twigs from the trees, who in the teaching of truth extract words and sentences of the Fathers from their eloquence, and submit these on the way of God to the mind of a coming listener with humble preaching. But those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting: Hosanna. Indeed, the Jewish people went ahead, the Gentiles followed. And because all the chosen, whether they could have been in Judea or those who now exist in the Church, believed and believe in the Mediator of God and men, those who go ahead and those who follow shouted Hosanna. Hosanna is said in Latin as save us. From Him, both the former sought salvation, and the present seek. They confess the blessed one who comes in the name of the Lord, because there is one hope, one faith of the preceding and following peoples. For just as they were healed by witnessing His passion and resurrection, so we are saved by His past passion and by His resurrection enduring through the ages. For whom our ancestors from the Jewish people believed and loved to come, this one we believe has come and love, and we are kindled with desire for Him, so that we may behold Him face to face.

[Mark 11:10] -- Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David. Hosanna in the highest. And he entered Jerusalem into the temple, etc. We read in the Gospel of John that the crowds, having been fed with five loaves and two fishes, wanted to seize Jesus and make him king; but to prevent this from happening, he fled to the mountain and prayed. Now, however, as he comes to Jerusalem to suffer, he does not avoid those who make him king, who lead him to the royal city with a glorious procession and hymns worthy of the Son of God and king; he does not suppress the voices of those who proclaim the restoration of the kingdom of patriarch David

in him and the recovery of the blessings of old. Why, then, does he now willingly embrace what he avoided before by fleeing, and not refuse to accept the kingdom, which while still living in the world he did not wish to receive, but now, about to depart from the world through the passion of the cross, he does not refuse to accept, unless it is to openly teach that he is a king not of a temporal and earthly, but of an eternal empire in heaven? To which kingdom indeed he would arrive through the contempt of death, the glory of resurrection, and the triumph of ascension. Hence it is that after the resurrection, appearing to the disciples, he said:

All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me, and other things of the same place. It should certainly be noted how great a consonance there is between the crowd praising the Lord and the voice of the archangel Gabriel announcing to the virgin mother, who said: He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever (Luke I). Now, the Lord took the seat or kingdom of David to call the people, to whom David once provided the reins of the temporal kingdom as well as examples of justice, and whom they were accustomed to inspire with the modulations of spiritual hymns to faith and love for their Creator, to the heavenly and immortal kingdom by means of words, gifts, deeds, and promises worthy of such a mediator between God and men, and to lead them to the very vision of God the Father. In this it is joined: Hosanna in the highest, that is, salvation. This clearly shows that the coming of Christ is not only the salvation of men but of the whole world; uniting the earthly with the heavenly, so that every knee shall bow to him, of those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. It should certainly be noted that the word Hosanna, a Hebrew word, is composed of two parts, corrupted and intact.

For save or save us is said by them Osi, while anna is an interjection of one who is beseeching. Just as among the Latins there is an interjection for one who is in pain, ”heu,” and an interjection for one who is marveling, ”papae. Finally, in the hundred and seventeenth psalm, where the seventy interpreters translated ”O Lord, save me,” in Hebrew it is written: Anna Adonai, osi anna. This our interpreter Jerome, elucidating more diligently, translated thus: I beseech you, O Lord, save I beseech. For it signifies the same thing, ”O Lord,” through the interjection of beseeching, as ”I beseech you, O Lord,” through the very word of supplication. Hosanna thus signifies ”save, I beseech,” with the vowel letter i, which terminates the first word when it is perfectly said osi, being consumed by the force of the vowel letter a, with which the following word begins anna. Which the metrical poets call synaloepha in scanning verses, although when scanning they leap over the written letter; however, in this word Hosanna, the letter i is neither even written, but with the sense of the speakers preserved, is utterly extinguished.

[Mark 11:11] -- And he entered Jerusalem into the temple. Having entered the city, he first went to the temple, showing us the form of religion which we should follow. So that when by chance we enter a village or town or any other place where there is a house dedicated to the worship of God, we first go to this; and, after we have commended ourselves to the Lord through the duty of prayers, we then withdraw to attend to the temporal business for which we came. However, as the time of the Passion approached, the Lord wished to draw near to the place of the Passion and remain there, where at the appointed and predetermined time he could be found by those through whom the Passion was to be accomplished. Through this, he also intimated to all those hearing that he would face death not unwillingly, as the profane thought, but of his own will. When the hour was approaching, he boldly went to the place where he had foretold far in advance through himself and his prophets that he would suffer. It should be noted that this entry of his into Jerusalem occurred five days before Passover, during which he decided to fulfill the mystery of his most holy Passion. For John narrates that six days before Passover, he came to Bethany, where a supper was made for him, and many reclining at the table, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, anointed him with mystical ointment;

and the next day, sitting on a donkey, with a large crowd meeting him with palms, he came to Jerusalem. Here, not only the harmony in things but also in the times of the Old and New Testaments, the shadow and the truth, the law and the Gospel, must not be passed over in silence. For it is written in the law, with the Lord speaking to Moses and Aaron: ”This month shall be for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Speak to the whole congregation of Israel, and say to them: On the tenth day of this month, every man shall take a lamb according to their ancestral houses, a lamb for each household. And shortly after: ”And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight” (Exodus 12). Therefore, on the tenth day of the first month, the lamb to be sacrificed at Passover was commanded to be brought into the house, because also on the tenth day of the same month, that is, five days before Passover, the Lord was to enter the city in which he would suffer.

And just as the lamb chosen from the whole flock awaited the certain day of its sacrifice, so also the Lord, as the whole council of elders and leaders conspired against him, steadfastly awaited the hour in which he would offer himself as a sacrifice to God and a victim in the odor of sweetness for the salvation of the world. The lamb was sacrificed on the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight, and the Lord, at the same hour, eating the lamb with his disciples, where he completed the decrees of the legal Passover, immediately went out with them to the place of prayer, where, being captured and bound by the Jews, he began at once the mysteries of his blessed suffering.

[Mark 11:11] -- And having looked around at everything, since it was already evening, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. He did not do this just once; but for all five days after he had gone up to Jerusalem until the time of the Passion, he was accustomed to do this very thing: that during the day he would teach in the temple, but at night he would go out and spend the night on the Mount of Olives, as we read in Luke. For by teaching the unbelievers, he diligently fulfilled the duty of correction. However, by staying among the faithful, he graciously exhibited the kindness of his favor to them. It is well noted that, after looking around at everything, he went out to Bethany. Indeed, the internal judge examines the hearts of all, and when he does not find a place to rest his head among those who oppose and resist the truth, he withdraws to the faithful and rejoices in making a dwelling with the Father in those who obey the word. For Bethany is called the house of obedience. This also must be understood, that the Lord was of such great poverty, and so did not flatter anyone, that he found no host, no lodging in that greatest city, but stayed in the small country place with Lazarus and his sisters. For their village is Bethany.

[Mark 11:12] -- And the next day, when they went out from Bethany, he was hungry. He was hungry, either showing the truth of human flesh or desiring the salvation of believers, burning with zeal against the unbelief of Israel.

[Mark 11:13] -- And when he saw from afar a fig tree having leaves, he went to see if perhaps he might find anything on it. And when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. And answering, Jesus said to it, ”May no one ever eat fruit from you again. Just as the Lord was accustomed to saying many things in parables, so also he was accustomed to doing certain things in parables. For what reason would there be for him to seek fruit on a fig tree when he was hungry, when any man knew that it was not yet the time for figs, and to condemn the tree to an eternal curse for not having fruit at that time, unless, by this act, he intended to admonish the people whom he was teaching by word, that no one producing leaves but not fruit, that is, displaying the words of righteousness without deeds, would deserve to be cut down and cast into the fire? For every tree is known not by its flowers, not by its leaves, but by its fruit; that is, every man is tested and proven not by the reputation of fame or the pomp of words, but by the testimony of their actions. Therefore, the Lord, being hungry, saw a fig tree having leaves and came to seek fruit on it, but did not find any.

Because desiring the salvation of the human race, he saw Judea having the words of the law and the prophets, and came to test, by teaching, correcting, and performing miracles, if he might find any fruit of faith and life in their hearts. But because the fig tree was found to have leaves without fruit, it is condemned, because Judea, which resounded with the words of Scripture without deeds, deserved to be punished with vengeance. However, I would say this, not that the entire Synagogue

was rejected, from which certainly the early Church was constructed. But that portion of the Synagogue which refused to feed the hungry Christ with good works deservedly earned condemnation, preferring to be overshadowed by the leaves of spiritual words rather than to be adorned with the fruits of the Spirit. To them, he says elsewhere: ”I go, and you will seek me, and in your sin you will die” (John 5:34). This passage, indeed, fits with that parable of his, where he says: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and did not find any. He then said to the vinedresser: Behold, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down, why does it even occupy the ground? But he answered and said to him: Lord, leave it for this year also, until I dig around it and put manure on it. And if it bears fruit, well;

but if not, you shall cut it down (Luke 13:6-9). The vinedresser is the order of the apostles and spiritual doctors, who diligently called the Synagogue to repentance, lest it perish, and strove to supplicate the Lord for its salvation. Especially James, the brother of the Lord, who was put in charge of governing the Church in Jerusalem. But because that Synagogue neither in the legal edicts, nor in the prophetic declarations, nor in the grace of the shining Gospel itself, agreed to bear the fruit of obedience, it remained a sterile fig tree for three years and was rejected by the Lord and overturned by eternal malediction. For it was not only cast away from the lot of the elect, but also cut off from the very ground it occupied in vain. But also you, if you do not wish to hear in judgment from Christ: Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire, for I was hungry, and you did not give me to eat (Matthew 25:41), beware of being a sterile tree in this life; rather, offer to the poor Christ who is hungry the fruit of piety he needs.

[Mark 11:15] -- And they come to Jerusalem. And when he had entered the temple, he began to cast out those who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of those who sold doves. What the Lord did by cursing the barren fig tree as a symbol, he soon showed more clearly by casting out the wicked from the temple. For the tree did not sin in that it did not have fruit when the Lord was hungry, since the time for fruit had not yet come; but the priests sinned by conducting secular business in the house of the Lord, and they neglected to bear the fruit of piety which they owed, and which the Lord hungered for in them. The Lord withered the tree with a curse, so that those who saw or heard might more greatly understand that they would be condemned by divine judgment if they were without the fruits of deeds, but only relied on the praise of religious speech, or on the appearance and covering of flourishing leaves. But because they did not understand, he then exercised the necessary severity of deserved vengeance upon them. And he cast out the commerce of human affairs from that house, in which it was commanded that only divine things be conducted, sacrifices and prayers be offered to God, the word of God be read, heard, and sung.

And indeed it is to be believed that he found only those things being sold or bought in the temple which were necessary for the ministry of the same temple, based on what we read happening elsewhere, when he entered the same temple and found in it sellers and buyers of sheep, oxen, and doves. Clearly, it is to be believed that all these things were bought by those who came from afar from the locals, so that they might be offered in the house of the Lord. If, therefore, the Lord did not even want those things to be sold in the temple which he wanted to be offered in the temple, namely because of the greed or fraud that is usually the crime of merchants, how great a punishment, do you think, would he inflict if he found anyone there engaged in laughter or idle talk, or enslaved to any other vice? For if the Lord does not allow temporal business to be conducted in his house, which can be conducted freely elsewhere, how much more do those things deserve celestial wrath that are not allowed anywhere, if they are conducted in buildings consecrated to God? But because the Holy Spirit appeared upon the Lord in the form of a dove, rightly, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are signified by doves. Who, then, are those in the temple of God today who sell doves, but those in the Church who take a price for the imposition of hands?

Through this imposition, namely, the Holy Spirit is given from heaven. Therefore, the dove is sold when the imposition of hands, through which the Holy Spirit is received, is provided for a price. But our Redeemer overturned the seats of those who sold doves, because he destroys the priesthood of such merchants. Hence, sacred canons condemn the Simoniac heresy and command that those who seek a price for conferring ordinations be deprived of the priesthood. Therefore, the seat of those who sell doves is overturned, because those who sell spiritual grace are deprived of the priesthood either before humans or before the eyes of God.

[Mark 11:16] -- And He would not allow anyone to carry vessels through the temple. He speaks of those vessels which were brought in for the sake of trading. Moreover, far be it that the Lord would cast out from the temple the vessels dedicated to God, or prohibit them from being brought into the temple, where He provided an example of His future judgment; but rather He eliminates the impure and profane vessels from the temple and prohibits them from being brought in any longer, as He not only drives away and expels all the reprobates from the Church, but also, to prevent them from entering again to disturb the Church, restrains them with an eternal scourge. But also in the present time this is the true house of the Lord, that is, the purification of the hearts of the faithful, so that not only does the divinely inspired compunction remove the sins that were present, but also, lest these sins return, the divine grace persevering in them may help.

[Mark 11:17] -- And He taught, saying to them: Is it not written that my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations? He says, for all nations, not for one Jewish nation, nor in one place in the city of Jerusalem, but in the whole world,

and not with the sacrifices of bulls and goats and rams, but with prayer. [Mark 11:17] -- But you have made it a den of robbers. Those who sat in the temple to receive gifts, certainly it was no doubt that they would seek harms from some who did not give. Therefore, the house of prayer had become a den of robbers, because they had learned to stand in the temple for this purpose, to either pursue those not giving gifts physically or to kill those giving spiritually. The temple and the house of God are also the mind and conscience of the faithful, which, if ever it produces perverse thoughts in the injury of a neighbor, resides as it were in a den of robbers. And they simply kill those walking uprightly, when they thrust swords into those who are guilty of no offense. For the mind of the faithful is no longer a house of prayer, but a den of robbers, when, having abandoned the innocence and simplicity of holiness, it strives to do that by which it may harm its neighbors.

[Mark 11:20] -- And as they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. Not only the branches or the trunks of the barren fig tree, but even the root itself, drying up, showed the sentence of divine reprobation upon it. And John says that the axe is laid to the root of the trees (Matt. III). Therefore, the fig tree dried up from the roots to show that the impious nation was not to be corrected temporarily or partially by invasions of foreigners, and then immediately, with the Lord's mercy, after repentance, to be restored to its former freedom, as sacred history often reports; but rather, it was to be struck with eternal damnation, dried up from the roots, so that it might be intimated that the wicked people were to be utterly deprived not only of external human glory but even of inner divine favor. For it lost both the salvation and the life it could have received in the heavens and the homeland it had already obtained on earth.

[Mark 11:22] -- And Jesus answering said to them: Have faith in God. Amen, I say to you, that whoever says to this mountain: Be lifted up and cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Those gentiles who wrote curses against the Church usually reproach our people for not having complete faith in God, because they have never been able to move mountains. To which it must be replied that not everything that has happened in the Church is written, just as our Scripture testifies about the deeds of Christ Himself, our God and Lord. Therefore, it could also have happened that the mountain was removed from the earth and cast into the sea, if necessity required it. As we read about what was done by the prayers of the blessed father Gregory of Neocaesarea, bishop of Pontus, a man distinguished by merits and virtues, that a mountain yielded ground to the extent that the inhabitants of the city needed. For when he wanted to build a church in a suitable place, he saw that it was narrower than required because on one side it was confined by a sea cliff and on the other by a nearby mountain. He came to the place at night, and on his knees admonished the Lord of His promise, to move the mountain further away according to the faith of the petitioner.

And in the morning, he returned and found that the mountain had left as much space for the church builders as they needed. Therefore, this man or another man of the same merit could have obtained from the Lord, by the merit of faith, that even the mountain would be lifted up and cast into the sea if the opportunity demanded it. However, because the term mountain is sometimes used to signify the devil, evidently due to the pride with which he rises against God and wishes to be like the Most High, the mountain is removed from the earth and cast into the sea at the command of those strong in faith when holy teachers preaching the word drive out the unclean spirit from the hearts of those ordained to life, and he is permitted to exercise the madness of his tyranny in the turbulent and bitter minds of unbelievers. Not that he hadn't had his seat and kingdom there before, but because he rages more fiercely against those he can harm as much as he regrets having been driven out by the injury inflicted by the pious. To this is similar that passage of the Apocalypse: And the second angel sounded the trumpet, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea (Rev. VIII).

For when the angel sounded the trumpet, a mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea, because, when the teacher of truth preached the word, the ancient enemy, inflamed with the torches of envy, heavily corrupted the minds of the perverse to avenge his expulsion from the faithful upon the unfaithful.

[Mark 11:25] -- And when you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father in heaven may also forgive your sins. It is to be noted the distinction of those praying. He who has perfect faith, which works through love, can by praying or even commanding, move spiritual mountains. As Paul did with Elymas the magician, whom he deprived of his sight and his wicked art. Likewise with the soothsayer in Philippi, from whom he cast out a malignant spirit, a most haughty mountain to be sure. But the same mountain being cast into the sea, as much maddened fire it had brought, the persecution of the Gentiles immediately following against him taught him well. But those who have not yet climbed to such a height of perfection, let them ask for their sins to be forgiven, so that they may be counted worthy to enter eternal life, and undoubtedly they will obtain what they ask for, if they first forgive those who sin against them. But if they scorn to do this, not only can they not perform miracles by praying, but they cannot even obtain forgiveness of their own sins.

[Mark 11:28] -- And when he was walking in the temple, the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders came to him and said to him: "By what authority do you do these things? And who gave you this authority to do these things?" In various ways they raise the same calumny as before, when they said: "He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons." For when they say, "By what authority do you do these things?" they doubt the power of God, and want it to be understood that what he does is by the power of the devil. Also adding: "Who gave you this authority?"

most openly they deny the Son of God, whom they think performs signs not by his own power, but by that of others. [Mark 11:29] -- But Jesus answering said: ”I will also ask you one thing, and you answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or from men? Answer me.” The Lord could have refuted the calumny of the tempters with an open answer, but he prudently asks, so that they may be condemned either by their silence or by their own decision.

[Mark 11:31] -- But they considered among themselves, saying: If we say, from heaven, he will say to us: Why then did you not believe him? For he whom you acknowledge to have had prophecy from heaven, testified about me, and you heard from him by what authority I do these things. [Mark 11:32] -- If we say from men, we fear the people. For all held John to be a true prophet. Therefore, they saw that whichever of these they answered, they would fall into a trap, fearing stoning, but more fearing the confession of the truth. [Mark 11:33] -- And answering, they say to Jesus: We do not know. And Jesus, responding, said to them: Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things. I do not tell you what I know, because you do not want to admit what you know. Most justly rejected, they indeed went away confused. And it was fulfilled what in the psalm the Father God says through the prophet: I have prepared a lamp for my Christ, that is, John himself. I will clothe his enemies with shame (Psalm 131). It should be noted, moreover, that the knowledge of the truth is to be hidden from those who seek it for two main reasons. Namely, when he who asks is either less capable of understanding what he seeks, or is unworthy because of hatred or contempt of the truth itself, to whom it ought to be revealed what he seeks. For one of these reasons, the Lord said: I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. For the other reason, he commanded the disciples: Do not give what is holy to dogs, nor throw your pearls before swine.

Chapter 12

[Mark 12:1] -- And he began to speak to them in parables: A man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge around it, and dug a pit, and built a tower. This man who planted the vineyard is the same who in another parable hired laborers into his vineyard. He planted the vineyard about which Isaiah speaks most fully in a song, ultimately saying: The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel. And in the psalm, it is said: You have transplanted a vineyard from Egypt; you expelled the nations and planted it. And he set a hedge around it, whether a city wall or the assistance of angels. And he dug a pit in it, whether a winepress, or an altar, or those winepresses whose titles are marked by three psalms, the eighth, the eightieth, and the eighty-third. And he built a tower, undoubtedly the temple about which it is said through Micah: And you, O tower of the flock, daughter of Zion.

[Mark 12:1] -- And he leased it to husbandmen. Elsewhere, he called these workers of the vineyard, who had been hired at the first, third, sixth and ninth hours. And he went away on a journey, not by changing location. For where can God be absent from, since all things are filled by him? And he who says through Jeremiah: I am a God at hand, and not a God afar off, says the Lord? But he seems to go away from the vineyard to leave the vine-dressers free will in working. [Mark 12:2] -- And he sent a servant to the tenants at the proper time to receive from the tenants some of the fruit of the vineyard. But they seized him, beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. Indeed, he set the time for the fruit, not for the harvest. For no fruit was found from the obstinate people, no yield of this vineyard was found, even though it was often and diligently sought. Therefore, the servant who was sent first is understood to be Moses, the lawgiver, who for forty continuous years sought some fruit of the law he had given from the cultivators, but they beat him and sent him away empty-handed. For they provoked Moses in the camps and Aaron, the holy one of the Lord. And Moses was vexed because of them, for they grieved his Spirit. This same servant also clearly declares in a song what he thinks about the fruit of this vineyard, saying, ”For their vine is from the vine of Sodom, and their branching is from Gomorrah. Their grapes are grapes of gall, and their clusters are bitter. Their wine is the venom of dragons, and the cruel poison of asps” (Deut. XXXII).

[Mark 12:4] -- And again he sent another servant to them, and they wounded him in the head and treated him shamefully. The other servant signifies David the king and prophet and the other psalmists, who were sent after Moses, so that by the modulation of psalmody and the sweetness of the harp they might stir the cultivators of the vineyard to the practice of good works after the legal edicts. For David himself, who lifted up the hearts of the people to desire heavenly things, established that the continuous praises of the Lord be sung with sweet melody among the rites of carnal sacrifices. But they also wounded this devotion, treating it shamefully by wounding it in the head, because disregarding the songs of the psalmists which called to the praise of the Lord, they rejected David, who had shone as the head and source of psalmody in the Holy Spirit. For they said: ”What portion do we have in David, or what inheritance in the son of Jesse?” (1 Kings 12) With these words, they both changed his kingdom with an ignoble stock, and his religion with impiety. Nevertheless, he prayed for this vineyard, which, transplanted from Egypt, had covered the mountains of Palestine with its shade, that it might not be utterly destroyed: ”Lord God of hosts, return now, look down from heaven and see, and visit this vineyard, and protect what your right hand has planted” (Psalm 80). Here he equally explained who that man is who planted this vineyard, namely the Lord God of hosts.

[Mark 12:5] -- And again he sent another, and they killed him, and many others, beating some and killing others. A third servant with his companions, understand a chorus of prophets, who with continuous attestations confronted the people and predicted the evils that were imminent for this vineyard. But which of the prophets were they not persecuting? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Lord Savior (Acts VII). And all these spoke much about the barrenness of this vineyard, but the lamentation of one Jeremiah is sufficient to mention. But I, he says, planted you as a chosen vineyard, all true seed, how then have you turned into a degenerate shoot of a foreign vine (Jer. II)? Clearly, by these three ranks of servants all the figures of the teachers under the law can be understood, the Lord elsewhere openly declares, saying: For everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled (Luke XXIV).

[Mark 12:6] -- Therefore, still having one beloved son, he sent him to them last, saying: They will respect my son. What he said: They will respect my son, does not come from ignorance. For what does the head of the household not know, who is understood as God the Father in this place? But God is always said to be in doubt so that free will may be reserved for man. Let us ask Arius and Eunomius. Behold, the Father is said to be ignorant, and moderates his judgment, and as much as it depends on us, is proven to be lying. Whatever they respond on behalf of the Father, let them understand the same for the Son, who says he does not know the day of completion.

[Mark 12:7] -- The husbandmen said to one another: This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours. Most plainly the Lord proves that the leaders of the Jews crucified the Son of God not out of ignorance, but out of envy. For they understood this to be the one of whom it was said: Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance (Psalm II). And so, as if consulting for themselves, they said: Behold, the whole world has gone after him. And if we let him thus alone, all men will believe in him (John XII). Therefore the inheritance of the Son is the Church, given to him from among all the nations, which the Father did not leave to him by dying, but he himself wondrously acquired by his own death, which he possessed by rising again. However, after killing him, the evil husbandmen sought to seize it, when the Jews, crucifying him, endeavored to extinguish the faith that comes through him and preferred rather their own righteousness, which is by the law, and sought to instill it in the gentiles.

[Mark 12:8] -- And taking him, they killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. It notes their persistent malice, who, even with the Lord crucified and risen from the dead, did not wish to believe in the preaching of the apostles but cast him away as if he were a vile corpse. For, as far as it was in their power, excluding him from their borders, they delivered him to be received by the gentiles. [Mark 12:9] -- What will the Lord of the vineyard do, therefore? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and give the vineyard to others. The Lord himself explained this verse shortly afterward in Matthew, saying: Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof (Matthew XXI). He also figuratively showed this was about to happen when he cursed the unfruitful fig tree as an example of the unbelieving Jews. Conversely, he compared those who afterward believed, whether from the Jews or the gentiles, to a fruitful and excellent tree, saying: I am the vine; you are the branches. He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit (John XV). When he had said that the Lord of the vineyard, after the destruction of the wicked husbandmen, would give the vineyard to others, he immediately affirmed that this was procured by divine guidance in a prophetic example, saying:

[Mark 12:10] -- Have you not read this Scripture: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone? This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. How, he says, will this prophecy be fulfilled, that the stone rejected by the builders is said to be placed as the cornerstone, unless because Christ, rejected and killed by you, is to be preached to the Gentiles who will believe, so that, like a cornerstone, he may unite the two in himself and build from both peoples one faithful city for himself, one temple? For he now calls the same synagogue teachers, whom he previously called tenants, builders. For those who were commanded to cultivate the people subject to them to bear the fruits of life, like a vineyard, were also commanded to construct and adorn it as a house worthy of God as its inhabitant. Hence, the Apostle, writing to the faithful, says: You are God’s field, God’s

building (I Cor. III). But those who refused to return the fruit of God's vineyard to the great householder, like the worst tenants, the same, like evil masons, strive to remove from the house of God the precious and chosen stone, which was to be placed either in the foundation or in the corner, that is, they sought to take away the faith of Christ from their listeners.

[Mark 12:12] -- And they sought to seize him, and they feared the crowd. For they understood that he had spoken this parable against them, and leaving him, they went away. The chief priests and the scribes, as if they found the Lord lying against them, sought to kill him. But by seeking this, they taught that what he had said was true. For he himself is the heir, whose unjust death he declared would be avenged by the father. Those wicked tenants, who from killing the Son of God were indeed delayed a little by human fear, until his hour had come, could never be restrained by divine love. Surely, in a moral sense, for each of the faithful, when the mystery of baptism entrusted to him is exercised by working, it is as if the vineyard he cultivates is leased out. One servant is sent, another, and a third, to receive produce, when law, psalms, prophecy, whose admonition to follow by doing well, are read. But the sent servant, afflicted with insults or beaten, is cast out, when the word heard is disdained, or (what is worse) even blasphemed. Moreover, the sent heir is killed, as far as it depends on them, who have also trampled the Son of God and insulted the spirit of grace by which he was sanctified. With the wicked tenant destroyed, the vineyard will be given to another, when the gift of grace which the proud one spurned, the humble one will be enriched.

But even this, that the chief priests, scribes, and elders seeking to lay hands on Jesus are restrained by fear of the crowd, happens daily in the Church, when anyone, merely on account of the name "brother," does not love the unity of ecclesiastical faith and peace, either out of shame or fear of the multitude of good brothers living together, refrains from attacking it. Yet, as the Lord says of the most foolish bird, the ostrich, when the time comes, it raises its wings on high, because by persecuting the Church, he will rejoice to have crucified the Lord and have him as a showpiece.

[Mark 12:13] -- And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and Herodians, to catch him in his words. The Herodians are said to be soldiers of Herod the tetrarch, who was also at that time in Jerusalem, and in scorning and mocking the Lord, he agreed with Pilate and the Jews, as the evangelist Luke attests. Therefore, seeking to seize the Lord, the chief priests, scribes, and elders feared the crowd. And thus, since they could not do so by themselves, they attempted to accomplish it through the hands of earthly authority, so that they themselves might seem to be free of his death. For recently under Caesar Augustus, Judaea was subjected to the Romans when a census was celebrated throughout the whole world, and it had become tributary, and there was great sedition among the people, some saying that for the sake

of security and peace, for which the Romans fought for all, tribute ought to be paid; but the Pharisees, who prided themselves on righteousness, contended otherwise, that the people of God, who paid tithes, and gave firstfruits, and all other things written in the law, ought not to be subject to human laws. The spark of this sedition grew so strong that after the resurrection of the Lord, the Romans pressed on and the native people, the kingdom, as well as that august temple with its religion, moreover even the light itself, chose rather to perish than to pay tribute.

[Mark 12:14] -- Those coming said to him: Teacher, we know that you are truthful, and do not care about anyone. For you do not look at the face of man, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? This flattering and deceitful question provokes the respondent, so that he fears God more than Caesar, and says that tribute ought not to be paid, so that immediately the Herodians, hearing this, could seize him as the author of sedition against the Romans. [Mark 12:15] -- But knowing their deceit, he said to them: Why are you testing me? Bring me a denarius so that I may see it. And they brought it to him. Wisdom always acts wisely, so that the tempters are rather confounded by their own words: Bring me, he said, a denarius. This is a type of coin, which was accounted for ten nummi, and had the image of Caesar.

[Mark 12:16] -- And he said to them: Whose image and inscription is this? Those who think the question of the Savior shows his ignorance, and not his design, should learn from the present passage that Jesus could certainly have known whose image was on the coin: but he asks so that he might appropriately respond to their words. [Mark 12:17] -- They said to him: Caesar’s. Then Jesus, answering, said to them: Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s. What he said: Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, the coin, the tribute, and the money; and unto God the things that are God’s, we understand as tithes, first fruits, offerings, and sacrifices. Just as he himself pays the tribute for himself and for Peter, and rendered to God the things that are God’s, doing the will of the Father. Another way: Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s. Just as Caesar demands from us the impression of his image, so too does God, that just as the coin is rendered to Caesar, so the soul illuminated and marked by the light of his countenance is rendered to God. Hence the Psalmist says: The light of your countenance, O Lord, has been signed upon us (Psalm IV). This light is also the whole of man, and true good, which is seen not with the eyes but with the mind. He said it is signed upon us, just as a coin is engraved with the image of the king. For man was made in the image and likeness of God, which he corrupted by sinning. Therefore, his true and eternal good is if he is marked again by being reborn.

[Mark 12:17] -- And they marveled at him. Those who should have believed in such great wisdom, marveled because their cunning in plotting had found no place. And,

as Matthew writes, they left him and went away, carrying their unbelief along with the miracle. [Mark 12:18] -- The Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him. There were two sects among the Jews, one of the Pharisees and the other of the Sadducees. The Pharisees, who preferred justice of traditions and observances which they called ”deuterosis,” were commonly known as separated from the people. But the Sadducees, whose name means ”just,” also claimed what they were not. The former believed in the resurrection of both body and soul, and admitted angels and spirits; the latter, following the Acts of the Apostles, denied everything. [Mark 12:19] -- And they questioned him, saying: Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies leaving a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children, and so on. Believing neither in the resurrection of bodies nor the survival of souls beyond death, they rightly concoct such a tale to ridicule those who assert the resurrection of bodies. Yet it could happen that such an event occurred in their nation.

[Mark 12:23] -- In the resurrection, when they rise again, to which of them will the woman be wife? For the seven had her as a wife. They use the absurdity of the story to deny the truth of the resurrection; but mystically, these seven brothers who died without children are like all the wicked, who, throughout the entire span of this life which revolves in seven days, are barren of good works. To each of them who is taken by a miserable death, ultimately worldly living itself, which they wasted without producing any vital work, will pass away like a barren wife. [Mark 12:24] -- And Jesus answered them, saying: Are you not mistaken because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? They err because they do not know the Scriptures. And because they are ignorant of the Scriptures, consequently they do not know the power of God, which is Christ, who is the power of God and the wisdom of God (I Cor. I).

[Mark 12:25] -- For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven. The Latin custom does not correspond to the Greek idiom. Women are properly said to marry, and men to take wives. But let us simply understand this to mean that marrying applies to men, and being married applies to wives. If in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, then bodies which can marry and be given in marriage shall rise. For no one says of a stone or a tree and those things which do not have genital members that they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but of those who, while able to marry, nevertheless do not marry for some reason. But what follows: “But are as the angels in heaven,” a spiritual conversation is promised. For they are as the angels in heaven, who, renewed by the glory of the resurrection, enjoy the perpetual vision of God without any fear of death, without any stain of corruption, without any activity of earthly state. To which anyone desiring to ascend to the

equality of angelic dignity must now condescend by acting piously towards the least of the brethren.

[Mark 12:26] -- But concerning the dead, that they will rise, have you not read in the book of Moses at the bush, how God spoke to him, saying: I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? To confirm the truth of the resurrection, he could use many more manifest examples, among which is this: The dead will be raised, and those in the tombs will rise. And in another place: Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and others to shame and ever-lasting contempt (Dan. XII). Therefore it is asked what the Lord meant by bringing forth this testimony, which seems ambiguous or not sufficiently relevant to the truth of the resurrection. We have previously said that the Sadducees, not confessing either angels, spirits, or the resurrection of bodies, also preached the destruction of souls. These Sadducees accepted only the five books of Moses, rejecting the prophecies of the prophets. Thus it was foolish to bring forth testimonies whose authority they did not follow. Now, to prove the eternity of souls, he presents the example: I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Immediately he adds:

[Mark 12:27] -- He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. So, when he proved that souls remain after death (for it could not be that he was the God of those who in no way subsisted), consequently, the resurrection of bodies which performed good or bad deeds together with their souls would also be introduced. [Mark 12:28] -- And one of the scribes came up who had heard them disputing. And seeing that he had answered them well, he asked him which commandment was the first of all. Jesus answered him that the first of all commandments is: Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one God. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. He says the first and greatest commandment is that before all things we each should place in our innermost heart, as the only foundation of piety. This he demonstrated more clearly in conclusion, when he said: There is no greater commandment than these. Therefore the first and greatest commandment is the acknowledgement and confession of divine unity along with the performance of good works. Good works are perfected in the love of God and neighbor. The Apostle commends this briefly in other words, saying: For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but faith working through love (Galatians 5).

[Mark 12:32] -- And the scribe said to him: Well said, teacher, you have truly said that there is one God, and there is none other besides him. And to love him with all your heart, and with all your understanding, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, is greater than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. It is shown by this response of the scribe that there was

often a serious question debated among the scribes and Pharisees about what was the first or greatest commandment of divine law, some indeed praising offerings and sacrifices, others preferring with greater authority the works of faith and love, because many of the fathers before the law, without any custom of victims and sacrifices, pleased God through faith alone, which works through love, and were held in the highest regard by him; but none was ever found to have pleased God through holocausts and sacrifices alone without faith and love. In which opinion this scribe also declared himself to be.

[Mark 12:34] -- But Jesus, seeing that he had answered wisely, said to him: You are not far from the kingdom of God. He was not far from the kingdom of God because he was shown to be a supporter of the precepts that are characteristic of the New Testament and evangelical perfection. Hence, it must be more carefully inquired how Matthew says that the scribe here or the doctor of the law (as he calls him) was testing the Lord, asking about the first or greatest commandment, whom, according to this evangelist, the Lord asserts is not far from the kingdom of God, whereas it is evident that those who seek wisdom through testing cannot find it, and therefore cannot approach the gate of the heavenly kingdom, which is revealed only to the wise. For Scripture says: ”And seek him in the simplicity of heart, because he is found by those who do not test him” (Wisdom 1). Unless perhaps we say that he came indeed to test the Lord, but hearing His response, being corrected, soon returned to the grace of piety; and whom he previously thought was to be deceived by testing, he later recognized must be followed by embracing. Or certainly, let us not consider the very temptation to be evil, as if wanting to deceive an enemy, but rather cautious, as wanting to test more thoroughly someone unknown. For it is not written in vain: ”He who easily believes will become less in heart” (Sirach 19).

[Mark 12:34] -- And no one dared to question him anymore. The Pharisees and Sadducees, and other leaders of the Jews seeking an occasion for calumny and to find some word that could be subject to traps, because they were refuted in their words, no longer questioned him, but openly handed him over to the Roman authority. From this, we understand that the poison of envy can indeed be overcome, but it is difficult to be fully quieted. [Mark 12:35] -- And answering, Jesus, teaching in the temple, said: How do the scribes say that Christ is the Son of David? For he himself says in the Holy Spirit: The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies as a footstool for your feet. For David himself calls him Lord, and how is he his son? The questioning of Jesus benefits us even today against the Jews. For even those who confess that Christ is to come assert that he is a simple and holy man from the lineage of David. Therefore, let us question them, instructed by the Lord, if he is a simple man, and only a son of David, how does David call him his Lord, not with uncertain error, nor of his own will, but in the Holy Spirit. They are not reprehended for calling him David’s son, but because they do not believe him to be the Son of God: indeed, he himself is both Lord of

David, remaining God before the ages, and appeared as the son of David, being born as a man at the end of time. But the fact that enemies are subjected to him by the Father denotes not the weakness of the Son, but the unity of nature, because in one the other works. For the Son also subjects enemies to the Father, because he glorifies the Father on earth.

[Mark 12:38] -- And he said to them in his teaching: Beware of the scribes who desire to walk in long robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, and to sit in the first seats in the synagogues, and to have the first places at feasts. Walking in long robes signifies appearing in public adorned in more splendid garments, in which among other things, that rich man who feasted sumptuously every day is described as sinning. However, it should be noted that he does not forbid those to whom it is appropriate by order of office to be greeted in the marketplace, or to sit or recline in the first places, but he certainly teaches that those who love these things inappropriately, whether they possess them or not, should be avoided by the faithful as wicked, rebuking the disposition, not the rank, with just discernment. Although this too is not free from fault, if those who desire to be called teachers in the chair of Moses in the synagogue are also involved in lawsuits in the marketplace. We are certainly commanded to beware of those desiring vain glory for two reasons, believing that what they do is good and should be done, or we may be inflamed with emulation, rejoicing in vain to be praised for the good they feign.

[Mark 12:40] -- Those who devour widows' houses under the pretense of long prayers will receive a harsher judgment. He did not merely say, "They will receive judgment," but added "harsher," to insinuate that those who stand praying in corners to be seen by people deserve condemnation. And those who engage in such practices more extensively, as though they were more religious, not only seeking praise from people but also money, are to be punished with a severer judgment. For there are those who, pretending to be righteous and of great merit before God, do not hesitate to take money from anyone of humble means and troubled by the awareness of their sins, as though they will act as their advocates in judgment. And while the outstretched hands of the poor typically bring aid through prayers, these individuals, mainly for the purpose of taking money from the poor, spend the night in prayer. To such individuals the curse of Judas fittingly applies: "When he is judged, let him come out condemned, and let his prayer become sin" (Psalm 108). When he is judged, he comes out condemned, and he takes his prayer into sin, as he, now held in high regard by humans, then finds himself not only incapable of interceding for others but also insufficient in his own merits before the divine judgment. In fact, he will bear the punishment for the very prayers by which he deceived human judgment.

[Mark 12:41] -- And Jesus sat down opposite the treasury and watched how the crowd put money into the treasury. Because in Greek speech φυλάττειν is said to

mean ”to guard,” and ”gaza” in the Persian language means ”riches,” the treasury is customarily called a place where riches are kept. By this name both the chest in which the people’s donations were collected for the temple’s necessities and the porticoes where they were kept were called. You have an example of the porticoes in the Gospel. Jesus, He said, spoke these words in the treasury, teaching in the temple (John 8). You have about the chest in the book of Kings: And Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one comes into the house of the Lord. And the priests that kept the door put all the money that was brought into the house of the Lord into it. And when they saw that there was much money in the chest, the king’s scribe and the high priest came up and tied up and counted the money that was found in the house of the Lord (2 Kings 12). Therefore, the Lord, who warned that seekers of preeminence and vain glory should be avoided, who predicted with prolonged simulated prayers that judgment would be rendered, also judges those bringing gifts to the house of the Lord with a certain scrutiny, so that He may reward each according to their heart and deeds, because in the same manner the same internal judge always acts in the Church unceasingly.

[Mark 12:41] -- And many rich people put in large amounts. But when a poor widow came, she put in two small coins, which is a quadrans. Mathematicians call a quadrans the fourth part of anything, namely of a place, of time, or of money. Thus, perhaps in this passage, it signifies a fourth part of a shekel, that is, five obols. [Mark 12:43] -- And he called his disciples and said to them: Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. This place morally indeed suggests to us that anything we offer with a good intention is acceptable to God, who values not the substance of the offerings, but the conscience; he does not consider how much is in the sacrifice, but from how much it is given. According to the rules of allegory, the rich who were putting gifts into the treasury represent the Jews proud of the righteousness of the law, whereas the poor widow signifies the simplicity of the Church. She is rightly called poor, because she has cast away either the spirit of pride or the desires for temporal things, as if they were the riches of the world. She is called a widow because her husband endured death for her, and now, hidden from her eyes in the recesses of heaven, lives as if in another part of the region. She puts two mites into the treasury, because into the sight of the Divine Majesty, where the offerings of our devout works, as if written and inscribed in a definite number, are kept, she brings either love of God and neighbor or the gifts of her faith and prayer. These, considered small due to her own frailty, but accepted because of the merit of pious intention, surpass all the works of the proud Jews.

[Mark 12:44] -- For all of them have contributed out of their abundance. But she, out of her poverty, has given all she had, her whole livelihood. The Jew contributes to the gifts of God out of his abundance, who, presuming upon his own righteous-

ness, prays to himself thus: God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, etc. (Luke 18). But the Church gives all her living to the gifts of God, understanding that all she lives is not by her own merit, but by divine grace, saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner (Ibid.). And again: I will keep my strength for you, because you are my protector, my God; his mercy will precede me (Psalm 58).

Chapter 13

[Mark 13:1] -- And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, Teacher, behold what manner of stones and what buildings are here. And Jesus answering said to him: Do you see all these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. According to history, the meaning is clear. However, as the Lord departed from the temple, all the structures of the law and the composition of the commandments were so destroyed that nothing could be fulfilled by the Jews; and with the head removed, all the members clashed among themselves. And because, with faith established among the Gentiles and the Church of Christ, Judea was about to bear the worthy punishments for its perfidy, it was fitting for the Lord, after praising the devotion of the Church in the poor widow, to leave the temple, and to predict its future ruin and that the buildings then admired would soon be leveled. Divinely, it was arranged that, with the grace of the evangelical faith revealed throughout the world, the temple itself, once august with its ceremonies, would be removed, lest anyone still young and suckling in the faith, seeing those things which were made by the holy prophets and instituted by the Lord remaining, might wonder at the secular sanctity and gradually slip from the sincerity of the faith which is in Christ Jesus into carnal Judaism. Therefore, God, providing for our infirmity and desiring his Church to multiply, caused all those things to be overturned and utterly removed, so that with the shadow and type ceasing, the truth now declared throughout the world might hold the greater palm.

[Mark 13:3] -- And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately. Tell us when these things will be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished? Because as some were praising the buildings of the temple, the Lord openly responded that all these would be destroyed. The disciples secretly inquired about the time and signs of the foretold destruction. The Lord sits on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, discussing the ruin of the temple and the destruction of the nation, so that even in the very position of his body he aligns with the words he speaks, mystically indicating that while resting in the holy, he detests the madness of the proud. For who does not see that the Mount of Olives signifies the fruitful height of the holy

Church, which the Lord always delights to dwell in? For truly, that mountain was known not for having unfruitful trees and a barren forest, but for producing olives, which provide light to dispel the shadows of the night, cures for infirmities, and rest for the weary. All of which particularly happen in the Church, as it itself says: But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever (Psalm 52).

[Mark 13:5] -- And Jesus, answering, began to say to them: See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name saying, I am he, and they will lead many astray. Many, as the destruction of Jerusalem approached, were leaders who claimed they were christs, and reported that the time of liberation was near at hand. Many heresiarchs appeared in the Church even in the times of the apostles, who, among many other things contrary to truth, proclaimed that the day of the Lord was imminent. These the Apostle condemns in the Epistle to the Thessalonians. Many in the name of Christ were Antichrists, the first of whom is Simon Magus: to whom, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, all who were in Samaria listened, from the least to the greatest, saying: This man is the power of God that is called great, because he had for a long time bewitched them with his magical arts (Acts 8).

[Mark 13:7] -- But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled. For such things must happen, but the end is not yet. Wars pertain to enemies, seditions to citizens. Both of these abounded abundantly from the time of the Lord's Passion among the people of the Jews, who chose a seditious robber for themselves instead of the Savior Christ. However, the apostles, as these events draw near, are warned not to be terrified, not to abandon Jerusalem and Judea, because evidently the end, which should rather be deferred until the fortieth year, namely the desolation of the province and the ultimate destruction of the city and temple, is to follow. [Mark 13:8] -- Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be earthquakes in various places, and pestilences and famines. These are the beginnings of sorrows. In the Gospel of Luke, it is written: And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and pestilences and famines (Luke 21). It is known that these things happened literally before the last and most bitter pains, by which the entire province was devastated, or rather erased, during the time of the Jewish sedition. But kingdom against kingdom, and the pestilence of those whose speech spreads like cancer, and the famine of hearing the word of God, and the upheaval of the whole earth, and the separation from the true faith, can be better understood in heretics, who, fighting against each other, bring about the victory of the Church. Moreover, the Lord reveals why so many adversities were deservedly bestowed upon Jerusalem and the whole province of the Jews, by adding when he says:

[Mark 13:9] -- But watch yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before kings and governors for my sake, for a testimony to them. Indeed, the very fact that the Jewish people, either alone or as the greatest cause, were the cause of their own destruction, because after the killing of the Lord Savior, they tormented the heralds and confessors of his name and faith with impious cruelty. [Mark 13:10] -- And the Gospel of God must first be preached to all nations. This is confirmed by Ecclesiastical histories, in which it is reported that all the apostles, long before the destruction of the province of Judea, were dispersed throughout the entire world to preach the Gospel, except James son of Zebedee, and James the brother of the Lord, who were the first in Judea to shed their blood for the word of the Gospel. Therefore, since the Lord knew that the hearts of the disciples would be troubled by the destruction and loss of their nation, He alleviates them with this consolation, so that they might know that even with the Jews being cast off, they would still have companions for the joy and heavenly kingdom, indeed gathering many more from all the nations of the world than would perish from Judea.

[Mark 13:11] -- And when they lead you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand what you will speak, but say whatever is given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. When we are led to judges because of Christ, we must simply express our will for Christ. Moreover, it is Christ Himself who speaks in us, and the grace of the Holy Spirit is given in answering. [Mark 13:12] -- Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all because of my name. But, etc. We have often seen this happen in persecutions, and there is no loyal affection among those who have different faiths. [Mark 13:14] -- But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not, let the reader understand. Where Mark says: Standing where it ought not, in Matthew it is written: Standing in the holy place (Matthew 24); which altogether signifies the same thing, because surely the abomination of desolation ought not to stand in the holy place. When we are called to understanding, it is shown to be mystical what is said. However, it can be simply understood either concerning the Antichrist, or the image of Caesar which Pilate placed in the temple, or the equestrian statue of Hadrian, which stood for a long time in the very holy of holies place. According to the old Scripture, an idol is also called an abomination. And hence it is added, of desolation, because the idol is placed in the desolate and deserted temple.

[Mark 13:14] -- Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. And let him who is on the rooftop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not turn back to take his garment. It is clear that these things happened literally when, with the approaching Roman war and the extermination of the Jewish people, warned by an oracle, all the Christians who were in the province withdrew farther away, as Ecclesiastical History narrates,

and sitting across the Jordan, they remained for a time in the city of Pella under the protection of Agrippa, the king of the Jews, who is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, who, with those Jews willing to obey him, always acted in submission to Roman authority. According to spiritual meanings, when we see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not, that is, heresies and crimes reigning among those who seemed to be consecrated by heavenly mysteries, when we observe peace among the faithful being disturbed by workers of iniquity, speakers of lies, men of blood and deceit whom the Lord will abhor, then whoever remains in Judea, that is in the confession of true faith, should not be enslaved by earthly and weak deeds but should ascend the summit of virtues as high as the more numerous wide and wandering paths of vices we see being followed.

Then whoever is on the rooftop, that is, who spiritually lives as if in the free air, exceeding carnal matters in mind, should not descend to the base deeds of past conduct, nor repeat the desires of the world or flesh which he had left behind. For our house means either this world or our flesh in which we dwell, which the Apostle speaks of: For we know that if our earthly house of this habitation is dissolved, we have a building from God (2 Cor. 5). And whoever works in the Church, like Paul and Apollos planting and watering (1 Cor. 3), should not look back at worldly hopes, which he renounced, nor presume to take up again the trappings of a fleeting life, which he had already stripped off to follow Christ.

[Mark 13:17] -- Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days. Woe to the present captivity for those pregnant and nursing women, whose heavy burdens of the womb or hands of their children greatly impede the necessity of flight. Read the story of the Kings, where the wife of Jonathan, by trying to avoid the evil of captivity with a hasty flight, received her son who had fallen from her bosom permanently lame. [Mark 13:18] -- But pray that it does not happen in winter. In Matthew it is written: But pray that your flight be not in the winter neither on the Sabbath. If we wish to take this concerning the captivity of Jerusalem, when it was captured by Titus and Vespasian, they should pray that their flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath, because in the one, the hardness of the cold blocks the way to proceed to solitude, and to hide in mountains and deserts; in the other, it is either a transgression of the law if they want to flee, or imminent death if they stay behind. But if it is understood about the consummation of the world, this instructs us lest our faith and love in Christ grow cold, nor let us be idle and sluggish in the work of God on the Sabbath of virtues. For this saying of the Lord pertains partly to the Jewish captivity which happened by the Romans, and partly to the day of judgment. For in Matthew, the disciples are understood to have asked the Lord, when He was about to speak these things: Tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the world?

[Mark 13:19] -- For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, nor ever will be. These words properly fit the times of the Antichrist, when not only will there be torments more frequent than they used to be, inflicted upon the faithful, but (what is worse) the operation of signs will also accompany those who inflict the torments: as the Apostle testifies, who says, ”whose coming is according to the working of Satan, with all deception, signs, and lying wonders” (II Thess. II). Indeed, how many miracles and how many powers the holy martyrs often performed before their persecutors, and yet they did not wish to believe nor to cease from persecuting. Who then will be converted to the faith, an unbeliever, whose faith already believing does not fear and is shaken, when the persecutor of piety also becomes the worker of virtue, the same one who rages with torments so that Christ is denied, provokes with miracles so that the Antichrist is believed? What then will be the refuge in these things, what hope will remain for the elect, except that the higher grace, which grants the power of patience to the pious, should quickly remove the power of persecuting and tribulating from the impious? Hence it is providently added with piety:

[Mark 13:20] -- And unless the Lord had shortened the days, no flesh would have been saved. But for the sake of the elect whom He chose, He shortened the days. For this tribulation, as much as it is heavier in the weight of oppressions than the others which preceded, so much more will it be moderated by the brevity of time. For it is believed that for three and a half years, as can be conjectured from the prophecy of Daniel and the Revelation of St. John, it will wage war against the Church throughout the world. [Mark 13:21] -- And then if anyone says to you: Here is Christ, here there, do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will give signs and wonders to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. Some refer this to the time of the Jewish captivity, where many, saying they were Christs, led astray crowds of people after them. But it should be noted that in that siege of the miserable and wretched city, there was no faithful one to whom the divine exhortation, not to follow perverse teachers, should be made: rather, all equally, both the lesser and the greater, both the besieged and the besieging, persisted alien to Christ. Hence, it is better to be understood about heretics, who, coming against the Church, would lie about being Christs. The first of whom was Simon Magus; but the last, greater than the others, is the Antichrist.

[Mark 13:24] -- But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will darken, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars of the sky will fall. The stars will appear obscure on the day of judgment, not because their light decreases, but because the brightness of the true light, that is, of the supreme judge, will come, when he will come in his majesty, with the Father, and the holy angels; although nothing prevents it from being rightly understood that the sun and the moon, along with the other stars, will be deprived of their light for a time, just as it is known that

the sun did during the Lord's Passion. For the moon at that time, being full, lay hidden under the earth. Hence that prophecy of Joel remains imperfect up to this day: after he said, "The sun will turn into darkness," he added, "And the moon into blood, before the great and manifest day of the Lord comes" (Joel II). And Isaiah, speaking of the day of judgment, said, "And the moon will be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts reigns in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his elders is glorified" (Isaiah XXIV). However, after the day of judgment has passed and the glory of future life has shone, when there is a new heaven and a new earth, then what the same prophet says elsewhere will occur, "And the light of the moon will be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, like the light of seven days."

[Mark 13:25] -- And the powers that are in the heavens will be moved. Is it any wonder that humans, who are earthly by nature and sense, are perturbed at this judgment, at the sight of which even the powers of the heavens, that is, the angelic powers, tremble? Blessed Job also attests to this, saying, "The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof" (Job XXVI). What will the tablets do, then, when the pillars tremble? What will the twig of the desert endure, when the cedar of paradise is shaken? [Mark 13:27] -- And then he will send his angels, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the sky. By the four winds, he means the four quarters of the world: East, West, North, and South. And lest anyone think it was only from the four sides of the earth, and not rather from its entire bounds including the interior regions, he aptly added: From the ends of the earth to the ends of the sky, that is, from the extreme borders of the earth straight to its farthest limits, where, to those gazing afar, the circle of the sky seems to enclose the earth. Therefore, on that day, no elect will be left behind, who will not meet the Lord coming to judgment in the air, whether still living in the body or already resurrected to life from death. The reprobates also come to judgment, both those found living in the body and those resurrected to life from death. But with this distinction, that the just are gathered into the joy of their Lord; whereas his enemies, after the judgment is finished, are scattered and perish from the presence of God.

[Mark 13:28] -- From the fig tree learn the parable: when its branch becomes tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So also you, etc. With the example of the tree, He taught the coming of the consummation. Just as when the branches of the fig tree become tender, and the bud breaks into flower, and the bark bears leaves, you understand the coming of summer and the entrance of the west wind and of spring; so too, when you see all these things written, do not think that the end of the world is already at hand, but that certain preludes and forerunners come to show that it is near and at the doors. But this fructification of the fig tree can be understood more deeply according to mystical senses, namely concerning the state of the Synagogue, which, when the Lord came to it once because

it had no fruit of justice, was condemned to eternal barrenness among those who then were unbelievers. But because the Apostle said that blindness has happened in part to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, and so all Israel will be saved (Rom. XI). When this time comes, so that the long blindness of unbelief is taken away, and all Israel receives the light and salvation, what else will happen but that the fig tree, long barren, will yield the fruit it had denied? As it is written in the blessed Job: A tree has hope; if it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its shoots will not cease. If its roots grow old in the earth, and its trunk dies in the dust, at the scent of water it will bud and produce branches like a newly planted sapling. When you see this taken place, you will not doubt that the day of final judgment and the summer of true peace and light are near.

[Mark 13:30] -- Amen, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. By the name of generation, he either signifies every kind of people or specifically the Jews. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. The heaven that will pass away must be understood not as ethereal or sidereal but as the aerial, from which even the birds of heaven and clouds of heaven are named, as Peter attests saying: ”The heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water, by the word of God; by which the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. The heavens that now exist and the earth, are stored up by the same word, reserved for fire for the day of judgment and the destruction of ungodly men (II Peter III), clearly teaching that not other heavens will perish by fire than those that perished by water, that is, these empty and nebulous spaces of windy air. For it is not to be believed that the water of the flood, which surpassed the tops of mountains by fifteen cubits only, reached beyond the boundaries of the air and ether. However, wherever it could reach, there indeed, according to the aforementioned opinion of blessed Peter, the fire of judgment will also reach. But if heaven and earth will pass away, it can be questioned how Ecclesiastes says: ”A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever” (Eccl. I).

But, with clear reason, heaven and earth pass away by the form they now have; however, they persist without end by essence. For the figure of this world is passing away (I Cor. VII). And to John, the angel says: ”There will be a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev. XXI); which indeed are not to be newly made, but these same ones are to be renewed. Therefore, heaven and earth both pass away and will be, because they are purged by fire from the form they now have, yet are always preserved in their own nature. Hence also it is said through the Psalmist: ”You will change them, and they will be changed” (Ps. CI). Indeed, this last change of theirs, they now declare to us by these revolutions by which they unceasingly alternate for our uses. For the earth fails from its winter form through dryness, flourishes again with spring moisture. The heaven is daily covered with the darkness of night, and renewed by divine light. Hence, therefore, hence let each faithful person gather,

that these things both perish and yet are renewed through their renovation, which now evidently seems to be continually repaired as though from defect.

[Mark 13:32] -- However, of that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Arius and Eunomius rejoice as if the ignorance of the master is the glory of the disciples: and they say: ”He who knows and he who is ignorant cannot be equal.” But since Jesus, that is, the Word of God, made all times (for all things were made by Him, and without Him nothing was made, and in all times the day of judgment must also be, can He who knows the whole, be ignorant of a part? Therefore, a reason must be given why He is said to be ignorant. The Apostle wrote concerning the Savior: ”In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2). Why hidden? After the resurrection, being questioned by the apostles about the day of judgment, He answered more clearly: ”It is not for you to know the times or the moments which the Father has set by His own authority” (Acts 1). When He says, it is not for you to know, He shows that He Himself knows, but it is not expedient for the apostles to know, so that, always uncertain of the coming of the Judge, they may live daily as if they were to be judged that day. Furthermore, the subsequent discourse of the Gospel makes it clear. Also teaching that the Father alone knows, He includes the Son in the Father. For every father’s name is of the son.

[Mark 13:33] -- Watch, therefore, and pray. For you do not know when the time is. Like a man who, traveling abroad, leaves his house and gives authority to his servants, etc. The Lord clearly shows why He said: ”Of that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” Because it is not expedient for the apostles to know, so that in the uncertainty of the hanging expectation they may always believe Him to be coming, whom they do not know when He will come. And He did not say, because we do not know at what hour the Lord will come, but you do not know. And, having given the example of the householder, He more clearly teaches why He conceals the day of consummation, saying: [Mark 13:35] -- Therefore, keep watch; for you do not know when the Lord will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at the cock’s crow, or in the morning. Lest, when he comes suddenly, he finds you sleeping. However, the man who went on a journey and left his house, without a doubt, is Christ, who, ascending victoriously to the Father after the resurrection, left the Church corporally, which he nevertheless never deprived of the divine presence’s protection, remaining in it all days until the consummation of the age. For the place of the flesh is properly the earth, which is as though led to foreign lands when it is placed in heaven through our Redeemer. But he gave his servants the power of every work, because to his faithful, granting the grace of the Holy Spirit, he gives the ability to serve in good works. He also commanded the doorkeeper to keep watch, because he orders the spiritual pastors and leaders, with diligent care, to oversee the Church entrusted to them.

[Mark 13:37] -- But what I say to you, I say to all: Keep watch. Not only the apostles and their successors, indeed the leaders of the Church, but all are commanded to keep watch. We are all urgently ordered to guard the doors of our hearts, lest the ancient enemy break in by suggesting evil. We must each carefully avoid being found sleeping when the Lord comes. For each of us will give an account to God. He keeps watch who has the eyes of his mind open to the vision of true light. He keeps watch who, by working, keeps what he believes. He keeps watch who repels the darkness of lethargy and negligence from himself. Hence Paul says: Awake to righteousness, and do not sin (I Cor. XV). Hence he says again: It is now the hour for us to rise from sleep (Rom. XIII).

Chapter 14

[Mark 14:1] -- Now it was the Passover, and the unleavened bread after two days. Passover, which is called ”phase” in Hebrew, is named not from suffering as many think, but from passing over, because the destroyer, seeing the blood on the doorposts of the Israelites, passed over and did not strike them, or the Lord Himself providing aid to His people passed over them. Explaining the sacrament of this word more sublimely, the evangelist John says: ”Before the feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that his hour had come that he should pass out of this world unto the Father” (John XIII). Where he clearly declares that the day of this solemnity is mystically called the Passover through the law because the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, in it, would either pass from this world, or lead us out of the servitude of Egypt through a wholesome passage. Certainly, according to the scripture of the Old Testament, there is a distinction between Passover and unleavened bread, in that Passover itself is called the single day on which the lamb was killed in the evening, that is, the fourteenth moon of the first month. The fifteenth moon, however, when they left Egypt, followed the festival of unleavened bread, which for seven days, that is, until the twenty-first day of the same month in the evening, the solemnity was established. Indeed, the evangelists interchangeably use the day of unleavened bread for Passover and Passover for the days of unleavened bread. For Mark says:

“Now the Passover and the unleavened bread were after two days” (Mark XIV). Luke says: “The festival day of the unleavened bread, which is called Passover” (Luke XXII). Also, John, when on the first day of the unleavened bread, that is, the fifteenth moon, the act was being carried out, says: ”And they did not enter into the Praetorium, that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover” (John XVIII). They did this because the day of Passover is also commanded to be celebrated with unleavened bread, and we, as if making a perpetual Passover, are always commanded to pass from this world. For on the one day the lamb was sacrificed in the evening, and seven days of unleavened bread successively followed, because Christ Jesus, having once suffered for us in the fullness of time in the flesh, commanded that through the whole time of this age (which is conducted in seven days), we must live in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (I Cor. V), and

always by every effort, we are admonished to flee earthly desires as the bindings of Egypt, and to undertake a secret solitude of virtues as if from worldly conversation.

[Mark 14:1] -- And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might take Him by craft and kill Him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people. Those who ought to have been preparing the sacrifices for the nearby Passover, cleaning the temple walls, sweeping the floors, cleansing the vessels, and purifying themselves according to the law so that they would be worthy to eat the lamb, gathered together, taking counsel on how to kill the Lord, not fearing a sedition, as the simple phrase shows, but avoiding that He be taken from their hands by the help of the people. [Mark 14:3] -- And when He was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, and sat at meat. About to suffer for the entire world and to redeem all nations with His blood, He stayed in Bethany in the house of obedience, which once belonged to Simon the leper; not that the leper remained at that time, but because he who had been a leper was later cleansed by the Savior, the former name remaining, so that the power of the healer might appear. For even in the catalog of the apostles, Matthew the publican is named with his former vice and office, who certainly had ceased to be a publican. Some wish to understand Simon the leper as part of the people who believed in the Lord and were cured by Him. Simon is also called obedient.

[Mark 14:3] -- A woman came having an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of spikenard, and having broken the jar, she poured it out on his head. This woman was Mary of Magdala, the sister of Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead, as John openly mentions, who also attests that this happened six days before the Passover, the day before he came to Jerusalem sitting on a donkey with palms and the praise of the crowds. She is the one, not another, who once (as Luke writes) was still a sinner, coming to the Lord’s feet, washed them with tears of repentance and anointed them with the ointment of pious confession. And because she loved much, she earned forgiveness of many sins from the merciful judge. Now having been justified and made familiar with the Lord, she not only anointed his feet (as the same John narrates) but also his head (as Matthew and Mark testify) with sacred oil. Alabaster is a kind of white marble, speckled with various spots, which is typically hollowed out for ointment vessels because it is said to preserve them uncorrupted. It is found around the Thebes of Egypt, and the whitest around Damascus of Syria, but the best is in India. Nard itself is an aromatic shrub, with a heavy (they say) and thick root, but short and black and brittle, although rich, smelling like a rose or cypress, with a bitter taste, small and dense leaf, whose tips spread into spikes.

Therefore, perfumers celebrate the spikes and leaves of nard for their dual property. And this is what Mark says: Very costly ointment of spikenard. Because indeed, the ointment which Mary brought to the Lord was not only made from the root of the nard, but also, to make it more precious, its perfume and power were

enhanced by the addition of its spikes and leaves. Moreover, naturalists say about nard that it is principal among ointments. Therefore, it was rightly offered for the anointing of the Lord's head and feet. There are many kinds of it, but all are less potent except for the Indian, which is the most precious. Mystically, this devotion of Mary ministering to the Lord signifies the faith and piety of the holy Church, which speaks in the Song of Songs saying: While the king was at his table, my nard gave forth its fragrance (Song 1). Undoubtedly, these words, both once literally fulfilled by the hands of Mary, and daily spiritually fulfilled in all its members, who, spread throughout the world, glorify and say: But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ, and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ (2 Cor. 2). When it acknowledges with worthy reverence the power of his divine strength, which he shares with the Father, it truly anoints his head with precious ointment.

But when it equally regards with worthy reverence the mysteries of his assumed humanity, it surely anoints the Lord's feet with pure nard ointment, that is, faithful and true, because it piously commends and devoutly venerates that nature of his in which he deigned to touch the earth, that is, to live among men.

[Mark 14:4] -- There were some who were indignantly saying among themselves, "Why has this waste of ointment been made? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and given to the poor." Mark, like Matthew, speaks synecdochically, using the plural for the singular. For John, speaking more distinctly, testifies that Judas said this, and that out of greed, because he was a thief and had the money box and carried what was put in it. It can also be understood that other disciples either thought this or said it, or were persuaded by Judas saying it, and Matthew and Mark expressed the will of all in words, but John said it of Judas because he was a thief, while the rest rejoiced for the sake of the poor. John, however, wished to mention only him who from this occasion believed he should intimate his habit of stealing. And what follows:

[Mark 14:4] -- And they rebuked her harshly. I do not believe it was said of the good and diligent apostles who loved Christ, but rather of the one who, under the plural number, was proven neither to have adhered faithfully to the Lord nor to his disciples, nor to have cared for the poor. [Mark 14:6] -- But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good deed to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good to them; but you will not always have me." Another question arises, why did Jesus say after the resurrection to the disciples, "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28), and now says, "But you will not always have me." But it seems to me in this place he speaks of his bodily presence: because he will not be with them after the resurrection as he is now in all associations and familiarity. Remembering

this, the Apostle said, ”Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him thus no longer” (2 Corinthians 5).

[Mark 14:8] -- What she had, she did; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. What you consider to be the waste of ointment is the duty of burial. It is not surprising if she gives me the good scent of her faith, since I am going to shed my blood for her. [Mark 14:9] -- Amen, I say to you, wherever this Gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her. Pay attention to this knowledge of future events, that He knew He would suffer after a few days, and that His Gospel would be celebrated in the whole world. It should be noted that just as Mary has achieved glory throughout the world, wherever the holy Church has spread, because of the homage of devoted piety she showed to the Lord, so, conversely, the one who did not fear to detract from her homage with a reckless tongue, has been infamously known for his treachery far and wide, and deservedly made hateful to God and men alike. But the Lord, rewarding good with worthy praise, silently overlooked the future insults of the wicked.

[Mark 14:10] -- And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray him to them. Unfortunate Judas! He believes he has suffered a loss from the pouring out of the ointment and wants to compensate it with the price of his master, not even asking for a fixed amount, as if to make the betrayal seem at least lucrative, but, as if selling a worthless slave, placed it in the power of the buyers to give as much as they wanted. The fact that it says, “He went to the chief priests to betray him to them,” shows that he was neither invited by the leaders nor constrained by any necessity but spontaneously entered into the plan with a wicked mind. [Mark 14:11] -- Upon hearing this, they rejoiced and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might opportunely betray Him. Many today are horrified by Judas’s crime of selling his Lord and Master, and God with money, as something monstrous and wicked, yet they do not take heed. For when they speak false testimony against anyone for the sake of women, indeed because they deny the truth for money, they sell God for money. For He said: I am the truth. When they defile the fellowship of brotherhood with some plague of discord, they betray the Lord, because God is love. Therefore, those who spurn the commands of love and truth betray God, who is indeed love and truth, especially when they sin not out of weakness or ignorance, but in the likeness of Judas seek opportunities to change truth with lies and virtue with crime.

[Mark 14:12] -- On the first day of unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the Passover, the disciples said to Him: Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover? He calls the first day of unleavened bread the fourteenth day of the first month when, having cast away the leaven, they used to sacrifice the Passover, that is, kill the lamb in the evening. Explaining this, the Apostle says: For even Christ our Passover has been sacrificed (I Cor. V). Although He

was crucified on the following day, that is on the fifteenth moon, yet on this night when the lamb was sacrificed, He handed over to His disciples the mysteries of His body and blood to be celebrated, and being captured and bound by the Jews, He hallowed the beginning of His own sacrificing, that is, of His passion.

[Mark 14:13] -- And he sends two of his disciples and says to them: Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. This is indeed a sign of divine foresight, because while speaking with the disciples, he knows what will happen elsewhere. When, however, the disciples are preparing for Passover, a man carrying a jar, or according to another Gospel, a pitcher of water, meets them, to show that the mystery of this Passover is to be celebrated for the perfect cleansing of the whole world. For water signifies the washing of grace, the jar indicates the frailty of those through whom the same grace was to be administered to the world. Hence, they say: “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels” (II Cor. IV). Therefore, the disciples prepare the Passover where the jar of water is brought, to signify that the time is here when the typical blood on the doorposts of the true Passover will be removed, and the baptism of the life-giving font will be consecrated to take away the sins of the world.

[Mark 14:14] -- Follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, that the teacher says: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples? By referring to both the water-bearer and the master of the house, the omitted words are suggesting that, to all wishing to celebrate the true Passover, that is, to be imbued with the sacraments of Christ and to receive him in the hospitality of their minds, this opportunity is indicated. [Mark 14:15] -- And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared there for us, etc. The large upper room is the spiritual law, which leaving the narrowness of the letter, receives the Savior in a high place. For he who still observes the killing letter, who understands nothing in the lamb but a mere animal, certainly does less of the Passover: because he has not yet learned to grasp the majesty of the spirit in the words of God. But he who follows the water bearer, that is, the preacher of grace, into the house of the Church, prepares for Christ a banquet room in the high chamber of the mind by transcending the surface of the letter through the illuminating spirit, because he recognizes that all the mysteries of the Passover, or other decrees of the law, are his mysteries.

[Mark 14:17] -- When evening came, he arrived with the twelve. And as they reclined and ate, Jesus said, ”Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, the one who is eating with me.” He who had foretold of the passion, also foretells of the betrayer, giving a place for repentance, so that when he understood that his thoughts and the secrets of his conscience were known, he might repent of his deed. And yet he does not designate him specifically, so that, being openly accused, he would not become more impudent. He places the crime within the number, so that the guilty

one might act with repentance. [Mark 14:19] -- But they began to be sorrowful, and to say to him one by one, ”Is it I?” And surely the eleven apostles knew that they were not contemplating anything like this against the Lord, but they trusted the teacher more than themselves; and fearing their own weakness, they sorrowfully inquired about a sin of which they had no consciousness.

[Mark 14:20] -- He said to them, ”One of the twelve, who is dipping his hand with me in the dish.” Oh marvelous power of the Lord! First he had said, ”One of you will betray me,” the betrayer persists in evil, he is more clearly accused, and yet his name is not specifically designated. Judas, while the others were saddened and withdrawing their hands and forbidding food to their mouths, with the rashness and impudence by which he was about to betray the master, even puts his hand with the master into the dish, so that his audacity could falsely claim a good conscience. [Mark 14:21] -- And indeed, the Son of Man goes as it is written of him. But woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. Neither at first nor second admonished does he withdraw his foot from betrayal, but the patience of the Lord nourishes his impudence, and he treasures up wrath for himself in the day of wrath. He predicts punishment, so that whom shame did not conquer, the announced torments might correct. But today also and forever, woe to that man who malignantly approaches the table of the Lord, who with schemes hidden in mind and some crime polluting his innermost heart, does not fear to partake in the holy sacrifices of the mysteries of Christ. For even he in the example of Judas betrays the Son of Man, not indeed to sinful Jews, but yet to sinners, namely his own members, with which he presumes to desecrate that inestimable and inviolable sacrament of the Lord’s body and blood. He sells God, who, neglecting His fear and love, is convicted of valuing and caring for earthly and perishable things, indeed even criminal things, in place of Him.

[Mark 14:21] -- It would have been good for him if that man had not been born. This should not be thought to mean that he existed before he was born, for it cannot be well for anyone, except for him who has been. But it is simply said, it is much better not to exist than to exist badly. [Mark 14:22] -- And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessing it, broke it, and gave it to them, and said: Take, this is my body. When the solemnities of the old Passover, which were celebrated in remembrance of the ancient liberation of God’s people from Egypt, were finished, he moved on to the new which he wanted the Church to observe in memory of his own redemption, so that he might substitute, in place of the flesh and blood of the lamb, the sacrament of his body and blood, and show himself to be: To whom the Lord swore and will not repent: You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110). He himself breaks the bread which he gives to the disciples, to show that his body’s breaking would not come without his own volition and preparation, but as he says elsewhere, he has the power to lay down his life, and he has the power to take it up again. Indeed, he blessed the bread with

the grace of a certain sacrament before breaking it, because the human nature he took on, which he was to suffer, he, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, filled with the grace of divine power. He blessed and broke the bread, because he deigned to submit the assumed man to death in such a way that he might truly demonstrate that he had within him the power of divine immortality, and thus teach that he would quickly be raised from death.

[Mark 14:23] -- And taking the cup and giving thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. As he is said to be approaching his passion, he is reported to have given thanks when he took the bread. Therefore, he gives thanks, who bears the lashes of another's iniquity. And he who showed nothing worthy of being struck, humbly blesses in the beating, to show by this what each person should do under the lash of their own fault, if he bears the lashes of another's fault with equanimity; to show by this what a subject should do in correction if, placed under the lash, he gives equal thanks to the father.

[Mark 14:24] -- And he said to them: This is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many. Because bread strengthens the body, but wine works blood in the flesh: this is mystically related to the body of Christ, that refers to the blood. But because it is necessary that both we remain in Christ, and Christ in us, water is mixed with the wine of the Lord's cup. For according to John, the waters are the peoples. And neither water alone, nor wine alone, just as neither grain of wheat alone without the mixture and preparation of water, is permitted to be offered to anyone as bread, lest this offering be understood as signifying a separation of the head from the members, and that either Christ could have suffered without love for our redemption, or we could be saved and offered to the Father without his passion. But what he says: This is my blood of the new testament (Matthew 26), relates to the distinction of the old testament, which was dedicated with the blood of goats and calves, the legislator saying while sprinkling: This is the blood of the testament, which God has commanded unto you (Hebrews 9). For it is necessary indeed that the copies of the true are cleansed by these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these; according to what the Apostle through the whole epistle to the Hebrews, distinguishing between the law and the Gospel, declares with a most beautiful explanation and comprehensive reasoning.

[Mark 14:25] -- Amen, I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. The vine or vineyard of the Lord has been called the Synagogue, as all Scripture frequently testifies, and Isaiah more openly in the song sung about it: "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel" (Isaiah V). From which vineyard, indeed, the Lord was drinking for a long time, although many branches turned into the bitterness of a foreign vine, because even though many in that people deviated from the straight path of faith, there were always many throughout the time of the law, whose pious thoughts and

excellent virtues delighted God. But with the Lord suffering in the flesh and rising from the dead, it was time for that legal and figurative observance to cease, and for those things which were carried out according to the letter to be transferred into a spiritual sense and held better in the new testament, with the grace of the Holy Spirit helping. Therefore, going to His passion, the Lord said: I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. As if He said openly: I will no longer delight in the carnal ceremonies of the Synagogue, in which even those sacred rites of the paschal lamb held a special place. For the time of my resurrection will come, that day will come, when I, placed in the kingdom of God, that is, exalted in the glory of immortal life, will be filled with new joy together with you, from the fountain of the grace of the Spirit regenerated in the salvation of that same people.

[Mark 14:26] -- And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. This is what we read in the psalm: ”The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek the Lord will praise Him” (Psalm 21). The hymn can also be understood as the one which the Lord, according to John, sang while giving thanks to the Father, in which, lifting His eyes up, He prayed for Himself, for the disciples, and for those who would believe through their word. And beautifully, He led the disciples, who had been imbued with the sacraments of His body and blood and commended to the Father with a hymn of holy intercession, to the Mount of Olives, to symbolically show that through the reception of His sacraments and by the aid of His intercession, we ought to ascend to the higher gifts of virtues and the charismata of the Holy Spirit, by which we might be anointed in heart.

[Mark 14:27] -- And Jesus said to them: You will all be scandalized in this night. He foretells what they will suffer so that when they suffer, they do not despair of salvation but find release by repenting. And He specifically added, ”in this night you will be scandalized,” because just as those who get drunk, get drunk at night, so also those who suffer scandal, suffer it in the night and in darkness. But let us say: ”The night is far spent, the day is at hand” (Romans 13). [Mark 14:27] -- For it is written: ”I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.” This is written in other words in the prophet Zechariah; and, if I am not mistaken, it is spoken by the prophet to God: ”Smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered” (Zechariah 13). The sixty-eighth psalm, which is entirely sung by the Lord, corresponds to this sense: ”For they persecuted him whom you have smitten.” The good shepherd is smitten so that he may lay down his life for his sheep and from many wandering flocks there may be made one flock and one shepherd.

[Mark 14:29] -- Peter said to Him: Even if all are scandalized, yet not I. This is neither recklessness nor falsehood, but the faith of the Apostle Peter and his ardent zeal towards the Lord the Savior.

[Mark 14:30] -- And Jesus said to him: Truly, I say to you that today, in this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times. And Peter, in the fervor of his faith, made a promise, and the Savior, as God, knew the future. And note that Peter denies in the night, and denies three times. But after the rooster crowed, and as the darkness lessened, the approaching light was announced, he turned and wept bitterly, washing away the filth of the threefold denial with his tears. It should certainly not be thought to be contrary that Mark says: Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times, while the other evangelists simply say: Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times. For the entirety of Peter's denial is a threefold denial. Because he remained in that same denial, with the intent and purpose of falsehood, until, reminded of what he had been foretold, he was healed with bitter weeping and sorrow of the heart. But this entire, that is, threefold denial, if it had begun after the first crowing of the rooster, the three who said that the Lord had spoken truly that before the rooster crows, Peter would deny him three times would seem to have spoken falsely. Again, if he had completed the whole threefold denial before the rooster began to crow, Marcus would be found to have said in vain from the person of the Lord:

Truly I say to you that you, in this night, before the rooster crows twice will deny me three times. But because that threefold denial began before the first crowing of the rooster, those three paid attention not to when Peter would complete it, but to how extensive it would be, and when it would begin, that is, threefold before the rooster crows, although it could be understood entirely in his mind before the first crowing of the rooster. Although indeed the beginning of those words of denial was before the first crowing, and after the second crowing the entire threefold denial was completed, nevertheless by the disposition of his mind and the fear of Peter, it was conceived entirely before the first crowing. Nor does it matter over how many intervals of delay the threefold voice was announced, since his heart, even before the first crowing, possessed it entirely, so deeply was it imbued with such great fear that he could deny the Lord, not only once, but a second and third time when questioned, so that to those considering attentively and diligently how one who has already committed adultery in his heart if he looks at a woman lustfully, so Peter, whenever he expressed in words the fear which he had so vehemently conceived in his mind, that extended up to the third denial of the Lord, the entire threefold denial must be attributed to that moment when such sufficient fear for a threefold denial overtook him.

[Mark 14:32] -- And they come to a place called Gethsemane. The place of Gethsemane is shown to this day, where the Lord prayed, at the foot of the Mount of Olives, now a church built above it. However, Gethsemane is interpreted as the valley of the fat ones or the fatness. Indeed, not only the sayings or deeds of our Savior, but also the places and times in which he works and speaks, are full of mystical figures (as often said), when the Lord prays on the mountain, as if silently

admonishing us that only high things should be sought by praying, and that we should supplicate for heavenly goods. But when he prays in the valley, and this in the valley of the fat ones or fatness, he equally insinuates to us humility always in prayers, and the internal fatness of love to be preserved, that none should dare, as it were, to boast his merits before God in prayer in the example of the proud Pharisee, but rather with humble voice and mind proclaim: God, be merciful to me a sinner (Luke XVIII). Nor bearing a heart dry of love for the neighbor, to placate the Creator's grace, should he kneel, like the one who, not willing to forgive a hundred denarii to his brother which he owed him, in vain prayed for ten thousand talents to be forgiven to him by his lord.

Nor having a heart fasting from the love of the Creator, should he in prayer seek any temporal things rather than his vision, to be counted among those of whom he said: For they have received their reward (Matthew VI). To place one's thought in the low, what else is it but a certain dryness of mind? But those who intellectually already feed on the food of inner delight by holy desires of heavenly things, as it were, grow fat by more ample nourishment. For this fatness the Psalmist longed to be filled, when he said: My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness (Psalm LXII). As regards the dispensation of the Lord's passion itself, it is fittingly appropriated to death, that the Lord prayed in the valley of fatness, because through the valley of humility and the fatness of charity he underwent death for us. For he humbled himself, being made obedient to the Father unto death (Philippians II). And greater love than this no man has, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John XV).

[Mark 14:33] -- And He takes Peter, and James, and John with Him, and began to be afraid and to be very sorrowful. And He said to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death. Christ is afraid, while Peter is not afraid. Christ is afraid; Peter says: I will lay down my life for you (John 13). Christ says: My soul is troubled. Both are true, and each is full of reason, because the one who is lower does not fear, and the one who is higher carries the emotion of fear. For he, as a man, does not understand the power of death. But He, being established as God in the body, exposes the frailty of the flesh, so that the impiety of those who deny the mystery of the Incarnation might be excluded. Indeed, He said this, and Manichaeus did not believe, Valentinus denied, and Marcion judged it a phantom. However, He equaled the human set forth in the truth of the body to such an extent by emotion, that He would say: Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will (Matthew 26). Therefore He took up my will, took up my sorrow. I confidently name sorrow because I preach the cross. My will is what He called His own. Because as a man He took up my sorrow, as a man He spoke.

[Mark 14:36] -- And so He says: Not as I will, but as You will (Ibid.). My sorrow is what He took up with my emotion. Therefore He grieved for me, who had nothing to grieve for Himself. And setting apart the delight of eternal divinity, He is affected by

the weariness of my weakness. My soul, He says, is sorrowful even unto death. The Lord is not sorrowful because of death, for He is offended by the condition of bodily emotion, not by the fear of death. For He who took on the body had to undergo all that pertains to the body, such as hunger, thirst, anguish, and sorrow. However, divinity is not altered by these emotions. [Mark 14:34] -- Endure here, and keep watch. And when he had gone on a little further, he fell to the ground. What he commands, endure here, and keep watch, does not forbid sleep, whose time had not come with impending danger, but the sleep of infidelity and the numbness of the mind. And after giving them the command to endure and keep watch with him, proceeding a little further, he fell on his face and showed the humility of the mind through the habit of the flesh.

[Mark 14:35] -- And he prayed that if it was possible the hour would pass from him, and said: Abba, etc. What was that voice, except the sound of our weakness? Many still frail ones grieve at the future death; but let them have a right heart, let them avoid death as much as they can; but if they cannot, let them say what the Lord himself, not for himself, but for us said. For what did he say? Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Behold you have the human will expressed. Now see the right heart.

[Mark 14:36] -- But not what I will, but what you (will). I did not come (he says) to do my will, but the will of him who sent me (John 5). He spoke of his own will, which he temporarily assumed from the virgin; but the will of him who sent him, he marked that, namely, which eternally and eternally he had in common with the Father. He prays for the cup to pass, to truly show that he was also a man. However, remembering also why he was sent, he completes the mission for which he was sent, and cries out: But not what I will, but what you (will). If death dies without me dying, namely in the flesh, let this cup pass, he says. But because this will not happen otherwise, he says: Not what I will, but what you (will). And that he, invoking the Father with a double name, says Abba Father, shows that he is the God and Savior of both peoples, namely the Jew and the Gentile. For indeed, Abba signifies what Father means. But abba is Hebrew, father is Greek and Latin. Therefore, in order to teach that both people would believe in him and would invoke him, he himself first invokes him in both languages. For he is the good shepherd, who, giving his life for his sheep, makes one fold out of two flocks.

Therefore, with the voice of both flocks, he asks for the Father’s help, so that we, informed by his example, when we feel adversities coming, invoking God the Father as the Hebrew, Abba, with one devotion of faith and charity, may seek heavenly help. Hence the admirable doctor, taking the form of teaching from the Lord, thus addresses his listeners: You have received the Spirit of adoption of sons, in which we cry out: Abba Father (Romans 8). Truly Abba to those who are from the Israelite people, us Father, who from the Gentiles came to the faith of Christ.

[Mark 14:37] -- And coming, he found them sleeping, and said to Peter: Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? He who had previously said: Even if all are scandalized, I will never be scandalized, now, in the greatness of his sorrow, cannot overcome sleep. [Mark 14:38] -- Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation. It is impossible for the human soul not to be tempted. Hence, in the Lord's Prayer we say: And lead us not into temptation (Matthew VI); which we cannot endure: not rejecting temptation entirely, but imploring the strength to withstand in temptations. Therefore, in the present, he does not say: Watch and pray, lest you be tempted, but, lest you enter into temptation. That is, lest the ultimate temptation overcomes you and ensnares you in its traps. For example, the martyr who shed his blood for the confession of the Lord was indeed tempted, but he was not entangled in the snares of temptation. However, he who denies falls into the snares of temptation.

[Mark 14:38] -- The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. This is said against the rash, who think they can achieve whatever they believe. Hence, as much as we trust in the ardor of the mind, so much should we fear the frailty of the flesh. But nevertheless, according to the Apostle, let us mortify the deeds of the flesh by the spirit. This passage is also against the Eutychians, who say there was one operation, one will in the mediator of God and men, our Lord and Savior. For when he says: The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak, he shows two wills: namely, the human, which is of the flesh, and the divine, which is of the deity. Where indeed the human, because of the weakness of the flesh, refuses suffering. But the divine will is most willing. For to fear in suffering is of human frailty; but to accept the dispensation of suffering is of divine will and virtue.

[Mark 14:39] -- And again, he went away and prayed, saying the same words; and returning again, he found them sleeping. He alone prays for all, just as he alone suffers for all. The eyes of the apostles were weakening and oppressed with the nearby denial. [Mark 14:41] -- And he came the third time, and said to them: Sleep now, and take your rest; it is enough. When he had said: Sleep now, and take your rest, and added: It is enough, and then introduced: The hour is come; behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners, and so on, it is understood that, after He had said to them: Sleep and take your rest, the Lord kept silent for a while so that what He foretold might be fulfilled, and then added: Behold, the hour is at hand, or the hour has come. Therefore, after saying those words, it is placed as 'it is enough,' meaning that the time for resting is now sufficient. But since the mention of the Lord's silence was not included, it constrains the understanding, making it necessary to seek another interpretation in those words.

[Mark 14:42] -- Rise up, let us go. Behold, he who betrays me is at hand. After praying a third time, and commanding the fear of the apostles, followed by penance, to be corrected, secure in His passion, He proceeds to His persecutors, and voluntar-

ily offers Himself to be killed, saying to the disciples: Rise up, let us go. Behold, he who betrays me is at hand. Let him not find us as fearful and hesitant, but let us go to death willingly, so they may see our confidence and joy in suffering. [Mark 14:44] -- Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying: Whomsoever I shall kiss, etc. Indeed, an impudent and wicked confidence, to call Him Master and to give a kiss to Him whom he was betraying. However, he still had something of the disciple's shame, since he did not openly hand Him over to the persecutors, but by the sign of a kiss. The Lord received the kiss of the betrayer, not to teach us to deceive, but so that He would not appear to evade the traitor, and also fulfilling that which was written in David: I was peaceful with those who hate peace (Psalm 119).

[Mark 14:47] -- One of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Peter did this, as the evangelist John declares, indeed with the same ardor of mind with which he had done other things. For he knew how Phinehas, by punishing the sacrilegious, had received the reward of the eternal priesthood. But Luke adds that the Lord, touching the servant's ear, healed him. Therefore, the Lord never forgets his mercy, who even does not allow his enemies to be wounded. They inflict death on the just, He heals the wounds of his persecutors. Mystically teaching that even those who had contracted the wound of the soul by consenting to his death, if they made the fruit of repentance worthy, they could merit salvation. [Mark 14:48] -- And Jesus, answering, said to them: "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? etc." He said, it is foolish to seek him with swords and clubs who freely surrenders to your hands; and to search for him at night as if he were hiding and avoiding your sight, who teaches daily in the temple. But you gather against me in the dark because your power is in the darkness.

[Mark 14:50] -- Then his disciples, leaving him, all fled. The word of the Lord which he had spoken was fulfilled, that all his disciples would be scandalized in him that very night. For even if, by the crowd permitting to the Lord's request, they fled, as John writes, they nonetheless showed the fear and timidity of their mind, that they were more ready to take refuge in flight than to endure suffering with Christ in confidence. [Mark 14:51] -- A certain young man followed him, clothed in a linen cloth over his naked body, and they seized him. But he, leaving the linen cloth behind, fled from them naked. When it says 'clothed in a linen cloth over his naked body,' it is implied on the body, that is, on the naked body, because he had no other clothing than only the linen cloth. But who this young man was, the evangelist does not say. Whoever he was, he proves that a greater love for the Lord remained in him than in the others, who, while they were already fleeing, he, bound by the bond of love, did not cease to follow him until he was apprehended by the enemies. Although he had not yet perfected love, who could even while being held flee from the companionship of the Savior. Because just as perfect love casts out fear (1 John IV), so fear, besieging the mind, proves imperfect love.

[Mark 14:51-52] -- But it is to be noted narrowly that the evangelist writing about this young man does not say that he fled from the company or fled from following the Lord, but, he says, rejecting the linen cloth, he fled naked from them. For he fled from the enemies, whose presence and deeds he detested; he did not flee from the Lord and his Master, whose love fixed in his heart he preserved even absent in the body. Nor is there anything to prevent us from understanding that this young man was John, the disciple beloved above others by the Master. For that he was a young man at that time is indicated by his long life afterward in the flesh. For it could have happened that, having slipped from the hands of his captors for a moment, he soon, having resumed his garment, returned and mingled among the crowd leading Jesus, as if he were one of them, until he reached the high priest's courtyard where he was known, as he himself recounts in his Gospel. But just as Peter, who washed away the sin of his denial with the tears of repentance and completely eradicated it by confessing his love for the Lord, showing the recovery of those who fall in martyrdom, so the other disciples, who avoided the moment of capture by fleeing, teach the caution of fleeing to those who feel themselves less capable of enduring torments.

For it is much safer for them to seek the protection of hiding places than to expose themselves to the danger of contests. Thus also this young man, who, rejecting the linen cloth, fled naked from the impious ones, designates their work and mind who, in order to be more secure from the attacks of the enemies, throw away whatever they seem to possess in this world and learn to serve the Lord naked rather than by adhering to the things of the world, giving the adversaries matter for tempting and recalling them from God: following the example of the blessed Joseph who, leaving his garment in the hands of the adulteress, leapt out, preferring to serve God naked rather than, clothed in the desires of the world, to serve the prostitute.

[Mark 14:53] -- And they led Jesus to the high priest. The high priest means Caiphas, who (as the evangelist John writes) was the high priest of that year. Josephus also testifies in agreement about this, saying that he obtained the high priesthood without merit from the Roman ruler. Therefore, it is not surprising if an unjust high priest judges unjustly. [Mark 14:54] -- But Peter followed from a distance, etc. Deservedly he followed from a distance, who was soon to deny him. For he could not have denied if he had clung closely to Christ. Yet in this, he is most greatly venerable to us with admiration because he did not leave the Lord even when he was afraid. For what he fears is due to nature; what he follows is due to devotion; what he denies is due to deception; what he repents of is due to faith. Another interpretation: Peter following the same Lord from a distance to the passion signified that the Church would indeed follow, that is, imitate the passion of the Lord, but from a far distance. For the Church suffers for itself, but He for the Church.

[Mark 14:54] -- And he was sitting with the attendants and warming himself at the fire. There is the fire of love, and there is also the fire of desire. Of this it is said: I came to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I if it be already kindled (Luke 12)? But of that: They are all adulterers, like an oven heated by the baker (Hosea 7). This fire, descending upon the believers in the upper room of Zion, taught them to praise God in various languages. That fire kindled by the evil spirit in the courtyard of Caiaphas armed the harmful tongues of the faithless to deny and blaspheme the Lord. For what the malignant council was plotting inside the house of the high priest, this fire materially lit outside in the courtyard amidst the cold of the night, symbolically prefigured. Therefore, whoever extinguishes the evil and harmful fire in themselves can say with the prophet to the Lord: For I am become like a bottle in the frost; yet do I not forget thy statutes (Psalm 119). But those in whom the flame of love has been overwhelmed by the turbulent waters of vices hear from the Lord: Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold (Matthew 24). At that cold moment, the Apostle Peter, numb from the cold, wished to warm himself by the coals of Caiaphas' attendants, because he sought the comfort of temporal ease by the company of the faithless.

But soon, remembered by the Lord, he left behind both the physical fire of the wicked and the infidelity within his heart. And after the resurrection of the Lord, revived by the holy fire, he completely purged the sin of his threefold denial by the threefold confession of love. Then, upon that memorable catch of fish, when he came to the Lord with his fellow disciples, soon seeing the coals laid, and the fish laid on it and the bread, he was inflamed with the fire of love in the hidden chambers of his heart.

[Mark 14:58] -- And some standing up bore false witness against him, saying: We heard him say: I will destroy this temple made with hands, and after three days I will build another not made with hands. How are they false witnesses if they say things which we read that the Lord said? But a false witness is he who does not understand statements in the same sense as they are spoken. For the Lord had spoken about the temple of his body. Yet they slander even the very words, and by adding or changing a few, they seem to create a just accusation. The Savior had said: Destroy this temple. They change it and say: I will destroy this temple made with hands. He says, you destroy, not I. Because it is unlawful for us to bring death upon ourselves. Then they twist it: and after three days I will build another not made with hands, so that it appears he spoke specifically about the Jewish temple. But the Lord, to show that the living and breathing body is the temple, had said: And I will raise it up in three days. Building is one thing, raising is another.

[Mark 14:60] -- And the high priest, rising up in the midst, asked Jesus, saying: Do you answer nothing to what is objected against you by these men? But he was silent and answered nothing. Impetuous and impatient anger, finding no place for

slander, shakes the high priest from his seat to show the madness of his mind with the movement of his body. The more Jesus was silent towards the false witnesses and impious priests unworthy of his response, the more the high priest, overcome with fury, provokes him to respond, so that at any chance of speaking he finds a place for accusing. Nonetheless, Jesus remains silent. For he knew, as if God, whatever he had answered, it would be twisted for slander. [Mark 14:61] -- Again the high priest asked him, and said to him: Are you the Christ, the son of the Blessed? Jesus said to him: I am. In Matthew it is written that to the high priest asking and adjuring him if he was the Christ, he answered: You have said it (Matt. 26). For which Mark placed: I am, to show that what Jesus says to him: You have said it, is as much as if he had said: I am.

[Mark 14:62] -- And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven. Therefore, if for you in Christ, O Jew, pagan, and heretic, contempt, weakness, and the cross are an insult, see that through these the Son of Man is to sit at the right hand of God the Father, and, born from the Virgin's womb as a man, is to come in His majesty with the clouds of heaven. Hence, the Apostle also, after describing the rejection of the cross, saying that He humbled Himself, became obedient unto death, even death on a cross, added and said: Therefore God also exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father (Philipp. II).

[Mark 14:63] -- But the high priest, rending his garments, said: Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy. The same fury that had shaken him from the priestly throne provokes him to rend his garments. He rends his garments to show that the Jews had lost priestly glory and had an empty seat of the high priest. It is also a custom among the Jews, when they hear something blasphemous and seemingly against God, to rend their garments. We read that Paul and Barnabas did this too when they were honored with divine worship in Lycaonia. However, because Herod did not give honor to God but acquiesced to the excessive favor of the people, he was immediately struck by an angel. But in a higher mystery, it happened that during the Lord's passion, the high priest of the Jews himself rent his garments, while the tunic of the Lord could not be rent by even the soldiers who crucified him. It was prefigured that the priesthood of the Jews would be rent for the crimes of their priests and completely dissolved from its state of integrity; however, the solidity of the holy universal Church, which is often called the garment of its Redeemer, could never be rent. Rather, even if the Jews, the Gentiles, the heretics, or the wicked Catholics despise the humility of the Lord Savior, its inviolate chastity will remain until the end of the age in those whom He finds chosen.

[Mark 14:65] -- And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say to him: Prophesy. And the officers struck him with the palms of their hands. The prophecy was fulfilled here which says: I gave my cheeks to the smiters, and I did not hide my face from confusion and spitting (Isaiah 50:6). But he who was struck then with buffetings from the Jews is now also struck by the blasphemies of false Christians. He who was then spat upon with the saliva of the unbelievers is now even to this day dishonored and provoked with insults by the frenzied only in name faithful. They covered his face, not so that he would not see their crimes, but so that they themselves, as they once did to Moses, might hide from themselves the grace of his knowledge. For if they believed Moses, they might perhaps also believe in the Lord. That veil remains until this day upon their hearts not revealed. But it has been taken away for us who believe in Christ. For it was not in vain that the veil of the temple was torn in two at the moment he died, and the things that had been hidden throughout the whole time of the law, and had been concealed from the carnal Israel, were made manifest to the worshippers of the New Testament in the sanctum sanctorum secrets. But what they say to him: Prophesy, and according to other evangelists: Prophesy who is the one who struck you; they do this as if in scorn of him who wished to be considered a prophet by the people. But he himself arranging what he suffers, everything is done for us, as Peter exhorts: Since Christ suffered in the flesh, let us arm ourselves with the same thought, and be prepared to endure the mocking insults for his name.

[Mark 14:66] -- And while Peter was in the courtyard below, one of the maidservants of the high priest came. And when she saw Peter warming himself, looking at him she said: You also were with Jesus of Nazareth, etc. What does it mean that the maidservant first betrayed him, when surely men could have recognized him more? unless it is that this sex might also appear to have sinned in the death of the Lord and that this sex might also be redeemed through the passion of the Lord. And therefore the woman first receives the mystery of the resurrection, and keeps the commandments to abolish the ancient error of transgression. [Mark 14:68] -- And he went out before the courtyard, and the cock crowed. Of this crowing of the cock, the other evangelists are silent, though they do not deny that it happened, just as many others pass over in silence many things which others recount.

[Mark 14:69] -- Again, when the maid saw him, she began to say to those standing around: This man is one of them. But he denied it again. The one accusing him now should not be believed to be the same as before. For Matthew says very clearly: When he went out to the gate, another saw him and said to those who were there (Matthew 26), etc. From this denial of Peter, we learn not only that Christ is denied by someone who says He is not Christ, but also by someone who, when He is, denies that he himself is a Christian. However, the Lord did not say to Peter: You will deny my disciple, but: You will deny me. So he denied Him when he denied being His disciple. [Mark 14:70] -- And after a little while, those standing by said to

Peter again: Truly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean. Not that Galileans spoke a different language than the Jerusalemites, for both were Hebrews, but that every province and region has its peculiarities, and it cannot avoid the native accent. Hence, in the Acts of the Apostles, when those upon whom the Holy Spirit had descended spoke in the languages of all nations, among others who had come from different parts of the world, even those living in Judea are reported to have said: Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear each in our own language in which we were born (Acts 2)? And Peter, speaking to the brothers in Jerusalem, said: And it became known to all those inhabiting Jerusalem, so that that field was called in their own language Haceldama (Acts 1). Why in their language, unless it was because they pronounced the same name differently, that is, the Galileans differently from those in Jerusalem?

[Mark 14:71] -- But he began to curse and to swear: ”I do not know this man you are talking about.” And immediately the rooster crowed again. Scripture is wont to designate the mystery of events by the state of times. Hence Peter, who denied in the middle of the night, repented at the crowing of the rooster. He who even after the resurrection of the Lord professed by daylight equally thrice to love Him whom he had thrice denied. For surely, what he erred in the darkness of oblivion, he corrected by the remembrance of the hoped-for light, and by the acquisition of the presence of the true light, fully raised all that had faltered. I think this rooster is to be understood as some teacher, who, awakening us supine and rebuking the sleepy, says: ”Awake to righteousness, and do not sin.” [Mark 14:72] -- And Peter remembered the word that Jesus had said to him: ”Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he began to weep. How harmful are the colloquies of the wicked? Peter himself among the faithless denied even knowing a man, whom among his fellow disciples he had already confessed to be the Son of God. But neither could he, held in the courtyard of Caiaphas, perform penitence. He went outside, as the other evangelists narrate, so that, secluded from the council of the ungodly, he might wash away the filth of his fearful denial with unrestrained weeping.

Chapter 15

[Mark 15:1] -- And immediately, forming a plan, in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole council, binding Jesus, led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate. He was led not only to Pilate but also to Herod, so that both might mock the Lord. And observe the priests' diligence in evil. All night they stayed awake to commit murder, and they handed over the bound one to Pilate. For they had this custom, that whoever they sentenced to death, they handed over bound to the judge. Nevertheless, it should be noted that they did not bind Him for the first time then, but as soon as He was apprehended in the night in the garden, as John declares, they bound Him and thus brought Him first to Annas. [Mark 15:2] -- And Pilate asked Him: "Are you the king of the Jews?" Pilate, asking no other crime except whether He was the king of the Jews, the Jews are accused of impiety, because they could not find even falsely something to charge against the Savior.

[Mark 15:2] -- But he, answering, said to him: You say it. He answered in such a way that he both spoke the truth and his speech could not be accused of calumny. And note that to Pilate, who was reluctantly passing judgment, he responded in part, but to the priests and leaders, he did not want to respond and judged them unworthy of his speech. [Mark 15:4] -- Pilate, however, again asked him, saying: Do you not answer anything? See in how many things they accuse you. But Jesus no longer answered anything. Although it is a Gentile who condemns Jesus, he attributes the cause to the Jewish people: See in how many things they accuse you. Jesus, however, did not want to answer, lest, by dispelling the accusation, he would be released by the governor, and the benefit of the cross delayed. [Mark 15:11] -- But the chief priests stirred up the crowd that he might rather release Barabbas to them. To the Jews to this day remains their request, which they obtained with such effort. For given the choice, they chose a thief over Jesus, a murderer over the Savior, the taker of life over the giver of life, and deservedly lost both salvation and life, and submitted themselves so much to robbery and sedition that they lost both their country and kingdom, which they loved more than Christ, and have not yet deserved to regain that liberty of either soul or body which they sold.

[Mark 15:12] -- But Pilate again, answering, said to them: What then do you want me to do with the king of the Jews? But they again shouted: Crucify him. However, Pilate was saying to them: What evil has he done? Pilate gave many opportunities to free the Savior: first, comparing him to the thief, then saying: What then do you want me to do with the king of the Jews? And when they answered, "Crucify him," he did not immediately comply, but, according to the suggestion of his wife who had sent word to him, as Matthew writes: Have nothing to do with that just man (Matthew 27), he himself also seriously responding: What, he said, has he done wrong? By saying this, Pilate absolved Jesus. [Mark 15:14] -- But they cried out more: Crucify him. That it might be fulfilled which was said in the twenty-first psalm: Many dogs surrounded me, the assembly of the wicked enclosed me (Psalm XXI); and that from Jeremiah: My heritage is become to me as a lion in the forest, they have given forth their voice against me (Jeremiah XII). Isaiah also agrees in this sentiment: And I looked for judgment, but behold iniquity and not righteousness, but a cry (Isaiah V).

[Mark 15:15] -- But Pilate, willing to satisfy the people, released Barabbas to them and delivered Jesus, after having him scourged, to be crucified. Jesus, however, is understood to have been scourged not by another, but by Pilate himself. For John writes openly: They all cried again, saying: Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber. Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged him (John XVIII). And then he adds: And the soldiers, weaving a crown of thorns, placed it on his head, etc. (John XIX). Indeed, he is believed to have done this and to have delivered him to the soldiers to be mocked, so that, satisfied with his pains and insults, they might willingly stop desiring his death. This was done, for it was written: Many are the stripes of the wicked (Psalm XXXI), he was scourged so that we might be freed from beatings, the Scripture saying: The scourge shall not approach your tabernacle (Psalm XC).

[Mark 15:16-18] -- But the soldiers led Him into the courtyard of the praetorium, and called together the entire cohort, and they clothed Him in purple, and after weaving a crown of thorns, they placed it on Him, and began to salute Him: Hail, King of the Jews. The soldiers did this because He had been called the King of the Jews, and because the scribes and the priests had accused Him of seizing power in the Israelite people for Himself. They did this in mockery, stripping Him of His former clothes, dressing Him in purple, which ancient kings used, placing a crown of thorns on Him instead of a diadem, giving Him a reed instead of a royal scepter, as Matthew writes, and worshipping Him as though He were a king. But let us understand all these things mystically. As Caiaphas said: It is expedient that one man should die for the people (John XVIII), not knowing what he said (Luke IX); so whatever they did, although they did it with a different intent, nevertheless, for us who believe, they were administering the sacraments.

[Mark 15:17] -- It is to be noted, however, that for what Mark says: And they clothed Him in purple, Matthew puts it thus: And stripping Him, they put on Him a scarlet robe (Matthew XXVII). From which it is understood that what Matthew says: They put on Him a scarlet robe, Mark states as: Clothed in purple. For that scarlet robe was used in mockery as royal purple, and it is a kind of red-purple similar to scarlet. It is also possible that Mark mentioned purple, which the cloak had, although it was scarlet. Mystically, therefore, in the purple with which the Lord is clothed, His very body, which He subjected to sufferings, is indicated. Concerning this, prophecy had already said: Why then is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one treading in the winepress? (Isaiah LXIII).

[Mark 15:17] -- In the crown of thorns He wore is shown the taking up of our sins, for which He deigned to become mortal. As His forerunner bearing witness to Him said: Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world (John I). For the Lord Himself bears witness that thorns are customarily placed as a sign of sins, who said to the first man fallen into sin: Your land will bring forth thorns and thistles for you (Genesis III). Which is to say openly: Your conscience will constantly generate for you the stings and thorns of vices. But according to the Gospel of Luke, the Lord is clothed in a white robe before Herod, while in the other Gospels He is mocked by the soldiers of Pilate under a scarlet or purple garment. Comparing both narratives, in one the innocence and chastity of the assumed humanity are expressed, while in the other, the truth of the passion through which He was to attain the glory of the immortal kingdom is expressed. For just as purple mimics the color of the blood shed for us, so also the habit of the kingdom, into which He entered after the passion and which is open to us to enter, is insinuated. But since the Apostle says: For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Galatians III); and Isaiah instructs the Lord about all the elect:

These, he says, will be clothed as with an ornament (Isaiah XLI), in this double attire of the Lord, contemptible indeed in the view of enemies but most glorious in the election of the Lord Himself, the entire multitude of His elect, divided into the venerated martyrs and the remaining faithful, can be most aptly designated. For He is clothed in a white robe when He is surrounded by the pure confession of the righteous. He is dressed in purple or scarlet, when he glories in the triumph of victorious martyrs.

[Mark 15:19] -- And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting upon him. And kneeling down, they worshipped him. These things then the soldiers of Pilate did, these things up to today the heretics and pagans do, indeed the soldiers of the devil. For since Christ’s head is God, they strike his head who deny that he is true God. And because Scripture is usually written with a reed, they strike the head of Christ as it were with a reed, who, denying his divinity, try to confirm their error with the authority of Sacred Scripture. They spit in his face, who reject his

presence of grace with execrable words conceived from the insanity of a blinded mind, and deny that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. [Mark 15:19] -- And indeed the soldiers, as if he had falsely claimed to be God, mocked and adored him. But today there are those, with greater madness, who adore him with firm faith as true God, but by perverse actions soon despise his words as if fanciful, and place the promises of his kingdom far behind worldly allurements.

[Mark 15:20] -- And they led him out to crucify him. And they compelled a certain passer-by, Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. Simon seems to have been of great repute then, as his sons also are named as already known to all. But it must be avoided lest anyone thinks contrary to what John writes, that the Lord himself carried his cross; for the other evangelists relate that this Simon of Cyrene carried it. [Mark 15:21] -- Firstly, it was carried by the Lord, and then it was imposed on Simon, whom they happened to meet as they were going out. And this is in a fitting order of mystery. For he undoubtedly suffered for us, leaving us an example that we might follow in his footsteps. [Mark 15:21] -- And because this Simon is said to be not from Jerusalem but a Cyrenian (for Cyrene is a city of Libya, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles), it is rightly by him that the peoples of the Gentiles are designated, who once were strangers and foreigners to the covenants, now by obeying are citizens and household members of God, and, as it is said elsewhere, heirs indeed of God, but co-heirs of Christ (Romans VIII). Thus fittingly Simon the obedient, Cyrene, is interpreted as heir. And it should not be overlooked that the same Simon is reported to have come from the country. The country in Greek is called πάγος. From this, we call pagans those whom we see as alien to the city of God and almost devoid of urban conversation. But Simon, coming out of the country, carries the cross after Jesus, as the people of the nations, having abandoned pagan rites, obediently embrace the footsteps of the Lord’s passion.

[Mark 15:22] -- And they bring him to a place called Golgotha, which is interpreted as the place of the Skull. Outside the city gate are places where the heads of the condemned are cut off, and they have taken the name Calvariae, that is, of those beheaded. For this reason, the Lord was crucified there, so that where there was once the ground of the condemned, the banners of martyrdom might be raised. And just as for us, He became the curse of the cross, and was scourged and crucified, so for the salvation of all, He is crucified as a guilty one among the guilty. [Mark 15:23] -- And they gave Him wine mixed with myrrh to drink, and He did not accept it. God speaks to Jerusalem: I planted you, my true vineyard; how have you turned into a bitter wild vine (Jeremiah II)? The bitter vine produced bitter wine: which is offered to the Lord Jesus, so that what is written may be fulfilled: They gave me gall for my food, and in my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink (Psalm LXVIII). But when it is said: And He did not accept it, or according to Matthew: When He had

tasted it, He did not want to drink (Matthew XXVII), this indicates that He indeed tasted the bitterness of death for us, but on the third day He rose again.

[Mark 15:23] -- For what Mark says: he did not take, it is understood: he did not take to drink. However, he tasted, as Matthew is a witness, so that what the same Matthew says, He did not want to drink, Mark says He did not take, but he is silent on the tasting. And what Mark says, Wine mixed with myrrh, it is to be understood Matthew said with gall mixed (Matthew 27). For Matthew indeed uses gall to signify bitterness. And wine mixed with myrrh is very bitter, although it might be that both with gall and myrrh the wine is made very bitter. [Mark 15:24] -- And crucifying him, they divided his garments, casting lots upon them, who should take what. This the evangelist John explains more fully: namely, that the soldiers divided the rest into four parts, according to their number, casting lots for the tunic, which was seamless, woven from the top throughout.

[Mark 15:24] -- The fourfold garment of the Lord, therefore, prefigured His fourfold Church, spread throughout the whole world (which consists of four parts) and equally, that is, harmoniously, distributed in all those parts. But that tunic, acquired by lot, signifies the unity of all the parts, which is preserved by the bond of charity. For if charity, according to the Apostle, has both a more excellent way and surpasses knowledge, and is above all precepts, rightly the garment by which it is signified is said to be woven from the top. In the casting of lots, what else is commended but the grace of God? Thus it reaches all in one, as the lot pleased all, because God’s grace reaches all in unity. And when the lot is cast, it is believed not to be due to any person’s merits, but to the hidden judgment of God. And because, as the Apostle says, our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin (Rom. VI), as long as our works are aimed at destroying the body of sin and as long as the outer man is being corrupted so that the inner man is renewed day by day, it is the time of the cross. These also are good works, yet still laborious, whose reward is rest. But it is said, Rejoicing in hope (Rom. XII), so that we work with cheerfulness in labors for the future rest.

This cheerfulness is signified by the width of the cross in the transverse wood where the hands are fixed. For by the hands we understand works, by the width, the cheerfulness of the worker, because sadness causes narrowness. By the height, to which the head is attached, we understand the expectation of the reward from the sublime justice of God, who will repay everyone according to their works (Matt. XVI), to those indeed according to the endurance of good work, seeking glory, honor, and immortality, eternal life. Hence also the length, by which the whole body is extended, signifies endurance itself, whence those who endure are called long-suffering. The depth, however, which is fixed in the earth, prefigures the secret of the sacrament. You may remember, if I am not mistaken, that the words of the

Apostle are expounded in this description of the cross, where he says: Rooted and grounded in charity, that you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length, width, height, and depth (Eph. III).

[Mark 15:25] -- It was the third hour, and they crucified him. There are those who believe that the Lord was crucified at the third hour, but that darkness came from the sixth hour until the ninth, so that the three hours from when He was crucified until the darkness came are understood to have passed. And this could indeed be very rightly understood, except that John says that Pilate sat on the judgment seat in a place called the Stone Pavement, in Hebrew Gabbatha, at about the sixth hour (John 19). He continues: ”It was the Day of Preparation of the Passover, about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews: ’Behold your King,’” etc. Therefore, if at about the sixth hour, when Pilate was seated on the judgment seat, He was handed over to the Jews to be crucified, how was He crucified at the third hour, as some have misunderstood the words of Mark? For Mark had surely said: ”And when they crucified him, they divided his garments. Therefore, if he wanted to mention the time when the event took place, it would suffice to say: “And it was the third hour”; why did he add: “And they crucified him,” unless he wanted to signify something by recapitulating, which would be found upon investigation, since the Scripture was read at a time when the whole Church knew at what hour the Lord was hung on the wood, from which either this error could be corrected or the lie refuted?

But because he knew that the Lord was crucified by soldiers and not by Jews, he wanted to reveal secretly that those who shouted for Him to be crucified were more responsible for the crucifixion than those who performed their service according to the duty assigned by their ruler. Therefore, it is understood that it was the third hour when the Jews cried out for the Lord to be crucified. And it is very rightly shown that they crucified Him when they cried out, especially since they did not want to appear to have done it, and therefore they handed Him over to Pilate, as their words clearly indicate according to John. Thus, what they especially did not want to appear to have done, Mark shows they did at the third hour, very rightly indicating that the tongue of the Jews was more the killer of the Lord than the hands of the soldiers.

[Mark 15:26] -- And the inscription of the charge against Him read: King of the Jews. The inscription placed above His cross, in which it was written: King of the Jews, showed that even by putting Him to death, they could not make it so that they did not have Him as a king, who, with manifest and most eminent power, was going to repay them according to their deeds. Hence it is sung in the psalm: But I am established king by Him over Zion, His holy mountain (Psalm II). Who, fittingly, since He is both king and priest, when He was offering the extraordinary sacrifice of His flesh to the Father on the altar of the cross, also exhibited the dignity of the king with which He was endowed, so that He might suggest to all who wished to

read, that is, to hear and believe, that through the gibbet of the cross He did not lose His dominion, but rather confirmed and strengthened it.

[Mark 15:27] -- And with Him they crucified two robbers, one on His right, and the other on His left. The robbers who are crucified with the Lord signify those who, under the faith and confession of Christ, undergo either the struggle of martyrdom or any other practices of stricter continence. But whoever undertakes these solely for the eternal and heavenly glory, these are undoubtedly identified by the merit and faith of the right-hand thief. But those who, either in view of human praise or any less worthy intention, renounce the world, they justly imitate the mind and actions of the blasphemous and left-hand thief. Of whom the Apostle says: If I give my body so that I may be burned, if I give all my resources to feed the poor, if I seem to do many other works of piety or to have received spiritual gifts, but do not have charity, it profits me nothing (I Cor. XIII). Blessed are those who leave their own things for the Lord, and for the Gospel. Blessed are those who suffer persecution for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. V).

[Mark 15:31] -- Similarly, the chief priests, mocking, said to one another with the scribes: He saved others, etc. Even unwillingly, the scribes and priests confess that He saved others. Therefore, your own judgment condemns you. For He who saved others could indeed, if He willed, save Himself. [Mark 15:32] -- Christ, King of Israel, descend now from the cross, so that we may see and believe. False promise. What is greater, to descend from the cross while still alive, or to rise from the tomb when dead? He rose, and you do not believe; therefore, even if He had descended from the cross, you similarly would not believe.

[Mark 15:32] -- And those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him. How were those who were crucified with Him insulting Him, when indeed one of them insulted Him, according to the testimony of Luke, the other rebuked him and believed in God? Unless we understand that Matthew and Mark, summarizing briefly, used the plural number for the singular in this place, as we read it is said in the plural in the Epistle to the Hebrews: They shut the mouths of lions (Heb. 11), when it is understood to mean Daniel alone. And it is said in the plural: They were sawn in two (Ibid.), though it is traditionally said of Isaiah alone. But what is more common, for example, than for someone to say: The peasants insult me, even if only one insults? For it would be contradictory to what Luke clearly stated about one, if they had said both thieves insulted the Lord, when one could not be understood under the plural number. When it is said thieves, or, those who were crucified with Him, without adding both, not only if both had done it could this be said, but also because one did it, it could be expressed using the plural number in the usual way. With Luke testifying that one thief blaspheming the Lord said: If you are the Christ; save yourself and us (Luke 23), the other, however, rebuked him with fitting reproach, and prayed to the Lord with faithful supplication saying:

Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom (Ibid.), we see this still happening today in the Church, when those touched by worldly afflictions, both true and false Christians, indeed those who bear the sacraments of the Lord's Passion with a feigned mind, wish to be liberated by the Lord for the joys of this present life. But those who with sincere intention do not glory except in the cross of our Lord with the Apostle, rather desire to be delivered from present troubles in such a way that they commend their spirit into the hands of their Creator, and desire to be partakers of the heavenly kingdom with Him. Hence well did he who prayed to the Lord with doubtful faith was utterly scorned by the Lord and deemed worthy of no response. But indeed, the prayers of him who sought eternal salvation from Him, the Lord was soon pleased to receive with pious hearing. Because clearly, whosoever placed in tribulation seeks only temporal comfort from the Lord, deprives himself equally of both temporal and eternal joys. But those who sincerely long for the good things of the heavenly homeland, come to them without any doubt, Christ granting mercy.

[Mark 15:33] -- And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. The most brilliant light of the world withdrew its rays, lest it see the Lord hanging, or the impious blasphemers enjoy its light. And it is to be noted, that the Lord was crucified at the sixth hour, that is, when the sun was about to withdraw from the center of the world; but at dawn, that is, when the sun was rising, He celebrated the mysteries of His resurrection. For He marked with the hour of time what He showed by the effectiveness of the work. Because He died for our sins and rose for our justification. For it is written of Adam sinning that he heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day (Gen. III). In the cool of the day, namely with the light of faith declined; and in the cool, with the fervor of charity cooling. He was heard walking because He had withdrawn from sinful man. Therefore, the order of reason, or rather of divine piety, demanded that at the same time in which He had then closed to the transgressing Adam, now the Lord might open the gates of paradise to the penitent thief, and at the hour at which the first Adam had brought death to this world by sinning, at the same hour the second Adam might destroy death by dying.

[Mark 15:34] -- And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying: "Heloi, Heloi, lama sabachthani?" which is interpreted, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" He used the beginning of the twenty-second psalm. That which is read in the middle of the verse: "Look upon me," is superfluous. For in Hebrew it is read, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" Do not marvel at the humility of the words, the complaints of the forsaken, when, knowing the form of a servant, you see the scandal of the cross. For just as to hunger, and to thirst, and to be fatigued were not proper to divinity, but bodily passions, so also what is said, "Why have you forsaken me?" was proper to the bodily voice, because it is natural for the body not to wish to be deprived of the life joined to it.

For although the Savior himself said this, he properly showed the fragility of the body, remaining the power and wisdom of God. Therefore, as a man, he speaks, carrying my emotions, that in perils we think we are forsaken by God; as a man he is troubled, as a man he weeps, as a man he is crucified.

[Mark 15:35] -- And some of those standing by, hearing this, said: ”Behold, he calls Elijah.” Not all, but some. I think these were Roman soldiers, not understanding the Hebrew language, but from what he said ”Heloi, Heloi,” thinking Elijah was being invoked by him. But if you prefer to understand Jews saying this, they also do it as is their custom, to dishonor the Lord with weakness, who is seen as seeking Elijah’s help.

[Mark 15:36] -- But running, one of them, and filling a sponge with vinegar, and putting it around a reed, offered him a drink, saying: Wait, let us see if Elijah will come to take him down. For which cause the Lord was given vinegar for drink, John shows more fully, saying: Afterward Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, says: I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar. So they filled a sponge with vinegar, and putting it upon hyssop, offered it to his mouth. Seeing then that all things were accomplished which were necessary to be done, before he received the vinegar and gave up the ghost, and that this also might be fulfilled which he said: And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink (Psalm 118), he says: I thirst. As though he said: This you have left undone; give what you have. Certainly, the Jews themselves were the vinegar, degenerate from the wine of the patriarchs and prophets; as it were, from a full vessel, filled with the iniquity of this world, having a heart like a sponge, in a way crooked and deceitful with hollow and tortuous cavities. The hyssop, around which they put the sponge full of vinegar, since it is a lowly herb and cleanses the flock, we fittingly take to mean the humility of Christ himself, which they surrounded, and thought they had circumvented. Whence it is said in the Psalm:

Sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be clean (Psalm 50); for we are cleansed by the humility of Christ, since unless he had humbled himself, made obedient to the Father even unto death of the cross (Philippians 2), surely his blood would not have been shed for the remission of sins, that is, for our cleansing. But by the reed upon which the sponge was placed, Scripture is signified, which was fulfilled by this act. For just as a tongue is said to be either Greek, or Latin, or any other, signifying the sound which the tongue utters, so a reed can be said to be the letter which is written with a reed. Yet we more commonly call the sounds of the human voice tongues; but for Scripture to be called a reed, though less usual, is more mysteriously symbolic.

[Mark 15:37] -- But Jesus, having cried out with a loud voice, expired. What the Lord said with this loud voice, Luke clearly indicates, saying: Father, into your hands I commend my spirit. And having said this, he expired (Luke 23). What John

writes, however, that when Jesus had received the vinegar, he said: It is finished, and bowing his head, gave up his spirit (John 19), between that which he said: It is finished, and that: And bowing his head, gave up his spirit, the loud voice was emitted, which John kept silent about, but the other three mentioned. [Mark 15:38] -- And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The veil of the temple is torn, so that the ark of the covenant and all the sacraments of the law, which were covered, may appear and pass on to the people of the nations. For it had been said before: God is known in Judah, his great name in Israel (Psalm 76). But now: Be exalted above the heavens, O God, and your glory over all the earth (Psalm 66). And previously in the Gospel, he said: Do not go into the way of the gentiles (Matthew 10). But after his passion, he said: Go and teach all nations (Matthew 28).

[Mark 15:39] -- But the centurion, who stood opposite, seeing that he had expired in such a way, said: Truly this man was the Son of God. The clear cause of the miracle concerning the centurion is explained: seeing that the Lord had expired in this way, that is, having given up his spirit, he said: Truly this man was the Son of God. For no one has the power to give up the spirit, except he who is the creator of souls. And it should be considered that the centurion, before the cross, in the very scandal of the passion, confesses truly the Son of God, and Arius in the Church proclaims a creature. Hence, deservedly, through the centurion, the faith of the Church is designated, which, with the veil of the heavenly mysteries revealed through the death of the Lord, immediately confirms Jesus as both a truly just man, and truly the Son of God, while the Synagogue remains silent.

[Mark 15:40] -- There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. And when he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him. James the Less is said to be James the son of Alphaeus, who was also called the brother of the Lord, because he was the son of Mary, the Lord’s aunt, of whom John makes mention in his Gospel, saying: Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas (John 19). He seems to call her Mary of Cleophas, either from her father or from her kinship. James was called the Less to distinguish him from James the Greater, the son of Zebedee, who was called among the first apostles and chosen by the Lord. It was the Jewish custom, and not considered blameworthy by the ancient custom of the people, that women provided food and clothing for teachers from their substance; Paul recalls having renounced this in case it could cause scandal among the Gentiles: Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles do (1 Cor. 9)? They ministered to the Lord from their substance, so that he reaped their carnal things, of which they reaped spiritual things. Not that the Lord of creatures needed food, but to show a pattern for teachers, that they should be content with food and clothing from their disciples. But let us see what companions he had. Namely,

Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven devils, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, his aunt, and others, which we read of in the other Gospels.

[Mark 15:42] -- And when evening had already come, because it was the day of preparation, which is before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a noble councillor, came. He is called a councillor because he is from the order of the council and administers the office of the council. He is also usually called a curial by handling civic duties. Arimathea itself is Ramathaim, the city of Elkanah and Samuel in the region of Thamna near Diospolis. Παρασκευὴ in Greek is called preparation in Latin. By this name, the Jews who lived among the Greeks used to call the sixth day of the Sabbath, because on that day they were accustomed to prepare what was necessary for the rest of the Sabbath. According to what was once commanded about manna: On the sixth day you will collect double, etc. Because man was made on the sixth day, and the whole creation of the world was completed, and on the seventh, the Creator rested from His work, hence He wished to call it the Sabbath, that is, rest. The Savior, rightly crucified on the same sixth day, fulfilled the mystery of human restoration. Therefore, when he received the vinegar, he said: It is finished, which means, on the sixth day, what I have undertaken for the world's restoration, the whole work is now completed. And resting in the tomb on the Sabbath, He awaited the event of the resurrection which was to come on the eighth day.

Here shines the example of our devotion and blessed reward, that in this sixth age of the world we must suffer for the Lord and as if be crucified to the world. In the seventh age, that is, when someone pays the debt of death, the bodies indeed rest in graves, but the souls remain in secret peace with the Lord and must rest after good works, until finally, when the eighth age comes, even the bodies themselves, glorified by the resurrection, with the souls receive the incorruption of the eternal inheritance.

[Mark 15:43] -- Joseph of Arimathea, a noble councilor, who also awaited the kingdom of God, came and boldly approached Pilate and requested the body of Jesus. This Joseph indeed is praised for his great standing in the world but is lauded even more for his merit with God. For it was fitting that such a man should exist who would bury the body of the Lord, one who by his righteousness of merits would be worthy of such a ministry, and by the nobility of his secular power would have the capacity to obtain the ability to minister. For not just anyone, unknown or of moderate status, could approach the governor and request the body of the crucified. [Mark 15:46] -- Joseph then bought a linen cloth, and taking Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth. And by the simple burial of the Lord, the ambition of the rich is condemned, who cannot even do without riches in their tombs. We can, however, understand this spiritually to mean that the body of the Lord should not be wrapped in gold, gems, or silk, but in pure linen, although this also signifies that

he who wraps Jesus in clean linen has received Him with a pure mind. Hence the custom obtained in the Church that the sacrifice of the altar is celebrated not in silk, nor in dyed cloth, but in plain linen, just as the body of the Lord was buried in a clean linen cloth, as we read it was decreed in the pontifical acts by the blessed Pope Sylvester.

[Mark 15:46] -- And they laid him in a tomb, which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone to the door of the tomb. Those who have come from Jerusalem to Britain in our age report of the Lord's tomb, that it was a round house hewn from underlying rock, of such height that a man standing inside could scarcely touch the top with an outstretched hand. It has an entrance from the East, to which that great stone was rolled and placed. In the northern part of this tomb, the actual sepulcher, that is, the place of the Lord's body, was made from the same rock, being seven feet long and measuring three palms higher than the surrounding floor. The place indeed is not open from above, but from the southern side it is open throughout, from where the body was brought in. The color of this same tomb and the coffin is said to be a mix of reddish and white.

[Mark 15:47] -- But Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid. In Luke, we read that all his acquaintances and the women who followed him stood at a distance. Therefore, with Jesus' acquaintances returning to their own homes after his body was laid down, it was only the women who loved more fervently who cared to observe how he was placed, so they might offer him a fitting gift of devotion at an appropriate time. Likewise, until now, holy women on the day of Preparation, that is, the day of Preparation for the Sabbath, do the same, diligently following the footsteps of his passion in this world, where the future rest is to be prepared. And if they might perhaps be able to imitate with pious curiosity, they consider in what order the same passion was completed.

Chapter 16

[Mark 16:1] -- And when the Sabbath had passed, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Jesus. In the Gospel of Luke, it is written that returning from the tomb, they prepared spices and ointments, and on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. Therefore, the commandment of the law was that the silence of the Sabbath be maintained from evening to evening; and so the devout women, after the Lord was buried, as long as they were allowed to work, that is, until sunset, were occupied in preparing the ointments, as Luke writes. And because then, due to the shortness of the time, they were unable to complete the work, they hurried soon after the Sabbath had passed, that is, at sunset, when the permission to work had returned, to buy spices, as Mark recounts, so that coming early they might anoint his body. For neither did they wish to visit the tomb in the evening of the Sabbath, with the approach of nightfall already impending.

[Mark 16:2] -- And very early on the first day of the week, they come to the tomb, the sun having already risen. The first of the Sabbath is the first day after the Sabbath, that is, the days of rest, which now the ecclesiastical custom calls the Lord’s Day because of the resurrection of the Lord Savior. It is the same when we read of the ”one of the Sabbaths” or ”one of the first of the Sabbaths,” which means the first day after the Sabbath, that is, the days of rest which were observed among the Sabbaths. The holy women, who had followed the Lord, came to the tomb with spices, and even in death, they showed the devotion of their humanity to Him whom they had loved while alive. So, we too, believing in Him who has died, if we seek the Lord filled with the fragrance of virtues, with the reputation of good works, we indeed come to His tomb with spices. But that the women came very early to the tomb with the rising of the sun, that is, when the sky began to brighten from the eastern part, which surely does not happen except by the proximity of the rising sun, indeed, according to history, shows the great fervor of love in seeking and finding the Lord. According to the mystical understanding, an example is given to us, with an enlightened face, having dispelled the darkness of vices, to offer the fragrance of good works and the sweetness of prayers to the Lord.

[Mark 16:3-4] -- And they said to each other, ”Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?” And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away. For it was very large. How the stone was rolled away by the angel, Matthew explains sufficiently. But the rolling away of the stone mystically suggests the uncovering of the mysteries of Christ, which were covered by the veil of the legal letter. For the law is written on stone, whose covering having been removed, the glory of the resurrection is shown, and the abolition of the ancient death and the eternal life to be hoped for by us began to be proclaimed throughout the whole world.

[Mark 16:5] -- And entering into the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a white robe, and they were amazed. Entering from the east into that round house carved in the rock, they saw an angel sitting on the southern part of that place, where the body of Jesus had been laid, for this was indeed on the right side. For surely the body, lying supine with its head towards the west, must have its right side towards the south. Matthew writes that they first saw the angel who rolled back the stone from the door of the tomb sitting upon the stone, who commanded them to enter the place where the Lord had been laid and to see that He had already risen from the dead. Luke writes that entering the tomb, they found two angels standing there. Therefore, the women who came with spices saw the angels, for indeed those minds see the heavenly citizens who, with virtues, travel to God through holy desires. We must note, indeed, what it means that the angel is seen sitting on the right hand. For what is signified by the left but the present life? And by the right but eternal life? Hence it is written: ”His left hand is under my head, and his right hand shall embrace me. (Cant. II). For the Church places the left hand of God, namely the prosperity of the present life, as under the head, which it presses with the intention of supreme love.

But God’s right hand embraces it, because under its eternal bliss it is wholly contained with devotion. Therefore, because our Redeemer had already passed beyond the corruption of the present life, rightly did the angel who came to announce His eternal life sit at the right. He appeared clothed in a white robe because he announced the joys of our festivity. For the whiteness of the garment signifies the splendor of our festivity. Let us say ours or his? But to more truly confess, let us say both his and ours. For the resurrection of our Redeemer was both our festivity because it restored us to immortality, and the festivity of angels, because by bringing us back to the heavens, it fulfilled their number. Therefore, in his and our festivity, the angel appeared in white garments, because as we are led back to heaven through the resurrection of the Lord, the losses of the heavenly homeland are repaired. But now, let us hear him who addresses the women who come.

[Mark 16:6] -- Do not be afraid, you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified; he has risen, he is not here. Behold the place where they laid him. Do not

be afraid, he says. As if he clearly states: Let those who do not love the coming of the citizens of heaven be afraid. Let those who are burdened by carnal desires and despair of being able to reach their company be afraid. But why are you afraid, who see your fellow citizens? Hence also Matthew, describing the angel who appeared, says: His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow (Matthew 28). For there is fear in lightning, but there is comfort in the whiteness of snow. Because Almighty God is both terrible to sinners and gentle to the righteous, the angel, witness of his resurrection, is rightly shown both in the lightning of his face and in the whiteness of his clothing, that he might terrify the reprobate by his appearance and console the pious. You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene. Jesus, in the Latin language, is interpreted as ”savior.” Indeed, many could be called by this name at that time, not substantively, but nominally. Therefore, the place is added to clarify which Jesus is being spoken of: the Nazarene; and the reason is immediately added, who was crucified, and he added, he has risen, he is not here. He is not here in the presence of the flesh, though he is never absent in the presence of majesty.

[Mark 16:7] -- But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you into Galilee. We must ask why Peter is specifically named when mentioning the disciples. But if the angel had not explicitly named him, he who had denied the Master would not have dared to come among the disciples. Therefore, he is called by name so that he may not despair because of his denial. In this matter, we must consider why Almighty God allowed the one whom he had planned to place over the entire Church to fear the voice of a maid and deny himself. We recognize that this was done with a great disposition of mercy, that he who was to be the shepherd of the Church might learn from his own fault how he ought to be merciful to others. Therefore, he first revealed himself to him, and then placed him over the others, so that from his own weakness he might understand how mercifully he should bear the weaknesses of others. It is fittingly said of our Redeemer: He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see him, just as he told you. For Galilee is interpreted as ’transmigration.’ For indeed our Redeemer had already migrated from passion to resurrection, from death to life, from punishment to glory, from corruption to incorruption. And he is first seen by the disciples in Galilee after the resurrection, because we will joyfully see the glory of his resurrection if we now migrate from vices to the height of virtues. Therefore, he is announced in the tomb and shown in the ’transmigration,’ because he who is recognized in the mortification of the flesh is seen in the migration of the mind.

[Mark 16:8] -- But they went out and fled from the tomb (for trembling and amazement had seized them) and they said nothing to anyone. For they were afraid. It rightly raises the question of how Mark writes: And they said nothing to anyone. Whereas Luke says: And returning from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Similarly, Matthew: And they departed quickly from

the tomb, with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples (Matthew 28). Unless we understand that they dared not say anything to anyone about the angels themselves, that is, to respond to what they had heard from them; or certainly the guards whom they saw lying down. For that joy which Matthew mentions does not contradict the fear of which Mark speaks. For we must understand both to have happened in their minds, even if Matthew himself did not speak of fear.

[Mark 16:9] -- Now, rising early on the first day of the week, Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene. How and where this appearance of the Lord took place, John teaches most fully. But the Lord rose early from the tomb, in which he had been laid late the day before, so that what was written in the Psalms might be fulfilled: Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning (Psalm 30). Therefore, having been buried on the sixth day of the week, which is called Preparation Day, around the evening hour, he was placed in the tomb on the following night and day of the Sabbath with the subsequent night, and thus on the third day, that is early on the first day of the week, he rose. Further, he did not lie in the tomb for one day and two nights only justly, because he deliberately joined the light of his singular death to the darkness of our double death. For he came to us, who were held in death of both the spirit and the flesh. He endured his own death, that is, of the flesh, and dissolved the double death that he found in us. For if he had borne both, he would have freed us from neither. But he mercifully accepted one, and justly condemned both. He joined his singular death to our double death, and by dying he conquered our double death.

[Mark 16:9] -- He appeared first, he says, to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had expelled seven demons. She went and announced it to those who had been with him and were mourning and weeping. Just as at the beginning the woman was the author of sin for the man, and the man the executor of error, so now she who first brought and tasted death, saw the resurrection first. And lest she who had transferred guilt to the man should bear perpetual reproach among men, she also transferred grace. Hence, rightly, this woman who first announced to the mourning and weeping men the joy of the Lord’s resurrection, is remembered to have been cured of seven demons, so that it is marked that she was full of all sins, but by divine gift was cleansed from all of them, and where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more. For the number seven is customarily mystically placed for entirety. Therefore, she who was cured of seven demons, that is, was liberated from all sins, first saw the Lord rising from the dead, so that no one who repents worthily might despair of the pardon for their misdeeds, seeing her who was once subject to so many and great vices being suddenly advanced to such a pinnacle by the merit of faith and love, that she first evangelized the miracle of the accomplished resurrection to the very evangelists and apostles of Christ.

[Mark 16:11] -- And they, hearing that he was alive, and had been seen by her, did not believe. Because the disciples were slow to believe in the Lord's resurrection, it was not so much their infirmity as our (so to speak) future firmness. For that very resurrection was shown to them, who doubted, through many proofs, which we, recognizing while reading, are otherwise solidified by their doubt. For Mary Magdalene, who believed sooner, rendered me less a service than Thomas, who doubted longer. For by doubting he touched the scars of the wounds, and removed the wound of doubt from our heart.

[Mark 16:12] -- After this, however, he was shown in another form to two of them, as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them. How this happened, Luke explains more fully. But what Mark says, he was shown in another form, Luke says more plainly, because their eyes were held, so that they should not recognize him, until, coming to the village where they were going and setting a meal for him as for a stranger, they finally recognized him in the breaking of bread (Luke 24). As the same Luke adds subsequently, they rose up that same hour, returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and those who were with them saying, the Lord has truly risen, and appeared to Simon. And they recounted the things that happened on the way, and how they recognized him in the breaking of bread (Ibid.). But as Mark says, they reported it to the others, and they did not believe them, while Luke says that they were already speaking, that he had truly risen and had appeared to Simon. What is to be understood, if not that there were some among them who did not want to believe it? Who, however, does not see that Mark left out what Luke narrated in detail? That is, what Jesus had spoken to them before they recognized him, and how they recognized him in the breaking of bread.

Since as soon as he said that he appeared to them in another form as they went into the country, he immediately added: And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them. As if they could report what they did not recognize, or recognize what appeared to them in another form. How then did they recognize him to be able to report it, Mark undoubtedly omitted. Which is worth recording so that we may become accustomed to noticing the habit of the evangelists, of omitting what they do not mention, and joining what they do mention, so that for those who do not have the practice in this consideration, no other error mainly arises, by which they think that they do not agree with each other.

[Mark 16:14] -- Last of all, as they were reclining at the table, he appeared to the eleven and reproached their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen him risen. How "last of all," as if they would no longer see him? For it is the last time that the Apostles saw the Lord on earth when he ascended into heaven, which happened on the fortieth day after his resurrection. Would he then reproach them, for not having believed those who had seen him

risen, when by that time they had themselves seen him so many times after the resurrection? Therefore, let us understand this: after many demonstrations of himself, during which he was presented to his disciples over forty days, he also lastly appeared to those eleven while they were reclining at the table, that is, on the very fortieth day. And because he was about to ascend to heaven from them, he wanted especially to reproach them on that day, because they had not believed those who had seen him risen before they themselves saw him, while certainly after his ascension, the nations, which had not seen him, were to believe through their preaching of the Gospel. After that reproach, as Marcus follows:

[Mark 16:15] -- And he said to them: Go into the entire world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. Therefore, when you preach that whoever does not believe will be condemned, since he certainly does not believe what he has not seen, should not they themselves first be reproved, because they did not believe those to whom the Lord appeared before they had seen the Lord? But when he said to them, Go into the entire world, preach the Gospel to every creature, surely the holy Gospel was not meant to be preached to senseless things or brute animals, so that it would be said to the disciples, Preach to every creature? But under the name of every creature, every nation of the Gentiles can be designated. It had been previously said: Do not go into the way of the Gentiles; but now it is said, Preach to every creature, so that the preaching of the apostles, first repelled by Judea, would then assist us, since Judea had proudly repelled it to its own damnation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. Perhaps each one says to himself: I have already believed, I will be saved. He says the truth if he holds faith by works. For true faith is that which does not contradict in behavior what it says in words.

From this comes what Paul says about certain false believers: They confess to know God, but in works they deny him (Titus 1). Here John says: He who says he knows God and does not keep his commandments is a liar (1 John 2). But when it is said, He who does not believe will be condemned, what do we say about infants who cannot yet believe because of their age? For with regard to adults, there is no question. Therefore, in the Church, infants believe through others on behalf of the Savior, just as they have derived the sins from others, which are remitted to them in baptism.

[Mark 16:17] -- And these signs will follow those who believe: In my name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. Should it be said that because we do not perform these signs we do not believe at all? But these were necessary at the beginning of the Church. For as faith was to grow, it had to be nurtured by miracles. For

when we plant young trees, we water them until they seem to have taken root in the ground. But if they have once fixed their roots, the watering will cease. Hence it is that Paul says: Tongues are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers (1 Cor. XIV). Do we not have of these signs and virtues what we should more subtly consider? The holy Church indeed daily spiritually performs what it did physically through the apostles. For when its priests lay hands on believers through the grace of exorcism, and deny the evil spirit dwelling in their minds, what else do they do but cast out demons? And faithful ones who have already renounced the secular words of the old life, but sound out the holy mysteries, and narrate, as far as they can, the praises and power of their Creator, what else do they do but speak in new tongues?

When they remove malice from others' hearts by their good exhortations, they take up serpents. And when they hear pestilent suggestions but are not led into evil action, indeed it is deadly what they drink, but it will not harm them. Whenever they see their neighbors weakened in good work and run to help them with all their strength, and strengthen their life by the example of their actions, who waver in their own deeds, what else do they do but lay hands on the sick, that they may recover? These miracles are indeed all the greater as they are more spiritual. They are all the greater as by these not bodies, but souls are raised.

[Mark 16:19] -- And indeed the Lord Jesus, after having spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sits at the right hand of God. We must consider what it is that Mark says: He sits at the right hand of God, and Stephen says, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God (Acts VII). What is it that Mark says he sees sitting, while Stephen testifies he sees standing? But we know that to sit pertains to one who judges, and to stand to one who fights or helps. Therefore, because our Redeemer, taken up into heaven, now judges everything and will come as the judge of all at the end, Mark describes him as sitting after the ascension, because he will be seen as the judge in his glory at the end. But Stephen, positioned in the struggle of toil, saw him standing, whom he had as a helper. Because he, in order to overcome the unbelief of the persecutors on earth, was fought for by the grace of him from heaven. It follows:

[Mark 16:20] -- But they, having departed, preached everywhere, with the Lord working with them and confirming the word with the accompanying signs. What is to be considered in this, what to be commended to memory, except that they followed the command with obedience, and obedience was followed by signs? Among these, it is notable that Mark, although he began his Gospel later than the others, extended it to longer times in his writing. For he neither mentioned the birth of the Lord himself or his forerunner, nor any account of their infancy or childhood, nor did he write in depth about the birth of the Savior, except that he called him the Son of God at the beginning of his Gospel. He began from the start of the evangel-

ical preaching, which happened through John, and continued narrating up to the time when the apostles disseminated the entire Gospel word by preaching around the world.

[Mark 16:7] -- There remains indeed a not insignificant question, how the same evangelist wrote that the angel said to the women, ”Go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you into Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you,” yet did not report that the Lord was seen by the disciples in Galilee at any point after this in his Gospel. And indeed, Matthew says that the disciples went to Galilee, saw and worshipped the Lord there, and received the command from him to go, teach, and baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. However, considering the writings of the other evangelists, it shows that he was seen by the disciples several times before in Jerusalem, and in the village of Emmaus, especially on the day of his resurrection. Why then did he specially predict that he would go ahead of them to Galilee and be seen by the disciples there, when he was seen neither first nor only there? Let us examine for what mystery he rising said, according to Matthew and Mark, ”I will go ahead of you to Galilee, there you will see me. And even if this was accomplished, it was after many other things were completed, since the command was such (though not by necessity) that it might have been expected that either this alone, or this first, should have happened.

Therefore, without doubt, since this is the voice not of the evangelist narrating what happened, but of the angel by the command of the Lord, and of the Lord himself, narrated by the evangelist as it was said by the angel and the Lord, it must be accepted as a prophetic statement. For Galilee is interpreted either as ”transmigration” or ”revelation”. So first, according to the meaning of ”transmigration”, what else occurs to be understood? He will go before you into Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you, unless the grace of Christ was destined to be transferred from the people of Israel to the Gentiles, to whom the apostles would in no way be believed when preaching the Gospel, unless the Lord himself prepared the way in the hearts of men for them? And we understand this: He will go before you into Galilee. But what they joyfully marvel at, with difficulties being broken and conquered, that the door is opened for them in the Lord through the enlightenment of the faithful, is understood thus: there you will see him, that is, there you will find his members. There you will recognize his living body in those who receive you. According to that which Galilee is interpreted as revelation, it is not now to be understood in the form of a servant, but in that in which he is equal to the Father, which he promised to his beloved in John, when he said: I will love him, and will manifest myself to him (John XIV).

Certainly not according to that which they now saw, and which, even resurrected with scars, he afterwards showed not only to be seen but also to be touched: but

according to that ineffable light, which illuminates every man coming into this world: according to which he shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend him (Ibid.). He has gone before us there, from where, coming to us, he did not precede us, and to where, going before us, he did not abandon us. That will be a revelation, as it were the true Galilee, when we will be like him, there we will see him as he is. That will also be the more blessed migration from this world to that eternity, if we embrace his precepts so as to deserve to be gathered at his right hand. For then the wicked will go into eternal fire, but the righteous into eternal life. From here they will migrate there, and there they will see him as the wicked do not see. For the wicked will be taken away so as not to see the glory of the Lord, and the wicked will not see the light. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent (Ibid. XVII), just as he is known in that eternity, where he will lead his own through the form of a servant, so that they may freely contemplate him through the form of the Lord.

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.