

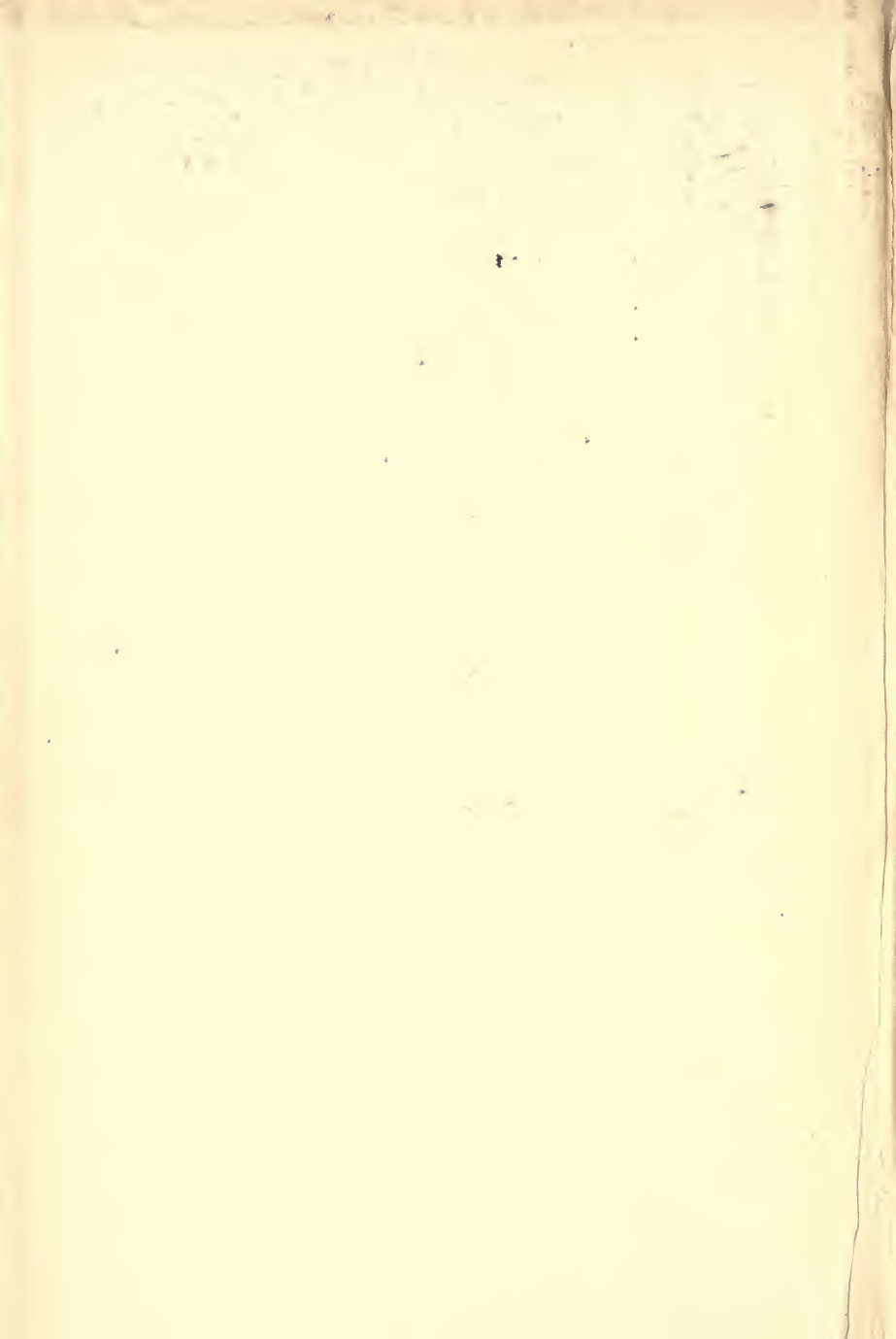
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THE BEAUTY AND TRUTH
OF THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH

— • —
JONES





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THE BEAUTY AND TRUTH OF
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

SERMONS

FROM THE GERMAN, ADAPTED AND EDITED

BY THE
REV. EDWARD JONES

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THE
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VOLUME IV

ST. LOUIS, MO., 1916
PUBLISHED BY B. HERDER
17 SOUTH BROADWAY
LONDON, W. C.
68, GREAT RUSSELL STR.

NIHIL OBSTAT

Sti. Ludovici, die 16. Jan. 1916

*F. G. Holweck,
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THE BEAUTY AND TRUTH OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

SERMON I

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

“For by the greatness of the beauty, and of the creature, the creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby.”

—WISDOM, 13, 5.

“I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth;” with these words the Apostles’ Creed begins. Faith in the existence of God, therefore, is the foundation upon which rests the whole Christian faith. And naturally, for we must first know and believe that God is, before we can give assent to His revelation. But we believe that God is, because He Himself has revealed it; we know that there is one God, for our own understanding convinces us of this. Reason, based on experience, tells us that there is no effect without a cause, no work without a master, no movement without a moving-power. We see a stream, at once we know that it has a source; we see smoke rising, we conclude at once that there is a fire; we see a watch, a painting, a house, and at once we will represent to ourselves the watchmaker, the painter or the builder. But the smallest bird is a much greater

masterpiece than the finest and most perfect watch; man is by far more wonderful than his best delineation. Experience, moreover, teaches us that the greatest artist and all artists together, have never been able to make a bird, a flower, nor the least living being by art, much less a man. Did they therefore grow up from the earth? But why do no birds now and no men grow up out of the earth? And whence is then the earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars? It is self-evident that men do not make them; and they could not make themselves, for if they could there would necessarily have to be new earths, new suns and new moons constantly made. Therefore there must be some one who made all these things. And he must evidently be immeasurably more powerful, more skilful and more wise than all mankind together, since they all together could not accomplish such a work.

Who is then, my beloved, the one who is above all these works and is their Creator? It is God. Yes, there is a living God, the Almighty Creator of Heaven and earth. Without Him the world is an unsolvable riddle, with Him the most eloquent speech; without Him it is a labyrinth, to which indeed thousands of ways lead, out of which, however, there is no exit. With God the world is a marvelous book that speaks in thousands of languages and tongues of the living God. And therefore to-day we will meditate upon the existence of God as exhibited in the language of creation: "For by the greatness of the beauty, and of the creature, the creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby."

We will not so much prove the existence of God, which would be superfluous, as show how all creatures praise the existence of God. To be obliged to prove the existence of God would be for those who demand it a clear evidence of their lack of intelligence and moral degradation, since every pulsation of the heart, every minute of life, every view of earth and the heavens speak loudly and eloquently of the existence of God. We will therefore at present meditate upon the language of creatures about the existence of their Creator, the living God.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. The royal Prophet David exclaims: "Only the fool saith in his heart, there is no God!" (Ps. 13, 1). Only the fool who closes his eyes wilfully against the illuminating light of truth can deny the existence of God and from the effects of his own degraded heart raise a doubt about this truth. But if he dares openly to deny the Creator before the creatures, he will be convinced of his falsehood by Heaven and earth. The existence of God is announced to us by the language of all creation and by individual creatures. They are the book which God has placed before mankind in order that each one may read out of it. Therefore St. Chrysostom asked why God did not from the beginning give to the world the Holy Scriptures, since they are so useful? He himself gives the answer: "Because God in fact wanted to instruct mankind through His creatures." If He had begun His instruction with books and signs they would have been useless for the unskil-

ful. Because of the want of the knowledge of languages, the lack of ability, the desire of contradiction and misrepresentations of written truths, such instructions would have very soon become effaced. It is altogether different with the glorious view of the heavens. All the nations of the earth understand this language. This book lies open before the learned and the unlearned, before the poor and the rich. For this reason the royal Prophet exclaims: "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands. Day to day uttereth speech, and night to night showeth knowledge" (Ps. 18, 1, 2). He does not say: "The heavens witness, no, they show forth the glory of God." They are the eloquent preachers who have for their audience the whole of humanity. And mankind has as a book the glorious spectacle which the heavens offer them, and they hear their speech by day and by night, and night and day each shows forth a different view. And what is this speech, my beloved? "He has made us and not we ourselves." He who dwells above us, He has made us. Dwellers on the earth understand our language: not we, but He has made us! Yes, every day and every night adds a new syllable to the word that we see written in letters of flame on the heavens, and this word is: God.

2. Another open book is the earth, the earth with its giant mountains and its fruitful plains; with its seas and rivers; the boundless ocean with its rolling waves and its innumerable inhabitants; the atmosphere with its army of feathered beings, the mineral, the vegetable

and the animal kingdoms, all bespeak the praises of God. They all speak the same language, the same language of one all-powerful Cause as the Creator of so many marvels. But who is this Cause? Are not these numberless works their own cause? No! Everything answers in the most eloquent language: "He has made us, not we ourselves." St. Augustine therefore beautifully says in his Monologue: "When I sought Thee, O God, I asked the earth if it were my God, and it said: No! The same answer everything gave me that is concealed in the earth and on the earth: the stones, the plants and the animals. I asked the fathomless ocean and its living creatures and they answered: 'We are not thy God; seek Him above us.' And I asked the air and it answered with all its inhabitants: I am not. But whence then are you all, you creatures on earth, in the air and in the firmament? And with a mighty voice they called back to me: "He has made us; He, the Almighty God."—Therefore, St. Francis Borgia, when he beheld the beauties of nature, exclaimed almost unwillingly: O do not speak so loud! Cry not so loud that there is a good God. I can scarcely bear your loud calling any more." Holy Scripture says: "But ask now the beasts and they shall teach thee: and the birds of the air and they shall tell thee. Speak to the earth and it shall answer thee: and the fishes of the sea shall tell, who is ignorant that the hand of the Lord hath made all these things?" (Job 12, 7, 9).

But these voices of the creatures, my beloved, become a true song of praise of the goodness, the wisdom

and the power of Him whom they proclaim, if we consider the marvelous in the whole creation. Look only at the insignificant blade of grass at your feet, how tender and fine is each little woven fiber; how artistically veined is the inner woof! What uniformity and perfect art is impressed upon each leaf, each blossom! Look again at the bodies of even the smallest animals, what a depth and a unity of form is observed! Every insignificant insect is a perfect work of art, whose entire make-up is most harmoniously formed. And it not only is born, no it lives in virtue of an art which we cannot imitate and not even understand. In virtue of a wisdom which we can only admire with amazement but which we cannot grasp, this little animal stands in immediate connection with the whole of nature, with all elements, even with the stars of heaven whose light is communicated to it. Now go upward from this insignificant little creature to the giant trees of the vegetable world and to the colossus of the animal world and see how all animate and inanimate creatures move within their own measured sphere; one supplements the other and they gradually become more and more perfect and better formed. Go now from these creatures to the immeasurable canopy of heaven and consider the sun and the numberless hosts of stars in their amazing greatness, in their glorious brilliancy, in their marvelous order and movement. Yes, they are all voices of the eternal wisdom, and goodness and power of God who made all these things. Therefore the holy King David enthusiastically exclaims: "Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise ye him

O sun and moon: praise him all ye stars and light: praise him ye heavens of heavens and let all the waters that are above the heavens praise the name of the Lord: let all creatures praise the Lord, for he spoke and they were made, he commanded and they were created" (Ps. 148). The man of good will and clear intellect stands and listens to this universal voice and witness of all creatures to the existence of a living God and Creator. His spirit will be overpowered and his heart will exclaim: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

3. The whole of nature, my dearly beloved, is not the only witness to the existence of God, but man's own heart announces it to him. Faith in a Supreme Being is born in man, it is implanted in his heart. Within himself man feels drawn to God, an inclination which springs from the consciousness of his own helplessness, and he looks to God for help. For this reason all peoples have believed in the existence of God. They erred indeed about His being and His attributes, but they always acknowledged His existence. Begin with the cradle of the human race and follow it in all directions throughout the world, let no country, no race escape you, you will find this belief, and traces of altars to the honor of a Supreme Being. They may be represented under the picture of the sun, of the stars or of animals, but the fact remains that such representations are a witness for the existence of God and the powerful inclination in man to believe in God. The powerful passions of man were the cause that the original belief in a Supreme Being which the witness of creation and

the voice of reason proclaimed to man, was perverted to idolatry, as St. Paul bears witness: "Because that which is known of God is manifest in them. For God hath manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also and divinity: so that they are inexcusable. And they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of corruptible man, and of birds and of fourfooted beasts and of creeping things" (Rom. 1, 19-23). And yet even then, when man was sunk in the mire of the most degrading sensuality and the most inexplicable stupidity and had in a certain measure become like unto the animals, even then this secret inclination to God urged him on; the name of God without his will even escaped him and he turned his looks towards Heaven. Therefore Tertullian in the second century addressed the pagans: "Should I prove to you the existence of God from the witness of the soul alone? Very well! Although you are sunk deep in this prison of the earth; although you are chained by a mass of prejudices, enervated by passions and desires, servants of false gods, the soul calls when it comes to itself, as awakening from drunkenness or sickness, upon the name of God, and calls to Him with the one name alone which belongs to Him: Great God! Good God! These words come into the mouth of every man. O testimony of the soul naturally Christian! And when therefore it speaks, it does not look to the Capitol — the principal seat of the pagan gods — but to Heaven,

because it knows well that there is the seat of the living God, that it comes from there and from Him" (Apology, Ch. 18, 4).

4. This testimony of the soul will be especially augmented by the voice of conscience. This voice loudly proclaims the existence of a supremely holy and just God. It bears witness to a law which a higher hand has written in our hearts. This loud voice is not first planted in the heart of man by education; it is already there and speaks loudly in the child; it can indeed be awakened, but not implanted. It opposes the pet inclinations of man and contradicts him in the most unamiable manner in his secret wishes, a proof that man did not give it to himself but that it originated from a Higher Being, of which it gives testimony. It can indeed be silenced by the turmoil of the world, for a time go unheard in the delirium of sin, but it can never be entirely stifled and condemned to eternal silence. Suddenly it cries out again, and as the forerunner of a higher judgment it calls fearfully in the desert of the sinful heart.

But not only does the entire creation, the universal acclaim of man, the witness of the soul and the voice of conscience preach the existence of the living God, but also the evil of the world, the thunder in the heavens, the lightning, the hail and snow, the winds and the storms, the floods and the earthquakes, wars, sickness, famine and want, they all call aloud that there is a God who can control them, who can help and save. For this reason even the heathen in his necessities stretches forth his hands to Heaven beseechingly to the

Supreme Being, the infidel blasphemer, then pale and trembling with fear, often ridiculously calls upon that Being whom so long as all things went well with him, he presumptuously denied in spite of the voice of nature and of conscience; a strong proof of the existence of God is hereby proclaimed even by the evil of the world.

Holy Scripture therefore says so strikingly: "Only the fool saith in his heart, there is no God." Yes indeed, those men are fools who, scarcely noticeable in this boundless universe, a toy of nature, destined to corruption and dishonored by shameless passions, but nevertheless full of themselves, raise their presumptuous heads and say: "There is no God," while the heavens show forth the praises of God and the earth is full of His glory. Not less foolish are those who proclaim nature to be God and consequently also the creatures themselves, and animals, and therefore like the earlier heathens, according to the words of St. Paul: "They have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of corruptible man, and of birds and of fourfooted beasts and of creeping things." Truly at the sight of such presumption joined with such poverty one is so amazed that he does not know whether to be more surprised at the excess of their audacity, or at the excess of their ridiculous stupidity, cloaked by a pretense of research and enlightenment. Here the words of Holy Scripture hold true: "They are corrupt, are become abominable in their ways" (Ps. 13, 1); and St. Paul says: "Wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart,

unto uncleanness, to dishonor their own bodies among themselves, who changed the truth of God into a lie; and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed for ever" (Rom. 1, 24, 25).

If, therefore, everything is only one voice proclaiming the existence of God, let us also, my beloved, be a voice to praise the existence of God, the goodness and power of God. And we are such voices if we give to Him, our Creator, due honor, by faith, by obedience and love; if we feel ourselves happy in His knowledge and consecrate to Him all our feelings, our hearts and our lives. For only in God, the Almighty Creator of Heaven and earth, do we find rest, and in Him only consolation and peace. Therefore, the soul urges and drives with such a mysterious inclination towards God; yes, she wants to return to Him again who created her after His own image. May you, therefore, follow this inclination which leads to a blessed end, to union with God! May you follow this inclination instead of the inclination to sin! What is sin but a practical denial of God as St. Paul writes: "They professed that they know God but in their works they deny him" (Tit. 1, 16). Sin is, therefore, an open protest against the truth that there is a God to whom we owe obedience. But faith and love and obedience are an open profession that God is, from whom we and all creatures have life and existence, and to whom may honor be given by us and all creatures, and praise and glory for all eternity. Amen.

SERMON II

THE ESSENCE OF GOD AND HIS PERFECTIONS

“For of him, and by him, and in him, are all things: to him be glory for ever. Amen.”—ROM. II, 36.

Since the basis of all the truths of our holy Catholic faith is, according to the words of St. Paul, faith in God: “For he that cometh to God, must believe that He is” (Hebrew II, 6) — it is consequently self-evident that it is not sufficient to only believe that God is, but we must also long for Him and strive to know His essence and His perfections, just as the poor man is eager to know his benefactors, the child his father. And although faith in the existence of God becomes for mankind, and especially for the Christian, a self-evident truth from the consideration of creation, nevertheless the knowledge of His essence and His perfections are beyond all our intellectual powers, so that we can scarcely say what God is not, much less what God is. For this reason a holy Job exclaims: “Behold, God is great, exceeding our knowledge” (Job 36, 26), and the Apostle of the Gentiles writes: “Who only hath immortality and inhabiteth light inaccessible, whom no man hath seen nor can see” (I Tim. 6, 16). What language can therefore express what God is! God is inexpressible for every tongue, inconceivable for every

created knowledge. Every glorious name belongs to Him, and yet none can describe Him. *I am, Who am*, — that is the one and only name which would not be unworthy of Him! Would you even ask the Cherubim and Seraphim, who behold God face to face and are endowed with the highest created wisdom — would you ask them what God is? They would also confess that they do not perfectly understand Him. He is eternal and dwells in inaccessible light. But precisely this lack of knowledge teaches us all the more clearly the necessity of learning all about the being of God that the light of reason and above all that the light of faith teaches: “This is eternal life: that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17, 3). What a glorious effect therefore must not even the imperfect knowledge of God awaken in the heart of the faithful!

We shall therefore to-day, according to the measure of my ability, and with confidence in the assistance of the Holy Ghost, speak of the Essence and the Perfections of God, and that according to the words of the Apostle: “Of him is all,” first of His eternity; “by him is all,” of God as a pure spirit, and “in him is all,” of His perfections; in a word God is eternal, a Spirit, perfect.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. God is eternal: thus the creatures proclaim Him; God is eternal: thus our faith teaches us. God is eternal; the universe has but one voice about this: “He hath made us, and not we ourselves” (Ps. 99, 3), or as

St. Paul gives the same still more briefly: "By him is all." What intelligent man would assert that before all this there was purely nothing in existence? Then if purely nothing preceded all this that we see there would also be now purely nothing in existence. That nothingness in ancient times accomplished nothing, and accomplishes nothing to-day. It can, therefore, not give to this universe its existence because it has no existence itself and therefore is nothing and can do nothing. But did the creatures perhaps give to themselves their own existence? But how could they make themselves since they did not exist? Thus we are compelled by the power of circumstances to acknowledge a Being which is of Himself and who gave existence to all visible things. Such a Being is God, who is of Himself, therefore always or eternal. That the creation teaches us: "From him is all."

But if some one in order to deny the existence and the eternity of God with a greater show of learning, would postulate another cause of the present visible things, and before this cause still another, and then again another, and so an endless series of causes of which one would have sprung from the other, one would have given to the other existence, still the question would always return: Whence comes then the first cause? From nothing it cannot originate; it could no more give existence to itself than the new-born child to itself; and so there remains again the eternal God who gave existence to all creatures. Yes, precisely such an assumption of an endless series of causes

through millions and millions of years shows still more the eternity of God.

God is eternal, our holy faith teaches us much more emphatically. "I am, Who am," thus God spoke to Moses, when He sent him to free the Israelites from Egypt. "I am, Who am." It is my essence that I always am, without a beginning. God has no beginning: "He is." Hence the holy King David exclaims: "Before the mountains were made and the earth with its circumference, thou art, O God, from eternity to eternity." Everything which once was not, has its beginning and its existence from Him. "He that liveth forever created all things together" (Sir. 18, 1). And just as God is without a beginning, so is He also without an end. "I am, Who am." Therefore holy David again exclaims: "In the beginning, O Lord, thou didst found the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish but thou remainest: and all of them shall grow old like a garment, but thou art always the selfsame and thy years shall not fail" (Ps. 101, 27, 28). The eternity of God therefore consists in this, that He has no beginning and no end, no growth and no change, but with His Essence is always as He was, and always will be as He is. We cannot measure God's existence and life according to years and thousands of years, because He is without beginning and without end. These are for us and for all created beings who have a beginning, increase, grow old and pass away, because time began only with the creation of the world and before that

there was no time. Therefore St. Paul says: "With God a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day," for in God there is no past and no future, and therefore no change.

2. What then is eternity? It is a majestic present, a constant present duration, a constant day, an ocean without bottom, without boundaries and without end. And if you wanted to reckon eternity according to hundreds of millions of years and hundreds of thousands of millions of years you would find neither beginning nor middle nor end, for eternity is always the unchangeable present. For this reason is time which we measure after the creation of the world and according to the duration of our life, surrounded by this unchangeable present, just as the center in a circle is surrounded on all sides. For this reason a day is to God as a thousand years, a thousand years is as a day; for this reason everything is always present to God, whatever has happened or whatever will take place, from the creation of the world, good or bad, life and existence. And for this reason sinners will be eternally punished if they die impenitent, because their sins are eternally present to God, therefore eternally offend Him. Majestic eternity, eternal presence of God! Mountains and valleys, countries and nations have disappeared, the most powerful kingdoms, cities and palaces have perished, emperors and kings, kingdoms and armies, countless hosts of men have sunk into their graves, we too will sink into our graves and after us millions of men, everything passes away as a shadow, even heaven and earth will pass away, but God remains

eternally the same: "I am, Who am." Oh, yes, indeed, a great consolation for the good Christian whose soul thirsts for God and observes His commandments! He, the eternal One, will make him eternally happy, because his love and penance and good works are eternally present to Him. Do you therefore, O Christian, desire an eternal joy which will never pass away, then obey Him and love Him Who exists eternally! But woe to the sinner, for God is an Eternal Avenger of sin!

3. Because God is eternal He cannot be a material being, He must be a spiritual Being. For material beings are all subject to the change of time and change daily, they have a beginning and find an end either by destruction or cessation, or some other powerful cause; only the spirit cannot be destroyed or changed, but God does not change, He is always the same: "I am, Who am," He is a Pure Spirit.

If creation, its order and the providence and wisdom which rules the world would not prove to us that God is a Spirit, our faith teaches us this truth. "God is a spirit," says Christ, our Lord (John 4, 24). God is without a body, incorporeal; He needs neither an eye to see, nor an ear to hear, nor any member to work. In us men too, it is in reality the soul which sees, hears and works. The eyes are only windows through which the soul looks out upon the world, and the other senses serve her as instruments with which she works and reveals herself. The more we raise ourselves above the needs of the body, the more free will the spirit become; therefore the Angels are far more perfect be-

ings than we are, of greater understanding and better will, because they are not hemmed in with a body, therefore incorporeal and pure spirits. Therefore what a sublime Spirit must God be according to Whose image and likeness the Angels and our souls are created, even though immeasurably lower!

God is a Spirit, but also the most Perfect Spirit, that is, He possesses of Himself the highest knowledge, the holiest will and all perfections in the highest degree. The spirit of man, and much more the spirit of the Angel, is indeed like unto the Spirit of God, but not equal to it; for the former is limited, the latter unlimited; the former created, the latter uncreated and eternal of Itself. Man, the Angels and all creatures have their perfections, their life and existence from God, but He has everything of Himself. Therefore, just as our bodily eye cannot look upon the sun in its brilliancy, but eagerly seizes upon its rays and through them beholds things in their true light, so also our spirit can neither grasp the perfection of God nor behold Him, but it seeks eagerly after Him, since it finds rays of the eternal Sun in His creatures and can also learn these in their proper relations. "For by the greatness of the beauty, and of the creature, the creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby" (Wisdom 13, 5).

There are therefore two ways to obtain a true and proper conception of the immeasurable perfection of God, and to form a worthy picture of His Godhead, namely, the way of negation, whereby we deny to God everything imperfect and limited because they are un-

worthy of His greatness; hence we call God infinite, immeasurable and incomprehensible. The other way is to ascribe to God all the beauty and perfection we discover in creatures but in an infinitely more perfect manner. This is the same as what the artist does when he wishes to reproduce a beautiful picture. If it is of stone he hammers and files everything away until the picture appears as beautiful as possible. If he paints on a canvas he puts on colors until the picture appears satisfactory to him. In the first way, therefore, we learn what God is not, that is that God is not like any creature, He is therefore neither brilliant, nor beautiful, nor enlightening as the things are which we see; He is not as the sun, not as the heavens, the stars, the air; not as fire, water, the earth, not as the animals or plants, for all these man perceives with the senses. It would therefore be unworthy of the greatness of God to compare Him with such things. "To whom then have you likened God? and to whom have you likened me and made me equal, sayeth the Holy One" (Isaias 40, 18-25). God is not beautiful as the created things, but indeed of an entirely different beauty which even the Angels cannot comprehend; He is not brilliant as the light of the sun, but indeed of an entirely different immeasurable brilliancy and uncreated light; He is not great as the measurements of the body, but indeed of a greatness which is incomprehensible.

God is, moreover, not like anything which we can grasp and comprehend by our intellects, for all this is limited and imperfect and contradicts the greatness and majesty of God. Therefore He is not as our spirit

or the celestial spirits; not good, not wise, as we or the Angels understand goodness and wisdom, for such is always an imperfect goodness and wisdom. His goodness is infinitely different from these. It is for us incomprehensible and inexpressible. His greatness is not the greatness of a man or of an Angel; His power, all His qualities surpass everything, and are far different from everything which we can imagine. For whatever we think of is always imperfect, taken from daily experience and therefore unworthy of the majesty and perfection of God. Therefore, in order to obtain a right conception of the greatness of God we must remove everything from the essence of God which we can perceive in creatures with the aid of the senses and understanding, for God is no being, no spirit, no life such as we know, but a sublime, marvelous, ineffable Being, above all beings, above all spirits, above all existences. Yes truly, the Essence of all essences, the Ineffable for every tongue, incomprehensible for every intellect. "He that is a searcher of majesty, shall be overwhelmed by glory" (Proverbs 25, 27).

The second way to arrive at the knowledge of the infinite perfections of God is to attribute to God all the beauty and perfection which we perceive in creatures, but in an infinitely higher degree. The first and highest perfection of God is a perfect existence, that is — as St. Dionysius, St. Augustine and all the Fathers of the Church teach — to unite all possible and conceivable excellences and perfections of creatures with-

out a shadow of imperfection; so that we cannot imagine a beauty which would not be in God, and that too in an infinite measure and degree. Hence Holy Scripture says: "His greatness has no end." He embraces within Himself everything that is beautiful, perfect, glorious, and it is found in Him in an infinitely higher manner and without the imperfections of creatures. Marvelous is the sun when it disappears in triumph from the glorified horizon; marvelous is the moon when it pours out its floods of pure silver light; marvelous is the star-studded canopy glittering joyously in the firmament of heaven; marvelous is nature when it awakens in spring. The Christian feels in his heart that this same beauty is in an infinite degree found in Him Who gave all this beauty to nature; he feels, he believes with his whole soul the word of the Apostle: "In him is all." All beauty, in an infinite degree.

Marvelous is the growth and variety of flowers, their colors and blossoms. They beautify the earth and ravish the eye of the man of faith, but he raises his eyes higher and higher to God; his heart tells him that in God is found all this beauty in an infinitely higher degree and without any imperfection.

Marvelous is the life of animals, from the smallest insect to the elephant, from the smallest fly to the eagle, from the smallest fish up to the whale, from the smallest worm to the giant serpent; marvelous is their movement, the quickness of their senses and their strength. The Eternal Wisdom is their Teacher and

Director; they follow the inclination which the Creator gave to them. Therefore the gaze of admiration is not confined to them but is raised higher and higher to God, in Whom all this is, and in Whom everything is infinitely better and infinitely more perfect.

Marvelous is man with his soul created according to the image and likeness of God, with his memory, understanding and free will, with his arts and sciences, with the wonderful and giant works of his mind and body. But he is far surpassed by the heavenly spirits, the Angels and Archangels, the Cherubim and Seraphim. And yet a voice in man cries out to him: "Remember, O man, that dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return." There is only One from Whom everything is. In God is all wisdom and power in an infinite measure. Admirable are the virtues of pious men and yet they point to the Adorable Fountain, to the Eternal Beauty. As all lesser lights are extinguished by the rising sun, so is all beauty clouded by the Eternal Beauty. They are all traces which lead us to the infinite God. Everything in nature is but a slight reflex of the glory of God; would that they might illuminate us with their light in order that we might worthily know God in His Majesty.

But you must not believe that because these perfections in creatures are manifold that they are also manifold in God. In God there is only one, simple and supreme perfection which embraces within itself in an infinite manner all the perfections of creatures, just as the ocean unites all the drops of rain, springs, rivers and brooks into one whole.

From this you can understand the greatness and the folly of sin, and therefore also the greatness of its punishment. What else is sin but to leave God, the highest Good, and seek it in creatures, who have not even the relation to Him which the drops of rain have to the water in the ocean? "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jeremias 2, 13). Yes, the fountain of all beauty from which flows all the beauty of creatures, and in which all these beauties find themselves reunited in an immeasurable degree, we desert this fountain and go to find goodness and happiness in the creatures which are so poor and miserable in comparison with the highest Good. "Where is thy God?" St. Paul answers the sinner: "Thy God is thy belly, money and vain glory. This first God of the sinner will decay, and the second will be squandered or stolen and the third will go up in smoke. Who then is thy God?" David thought otherwise: "My soul thirsts after God," thus spoke this holy King in the midst of countless riches, in the midst of victories, of a powerful government, in the midst of the joys of life: "My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God: when shall I come and appear before the face of God?" (Ps. 41, 3). Nothing can therefore satisfy him; he wishes to die, he wishes to be before the face of God in order to lose himself in the contemplation of His marvelous beauty and to be sated. And may this meditation separate us from the love of creatures and lead us to God, in order that we may one day become worthy of seeing God face to

face, mindful of the words of St. Paul: "That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for those that love him" (1 Cor. 2, 9). Amen.

SERMON III

THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD IN THE UNIVERSE

“For in him we live, and move, and are.”—ACTS 17, 28.

We have thus far considered the eternity of God, His spiritual essence and His perfections. These three attributes of God naturally lead to another attribute of God which moves us to a new reverence and adoration of the infinite God. If the eternity of God is nothing else than His unchangeable, majestic presence by which everything is present to Him since the creation of the world; if secondly God is a Spirit who knows no measure and no place like bodily substances, and if God, thirdly, embraces in Himself all the perfections found in creatures in an infinite degree — it follows also that God is omnipresent in the whole creation. “In him we live, move and are.”

Everything is preserved in its life and existence by God, everything exists by virtue of His power. In the whole world there is no place which the eternal God does not fill, no boundaries which limit Him; He is omnipresent. God Himself gives us a sublime picture of this when He says: “Heaven is my throne and the earth my footstool” (Isaias 66, 1). And yet the earth, this footstool of God, has a surface of nine millions of square miles and millions of stars sparkle

like diamonds around the throne of God in Heaven, and these are mostly greater than this footstool, than the earth! God fills and preserves everything with His presence. The soul of man is a weak picture of this, which as an image of God is present everywhere in the body and preserves its life and its movements, for with its thoughts it hastens with the speed of lightning through the spaces of earth and can place itself now here and now elsewhere in its imagination. This latter presence of the soul is, to be sure, only an imaginary one; with God, however, it is real and substantial.

We will therefore, my beloved, meditate to-day on the omnipresence of God in the universe. Lend your ears to this meditation, and I will begin with the beautiful expression:

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. God is really present everywhere; so that He fills Heaven and earth, as God Himself asks through His Prophet Jeremias: "Shall a man be hid in secret places, and I not see him, sayeth the Lord? Do not I fill heaven and earth, sayeth the Lord?" (Jer. 23, 24). Or, as the Book of Wisdom says (1, 7): "For the spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world: and that which containeth all things, hath knowledge of the voice." There is no place either in Heaven or on earth where God is not, and since He is a Pure Spirit He penetrates everything and is in everything. He is in the altitudes of Heaven, in the depths of the sea, in the bowels of the earth and wherever we go we

are in God: "In him we live, move and are." For this reason the holy King David, feeling, as it were, the immensity and the omnipresence of God, exclaims: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I fly from thy face? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there: if I descend into hell, thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there also shall thy hand lead me: and thy right hand shall hold me" (Ps. 138, 7-10). What consideration, therefore, is more suitable for the knowledge of God, for the admiration of His infinitude, and for the joy over His greatness than the meditation on His omnipresence? The Prophet Baruch exclaims: "O Israel, how great is the house of God, and how vast is the place of his possession! It is great, and hath no end: it is high and immense" (Bar. 24, 25). "Heaven is his throne and the earth is his footstool" (Isaias 66, 1).

But how, my beloved, is God everywhere present in all His creatures? He is everywhere present by His Substance or Nature; secondly by His omnipresence and thirdly by His omnipotence. God is, first, everywhere present by His Substance or Nature. Wherever we may be, there God is truly and really: "In him we live, move and are." Everywhere is His whole, indivisible Godhead, His goodness and love, His mercy and justice, His wisdom and omnipotence, and all the greatness and perfection of His Divine Nature. God is everywhere the same as He is in Heaven, the same, who created the earth and governs

it. If our eyes would be opened we would behold Him here everywhere, and be blessed in this vision. For the saints in Heaven are happy only because they behold God, and God permits Himself to be seen by them in Heaven and not everywhere, because the blessed cannot be everywhere, and Heaven, not the earth, according to the will of God is the dwelling-place of the blessed.

2. God is, secondly, everywhere present in all created things by His knowledge, in as much as He sees everything and knows what transpires in them, without the least thing being hidden from Him. God is not present by His omniscience as, for instance, a man in a dark place, where he does not see what transpires around him; neither is He present like the soul in the body, which does not see the interior organism of the body; but God is so present, that from the smallest creature up to the greatest, from the smallest worm up to the sun, He knows everything and sees everything. No voice, no sigh, no pain and no complaints of animals escape Him. Or does He not hear the cry of the young robin and the roar of the hungry lion? He clothes the lilies of the fields and is mindful of the sparrow on the roof. There are no sufferings and miseries, no struggles and temptations, no thoughts and no desires, no word and no sin, not the least good or bad in man that remains hidden from Him. Everything is bright and open before Him as the brightest light in open day. "The eyes of the Lord in every place behold the good and evil" (Prov. 15, 3). Overpowered by this thought the holy King David exclaims:

“Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I fly from thy face?” (Ps. 138, 7).

3. God is, thirdly, everywhere and in every creature present by His omnipotence. He not only sees and knows what takes place in the creatures, but He gives to them also existence, life and strength, and preserves them as long as His wisdom has determined the duration of the existence for each creature. “In him we live, move and are.” Whatever life we notice even in the smallest creatures, they live only because God in them preserves life by His omnipresent omnipotence. “In him we live.” Whatever movements we see in the smallest insect, it makes only because God gives it motion. “In him we move.” Whatever existence the most insignificant things have, they have only because God preserves the existence of creatures by His omnipresent omnipotence. “In him we are.” If God would only for a moment withdraw His omnipotent presence from them and us and all creatures, we and everything with us would sink again into nothingness from which He has brought us and everything forth. Hence King David says in his praise of God: “All expect of thee that thou give them food in season. What thou givest to them they shall gather up: when thou openest thy hand, they shall be filled with good. But if thou turnest away thy face, they shall be troubled: thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust” (Ps. 103, 27-29).

God is, therefore, everywhere and in all creatures present with His substance, omniscience and omnipo-

tence. As we can conclude from the exterior and visible of man his interior and invisible, his soul, which communicates to the body its being, life and movement, so also we can penetrate with the eye of faith the whole creation and recognize in it the omnipresence of God who gives and preserves to everything its existence, life and movement. "In him we live, move and are." But what then are the fruits which we should draw from the meditation on the presence of God in the universe? It is admiration, adoration of God and a greater love and confidence in Him. "For by the greatness of the beauty, and of the creatures the creator of them may be seen so as to be known thereby" (Wisdom, 13, 5). But it is only given to him who believes in God and loves Him from the depths of his heart, to recognize his Creator in the universe and to love Him all the more. The sun may cast its radiant effulgence through the heavens, the moon may pour out its rays of purest silver, the stars may rejoice and in the dancing sheen of their beams hold their nightly feast to the honor and glory of God — if the soul is not united with the eye, if by sin it is turned away from God, if it is held captive by love for the creature and is brought to the last straits by a life of indifference, then all this splendor, all this knowledge is hidden to men. Then the words of the Apostle find their accomplishment: "For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity: so that they are inexcusable. Because that, when they knew God

they had not glorified him as God, or given thanks; but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Rom. I, 20, 21).

Creation is for him who has learned to pray and to love, an open prayer book in which he learns to know the greatness and omnipotence of God, His beauty and goodness. The heavens recount for him the praise of God and the firmament declares to him the works of His hands. There is no speech, no word of creatures that He does not hear. What the starry hosts in heaven recount in tongues of flame, what the ocean and the depths of the earth and its mountains proclaim, what the rays of the sun and the noises of the storms, what the blossoms of spring, and what the hail that destroys them, or the icy breath of the frost that kills them, what the lilies of the fields, the sparrow on the house-top, yes, what the smallest worm proclaims — everything that exists, if rightly read and understood, is also a revelation of what God has done in the days gone by; in them is written the presence, wisdom and providence of God, but also His chastising justice. The longing hope and waiting of creatures is also a sermon which opens up the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, since it speaks of blessing and cursing, of sin and redemption, of death and resurrection.

But the presence of God in the universe teaches us more than this. For whom do you believe has the earth with its millions of creatures been created? Perhaps only for us? Just as little as a beautiful garden is made for the sake of the gardener, but for his sake

who planned and made it — just as little is the earth made only for our sake. We men, indeed, dwell on earth and live from its gifts, rejoice in its beauty, exercise our intelligence and our mind on it, and it becomes to us as St. Augustine remarks a ladder by which we can climb to its and our Creator, but it is created really and principally for the glorification of God. How many thousands of flowers blossom yearly, which the eye of man does not see nor make use of? For whom do these flowers bloom so beautifully? For the glorification of the omnipresent God. Thus they have perfectly reached their destiny even if they are not made into a bridal wreath, or used for medicinal purposes. How many pearls lie hidden in the depths of the sea; how many diamonds and precious metals are hidden in the cliffs of the mountains which no one knows of or can use? How many thousands of animals are there which are useless to us, yes, even injurious? Did God's wisdom perhaps err in their creation? Do they exist for nothing? No, they are not in existence for our sake but for the glorification of the omnipresent God, and herewith they have reached their first and highest object.

Just as in Heaven the pure spirits offer to God a sacrifice of praise: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of hosts;" just as we have a holy sacrifice of praise in the Sacrifice of the Altar,— so also stammers the earth by the mouth of the millions of its children, animate and inanimate creatures — it offers to God a sacrifice of praise. The holy King David enthusiastically exclaims: "Praise ye him, O sun and moon:

praise him, all ye stars and light. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens: praise him, ye mountains and hills, fruitful trees and cedars: beasts and cattle: serpents and feathered fowls: praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons and ye deeps: fire, hail, snow, ice, stormy winds which fulfill his word" (Ps. 148). Therefore we read also: "Lord our Lord, how wonderful is thy name upon the whole earth." Yes, the whole earth is a temple of the omnipresent God, Heaven is the canopy, every mountain and hill an altar, every tree a candelabrum, the sun is the light, and all creatures are the choir that sing the praises of God. There man stands, poor and sinful, far smaller than the little worm that he treads on, or than the withered leaf that blows past him. The worm dies not because of its own guilt; the leaf does not fall from the tree by its own fault, but because it has served its purpose and reached its term. But thou, O man, thou hast fallen away from God by thy own guilt, withered away from Him in whom alone there is true life! Thou diest by thy own guilt! O man, who art thou? O man, who dost continue to live in sin, who art thou, that thou hast abandoned God? Who art thou, that thou hast so terribly mistaken the object of thy existence, and instead of living in love and for the praise of the all-present God, scornest Him constantly by the transgression of His commandments and by the desecration of His day? And yet if tears and contrition and a true conversion to God follow after a sinful, godless life — if a real conversion to God in whom we alone live, and move and can exist follows, then there

is forced from the soul the Kyrie Eleison, Lord have mercy on me! followed by the Gloria in excelsis, because the soul wishes to again intone the praises of God by its life and its words: "Lord, our Lord, wonderful is thy name in the whole world."

May you also, my dearly beloved, faithfully fulfill your calling on earth for the honor and the praise of the omnipresent God! May you not by your own fault, by a godless life fall away from Him! It would bring to you no happiness! And even the smallest creature on the day of judgment would rise up against you, and by the faithful fulfillment of its calling condemn you. Well for us, if we have lived for the honor of God, for then our eyes will be opened, we shall see the omnipresent God whose glory fills Heaven and earth, and this vision is our future bliss and the reward of the faithful fulfillment of our calling. Amen.

SERMON IV

THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN US

“For in him we live, and move, and are.”—ACTS 17, 28.

With these words, so replete with significance, the great Apostle St. Paul teaches us not only the presence of God in the universe, but also in ourselves. By His omnipresence in creation God is the source and origin of all life and movement. Wherever we see life and movement we know that these exist only because God gives to all creatures and preserves for them life and movement. Just as the soul is present and active in man's whole body and in every member thereof, so God is also in creation. Therefore His presence is general, for by it God is present in every place, and in every creature with His Substance and His Omnipotence. He is in Heaven and on earth, in animate and inanimate creatures, in those that are endowed with intelligence and those that are without it, in material and immaterial or spiritual beings. To all of them God gives and preserves existence, life and movement.

We also are in God and God is present in us men. “In him we live, and move, and are.” For this reason St. Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo, beautifully says: “Like an erring lamb, O Lord, I went about seeking Thee in the outer world whilst Thou wert within

me. . . . I strayed over the pathways of the world to find Thee, and I never found Thee, because it was unnecessary to seek Thee in the outside world when Thou wert within me. How long have I tarried to love Thee, O Beauty ever old and ever new, how long have I hesitated to love Thee! Thou art within me and I sought Thee outwardly and lost myself in the beauties that Thou hadst created. Thou art with me and I was not with Thee, for I was separated from Thee by Thy creatures, which cannot even exist without Thee." But how are we with God, and how is God with us? God is in us: 1. Like in the rest of creatures by His Substance, His Omniscience and Omnipotence; 2. God is in us in a still higher manner, namely by His Grace. The subject of to-day's meditation will be: we in God and God in us. May these considerations bear such fruit that we will always live in the presence of God and act in accordance with the words which God spoke to Abraham: "Walk before me, and thou wilt be perfect."

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. We are in God. "In him we live, and move, and are." Therefore we are in God, in God who fills Heaven and earth with His presence. But where else could we well be if not in God? "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there: if I descend into hell, thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there shall thy hand lead me: and thy

right hand shall hold me" (Ps. 138, 7-10). God surrounds us on all sides with His Substance, Omniscience and Omnipotence, just as we are surrounded by the air on all sides. Yes, Christian, God is thy house in which thou livest, and out of which thou canst never step. God, we might say, is thy bed where thou takest thy rest, and outside of which thou canst never find rest or peace. He is thy support and thy life, outside of which thou canst never find security, sustenance and life. He embraces thee, He bears thee within Himself as the mother doth her child. God Himself speaks as follows through the mouth of the Prophet Isaias (46, 3): "Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who are carried by my bowels, are borne up by my womb." For this reason the words of the Apostle are so trite and fraught with significance: "In him we live, and move, and are." Verily, here and everywhere we are in God: we act and live in God, surrounded by His Divine Majesty, borne up by His Omnipotence, glorified by His Beauty forever old and forever new, so that if for a moment our eyes were opened, we should behold ourselves enveloped by the reflex of His glory, as we are encompassed by the light of the sun.

However, we are not only in God, but God is also in us. God, by His Substance, Omniscience and Omnipotence, is in us in a more intimate and more effective manner than the soul, just as He is in the rest of His creatures. His Divine Nature is truly and effectually within us, consequently also His goodness which bestows on us existence and life, His wisdom

which has given us intellect and understanding. His Omnipotence is united with our powers and sustains them in their efforts. He is with our eyes, so that they can see; with the ears so that they can hear; with the feet so that they can carry us on their way; He is with us so that memory can remember, the mind understand and the will will, and exercise itself. God is present in such a manner as if we were His abode. We cannot have the slightest thought or perform the least action without Him, yea, we would sink back into nothingness if God but for a moment should withdraw Himself from us with His Presence and Omnipotence. But rejoice, Christian soul, that the presence of God is within thee; be glad for this immeasurable boon that is thy possession; just as the friend is glad of the presence of his friend, or as the weak man rejoices at the presence of the strong man, the poor of the rich, and the rich man of his prince. Art thou poor? Behold, in thee is God whose wealth of mercy for thee knows no bounds. Have thou recourse to Him. Art thou weak and of little courage? With thee and in thee is the Eternal Omnipotence itself: creatures cannot help thee, but He can and will help thee. Dost thou feel that thou art abandoned? No, thou art not abandoned; God is still in and with thee, and thou art in God. And yet, how long wilt thou still go astray, how long wilt thou waste thy strength in the pursuit of vain shadows, and in estranging thyself from Him who is so near to thee? How long wilt thou yet tarry and hesitate to love Him, who is the beauty ever old and ever new, in union with whom

thou couldst be peaceful, contented and happy on earth, so that one day in Heaven thou couldst be still happier and more blessed in seeing Him face to face?

2. Secondly, God is in us in a higher manner, that is, in those of us who are without mortal sin. He is in the souls of the just with His grace and performs in them and with them works that are meritorious and worthy of eternal life. Hence the Apostle St. John says: "He that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him" (1 John 4, 16). God does not merely give and preserve by His presence the life and the powers of the body, but by His grace He gives and preserves the life of the soul and the works of love. By means of grace we participate in the Divine Nature, that is, in its holiness and purity. Grace is a heavenly gift which so transforms man that he no longer lives the old corrupt life which he has inherited from Adam, but the new life which he has received from the Second Adam, Jesus Christ. Grace is the source of all virtues and meritorious works, so that it is for the soul what the soul is for the body. The soul gives the body beauty, life and strength, and grace gives the soul beauty, life and strength. The beauty of soul attendant upon grace is so extraordinary, that such a soul is called by the Scriptures a spouse of God. The life that it gives is so much higher and divine that the Christian who possesses grace is a child and heir of God. Grace enables him to live and act as a child of God and an heir of Heaven, namely, to keep the commandments of God, to withstand the temptations of lustful nature, to live a pure

and holy life and to imitate Christ and His life. Such are the effects of the union of God with the soul of the just by means of His grace. This grace is the beginning of that eternal union with God in the eternity of bliss, where the soul will see God and possess everything that is His, as His bride, His daughter and His heiress.

It is true, we can neither see the union of God with the soul by means of grace nor the beauty of the soul in its participation in the divine nature. But we understand it from the life, from the works and from the peace of the good Christian. Beautiful is the answer which St. Ephraim in the fourth century gave to this doubt: "How now? Do we then see the just of God, if they do good? Yes! if you do anything for the sake of God, it is done in His presence, and you see God thereby." St. John says: "God is charity." If thou only hast love, then thou wilt see Him who is in thee. But in what manner dost thou see Him? Listen further! If you performed a good work, you feel joy; if you are obedient, gladness fills your soul. Love, therefore, is satisfaction, joy, rejoicing; it accomplishes with you a good work. Behold how God works with you! Every one indeed knows him who works with him. Love, therefore, does not become visible to the eye of flesh; and we do not behold justice and sanctity with the eyes of the flesh, but love, sanctity and justice reveal themselves to the eyes of the spirit and with gladness rejoice over the good works which you perform. You see, therefore, God, for God is love! You behold also the virtue of absti-



nence and modesty, not with bodily eyes, but you can see their effects; in the same way you can see God by love, although you do not behold Him with your bodily eyes. Why does St. John say: "Nobody has as yet seen God?" (1 John 1, 18). Surely no one has seen the greatness or the Nature of God; saints have seen Him through signs and types or images; now the saints on earth behold Him through His works in their hearts.

3. God is therefore in us, and we in God. What greatness, what majesty is this to be ever mindful of the presence of God! What indeed moved the Apostles and the disciples to practice the high virtues which our Divine Lord demanded, with a joyful heart, if not the presence of Jesus constantly before their eyes? As often as they beheld Him in spirit, they were reminded of their duty; the teachings which He had given to them came vividly before their minds, as also the glorious promises with which He encouraged them and spurred them on. The same effect will the presence of Almighty God have upon us if we often and frequently think of Him. This thought awakens in us the divine doctrine, the commandments and the promises of an eternal reward for our fidelity. And indeed the thought: "God sees me, He understands and knows all that I think and do," is of such a power that it banishes sin, holds back the desires of sensuality and assists virtue in its triumph. "God sees me," if this truth is vividly realized, the soul is filled with a secret terror of committing any sin in the presence of the Divine Majesty, in the presence of

its Judge, in the presence of the Lord of life and death, be it a sin of desire or of deed; evil at once loses its allurements, temptation its power, and Christian virtue shines luminously forth before all. Therefore God Himself said to Abraham: "Walk before me and be perfect" (Gen. 17, 1). The saints were always penetrated with this consciousness, and for this reason they arrived at such a high state of virtue and perfection which made them like unto God. Just as the moon needs the presence of the sun and receives from it its light and brilliancy, and becomes more and more brilliant the more it is turned towards the sun, and less so the farther it recedes from it,—so is it with us. God is our Sun, the Sun of Justice. The more we are related to Him and walk before and in Him, the more shall we be filled with this divine light and the more shall we receive of the justice and the perfection of God. But the farther we are away from God and the more we forget His presence the more shall we dwell in darkness and injustice and increase in sinfulness. "He has not God before his eyes — says the Royal Prophet of the sinner,— therefore his ways are at all times besmirched with sin."

May the thought ever be before our minds, my dearly beloved: "God sees me!" This thought will preserve us from sin, strengthen us in temptations and enable us to lead a truly Christian life. Yes, to walk before God, here on earth, to live with God and in God, this is nothing else than an examination which we undergo on earth to prove whether we wish to become worthy to live for all eternity in the presence

of God. Here on earth we behold His presence only as in a mirror, in the creation, in ourselves, in good works, in a good conscience and by faith; in Heaven, however, face to face; here our life in the presence of God is meritorious, but there it is rewarded; here is the beginning of joy and of peace, but there full possession of eternal joy and of eternal peace. Therefore I conclude with the words of the one hundred and fourth Psalm: "Seek ye the Lord, and be strengthened: seek his face evermore." Amen.

SERMON V

THE OMNISCIENCE AND WISDOM OF GOD

“O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?”

— ROM. II, 33, 34.

The omnipresence of God, by means of which He fills Heaven and earth and everything that has being, with His Substance and omnipotence, naturally leads us to another of His infinite attributes, namely, His omniscience. Since God is eternal, and His eternity knows neither past nor future but is an unchanging present, it follows that God knows all things from all eternity, all that has ever happened in and by inanimate and animate creatures in Heaven or on earth, that happens or that henceforth will ever happen. Holy Scripture says: “For all things were known to the Lord, before they were created” (Eccus. 23, 29).

But because God knows all things from all eternity, He was able to arrange all things in the universe in the wisest manner and bestow on every creature all the qualities and powers that it needed, so that the whole of creation is a wonderfully constituted whole even in its slightest details. Omniscience brings us to wisdom, and both of these take us one step farther and

bring us to providence, by means of which God watches over and guides all His creatures, so that every individual one of them, and they all together attain the end for which they were created. "She reacheth therefore from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly" (Wisdom 8, 1).

Therefore I will speak to you to-day about the omniscience and wisdom of God. May the Holy Ghost bestow His blessing on our meditation that we may grow in our knowledge and understanding of God.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!" It is thus that the great Apostle exclaims, and so shall we with him also exclaim. We must first confess that it would be presumption on our part to wish to seize and fully comprehend the sublime and infinite attributes of God, especially His omniscience and wisdom, for all these transcend not only all the powers of man but also those of the angels. The same Apostle tells us: "So the things also that are of God no man knoweth, but the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2, 11). God alone knows Himself, His essence and His attributes perfectly; all that we know of them by faith and reason is only a small ray of light that God bestows upon us. Enlightened by this we will consider the omniscience of God with regard to His own Being and with regard to creatures.

With regard to Himself, God comprehends fully His own Being, His goodness and love and holiness and

omnipotence and all His infinite perfections. His Being is, as it were, His teacher and counsellor, His book, His mirror and the exemplar for everything that God intends and carries out, and for everything that can possibly be known. From this it follows that God is just as essentially and eternally all-knowing as He is eternally and essentially all-powerful and all-good. As little as His omnipotence began only with the creation of the universe, so little has His omniscience its origin since the creation of things. But God comprehends created things not only in His own Being as in a mirror, He also knows them in themselves. His omniscience sees all things, for with one glance He looks over the whole of eternity, so that the duration of time and the succession of events cause no increase or succession in His knowledge. Therefore we read in Holy Writ: "For all things were known to the Lord, before they were created" (Eccus. 23, 29), "with whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration" (James I, 17).

But not only created things are known to God from all eternity, but also all the good or evil that men have done of their own free will since the beginning of the world. For this reason God alone can judge justly and recompense each one according to his works. He does not forget even the slightest and humblest of good deeds, even though men may long since have lost the memory of them; not even the most secret of evil thoughts will escape His remembrance, and the all-knowing God will demand a strict accounting of every idle word. If man wants to save words and events

from oblivion he must commit them to writing, but God needs no day-book. All that happened thousands of years ago is as present to Him to-day as then, for "One day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. 3, 8).

2. In like manner God knows all that is taking place all over the earth at the present moment, so that not the most secret thought or the most hidden desire can escape Him. Our soul lies before Him like an open book. A poor picture of this omniscience of God is the sun, which looks over the earth and the sea with his radiant eye, and searches out the most distant valleys and the most hidden corners. We are told in Holy Writ: "And he knoweth not that the eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most hidden parts" (Eccus. 23, 28).

Just as God knew Cain's plan of revenge, the innocence of the Egyptian Joseph, Herod's plan of murder, the thoughts of the Scribes and Pharisees, the betrayal of Judas, so also does He know us thoroughly with all our thoughts and words and deeds, both those of the past and those of our present life.

But God also knows all the things that are still going to happen until the end of the world, even though they are dependent upon our free choice. He knows them as though they had already happened or were happening just now. "He seeth from eternity to eternity, and there is nothing wonderful before him" (Eccus. 39, 25). In the Apocalypse of St. John there

appears a book with seven seals, but "no man was able, neither in heaven, nor on earth, nor under the earth, to open the book, nor to look on it" (Apoc. 5, 3). The future is such a book for us men. But God, who has marked down His plans for the future in this book knows every page of it.

The royal David exclaims: "Thy eyes did see my imperfect being, and in thy book all shall be written: days shall be formed, and no one in them" (Ps. 138, 16). Our days are also marked down there. There are determined the graces that we shall yet receive in order to be able to work out our salvation. Who knows for how many of us this measure of grace is already filled, because of those graces that we have misused and despised? Who can tell of all the warnings of conscience, of all the incentives to good that have been given us in accordance with the designs of God, and how many more will follow these and when they will cease? How many transgressions of the commandments of God and of His Church will God still permit until the measure of His mercy is exhausted? God alone knows that. O man! do not trifle with an uncertain future, for thy lot, thy fate rests in the hands of God, and God is a Just Judge.

3. But the fact that God knows and foresees all our actions does not oblige us to forego our freedom of self-determination, and force us to do the good or the evil that will eventually decide our eternal happiness or our eternal damnation. Ah, no! to believe thus would be fundamentally false. We too can foresee that if anybody takes poison he will die. But on this

account the other is not forced to take poison. Hence it is not our foresight that brings him death, but the poison. A mirror will show all the movements that we make in a room. The mirror, however, does not cause our free and deliberate movements, it only shows them because we are making them. In a somewhat similar manner the omniscience of God is a kind of a world-mirror, wherein the whole future is already visible from all eternity.

We are not obliged to do this or that good or evil because God foresees everything, but God foresees them because we are really going to do them. God gave us liberty, He gave us a Redeemer, the Faith, the Church, the Sacraments, so that we could save ourselves, but He also foresees the use we are going to make of them of our own volition. He foresees how many of us are going to use them for a Christian life and for eternal salvation, and how many of us are simply going to cast them aside as so many things of no value. We cannot too much admire the goodness of God, a goodness that should touch and convert every human being, for, notwithstanding everything, He shows grace and love and mercy to those who offend Him, so that they might if they would, leave their un-Christian and godless life and do penance for their sins. Hence when we consider the omniscience of God we are obliged to cry out: "O the depths of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! . . . for who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?"

4. If, my dearly beloved, the omniscience of God is

so infinitely great that it knows all things from all eternity, how infinitely great must also be His wisdom, which, in a manner, could guide itself by this omniscience and ordain all things in such a way, that beginning with the smallest and most insignificant creatures up to the giant bodies in the heavens, each one received the being adapted to it, and that again all these, subject to a most marvelous order, formed a majestic whole — the universe? Moreover, the divine wisdom is the source of all created wisdom, and only that is true wisdom which draws from the divine. From this all arts, all sciences, all inventions and discoveries take their origin, for whatever man knows and discovers and makes is already present either on the earth or in the heavens in an immeasurable degree, and hence only a poor imitation of what God has so wisely created and formed. Hence the Scripture tells us: “And he poured her (wisdom) out upon all his works, and upon all flesh according to his gift, and hath given her to them that love him” (Eccus. 1, 10).

The infinite wisdom of God is truly poured out upon all His works. Numberless marvels thereof greet us from the heavens. The constellations have been shining for untold centuries and in the exactness of their courses they surpass the most skilfully constructed watch. How long have not the most learned scholars with unwavering diligence made the world of the stars the object of their study and research, and have written down in their books thousands of proofs of how wisely all things are ordained there in the skies, and yet they have scarcely gone beyond the be-

ginning of their researches. "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?"

The wisdom of God shows itself not less on earth, and it is, in a manner, more manifest to our eyes, in the four elements of fire, water, air and earth, which, instead of being unbridled in uncurbed might, destroying everything, are joined in fraternal union to give us growth, life, warmth and progress, and as the servants of man help him faithfully in his works. The wisdom of God shows itself in the situation of the different countries, in the ranges of mountains, in the division of the waters over the earth in order to feed the wells and the springs. It shows itself on the earth in the courses of the creeks and the rivers, or in the manner in which the seas and the oceans join the different countries. It shows itself in the heavens, in the clouds that are destined to make the earth fruitful and to purify the air. What a wealth of wisdom, my dearly beloved, is hidden in the mineral kingdom, to which God has granted such properties that out of it as from a rich treasure-vault the farmer and the tradesman may obtain their tools, the soldier his weapons, the king his crown and sceptre, the rich man his ornaments, the artist his material, the physician his remedies, and even the animals that which is necessary to them.

Go a step farther, O Christian, and thou wilt find the wisdom of God poured out in the world of plants. There you will find beauty in noble rivalry with use-

fulness. The same plant which delights the eye with the beauty of its form and the wealth of its color and spreads abroad an agreeable perfume, often offers food to the hungry in its fruit, honey to the bees in its blossoms and medicine to the sick in its sap. All draw their strength of life from the same earth, but each one retains its own form and qualities. Who can enumerate all their qualities! And yet they are the children of the same mother. The same earth generates them, nourishes them and brings them to maturity. But consider how in the multiplicity of plants every one of them remains true to its nature and never goes beyond its bounds; not one takes on the blossoms of another, not one clothes itself with strange leaves or adorns itself with strange fruit. Although they are devoid of reason they follow the law, the law of the wisdom of God, which has made them distinct one from the other since the day when they came forth from nothing.

But come with me one step farther in the kingdom of creation. What art gave the insects their wings? Who taught them to fly and to soar with them, to rise or to lower themselves with them? Who taught them to find the food that was suitable for them and to accommodate themselves to the change of the seasons, to the rain and the wind, to the heat and the cold? O eternal wisdom of God! who can fail to know thee here!

How varied the songs of the birds! Every kind has its own speech, every sex its own melody. They understand better than man the art of moderating

the breath, of controlling the voice, of measuring the tones. Who teaches them all this? The highest wisdom is their teacher and guide. They follow the instinct that the Creator gave them. Who points out to these little animals the materials best adapted to the construction of their nests? Who taught them the sense of measure and design for their little construction? And yet with what skill they know how to build and how to make their little abodes habitable! First they seek grassblades and twigs, then the softer fibres of the plants and finally a soft wool gathered from the trees and the hedges for their weak little brood. Who determines for them the time when they are to begin building their nest so that it is finished when they lay their eggs, or that they raise their young with the proper kind of food?

But why need we worry about this? O most Admirable Wisdom of God, how splendidly dost Thou instruct the least of Thy creatures! They obey Thy voice and because of this obedience all is well with them. It is the wisdom of God, my dearly beloved, that gives the animals those very qualities, those powers and keenness whereby they can live and move, either high in the air or on the earth, under the earth or in the water. To some it gave a sharp eye, to others a keen sense of smell, to others weapons of defense, agility, skilfulness and craftiness, to all of them a wonderful instinct which teaches them as a reliable guide how to find food and remedies, how to arrange their dwelling places, how to avoid dangers and protect their life. They are distributed over the earth

in a wonderful manner in accordance with their qualities and mode of life or for the manifold uses of man.

Even though it be true that we cannot understand why many of the animals were created, and of what use they are to man and apparently do more harm than good, still the thousands of other works with their wise arrangement that come to our notice should suffice to make us understand that the comparatively few of the creatures whose purpose our short sightedness cannot grasp, are also, because they are the works of God, wise and useful. Let us seriously consider the words that the Lord pronounced: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts are above your thoughts." Just as the apprentice cannot yet grasp the plan of a great building, the recruit the plan of campaign of a great general, or the child the purposes of a wise father, just as little and much less can we grasp and judge the plans and designs of God. "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom. 11, 33). Who shall therefore dare to demand an accounting of the Almighty for what He has done? It is sufficient for us to know that infinite wisdom and goodness constantly guide His decrees. Just here you have an opportunity of learning something for yourself! Divine wisdom clearly indicates to us in the animal world the virtues with which we should adorn our lives and the vices that we should flee. You behold an animal wallowing in filth and mire and you turn away your gaze in dis-

gust; but the man who wallows in the mire of degrading lust behaves far more unworthily. The serpent with its venom, the toad with its spume are all alike detestable. But far more detestable are those men who with the venom of envy and slander wound their neighbor unto death and besmirch his fair name. The wolf falls upon the herd, the fox steals craftily along, the hawk pounces down on his victim. Do not be excited! These are but the pictures of men who rob their neighbor of his rightful possessions, who cheat or oppress him either in an underhand manner or by open force. Beware lest you become such a wolf, such a fox or hawk in human form.

Look upon the lamb and learn from it meekness, innocence from the dove. The dog fawns upon his master in gratitude for the little that has been done for him. Eternal God! In what insignificant things dost Thou represent to us sublime objects and great virtues! Who can defend his evil deeds before the great Law giver! A dog shames the ingrate; a dog teaches us gratitude and love towards the Creator. Blush, O man! Art thou as faithful to thy God as this animal is to the one who feeds it? Thou murmurest, thou growest vexed and angry when the all-good God, thy loving Master, visits thee with suffering for thy amendment, for thy eternal welfare; but the dog licks the hand of him who strikes it and crouches humbly at the feet of his master. Go to the ant, thou lazy one! seek the bee, thou idler! there go to school and learn. Eternal Wisdom condescends to speak to us even in the depths of the forest and out upon the level

expanse of the smiling meadows. Fortunate the man who everywhere listens to its word, who preserves these words in his heart and makes them the guide of his life.

5. But where, my dearly beloved, shall we find a clearer evidence of the wisdom of God than in man himself? In man we find that incomprehensible union of an immortal soul with a mortal body—a body that in and by itself is nothing but a dead and putrid mass. And yet how many hours, yea days and weeks would be necessary to describe the wisdom of the Creator as it manifests itself in all the parts of the human body? The eye alone is a little world in itself, the ear alone is a wonderful piece of mechanism whereby we can hear and distinguish the various kinds of sounds, so too the mouth with which we eat and breathe and speak. But what shall we say of man's inner constitution? Gallenus, a pagan physician, exclaims: "O Thou who hast formed us! I believe that when I describe the body with all its parts I utter a hymn of praise to Thy glory. I honor Thee more when I proclaim the beauty of Thy works than if I burned precious incense in the temples." He is the same who was going to give the infidel Epicurus a hundred years for reflection to see if the Master who formed the human body had committed even the slightest mistake, or if he could have made a single member otherwise or more adapted to its purpose without robbing the whole of its beauty and strength. But the wisdom of God shows itself also in the great variety of men, in the almost infinite variety of the

countenances we see, in their bearing and the size of the bodies. Divine Wisdom has thereby avoided incalculable confusion.

6. Thus far, my dearly beloved, we have considered the eternal wisdom of God in His creatures. Whither, therefore, shall we still further direct our gaze in order to find it manifested in a still higher and convincing degree? Where else if not in the direction of human destinies? If in the whole visible creation the wisdom of God appears to us in undeniable facts, we must be still more convinced that the same wisdom arranges all things in our life for the best and brings them to a happy conclusion.

It is especially here that its effects are the most marvelous, because, without robbing man of his liberty, it ordains and guides all things for the best, both for the individual and for the world at large. To the short-sighted man many things in the lives of individuals and of peoples appear to be a matter of merest chance; but for God there is no chance nor anything unforeseen. All is the work of His ordaining. In the Book of Wisdom we are told: "But thy providence, O Father, governeth it" (14, 3), or as Our Divine Saviour says still more convincingly: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father" (Matth. 10, 29).

Holy Scripture gives us most remarkable proof of how Divine Wisdom arranges all things for the best in the lives of men. Joseph mourned in the cistern into which his brothers had thrown him; he suffered

innocently in prison, but contrary to all human calculation the cistern and the prison were the way by which God raised him to the height of power and made him the saviour of many nations. Trembling with fear and with a bleeding heart a Hebrew mother concealed her little boy in the rushes on the banks of the Nile; but a few hours later the infant Moses rested in the arms of the daughter of Pharaoh and became the leader of his people. Who can offer a single criticism of the truly wonderful guidance of the Jewish people from the time of their departure out of the land of Egypt down through all the centuries of their history?

The wisdom of God still manifests itself in the destinies of whole empires as well as in the guidance of individual men. You yourselves are the witnesses hereof. The same wisdom that among animals and plants has established so great and useful a variety has also made different kinds of men. Each one for his state in life needs special aptitudes, powers and knowledge, so that he can assume his proper position in human society. And God, who rules and ordains all things, has given each one these inclinations, powers and aptitudes. They cannot be forced upon us, they cannot be sifted into us, they can scarcely be made a matter of education for us, they come from God. He ordains that some shall rule and others obey; that some teach and others learn; that some labor with the mind and others with their hands; that some take up the different trades and others devote themselves to agriculture. One portion of the race

is rich, the other poor, so that the poor may help the rich and the rich be useful to the poor.

If everyone had the same inclinations and aptitudes, if all were tradesmen or farmers, all scholars or illiterate, all rich or poor, who could calculate the consequent confusion and misery? But now God, like the wise father of a family, has arranged all things for the best, so that everyone has his post where he can work to the best advantage for his own welfare and for the welfare of the community.

7. If we could enter into the kingdom of grace and redemption, how great would be the wonders of the wisdom of God that would present themselves to our mind, but these we shall consider later. The attributes of God teach us that we should strive to imitate them. Since we are created to the image of God it is our duty to become more and more like unto Him and therefore always wiser. For this reason God teaches us in a thousand ways, but in doing so He does not force upon us the unreasoning impulses discerned in the brute creation. He invites us to do what is just and honorable; He always leaves us the free choice. Yet if man carelessly closes his ears to the voice of love, if he lazily lags behind, when he becomes rebellious and hardened in the ways of vice, with whom lies the blame? What is it that Divine Wisdom has not done and is doing in order to win us over? Heaven and earth and the entire universe give testimony of the loving care with which He calls us to Himself. After it had spoken to us through nature and through a thousand other voices, Divine Wis-

dom came down from Heaven in the Person of the Redeemer in order to teach us. But if man in his presumption contemns this way and these doctrines and deems that by doing so he is enlightened, what else is he but an unpardonable fool as St. Paul witnesses? (Rom. 1, 22.) Hence the same Apostle warns us with these words: "See therefore, brethren, how you walk circumspectly: not as unwise, but as wise: redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore become not unwise, but understanding what is the will of God" (Eph. 5, 15-16). Blessed are we, therefore, if we surrender ourselves to this true wisdom; it leads us to a likeness of God, to a life pleasing to God and to eternal happiness. Amen.

SERMON VI

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD FOR BODY AND SOUL

“For he made the little and the great, and he hath equally care of all.”—WISDOM, 6. 8.

That part of the Gospel which tells us of the multiplication of the loaves demonstrates clearly the truth of the promise which Our Divine Saviour once made, when He said: “Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice,”—namely, that which is most important—“and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matth. 6, 33). The multitudes followed the Saviour up the mountain to hear His teachings, and forgot all about providing themselves with the necessary food. Hence Our Divine Saviour said to the Apostle Philip: “Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” (John 6, 5). Our Divine Saviour addressed this question to Philip not because He was anyways embarrassed by the apparent necessity of providing food for so large an assembly, “for he himself knew what he would do,” but in order to try the faith of the Apostles. He wished by His tender Providence which animated Him to nourish the multitude with material food, and thus also give an answer to the oft repeated question: “Whence shall we buy bread?” There is nothing that we forget so easily as the Providence of God, and yet without this

Divine Providence our every effort will be barren of result. Nothing would prosper, for everything depends on the blessing of God. "Whence shall we obtain bread?" is a question that we hear fall from the lips of many Christians. "Where shall we find the means to nourish the life of the soul, and to preserve it in the grace of God?" God has provided even more wonderfully for the sustenance of the soul, so that she will not go down to miserable ruin in the wilderness of this life. But here too we are prone to forget the Providence of God for our souls. This twofold forgetfulness brings forth a complete reversal of the natural order of things, and the results from this condition of affairs can be none other than wrong. It is therefore my purpose to speak to you to-day about the Providence of God for the body and the soul, for the temporal and the eternal life, so that in the one case we will place our trust in God, and in the other use it for the benefit of our eternal salvation. Above all things, however, we should not forget the words of the Saviour: "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you."

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. What is the Providence of God? It is the coordinating of all those means given by God to creatures and to men, so that they can attain their end and fulfill the tasks, for which God created them. The ultimate end of creatures is the glory of God and the service of man. The ultimate end of man is first and

foremost his eternal happiness. For God has created man that he may know Him, love Him and be eternally happy with Him in Heaven. For this reason God places at his disposal all the means that will enable him to fulfill his vocation here on earth, and obtain eternal happiness in Heaven. And verily, nothing escapes the omniscience of God. He knows all the means that are necessary and apt to lead man to his destiny; He knows all the obstacles that confront us, and the means that are best calculated to remove such obstacles. His wisdom knows how to arrange all things in such a way that everything will eventually turn out for the best. Nothing can resist His omnipotence, and His mercy refuses nothing. Such is the Providence that watches over us, and hence there will be wanting to us nothing that our temporal and eternal welfare may demand. For this reason the Apostle St. Peter tells us: "Casting all your care upon him, for he hath care of you" (1 Peter 5, 7). This truth will become evident when we consider all the services that Providence renders to man. It is our mother, for from it we have received our existence. God himself tells us by the lips of the Prophet Isaias (46, 3): "Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who are carried by my bowels, are borne up by my womb." The Providence of God is like the nurse that nourishes and raises us, and carries us in her arms. "And I was like a foster father to Ephraim, I carried them in my arms" (Osee 11, 3). It is our guard and our guide, for it watches over the whole course of our

life: "But thy providence, O Father, governeth it" (Wisdom 14, 3). It is our teacher and our counselor, for it instructs and advises us when we are in doubt, and when we must act it guides us that we may not err: "I am the Lord thy God that teach thee profitable things, that govern thee in the way that thou walkest" (Isaias 48, 17). It is our protector and defender in all troubles and dangers, for it assists us everywhere: "Our God is our refuge and strength: a helper in troubles" (Ps. 45, 2). The Providence of God is our consolation in all anxiety and sadness, for it provides comfort for everyone: "And I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them joyful after their sorrow" (Jerem. 31, 13). All the services of mercy, of sympathy, of love that we can imagine, we can find all of them in the Providence of God. It takes the place of father, of friend, of physician, of judge, of shepherd and of every person that can render us any service for the best of our interests. For this reason the Providence of God is the source of all the benefits for body and soul, for time and eternity, that we have so far obtained and still hope to obtain. St. Dorotheus tells us: (Serm. 13) "Wheresoever Providence is, there is also all good, and everything happens for the good of the soul." It exists for others only, retains nothing for itself; it embraces all creatures and excepts none. "For he made the little and the great, and he hath equally care of all" (Wisdom 6, 8). Hence there is neither chance nor luck for the Providence of God. We have every reason, indeed, to entrust

ourselves to the Providence of God, for in it we find everything that our temporal and eternal welfare may demand. The man who builds thereon has built on a solid foundation. But in order that we may understand this all the better, let us consider Providence in its various manifestations and works.

2. Behold how God created the world in six days, the blue firmament, the clouds in the air, how He separated the water from the earth so that the latter might become dry and bear trees, herbs and fruits. After He had made the sun to shine by day, the moon by night, after He had placed the fish in the water, the birds in the air and the animals upon the earth — then, and only then, when everything needed was at hand, when everything was arranged and made habitable like a house, God created man, gave him the house and constituted him the lord and master over the other creatures. How splendidly the Providence of God for man manifests itself! And should it now cease to care for us? Nay, for Jesus says: “Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on” (Matth. 6, 25). Why does Our Divine Saviour forbid every excessive worry about food and clothing, a worry and anxiety that prevents us from raising our eyes to God, and from caring for our souls and for the betterment of our lives? “But your Father knoweth that you have need of these things” (Luke 12, 30). But in order to strengthen us all the more in this view of the question Our Divine Saviour asks His Apostles: “Is not the life more than the meat:

and the body more than the raiment?" (Matth. 6, 25). If, therefore, God has given us body and soul, is He not obliged also to give us the means of preserving them? He who gives the greater includes therein also the lesser. How beautiful are therefore these simple words: "Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are you not of much more value than they?" (Matth. 6, 26). These words assuredly glorify the wonderful Providence of God that is mindful even of the least of His birds. Even the most insignificant of animals live on the Providence of God: "The eyes of all hope in thee, O Lord: and thou givest them meat in due season. Thou openest thy hand, and fillest with blessing every living creature" (Ps. 144, 15, 16). After all this is it conceivable that we should have no confidence in the Providence of God, or that He should not be mindful of us also? If God does not forget the least of His creatures, the animalcules, will He forget man? It is unthinkable! Hence He provides in a multitude of ways for his sustenance. To one He gives health, to another strength; He blesses the endeavors of another and for still another He raises up a benefactor, and thus, in one way or another, He provides for all. In fact, consider the matter a little more closely. Man could not live without the fruits of the earth; but on the other hand the earth would be in no condition to bring them forth did not the seasons return in their regular order. And even this is not sufficient; to all must be added

rain and sunshine, and only then is growth and maturity assured when these are given in due time and proportion. And yet how seldom do we find that rain and warmth come as regularly as they should; sometimes storms, then rains, then cold prevail. We often think that everything had conspired to destroy every vestige of the crops. But can anyone remember that the crops have ever suffered to such an extent that they failed to supply at least the most pressing wants and that the shortage so caused was not more than compensated by the surplus that had gone before or that succeeded? How does it come that bad weather has never yet completely destroyed them everywhere? It is indeed by the Providence of God that watches over the good and the evil, that makes the sun shine upon them and that sends rain down upon their fields: it is the Providence of God that men do not recognize and that they seldom thank, but which nevertheless lovingly and mercifully bestows its blessings upon them.

How admirable is the Providence of God! It has given, as it were, to every animal its appropriate clothing, its skin, its hair, its wool, its fur or its feathers. It does not even forget the plants: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they labor not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. And if the grass of the field, which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe: how much more you, O ye of little faith?" (Matth. 6, 27-30).

3. Now I can well understand the words of Our Divine Saviour: "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matth. 6, 33). If the Providence of God cares for all men and watches over them, how much more will it not do so over all those whose every effort is directed toward one object, namely, to be good Christians, to love God and to work for the salvation of their souls, so that they can become eternally happy in Heaven. Do you not think that God will provide specially for them in the matter of what is most necessary to them for their temporal lives—though not for what is superfluous? Assuredly! This is so true that we learn to understand the Providence of God in its real and loving greatness only when it is being exercised in behalf of His elect, for then when all ordinary means are lacking, it will have recourse to the most extraordinary ones. God lets manna rain from heaven for the Jewish people in the desert, He lets water spring from the rock, yea, in spite of their many and prolonged wanderings, neither their clothes nor shoes were torn. God commanded a raven to bring, morning and evening, meat and bread to the Prophet Elias, and at the word of God an angel sustained Daniel in the lions' den. Our Divine Lord fed four thousand men with seven loaves and a few fishes. How many countless Christians, who seek neither themselves nor the wealth of the earth, but whose purpose in life is to love God and to save their souls, can speak of the special Providence of God in their behalf. But enough of this, for the

care that the Providence of God has for the necessities of men is most wonderful. If all men would only recognize this fact, there would be less misery on earth, and calm and peace would return to many hearts that are now torn with care and anxiety.

But, some one will ask, if Providence is really so loving and so kind, whence come the many evils of the body and the soul? I answer: Our heavenly Father knows all this, and all these evils are included in His Providence, all the miseries, all the sicknesses, all the persecutions, all that man may suffer in body and soul. God so directs all these evils for which we ourselves are not responsible, that they will turn out for the best of His elect. The Scripture tells us that God makes all things turn out for the best of those who love Him, and even the evils of life are made to serve a useful purpose. If God even cares for the life of a sparrow and will not allow a single one of these to perish without His knowledge and His permission, how much greater care will He not bestow on men, especially upon those who are His children? "Fear not therefore: better are you than many sparrows" (Matth. 10, 31). God who has counted the hairs of our head, so that not one shall be lost without His knowledge and permission, looks out even more carefully for the temporal welfare, for the life and the honor of His Christians, so that we may rest assured that we shall suffer nothing without His knowledge or His permission. And yet God permits us to be persecuted or injured by bad men on account of the good that He will know how to draw therefrom either for

us or for others. And this good is invariably our eternal salvation and the means to obtain it the more easily and the more surely. Those who have to suffer are driven forcibly to God and to their salvation; but if we have all things that our heart may desire, then we are in danger of losing God and our own souls, and this God always strives to prevent. Joseph says to his brethren (Gen. 50, 20): "You thought evil against me: but God turned it into good." How many kinds of temporal evils there are; and God should know nothing of all these? He turns them all to the best of those who love Him.

Sufferings are the school to which God sends men so that they may adorn themselves with patience, with confidence, with virtues of every kind, for he who is obliged to suffer will surely not go astray, will commit no grievous sin, but will direct his gaze upon God and upon his eternal happiness. What else does God desire? If the heavens could speak they would tell us that even the holiest among men saves his soul only because an all-loving Providence allowed these apparent evils to come over him, in order to preserve him from eternal perdition and to help him save his soul. Those who have everything that they want upon earth and who are blessed in every temporal way are just the ones who have most cause to fear eternal damnation. Christ Himself tells us that those who now laugh and rejoice will some day see their joy turned into sorrow and their laughter will be changed into gnashing of teeth. The great Doctor of the Church, St. Augustine, dreaded nothing so much as

to be temporally so blessed as to see his every wish fulfilled, to have nothing disturb his comfort and so allow his conscience to fall asleep. Such good fortune is the unfailing source of sin. Behold, Christian soul, how the godless triumph on earth; see how they constantly increase in wealth and in the esteem of men, while honest and God-fearing Christians wrestle with suffering and want, and learn to know that this is the best proof of the loving-kindness of the Providence of God, for we are told that God will dry the tears of His saints, and there will come a time when there will be neither sorrow, nor sighs, nor suffering, for the old order will be changed.

4. We know, therefore, and believe that nothing escapes the ever watchful eye of God who rules and governs the world as a father does his family. We recognize the Providence of God in our own lives and in the events of the world. But believing Christians recognize it in every detail and in the daily happenings. St. Ignatius adored the Providence of God in every flower that grew to rejoice his eye and to raise his heart to his Creator. St. Francis de Sales, St. Vincent de Paul, beheld the Providence of God in every sick or poor person who made a demand upon their services, their charity or their patience. Everything stands under the direction of Divine Providence down to the bird that eats from our hand, down to the lily in the field and to the hair upon our heads.

God is the Lord of all things and the Master in all things. It is therefore our duty to submit ourselves freely and in a Christian manner to the decrees of His

Providence, for His Will will be accomplished whether we will it or no. What did Pharaoh win by his obstinacy? Did he prevent the liberation of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt? Far from it, and he himself perished. What benefit did the Jews derive from their opposition to the Redeemer? Did they possibly prevent the redemption of the world? Assuredly not, but instead Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jewish people dispersed. What advantage accrued to the pagan emperors from their persecution of the Christians? Did they perchance prevent the propagation of the Catholic Church over the earth? Far from it, but their own mighty empire crumbled into dust. And so will it happen to everyone who will ever try to oppose the decrees of Divine Providence. They alone will suffer harm, but Providence will rule quietly on.

There are few people in our day who still believe in Divine Providence which constantly cares for us and watches over our eternal and temporal welfare. The majority of men live as though they themselves were their own providence and the providence of others. In higher circles they reckon on the development of industry, on the progress of so-called civilization or on the power of the State, and assume the attitude that the world and earthly affairs can be ruled without the help of God. In the lower classes the workman depends upon his strength, the tradesman on his skill, the father of the family on his industry and the merchant on his business acumen. This explains the prevalent pagan unrest with regard to the

things of the future. "What shall we eat: or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed?" (Matth. 6, 31). This pagan unrest, in its turn, is the reason why the Lord's day is desecrated, why so many miss Mass, why prayer is omitted and why the whole question of the salvation of the soul is neglected. And in spite of all this, pagan unrest, poverty and misery, want and bitter privation are growing apace and drive thousands of men into the most horrible despair. What did it profit them that they assumed the position of providence, or what did they accomplish? Nothing, absolutely nothing, except that the Providence of God has deserted them and left them to their own helplessness. They rebelled against the Providence of God. Our age can show countless numbers of such rebels, and their misery and unhappiness is as great for time as for eternity.

5. We have thus far seen how lovingly and kindly the Providence of God cares for the welfare of the body and soul. It is, as it were, the mother, the nurse, the guide, the teacher and the protector of mankind. And yet this is but the smallest part of what Providence has done and still does for men. It shows itself most marvelous in its solicitude for the eternal salvation of our souls. We would be obliged to go too far afield did we wish to penetrate into the fathomless depths of Divine Providence. But tell me, who gave us prayer with the promise: "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you?" (Matth. 7, 7). It is God who, in His tender love for us wished to provide

us with a means that should bring us help, grace or safety both for body and soul in all the vicissitudes of life. Not content with this glorious means Divine Providence has placed an angel guardian at our side. He is destined to be our protector and defender against all the assaults of Satan, our friend and companion on all our ways and our counsellor in doubt. Holy Writ tells us: "For he hath given his angels charge over thee; to keep thee in all thy ways" (Ps. 90, 11). What was it that moved Jesus Christ to come down from Heaven and to die upon the Cross? It was Divine Providence that knew of this greatest of all means and used it to lead men back again to their last end, namely, eternal salvation. It was the Providence of God that instituted the Catholic Church through Our Divine Saviour, so that His teachings, His merits and everything that He accomplished for the good of mankind might be preserved to the end of time, and that all men might be able to share in the benefits of the Redemption. Divine Providence shows itself immeasurably great in the institution of the Church for the salvation of man. But how would the institution of the Church benefit the individual if it were not amply provided with all kinds of means like a well furnished dwelling? I will say nothing of the assistance of the Holy Ghost and of His grace. But how can you hope to be saved once you have estranged yourself from Christ and His commandments? How can you expect to persevere in grace and where will you find the means necessary to withstand the many temptations of the world? But be-

hold, Divine Providence has cared also for this by instituting for us the holy sacraments. From them, whosoever wishes to drink, may draw the waters of salvation, of grace and strength, of pardon and peace. Divine Providence shows itself in all its magnificence in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Herein we find all that the soul can desire for its salvation: meat and drink, the pledge of eternal life, a friend, physician, counsellor and redeemer. Tell me now, is Divine Providence not most wonderful in its solicitude for men? Hence St. Paul does not exaggerate when he writes: "He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also, with him, given us all things?" (Rom. 8, 32). No temporal evil, no temptation, no calumny or sickness can come over us without the knowledge or the permission of God, or that it be not turned to our greatest good. But our greatest good is the salvation of our souls, and God directs all things towards this. For what would it profit a man if he gained the whole world, but in the gaining of it lost his immortal soul?

6. An old proverb says: "The man who trusts in God has not built on sand." If only men would understand this better, they would assuredly not become disloyal to Divine Providence, Which means it so well with them and does so much for them. And yet we find so many who, instead of resting in the arms of Divine Providence, rely upon their own strength. They live on without prayer, without God, and therefore they so often encounter only bitter disappointment.

Would that I could make each of you feel in your innermost hearts all that God in His loving Providence has been to you, is and shall always be. We owe it to the Providence of God, who knew us and wanted us from all eternity, that we exist, that by Baptism we have been received into the number of His children and heirs, while millions of others are deprived of this happiness. We owe our life, our health, our all to Providence; we owe it to Providence if we are not suddenly taken away in our sins and plunged into the depths of Hell. We shall always have to thank God's Providence if we are in the end really saved. And truly, if we serve God faithfully and love Him with all our heart, what greater consolation can we have than that we are resting in the arms of Divine Providence? No matter what untoward things may come to us, the thought that God, our heavenly Father knows all about it and will know how to arrange all things for the best will give us peace and resignation. He is faithful; He will permit no one to be tempted beyond his strength, and after all the struggles of this life He will give us Heaven as our reward. Therefore I say with the Apostle St. Peter: "Casting all your care upon him, for he hath care of you" (1 Pet. 5, 7). Amen.

SERMON VII

THE MYSTERY OF THE MOST BLESSED TRINITY

“There are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost. And these three are one.”

— I JOHN 5, 7.

The foundation of our holy religion is our belief in one God, in one Divine Nature and Substance. “He it is who made us,” the one only God and Creator, the one only Lord, the Beginning and the End of all things. The very heavens declare this truth, the earth proclaims it, and our own reason confirms it. And truly, from the attributes of God, from His eternity, omnipresence, wisdom, and His other infinite perfections which we have already discussed, follows naturally the unity of God, the one Divine Nature and Substance. Only one God can be the highest, eternal Good, uniting in Itself in the highest degree all good, and all conceivable perfections. On this truth is based the commandment: “Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with thy whole mind, and with all thy strength,” for He alone is the highest Good. In like manner, only one God can be the highest Lord, who preserves and rules all things, and whose will nothing can thwart. If there were several gods there would be several wills, therefore contradictions, and the mar-

velous unity, order and harmony of the earth and the heavens, which of themselves proclaim one highest Lord, would cease to exist, and with them the world. "Every kingdom divided against itself shall be destroyed."

Finally, if God is our highest Lawgiver, Whose will is the supreme rule according to which we must live and act, and the rule according to which He, as the Supreme Judge, punishes transgressors, and rewards the obedient, and shows Himself to be our Last End, in this again we have a proof that there can be only one God. For if there were several gods, there would be various laws, rewards from the one, punishment from the other, confusion without end, and contradictions, and no one would be able to satisfy the longings of his soul for perfect peace and happiness.

Were these proofs, together with the testimony of the whole world and of our own soul, not sufficient to convince us of the unity of God, Holy Scripture would assuredly be sufficient. The unity of God was the principal and fundamental teaching of the Old Testament. For the preservation on earth of this primary truth of faith the people of Israel were chosen; and because among all other nations paganism, and with it faith in various gods flourished, God led the Israelites into the wilderness, prevented all intercourse with the pagans for forty years, surrounded His chosen people with a multitude of religious and ceremonial precepts, as with an impenetrable wall, nor did He permit them to enter into the Promised Land until these laws and precepts had be-

come part and parcel of their customs. For the same reason the Israelites were not permitted, even in the Holy Land itself, to have more than one High Priest, and only one place of sacrifice was permitted to them, namely, the tabernacle, and later on the Temple, to which they had to go three times a year, in order that a living faith in one God might be preserved among them. Christ also confirmed this belief. To spread the belief in the unity of God, and to rescue the pagans from idolatry, was the first and immediate task of the Apostles. The martyrs defended this truth with their blood. Faith in one God is our consolation. We have only one God to love, to adore, to serve, in order to be saved.

And yet we believe, and this faith is necessary for eternal life, the mystery that God is One in His Nature and Substance, but three in Person: "There are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost. And these three are one." Therefore we will to-day consider the mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity, under the following divisions: 1, how the Trinity was revealed; 2, what we understand by the Divine Nature and Substance, and what we understand by Divine Persons; 3, we shall try to make this mystery more intelligible; 4, and show what works are usually attributed to each of the Divine Persons, and why.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. The mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity was not distinctly proclaimed in the Old Testament to

the patriarchs and the people of Israel. One reason was, as has been already stated, because they were surrounded by idolatrous nations, and were under especial obligation to preserve faith in the unity of God, and because in spite of strict religious precepts and repeated punishments they could hardly be restrained from idolatry. Another reason was, that just as entrance into the Holy of Holies in the temple, and the sight of the Ark of the Covenant was denied to this people, so was also the insight into the deeper divine revelations denied them until the coming of the Saviour. Nevertheless we find in the Old Testament many references to this sublime mystery of faith, as for example in the narration of the creation of man, where God says: "Let us make man to our own image and likeness" (Gen. 1, 26).

In the Psalms, and, later, in the prophets, are found still clearer traces of this mystery. As we approach more nearly to the time of the coming of our Saviour, we behold this inclination to idolatry among the Jewish people gradually disappearing, and the faith in one God becoming more firmly rooted. And so we discover among the Jews just previous to the coming of the Saviour that the faith in the Triune God becomes more general, particularly among the better and more righteous classes. For instance, the venerable Simeon, Zachary, Elizabeth, John the Baptist, Joseph and Mary. The angel who brought the message to Mary did not surprise her by the reference to the Son and the Holy Ghost, and just as little were the others surprised by it.

But the doctrine that in God there are three Persons was first formally and in definite expression revealed by Our Divine Saviour in the New Testament. And since men were so strongly convinced of this truth, Our Divine Saviour, although He encountered many objections to His teachings among the Jews, in precisely this doctrine met with none. Let us admire here the Providence of God, which as it gradually, and ever more perfectly prepared mankind for the coming of the Saviour, so in like manner also led him gradually to the faith in this sublime mystery of the Trinity of God. As the faith in one God re-echoed in majestic and awe-inspiring proclamation from Mt. Sinai as the first commandment, so in the New Law is revealed in a more sublime manner the mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity. It is revealed by the message of the angel, by the baptism of Christ, by the sending of the Apostles to baptize all who believe, in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost, and by the promise of Our Blessed Saviour to send the Holy Ghost.

On Pentecost day belief in this mystery was proclaimed to the Jews and heathens, and to the whole world, as the first condition of salvation. Consequently we see that from that time the Apostles preach, teach, baptize, and bless in this name. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the charity of God, and the communication of the Holy Ghost be with you all" (2 Cor. 13, 13).

The successors of the Apostles proclaimed this belief, the martyrs confessed it before the tribunals of

the pagans. "Lord God, almighty, eternal Father of Thy Beloved and Blessed Son Jesus Christ"—thus prayed in the year 166 A.D. the octogenarian Bishop of Smyrna, the martyr St. Polycarp,—“I thank Thee that Thou hast deemed me worthy to live to this hour when I shall be numbered among the holy martyrs, and enjoy the happiness of sharing in the chalice of Thy Son Jesus Christ, in order to be renewed for the resurrection unto eternal life of body and soul, through Thy Holy Spirit. Accept me this day as an acceptable holocaust that Thou hast prepared for Thyself. . . . Therefore I praise Thee above all things. I praise and glorify Thee through the Eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, Thy Beloved Son, to Whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost be glory for ever and ever.”

This faith of the Apostles and martyrs spreading throughout the world, destroyed the temples and altars of paganism, demolished their idols, and converted the nations. Nineteen centuries have passed away since this faith was revealed, and mankind and we ourselves have been baptized in this Name. Everywhere resounds the ancient doxology, and with our own lips we too repeat, “Glory to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost;” and as in former times so also to-day Catholic Christians sign themselves with the holy sign of the Cross as the shortest profession of their faith in the two most sublime mysteries of our holy religion—in the Most Holy Trinity, and in Its most glorious work, our Redemption.

2. And now, my friends, what do we understand by being and nature, and what by person? We must

understand in some measure the meaning of these terms in order not to have a confused idea of the Most Holy Trinity. We number as many substances as we do beings. Three men are undoubtedly three substances, because each one has his own being distinct from every other. And so there are not three Divine Substances, because there is only one Divine Nature and Being. The being or nature comprises within itself all the attributes which belong to a substance. The Divine Nature, therefore, comprises within Itself all the divine attributes, eternity, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, wisdom, holiness, and so on. And as there is only one eternity, one omnipotence, one wisdom, so there is but one Divine Nature and Being. Therefore the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are not three Gods, but only one God, and so we say; "I believe in one God." But if they are only one God, they have only one Divine Nature or Being in common, that is they are equally eternal, equally omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient. Therefore not three omnipotent, not three omnipresent, not three all-knowing, but one omnipotent, one eternal, one all-knowing, just, holy God. In consequence, each Divine Person possesses in their plentitude all and the same Divine attributes as the other Divine Persons. Therefore the Father is not more omnipotent, more eternal, more omniscient, more holy and just than the Son, nor is the Son more so than the Holy Ghost, but each and every one of the Divine Persons has the same Divine attributes, one and the same indivisible Nature and Being. And because

each Divine Person possesses the indivisible Divine Nature whole and entire, it follows that the Father is true God, and the Son and Holy Ghost are true God, and yet they are not three Gods, but one Triune God. Therefore Christ says: "I and the Father are one." He does not say of one, but one, that is, one and the same Divine Nature and Being.

And now what is a person? A person is an individual substance, which is a principle of action in a rational nature, that is endowed with understanding and free will. Man is a person, because he does not exist in another being, but by himself, and is master of his actions. The soul has, indeed, understanding and free will, but it does not subsist alone and separate from the body, but forms with the body only one being, and, therefore, the soul is not of itself a person any more than the body of itself. The lower animals do exist by themselves, but they are not endowed with understanding and free will, and are consequently not persons. In God there are three Divine Persons, distinct from one another and existing of themselves: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Each one of these Divine Persons is consequently distinguished from the others, and to each one are ascribed acts that are proper to persons. Thus the Father promised His Eternal Son as a Redeemer, and sent Him; the Son came down from Heaven and redeemed us; and the Holy Ghost was sent on Pentecost by the Father and the Son in order that He might guide the Church into all truth, and might sanctify us.

In what then consists the distinction between the

Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? There can be no distinction in the one indivisible Nature and Being, because each Divine Person possesses the same Divine attributes. But if there were no difference between the Divine Persons, there would be evidently not three, but only one Person. There must therefore be a difference. It is not in the Being, but in the Persons. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are different as to Person. "The Father is from no one, the Son is from the Father alone, and the Holy Ghost is equally from both"—this is the doctrine of our holy faith (IV Conc. Lat. cap. firm.). The Father is, therefore, not the Son, the Son is not the Father, and neither the Father nor the Son is the Holy Ghost. Herein consists a real difference according to Persons.

But how is the mystery of the Trinity explained? We say explained, not proved, for it is sufficiently proved by the revelation of God, by the Incarnation of the Son of God, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost. The whole of Christendom is penetrated with the truth of this mystery, so that it is truly effective for the salvation of the world. Grace, the power of the sacraments, divine service, all have their virtue in this mystery, and as everything is done in this Name, in everything is this mystery professed and glorified. It shows God not only in His relation to us and to the world, but also in His relation to Himself, in His own innermost Life, in the Sanctity of His Eternal Majesty. We shall briefly explain this and endeavor to make it clearer by comparisons.

If all life is from God, and if God is Himself the highest eternal Life, it follows that He would not be wrapped up within Himself in utter inactivity. For even created life is active, not only externally, but also internally. The soul for instance is active not only in the movement of the body, but also in its own self by thinking and willing. In the same manner the body is active internally and externally. But God as the true, the highest Life, must also exhibit the highest activity not only externally, in regard to the world, but also internally, in His own Divine Being. What would the body, what would the soul be without eternal life? A dead and lifeless thing. What would be the life of God if He did not possess it with knowledge and love, which is the greatest activity? The first of the Divine Persons, the Father, comprehends Himself and His Divine Being with perfect clearness. In consequence of this eternal perception and comprehension of Self, He begets in Himself an eternal living picture of Himself, in which is a perfect reproduction of His whole Being, and this likeness, this other Being from Himself is the Son, Who is "the brightness of the glory of the Father and the figure of His substance," as St. Paul expresses it (Heb. 1, 3), Who is the Wisdom of the Father, and the Word of God which He spoke in Himself, and which is a perfect likeness of Himself. As a weak comparison, we may consider a man beholding himself in a mirror which gives him a picture of himself at a glance, without any effort on his part. In this case there is only a reflection, but in the case of God the Father there is a perfect like-

ness, which is not only His image, but His whole Being Itself. Inasmuch as the Father in this manner begets the Son, He loves the Son with an endless, infinite love, and the Son loves the Father with a like love. This mutual love, infinite and supremely perfect, is a Person, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Ghost. And so we say that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. We poor mortals cannot comprehend this mystery, but whilst we explain it we adore and believe it. Our intellect gives us to understand that God is incomprehensible, and that it is our glory and grace to believe before we see. And from this we can understand, my beloved, that God could live for an eternity before there were any created beings, and that He did live from all eternity in the most perfect happiness, and that He can live without creatures.

3. Although the Son is begotten by the Father, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the son, yet, since the Son and the Holy Ghost have the same substance and Nature as the Father, they, too, are from eternity just as the Father is from eternity. St. Augustine, in the fourth century, tried to make this truth more intelligible to his hearers in the following manner: fire generates a radiance which is just as old as the fire itself. Give me an eternal fire, and I will give you an eternal radiance. In like manner a light sheds a glimmer as old as the light itself. The fire has its radiance, the light begets a glimmer, but the fire did not exist a moment before the radiance, nor the light before the glimmer it sheds. Behold

how fire with its radiance, and light with its glimmer come into existence simultaneously, and doubt not that the Son exists with the Father from all eternity, "Being the brightness of his glory and the figure of his substance" (Heb. 1; 3). Tertullian, who lived in the second century, made use of the sun as an illustration. There is only one sun, but we distinguish three things in it, the sun, the rays generated by it, and the heat that proceeds from the sun and the rays. Give me, therefore, an eternal sun, and I will give you an eternal beam, and an eternal warmth proceeding from both.

But, my beloved, why demand more illustrations from nature? Has not the Most Holy Trinity made man, as it were, a mirror wherein we in a measure may contemplate the nature of the Trinity? Again St. Augustine teaches: The soul has understanding, memory, and free will. But in the understanding, in the memory and in the will, it is one and the same soul, one and the same substance. And yet the understanding is different from the memory, the memory from the will, but still the substance which has understanding is not different from that which has memory and will. It is the same soul which is internally and externally active through these different faculties. Thus in a much higher degree the Divine Nature and Substance are one and the same in the three Divine Persons. The Persons, though not the Nature, are distinguished by their personal qualifications. St. Augustine continues: The understanding that gener-

ates knowledge, or the Word, is the image of the Father; the knowledge or the Word, generated by the Father is the image of the Son, and the love of the will, which, to a certain extent, proceeds from the understanding and the knowledge, the image of the Holy Ghost (De Trin. Bk. IX, c. 12).

In our meditations on the infinite perfections of God we saw that created things are signs whereby we are guided to God, that they give us but a faint hint of the glory of God, enlightened by which we obtain some idea of His eternal beauty, "For by the greatness of the beauty, and of the creature, the creator of them may be seen so as to be known thereby" (Wis. 13, 5). Thus also in a special manner man is a mirror in which we, enlightened by faith, can in a measure comprehend the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. The soul in which the breath of God lives is this mirror, the soul whose substance is as much concealed from our eyes as the substance of God; the soul, simple, indivisible, without extension, independent of time and place, free in its action, seeking after its own happiness, yet revealing itself under a three-fold power, as it were, a small trinity in itself. Therefore just as it is reprehensible to deny the existence of the soul because we cannot see it nor fully understand its substance, so it is reprehensible in even a greater degree to deny that most sublime mystery of our faith, the Most Holy Trinity, because we cannot comprehend it, or because it surpasses our understanding. For that it is not against reason, or unreasonable, the smallest

child apprehends, because it knows that this mystery has been revealed by the Highest Intelligence and Wisdom, God Himself.

4. But we wish still to consider, my beloved, what works are ascribed to each of the Divine Persons. Although the Divine perfections, the wisdom, omnipotence, justice, holiness, etc., which are revealed in created things, belong alike to all the Divine Persons, nevertheless the work of omnipotence is ascribed especially to God the Father, the works of wisdom to God the Son, and the works of love to the Holy Ghost. The Father is not the Father of His Son by omnipotence, nor is He Father by His creation of the world, since the work of the creation belongs equally with the Father to the Son and the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless those works wherein omnipotence is revealed are especially ascribed to the Father. The same holds good of eternity. Although all three Persons are eternal the Father is first thought of as the reason of the other two, and therefore most justly is eternity ascribed especially to Him. Hence the frequent expression: "The Eternal Father." In like manner mercy is especially ascribed to the Father. Hence St. Paul calls Him "the Father who spared not his only begotten Son, but delivered him up for us" (2 Cor. 1, 3). Through Him we become children of God, and receive Him for our Father. Although we are, indeed, children of the three Divine Persons, yet we call ourselves with a particular right the children of the first Divine Person, because to Him alone is ascribed the Fatherhood.

The works of wisdom, but especially the work of re-

demption is ascribed to the Son. Since the Father begot the Son through the comprehension of Himself, and since the Son is thereby the Internal Word, the expression of all things knowable and the substantial likeness of the Father, to the Son wisdom stands in a particular relation. In the omnipotence which reveals itself in the creation of the world we recognize the Father, but in the wisdom displayed in the creation we behold the Son, for "through him all things were made." As the artist through the exercise of his understanding designs the plan of a work, so the Father, through the Son in Whom He knows all things, created this universe with its marvelous order. This order was destroyed by sin, therefore it is the Son Who by His Incarnation restored it. The Redemption is therefore peculiar to Him, for only the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became man, and Our Saviour. Therefore He Who with eternal wisdom introduced the original order that was in the world, has also restored it, and will in His eternal wisdom make the restoration of order still more complete on the last day.

Finally, the works of love, and especially of sanctification, are ascribed to the Holy Ghost. Love is the highest activity of the will, wherefore is the Holy Ghost the mutual Love of the Father and the Son. Although all three Divine Persons love us, we can say that this is true in a special degree of the Holy Ghost, because He is Love itself. Love manifests itself by good works and benevolence; hence all the works of Divine goodness are ascribed especially to the Holy Ghost. If omnipotence is remarkable in the creation

of the universe out of nothing, wisdom discernible in the introduction of the most marvelous order, then truly does love make itself known by the supplying of all that is needful or profitable. For this reason is the life-giving activity which was present in the creation ascribed to the Holy Ghost. The Holy Scripture says: "The Spirit of God moved over the waters," Who hovering over the original creation, gave vitality to all things. And so to-day the Holy Ghost hovers over the new order introduced by the Son of God on earth, over the Holy Catholic Church, which He fills with energy and vitality for the salvation of men, and through whose teaching and sacraments He operates in the souls of the faithful. This is the reason why we confess: "The Father hath created us, the Son redeemed us, and the Holy Ghost sanctified us."

5. Therefore, my beloved in Christ, may you also in reverence before this deepest and most wonderful of mysteries of our holy religion, prostrate in deepest adoration, be mindful of the infinite mercy of the Father Who created us out of nothing to His own likeness, Who did not spare His only begotten Son but sacrificed Him for us, and Who chose us for His children in preference to millions of other human beings. We should be always mindful of these things and gratefully say: O Lord, I believe; O Lord, I hope; O Lord, I love Thee with my whole heart.

May we all be ever mindful of the love of the Son of God Who, with the words addressed to His heavenly Father: "Behold I come to do Thy will," delivered Himself for us a sacrifice for our redemption, and

Who still continues to give Himself to us as food in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. To requite this love with love and obedience will lead us to the bliss of Heaven.

And may we be mindful of the love of the Holy Ghost and consecrate ourselves to Him in order that He may ever hover over us and open to us the treasury of graces won for us by the merits of Christ, and the seven great fountains of grace, the seven sacraments. Then in truth will the sign of the Cross be a real profession of our faith, our hope and our love, whereby the Triune God may recognize us as His own, may look down upon us with grace and mercy, and on the day of judgment and reward place us among His elect. Amen.

SERMON VIII

WHAT THE MYSTERY OF THE BLESSED TRINITY MEANS TO THE WORLD AND TO MAN

“Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

—MATT. 28, 19.

We considered last Sunday with reference to the mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity, what we are to understand by the terms, Divine Nature and Substance, and Divine Persons, and how the meaning of these terms may be made more clear to us by comparisons with the substance of the soul,—and finally what works are attributed to each of the three Divine Persons, and the reasons why they are so attributed. How much more remains to be said about this important article of our faith! But no matter what we should say, or how eloquently we should discourse upon it, all we could say would still be too little to enable us to arrive at a full understanding of this mystery. Therefore, more than all the other articles of faith, is it called *the* mystery. For as little as man can exhaust the air by breathing, or empty the ocean with a cup, just so little can he fathom the depths of this mystery. God alone can do that. Hence St. Bernard says that it is presumption to strive to fathom the Most Holy Trinity, but piety to believe It; to behold It in its

depths and beauty is the highest degree of bliss in Heaven, and the reward of childlike faith.

And yet this article of faith is so important that we will consider it again, but from a different viewpoint, namely, its meaning for the whole world and for us. If we consider this mystery, particularly, in and for itself, it must at once become clear that, as all knowledge of God, so also the doctrine which exhibits Him as the Triune God, has the greatest influence on faith, hope and charity. It affords a glance into the sublime depth and greatness of the Divine Substance; it shows us God as the Incomprehensible; it prevents us from insolently casting aside all belief, and leads us humbly to submit our minds and our hearts to believe all that God has revealed and that the Church proposes for our belief. Through this faith our hope of sharing in the immeasurable bliss of the Triune God will be awakened, and, borne on by this hope, we will love God as our highest Good, and men, too, as His children redeemed and sanctified.

But if we consider the Most Holy Trinity in its relation to the whole world, we are at once reminded of some great benefit conferred upon the world by each one of the Divine Persons. The Father reminds us of the creation, the Son of the redemption, the Holy Ghost of the world's sanctification. Hence the never-ending cry of the Church: "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;" hence, too, the sanctification of the Sunday, on which day we should meditate on our creation, redemption, and sanctification. Yes, without the knowledge of the Blessed

Trinity there is no knowledge of Christianity, and hence no redemption and no sanctification.

Therefore, beloved, what we have briefly outlined here we shall discuss at greater length, and consider what the mystery of the Blessed Trinity means to the world and to man.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. One truth remained impressed upon man even after the Fall, the truth of the existence of God. Though man fell deeper and deeper into vice, though he was sunk in the most unbelievable idolatry, nevertheless this truth was acknowledged by all nations. God had revealed His existence through created things and through the conscience. In a more particular manner God gave evidence of His existence to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom He chose to be the forebears of the Jewish race. But it was only after four hundred years, after the exodus from Egypt, that the commandment resounded from Mt. Sinai: "Thou shalt believe in only one God. Thou shalt not have strange Gods before me," whereby God revealed to the Jewish people not only His existence but also His unity. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, is one Lord" (Deut. 6, 4). But in spite of this command of God, and in spite of later serious visitations inflicted upon them by God, the Jewish people fell back again and again into idolatry. Later, when they had a magnificent temple at Jerusalem, a splendid divine service, and an unbroken series of high priests, and, from time to time, great prophets, the faith in one God took deep

and solid root among the Jews. But their faith, their commandments, their divine service, were not adopted by the pagans; they served, rather, to separate the two classes more and more. The world remained pagan and sank deeper and deeper into idolatry and vice, as the time for the coming of the Saviour approached. St. Paul draws a sad picture of the pagan world in his Epistle to the Romans (1, 18-32).

Now, my beloved, what gave to the world an entirely different aspect? What destroyed idolatry in every quarter of the earth, demolished the altars of the idols, abolished human sacrifices, suppressed animal vices, mitigated the cruelties of slavery, and made the nations more united, moral and humane? It is evident that Judaism did not do it. Just as little as it has during the past nineteen hundred years converted one solitary pagan nation, just as little did it do so before Christ. What, therefore, is the reason for the conversion of the world? For no one denies that the world is widely different now, and better than it was in the heyday of Judaism and paganism. The reason may be found in the belief in the Most Holy Trinity, in a Holy Triune God. Behold, here alone the immense importance of this faith for the world! But why did this faith overcome paganism, and why did it become the faith of the world? Because the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity stands, as it were, between Judaism and paganism, and thus becomes a bridge for both to Christianity.

2. The Jews had faith in one God, in one Divine Nature and Substance, without the mystery of three

Divine Persons in one Divine Nature having been revealed to them. But in this we must admire the providence and wisdom of God in guiding man to his salvation. For the Jews, at the time when the Law was proclaimed on Mt. Sinai, were as little prepared for the reception of this mystery as were the pagans. The most severe punishment was constantly necessary to keep them from idolatry, or to bring them back to the true faith. Had they known this mystery from the beginning they would have concluded that there were three gods, and the future would have been ruined both for themselves and for the world. And the pagans could not force themselves to believe in one Divine Essence, for they represented it to themselves as being solitary, without life and activity, and so they invented many gods and believed in them.

In the Most Holy Trinity, my beloved, we have one Divine Nature and Substance, and three Divine Persons, and therefore the most marvelous life in God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and yet the divine unity, or oneness subsists, one Holy Triune God.

Now to us, enlightened by this sublime mystery, the creation of the world and the guidance of mankind by the greatness and love of God are forcibly brought home. The universe was created out of nothing by the omnipotence of the Father; order established by the wisdom of the Son; and the Holy Ghost, Who moved over the waters, filled it with life and fruitfulness. "Let us make man to our own image and likeness," spoke the Most Holy Trinity, and man was

created, the common work of the Triune God. Adam sinned! What will the Holy Trinity do now? It will reveal Itself in the sending of Jesus Christ, the new Adam, and renew the bond between God and man, which had been severed by sin. For this reason God the Father promised man a Saviour. Mindful of this promise He saved Noe and his family from the deluge, led Abraham into the land of Canaan, chose the descendants of Abraham to be His people, freed them through Moses from the bondage of Egypt, gave to them the commandments on Mt. Sinai, miraculously preserved them in the desert, until they reached the Promised Land. But even here God the Father ruled the Israelites, sent them prophets, renewed His promises, chose David to be the progenitor of the coming Messias, and prepared not only the Jews but even the pagan world for the coming of the Saviour. Therefore it is particularly God the Father, Who, as He once created the universe by His omnipotent power, giving the harmonizing and regulating of it to the eternal wisdom of the Son, so here led mankind during that long period from the Fall and prepared him for the Redemption by His Son. When everything had been fulfilled, the second Divine Person took, as it were, the matter in hand; "the Word was made flesh," the Son of God took the form of man, announced to the world heavenly truths, and bore the sins of all men in the agony of the Cross in order that He might absolve all men by His Resurrection. He overcame death, and is the cause of our future resurrection, and by His Ascension into Heaven He leads man into bliss eternal. The

second Divine Person Who once so gloriously regulated the universe has now restored the relations between God and man that had been destroyed by sin, has vanquished the kingdom of Satan, and at the end of time will completely destroy it, and restore creation to its original happy state.

After the work of Redemption had been completed the third Divine Person, Who had once moved over the waters, and breathed life and fertility into the earth, came down upon the earth on Pentecost Day, and now hovers over the work reestablished by the Saviour. The Holy Spirit, Who once spoke through the mouths of the prophets, speaks now through the Church, and to her communicates everything which our divine Saviour taught. The Holy Ghost works through the sacraments, sanctifies men, enlightens their understanding, and moves their will to live according to the commandments of the Saviour; He is the cause of sanctity and of the Christian virtues, and thus He imparts to the new order life, activity and wondrous growth.

For this reason, my beloved, we see that everything is blessed in the name of the Most Holy Trinity. From the time when the Incarnate Son of God gave the commission to His apostles: "Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28, 19), Holy Church has never ceased baptizing in the name of the Blessed Trinity. In the name of the Blessed Trinity men receive the grace of confirmation, and the forgiveness of their sins. If they

receive Holy Communion, Extreme Unction; if some are married, others ordained to the priesthood, everything is done in the name of the Most Holy Trinity. If we receive a blessing, if we begin, and finish our prayers, we do so in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

But not only man, but even inanimate creatures are blessed in the name and with the sign of the Most Holy Trinity. From one end of the world to the other you see water, fire, earth, salt, fruits, foodstuffs, everything, blessed by the sign of the Cross, purified from the curse of sin, with which creation itself is heavily laden. The sign of the Cross impresses everything with the seal of its origin, the seal of the Most Holy Trinity. For the creatures, too, by the sins of men have fallen under the influence of Satan, and sigh after their redemption, as St. Paul affirms. Therefore through the sign of the Cross do they also profit, in as much, as they are sanctified by the name of the Most Holy Trinity

But not only man, not only irrational creatures are sanctified by this name, but even time itself is thus sanctified. There is not a day in the year, not an hour of the day, nor a minute in the hour, when the prayer of praise: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," is not uttered. Yes, all festivals of the year, what are they but a part of a universal and eternal festival of the Most Blessed Trinity, wherein now God the Father is glorified, now the Son, now the Holy Ghost, now the Triune God in His saints.

3. Therefore, my beloved, as the creation of man shows us the three Divine Persons making man according to their own image and likeness, so does the Redemption exhibit Them to us engaged in reestablishing this likeness deformed by sin, the Father namely, by preparing for the coming of His Son, the Son by taking sin upon Himself, and thereby reestablishing amicable relations between God and man, and the Holy Ghost by making grace and salvation continuous for all time. Therefore is this article of faith of such immeasurable importance for the whole world; it is the life of the nations. Whence are the customs, the humane laws, the higher knowledge of religious truths, the adjustments that changed the face of the world, that abolished slavery, human sacrifice, and the cruelties of paganism? Whence, but from men's faith in the Holy Trinity? Whence come the sublime virtues of men, their self-sacrifice, their works of mercy, their care of the sick, of orphans, of those suffering from contagious diseases — things unknown to the pagan world — whence do they come but from this faith? Yes, it is this faith which shows us God in His own sublime greatness, and in His admirable love for man. It is this faith which teaches men really to know themselves, which discloses to them the past, present and future, and unites them as creatures made to the very image and likeness of the Triune God, in most intimate fellowship. At the Last Supper Christ prayed: "Holy Father, keep them in thy name whom thou hast given me; that they may be one, as we also are one" (John 17, 11). What a sublime doctrine!

With that same love and with that same unity which He reveals to us as existing between the Persons of the Most Blessed Trinity, should men, as creatures made to the image and likeness of God, be united amongst themselves, with Christ, and through Him to God. If all, or at least Christians, would realize in their lives the wish of our Saviour expressed in these words, how happy and how glorious would not this world be!

There remains still to be discussed the meaning of the Trinity for each one of us. We saw that creatures bear within themselves traces of the perfections of God, that man is, moreover, made to the very image and likeness of God. But where is this likeness? It cannot be in the body, for God has no body. It must therefore be in the soul. God is a Spirit; the soul also is a spirit. God has the most perfect understanding and will; the soul also has understanding and will. God is eternal, and has therefore no beginning and no end; the soul has, indeed, a beginning, but no end, and will live forever. God's Substance is indivisible and simple; and the substance of the soul is likewise indivisible and simple. God is the highest bliss, and the soul has only one desire, a longing after happiness. You see, therefore, how the soul is truly made to the image and likeness of God. It has existence, the power of knowing and loving. Like the Father it has being; like the Son, knowledge; and like the Holy Ghost, love. If the heavenly Father did not constantly preserve man in existence, the body would dissolve, the soul would be separated from the body and

perish. Our continued corporal and spiritual existence is, therefore, nothing but the intimate union of our being with the omnipotence of God, which is the support of body and soul. St. Paul says: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17, 28).

4. But if the individual man is abandoned by the Word of God, the Son, he is deprived of all true wisdom, knowledge, and science. As the death of the body plainly shows us what we are, and what man might be without the aid of the heavenly Father, so too, the world with its idolatry has shown us into what an abyss of ignorance and infidelity man sinks, if abandoned by the wisdom of God, by the Son. Before Christ there was not, with the exception of the Jewish people, a single nation that acknowledged the true God, and even to-day wherever men do not believe in the Son of God we find the most absolute ignorance of the holiest and most necessary truths, and, consequently the greatest errors and blindness. Yes, thanks to the Saviour, as there is a sun for the material world, so also is there a sun for the world of spirit, and this is the Son of God of Whom it is said: "He is the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world" (John 1, 9). Therefore, because our soul without the Word of God, is deprived of light and truth, it is only through our union with the Second Divine Person, the Son of God, that we have true understanding, knowledge and science, for the Son of God preserves these as the Father preserves us in existence.

But, my beloved, let us consider man without the third Divine Person, without the Holy Ghost, the eternal Love of God. If the Holy Spirit does not reign in the will, the will becomes the sport of the passions, just as the body without the Father becomes the prey of death, and the understanding, without the Son, becomes the prey of error and infidelity. Think of the man in whom the Holy Ghost, or the eternal Love of God no longer dwells! He has no rest; nothing can satisfy him. He seeks to obtain happiness in creatures, but they cannot silence the longing within him. Wonderful is this trait of the soul. It compelled the saints to unite themselves ever more closely to God through love,—to draw nearer and nearer to Him. It drives the sinner, as it were, to surrender himself to luxury, to vice, or even to take his own life. Why therefore does a single mortal sin destroy the divine life in man? Because it banishes the Holy Ghost, and thereby destroys the Lord of love. The nobler inclinations of the soul inspired by the Holy Ghost disappear, and a strange spirit takes possession. The soul seems to live, but is dead, just as the body without the Father is dead, and the understanding without the Son falls into error and infidelity.

From this you see, my beloved, the sublime meaning of the Holy Trinity for the individual man. The words: "Let us make man to our own image and likeness," are no idle words. "What is the true life?" asks St. Augustine. And he himself makes answer: "When the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are in us." If man were abandoned by the Father he

would cease to be; were he abandoned by the Son his understanding would be deprived of divine enlightenment; were he abandoned by the Holy Ghost he would lose divine love. But if man loses the Holy Trinity by infidelity or sin, what is the result? My beloved, you see the consequences every day. Another and a terrible trinity enters the soul, concupiscence of the eyes, concupiscence of the flesh, and pride of life. This trinity can be conquered only by the three divine virtues, faith, hope and charity. Death, blindness, vice, that is the lot of man once he is separated from the One Triune God. And if God the Father continues to preserve such a man in life and bodily existence, He does so in order that he may either return through faith, hope, charity, penance and contrition, to the Son and the Holy Ghost, or do eternal penance in Hell for his defection from God.

May you, therefore, children made to the image of God Himself, offer yourselves as a sacrifice to Him. Offer your existence to the Father Who preserves it, in your obedience to Him; to the Son, your understanding which He enlightens; and to the Holy Ghost, your faith, which He prompts through love. Thus does God the Father communicate to us on earth His mercy, the Son His redemption, and the Holy Ghost His grace; but in Heaven, eternal joy, eternal redemption, eternal bliss. Amen.

SERMON IX

THE MYSTERY OF THE BLESSED TRINITY IS THE CAUSE OF OUR ETERNAL SALVATION, AND OUR COMFORT ON EARTH

“Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”
— MATT. 28, 19.

The Catholic Church celebrates to-day the Feast of the Most Blessed Trinity (Whose glory the Heavens proclaim, and bow in reverence before it.) The feast is the keystone of all great festivals which we have celebrated since Easter, in order to give to the Most Holy Trinity our deepest thanks for the great benefits of creation, redemption and sanctification.

The whole Christian world emulates us to-day in this thanksgiving, and throughout the whole world the great and the small praise the most holy Triune God, and the Christian congregation sings His praises; “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Sabbath, Heaven and earth are full of His glory”; and: “Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.” But the mystery of the Blessed Trinity is truly a great, a wonderful mystery; God, one in Substance and Nature, but three in Person, one God in three Divine Persons. It is the greatest of all revealed mysteries. One can rightly say that the child knows as much about it almost as the adult, the ignorant almost

as much as the most learned doctors of the Church. And why? Because the science of Christianity does not consist entirely in comprehension, but in faith. What God says is true, and while this mystery revealed to us by Him is unintelligible to us, still it is most credible, for incomprehensibility is an attribute of God. If therefore there be men who assert that they comprehend and understand the essence of God, let them reflect that they do not fully understand the smallest drop of water in the vast ocean. Is it not true that many of the works of God are inexplicable and inconceivable to us, and should not God Himself be immeasurably more incomprehensible than His works? Who can tell us of what the sun is made, or of the internal composition of the moon and the stars? And why are they just so, and not otherwise, and why do they move just so and not otherwise? What are the heavens, and how far do they extend? And to consider this earth of ours, who will give us a clear explanation of how the soul is united to the body of man? Who will explain for us the life that exists in the smallest insect, which we can scarcely see with the unaided eye, or tell us why the same seed bears always the same leaves, color, blossoms and fruit? For that it is so we all know, and not otherwise. Who will make clear to us how all this takes place, and do it in such clear words that no objection can be raised to the explanation? Yes, the smallest insect, the smallest flower, is for man an incomprehensible world, and yet puny man complains that God, the Creator of all these things, is incomprehensible! For this reason, my be-

loved, it is sufficient for us to know that God has revealed this mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity. The time will come when God will permit us to see Him face to face, and then we shall know this mystery. Our Divine Saviour revealed it in to-day's gospel, and commanded the Apostles to baptize all who believed in it. We, too, have been baptized in the faith in the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, because this faith is the cause of salvation in Heaven, and our comfort on earth. This is the import of my words, and the meditation on to-day's gospel.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. There is in our holy religion, my beloved, a most peculiar phenomenon which you have possibly not observed. When we were first instructed, and the fundamental truths of Christian doctrine imparted to us, how did they begin? Precisely with the most difficult and incomprehensible mystery. In human science we begin with the easiest and the simplest, reading with the alphabet, writing with lines, and counting with small numbers, and not less in the mechanical or artistic works is the same method pursued, always working from the easiest to the most difficult. It is not so with faith. It begins with the most important article of faith, with the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Before the child can hardly speak, its mother teaches it that there is one God in three Divine Persons, the Father, Who created it, the Son Who redeemed it, and the Holy Ghost, Who sanctified it. She directs the hand of the child in order that it may openly pro-

fess faith by means of the sign of the Cross, signing itself on forehead, mouth and breast. And why? Because faith in the Most Holy Trinity is the foundation stone of our hope, the source of all our merits, the beginning of our sanctification, the root of our justification, in a word, the cause of our salvation. It is, as it were, the mustard seed, of which the Saviour speaks in the Gospel, that was sown in our hearts, and now takes root and spreads out its branches towards Heaven, and should bring forth fruit which we are called upon partly to gather on earth, but entirely in Heaven.

This is the reason why the words, with which we express our faith: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," are so venerable in our religion. In this and in no other Name we receive according to the ordinance of Jesus Christ the holy sacraments. If we were born again, and sanctified in Baptism, it took place in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. If we were strengthened in grace in Confirmation, it was in this Name; and in this Name our sins are forgiven, and in no other Name are the other sacraments administered. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost do we receive the episcopal or priestly blessing, for there is no grace of the sacraments, no justification, no sanctification, no blessing, except in this Name. Faith therefore in the Most Holy Trinity is the reason of our salvation.

Who does not know that Christians have the holy custom of beginning all their works with the profession

of their faith in the Most Holy Trinity, by making the sign of the Cross and saying, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,"— who does not know that this venerable custom comes from the Apostles, has been practised during all Christian times and will be until the end of time? In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost the Christian rises in the morning, and with the same Name he consecrates his daily labor to the holy Triune God; in this Name he sits down to table and arises therefrom, and in no other name he lays himself down to rest at night, for in this Name we can offer to God all our works, our speech, in a word, everything that we do, and it will become meritorious for us, and will be gathered into the treasury of Heaven for us. And why? Because the faith in the Most Holy Trinity is the cause of our salvation.

All the prayers, all the customs of the Catholic Church begin in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; all her petitions end with the plea to the three Divine Persons. The priest in the breviary must repeat every day a hundred times: "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost"; frequently the faithful at divine service, in the rosary, and in other prayers pronounce this doxology, because we can say nothing more agreeable to God, and we should long for nothing more than that God should be glorified in Heaven and on earth. If we would always pray with devotion and recollection, as we should, what would these brief and simple words not become for us? Surely a rich source of divine

grace and sanctification, of merit and divine help! O, the names which it embraces, are terrible names for the enemies of God, but for the Christians most amiable names, the names of salvation and suited to awaken confidence and hope and love in them.

When we find ourselves upon our death-bed, and the priest recommends the soul in its death struggle to God, what name does he call upon, in order that his prayer may be more effective? The name of the most holy Triune God. He says: "Go forth, O Christian soul, in the Name of the Father Who created thee, in the Name of the Son Who redeemed thee, and in the Name of the Holy Ghost Who has sanctified thee," names surely powerful enough to banish the wicked enemy who, according to the testimony of the Apostle St. John, precisely in this moment makes his greatest efforts to bewilder the soul, to plunge it into despair or infidelity. When the priest then continues to recommend the soul to God what reasons does he offer in order to move God to favor this departing soul with His mercy? Perhaps you have not as yet observed it, and yet his words are capable of awakening your full confidence and of inspiring you with new zeal for the veneration of the Most Holy Trinity. The priest prays: "Although this soul has sinned, yet it has never denied the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, but has believed and has been filled with zeal for the glory of God, and has faithfully adored God Who made all things." He says, as it were: "O Lord, it is true, I call upon Thy mildness for a sinner. I was no exception to human frailty, and the weight of

my weakness often brought me to fall, but remember, O God, that no matter how often I may have sinned, nevertheless I confessed Thy Most Holy Trinity. Thou knowest that I showed zeal for Thee, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and exhibited zeal in venerating Thee and in sorrow for my sins." What else follows from this but that the faith in the Most Holy Trinity is the cause of our salvation?

2. But this same faith is also the cause of our comfort on earth. Christ says: "My Father is also your Father." But if God is our Father, we are His children. But if we are His children, what can we still be in need of? He loves all without regard of persons, the peasant in his hut, and the emperor in his palace, the beggar and the rich man, and the lowliest maid not less than the richest princess. He does nothing, He demands nothing from us, except what makes for our happiness here and in eternity. This faith, this childlike confidence in such a Father is for us the greatest consolation. And if we meet with much suffering we know that God directs all things for the best, for those whom He loves. But without this faith there remains to man nothing but misfortune, nothing but despair, grief, and not infrequently suicide.

If the husbandman, the mechanic, or the citizen performs his daily tasks with confidence in God, and recommends his work to God; if he as master gives to his apprentice a good example, if as father he shows good example to his children, as husband to his wife, encourages them to lead a Christian life knowing that

this is the will of his Heavenly Father, how happy will he not be through such a faith! Should he be even visited by misfortune, should he give the last piece of bread to his children, he will not lose confidence, for he knows that his and his children's Father is immeasurably rich, and that where the need is the greatest, His help is the nearest.

How many poor mothers, how many poor widows, how many abandoned orphans struggle with misery, with adversity and need, but still have consolation which sustains them! God is the Father of widows and orphans; He listens to the cries of the poor, and He, who hears the cry of the young raven and gives it food in good season, He, without whose knowledge not even a sparrow falls to the ground, nor a hair from the head, could He alone forget them? God Himself asks: "Can a mother forget her child? And even if she could I cannot forget it." Therefore faith in God the Father is our greatest comfort.

Should we not also say the same of the faith in the Son? Why did He come down from Heaven? In order to save us sinners, as shepherd to seek what was lost, as physician to heal what was sick, as teacher to instruct the ignorant. But did He abandon us by His Ascension into Heaven? "Behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." When man has lost everything, and when misfortune after misfortune overtakes him, and he stands alone, abandoned and without a friend to whom he can tell his grief, then it is that the teachings of Jesus Christ

console him; for he has still a Friend Who will never abandon him, and this Friend is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He dwells in the tabernacle in the Blessed Sacrament, and calls to us: "Come to me all ye who labor and are heavily laden and I will refresh you." There the Christian can knock, there weep, there pray, open his heart and tell his misery to his Saviour. Tell me, my beloved, was there ever anyone who went to Him with confidence, with faith, and returned unconsolated, or without help? When death comes, and we are lying on our bed without hope of recovery, and the memory of many sins committed, the anxiety before death, the fear of the Judge, the terror of damnation forces the cold sweat from our brow, and the heart in its torture almost bursts its bonds, what consolation remains to us then? Perhaps money, or mighty friends, or high titles? Nothing of all these, nothing indeed but the picture of the Crucified is our only consolation. Behold thou hast fear and anxiety, and perhaps justly so, but who is this one on the Cross? The Son of God! Why did He die on the Cross? In order that by His death He might redeem sinners. Therefore Christ also died for thee; why dost thou despair, why dost thou fear; what consolation does this not afford the dying man? Faith, therefore, in the Son of God is our greatest consolation on earth.

3. Is the faith in the Holy Ghost something different from this faith in the Son? He is called even by Christ Himself, "Our Comforter." This is, there-

fore, as it were, His work. He strengthens and consoles particularly the Christians, inspires them with patience and constancy, as we see in the examples of the martyrs most marvelously, and as we have the opportunity of seeing every day in the sick, the poor and the suffering. Holy, Holy, Holy is therefore the Triune God. Faith, living, active faith in Him is the cause of our eternal salvation, and our consolation on earth. Should it be possible, my beloved, that such a sublime mystery which is not only for the individual, but for everyone, the source of all salvation and of every consolation — should it not be possible for it to unite the souls of all into one communion? Should not this faith in the Most Holy Trinity be the motive to create mutual peace, harmony and love among men? How beautifully St. Paul admonishes the faithful at Ephesus: “I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called, with all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity. Careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” And what reason does the Apostle assign for so doing? “One body and one Spirit; as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all” (Eph. 4, 1-6). Are we not all called to the same hope, have we not all one Lord, and in this Lord do we not all recognize the Father, Whose children we are, and the Son Whose brethren we are, and the Holy Ghost, Who lives in us with His grace and whose temples we are? We are all baptized in the name of the Father

and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. So, as we have one hope, one faith, one baptism and one Lord, so should there be also amongst us and among all Christians the same bond of love, of harmony and of peace. You know how happy a family is, a parish or congregation, a city, a country, where all the members live together in peace and harmony! There is quiet and sociability, confidence and well-being; there dwells the blessing of God, and there are also the honor and the grace of God. And yet, my beloved, how much strife and hatred, and envy and anger do we not find in families, in parishes, congregations, in cities and in countries? Is then God divided, is the hope different, is our calling self-contradictory, here one baptism, there another? Even Christ admonished the Apostles and all the faithful to mutual love and harmony, as the Father loves the Son, and the Son the Father, and the Father and the Son love the Holy Ghost. Our Saviour in His last prayer on the day of the institution of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, and of His bitter Passion, thus prayed: "Holy Father, keep them in thy name, whom thou hast given to me, in order that they may be one as we are one."

The faith in the Most Holy Trinity must be the most intimate bond that unites the Christians on earth into one beautiful whole, into one body and one soul. Then they are true likenesses of God, children of the Father, brothers of Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost and heirs of Heaven. And in order that we may also be all this, and remain so, frequently think of the words of St. Paul: "I beseech you that you walk

worthy of the vocation in which you have been called, with all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity. Careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Amen.

SERMON X

RELIGION

“By thy ordinance, O God, the day goeth on; for all things serve thee.”—Ps. 118, 91.

God is, God reigns. The soul of man is immortal, made to the image and likeness of God. Is there not then some bond, some relation, some tie between God and man? Man is by his own proper nature religious, for were he not to admit the existence of a Supreme Cause of all things, he would be a being devoid of understanding. If the eye were not sunlike how could it behold the light? If the soul were not Godlike why should it ever yearn for God, seeking Him behind all that it follows and loves? Our highest aspirations reveal our deepest wants. Religion then is the greatest and holiest within us.

The great St. Augustine wrote: “O God, Thou hast made us for Thyself and our heart is disquieted until it repose in Thee.” But his words are forgotten, and God and religion are banished from the minds of many. But since God is and reigns and since the soul of man is immortal, I put the question: Do there not follow for us from these truths undeniable and solemn duties, the fulfillment of which must needs be considered an essential element in our rational life? In

other words is not religion in man an absolute duty, a rational necessity from which there is no escape without a denial of our being and its most imperious demands?

1. In the first place then, what is religion? Religion, from the Latin word "religare," whose primary meaning is the uniting of one to the other, expresses the duty of man towards God and God's condescension towards man, in return for duties fulfilled. It is the mystic and enduring link between God and man, bringing upward man's sighings, and bringing downward God's favors, lifting the creature into the Creator's own atmosphere of strength and peace. Religion is the law of morality, it is the fire of worship, the creature's instinctive gratitude and adoration towards his Creator.

This is religion. The question is then, whether or no it be possible to live without all this, without religion. But the inmost voice of the soul distinctly answers no, never.

Religion is co-extensive with human thought and history. He resists his own nature who lives without religion. Religion is an inherent tendency of the human soul. An ancient philosopher defines man, "A religious animal," and he is right. Man is as naturally a religious as he is a loving and social being. Before and without thought he loves those near and necessary to him and he seeks the companionship of his fellows. And in the same manner does man reach out to a mysterious being, superior to his surroundings, whom he invokes, and upon whom he leans, amid the

sense of his own insufficiency. Does he exist to whom times did not come when he felt constrained to adore and pray? Irreligious and scoffing he may have been in cabinet or club-room; alone amid the vast forest or in the presence of the ocean's mighty billows, he involuntarily sends forth his soul to meet the power that rules where human force and talent is of no more avail than the sands on the foam-washed beach. Proud and self-confident when all things go merrily with him, affronted by an overwhelming danger, he calls aloud for help and his lips form an unusual sound—the name of God. The child upon whose brow dawn the early rays of reason, passes with simplest ease, and with heartfelt joyousness from the recognition of the visible father guiding his footsteps to that of the Invisible One directing earth and sky. The religious tendency of man's nature is clearly portrayed in the following lines of Addison:

“It must be so, Plato, thou reason'st well;
Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This longing after immortality?
Or whence this secret dread and inward horror
Of falling into naught? Why shrinks the soul
Back on herself and startles at destruction?
'Tis the Divinity that stirs within us;
'Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter
And intimates eternity to man.”

2. How deeply rooted in human nature and how ineradicable this religious tendency and instinct is, is proved by the universality of positive religious acts among men through all time and space. Seek where you may, you will never succeed in meeting a people

devoid of faith, worship, morality. You will find some isolated, perverted creature, who has flung from his lips the horrible blasphemy that between earth and Heaven there is no tie, no bond whatsoever, but this dire, this calamitous cry is overcome by heavenward strains of the universal hymn of praise and benediction.

The Creator of man has put upon him the impress of the great laws to which he bound him, so that he should turn within his moral orbit with the same innate gracefulness, as the planets revolve within their physical orbits, and the finding out of the impress is the finding out of the law, and of the direction which the law commands. For this whole universe is constructed in magnificent order, one contrivance calling for some other, and this other sure to be near a tendency suggesting an objective goal and the goal sure to be in existence, and so when nature impels to religion, religion is the law, and religion exists in all that the word implies. (The sentiment of religion in man, subjective religion, as it is called, establishes according to the law of analogy, objective religion, God, and God demanding our worship and our prayers and hearkening to them.) The universality of religion, as I have already said, puts beyond all cavil the fact of the religious tendency of human nature, and confirms most victoriously the conclusions it suggests. This universality, too, is an evidence that the intellect of the human race approves the lessons which the instinct teaches. The verdict of mankind upon a matter so vital to its interests as religion — where passion is

opposed — cannot be easily set aside. Since therefore, religion interpenetrates all thought, all love and aspiration, is part of all human nobleness and excellence, of all struggles of truth and justice, of all hope in the presence of death, to scoff at it in its highest form with shameless assertion, is to sin, not only against the Creator, but against human nature itself.

3. The idea of an Intelligent Cause is an element of all thinking, and hence to be rational is to believe in God. We cannot think that God is, without perceiving our dependence on Him; and this is the root and origin of all religion. Religion, therefore, is the necessary consequence of the idea of God, which is impressed upon the mind by the law of nature itself; God is my Maker, I am His creature. Therefore must I adore and worship Him. It is my imperious duty to confess my dependency, to acknowledge His proprietorship of my whole being. I must proclaim the truth. I must look back to the origin and source of my life and publish my allegiance. "Religion," said the pagan Cicero, "is justice towards the gods." "If I am your Father," said Jehovah, through the prophet, "where is my honor?" The child bows before the parent, the citizen before the power of the state; shall not the creature bow before the Creator? The idea of God is impressed upon the mind of man by the law of nature itself; religion, therefore, is the law both of his thinking and acting. He can no more escape from it, than from God's presence, and the more truly human he is, the more he is under the control of reason and conscience, the more completely does he realize that

religion is the very soul of his existence. The neglect of divine worship is practical atheism; it is the setting aside of God and the implied substitution of self in God's stead. Hence irreligion is *the* capital sin, *the* great iniquity; for it denies the chief, the first duty and thereby cuts off the anchorage of all duties. Simple politeness dictates marks of deference before merit, position, superiority, and he who gives them not, is ranked as ignorant, as barbarous, in mind and demeanor, and yet there are men proud of their intellect, of their culture who have no act of respect for the Lord of the universe, for Him, from Whom they hold whatever they have, whatever they are. There are men — strangest of mysteries — who deem themselves debased if they bend the knee before the Infinite God. They blush with shame if their companions accuse them of praying to God. O men, where is your reason? Where is your sense of dignity? Where is your sense of righteousness and justice? The wild Indian saluting at daybreak the Great Spirit, the effulgence of whose throne is mirrored to him in the rays of the monarch of the skies; the unschooled Arab, dismounting from his desert steed at the noon hour to pray to Allah, is mountain high in excellence and glory of manhood, above the polished courtier, the famed philosopher whose eyes are never lifted upward, who know the dark ground trodden by their feet, and compel their soul to look away from the highest regions of the Deity to which they tend by all the native forces of their faculties.

4. As best they may, all creatures animate and in-

animate, confess God's power and praise His munificence. Through ages they obey His laws, and in the wonders of their harmonies show forth His infinite perfections. The whole universe is one imposing temple, which the Eternal has built in His own honor, speaking forth His thought and love, from the altars of which ascends the unceasing incense of adoration. "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands." Give speech to stars in limitless yonder space, to the trees of the forest, to the birds of the air, to the lions of the desert; they would break forth in conscious adoration of the power that made them, that preserves them, that endows them. But man who alone knows and speaks is silent. He is silent when he should speak for himself and for all nature, of which, as its king, he is the constituted spokesman and representative. For this end did God bestow upon man the high faculty of reading nature, penetrating step by step into the most hidden secrets, that everywhere he might see the hand of the Creator, and for all the Creator's wonderful works, adore Him and praise Him, repeating in transports of joy and admiration: "To him who sits on the throne, be blessing and honor, be glory and power, through endless ages."

God has no need of our homage. He is sovereignly independent and sovereignly self-sufficing, yet, He commands us to adore Him and He cannot but so command us. He was free to create us. Once we are created, He is not free to dispense us from the obligations of religion towards Him. For He is —

as all His works proclaim — the God of order and justice, and to permit man to depart from duty would be in the moral order, as if He permitted the sun to veil its face in darkness, and the planets to turn in space outside their orbits, plunging the universe into chaos and death. Nor are we allowed to imagine that God is so immensely removed from us, we being but as the spray of the ocean billows, being most insignificant in the boundless mass of created things, that the chasm between us and Him is unbridgeable and that it were folly for us to address Him. Stupid refuge of irreligion! God stooped to create the tiny violet, will He not stoop to admire His work, which tells of infinite power in creating and of unspeakable wisdom in fashioning? He stoops to demand the fulfillment of His laws in the ant, will He not demand the fulfillment of His laws in man who, because of the reason in him, reflecting in his faculties the Increate Essence itself, is of all visible beings the highest and most perfect, one conscious word of adoration from him giving more glory to God than the perennial movements of the giant planets of all the heavens!

5. Adoration is the act of intellect in man. What of the heart of man before Almighty God? We pardon with difficulty the defects of heart. We exact love and gratitude, where the titles are both unquestioned. The child with no heart response to father and mother is despised. The recipient of favors who habitually ignores the benefactor, or dishonors him by contemptuous bearing, is made an outcast among his fellows. The man devoid of love and gratitude, human

in name, is inhuman in fact. The speechless animal rebukes him for it is, in its manner, loving and grateful. Is not God most lovable? Does not all beauty in the universe emanate from Him as the light from the sun? Do not the rays with which nature sparkles tell of the infinite and all perfect beauty of Him who is the Cause of all causes and of all effects? God is the Author of all good, our Sovereign Benefactor. He is our Father, our Friend, as no other being is or can be. The faculties of soul, the senses of body, life itself, the gifts from other creatures — all things are His favors to us — tokens and pledges of His love. “In Him we live, move and have our being.” O God so loving and so lovable, how comes it that Thy intelligent creatures who, alone in the universe, can love and be grateful, forget Thee, pass Thee aside, as if Thou hadst no claim upon them? We are busy in a thousand civilities to one another, in a thousand marks of regard and affection to friends and well wishers, but for God we have no words of thanks, no time to address Him.

It is a sight most sickening to behold the world as it comes before observation. Tens of thousands do not speak to or think of God; His sovereignty over us, His claims upon us are utterly ignored. This is the supreme evil of the day — it is not positive atheism or the positive rejection of God’s claims — things impossible in men who think — that afflicts our time; thoughtlessness is our misfortune, thoughtlessness as to God whom we pass over in order to give attention to other things — preferring the creature to the Crea-

tor, the accident to the substantial, the transient to the eternal.

6. Adoration from the mind, and love from the heart imply the obedience of man to all laws which the Creator has imposed upon him. I pass to the fourth chief act of religion, prayer or petition. We are dependent beings, by the very fact that we are creatures, nor did we receive in our creation the forces and powers sufficient of themselves to supply all our needs. We realize at every step our helplessness, we are compelled to borrow aid from our fellowmen and we must petition for it before we do borrow. Prayer, I take it to mean petition, is the consequence of helplessness. We have recourse to it instinctively. A child in the cradle extends piteously its hands to its mother; the poor offer a request for help; the friend petitions for favor from friend. We are compelled to look beyond our fellowmen. The heart's sores are innumerable, in which human help is of no avail, when the whispering of the most devoted and the most powerful is a confession of their own helplessness, the offering of mere sympathy, the will to suffer with us.

Clouds thicken over the mind, which no ray of human light penetrates, which no human hand has cunning to uplift. Amid the fierce wars which the passions wage against us in the very sanctuary of our souls, we are affrighted by our weakness, and defeat and death are certain, if no ally appears on the field. Whence may we expect Him? Not from the surrounding world, weak as ourselves, and from its own maladies breathing into our being corruption.

Whence? O God, Who hath commanded me to be pure and upright, Thou wilt not turn away Thy face from me! The natural world yields to-day to our sway, and tomorrow laughs us to scorn, making less of us than the meadow grass which we trample under foot. We are weak and helpless, and the creatures of an all wise and all good Creator. What to conclude but that the forces which are not innate in us are to be received as we need them? God is all powerful to help us and loving to grant our requests.

Prayer has in all ages gone upward from the nations of the earth; incense from the altars of impetration has never lost its fragrance, "Nor are we allowed to suppose," writes the Roman philosopher Seneca, "that all mankind should have been so mistaken as to invoke everywhere the Deity, if they had not the certainty that those who pray receive in opportune times great benefits of heaven." Whenever in His revelation, God deigned to speak to man, He proclaimed the duty and the need and the reward of prayer. The Gospel of Jesus speaks to us, "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. Amen, amen, I say to you, whatsoever you ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you."

Prayer is the highest act of intellect of man. The body feels, the heart desires, the will resolves, the mind thinks; but prayer soars beyond all corporal sensations, all the affections of the heart, all desires of the will, all thoughts of the mind, embracing as it does the whole man. In prayer all powers of the

soul unite, all fountains of the inner life well forth and overflow. Thus religion is the most universal and efficient means of civilization and by equally developing mind, heart and will, religion alone educates the whole man. Without prayer, a man cannot be said to live, he simply vegetates. "He who prays ill, lives ill." The soul may be adorned with the richest gifts, yet without prayer it is like a face bereft of the organs of sight.

The stone which has no power of self movement ranks lower than the plant; the plant which has no sensation is inferior to the animal; the animal which does not think is lower in the scale of creation than man; so the man who does not pray is of a lower order than he who does; for prayer is the highest grade to which, in its upward flight, the created mind can attain. This act alone raises man towards God, and launches him on the current of the eternal stream; indeed it is true to say that man feels, thinks, and exists, only in order to pray, to serve God by religion.

7. Pay no attention to the oft-repeated assertion that as God in the altitude of His infinite perfections is unchangeable, and His decrees unalterable, prayer must needs be fruitless. God, we are told by some enemies of prayer, has established His laws, and disposed His secondary causes by means of which all things move in order and harmony; to ask Him to change those laws, to interfere with those causes, is to ask that He be as a creature, a changeling, putting Himself in His government in contradiction with Himself, and casting the universe into chaotic confusion. We reply, God's

decrees formed in the Divine Mind from all eternity included prayer as secondary cause in the moral order no less than the forces of matter as secondary causes in the physical order. All things have been foreseen by Him, the chirping of the birdling in its nest, and the intelligent aspiration of the human suppliant, and an answer has been provided for one as for the other. When we pray it is not to alter God's purposes, but to ask that, which in accordance with God's purposes, is to happen through our prayers. Irreligion invokes the laws of the universe; it ignores the holiest and most divine of those laws—the law of prayer, which through God's Providence fills an immense space in the harmony of the creation.

Nor is the suspension of law the contradiction or the annihilation of this law: it results from bringing into play a new force—God's will, immediately or mediately, and the collocation of new energies, in which the yielding of one to another forever makes for order and beauty. Nor, again, is there possibility from the introduction of new energies in response to prayer, that the coming and going of things He created be so uncertain as to cast us into fear and anxiety. Extraordinary happenings do not disturb the ordinary happenings, and God, the all Supreme Wisdom, can well work His wonders, so as to maintain His creation in the needed place and harmony.

God's love rules in His creation. Singular respect for the Divine attributes, which makes the world, once created, practically independent of its Creator. And singular the respect for the physical order of the

universe which blots out, or does not permit to exist, the moral or spiritual order. Strange universe would irreligion give us, miseries and suffering upon the earth, our souls in spite of themselves pouring upward their laments and their petitions, over them a sky of brass, impenetrable to sight or love, and above all a God, deaf to the voice of His children, powerless by His own decrees to send one throb of joy to a broken heart, one ray of light to a darkened spirit, to wipe off one tear from the eyelid of suffering. This is, assuredly, not the God which His world reveals to us, in which it is the law that beings forever help one another, and in which prayers and answers to prayers forever occurring never break, but ever make sweeter the order through which life for His creatures is possible. This is, assuredly, not the world which the Divine Teacher Jesus, the Son of God, opened unto our souls. God is love, and no world is His which is not suffused and penetrated to the very core with love, and a world of divine love is a world of prayer and religion.

God grants exceptional mercy, when gifts already accorded in His ordinary providence have been fully and properly used. "Help thyself and God will help thee," is the just and wise law of prayer. Undoubtedly, too, when men pray ignorantly or pray without due piety, they will not be heard. St. James reminds us that if our petitions are not rewarded it is because they are not rightly offered, and the Lord Himself tells us that no father presents a stone to the child who clamors for bread, meaning that we often imagine

to be profitable to us what would indeed be hurtful, and that therefore our prayers could not be answered by a merciful God as we in our blindness demand. The true prayer unlocks the treasury of divine love and divine favor, and humanity which has never been without prayer, has never been without the sunshine of God's smile resting upon the souls that do pray, prompting them to pray that they, too, be saved. Let the children of prayer of all ages give testimony. They will confirm my words, and they merit that we believe them, for they practise in their lives perfumed with the incense of prayer, the purest and highest virtues of humanity. Pray yourselves and you, too, will be like my witness. Religion uplifts the soul. Adoration, love, obedience, petition — this is religion. Can there be ought more reasonable? Does he live out his life as a man who neglects the practice of religion? The man has fallen from his high estate who is not religious. He is essentially a dependent being; he is by his nature ordered to be religious. The moment of his creation God said to him: "I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine," and the echo of those words forever afterwards pulsates in his ears. His free will allows him to stray off from religion, but then, he strays off from Him who is the Light and the Life, and his pathway is into night and death. Religion enthrones the soul on the celestial mountain-top which God's own face illumines, amid the atmosphere of truth and spiritual beauty and God-like strength, which is its native home, and on which putting on day by day the brightness of the eternal,

it transforms itself into His own image and likeness. Irreligion drags the soul downward, chains it to the earth, and feeds to it the husks of the earth, condemning it to be little better than the beasts of the field, even as the irreligious man toils, eats and never, pinion-borne, ascends to the sky. The penalty of irreligion even in time is awful; what shall it be in eternity! Amen.

SERMON XI

THE PROTOTYPES OF THE REDEEMER

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manner, spoke in times past to the fathers through the prophets, last of all, in these days hath spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world.”

—HEB. I, 1, 2.

In the course of our last meditation on religion, we saw that not only creation stands in a particular relation to God its Creator, but more especially man. His relation to God is regulated by religion, which is the living expression of his dependence upon God, of his gratitude and love, of his adoration and obedience. But since all men are constituted in this same relation to God, it follows that religion is an absolute necessity for each and every one in every position of life. It becomes a holy bond which not only unites men with God, their Last End, but unites them with one another to form one great family of God. But since mankind has been thoroughly corrupted by sin, and could not acquire the knowledge of the simplest and most natural truths of religion without aid, God took pity on the human race in a twofold manner.

God revealed Himself to man, and in the course of time chose one nation which He instructed in the fundamental truths of religion, which He constantly

taught through the mouth of His prophets, and through whom He influenced even the pagans. The second, and by far the more glorious manner whereby God took mercy on fallen man was the promise of a Redeemer, Who should take the sins of the world upon Himself, and destroy the kingdom of Satan and of Darkness. As the Divine Physician He would thereby heal the miseries of the world, and console afflicted humanity in its almost hopeless longing for salvation.

If we have seen, my beloved, the glorious wisdom and Providence of God, how in a particular manner He revealed Himself to the Jews in order to instruct them in the most essential truths, we shall be still more enlightened to-day with regard to the manner in which He frequently spoke to the Fathers, that is, how He gradually prepared mankind by prototypes and prophecies for the coming of the Redeemer, in order that men's longing might become greater, the deeper they should fall into the abyss of misery and suffering. We will therefore speak to-day of the prototypes of the Redeemer, of the persons and things that prefigured Him in the Old Law.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. By prototypes we understand those persons and things in the Old Testament by which the Person, the life and suffering of the Saviour, as well as the means of salvation, were previously and visibly represented. Although the Old Testament was only, as it were, the vestibule of Christianity, in which mankind was prepared for the coming of the Saviour,

nevertheless these types did not begin with the Old Testament, with the Jewish people, but two thousand years earlier, in Paradise. Taken together they give us a comprehensive view of the Redeemer as presented by God Himself, in the prophetic descriptions of His Person and life. The prototypes are older than the prophecies by which they are explained. But their complete explanation was given in the fullness of time, when Jesus Christ Himself appeared on earth, so that they become for us Christians who can compare the types with the reality an absolute proof. But since the Saviour Himself often appealed to these types in His discussions with the Jews, and St. Paul, especially in his letter to the Hebrews, does the same, we conclude that Almighty God intended them to be a preparation for the coming of the Saviour. We shall, therefore, consider the principal prototypes of our Redeemer, for to discuss all of them would be impossible.

Who was, then, the first type of the Redeemer? Adam, the father of the human race. God the Father knew from all eternity that His Divine Son would one day become man, and for this reason, in the creation of the first Adam, He had Jesus Christ in mind, Who should become the Second and Spiritual Father of the human race. St. Paul expressly says: "Adam, who is the form of Him who is to come." Wonderful! In the creation of everything else, Holy Scripture states after each thing was made: "God saw that it was good," only at the creation of the first Adam, we miss these words, but after four thousand years, when

Our Saviour Himself came, we hear these words: "This is my well-beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Here God saw for the first time that it was good.

The next type of the Redeemer is the innocent Abel, as the guilty Cain is a type of the Jewish people. Abel, the just, was hated by his brother Cain, because God was pleased with him and accepted his gifts; and Christ is the more hated by the Jews, His brethren according to the flesh, the more God looked upon Him with pleasure. Out on the open field, Cain shed the blood of the just Abel; outside the city the blood of Christ was shed. The blood of Abel cried to Heaven for vengeance against Cain, and the blood of Christ, shed indeed for the salvation of all, should, in accordance with their own demand, come down in vengeance upon His murderers and upon their children. Laden with the curse of God, the fratricide Cain wanders, a fugitive, banished from home; in like manner wanders the deicidal Jewish people over the face of the earth, scattered and dispersed. "And the Lord set a mark on Cain that whosoever found him should not kill him;" and although it was often persecuted and hated, the Jewish people has been marvelously preserved, and can be distinguished from all other people.

Who among you, my beloved, does not recognize in Noe and the Ark an evident type of the Saviour? Holy Scripture thus speaks of Noe: "This same shall comfort us from the works and labors of our hands on the earth, which the Lord hath cursed"

(Gen. 5, 29). Yes, Christ the Lord truly consoles mankind in its trials and difficulties, and changes the curse that rests upon it into a blessing. As the second and better Noe, He gathers His own into His Ark — into His Holy Church — and snatches them from the deluge of sin. Noe had only one Ark, and outside this Ark all the rest of mankind, even if they strove to save themselves in ships, were lost. Christ also has only one true Church; the sects do not constitute a church in the true sense of the word, nor do they offer salvation strictly considered. Noe saved his family by water and wood, and Christ saves His followers by the water of Baptism and by the wood of the Cross.

2. Melchisedech, in the time of Abraham, was a wonderful type of the Priesthood of Christ, of whom St. Paul speaks in the most sublime words in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews. Melchisedech means King of the Just, and Founder of Justice. Melchisedech was king of Salem, later Jerusalem, called the City of Peace, and therefore the expression, King of Peace. But who was the Prince of Peace if not Jesus Christ? Melchisedech appears very suddenly in the Holy Scriptures; we do not read whence he came, nor whither he went so suddenly, like an apparition from another world he appears on the scene. Christ comes forth from the bosom of eternity, and returns again. Melchisedech, upon his appearance in Holy Scripture, seems to have had one object, to offer bread and wine. Thus Jesus Christ likewise, at the Last Supper, offers bread and wine, and, under the same appearances, He continues

to offer Himself. For this reason King David, in the spirit of prophecy, and especially at a later time, St. Paul called Him a High Priest according to the order of Melchisedech.

But what other sacrifice will the coming High Priest and Redeemer make? Soon after the appearance of Melchisedech, God showed this new sacrifice in a new type and in a touching manner, namely, in Isaac. Isaac, the promised, the long desired, and the only heir of the aged Abraham, should, by order of God, be sacrificed by his father. Isaac willingly carried the sacrificial wood for himself on his shoulder, climbed Mt. Moria, and silently laid himself down on the sacrificial altar. True, he was saved by an angel, and a ram was sacrificed in his stead, but the day will come when the eternal Father will not spare His only begotten Son, but deliver Him up as a Sacrifice for the world. And truly, Christ, the Promised One, the Long-desired, the only begotten Son of God, carries the wood of the Cross on His shoulders, climbs Mt. Calvary, which according to an old tradition is the same Mt. Moria, and silently places Himself on the Cross as the altar on which He offers Himself as a Bloody Sacrifice for the salvation of the world.

Even the more minute circumstances of this Sacrifice, God soon showed even with greater clearness in the person of the blessed Joseph, who was deemed more worthy than the other saints of God to become a type of the Saviour. Joseph was the beloved son of his father Jacob, and for this reason he was an object of hate to his brothers, and was persecuted by them.

When Jacob sent Joseph to his brothers, they robbed him of his clothing and sold him as a servant for twenty pieces of silver to merchants, who took him to Egypt. So, too, Our Divine Saviour was hated and persecuted by the Jews, and when He had been sent to them by His heavenly Father, they robbed Him of His clothes, and sold Him for thirty pieces of silver, and delivered Him over to pagans and strangers. Joseph was falsely accused in Egypt, and, although he was innocent, he was cast into prison with two malefactors. He foretold to one of them that he would be received into the service of the king, and to the other his death on the gallows. So, too, was Our Divine Saviour falsely accused, accounted among malefactors, and crucified between two thieves. To one of these He promised that he would be taken up into Heaven; the other died an eternal death. Joseph came forth from the prison into a palace. The king issued a proclamation that every one must salute Joseph, and upon him he also conferred a new name, which signifies saviour or redeemer of the world. And Jesus Christ came forth gloriously, and transfigured from the prison of the grave. And His heavenly Father raised Him up and gave to Him a name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father. He is the Saviour and the Redeemer of the world. Joseph gave to the Egyptians bread in the time of famine, and Jesus gives us the Bread of Eternal Life, the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Joseph's brothers were con-

verted and obtained forgiveness from him; and the Jews will also be converted some day and obtain forgiveness.

In still clearer outline do we discern in Moses a figure of the Saviour, for of Moses we read: "I will raise them up a prophet out of the midst of their brethren like to thee: and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I shall command him" (Deut. 18, 18). And, truly, by a special providence of God Moses escaped from the destruction which menaced all the male Israelite children; and so did the Divine Child escape in the most miraculous manner the murder of the Innocents in Bethlehem. Moses left the royal court in order to help his people, betook himself into the desert, and was proclaimed by a voice from on high "The Ambassador of God." And Jesus Christ left Heaven, in order to assist His people, betook Himself into the desert and on the river Jordan was proclaimed by a voice from Heaven to be the Ambassador of God: "This is my well-beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Moses frequently appealed to his miracles as the proof of his divine ambassadorship, fasted forty days before he received the commandments of God, was the mediator between God and the Jewish people. He closed the Old Testament with its earthly rewards and punishments, and even offered his own life in expiation of the sins of his people (Exodus, 32, 32). So too Christ appealed more strongly to His miracles: "If I do not the works of my Father believe me not. But if I do, though you will not

believe me, believe my works, which give witness to me" (John 10, 37, 38). He fasted forty days before He entered upon His teaching office, when He proclaimed the Law of Grace. He is truly the Mediator between God and man, established the New Testament with its heavenly and eternal promises or punishments, and offered Himself in expiation for the sins of the world. Moses found unbelief, contradiction and ingratitude, which went so far that the people took up stones to cast at him. In like manner, the Redeemer found everywhere unbelief, contradiction and ingratitude. At Nazareth they took up stones to cast at Him, and, finally, murdered Him. Moses freed his people from the slavery of Egypt, chose Josue as his successor, and commissioned him to lead the people into the Promised Land in the words: "Be manly and brave, for you must lead this people into the Land of Promise." At the end of his life he ascended a mountain, and was seen no more. So, too, the Saviour freed His people from the slavery of the Devil, and chose the Apostle Peter as His successor, to secure the continuation and growth of His Church. He said to him: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, and thou being converted, confirm thy brethren." Jesus then went up the Mount of Olives, and from there ascended into Heaven.

3. Thus we arrive, my beloved, passing over other types as Josue and Elias, to David, who as progenitor of Christ typified in many ways the Person of the Saviour. He was king, prophet, and the anointed of the Lord. By his defeat of the giant Goliath, he

became the temporal liberator of his people. Persecuted by his ungrateful son he passed over the brook Cedron, and midst revilings and ridicule ascended Mt. Olivet. Jesus Christ, the great King, Prophet and Anointed of the Lord, passed over this same brook in sadness, having been betrayed by Judas, in order that He might begin His Passion on Mt. Olivet, but by His Passion He overcame the great Goliath, Satan, and became the Liberator of the World.

Jonas is in a particular manner the type or figure of the Risen Saviour, to which Christ Himself appeals: "For as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights; so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights" (Matt. 12, 40). The prophet Jonas, in order to save the people on board the ship, was cast into the sea, and the storm subsided. Jonas himself was swallowed by a whale according to the plan of Divine Providence, but after three days he was cast up on the land. He at once began to admonish the inhabitants of the wicked and degenerate city of Ninive to do penance, in order to escape the threatened punishment of God. So, too, the promised Saviour was delivered over to death for the salvation of all men. He remained three days in the grave, rose gloriously from the dead, and preached through His Apostles to the pagan world, which became converted to Him and believed in Him.

The High Priest of the Jewish people was placed by God as a type of the priestly office of Jesus Christ, just as Solomon typified the kingly office of Christ, and Elias the prophetic office. St. Paul gives testi-

mony of this truth in his Epistle to the Hebrews, in the ninth chapter. Purified and sanctified, the High Priest was obliged to enter the Holy of Holies in the Temple on the great Day of Atonement, in order to reconcile the people with Jehovah with bloody sacrifice and prayer. This Holy of Holies in the Temple — where the Ark of the Covenant, the golden urn with the manna, and the flowering rod of Aaron, and the Tables of the Law were kept, “And over it were the Cherubims of glory overshadowing the propitiatory” (Heb. 9, 5),— no mortal was allowed to enter, not even the priests. The High Priest was allowed to enter only once a year, namely, on the Day of Atonement, and this he did with solemn ceremony. The Redeemer is truly the Pure High Priest pleasing to God, Who, according to the words of St. Paul: “Neither by the blood of goats or of calves, but by his own blood, entered once into the holies, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb. 9, 12). The great Day of the Atonement was Good Friday, the Holy of Holies is Heaven, which no mortal could enter before Christ had ascended into Heaven.

Thus you see, my beloved, how gloriously God throughout the thousands of years pointed out the coming Saviour in these personal types, and as it were portrayed Him. From these personal descriptions, given even in minutest detail, the most skeptical man must needs believe, unless he forcibly closes his eyes to the truth, that Jesus Christ is truly the promised Saviour, and that these types are not merely accidental and forced comparisons, but the real types and

figures of Our Divine Saviour, which were made by the hand of the Supreme Artist Himself, God, in the Old Testament. Hence in admiration and adoration we are obliged to exclaim with the Apostle St. Paul: "O the depth of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable are his ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom. 11, 33, 34). These figures of the Saviour are like so many morning stars, heralding the approach of the sun.

It was decided in the counsels of Eternal Wisdom that the Saviour should not come immediately after the commission of the first sin, but that man should first by following the path of experience learn into what an abyss of depravity he had fallen without the Saviour, in order that his longing and gratitude should be all the greater. Just as the sun does not at once appear in all its brilliancy in the heavens, but is preceded by the soft light of daybreak, and then by the stronger light of the aurora, in order that our eyes may be prepared by this gradual development of light to bear the blinding brilliancy of the sun — so too Jesus Christ, the heavenly Son of Justice, did not appear at once in His full glory, but was preceded by a daybreak and aurora, which first gave promise of His coming, then typified Him and prepared the world for His arrival. This took place through the first promises; the promises were followed by the figures or types, the types in turn by the sublime and still plainer prophecies. But God not only typified the

Saviour by persons, but also by things, and we shall now discuss the principal material types of the Saviour.

4. We have already seen what a convincing type of the Saviour the Ark of Noe was. The second and, indeed, the most beautiful is the Paschal Lamb, which by divine ordinance had to be without blemish. The Jews, at the time of their exodus from Egypt, were obliged to sprinkle the doorposts with the blood of the Paschal Lamb, in order to escape death that night. It had to be spitted in the form of a cross, thoroughly roasted, and no bone broken. Who does not recognize in this Paschal Lamb of the Jews the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world? This Lamb is indeed without stain or blemish. Mankind is washed in His Sacred Blood, and saved from the slavery of the Devil. He was sacrificed on the Cross, but no bone was broken, as the evangelist St. John testifies. The Jews were obliged to consume the whole Paschal Lamb. Christ gave Himself entirely for us. We receive Him whole and entire in Holy Communion. The Paschal Lamb was eaten at the time of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt into the Promised Land. We receive the true Paschal Lamb Christ, after our exodus from the Egypt of sin; and at our exodus from the Egypt of this life as Viaticum on our way to the Promised Land of Heaven.

The passage through the Red Sea was another figure. Moses led the Israelites through the waters of the Red Sea in order to escape the slavery of Pharaoh, and to take possession of the Promised Land. So, too, Our Divine Saviour as the second and true Moses

leads His people through the waters of Baptism into His Holy Church, and snatches them from the pursuit of Satan in order that they may attain Heaven. A pillar of fire went before the Jewish people after their passage through the Red Sea, in order to show them the way through the wilderness.

Our Divine Saviour is such a pillar of fire, Who, after our Baptism, goes before us by His example and by His teaching, in order that we may not err in our wanderings through the wilderness of this life on our way to Heaven. Who does not recognize Christ as being typified by the manna in the desert? Even Christ Himself appeals to this figure of Himself: "Your fathers did eat manna in the desert and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven; that if any man eat of it he may not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6, 49-51). The Jews were preserved in the most marvelous manner on their way through the desert to the Promised Land by the manna from Heaven, and we, in our wanderings through the desert of this life, should be strengthened with the True Bread of Heaven in Holy Communion, until we are in possession of the Promised Land of Heaven. But when the Jewish people in the desert murmured against God and Moses, God sent among them poisonous serpents which caused the death of many. In contrition the people came to Moses and said: "We have sinned, since we spoke against Jehovah and thee; pray therefore to Jehovah that He take away from us the serpents." Moses prayed to God and Jehovah said

to Him: "Make a brazen serpent, and set it up for a sign: whosoever being struck shall look on it, shall live." Moses did so, and every one who had been bitten, and who looked upon the brazen serpent with hope was cured. Hence the Book of Wisdom of Solomon says: "But thy wrath endured not forever . . . having a sign of salvation to put them in remembrance of the commandment of thy Law. For he that turned to it was not healed by that which he saw, but by thee the Saviour of all" (Wis. 16, 6-7). Who now are meant by the afflicted ones, if not all mankind who were led astray by the Serpent on the tree in paradise, and thereby coming under the dominion of Satan died an eternal death? And who is the brazen serpent on the staff if not Christ, Who appeared in the form of sinful flesh, and yet the poison of sin was not in Him, no more than it was in the brazen serpent? Therefore Christ was raised upon the tree of the Cross in order that all who looked upon Him with confidence and with faith might be saved from the snares of the Infernal Serpent, healed from the wounds of sin, and delivered from eternal death. But if you do not wish to believe this explanation, believe at least the Saviour Who Himself appeals to this type in the presence of the Jews: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him may not perish but may have everlasting life" (John 3, 14-15).

The propitiatory sacrifices of the Jews prescribed by God were also types after the manner of this one.

They were sacrificed for each individual once a year, and on the great Day of Atonement for the whole people, and they foreshadowed the propitiatory sacrifice of the Saviour. For this reason the sinful Israelite had to place his hand on the head of the victim as if he desired thereby to transfer his sins to the victim, which was then sacrificed for him in his stead. So Christ took upon Himself the sins of each and every one of us, and atoned for them on the Cross in our stead, when He offered Himself on the great day of Atonement as the Lamb of God, as a Sacrifice for us.

5. What we have heard, beloved brethren, is sufficient to arouse admiration for the sublime Providence of God for the salvation of mankind. "O the depth of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable are his ways" (Rom. 11, 33)! For this reason it is that the unbelief of the modern world is so monstrous. Monstrous, too, is the scorn which men in their presumption, in their delusion and conceit, heap upon the eternal truths, which are as old as the world itself. By the greater number of Christians is the Saviour of the world known only in so far that they have learned to reject salvation at His hands, and to cast aside with ridicule His commands and teachings, and those of His Holy Church.

Would that they might behold the heavenly wisdom of the Father, Who, in His sweet Providence over mankind, was also mindful of them! Would that they might behold the love of the Father, Who, from the beginning, did not spare His only begotten Son, and

graciously deigned to prefigure His Person, His life and His suffering! Would that they might at least give ear to the heartrending cry of despairing mankind for the promised Saviour, in order that they might learn to know that they, too, should share in the salvation of mankind! Would that they would listen to the touching words of the prophet Isaias in which he expresses the longing of the oppressed: "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just; and let the earth be opened, and bud forth the Saviour" (Isaias, 45, 8). But they hear nothing, see nothing, feel nothing. Immersed in seeking after wealth, and delivered over to the lust of their hearts, of them the words hold true: "Forty years long was I offended with that generation, and I said: these always err in heart. And these men have not known my ways; so I swore in my wrath that they shall not enter into my rest" (Ps. 94, 10-11). Yes, how gloriously was the Redeemer prefigured, and how entrancing the rewards and blessings of those who believe in Him and keep His commandments! But what terrible examples of punishments are foretold which will overtake the unfaithful and godless Christians! These punishments are typified in that part of the Jewish people which, on account of their murmurings against Moses and their disobedience to him, died in the wilderness, and could not enter the Promised Land. They are typified in Core, Dathan, Abiron and their followers who arose against Moses, but the earth opened under their feet and swallowed them all together. "And immediately as he had made an end

of speaking, the earth broke asunder under their feet; and opening her mouth devoured them with their tents and all their substance. And they went down alive into hell, the ground closing upon them, and they perished from among the people" (Num. 16, 31-33). They are prefigured by those who were bitten by the poisonous serpents, and died amidst the greatest sufferings because they did not look to the brazen serpent on the cross. They are prefigured in the despairing cry of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah whom the fire consumed, and too in the pitiful downfall of Jerusalem, and the rejection of the Jewish people.

May you at least, my beloved Christians, being mindful of the love of God, prepare your hearts for your Saviour, and requite love with love. He has become for us a model for our conduct on earth, and He symbolizes, too, what we shall attain in Heaven, if we have here upon this earth walked in Faith, Hope and Charity. Amen.

SERMON XII

PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE REDEEMER

“God at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets.”—HEB. I, I.

The more that we reflect upon the plan of Divine Providence for the salvation of man, and for his preparation for the coming Redeemer, the more are we compelled in accents of deep reverence and of lively faith to exclaim with the Apostle St. Paul: “O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable are his ways!”

Beginning with the Fall of man, we may distinctly trace three different means whereby God the Father prepared man for the Redeemer: the first through promises, the second through types and figures, and the third through prophecy. Man had just fallen, tears of contrition still dimmed his eyes, when the promise of a Redeemer brought comfort to him: “Of woman shall be born a Son, who shall crush the head of the serpent.” That was all; the first hint of a dawn, and the one hope of men for two thousand years. But then it became brighter. For a second promise brings to Abraham the assurance that from his posterity the Messiah should be born. A third promise, made to Jacob, designates the tribe; and a fourth, made to

David, declares that it is his house from which the Saviour should go forth.

Remarkable, indeed, is this chain of promises, which go on step by step, and lead from the whole human race to a certain people, from this people to a certain tribe of the same, and from this tribe to a certain family of the tribe. And here God makes pause; the promises are at an end, the first manifestation of the heavenly Father is finished.

Men knew then for a certainty that a Redeemer should come, and that He should come from the Chosen People, from the tribe of Juda, from the house of David. But of this house there would assuredly be many offspring; which then should be the real Saviour beyond all danger of error or doubt? For this a new light was necessary, which should dispel the mist. And so the second manifestation on the part of God the Father begins, whereby He gradually, and with ever increasing clearness discloses to us the coming Redeemer. This took place by means of prototypes. During a period of more than three thousand years, that is from Adam to the prophet Jonas, there appears a long series of great personages all of whom represent the Messiah in the special circumstances of His birth, His life, His Passion, His Resurrection and Ascension. Besides this, God caused various phenomena, ordained the most numerous and varied ceremonies and sacrifices, and all of these were merely single strokes, which, when combined, give us a complete portrait of the Desired of the nations such as we have already considered.

But even the types and figures are not sufficient to dispel all doubt about the Person of the coming Redeemer. A mysterious semidarkness envelopes Him, and so a new light is required to banish all the shadows, to add the last touches to the portrait, to put an end to all uncertainty, a light indeed like the light of dawn which heralds the rising sun. For this reason the third and last manifestation of the coming Saviour on the part of the heavenly Father takes place, wherein He, in the course of centuries, raised up great prophets whom He acquainted with the mysteries of the future, before whose eyes He placed a picture of the coming Saviour; to whom He made known the life, Passion and glorification of the Redeemer, and whom He then commissioned to prophesy these things, so that the last doubt and the last uncertainty should vanish.

I propose therefore to-day to consider the prophecies concerning the Redeemer, discussing first the nature of prophecy and of the office of prophet; and then the particular prophecies themselves.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. What is a prophet, and what do we mean by prophecy? A prophet is an accredited messenger of God, who, having been illumined by God, saw into the future, and with reference to the coming Redeemer, even centuries before the events transpired, foresaw and revealed to men not only His coming, but also the special circumstances of His life and Passion. Only God knows the future, particularly the future in so

far as it depends upon the free will and the passions of men. So that this gift of prophecy, whereby man partakes of the omniscience of God, is really more miraculous than the raising of the dead, or the sudden healing of the sick.

A knowledge of future events is itself so mysterious and extraordinary, that even the most learned men of heathen antiquity denied it to their gods, because it would seem to destroy human freedom. And yet such a knowledge does display itself in the prophets sent and illumined by God, who in clear and thrilling words revealed many and most extraordinary things, that God alone could know, and that He alone could communicate to them. In sending these prophets, God had a twofold object in view. It was their office to comfort and console their contemporaries in their misery, and to increase their yearning for the coming Redeemer,—and by reason of these prophecies they were to make easy and clear to the contemporaries of Jesus Christ Himself, and to coming generations, the recognition of the Saviour already come. For this reason, it was incumbent upon the prophets not only to utter their prophecies orally, but to commit them also to writing in the Old Testament. And how often, dearly beloved, does not Our Divine Saviour in His conversations with the Jews appeal to the prophets? “Search the scriptures, for they give testimony of me” (John 5, 39). “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all scriptures, the things that were concerning Him” (Luke 24, 27).

How often do the Apostles employ the words:

“That it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet” (Matt. 2, 15), or: “These things were done that the scriptures might be fulfilled” (John 19, 36). For this reason the Apostle St. Peter says: “For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1, 21).

Even the Jews always were, and are still convinced that there were such prophets and such prophecies. Of course they would not recognize their fulfillment in the Saviour, but the only reason for this was the lowly descent, the humility, the poverty of the life of Christ, all apparently a contradiction of the qualities of greatness, power, universal sovereignty, which were spoken of in the prophecies, and by which they understood earthly power and greatness and sovereignty. It was this that gave birth to their extraordinary hatred against Jesus Christ, that He exhibited Himself as a Saviour of an order far different from that which they had expected. Let us admire, my beloved, the disposition of Divine Providence, Who ordained that these prophecies concerning our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ should not be falsified by the Jews after His coming. A copy of the work of each of the prophets had to be preserved in the Temple, and in every one of the many synagogues scattered throughout the land, and even in private houses and schools were copies, so that a falsifying of the text was simply impossible. Furthermore Divine Providence ordained that some three hundred years before the coming of the Redeemer, the Jewish people should not have the

sole possession of the Holy Scriptures. In obedience to the command of the heathen king Ptolomy, seventy-two of the most celebrated Biblical scholars made an authentic translation of the Old Testament into the Greek tongue, and this translation, preserved in the royal library at Alexandria, was disseminated by means of the many copies that were made, and that came into the possession of the Christians.

And even more than this! It is precisely the Jewish people which God uses to attest the antiquity, the inviolable possession, and the fulfillment of the prophecies. The Jews continue to watch for the Messiah endowed with all the qualities which we too attribute to Him, and this continued expectation is a most potent argument for the authority and signification of the prophecies. Before their fulfillment in Jesus Christ the Jewish people had the commission to instruct the heathen nations as to the nature and content of the prophecies. And now it has the mission to convince the whole world of the fulfillment of these prophecies. Although convicted in the eyes of the whole world of almost inconceivable obstinacy and of error, this people still carries with it in its aimless wanderings its sacred books, guards them faithfully, clings to them passionately, surrenders life itself in testimony of them. Without temporal or spiritual head, without a country, without altars, without sacrifice, just as the prophets foretold; the one remnant of the ancient world which has survived all vicissitudes; according to the design of Divine Providence it continues to exist for only one reason, to give perpetual testimony of the Messiah, and

to prove the fulfillment of the prophecies. All men should see clearly the truth of the prophecies, for prophecy is being fulfilled in this people which, like one stricken with blindness, wanders aimlessly amongst us.

In truth, my beloved, this is a most remarkable circumstance, and it becomes all the more remarkable as nations continue, like persons, to die and pass away. All the great nations of antiquity which were contemporaneous with the Jews lie buried in the dust. This one alone, the most ancient of all, continues its existence everywhere, always and everywhere in a state of decay; and this for only one reason, to give testimony of Jesus Christ. Thereby it is fulfilling the office which Providence has assigned to it, as keeper of the records and of the seal of Christianity. Side by side it exhibits the prophecy and its fulfillment; uniting both in its own person, it illuminates the earth with a torch which permits the light of truth to shine upon others with brilliant radiance, but which leaves itself in utter darkness. "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways!" The more we grow to understand the Providence of God for the salvation of man, so much the more are we filled with admiration and reverence for God, and with love for our sublime Catholic Faith.

2. So far, my dearly beloved, we have been discussing the nature of prophecies in general; we shall however now consider the various prophecies singly. They have reference partly to the time of the coming

of the Redeemer, to His Person, to the circumstances of His birth, His life, His Passion and Death; partly to His Resurrection, Ascension, and the sending of the Holy Ghost; and partly to the destruction of the Jews, the conversion of the heathen nations, and finally to the foundation, diffusion, and duration of His Church. On account of the great number and length of the prophecies it would be impossible to discuss them all, but I will quote the most notable of them, some verbatim, others according to their sense, in order that you may become more acquainted with them.

As far as the time of the coming of the Redeemer is concerned, the patriarch Jacob on his deathbed indicated it, when he was blessing his son Juda: "The sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda, nor a ruler from his thigh, till he come that is to be sent, and he shall be the Desired of the nations" (Gen. 49, 10). Although Juda was not the first son of Jacob, from the point of view of age, but Ruben, nevertheless, to him is the promise given that his progeny, his tribe, shall be dominant among the people of Israel, and that from him shall descend the Redeemer, the Expectation of the nations. And as a matter of fact it was so. For at a later period the tribe of Juda ruled over the other eleven tribes of the Jewish people; from it came the kings, from it came David, and also the Saviour. This preëminence over the other tribes, which took the name "the Jewish people" from it, the tribe of Juda retained until the time of the coming of the Redeemer. But then it became subjected to the dominion of Rome, and Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea,

resident in the capital city of Jerusalem. And it is for this reason that the defiant words of the Jews to Pilate when he exhibited Jesus to them as King of the Jews, become so meaningful: "We have no king but Cæsar" (John 19, 15). They themselves declare that the time for the coming of the Messiah according to the prophecy of Jacob was come, and that the prophecy was fulfilled.

Still more remarkable and more sharply defined is the prophecy of the great prophet Daniel. Whilst Daniel in the Babylonian captivity prayed for the liberation of the people, and the rebuilding of the Temple that had been destroyed, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to him and said: "Seventy weeks are shortened upon thy people and upon thy holy city, that sin may have an end, and iniquity may be abolished, and everlasting justice may be brought, and vision and prophecy may be fulfilled, and the saint of saints may be anointed" (Dan. 9, 24). By the term week is meant, according to the usage of the Jews, a week of years, or a period of seven years. Seventy weeks are therefore four hundred ninety years. And precisely so many years elapsed beginning with this prophecy until the death of the Saviour, Who, through the Bloody Sacrifice of the Cross, put an end to sin, abolished iniquity, satisfied eternal justice, and brought it. In Him are, indeed, fulfilled the prototypes and prophecies, and He has been anointed, that is, raised, by the heavenly Father to be King of Heaven and earth. For this reason Christ was called "the Anointed of the Lord." This same prophet Daniel also foretold that

the Saviour would be put to death by the Jews, and that Jerusalem would be destroyed.

Other prophets, too, designate even more closely the time of the coming of the Saviour. Aggaeus, for example, consoled the Jews in this manner after their return from the captivity of Babylon.

Malachias announced similar tidings; indeed announces even the precursor of Christ, John the Baptist: "Behold I send my angel, and he shall prepare the way before my face. And presently the Lord whom you seek, and the angel of the testament, whom you desire, shall come to his temple" (Mal. 3, 1). The Desired of the nations Who should bring them peace; the Ruler, Whom the Jews longed for, the Ambassador of God, Who would establish a New Covenant: who else is it but Jesus Christ the Lord, who came precisely at the time when the second Temple was finished in greater magnificence than the former one, in which He taught, and which He made glorious by His presence? This Temple was also the last one, for it was destroyed after the death of Christ by the Romans, never to be rebuilt.

3. But we wish to learn also, my beloved, to know the prophets who foretold the birth of the Saviour, and its more minute circumstances. The general outline of the Redemption we learn from the promise of God in paradise, when He said to the serpent: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel" (Gen. 3, 15). Here the coming Saviour is expressly called the Son of the woman, namely, of the Blessed Virgin Mary. For this

reason the prophet Isaias exclaims with enthusiasm: "Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (Is. 7, 14). This is, therefore, the miracle of all miracles, which God will give to the Jews as a most illuminating sign. Hence the Apostle and Evangelist Matthew in speaking of the virginal birth of Jesus says: "Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying: 'Behold a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, God with us'" (Matt. 1, 22, 23).

The prophets announce the race from which the Saviour is to be born, namely, from the house of David, as God had already promised David himself. And even the place, Bethlehem, where He was to be born, was foretold by Micheas. For this reason the Scribes told Herod in answer to his question as to where Christ should be born: "In Bethlehem of Juda. For so it is written by the prophet, 'and thou Bethlehem the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come forth the captain that shall rule my people Israel'" (Matt. 2, 5-6). In like manner the star at the birth of the Saviour was foretold by Balaam, when the Jews entered the Promised Land: "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not near. A STAR SHALL RISE OUT OF JACOB and a sceptre shall spring up from Israel" (Num. 24, 17). For this reason the three Magi said at Jerusalem with such confidence: "We have seen his star in the

East, and are come to adore him" (Matt. 2, 2). Even the coming of the three Magi was foretold by Isaias (60, 3, 6), and even earlier by David (Ps. 71, 10). Yes, even the slaughter of the Innocents in Bethlehem was foretold by the prophet Jeremias, and hence the Evangelist St. Matthew says: "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremias the prophet" (Matt. 2, 17). The flight into Egypt, and the subsequent stay at Nazareth, were likewise foretold, as the Evangelist St. Matthew testifies: "That it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet saying, (Osee 11, 1) . . . 'and he shall be called a Nazarene'" (Matt. 2, 15, 23).

4. But now, how do the prophets describe the public life of the Saviour? In truth that He shall come forth as the great Prophet, Who shall not only foretell future events, but will in reality be the true Teacher of the people. Hence the people at the multiplication of the loaves of bread called Jesus the great Prophet: "This is of a truth the prophet, that is to come into the world" (John 6, 14). And still more plainly the Samaritan woman in her conversation with Jesus expressed it, saying: "I know that the Messiah cometh, who is called the Christ; therefore, when he is come, he will tell us all things" (John 4, 25). In like manner the disciples of St. John the Baptist asked Him saying: "Art thou the prophet?" (John 1, 21; 35, 4, 6). The prophet Isaias described one by one the miracles which our divine Saviour would perform during His public life. And the Saviour Himself referred the disciples of John the Baptist to the fulfillment of

this prophecy: "Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matt. 11, 4, 5).

5. But what do the prophets narrate concerning the suffering of the Redeemer? If the prophecies regarding the birth and life of the Saviour are so convincing, then those regarding His sufferings, both in content and language, are so sublime and touching that we are led to believe that the prophets — who lived one thousand, six hundred, and four hundred years before the Saviour — were living witnesses, and gave free rein to their grief. The prophet Zacharias foretold the triumphal entry of Jesus on Palm Sunday into Jerusalem, and His betrayal for thirty pieces of silver. When Judas in despair cast the thirty pieces of silver into the Temple, and the Scribes and Pharisees used them to buy a potter's field for the burial of strangers, the Apostles St. Matthew and St. Peter pointed to this fact as a fulfillment of prophecy.

Touching and true is the prophecy of Isaias where he speaks of the suffering Saviour: "He was offered because it was his own will, and he opened not his mouth. He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth . . . and shall be reputed with the wicked; and he hath born the sins of many, and hath prayed for the transgressors" (Isaias 53, 2). The great prophet Isaias wrote a gospel, a history of the Passion of the Saviour, before it was accom-

plished. And yet he lived five hundred years before Christ. The complaints of David, uttered by him in the twenty-first psalm are just as touching, and almost literally narrate the sufferings of Jesus on the Cross, as the Evangelist St. Matthew testifies (Matt. 27, 34-44).

The burial of the Saviour was foretold by Isaias: "He was allotted a grave with evil doers, but he found his resting place in the tomb of the wealthy." His Resurrection was foretold by David in the fifteenth psalm, and His Ascension into Heaven in the sixty-seventh psalm.

The prophecy of Malachy beautifully foretells the new sacrifice that was to replace the old one: "I have no pleasure in you saith the Lord of hosts; and I will not receive a gift from your hands. For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation: for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 1, 10, 11).

Since the destruction of Jerusalem, my beloved, and especially since the destruction of the Temple, the Jews have no real sacrifice; all the sects that have fallen away from the Catholic Church, as the Protestants and others, have no sacrifice. Where then is this pure, holy sacrifice, so pleasing to God, which is offered up to Almighty God from one end of the world to the other, where is it now? In the Catholic Church. It is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which the Saviour instituted at the Last Supper, and the prophet Malachy foretold, and the King and High Priest

Melchisedech prefigured when he offered bread and wine.

6. We have now learned an important part of the prophecies. The first announcement of the Saviour was made in Paradise. The second extends to Abraham, the father of the Israelites, two thousand years before the birth of Christ. Moses wrote his fifteen hundred years before the birth of Christ, and David one thousand years. Osee and Joel open the series of minor prophets who were raised up by God, about eight hundred years before Christ, and Malachy, as the last, closed the series four hundred fifty years before the Saviour appeared. The prophets, therefore, had to precede the Saviour hundreds of years, in order that every one might be fully convinced that this was not the work of man, nor of his shrewdness, but that truly the sublime Providence and wisdom of God reigned in it all. Therefore, with the death of the last of the prophets, Malachy, the voice of prophecy ceased in Israel. The third manifestation of the heavenly Father, whereby He prepared man for the coming of the Redeemer, is completed. The Messiah is sufficiently described, the picture is finished.

A respectful silence reigned now in the world. But it is wonderful to behold, overwhelming for heart and soul, how God, the heavenly Father, paves the way for the Desired of the nations, the Saviour of the world; how He prepares the nations and makes the souls of men susceptible. Admirable, glorious religion, which teaches us to know God and His sublime rule, which is a continual, majestic miracle, and fills

all time from the beginning of the world, and is proclaimed in two distinct announcements; in the prophecies, and in the fulfillment of these prophecies. But both — prophecy and its fulfillment — have only one great object, the desire and its fulfillment — Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer. The ruling of God in its promise is not less visible than in the fulfillment of the promise. Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God, Who was slain from the beginning; Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End of all things, the Heir of all the ages, and the Father of all future time, Christ yesterday, to-day, and the same for all eternity.

My dearly beloved, may you all increase in faith in the Saviour, in hope and love for Him. The promises and the prophecies were given to us Christians more than to the Jews and pagans, in order that in us faith might shine forth in a brighter, a more wonderful light, the more we see everything in word and deed fulfilled in Our Divine Saviour. And just as everything up to this time has been fulfilled, so we must be assured that all things will be fulfilled in us which Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, has promised or threatened, eternal life with Him and His saints in Heaven, or eternal death with Satan and his minions in Hell. Observe, therefore, His commandments and those of His holy Church, and His promises will be fulfilled in us, and we will one day behold Him face to face in Heaven, and enjoy His happiness for all eternity. Amen.

SERMON XIII

JESUS CHRIST THE SON OF GOD

“The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us.”

—JOHN I, 14.

With these words the apostle St. John declares the Incarnation of the Son of God. They are also the words of the Angelus, with which the Catholic Church, morning, noon and night, calls upon the faithful to show their gratitude for the Incarnation of the Son of God. And, indeed, we have reason enough, for if we cast a glance towards Heaven, with the eye of faith we behold the Holy Triune God on the throne of His Infinite Majesty in eternal, wonderful happiness, having no need of creatures; and yet there goes forth from His throne like a celestial rainbow of glorious colors, His love, accompanied by His mercy and justice, which reaches down to earth. And whom do we behold on earth? Whom else but ourselves and the whole of mankind, despoiled by the sin of Adam, and wounded unto death, like the unfortunate man who fell into the hands of robbers on the road to Jericho and was wounded by them. And what has the Most Holy Trinity done? Like the good Samaritan who took the unfortunate man, poured oil into his wounds, and left him to be cared for, so God as another Good Samaritan, sent Jesus Christ who raised us up from

our prostrate condition, healed our deadly wounds, and gave us over to the care of His Holy Church. I will, therefore, speak of this Good Samaritan, of Jesus Christ our Saviour. In this sermon, I will speak of Him as the Son of God, and in the following sermons as the Son of man, as our High Priest, Mediator and King, in order that all the faithful here present may better understand who Jesus Christ is, and what He has become for us. He Himself demands of us, and in express words, this knowledge: "Now this is eternal life: that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17, 3). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, this is the subject of our meditation to-day.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy Grace!

1. When the Scribes and Pharisees tried to ensnare the Saviour in His speech, He asked them saying: "What think you of Christ? Whose Son is he?" Why did He ask this question? For no other purpose than to obtain from the mouth of His enemies themselves a testimony of Himself. It could not have been a matter of indifference to Him what His contemporaries thought of Him as the promised Messiah, for precisely on the knowledge of His Person depended the salvation of the world. And it was for this same reason that He asked the Apostles: "Whom do men say that the Son of man is?" (Matt. 16, 13). When they had given the different opinions, He addressed to the Apostles themselves the question: "But whom do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said:

“Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God!”
“But God who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers through the prophets, last of all, in these days hath spoken to us through his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world” (Heb. 1, 1, 2). God inspired the prophets and the Apostles, and we are taught to-day the things of God through them the same as were the Jewish people in former times. We have already learned the power of the prophecies. The prophet Isaias exclaims: “God himself will come and will save you. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb man shall be free” (35, 4, 6). Hence Jesus Christ could truthfully answer the disciples of St. John by pointing to the fulfillment of this prophecy. And He could justly answer the question of the Jews: “Who art thou?” “Search the Scriptures, for they give testimony of me” (John 5, 39). In fact, Holy Scripture is replete with testimonies, and God Himself it was who spoke through the prophets. Therefore all those who do not believe in the Saviour as the Son of God are inexcusable in the stern judgment of God. In the language of Holy Writ: “He that believeth not is already judged:” he carries around with him the reason of his condemnation. But the heavenly Father did not give testimony of His Divine Son through the prophets alone, but likewise even in His own Person, for His voice resounded from the heavens in the presence of a great multitude at the Baptism of

Christ at the river Jordan: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3, 17). And this is the same God who made Himself heard from the burning bush on Mt. Sinai: "I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not have strange Gods before me" (Ex. 20, 2). It is the same God that spoke through the mouth of the prophet Isaias: "I will not give my glory to another, nor my praise to graven things" (42, 8). God repeats the same as often as He confirmed by miracles the assertion of Christ that He was the Son of God. Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrim, said to Christ: "For no man can do these signs which thou doest, unless God be with him" (John 3, 2). Therefore Christ with authority referred the Jews to His miracles: "If you do not believe my words believe, at least, the works that I do" (John 14).

And truly, my dearly beloved, Christ commanded His angels not as man but as God, while He as the Child, promised by the prophet Isaias lay in the crib, to descend from Heaven and intone the anthem: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will. As God He called the three Magi from the East, guided by His star, in order that they might come and adore Him, and offer gold, frankincense and myrrh. His divine omnipotence called the dead Lazarus to life; it was this same power that with mighty voice commanded the dead youth of Naim: "Arise!" It was this same omnipotent power which the raging storms of the sea obeyed, and ceased their fury, so that the terrified sailors fell on their knees and exclaimed:

“Thou art truly the Son of God!” Quaking and trembling did the evil spirits whom He commanded to depart from the obsessed, confess Him to be the Son of God. “I am He,” He said to the soldiers who would apprehend Jesus of Nazareth; “I am he,” and this word prostrated them to the ground twice. As God, on the Cross where He suffered according to His human nature, He made the earth tremble. As God He commanded the sun to veil itself in darkness, the rocks to be rent asunder, the graves to open, and the veil of the temple to be torn, so that the pagan centurion himself in fear exclaimed: “Verily this is the Son of God.” All the people who were present on this occasion, and witnessed what had taken place, beat their breast in fear. As man Jesus died on the Cross, but by the power of His Divinity He rolled back the huge stone from the door of the sepulchre and arose, to the terror of His enemies, gloriously from the grave.

Therefore Jesus Christ as God could give others the power to work miracles in His name, as He really did when He commanded His Apostles and disciples to go forth into the world and to preach and teach, in order that their words might find a hearing among the pagans.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we see how the Apostles made use of this divine power, in order to spread the faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Redeemer. “In the name of Jesus arise and walk!” spoke St. Peter to the man born lame who was begging at the gate of the temple, and he rose up and walked. “And all the people saw him walking and praising

God . . . and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened to him" (Acts 3, 9, 10). "But many of those who heard and saw believed, and the number of men was five thousand" (Acts 4, 4). Many signs and wonders were performed by the Apostles among the people, so that they carried their sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mattresses in order that when Peter came, at least his shadow might fall upon each one and that they might be cured of their sickness. The people from the surrounding villages even brought their sick and those possessed by evil spirits to the Apostles at Jerusalem, and the Apostles cured them all. The consequence of this was that the Christian community at Jerusalem continually grew larger until the first persecution took place, in which Stephen was stoned, the Apostle St. James beheaded by Herod, and the other Apostles and disciples passed out into the world to bring the glad tidings to pagan peoples. They bore with them the power confided to them, and by it won over the pagans to faith in the Saviour. This power was not extinguished with the death of the Apostles, but shone brilliantly and marvelously in the saints and martyrs of the early Church, and reveals itself always in the true Church of Christ, even though not so frequently as in former times. But if you wish to know the real reason of this listen to the words of the Apostle St. Paul: "The signs are for the unbelievers," in order that they may be moved by true miracles to acknowledge the truth of the Christian faith and obtain their salvation. But for the faithful who already are

in possession of the true faith such signs are not necessary, for these have another sign just as expressive, the Church, ruled by the Holy Ghost. The gardener waters the tree which he has planted only until it has taken root and can draw moisture from the earth. In the same manner does the Divine Husbandman Jesus Christ.

2. Our Divine Saviour however attests His Divinity also by His omniscience. He reveals the thoughts and plans of the Pharisees against Him, and foretells the betrayal of Judas, the threefold denial of Peter and the flight of the Apostles, as also His scourging, His Crucifixion, and Resurrection from the dead. How perfectly were His words fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem! Here, indeed, is more than a prophet, for if He were not the Son of God, and God Himself from eternity, which He claimed to be and in testimony of which claim He died, how could He have possessed the gifts of omniscience and omnipotence, since God would evidently not give such a gift to a blasphemer! Therefore He either did not have them, and then He could not have performed such miracles, nor made such prophecies, or else He had them of Himself as His Divine attributes; He is indeed the Son of God, and God from eternity.

But why should we concern ourselves with proofs from the distant past when the present is full of such proofs? Before your very eyes is His divine word fulfilled, that the Gospel will be announced throughout the whole world. Go out into the world and seek a people that has not been visited by Catholic mission-

aries; seek a land where the Holy and Unbloody Sacrifice of the Cross is not offered up! Go back to the time of the Redeemer — what was more improbable at that time than that this most undeniable of all facts should take place? What was more incredible than that paganism which was spread throughout the whole world and had colossal power, could not withstand the struggle with Jesus Christ, the Crucified, Who was a scandal to the Jews, and to the pagans foolishness; could not resist twelve poor, uneducated Apostles; could not resist the new articles of faith which were so diametrically opposed to all human passions? Paganism was overcome, and disappeared! To this event so wonderful to the whole world should be added an apparently unimportant circumstance. With the announcement of the Gospel, there should be proclaimed in the whole world at the same time the story of how a converted sinner gratefully anointed the head and feet of the Redeemer: “Amen I say to you, whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which she hath done shall be told as a memory of her” (Matt. 26, 13). Who would have thought that the woman prostrate at the feet of Jesus, against the will of the guests present, would now be the glorious Magdalen honored throughout the world in the Church and on her altars!

3. Is this, then, the only proof which we have for the Divinity of Christ, Who reveals Himself to us? No, there is another proof just as cogent, which is ever present and speaks in no uncertain terms, and that throughout the whole world: “Thou art Christ the

Son of the living God." This living proof is the Catholic Church, the Church of which Jesus Christ had said even before He had founded it, that it would victoriously withstand all persecutions: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16, 18), a miracle that has been constantly and continuously renewed for nineteen hundred years. The unbroken series of Pontiffs in the See of Peter down to the present Holy Father Benedict XV. is truly a magnificent evidence of the power of God in governing His Church. Recall to your minds the first three hundred years, when the mighty hosts of paganism were arrayed against the Church, and numberless Christians went to their death as martyrs to their faith in Christ. What paganism could not accomplish, false teachers have tried to do in every age so that there remains hardly an article of faith that has not been attacked. But these gates of Hell could not prevail against the Church, although they tore away from the bosom of the Church whole nations. What paganism and false teachers could not accomplish, her enemies strove to do by enslaving the Church, by public or secret and hostile laws, the breaking of the natural bonds between the bishops and the Pope, the Vicar of Christ, between the priests and their bishops, between the faithful and their pastors; by the prevention of the promulgation of the laws of the Church and the discipline of the Church, by forbidding solemnities, by robbery of the goods of the Church, and other acts of violence which in the course of time had a more

destructive effect than the bloody persecutions of Nero which begot saints and martyrs, and confirmed the other Christians in their faith, while the false teachers had advanced unbelief, the desecration of Sunday, increased immorality and robbed numberless souls of their salvation. And yet these gates of Hell could not prevail against the Church. The Church is still as vigorous as ever with the vigor of youth, and spreads out her branches as the true tree of life over the earth, dispenses blessing and salvation, and produces glorious fruits of innumerable holy souls for Heaven. Truly here is the power of God; here is the living proof of the Divinity of Christ.

4. But for the Divinity of Jesus Christ there is still a living proof which God holds before the eyes of his people as the antithesis of His Church. This proof is the punishment which soon after the Crucifixion of the Saviour overtook the Jewish people. But if we have seen the Providence of God in the guidance of these people before the coming of Christ, and the wisdom of God in their preparation for the Messiah by types and prophecies, we can always be assured that the same Providence, the same wisdom of God, reveals itself also after the coming of Christ, in order that we and all men may know by the living proofs the truth that the Son of God came down from Heaven, and that we may believe in Him, as once the world hoped for Him before His coming. Therefore, we will openly and fearlessly consider this new living proof for the Divinity of Christ, for thus spoke the Archangel Raphael to Tobias: "For it is good to hide the secret of a

king; but honorable to reveal and profess the works of God" (Tob. 12, 7). I do not seek my honor, but the honor of Our Divine Saviour, Who has been scarcely at any time more blasphemed than at the present by the unchristian and scandalous life of Christians or by the scorn and contempt of infidels. The punishment, therefore, which overtook the Jewish people, and still continues, is this living proof of the Divinity of Jesus Christ.

God did great and marvelous things for the Jewish people during almost two thousand years. His Providence over these people was glorious, still more glorious were His promises to them. And precisely because of the munificence toward these people, the punishment inflicted upon them in consequence of their disobedience was all the more terrible. In truth, they must have loaded themselves with guilt to have merited such a punishment and banishment. They were guilty and merited this punishment, for the Jews were guilty of deicide and in proportion to this guilt was the punishment meted out to them.

And, in fact, all the circumstances of the misfortune which overtook Jerusalem plainly indicate that this guilty race should now receive the punishment which it had inflicted upon Jesus, and that His Blood should come upon them. At Easter time Jesus began His Passion; at Easter time when three millions of Jews had assembled for the festival, began the terrible sufferings of this people in consequence of the siege of Jerusalem — sufferings, than which Christ Himself said the world had never seen greater nor ever would

see greater. And how true this was an eye witness, Flavius Josephus, a Jew and celebrated historian, narrates in his history of the Jews.

On Mount Olivet, the Jews first laid hands on the Saviour; from Mount Olivet the city was first stormed. Jesus was led away a prisoner; ninety-seven thousand Jews fell into the hands of the Romans during the war and were led away as prisoners. Jesus during the night of His Passion was kept in a narrow cell, and Jerusalem, during the days of its suffering, was surrounded by Titus with a trench, and hemmed in from all sides. Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver, and thirty thousand Jews were sold into slavery. Jesus was scourged by the Roman soldiery, mocked and lifted up on the Cross; by these same soldiers all the Jews who had survived the famine and misery of Jerusalem, which was so terrible that mothers devoured their own children — all these were driven out of the city, scourged, mocked and crucified, sometimes five hundred or more on one day, so that at last there were no more crosses to be had.

And now for nineteen hundred years the remnants of this race have been scattered throughout the world. Many legislatures have used in vain their best endeavors to amalgamate the Jews with other nationalities, but, as little as oil and water can be mixed, so little can the Jewish people as a strange element be amalgamated with other nations. And although sometimes it seemed to succeed, a higher power always thwarted it and it was forcibly prevented. These people, therefore, must be guilty of a terrible crime which surpasses in malice

all former ones, as the present visitation and banishment surpasses all former punishments in severity and endurance. On account of their idolatry and on account of their infidelity towards God they were kept in the Babylonian captivity for only seventy years, but the present banishment has already lasted over eighteen hundred years and the abomination of desolation still reigns in the Holy Place, and will continue to do so until the end of the world. God revealed all this even to King Solomon, Christ the Lord revealed it most minutely, the prophet Daniel foretold it as a consequence of their denial of the Messiah and of His murder. Therefore, Jesus is God and the Son of God!

The Jewish people is the living proof of the Divinity of Jesus Christ, a proof which God Himself places before our very eyes, and as this people had continuous promises, types, and prophecies of the Saviour in the Old Testament, so we have in the New Testament living proofs for His Divinity in the spread of the Gospel, in Holy Church and in the punishment of the Jewish people. Any one who does not now believe in the Divinity of Jesus Christ may not be afflicted with temporal punishment as the Jews, but instead he will be banished from Heaven and punished eternally in Hell.

Nevertheless, my dear friends, cast no stone at the Jewish people on account of the murder of the Saviour, for any one who continues to sin in spite of Our Divine Saviour, who continues to give scandal to his neighbor, induces him to transgress the commandments of God, to desecrate Sunday, and to transgress the com-

mandments of the Church, any one who does these things murders the Saviour in his own soul and the soul of his neighbor. His punishment is no longer a temporal one, it is an eternal one, and, in the Jewish people, he has a living example of what will happen to him in eternity, and as everything was minutely fulfilled in them, so, too, will everything be fulfilled in him with the same certainty and exactness.

5. Yes, Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He proves this not only by His miracles and prophecies, but also by His teaching, which is the reflection of the Divine Wisdom. This wisdom enlightens the world, rescues it from error and idolatry, and explains the holy and eternal Nature of God, the life beyond, and our own destiny. This wisdom reveals to the truly faithful eternal truths under the veil of simple words, which are intelligible to the learned and to the child, and instil in all reverence. This wisdom like a mild light enlightens the faithful soul, banishes darkness, inflames the heart, awakes heavenly longing and spreads consolation and peace, hope and love.

Christian souls, who plant the heavenly truth in the garden of their soul, in order that they may grow and bring forth the fruits of innocence and obedience, of patience and of love, feel within themselves that the one whom they have learned to know, is truly the Son of God.

And in fact, the teaching of Jesus which flatters neither pride nor the passions, but demands that man deny himself, is loved and kept before the eyes as the one only rule by thousands and thousands of souls

who are transformed and sanctified by it. Only He can do this Who holds in His hand the hearts of men, and is able to prepare a susceptible world in spite of the passions diametrically opposed to His teaching. Only Jesus the Son of God can do this.

6. Jesus Christ is therefore the Son of God, God from eternity to eternity, and of the same substance as the Father, "I and the Father are one." Or as the Apostle St. Paul expresses it: "God hath spoken to his Son, whom he has appointed heir to all things. By whom also he made the world. Who being the brightness of his glory and the figure of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, sitteth on the right hand of his majesty on high" (Heb. 1, 2-3). Therefore, the same Divine attributes belong to Him which belong to the Father and the Holy Ghost: eternity, omnipotence, omniscience, justice and mercy. True, men did not see His Divinity in its substance, for it was hidden in His Humanity, the same as our soul is hidden in our body. But, as the soul reveals itself through the life of the body and its works, so also the Divinity of Christ reveals Itself through its works. "If you do not believe my words, believe at least my works, which give testimony of me." The Apostles believed; with this faith they went forth into the world, and for the sake of this faith they laid down their lives. Hosts of martyrs, even children, have sealed their faith with their blood, and with real joy we read in their lives their willing confession of the Divinity of Christ. Even the tombstones of the first Christian centuries, found in the cata-

combs, speak to us by their inscriptions of the Divinity of Jesus.

It was known to the pagans that the Christians honored Jesus as God. Yes, the successor of the emperor Augustus, Tiberius, under whom Christ was crucified, on receiving the news from Pontius Pilate regarding the Person of Christ, His miracles, and the more minute circumstances of His death, wished to place Him among the number of Roman Gods. But the Roman senate would not consent to this, for the sole and only reason that Jesus Christ excluded all other gods and demanded for Himself alone divine worship. Pliny, the governor of Bithynia, narrated later, toward the end of the first century, to the Emperor Trajan, that the Christians assembled on certain days early in the morning, in order to sing hymns to Christ as their God. Lucian, and the philosopher Celsus despised the Christians, because they gave worship to a Crucified Man, and adored Him.

This is, therefore, the adoration of the Son of God, which has been continued through all the centuries, of which we are also witnesses, and not only witnesses, but heart and soul, we join with all Christians in this adoration. What Christ foretold has been fulfilled: "When I am lifted up, I will draw all things to me." From the moment that Peter fell upon his knees with the confession: "Thou art Christ the Son of the living God," from the moment that Thomas fell on his knees with the cry: "My Lord and My God,"—these words have been fulfilled: "As I live sayeth the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue

shall confess to God" (Rom. 14, 11), or as the Apostle in his burning zeal for the honor of the Lord so longingly desires: "That in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue shall confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2, 10-11).

Whence comes it then, my friends, that so many men to-day who believe, indeed, everything else, even the most silly things, strive only against the faith in Jesus Christ, as the Son of God Himself from eternity to eternity? Are then the truths of religion not sufficiently revealed, are the proofs of His Divine Providence not sufficiently evident? On every side mighty voices are raised to give testimony of Him. But when man has once concluded friendship with vice, then he recedes involuntarily from the Divine; the dark, hellish power, which rules within him, communicates to him the horror which it feels itself before God. Therefore, it drives him to deny Jesus Christ as the Son of God, or, at least, to deny Him by his life. Truth is only mirrored in a pure innocent heart, and by such a heart it is understood, loved and followed, and may you also preserve a pure heart, free from vice and disobedience to God, the commandments, and the Church; then also truth will be mirrored in you; like a mild, soft light it will enlighten your mind, spread consolation and peace in your soul and make you happy in the confession, "O Lord, I believe; O Lord, I hope; O Lord, I love thee with all my heart." Amen.

SERMON XIV

JESUS CHRIST THE SON OF MAN

“The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us.”

—JOHN I, 14.

The third article of faith: “Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary,” teaches us that the Son of God became man, that is, took a human body and a soul. This most blessed of all the truths of faith the Apostle St. John in the beginning of his Gospel expresses in the following words: “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us.” The Evangelist calls the Son of God, “The Word,” and then says further: “We have seen his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father.” Flesh means here, as in other places in Holy Scripture, human nature. The Apostle intentionally emphasizes that which in human nature, consisting of body and soul, is visible, and at the same time the lowest, first, in order to make the truth of this mystery more comprehensible to us. Therefore, he writes in his first epistle: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life . . . and these things we write to you, that you may rejoice, and your joy may be full.” The beloved disciple of our Lord emphasizes, secondly, the word

flesh, in order that by the wondrous condescension of the eternal and only begotten Son of God, we might be urged to a greater gratitude and love. Therefore, I will speak to-day of this latter reason, namely, of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, the Son of man, and discuss the further words of this Apostle, addressed to the faithful and to you: "That which we have seen and have heard, we declare unto you, that you may also have fellowship with us, and our fellowship may be with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1, 3).

Jesus Christ the Son of man! That is in brief the subject of our meditation to-day.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. We believe that Jesus Christ is at the same time true God and true man, in one Divine Person, therefore God-man. As God, He is the only begotten Son of God from all eternity, and as man, the Son of man, that is of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Therefore as God, the Saviour said: "I and the Father are one," of the same Substance, with the same attributes; but as man He said: "The Father is greater than I." The Church expresses this briefly and concisely: "Christ is true God and true man, of one Substance with the Father according to His Divinity, of one substance with us according to Humanity. (Counc. Calced.) Although the Son of God became man in time, nevertheless, He did not become man in such a manner that He was obliged to leave Heaven, but He, who fills Heaven and earth with His Substance and Presence, united Himself with human

nature on earth. Just as a star which is visible to us, and as it were begins to be in our eye though still remaining in the firmament, so, too, did the Son of God not leave His throne of glory, although He became flesh on earth, and according to the expression of St. Paul: "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead corporeally" (Col. 2, 9).

Although the Son of God concealed Himself, as it were, in human nature, yet He was not concealed in such a manner that His Divine Nature was not everywhere present; just as the word of a speaker is not received by the hearer and lost in him in such a manner as not at the same time to entirely fill the place or room in which it was spoken. And as it is entirely in the hearer, and entirely in the room, so too is the fullness of the Divinity in Jesus Christ and entirely in every place in which God is or can be; and just as little as the word suffers a change when it unites itself with the auditor, so little did the Son of God suffer a change when He became man in time and dwelt amongst us. No, God, in Whom there is no shadow of change or vicissitude, God, who even in the creation and preservation of the world suffers no change, suffered no change in the Incarnation, none in His Substance.

The Son of God united in Himself the Divine and human nature. The Divine Nature He had from all eternity from His heavenly Father, the human, from the Blessed Virgin Mary; whole and entire the Divine, whole and entire the human nature. The latter consists of soul and body with its powers and faculties; thus the Son of God took to Himself a body and soul

with their powers and faculties; He became, therefore, man, as we are men, but God-man, and as such He is now called Jesus Christ. Almost as the soul and the body of man are united in one substance, without the body losing its attributes, or the soul those that belong to it, so too is the Divine Nature in Christ united with the human, without the Divine losing its attributes, or the human those that naturally pertain to it, or without both being blended into one; both remain separately as perfect in their own attributes, as they were before this union took place.

Therefore the creed of St. Athanasius says: "As the rational soul and body together is one man, therefore is God and man one Christ." It is, consequently, against faith if any one think that the Divinity of Jesus Christ is transformed into the humanity, or His humanity transformed into His Divinity, like a drop of water would be swallowed up in the immeasurable ocean. No, Pope St. Leo says that the one is not transformed nor the other swallowed up or annihilated, but that the human nature was elevated without the lowering of the Divine.

2. Therefore we see, my beloved, from the whole life of Our Divine Saviour that a twofold will is evident, the Divine Will, which belongs to His Divine Nature, and the human will which is a necessary part of human nature. "Not my will but thine be done," He prayed as man to the heavenly Father; "I seek not my own will, but the will of him who sent me" (John 5, 30). In order to subject His human will to the Divine, He struggled in the Garden of Olives, when His whole

human nature was terrified at the prospect of His Passion — He struggled with the agony of death, and sweat blood: “Father if it be possible let this chalice pass from me! Nevertheless not my will but thine be done” (Matt. 25, 39). We, too, must struggle in order to subject our lower, sensual will to our higher and better.

Jesus had a soul the same as we have: “My soul is sorrowful even unto death” (Matt. 26, 38). His soul was subject to sensations of joy, of compassion, and sorrow, just as much as our souls are. He rejoiced with the joyful, He had compassion on the unfortunate, He shed tears at the grave of His friend Lazarus, He wept over Jerusalem and its impending doom. He had an intellect, “for the child grew in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men, and all who heard him were astonished at his wisdom and His answers” (Luke 2). He had a body as well as we, which had the same needs, and was subject to the same discomforts or more so than are our bodies. He suffered hunger and thirst, fasted, became tired, and suffered pain, and finally died. Thus as Jesus Christ is true God, and shows Himself as God in His works, so, too, is He true man, and shows Himself as such in His human life. And as we can distinguish the activity of the body from that of the soul in each individual person, so, too, can we distinguish in Christ the Divine acts from the human, and thus solve the apparently great contradictions. God is eternal, and yet Holy Writ says, that God was born, because Jesus Christ was God *and* man, and as man was born of the Blessed

Virgin Mary. God cannot suffer and yet faith teaches us that God suffered for us, because Jesus Christ suffered in His human nature.

Christ Himself seems to contradict Himself when He says: "The Father is greater than I," and again: "I and the Father are one." How can they be one if the Father is greater, or how can He be greater if they are one? As the Son of God, Jesus is one with the Father, but as the Son of man, He is less than the Father.

3. But now, my beloved, if there is in Christ a twofold activity, a twofold will, they must evidently be united by something into one intimate whole, just as the body and soul are united in one intimate whole. But the body and the soul — the two separate substances — are united into one intimate whole by the human person. So too in Christ the widely separated and different natures are united into one marvelous whole, through the Divine Person, through Jesus Christ. Wherefore faith teaches us: there is in Christ only one, the Divine Person. Thus we say also: the God-man, Jesus Christ, or God and man at once. To the person is attributed every act both of the body and the soul, therefore we say: I go, rest, work, sleep, and also I think, I will, I remember, although the body it is that goes, or rests, and the soul that thinks and wills. Precisely in the same way, the acts of the Divine and the human nature belong to the Divine Person, since in Jesus Christ there is only one Person, the Divine Person, but no human person. Therefore we correctly say of Him: He descended from Heaven, and He

ascended into Heaven; He believed Himself to be God but took upon Himself the form of a servant. He taught, suffered and died. So that we at one time speak of divine things with reference to Him, at another of human things, because He is at the same time God and man, in one Divine Person.

4. But now, my beloved, we will consider Christ more closely as the Son of man, and what He was and is as the Son of man. In the beginning God created two classes of beings according to His own image and likeness, the angels in Heaven and man on earth. Adam, as the corporal progenitor of all mankind, should be also the bridge over which the blessing of Paradise should pass to all his descendants, or the curse of sin; the blessing, if he, as the head and progenitor of the human race, remained obedient, the curse if he sinned. Adam sinned, tempted by the Serpent. Therefore God had pity on him and his whole posterity. The proud angels of Heaven experienced the whole weight of Divine Justice: they were robbed of their beauty and grace, and cast forever into Hell, because of their own pride, and, tempted by no one, they fell away from God. God revealed to man the greatness of His mercy, since He promised to Adam that the Saviour would come from his own offspring. Before Adam had sinned, God who knew all things from eternity, and consequently arranged the plans of His Divine Providence, had decreed that Adam should be the type of the coming Saviour. Jesus Christ is, therefore, as Son of man, the Spiritual Progenitor of all mankind, the Bridge over which the blessing of God came over to

the human race, and He has become the Head of the children of God: "For as by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners; so also by the obedience of one, many shall be made just" (Rom. 5, 18, 19).

This one is Jesus Christ, the Son of man, Who takes the place of the first Adam, and is the Second Adam and our Second and Spiritual Father. Therefore, He entered into the world by the omnipotence of God, just as the first Adam was created by the omnipotence of God, and had as it were a virgin birth. Adam was adorned by God with the most abundant graces, in order to be the worthy head of the human race. He lost these graces both for himself and his posterity. Who could now describe the extraordinary graces with which the Son of man was adorned? If Mary, the Blessed Virgin and Mother of the Lord, was greeted by the angel with reverence as the one who was full of grace, how much more so Christ, as the Son of man, in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells? If Mary on account of Him obtained such extraordinary greatness and glory in order to become the worthy Mother of God and the second Eve, and the spiritual mother of all mankind, how much more so Jesus Christ, the Son of Man? The graces and excellences of Jesus Christ our Lord, because of the union of His soul with the Godhead, are of indescribable greatness.

The angels of Heaven behold God face to face; they are glorious, sublime spirits and have a measure of grace and higher excellence; the saints rejoice in their bliss and are marvelously transfigured, so that all their desires are fulfilled. High above the Cherubim

and Seraphim, above the angels and saints, is elevated the Blessed Virgin Mary in glory and bliss, the one, namely, who is full of grace; but higher than all and above all is Jesus Christ the Son of man, not only now when He is in Heaven at the right hand of God, but also at the time when He dwelt upon earth. To Him the Father gave the Holy Spirit without measure, to Him all graces, not only for Himself alone, but also to Him for all the redeemed, so that He, as our Saviour and Spiritual Father, might give the same to each one in part, in accordance with his merits. He is truly the Bridge over which the blessing of God comes to us again, and we, through Him, reach God.

Who should doubt, my beloved, that the Son of God filled the most holy soul of His human nature with the riches of His graces and His gifts? Therefore His soul, by its union with the Divine Nature, even on earth, beheld the vision of God. At one time Christ revealed this to His Apostles, that is at His Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor; the vision blinded them so that they did not know what they spoke. But because He came to redeem us, He withdrew from His blessed soul this highest consolation out of love for us. St. Paul exclaims: "Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as man" (Phil. 2, 67).

Yes, my dearly beloved, Jesus Christ was, as the Son of man, although externally like unto us men, nevertheless full of grace, and therefore, truly, most pure of heart and, on that account, could neither sin nor be

guilty of the slightest imperfection which was contrary to this purity. He was the Lamb of God, without spot or blemish, Who took away the sins of the world, and therefore had to be Himself without sin. He was of infinite holiness which surpassed immeasurably the united holiness of all angels and men, so that He is called the Saint of Saints, in Whom dwelt the Holy Spirit, and filled Him with the fullness of His seven gifts. The wisdom and divine knowledge which God communicated to the angels, the prophets and saints, was found in Jesus Christ not merely in part, but in Him were, according to the expression of the Apostle, wisdom, knowledge and holiness, so that He as the Son of man, not only knew all created things, the past, the present and the future, but as the future Judge of mankind, their acts, good or bad, so that He could reward or punish them. As the Son of man, He had the power to command, at will, the elements, the wind and sea, to raise the dead, and to heal the sick. And since as the Lamb of God, He took away the sins of the world, so, too, He had the power to forgive sins, to institute the sacraments, and to transmit the Unbloody Sacrifice, and supernatural gifts and graces to man.

5. Thus is Jesus Christ equipped as the Son of man by God, His heavenly Father, to be the Head of the new Kingdom of God on earth, of the Church Militant, true and Catholic, and of the Church Triumphant in Heaven. As Head of His Church in Heaven and on earth, He is far above all angels and men; as Head, He is the source of all heavenly blessings, graces and

gifts, which come from the Father of light for the salvation of the Church here below. As the Son of man He is the first and greatest among all the elect.

On His account men, too, are chosen by God, in order that Jesus Christ may have companions in His glory, and especially in order that He, as the Apostle St. Paul says, may be the first-born among many brothers, who will become like to Him in grace and bliss, as He was like to them in His human nature. Thus He entered first among all the children of men into the heavenly Kingdom, appeared before God and opened the gates of Heaven, in order that we, His brothers, might enter in.

Yes, my beloved, Jesus Christ as the Son of man comes to meet us in the most marvelous manner. In Him our poor human nature is elevated. God has become man in order to make us participators in His Divine Nature, on earth through grace, in Heaven through the vision of God. For this reason it is not said untruthfully: "He did not spare his only-begotten Son but sacrificed him for us." As man Jesus could indeed suffer for us, but this human suffering would not have been sufficient, hence He had to be more than man, namely God and man at one and the same time, and in one Divine Person; man, in order that He could suffer, in order to become our Father and Head; and God, in order that His satisfaction should have an infinite value, and, therefore, redeem all who should believe in Him.

Yes, Jesus Christ is like other men, and in form found as a man, sin alone excepted. As man He is not

only our Redeemer and Father, but has also become our Exemplar: "For I have given you an example that as I have done to you, so do you also" (John 13, 15). As God it would have been impossible for us to imitate Him, but as man we may. Hence the Apostle St. Peter says: "Jesus has left an example that you should follow in his footsteps." How touching it is to meditate on His life as man, from the crib to His death on the Cross, His childlike obedience to Mary and Joseph, His longing after the House of the Lord. "I will go to the altar of God, to God who giveth joy to my youth." How lovingly must not the eye of the heavenly Father have rested upon Jesus at prayer! How often did Jesus not spend whole nights in prayer! St. Paul exclaims: "Who in the days of his flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications to him that was able to save him from death, was heard for his reverence" (Heb. 5, 7). Who was more conscientious than He in the observance of the Jewish commandments, in the observance of fasting, of the Paschal Season, and of the Paschal Lamb, the Sabbath solemnity and the other laws? "I have given to you an example," he calls to you now, so that you may observe the far more holy and important commandments of the Church.

Our Divine Saviour Jesus Christ experienced in His own Person, in the highest degree, all our needs and all our miseries, in order that we should learn from Him to bear with patience and confidence in God our earthly sufferings. He experienced everything, and much more than do we; He was tempted in everything

without falling into sin, in order that we might learn from Him to fight against temptations. Learn meekness from His example, Who like a lamb did not open His mouth at the greatest indignities inflicted upon Him. With patience He bore with the ignorance of His disciples and Apostles, in order that we might not become angry and overbearing at once. Learn from Jesus Christ to love your enemies, learn contentment from His poverty, moderation from His hunger and thirst, and let His simple poor garments inspire you with contempt for style and pride.

May His tears over the misery of the unfortunate, His compassion for the suffering, His mercy towards the poor and sick, be to you an illuminating example to imitate. He never bore false witness, never spoke ill of any one, deceived no one. There was no deceit in His mouth, no hypocrisy in His character, no rancor and no envy. What was milder, more quiet and lovable than His intercourse with men? What was more attractive than His gentle earnestness, His friendly gladness, His winning condescension, or His clear bright eye, the mirror of His peace and love, into which even His enemies looked with pleasure? What was more impressive than His consideration in His intercourse with men, His amiability in speech and action, His modesty and meekness, His presence which inspired reverence? Would that you would also give more consideration to the example of Jesus Christ, the Son of man, which He has left as a legacy to us! Would that you might impress deep in your hearts the features and the life of Him, who is our Spiritual

Father and our Head; how much more would our life then correspond to the life of the Saviour.

6. The life of Jesus is the book which the saints studied; it is the book, too, which we should study. What St. Paul frequently asks, that, too, we can often ask of ourselves: "What would Jesus do now?" How would He act in this or that case, how in this or that position? Yes our dear kind Saviour has left us an example for every position of life, in His childhood He teaches the children by His obedience and diligence; the youth He teaches in the workshop at Nazareth by His modesty and carefulness; the poor by His poverty, the rich by His mercy towards the poor and unfortunate, the sick by His patience in suffering; by His meekness amidst calumny and insults He teaches the slandered and offended. In this book all can read, the great and the small, young and old, rich and poor, the prominent and the insignificant. Each one can find what He needs most in his position.

Would that all would read this book! There still lives in most men, even in most Christians, the old Adam with his sin and disobedience. When will Christ live at least in Christians, Christ the New Adam? "I live, now not I, the old man from the old Adam, but Christ liveth in me," St. Paul exclaims. Follow, therefore, my beloved, not the example of the old, but of the New Adam, in order that you may worthily bear the name of Christians, and that by your obedience towards God and His Holy Church you, too, can exclaim: "I live, but not I, the old disobedient man, but the new man according to the likeness of Christ."

These words of Jesus are glorious: "I am the way, the truth and the life." It is as were He desirous of saying to each one of us: "Where wilt thou go? I am the Way. Wither wilt thou go? I am the Truth. Where wilt thou remain? I am the Life. Wilt thou walk, and walk in holiness? I am the Way. Wilt thou not err and be deceived and led astray? I am the Truth. Dost thou desire not to die? I am the Life. Dost thou desire to attain Heaven; dost thou desire an explanation of God, of your own being and of the beyond; dost thou desire to be eternally happy? 'I am the way, the truth and the life.' My child, follow the examples which I have left to you on earth, and thou shalt follow Me into Heaven." Amen.

SERMON XV

GHRIST OUR REDEEMER, HIGH PRIEST AND KING

“ But I will rejoice in the Lord: and I will joy in God my Jesus.— HAB. 3, 18.

“ But I will rejoice in the Lord: and I will joy in God my Jesus ”— this is the joyful cry of the prophet Habacuc, who lived six hundred years before the coming of the Redeemer. The prophet speaks here not only in his own name, but in the name of the whole ancient world, of the saints and of the just of the Old Testament, who awaited with earnest longing for the Saviour, and stormed Heaven with their prayers in order to hasten His coming. Moreover, the prophet united his hope, his joy, with the hope and the joy of the Old Testament on account of the coming of the Saviour, yes, he rejoiced in anticipation of God His Saviour Whom the heavenly Father had promised in Paradise, whom the patriarchs had announced, and of Whom the prophets had foretold such glorious things, and Who was the Expectation of all nations.

Even if the world had offered the prophet the most alluring pleasures, if it had promised him honors and riches — all these would have possessed no value in his eyes. He recognized only one joy, only one delight, which surpassed all earthly joys a thousandfold; he rejoiced in the Lord, and joyed in God His Saviour.

How wonderful must not Jesus the Saviour of the world appear to him and to all the just of the Old Testament, that they, in anticipation of His coming, rejoiced with such exceeding great joy! And yet, they had not seen Him nor heard His teaching, nor known His suffering, nor seen His Church; neither had they offered His Sacrifice, nor received His sacraments! But we, my beloved, have experienced all, and hence our joy and delight should be united with that of the just of the Old Testament, with that of the blessed in Heaven, and all Catholic Christians on earth in order to truly glorify Jesus. We have indeed sufficient reason, for Jesus is our Redeemer, High Priest and King, and to-day we shall meditate on this important truth, in order that we may learn to know our Redeemer better, and to love Him more, and to share in His Redemption, His Sacrifice and His Kingdom. Our Saviour Himself says: "Now this is eternal life; that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John 17, 3).

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. Jesus, the Redeemer of the world! Everything in Heaven and on earth refers to Him. He is the sublime subject of the Providence, wisdom and justice of God. On His account the angels were created, and if some found grace and bliss and others were cast into Hell, this took place, solely and alone, on account of Jesus Christ. For His sake, the earth and Paradise, for His sake, man was created and adorned with grace. It was on His account that Noe was saved in the deluge,

Abraham was called to be His forbear, the Israelites became the Chosen People, and were guided by God. All the events of Jewish history, all the sufferings and punishments inflicted upon the Jews,—everything was on account of the Saviour.

On account of Jesus, on account of His merits and Redemption that were foreseen, did our first parents, after their fall, find forgiveness and mercy. His suffering and merits were communicated to mankind from the beginning; they awakened in thousands, at the time of the deluge, the grace of contrition, and consequently, saved their souls. His foreseen Redemption opened Limbo, where the just of the Old Testament found an asylum, until the Redeemer in His own Person came to them after His death on the Cross and freed them.

Yes, my beloved, He is the fullness of Redemption, and whoever from Adam down to the last human soul has been saved, could be saved, solely and alone, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. All have the Saviour alone to thank, Who has redeemed them from the slavery of death and the Devil. Jesus Christ is the King and Head of all creation, both visible and invisible, of Heaven and of earth; for His sake all things were created, all things are preserved and directed, all things redeemed. He is the beginning and end of all things, the pivotal point around which all nations and ages and men revolve. The history of the world circles around Him either in His favor or against Him. Just as the earth moves around the sun, so the spiritual world in Heaven and mankind on earth circle around Jesus Christ. He is, according to the words of St. Paul:

“The Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of all things, the heir of all the ages, and the Father of the future time. Jesus Christ yesterday, to-day, the same forever.”

The battle which in the beginning of time, even before the creation of man, took place in Heaven between the good and bad angels, was a battle for and against the Redeemer. It ended by the thrusting of the bad angels into Hell, and the entrance of the good angels into bliss and eternal redemption. This battle for or against the Redeemer continued in Paradise, in the pagan world, and among the Jewish people. It is continued to the present hour before our own eyes. What the world saw after the coming of Our Divine Saviour in persecutions, wars, revolutions, false teachings and bloody persecutions of the Church—all this is, in the last analysis, a battle for or against the Redeemer. If dynasties have been destroyed, powerful kingdoms overthrown, and great battles have decided the lot of whole nations, the final reason for it all is Our Divine Saviour, because they have risen against His Church or were unfaithful to Him.

To-day, my beloved, we behold the world more than ever before separated into two hostile camps, and everywhere is heard the cry: For Christ and His Church, or, Against Christ and His Church. And, as on the day of judgment, the people will be separated, so, too, Our Divine Saviour separates them even now, the nations and the governments into good and bad, into faithful and unfaithful, into those that love Him and those that hate Him. He is, indeed, the Beginning and the End of

all things, the Heir of all ages, and the Father of future times. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, the same forever. He is the Redeemer.

2. But Jesus Christ is not only the Redeemer of the world, of all who believe in Him, but is also our High Priest, Who by His Bloody Sacrifice on the Cross, atoned to the heavenly Father for our sins, and made satisfaction to God for us. In Him was fulfilled the dream of Jacob, who saw a ladder reaching from the earth to Heaven, on which the Angels of God were ascending and descending. Jesus is this ladder which unites Heaven with the earth, and on which the angels descend and men ascend to Heaven. He came to free us from the immense guilt of sin, and to lead us into the kingdom of grace.

As a matter of fact the whole human race groaned under this burden of guilt; even nature itself sighed under the yoke of sin, and longed for its redemption. Hence, we see everywhere after the fall, the longing for reconciliation. The Jews and the pagans felt the same effect, the breaking of the bond that had united them to God, the breaking of the chain that had united earth to Heaven. They felt that there was an immeasurable chasm between God and them, an infinite debt that they owed to Him. But they felt, too, and that simultaneously, that this debt of guilt could be taken away only through a reconciliation, and that a reconciliation could be attained only through sacrifice. Penetrated with this consciousness, we behold, my beloved, that all mankind, beginning with Cain and Abel, the forefathers, the Jews and pagan nations for four

thousand years offering the sacrifice of animals, which were killed and their blood poured out, in the place of men, who felt themselves guilty, in order that God might be appeased thereby. These sacrifices were the centre of their religion. There was not a religion, no matter how idolatrous, without sacrifice; they were the signs of atonement, a sign of the yearning and desire for reconciliation. They were the sign of all, pagans and Jews, that at some time a most wonderful sacrifice would be offered which would effect a reconciliation, and that a Divine High Priest would one day appear and offer this sacrifice. Therefore St. John so beautifully calls Jesus Christ "The Lamb of God, who was slain from the beginning," to Which all sacrifices of the world pointed, and in Which all were completed. Consequently, those sacrifices of old had value in so far that they were types or figures of the eternal and adorable Sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Finally, after four thousand years, the hour of atonement struck on the clock of eternity; the Eternal High Priest Jesus Christ appeared, Who said through David and later St. Paul these words: "Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not; but a body thou hast fitted to me: then said I: behold I come . . . that I should do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10, 5, 7). For this reason, Jesus Christ appeared on earth, a Sacrifice of atonement, poor and humble. He offered Himself in the Temple at Jerusalem forty days after His birth as a Sacrifice to His heavenly Father. In the river Jordan He numbered Himself among the sinners and received the baptism of penance as a debtor, in order that later

He might, by His own Blood, wash away the sins of the world. Adam sinned by eating the forbidden fruit, and brought misery into the world; therefore Our Divine Saviour fasted forty days in the wilderness to atone for this fault, and as a preparatory sacrifice to that of the Cross.

Jesus Christ wished to offer this marvelous sacrifice as the Eternal High Priest in Jerusalem, where alone it was allowed to offer sacrifice, and where for centuries the figurative sacrifices had been offered. Our Divine Saviour chose intentionally the Paschal Time which reminded the Jews, by the blood of the Paschal Lamb, of their liberation from the bondage of Egypt; so, too, should the true Lamb of God save man from the misery of sin and the slavery of Satan.

For this reason, we see, my beloved, how Jesus, as the Eternal High Priest, entered the Garden of Olives to begin His Bloody Sacrifice. Adam had sinned in a garden, and so the Saviour desired to begin His satisfaction in a garden, and, on that account, He went to the Grove of Olives to begin His Passion, for the branches of the olive tree signify peace and atonement. Like Isaac He carried the wood for His own Sacrifice up Mt. Calvary, and, nailed to the Cross as the Lamb of God, His blood slowly flowed down upon the earth, while at the same moment the Paschal Lamb of the Jews was slain by the High Priest in the Temple. Dying the Saviour cried out: "It is consummated!" And truly, with this Sacrifice on the Cross, Jesus as the Eternal High Priest, completed all the sacrifices of the world and brought atonement.

We see, therefore, on the heights of Calvary how the Cross raises itself from earth to Heaven, just as if the earth offered this eternal wonderful sacrifice to Heaven for its complete satisfaction and atonement, and as if the Cross itself wished to establish, by this sacrifice, peace between Heaven and earth. Its crossbeam extends towards the ends of the earth, towards the North and the South, and reaches the Jews and the heathens, the whole human race, in order to gather them into its embrace, and to unite them into the kingdom of grace. Fastened in the earth and born by the trembling earth, the earth too should by the Sacrifice of the Cross be purified from the curse of sin and share in the Redemption. Yes, from the Cross streamed forth a divine power and a divine light, which poured itself out over the whole world, enlightened the past, present and future, and reaches even unto Heaven. Its power opened the gates of Limbo, opened Heaven, blessed Purgatory, shook Hell to its very foundations and broke the fetters of the power of the Evil One over the human race. From the foot of the Cross, the history of the new way should be begun, to return everything to God and make everything subject to God. Enlightened thus, the world should in future become a reflection of the Divine Life, for "God was indeed in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their sins; and he hath placed in us the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5, 19).

From the moment that Jesus Christ, according to the expression of the Apostle St. Paul, entered into the Holy of Holies with His own Blood as the Eternal

High Priest and opened Heaven for all mankind, from that moment, the veil of the Temple was rent asunder. The Holy of Holies which until that time no profane eye had penetrated, and which only once each year the Jewish High Priest was permitted to enter with the blood of the Paschal Lamb, was disclosed to the eyes of all. The Temple was later destroyed, the sacrifices of the Jews ceased to be offered, their priests and high priests have died out and disappeared. Jesus Christ is now the true High Priest, Who constantly offers Himself for us in the Unbloody Sacrifice, and brings the adoration of the faithful to the throne of God.

The prophet Malachy foretold this glorious Sacrifice which, from now on, should bless the world and fill it with grace: "For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation; for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts" (Mal. I, 11). And, in fact, through Jesus Christ as our Eternal High Priest, all nations, all tongues, are united at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in one divine worship, in one language of adoration and praise of God. Through Jesus Christ, Who constantly offers Himself in our midst, is offered up to God every prayer, every devotion, every merit, every work of penance and every suffering of the faithful. It is beautifully expressed in the glorious song of praise in the Mass before the consecration, in the Preface, when the priest admonishes the faithful with the words: "Lift up your hearts," to praise God, and then continues the song of

praise to God the omnipotent and eternal : through Jesus Christ, through whom the angels and the archangels, and all the hosts of Heaven praise and glorify God, and we with them form only one choir of praise, which cries out: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabbaoth, Heaven and earth are full of thy glory."

Yes, even inanimate creation with its multiplicity of beings, joins in this song of praise: "O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is thy name in the whole earth. The heavens show forth the glory of God and the firmament declareth the work of his hands" (Ps. 8, Ps. 18). The whole of creation is, as it were, a mighty organ and Jesus Christ is the Master Who plays it, and as the Eternal High Priest accompanies it with His voice, and gives to it the true expression of the praise due to the Creator. Therefore the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the centre of religion, the expression of the highest adoration, the source of all graces, of every blessing and all consecration both of man and of creation; the pure, holy Sacrifice, through which from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same the name of God is great among the nations; and Jesus Christ is the Eternal High Priest Who offers this Sacrifice. For this reason the priest says after the consecration whilst he makes the sign of the Cross three times over the Chalice and the Sacred Host: "Through Him, and With Him, and In Him, is to Thee God the Father Almighty, in unity with the Holy Ghost, all honor and glory."

3. But Jesus Christ is also King. As He fulfilled His office as High Priest with His Bloody Sacrifice on

the Cross, and will continue it in the Unbloody Sacrifice until the end of time, so, too, He began His kingly office after His death on the Cross. As King He held His triumphal entry into Limbo in order to free the souls of the just, and as the first fruits of His victory in the battle against the prince of this world, against Satan and his kingdom, He took them with Him into Heaven. His second triumphal journey was from the grave where He overcame death, the horror of man, and with His glorified body, as the second fruit of His victory, rose from the dead. His third and most glorious triumphal journey was His triumphal entry into Heaven, in order, as man, to take possession of His heavenly Kingdom, where He now sits at the right hand of God the Father in the constant possession of the highest power and glory, over everything in Heaven and on earth. There the choirs of angels, and the hosts of the saints, and the blessed pay Him homage as their heavenly King, and all knees on earth must bow at His name, and all tongues confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father. Therefore St. Paul exclaims: "Now to the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever!" (1 Tim. I, 17).

Now when will be the fourth and last triumphal journey of Jesus as King of Heaven and earth; when but on the day of judgment, when the final act of His kingly office on earth takes place? He will then come to judge the living and the dead, the just and the sinner. On that day the whole human race, Heaven and even Hell, will bow the knee before Him and confess:

“Thou art just, O Lord, and just are thy judgments!” Our Divine Saviour will then show Himself in all the majesty of His kingly office as Judge, and that day will be the day of His triumph, when no sinner, no godless man, will blaspheme Him any more, but all will tremble and all will worship Him, the elect and the reprobate.

Our Divine Saviour, my beloved, founded also a kingdom on earth, and that kingdom is His Holy Church, the kingdom of truth and grace. The Pope is His vicegerent. The powers of Hell, godless princes and governments may attack this kingdom and make war on the Church, but all in vain; they will never overcome it. Jesus Christ is the invisible King of this kingdom, and all the faithful are, according to the expression of the Apostle St. Peter, a chosen race, a holy people, whom our Saviour knows how to protect with His royal power. He Himself said: “All power is given to me in heaven and on earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world” (Matt. 28, 18–20). The Catholic Church is His glorious kingdom on earth; it will remain until the end of days when the eternal heavenly Kingdom will begin, and all the faithful will be its citizens, and will become participators in the eternal glory of Jesus Christ in His heavenly Kingdom.

4. We now, therefore, comprehend in meditating on

all that Jesus has become to us, the joyful exclamation of the prophet Habacuc: "I will rejoice in the Lord, and I will joy in God my Jesus." But this prophet is not the only one who rejoiced in the Divine Redeemer; with him rejoiced all the just of the Old Testament and all the saints of the new. How wonderfully this joy was expressed by the purest and holiest soul, the Blessed Virgin Mary! She expressed the joy of the whole Christian world, and her song of praise re-echoes from heaven to earth: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Yes, this is the joyful utterance of the most sublime knowledge that any created being has ever had of Jesus, Our Divine Saviour.

Mary did not rejoice because she was chosen to be the Mother of our Lord, whom all generations should call blessed, no, she rejoiced in God her Saviour; for what she now is, for what she will eternally be in the brightness of her glory, she has Him and Him alone to be thankful to. She rejoiced in Him as her Saviour, High Priest and Eternal King, Who redeemed her also, Who sacrificed Himself for her, and governs for her Heaven and earth. She sees the world redeemed in Him; she sees the millions of souls that have been saved, the hosts of saints, the choirs of the blessed, and, therefore, she rejoices in God her Saviour.

Thus every Christian soul rejoices in God its Saviour, its Eternal High Priest and heavenly King, at the thought of the Redemption, of the heavenly graces, of the eternal bliss, of the glorious sacrifice, of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, of the Christian

faith and the Catholic Church. Thus rejoice all of the truly faithful in God their Redeemer, through Whom alone comes to them every mercy of God and salvation.

We too, my beloved, should unite our voices in this glorious Hosanna, and constantly praise Jesus in life and in death, in thoughts, words and deeds, as our Redeemer, High Priest and King, in order that we may continue for all eternity this song of praise in heavenly bliss: "I will rejoice in the Lord and I will joy in God my Jesus." Amen.

SERMON XVI

THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

"I will rejoice in the Lord, and I will joy in God my Jesus."

—HEB. 3, 18.

Habae

Jesus Christ is marvelous, glorious and adorable, as our Redeemer, High Priest and King. And just as marvelous, glorious and adorable as Jesus is as our Redeemer, High Priest and King, so also must His Name be marvelous, glorious and adorable. What are all the celebrated names of men in comparison with this one name *Jesus*? With admiration the world of to-day pronounces the names of great conquerors and princes, and calls to mind their glorious deeds. With pride distinguished families call themselves after the names of great heroes, statesmen, and scientists, whose renown and honor belong to them. With reverence we Christians pronounce the names of the saints who filled the world with the glory of their virtues and their life, who are the honor of God and the glory of the Church; and thus amongst every nation the names of their heroes continue to live.

The higher and the grander the calling was to which God has chosen individual men for the salvation of nations and the world, the more glorious are their names. God Himself gave to them their names. He gave to Abraham and John the Baptist their names,

and Our Divine Saviour Himself changed the name of the Apostle Simon into Peter on account of his living and firm faith, and called him the rock on which He would build His Church.

Still more glorious, sweeter and more marvelous is the name of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which embraces within itself a fullness of mysteries, graces and beauties, and fills the whole world with reverence, love and hope, lives on every tongue and in every heart, and disseminates peace and joy.

And yet, my beloved, what are all the glorious names of men, of the saints and even of the Blessed Virgin Mary in comparison with the one name *Jesus* which reveals the whole fullness of divine mercy, redemption and grace, and makes known to us the Divine Saviour in all His adorable greatness? Of this great name the Apostle St. Peter says: "Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4, 12). This is the Name that is above every name, in which, according to the Apostle St. Paul, every knee must bow, in Heaven, on earth and under the earth, and every tongue must confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father. I will therefore, speak to-day for our edification on the meaning and power of the name Jesus.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. No man, no prophet, no saint, not even Joseph and Mary could give to the Divine Child a suitable name, which would truly correspond to His future

name and glory. God alone could give this glorious Name and hence Joseph was commanded through the angel: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus" (Matt. 1, 21). In fact, this Name is the sum, or the epitome, of all the glories and perfections which are found in Jesus Christ. It reveals all perfections which are proper to Jesus as God, and all the graces and virtues which Jesus united in Himself as man. It unveils before us all the works which Jesus as God and as man accomplished for us men. If, therefore, the Redeemer is and means Jesus, He is infinitely wise, good, omnipotent, just, holy and merciful, as God is eternal Goodness, Wisdom, Omnipotence, Justice, Sanctity and Mercy. These divine perfections Jesus shows also towards us. Therefore the Apostle St. Paul says: "But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and justice, and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1, 30). But if we consider the Redeemer as man, the name Jesus tells us everything, that He became for us as man, therefore an example of all virtues, marvelously humble, patient, meek, amiable and obedient. As man Jesus is truly become for us an Example and Exemplar, as He Himself says: "For I have given you an example that as I have done to you, so do you also" (John 13, 15). O how touching was His life from the crib to the Cross! How winning His childlike obedience, His zeal in prayer, His love of His enemies, His meekness and His silence! What was more dignified and admirable than His intercourse with the Apostles, with sinners, with children, with the people, even with His enemies! In the mirror of His

peace and of His love, into His eye, even His enemies gladly looked; and no matter what sufferings overtook Him, even in suffering and pain, in life and in death, He is a most admirable example for all who suffer, are in sorrow, or struggling in the agony of death. Therefore the Apostle St. John exclaims: "Of His fullness we have all received," from the fullness of His example and His virtues. He has truly become a mirror for all men in which all can behold themselves and the Exemplar Jesus, and recognize themselves as they really are in Him.

If the Redeemer is as God and as man *Jesus*, then is He truly, according to the meaning of the name, our Master, Teacher, Shepherd, Physician, Father, Judge and Mediator, so that we find everything in Jesus, and can with truth often repeat: "O Jesus, my all." If we are sick, He is our Health; if we are hungry and thirsty, He is our Food and Drink for eternal life; if we are poor, He is our Riches; if we are weak, He is our Strength; if ignorant, He is our Teacher and our Wisdom; if sinners, He is our Justice, Sanctification and Redemption. Jesus, our All.

2. The name Jesus therefore embraces within itself all the glorious names which the prophets gave to the Messiah centuries before His coming. Isaias foretold: "And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the World to come, the Prince of Peace" (Is. 9, 6). How truly and gloriously do these designations and qualities correspond to the name Jesus! If He were not God, He could not have redeemed us; if He were not a mighty Hero, He could

not have overcome Satan, nor have born His bitter Passion; and if He were not our Counsellor He could not have given to us His heavenly teaching and His commandments.

Everything in Him is marvelous, His Incarnation, His Life, His Death, His Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven. He is the Father of the past ages, since all men from Adam on hoped in Him; He is the Lord of the present, since He rules everything; He is the Lord of the future and of eternity, since He pronounces judgment; and eternal bliss or eternal pain are decreed to men according as they have loved Him or have hated Him. For this reason the Apostle St. Peter says to the Jews: "Neither is there salvation in any other name, for there is no other name under heaven given to man whereby we may be saved," or as the Apostle St. Paul in his glorification of the Saviour of the world testifies: "God hath given him a name which is above all names; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus is in the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2, 9, 11).

For this reason, centuries before the events, the prophet Habacuc rejoiced at the coming of the Blessed Saviour, and at all His glory: "I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in God my Jesus!" He, the prophet, reviews in his mind all the promises of God, all that the former prophets and patriarchs had foretold, all the longing of the just, and the expectation of the nations. Therefore he cannot restrain his feelings, and He re-

joices in God his Jesus. And with him rejoices the whole ancient world; with him rejoices Limbo where the souls of the just waited with indescribable longing, until Jesus should have come down to them as their glorious Redeemer.

And yet, what is the joyful cry of the prophet Habacuc, what is the longing of the ancient world, in comparison to the joy of the Blessed Virgin, and with her the whole Christian world over Him whom they should call Jesus? "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour," in my Jesus! She alone, the Blessed Virgin, was at that time able to grasp the immeasurable greatness, glory and sanctity of Him whom the angel bade her to call Jesus. And in fact, my beloved, the whole Christian world shares in her joy, and joins in her praise of God the Saviour. Millions and millions of Christian souls feel themselves most fortunate, consoled and strengthened in every position of life, in joy and in sorrow, in life and in death, at the thought of Jesus. This Name is a Name which is above every name, which the Apostle declares that no one can with advantage, grace, salvation and blessing for time and eternity so much as pronounce, except by the Holy Ghost.

3. And, truly, the name Jesus has a remarkable power and efficacy. In it is united all the brilliancy and blessing of Christianity; in it all graces, all merits, all virtues, all prayers, all sacrifices; in it are faith, hope and charity, peace, joy and justice, temporal and eternal weal. Jesus is the admiration of Heaven, the gratitude of earth, the terror of Hell. Jesus is music

to the ear, honey to the mouth, joy to the heart. Jesus, Saviour, Redeemer, High Priest and King; Jesus, Teacher and Exemplar, Physician and Shepherd, Food and Drink, Jesus the true Life on earth, true Bliss in Heaven! Who can count all the souls that have been redeemed through Jesus and made happy? Who can number all the sinners who have found forgiveness for their sins in the name of Jesus? Who could count all the sorrowful and the sick who have been consoled by the Name of Jesus, who all the poor and the miserable who have found help in the Name of Jesus? Who could count the numberless sighs, tears and prayers that have gone from earth up to the throne of God, and found a hearing on account of Jesus? Yes, even the prattle of innocent children, when they fold their hands for the first time and recite the Our Father, becomes precious in the sight of God on account of Jesus. Who can recount all the glorious, magnificent works of Christian mercy, the deep love of God and neighbor, such as the world never witnessed before the Christian era? The Name of Jesus called them into existence. Yes, as the sun in the morning and evening glorifies everything and floods all things with charming beauty, forest and field, hill and dale, pasture and meadow, so, too, the Name of Jesus glorifies, beautifies and ennobles all life, all virtue, all time, Heaven and earth.

May we also, my beloved, give honor to Jesus by our Christian life, by observance of His commandments, by gratitude and joy. May we also join in the song of praise of the prophet, or in the joy of the Blessed Virgin, at the very thought of such a glorious Re-

deemer. Therefore when you speak the Name of Jesus speak it not in scorn by misuse or contempt, by sin or unchristian life. Just as the Name of Jesus was spoken for the first time on earth by the pure lips of the Archangel Gabriel, and at its first utterance was destined only for the ear of the purest of virgins, Mary, in precisely the same manner should we with pure mouth and pure heart utter this Most Holy Name, that it may become for us salvation and blessing, grace and redemption. "Jesus my Love," was the favorite utterance of the holy bishop Ignatius. And he repeated it in his sufferings, and when the pagans threatened to behead him if he uttered it again, he said: "In that event you would find engraven on my heart the words: 'Jesus my Love.'" May Jesus be also our Love. May Jesus rise with us, accompany us to our work, to prayer, to devotions; Jesus in life and in death, Jesus praised and blessed forever. Amen.

SERMON XVII

THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

“Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart.”

In the festivities of Corpus Christi, the triumph of Our Divine Saviour is celebrated in the midst of His faithful. The Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is His second Bethlehem, where He is born again under the appearances of bread and wine; His second Nazareth, where He works in the quiet workshop for the salvation of our souls; His Promised Land, where He goes about to console, to heal, and to visit and strengthen the sick and the dying; His Mt. Calvary, where He constantly offers Himself for us. But every Christian soul feels also a longing desire for God and for heavenly bliss, and the soul seeks to satisfy this longing desire on earth by devotion to the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. This Sacrament is like a divine magnet which attracts to itself the hearts of men. Therefore, there is in the Catholic Church no devotion, no festivity, no feast which is not glorified and consecrated by the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

For this reason, the Feast of the Sacred Heart follows immediately after that of Corpus Christi, for in this festival, as in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, the love of Jesus is wonderfully expressed, and in both and through love, our love for Jesus is enkindled. In the Blessed Sacrament is the Food of

Love, and in the Sacred Heart of Jesus the devotion of love is enkindled, and wonderful to relate, both festivals and devotions were inaugurated in the Catholic Church by virgins. The festivities of Corpus Christi were introduced by the holy Sister Juliana in Luttich, in the year 1246, and the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus by the Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque in a convent in the diocese of Autun in France. She died in the year 1690, at the age of forty-five years, and was beatified by Pope Pius IX in the year 1867. God chose the weak to accomplish a great work for the salvation of souls in His Church.

Our Divine Saviour appeared to the Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque. His Divine Heart was wounded, flames burst forth from It; It was crowned with a crown of thorns, and a cross protuded from Its centre. In truth a picture full of meaning and beauty. Yes, the Sacred Heart was wounded for our sakes; It burned with love and longing for us; It bore all pains, cares and miseries for our sake, and longed with a great desire during the whole life of Christ for the sacrificial altar of His love, for the Cross.

We will, therefore, to-day meditate on the Sacred Heart of Jesus; first, as the seat of Divinity; secondly, as the seat of Love; thirdly, as the seat of pain; and fourthly, as it continues to live in the Blessed Sacrament a life of grace and a life of sacrifice.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. As the Divinity of Jesus Christ was united with His soul and body, so, too, is it united with His Sacred

Heart. Therefore the Sacred Heart of Jesus was and is Divine, and Divine Its life. O Heart of Jesus, as holy and as pure as God Himself! O Heart of Jesus, as sweet and true as God Himself! As adorable, as amiable as God! Take our hearts to Thee, O Jesus, in order that they may become pure, and holy and worthy, a dwelling place of God and of His grace!

2. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is also the seat of His love, for love dwells in the heart. Oh, how much love dwells in the heart of a father and a mother towards their children, in the heart of a friend towards a friend, of a bride towards her bridegroom! But what is all, even the most intimate love in human hearts, in comparison with the love of the Divine Heart of Jesus! Go to the crib and behold the love in that little Heart of the Divine Child in which the greatest love the world ever saw was born. How much does the heart suffer that is inflamed with a great love? For love is a fire that consumes hearts in its holy flame. For this reason, the sainted martyrs often felt the external pain less because they were consumed from within by the flames of love for Jesus, and joyfully with songs on their lips—a wonder in the eyes of the pagans—went to their martyrdom. Saint Stanislaus was often obliged to cool his breast with snow in order to reduce the flames of his love for God in his heart. Love for God enlarged the heart of St. Philip Neri so much that it was only through the miraculous power of God that he continued to live. Love compelled St. Peter of Alcantara to leave his narrow cell and go out into the open to seek to dampen the flames of his love, and to

breathe. Oh, who can describe the flames which consumed the Sacred Heart of Jesus! Every care, every compassion, every longing for the salvation of our souls seizes and moves that Sacred Heart. During three and thirty years the Sacred Heart of Jesus burned with love for God His heavenly Father, and with love for us, and was consumed as He Himself revealed in these words: "I must be baptized with another baptism, and how it drives and forces me until it is accomplished."

3. But the heart is also the seat of suffering, for love cannot live without suffering. How painfully is often the heart of a father moved on account of his children; how deeply does the heart of a mother suffer! But what are all external sufferings in comparison with the agonies of the soul, with the cares and miseries which afflict men and shorten their life? And yet, my Christians, what are all the sufferings of human hearts together in comparison with the sufferings which the Sacred Heart of Jesus endured on earth? As great and as infinite as His love was, so great and immeasurably deep were the sufferings of His Sacred Heart. The life of Jesus was a martyrdom, and His greatest pain was the martyrdom of His own Heart. Behold His anxiety and sadness, the misery of His soul on account of our ingratitude and sins, on account of the numberless souls that are lost, who plunged themselves into eternal unhappiness. On Mt. Olivet He struggled with death, and the agony of His Heart forced a sweat of blood from the pores of His body. Oh, if only a spark of His suffering should fall upon our hard hearts,

how earnestly would we not do penance for our sins, and how much grace and mercy would we not find! Oh, how much gratitude do we not owe to the Sacred Heart of Jesus!

4. But, my beloved brethren, rejoice for the Sacred Heart of Jesus still lives; It lives a life of grace in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. What the Sacred Heart of Jesus felt in Its life on earth towards sinners and the erring, towards the poor, the sick and the inconsolable, that It now continues to feel in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. No matter how great your cares, your miseries, your sinfulness may be, the Sacred Heart of Jesus lives on in the tabernacle and beats with love and compassion for you. Take your refuge therefore to the Sacred Heart, open your heart to It, in order that It may heal your heart, console and have mercy on you.

In the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar the Sacred Heart of Jesus continues Its life of sacrifice. It constantly offers Itself to God, the heavenly Father, for us, with Its merits, with Its sufferings on earth, with Its obedience and death on the Cross. Jesus unites with His Sacred Heart the hearts of His true Christians and offers to God their prayers, merits and sufferings. This is surely a sufficient reason to adore and praise the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to love It from your hearts, and frequently to pray: "O sweetest Heart of Jesus, I implore, that I may love thee more and more."

But let us learn also from the Sacred Heart of Jesus to be meek and humble of heart, in order that our hearts may be united to the Heart of Jesus and never

more be separated from Him, neither by sin nor by ingratitude, but that united on earth by a Christian life, it may remain united to His eternally by a happy life in Heaven. Amen.

SERMON XVIII

THE HOLY GHOST

“There are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.”

— I JOHN, 5, 7.

“I believe in the Holy Ghost,” thus sounds for every Christian who wishes to be saved the eighth article of the Apostles’ Creed. In fact, as faith in God the Father and the Son fills the whole world, so, too, faith in the Holy Ghost. And as the world is full of the omnipotence of the Father and full of the Redemption through the Son, and consequently gives testimony of the Father and the Son, so also it is filled with the Providence of the Holy Ghost, and gives glory to the Holy Ghost by a like testimony.

The omnipotence of the Father as Creator of Heaven and earth called the world into existence out of nothing; but the world was still void and empty. It was the work of the Holy Ghost to adjust it and communicate to it wonderful beauty, motion, life, fertility and the multiplicity of its creatures. Hence Holy Scripture says: “The Spirit of God moved over the waters,” which still covered the whole earth.

In like manner, Our Divine Saviour accomplished the work of Redemption, announced truths, and gained again grace for the world; but it was the work of the Holy Ghost to adjust as it were this Redemption, to

apply it to men by forming the kingdom of grace and truth, the Holy Church, and to communicate to her marvelous beauty, fruitfulness, and perpetuity, in order that in her and through her the Redemption might become the common property of all men until the end of time. For this reason, the Holy Ghost came down on Pentecost at Jerusalem, in order to begin His divine activity for the salvation of the world. This was in accordance with the promise of Our Divine Saviour to His Apostles: "I will ask the Father and He will give you another Paraclete, in order that He may remain with you forever, the Spirit of truth." I will, therefore, speak to you to-day of the Holy Ghost, of His name, of His activity, and of His government of His Church.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. The Holy Ghost is the Third Divine Person, as every Christian believes and knows. And every one who is baptized or receives any of the other sacraments, receives them in the name and with the invocation of the Holy Ghost. As we have been taught by Our Divine Saviour to call the First Person Father, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Heavenly Father, Who has adopted us as His Children; and as we for this reason call the Second Person the Son, as Jesus called Himself, so, too, do we call the Third Person, according to the revelation of Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost.

True the Holy Triune God is the purest, most perfect Spirit; the angels are also pure spirits and have

no bodies; and our own souls are immortal spirits; nevertheless we call the Third Person by the particular name, *Holy Spirit*, because He gives to us and to the whole world that supernatural, that higher spiritual life of grace. The Apostle St. John writes: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3, 6). This birth to a higher spiritual and supernatural life, as the fundamental condition of eternal happiness, takes place through the Holy Spirit in Baptism, as Our Divine Saviour Himself teaches: "Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3, 5). On earth, he does not belong to the Church, and after death, he does not belong to Heaven, just as one who is not born of woman, could not belong to the human race on earth.

The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity is called, especially, the Holy Spirit, although supreme holiness is common to all three Divine Persons. As creation is attributed to the Father and redemption to the Son, so to the Holy Ghost is attributed sanctification. He sanctifies our souls by His grace; he sanctifies the Catholic Church and the faithful. Whatever holiness there is on earth, or in Heaven in the Blessed Virgin Mary, the angels, the saints and the blessed — all this grace and sanctity comes from the Holy Ghost. True, Our Divine Saviour merited for us and for the whole world, by His bitter Passion and Death, all grace and sanctification, but it is the Holy Ghost that animates our hearts, and makes them susceptible to these graces

and to redemption. He distributes the graces, and calls forth those heavenly virtues of innocence, faith, hope and charity, piety and the sublime works of Christian mercy, which are the glory and beauty of the Church, and loudly proclaim her divinity and truth before all the world. Therefore, every child that has been baptized, and in whom is seen the innocence and grace imparted by the Holy Spirit, answers the question: "Who has sanctified thee?" briefly and clearly: "The Holy Ghost has sanctified me." And as this child, so the whole Christian world and everything that is blessed in Heaven owes its sanctification to the Holy Ghost, as it owes creation to the Eternal Father, and redemption to the Son. But let us ask now when did the Holy Ghost begin His divine activity? If He as the Third Divine Person of the Blessed Trinity is God from eternity to eternity, equally omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent with the Father and the Son, so, too, He must have revealed His divine activity from the beginning. And this is true even though it was concealed from the eyes of the world, as the sublime mystery of the Most Holy Trinity was not revealed from the beginning.

The Divine Activity of the Holy Spirit adjusts, animates and develops into one organic whole what the Omnipotence of the Father and the Wisdom of the Son created. The universe which was called into existence by the word of the Father was, as it were, the building material from which the Holy Spirit made all things, just as the builder from materials, brick, iron and wood, constructs a beautiful palace.

The Jews formed only a mob, a crowd of men and women, speaking the same language, descended from the same stock and having the same customs; it was only after their exodus from Egypt and the promulgation of the Law on Mt. Sinai that they became a nation, with the same faith in, and the same hope of a Saviour to come, with the same proclamation of laws, with the same sacrifices and ceremonies. The Old Testament with its promises was a figure of the New Testament and of the Christian people. This transformation of the Jewish nation was the work of the Holy Ghost. The prophets, who foretold such wonderful things of the Saviour, until the expectation of a Saviour was to be found even among the pagans—these prophets were inspired and enlightened by the Holy Ghost. The just of the Old Testament, who were so great in their hope and in their holy lives, were enriched by graces given by the Holy Ghost. The martyrs of the Old Testament, who so heroically offered their lives in defense of the Commandments and their faith in one God, were strengthened and preserved steadfast by the Holy Ghost. Whatever the Old Testament possessed, whatever the Jewish nation possessed that was good and holy—it was such by virtue of the operation and assistance of the Holy Ghost.

Thus it was also, my beloved, at the time of Our Divine Saviour. The Redeemer had, indeed, announced His heavenly truths, performed miracles of heavenly mercy, had chosen His Apostles, instituted the sacraments, and offered up the Bloody Sacrifice of His life on the Cross for the Redemption of the world,—

but all these things were merely the material, so to speak, for the New Testament, for the kingdom of grace and truth, the one, true Catholic Church. But the Church was not yet in existence. To arrange it, to animate it, to constitute it the kingdom of God on earth, this was again the work of the Holy Ghost.

We witness therefore the same phenomena at the conclusion of the New Covenant of God with man on Pentecost in Jerusalem, as once at the forming of the Old Covenant on Mt. Sinai. On the fiftieth day after the exodus from Egypt God announced the Old Law to the Jewish people through Moses; this law was written on two tables of stone, the Ten Commandments. Likewise it was fifty days after Easter, after the exodus from the kingdom of death, that the Law of Grace was proclaimed to the world that had been redeemed. It was announced by the prince of the Apostles after the descent of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost.

In the signs, whereby the coming of the Holy Ghost at Jerusalem made itself perceptible, were contained the greatest mysteries. There came a sound as of a mighty wind rushing. So, too, with the assistance of the Holy Ghost should redemption and the Christian faith be spread throughout the world with the swiftness of the wind, and with the power of the storm destroy paganism with its idolatry, purify the earth from pagan vices, and dispel superstition and the tumors of the passions.

But the Holy Ghost came down in the form of fire, as God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, or as a pillar of fire went before the Israelites in the desert.

The Holy Ghost purified the hearts of individuals and of men as fire purifies metal. He enlightens our understanding, He dispels the darkness of unbelief, He enkindles the glorious light of Catholic faith throughout the world, and warms all hearts with the fire of divine love.

The Holy Ghost came down upon the Apostles in the form of fiery tongues, communicating to them the gift of tongues. Not one nation alone, as the Jews, but all nations from now on are called to the redemption, and all mankind should now speak only one language, the language of faith. God caused the confusion of languages at the building of the tower of Babel, as a punishment for man's pride and apostasy from Him, and divided the human race into many and hostile nations. But with the coming of the Holy Ghost, all nations are again united into one true Catholic Church, as the great family of God on earth.

3. Herewith is the government of the Holy Spirit made manifest in the Church. Our Divine Saviour had indeed with His merits, teaching, and sacraments, as well as with His Bloody and Unbloody Sacrifices, gathered together, as it were, the building stones for the kingdom of God on earth, that is, to found the Catholic Church. But before the Church came into existence, the Saviour had ascended into Heaven, and it is now the Holy Ghost who completes the work, and preserves and governs the Church for the salvation of mankind. Therefore the true Church celebrates as her birthday the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles at Jerusalem. The Holy Ghost now rules, teaches

and animates the Church according to the promise of Our Divine Saviour. He preserves her in truth, communicates to her His treasures of grace, and will be with her until the end of time.

Just as in Jesus Christ, the Divine and the human were united for the redemption of man, so, too, must there be united in His Church the Divine and the human element for the preservation of grace and faith. A purely human activity would be as little calculated to bring about this sublime work, as the pure man in Jesus Christ, without the Person of the Son of God, would have been sufficient to save the world. The Holy Ghost takes the place of the Son of God and, instead of the Humanity of Christ, the visible Church teaches and saves. Therefore the Redeemer spoke so emphatically to His sad and troubled Apostles: "It is expedient for you that I go, for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you" (John 16, 7).

The Holy Ghost is now, my beloved, as it were, the Divine Soul of the Church which animates and sanctifies it, just as the soul of man animates and preserves his body. The Holy Ghost is, moreover, the Divine Teacher of the Church Who leads her into all truth, so that she cannot err, just as the Divine Saviour was the visible Teacher of His Apostles. The Holy Ghost sanctifies souls through the Church, communicates to them the graces and merits of Jesus, rules and directs them. Yes, as only God could create and redeem the world, so only God can preserve the fruits of redemption on earth, and communicate them to man-

kind. In this work the Church is the instrument of the Holy Ghost. What would have become of heavenly truth amidst the errors of men and their change of views and opinions, if the Holy Ghost had not preserved it on earth in and through the true Church? What would become of grace and the sacraments in the midst of the passions of men, if the Holy Ghost were not preserving them until the end of time, and dispensing them in and through the Church? If the Holy Ghost did not govern and preserve the Church it would have long ago been destroyed in the fearful storms and persecutions, and by the hatred of godless governments and men. But the Holy Ghost rules the Church, preserves it, leads it into all truth, and continues through it the redemption and sanctification of men, until the end of time.

4. God the Father is marvelous in His creation of the world, marvelous and amiable is God the Son in its redemption, but just as marvelous is God the Holy Ghost in the preservation of the redemption, in the sanctification of men and in the government of Holy Church. Through her and in her He continues the work of Our Divine Saviour. As He unites Himself with Christian souls by His grace, and makes them children of God and heirs of Heaven, so, too, He unites Himself in a higher and more divine way with the one true Catholic Church, and makes her the kingdom of God on earth, the kingdom of grace and of truth. This is His action in the Church, which will be completed only on the day of judgment, on that day when the Church will become the Church Triumphant and

every Christian soul will be transported into the eternal bliss of Heaven.

But, my beloved, the Holy Ghost came down upon us in baptism as He did on the Apostles. Our faith, our hope, our love is the work of the Holy Ghost. If a sinner is moved to true conversion, if any one is terrified at the thought of death and judgment, if a Christian soul is consoled in its suffering, encouraged in its battles, moved to devotion — all this is the work of the Holy Ghost. We should praise Him, adore and always pray to Him in order that He may complete the work in us which Our Divine Saviour has begun for us, namely, our redemption and eternal happiness. Yes, may He enlighten our understanding with heavenly truths, and move our wills, to live according to the will of God, in order that according to the words of the Apostle St. Paul, our hope may not be a false one, but that He who has begun a good work in us, may also complete it in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the day of judgment and of eternal happiness. Amen.

SERMON XIX

THE ACTION OF THE HOLY GHOST IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

“But when He cometh, the Spirit of truth, He will teach you all truth.”—JOHN 16, 13.

By His Death and Resurrection the Saviour had accomplished the Redemption of mankind. But the fruits of this Redemption were to pass on to all succeeding generations, and to continue until the end of the world. Therefore Christ said to His Apostles: “It is expedient for you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. . . . But when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will teach you all truth, and will bring to your mind everything that I have taught you” (John 16, 7). The Incarnate Son of God ascended to His heavenly Father Who had sent Him. It was Thursday, the hour was noon, the fortieth day after His Resurrection, when Jesus Christ in the same place, on Mt. Olivet, which had witnessed His bloody sweat and His apprehension, with a last look upon His Mother and disciples, raised His hands, blessed them and ascended into Heaven. But what an invisible host accompanied Him! He was accompanied by the souls of the patriarchs, prophets and all the just from Adam on, who until that time had quietly awaited the arrival of the

Saviour in Limbo. The Saviour, in His Ascension, took with Him these souls as a glorious trophy of victory, as rich spoils taken from the enemy, as the firstlings of His accomplished Redemption through His Adorable Blood. They might indeed have used the word of the royal prophet: "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the King of Glory shall enter in." To the angel's question: "Who is this King of Glory?" they answered: "The Lord who is strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle; the Lord of hosts, He is the King of Glory." Who could describe the amazement of the heavenly hosts when they beheld the human nature of Christ raised high above them in Heaven, where He now as man sits at the right hand of God, and is called upon in prayer as the Lord of Creation and the Supreme Judge of men.

But the Son of God, my beloved, did not forget His promise. Ten days after His Ascension, the Holy Ghost came down to set in motion the grand work of Redemption. And for this reason Pentecost is one of the first and greatest feasts of Christendom, for it is at the same time the birthday of Holy Church, in which men attain their salvation.

By this event, we are reminded of the love of the Father and the Son Who sent the Holy Ghost to be with us and with the Church all days even to the end of the world. And for this reason, I will speak to-day of the action of the Holy Ghost in the Church of Christ.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

Before Pentecost Day, my beloved, there was no Christian Church. Christ had, indeed, a small band of Apostles and disciples who clung to Him and were His companions, but they formed no special congregation or Church. They had no special places of meeting, no divine service, no special priests, but they all clung to the Jewish synagogue; offered sacrifice in the Temple at Jerusalem according to the prescription of Moses, ate the Paschal Lamb, and joined in the festivals of the Jewish nation. But on Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Ghost matters were completely changed. The Apostles now publicly proclaimed themselves together with the disciples, preached Jesus Crucified, converted and baptized three thousand, imposed hands upon the baptized, and these received the Holy Ghost, that is, they were confirmed by the Apostles. They met every day for prayer and the breaking of bread, that is, for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice and the Last Supper. Thus the first Christian congregation, thus the Christian Church itself, took its beginning in Jerusalem. Shortly afterwards, they scattered throughout the whole world to teach all nations. This took place through the power of the Holy Ghost, Who accomplished such extraordinary effects through the Apostles, and out of timid, wavering and ignorant men made such heroic, steadfast, faithful and eloquent teachers of the world, whom no human wisdom could withstand.

1. But what the Holy Ghost accomplished at Jerusalem on Pentecost, that the Catholic Church accomplishes to-day. Our Divine Saviour said to His

Apostles: "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you" (John 14, 26). Therefore the Holy Ghost was sent by Christ to be the Teacher, Sanctifier and Consoler in His place. But precisely because He works in the place of Christ He associates Himself most closely with the work of Christ. Wherefore they await in vain His enlightening and sanctifying grace, who neglect to learn to know the teachings of Jesus Christ, to receive His sacraments and to observe His commandments. Why did Christ for years teach the Apostles, disciples and the people? Why did He give commandments and institute the sacraments, if the Holy Ghost through His grace would dispense men from the hearing, the learning, the observance of the commandments and the reception of the sacraments? It is therefore evident, how absolutely He is associated with the work of Christ, in the fact that He communicates His graces only to those who make use of the means of salvation instituted by Christ. This will become evident to us, if we consider, how Jesus Christ, although He has ascended into Heaven, nevertheless continues the work of Redemption on earth, and that through the Holy Ghost, by means of His teaching, sacraments, and the government of His Church.

2. By means of His teaching, Christ constantly goes about through the world as the Light of the world, but He goes about as the Light of the world through those whom He has constituted His bishops and priests, and through the Holy Ghost sent by Him.

His word is constantly heard from the mouth of His preachers: "Who hears you, hears me." This doctrine of Jesus Christ, supported by all divine credentials, is offered to the world for its acceptance, and is incessantly presented to men as the law of the world. And while this is done externally by the voice of those who preach the word of God, it is done internally by the operation of the Holy Ghost. He is always present, supporting the Word of God, enlightening and illuminating the understanding. He preserves in the Church of Christ the teachings of Christ in all their purity; He ordains and inspires those who announce the word of God to do so clearly and intrepidly; He opens the hearts of the hearers of the Word that they may be able to understand it, to believe it and guard it with reverence as a message from God Himself. Wherefore the Apostle says: "No man can say Christ Jesus, excepting the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 12, 2).

In like manner, Jesus Christ continually goes about the world as the Reconciler and Sanctifier of men. He does this also by the priests, constituted by Him to act in His stead, and through the Holy Ghost Whom He has sent. Day by day He renews under the visible mediation of the priests His death of atonement before the eyes of the world. Day by day, through them, in the presence of the faithful, He offers His obedience and His sacrificing love to the Father in atonement for the disobedience and selfishness of men. Day by day, through the priests, He cleanses men in the saving waters of baptism, and purifies them from sin and makes them children of God. Day by day, through

the agency of the priests, He nourishes the faithful with the Food of His Body, and makes them fit for everlasting life. Through the priests, He assists the sick and the dying, and prepares them for their passage into eternity. But whilst He does all this visibly through His priests, He does it invisibly through the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost consecrates and sanctifies the bishops and priests in their high office. He gives to their words that same internal power and effectiveness as if Christ Himself had spoken in His divine power and love. He re-creates men, and makes them to be the children of God; He preserves them in the state of grace, consoles and blesses them through Christian hope in the eternal promises of God.

Jesus Christ goes through the world as the Good Shepherd of His flock. Those whom He has received into His flock He feeds and guides all the days of their life. "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." But He does all this through the bishops constituted to take His place. In His name they rule the faithful, teach, admonish, praise or punish them in accordance with their deserts. The Holy Ghost assists the ministers of God in their external pastoral work: "Take heed to yourselves, and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops to rule the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20, 28). Thus spoke the Apostle to the congregation at Miletus. The Holy Ghost equips them with that courage and constancy which the shepherd of the people must have. He guides them in their discipline, admonishing, ex-

aming, blaming, encouraging, threatening. He is the constant internal Instructor of souls, active in the consciousness of men in all their activities.

3. Thus the Holy Ghost administers the work of salvation since the day of Pentecost when He came down upon the Apostles and disciples. He constitutes priests and bishops, consecrates and enlightens them. He unites them into one body, animates and rules them, and gathers about every priest hundreds and thousands of the faithful and unites all together into one communion, into the Holy Church. They all believe and teach through the assistance of the Holy Ghost as with a single voice; they all dispense or receive the graces of Heaven as out of one hand. But in as much as thousands and millions of the faithful gather together, fighting for God and truth around their shepherds, and the one Supreme Head, the Pope, they constitute an immense congregation, whose faith is the word of God, whose life is sanctification and redemption; amongst whom the commandments of the Lord are the public rule of life. This faith, this life, this public rule of conduct of thousands and millions of Catholic Christians, what an immeasurable power it is for each individual, yes even for those who are not of the household of the faith. That is the power of the leaven which constantly leavens the world. Not only what is written of Christ has this power, but the Church is animated and quickened by the Holy Ghost. He constantly acts and works in her until the end of the world, continuing the work of Redemption, "until we all," according to the words of the Apostle St.

Paul, "have reached the fullness of the age of Christ," that is share in His Redemption not only partly as on earth, but entirely through participation of His glory in Heaven.

4. But the Holy Ghost acts not only in and through the Church, but also in individuals, and thus enlarges the sphere of the Church's activity. The Church of Christ can only announce the Word of the Saviour through her ministers in some particular place and time, and only before a definite number of hearers. But the Holy Ghost takes the word of the Church, announces it contemporaneously when and wheresoever He wills, and preaches it according to the needs of each one, in solitude, in the sick room, in the workshop, by night and day. And He preaches it not only to the ear, but to the heart, to the conscience, and reveals the high meaning of the word and its hidden power.

In like manner, my beloved, the Catholic Church can only sanctify men through the sacraments, purify them from sin and lead them back to God, therefore only at designated times and in certain places. But the Holy Ghost calls sinners when and where He will for conversion. If they follow His interior inspirations He leads them on to contrition, and moves them to penance, and purifies and sanctifies the truly contrite sinner, and leads him through the worthy reception of the sacraments to a renewal of the living union with Christ and His Holy Church. Every Christian is a child of the Holy Ghost whom He never lets out of His eye, and whom He strives to form, step by step. His admonitions, warnings, encouragements, are now

loud, now low, meek or earnest, praising or blaming, to-day seemingly vanished, to-morrow awake and powerful. At one time He points to this truth, at another time to another. One He assists in temptations, another in his usual occupations. To one He speaks before the deed, to another after the deed; sometimes He reveals Himself to the sinner, at other times to the converted, and again to the beloved child, but always and everywhere working for the one end, that the soul may attain to its great destiny and share in the Redemption of Christ. Who among you could not confirm this by your own experience, if you would but glance attentively at your former or present condition of soul?

5. This is therefore, my beloved, the action and the work of the Holy Ghost in the Church and in the individual — such a divine action that the Redeemer knew no better consolation to give to His Apostles for His forthcoming departure from the world, than this: “But I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go: for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you, but if I go I will send him to you. . . . He will give testimony of me, and will recall to you all things whatsoever I have told you.” This was literally fulfilled in the coming of the Holy Ghost, in the transformation of the Apostles into enthusiastic and enlightened teachers of the world, in the transformation of pagans into holy and steadfast Christians, in the marvelous guidance of Holy Church through all persecutions, and through all attacks of her enemies even to the present day, and in the God-fearing life of innumerable

Christians who correspond to the grace of the Holy Ghost and make use of the means of salvation. Therefore as the individual Christian, free from sin is full of joy, peace and justice in the Holy Ghost, and rejoices in Him, so too and still more Holy Church rejoices, for she knows that the Holy Ghost will be with her until the end of the world, so that she can with His divine assistance lead her children, the Christian people, to sanctification and union with Christ.

Therefore is the coming of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost since the days of the Apostles celebrated with such solemnity and joy. Each one of us, my beloved, should also celebrate the coming of the Holy Ghost worthily and joyfully, and pray to Him to come down upon us and govern our hearts and fill us with His gifts and graces in order that it may not appear as if this great festival had no meaning for us. If this great festivity is nothing to a man, and if he does not make use of the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, He will be as one empty-handed, as one who has excluded himself from the common joy and the common goods of the Christian people. Let us ask the Holy Ghost, constantly and insistently, that in accordance with the promise of the Redeemer, He may lead us into all truth, enlighten our understanding in order that we may know what is necessary for us, move our wills to live according to the will of God, and fill us with peace and joy and justice. St. Paul says: "For hope confoundeth not: because the charity of God is poured forth into our hearts by the

Holy Ghost, who is given to us — (Rom. 5, 5),— being confident of this very thing, that he, who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1, 6). Amen.

SERMON XX

SANCTIFYING GRACE

“Know you not, that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”—I COR. 3, 16.

Our Divine Saviour, by His suffering and death, has redeemed us from our sins, and in His Ascension into Heaven left the whole treasure of His merits and the graces that He had acquired. But these merits and graces must now be communicated to the individual souls; the individual souls must be made capable of profiting by the Redemption. This is the task of the Holy Ghost. He must, until the end of the world, communicate the merits of Christ to the soul of each individual Christian, and make it capable and worthy of Redemption. Therefore Our Divine Saviour said to the Apostles before His departure: “It is expedient for you that I go, for if I go not the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go I will send him to you” (John 16, 7).

Our Divine Saviour had to suffer only once in order to redeem us and to acquire the grace of God and the right to Heaven, lost through the fall in Paradise. After He had accomplished this work, He could return to His Father Who had sent Him into the world. It is not so with the Holy Ghost. He is obliged to sanctify men not only once, but to continue to do so until

the end of the world. For wherever men are born and through their carnal birth inherit original sin and its consequences, they must also enter into the Redemption and share in the merits of Christ and eternal life. But in order that they may share in the merits of Christ the Holy Ghost must make each individual soul capable of it, that is, He must sanctify it. This sanctification takes place through sanctifying grace. I will, therefore, to-day speak of sanctifying grace, its nature, its worth and its consequences for the soul.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. Among all the gifts of God, my beloved, sanctifying grace is the first and the most important, because through it the Christian attains to the highest dignity which a mortal is capable of attaining. It is a grace; therefore we have received it from God without any merit of our own, otherwise it would not be a grace but a reward. What merits can we allege, since we have received sanctifying grace in Baptism? Perhaps original sin? Or if we have received sanctifying grace again in the sacrament of Penance as a gift of God, perhaps the sins committed? All the greater, therefore, is the mercy of God and the worth of the merits of the Redeemer. The more marvelous that this grace is in its nature and in its effects, the more must it fill us with reverence and gratitude.

But sanctifying grace is, in the language of the Church, a supernatural strength and virtue given to the soul of the Christian in Baptism, which as long as the soul remains free from mortal sin constantly re-

mains in the soul and is a participation in the Divine Nature. It is a bond which unites us to God, and inflames our hearts with love for God and sustains them, and this is the highest virtue.

God lives in us in a twofold manner: through the omnipresence of His Divine Nature, and through His grace. But God is not only in us, but in all creatures, with His Substance, Presence, Providence and Power. He is everywhere and fills everything, so that even the most minute creature could not preserve itself and continue to exist, if God were not in it by His Substance, His Presence and His Power. Therefore God Himself asks by the mouth of the prophet Jeremias: "Am I, think ye, a God at hand, saith the Lord? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" (23, 21). And St. Paul exclaims: "In him we live, and move, and have our being." God is therefore in each one of us as He is everywhere by His omnipresence.

But God is, in a most particular manner, in the souls of Christians, who, by Baptism, are free from sin, consequently, are just and holy, and who live without committing mortal sin, and have wiped out all grievous offenses by the sacrament of Penance. He is in them through sanctifying grace. This grace is a participation in the Divine Nature, that is in the sanctity of God, and this grace is therefore called sanctifying grace, which consequently, truly makes the soul holy. Through this grace, the old sinful life inherited from Adam is destroyed; and there begins a new life, the supernatural life, which originates with God and makes the souls beautiful likenesses of God, and ac-

ording to the words of St. Peter, participators in the Divine Nature. Thus the soul becomes capable of possessing God wholly in eternal bliss, according to the words of Christ: "He that is not born again of water and the Holy Ghost, cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."

We live, my beloved, two different lives. One life is the natural life common to all men, which we enter upon by our corporal birth; the other is the supernatural life which we receive in the regeneration of Baptism. The natural life springs from the union of soul and body, and the supernatural life originates with God from the union of grace with the soul. From the soul come the understanding, the will, the memory and the other faculties. From grace germinate all Christian virtues and all gifts of the Holy Ghost, as wisdom, piety, fear of the Lord.

The soul gives to the body life, beauty, strength and dexterity; grace gives to the soul heavenly beauty and innocence and strength to do good. But this beauty which sanctifying grace gives to the soul is so wonderful that the soul becomes the object of the love and pleasure of God, yes, and is called in Holy Scripture the bride of God and the temple of the Holy Ghost. "Know you not, that you are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3, 16). And Christ Himself says: "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him" (John 14, 23). The soul is differentiated from the angels, only in so far, that it dwells on earth in a

mortal body, and can lose grace by sin, whereas the angels have no bodies, dwell in Heaven, and cannot lose their grace.

Now we understand better why the soul which possesses this grace is a child of God and an heir of Heaven, and because through this grace it participates in the Divine Nature it is the dwelling place of God, a sanctuary, and as it were Heaven. Thus as God has descended to it in order to dwell in it, so should it also ascend to Him in order to dwell with Him, and after the separation of the body possess completely that which it now in this mortal life possesses only in part. For this reason Christ could say to His Apostles at their return to Him, drunk with joy, because they had performed miracles in His Name, and because even the devils were subject to their commands: "Rejoice not in this, that spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice in this, that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10, 20). And why should we not rejoice? For this grace is the reason why the Son of God calls us His friends. Christ says: "I will not now call you servants . . . but I have called you friends, because whatsoever I have heard from my Father I have made known to you" (John 13, 15). He not only calls us friends, but even His brothers. St. Paul says: "For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all one. For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. 2, 11). "What you do to the least of these my brethren, that you do to me." As Christ is the only begotten Son of God, so we are, by sanctifying grace, the adopted children of God. St.

John exclaims: "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God" (1 John 3, 1).

2. From this marvelous grace the source of all redemption which makes us participators in the Divine Nature, that is in His sanctity, wisdom, goodness and other perfections, originates the living faith of the true Christian, his unwavering hope, his burning love, virtues which for this reason are called divine virtues. This sanctifying grace instills meekness, humility, patience, and strength; it sanctifies, ennobles, perfects, deifies, as it were, the good works of those who have the good fortune to be in the state of grace. Such a one does not live a human, a natural life; he lives a divine life. David exclaims: "You are gods, and children of the Most High."

Here, my beloved, is unveiled before us a new picture, which still more reveals the wonderful providence and mercy of God, which He exhibits towards us if we love Him and persevere in His grace. Christ says: "Gather for yourselves treasures in heaven, which no thief can steal, and which will receive you into heavenly mansions." Purchase Heaven with good works, for Heaven is a reward; it is a crown, a remuneration. And behold even the poorest, even the lowliest among the Christians becomes richer than the richest of the children of earth. How so? The most indifferent, smallest, humblest acts, as eating, drinking, daily work, rest, everything that the Christians living in the state of grace offer daily to God, with the desire to fulfill in all things the holy will of God and to please Him

thereby — everything is ennobled and perfected by sanctifying grace and made meritorious for supernatural life. Therefore the poorer one is, the more infirm, the more despised among men, the richer he is in the eyes of God because he offers daily to God his poverty, sickness, misery, and all his sufferings, and therefore bears the heavy burdens with patience for the love of God. For this reason the Apostle so earnestly recommends us to do all our works for the honor and love of God (Cor. 16, 14; Col. 3, 17), and Christ says: “ And whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward ” (Matt. 10, 42).

Must not, therefore, my beloved, sanctifying grace have a wonderful value which even surpasses our comprehension, since it makes such insignificant works and acts as eating, drinking, housework, everything that we must do — since it makes these worthy of an eternal reward! Whence does this all come? It comes from the fact that we are made participators by grace in the Divine Nature, and consequently all our works performed in the state of grace and for the love of God receive a higher, a supernatural consecration. How many new merits does not a Christian in this manner acquire in a day, in a week, in a month, in a year, and throughout a lifetime? How he ascends by every meritorious work in the future reward, and how will the place of his glory and happiness in Heaven become constantly higher!

The words of Holy Scripture may be applied to sanc-

tifying grace: "Now all good things came to me, together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands" (Wis. 7, 11). A soul that is adorned with sanctifying grace stands in greater honor and wealth than the queens of this earth. It possesses a treasure which surpasses the treasures of this earth, for these are transitory, while it is divine and eternal. With it reigns in the soul the peace and joy and justice of the Holy Ghost, and a foretaste of future happiness in the dwelling place of the saints.

What enhances the wonderful value of sanctifying grace still more is the circumstance that it can be constantly increased. It is like a capital fund, which grows through interest and compound interest. Every good work, performed in the state of grace, every struggle against sin, every victory over temptation, every act of contrition for former sins committed, whether mortal or venial, long forgiven sins, every worthy reception of the sacraments, every good communion, daily prayers, the celebration of divine worship — everything done in the state of sanctifying grace increases and multiplies it. The more it is increased, the greater will be the merits of the Christian, the more glorious his future happiness. For this reason, the saints were so marvelous in their earthly lives, the joy of God, the glory of Jesus Christ, the honor of the Catholic Church, because they increased in the most extraordinary manner sanctifying grace in their souls by their sufferings and struggles, their labors and virtues, by their good works and prayers. Sanctifying grace was the source of their holy life here on

earth, it was the cause of their eternal happiness. The greater sanctifying grace in the Christian is, and the more faithfully he preserves it until death, the more glorious will be his bliss and the more glorious his resurrection from the dead, and the glorification of his body. From this are evident the consequences of sanctifying grace for the soul.

3. As the sun surpasses the light of the moon, and the moon the light of the stars, and the stars themselves in brilliancy and beauty surpass one another, so, too, it is with the saints of God and with all Christians who are in the state of grace. The greater their grace was on earth, the more they corresponded with it, and the more they increased it by good works, the more wonderful is their happiness. For this reason, the Blessed Virgin Mary surpasses all in glory, because she was full of grace. So also the Apostles, the martyrs, the confessors, the virgins, surpass others in that great army of the blessed in Heaven, according to the degree of grace which they possessed on earth. And the poorest, the most humble Christian on earth, unknown, persevering in a good life, servants, widows, oppressed laborers, the abandoned sick — they are more glorious in Heaven, richer and more blessed than powerful princes, kings, great statesmen, and great scientists, if they faithfully persevere in grace.

Every soul in the state of sanctifying grace is the bride of the heavenly King, the daughter of the Eternal Father, a temple of the Holy Ghost and a sister of the angels and saints. Even if on earth she was crippled, bent, and hateful to the eyes of men and despised,

she bears within herself a treasure which all the gold of earth can never purchase. Sanctifying grace is, as it were, a precious diamond from which the sunlight sparkles in the most beautiful colors. Thus sparkles the heavenly light of innocence and grace from the sanctified souls of children. Thus is seen in the eye of all good Christians peace, piety, faith, hope and love, a pure conscience and joy of heart, so long as they remain in the state of sanctifying grace. And even if the struggles and temptations, sufferings and sorrows are many — they only loosen the soul from the shackles of human passion, and raise it in the glory of sanctifying grace.

With what feeling did not our Redeemer speak of the soul to the Samaritan woman! “If thou hadst known the gift of God!” (John 4, 10). This gift which comes down from Heaven through the Holy Ghost into the soul, and raises it so wonderfully above everything that is earthly and mortal to what is heavenly and supernatural, to God and happiness. Sanctifying grace is the precious pearl of the Gospel, to acquire which the merchant, in fact every intelligent man, is willing to give everything. The holy martyrs shed their blood in order to preserve it; to preserve it confessors underwent sufferings and struggles, thousands have left all things, honors, titles and goods, and withdrew themselves into monasteries; in order to regain this precious pearl sinners have subjected themselves to severe penances. Sanctifying grace is the honor, the joy, the consolation of all Christians amidst the contradictions and vicissitudes of life.

Sanctifying grace is the bridal robe of which Our Divine Saviour speaks in the Gospel, without which no one is permitted to attend the wedding feast which the king prepared for his son, and every one found without the bridal garment will be cast into exterior darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Sanctifying grace is the bridal garment of the Christian soul, which she receives from the Holy Ghost in the sacrament of Baptism, or after having committed mortal sin, she regains in the sacrament of Penance. Clothed with this bridal garment, she much approach Holy Communion, as the bride when she appears before the altar on the day of her honor. With this bridal robe must every Christian be clothed in the hour of his death, if he wishes to enter into eternal bliss, and without this robe, he will be cast into exterior darkness, into the night of eternal perdition.

Yes, my beloved, to behold oneself after death in the brilliancy of sanctifying grace, therefore as the child of God, the heir of Heaven and the temple of the Holy Ghost — that is the first beginning of bliss and unspeakable joy. Even the angels behold with rapture the heavenly beauty of such a soul, and ask: “Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun?” It is a Christian soul adorned with grace.

And even if this bridal robe is blemished with venial sins, the flames of Purgatory wipe out these blemishes and stains. As soon as it is thoroughly purified and again in that brilliancy which it had from the Holy Ghost in Baptism, it ascends from Purgatory to the

eternal vision of God and is numbered in the circle of the elect. For sanctifying grace is the pledge of bliss, the seal of Redemption and the cause of eternal joy.

4. May you, therefore, recognize this gift of God, this precious pearl, this source of all faith, of all hope and love, the cause of all good works and all merits, this joy and rest of a good conscience and the best consolation in all the sufferings and vicissitudes of this life. To preserve this grace must be our highest duty; to constantly increase it through good works, through the worthy reception of the holy sacraments and patience in suffering — that should be our most zealous care. O rejoice, Christian souls, who have the happiness to be in the state of sanctifying grace, and with it to possess innocence of heart and purity of conscience. God speaks to you through me: “Say to the just man that it is well, for he shall eat the fruit of his doings” (Isaias 3, 10). As God has now established His dwelling place in you, so should you also enter into His dwelling place as your eternal reward.

How many poor and abandoned souls there are in the world, who live in poverty and lowliness, but are adorned with sanctifying grace. God knows them; God loves them; and they are precious in His eyes, and are the object of His particular pleasure. Let the worldlings with their money and their titles and distinctions boast. “They have called the people happy that hath these things; but happy is that people whose God is the Lord.” And yet whoever amongst us is in the state of mortal sin and has lost this glorious good

of the soul — sanctifying grace — is fortunate if he seeks this precious pearl, this pledge of Redemption and bliss, and finds it again by a worthy penance. O no tongue can say what it really means to be in possession of sanctifying grace, therefore redeemed, and an heir of Heaven! That is truly the original right of the soul, the true title of nobility as the child of God, the sublime consecration as the temple of the Holy Ghost, and the pledge of eternal happiness. All who are in the state of grace can, on earth, and in Heaven in the circle of the blessed and in the vision of the infinite glory of God, say with king David: “Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what great things He hath done for my soul” (Ps. 65, 16). Amen.

SERMON XXI

THE GLORIES OF DIVINE GRACE

“Now all good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands.”—Wis. 7, 11.

The Apostle St. John describes the whole fullness of the treasures and goods which the Son of God brought into the world by His Incarnation in these words: “And we saw his glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1, 14). We should also share in this glory partly on earth, but wholly in Heaven. Sanctifying grace is a participation in this glory of Jesus which flows into our souls in Baptism. For this reason the Apostle St. Paul knows no better wish for the faithful than: “The grace and the peace of God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.” Grace is the highest good which the joyful and heavenly message of the Son of God, therefore the Gospel, brought upon earth. We become children of God through grace, and attain the right of possessing the very highest goods that God can communicate to us, yes the right to the possession of God Himself and His eternal glory.

The Apostle St. Peter, meditating on the greatness and glory of grace, says to the faithful: “By whom he hath given us great and precious promises: that

by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1, 4). These promises, which are founded on sanctifying grace, are superlatively great because they, immeasurably, surpass all created things. But they are also precious, because they contain the best that God can give us, yes, the more precious because they have been purchased by the price of the Blood of Jesus. What can, consequently, be for us poor fallen creatures, for us sinful men, greater than to be raised up from the depths of our misery, and made children of God and participators in His Divine Nature and glory?

In this, the whole greatness and glory of grace lies open before us. It is the sublime mystery, which was hidden from men before the coming of Jesus Christ. But the greater that this mystery is which God alone could reveal, the greater appears the richness and glory of grace. Through it, man is incorporated with the Divine Redeemer, and shares in the fullness of His Redemption. Alas, this sweet and sublime mystery is all too little known among Christians. This lack of knowledge is the reason why our own dignity as faithful, the greatness of our hopes and the inexhaustible merits of Jesus Christ are so little esteemed among us. I will, therefore, speak to-day on the glories of divine grace.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. Sanctifying Grace is a ray of the Divine Beauty, which is poured into our soul and penetrates it with such a Divine Light that even God Himself is delighted

with it, and through it the soul becomes a child of God, and is called to pass beyond the confines of human nature to the glory of God and to the heritage of Heaven. The light of the sun is a weak picture of this grace, which pours out encouragement, beauty and life over all creation which without the sun would present a sad and sorrowful appearance, as it does when covered with dark clouds.

Grace surpasses in the most sublime manner all created things. Heaven and earth will pass away according to the words of the Redeemer, but the salvation and justice of the just will remain, for those are the works of God, but this is His likeness. The great Doctor of the Church, St. Thomas, says that it is a greater work to awaken a sinner to the life of grace than even to create Heaven and earth, for these are inanimate and changeable substances, but grace continues on in the eternal participation of the glory of God. The world is indeed His house, but the sanctified soul is His temple. From this is evident the truth that grace far surpasses all created things as God Himself, because it is a heavenly good which is poured into the soul out of the fullness of the Divine Nature.

But grace not only surpasses all natural things, but also all other works of God. His omnipotence shows itself in His works, but His omnipotence shows itself more brilliantly and sublimely in His mercy, in the grace with which He sanctifies men. St. Augustine explains the promise of Our Divine Saviour that the faithful would do greater things than He did on earth, by the grace through which the ordinary tasks and

sufferings are raised and made meritorious for eternal life. Yes, the gift of grace is more glorious for God and man than visible miracles, such as the sudden healing of the sick, the resurrection of the dead, and the like. For by grace God works in the soul, creates it anew, raises it above every natural being, breathes into it supernatural life, and impresses upon it His own likeness.

This marvelous power God gave also to His Church and to His priests, in so far, as they, through the preaching of the Catholic faith, and through the administration of the sacraments form souls, redeem souls, and make them worthy of grace and eternal life. Such a power is really greater than that of giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, or speech to the dumb. These miracles we can see, but the infusion of grace through the Holy Ghost we cannot see, and yet it is a far more sublime miracle, because it takes place in the soul which we can see with our bodily eyes as little as we can see God. God would not be the infinitely great God if we could behold Him in a natural manner, and in the same manner grace would not be such a sublime and heavenly good if it were visible to us. It will be visible to us only on the day of judgment, when the soul will behold itself in its glory and beauty, and will eternally meditate on it as the source of new joys.

2. Sanctifying grace raises us also, my beloved, high above our human nature. It is the spring of eternal life; it is the root whose blossoms and fruits are the bliss of Heaven. Even the saints who now rejoice

in Heaven, rejoice only on account of the grace which they possessed on earth. Therefore the happiness of Heaven is nothing more than the final development and completion of grace. The Apostle St. Paul says: "For the wages of sin is death. But the grace of God, life everlasting, in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6, 23). As sin on earth must precede before eternal death could follow, so, too, must grace precede before the soul can receive the reward of happiness. Grace is consequently such a wonderful good that even the bliss of Heaven depends upon it.

But as the happiness of Heaven is sublimely high above our sinful nature, so, too, is divine grace. It does not lower itself to us but elevates and raises us above our nature to its heavenly substance, and makes our soul like to God and worthy of God. It unites itself with our soul and communicates to it all its own excellences and beauty. It weaves, as it were, its heavenly treasures into a bridal robe with which it clothes the soul, and as it is itself the most glorious work of God, so, too, it transforms the soul into the most sublime work of God. We comprehend now why we are, when in the state of grace, the children of God and heirs of Heaven, and co-heirs with Jesus Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost and companions of the angels.

3. It is something great, my beloved, that we, through divine grace, are elevated above all created nature, but it is something still greater that we become participators in the uncreated Divine Nature. The nearer an object approaches a fire the more light and warmth does it receive, and the nearer we approach

to God the more do we participate in God. But we come closer to God by sanctifying grace and enter through it into the most intimate union with Him. St. Peter teaches us this when he declares that the promises are great and precious, which God made to us through Jesus Christ in order that through them we might become participators in the divine nature. On earth this takes place through grace, but in Heaven through entrance into the eternal glory of God. As the earth attracts all created things to it, so also God attracts all sanctified souls to Himself, and gives to them a dignity and a beauty which the material eye could not bear to look upon. It reveals only after death that transfiguration of which the Apostle says that eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man what God hath prepared for those who love Him, that is, for those who are in the state of sanctifying grace.

This participation in the Divine Nature is such a sublime mystery of the glory of divine grace, that I shall endeavor to explain it as far as possible. Everything, even the smallest creatures, have a certain participation in the divine perfections, be it in their existence and life, or in their qualities and faculties. They are all traces of the glory of God, all a mirror in which we behold the omnipotence, wisdom and providence of God, and they are all a book in which we can read of His love, goodness and mercy. But since the visible creatures are corporeal they are indeed an evidence of the work of God and reveal His wisdom and omnipotence, but by no means represent to

us His Divine Nature, since God is a Spirit; but our souls and all pure spirits, as the angels, are even according to their spiritual nature a likeness of God, and therefore rational and immortal. Consequently they become like to God if they are a pure and unblemished mirror of divine grace from which is reflected a ray of the Eternal Beauty and Sanctity. But this takes place through divine grace which transforms and sanctifies the soul. And herein lies the participation in the Divine Nature, which gives to the soul a most particular and sacred attribute and likeness to God, a reflection of His Divine Sanctity. The innocence which shines forth from the eyes of a baptized child, the sublime patience of a martyr, the heavenly purity of the Christian virgin, the marvelous piety and courage of so many saints — they are not of the earth, they are something superterrestrial, which comes from Heaven, a reflection of the Sanctity of God, rays of His Divine Being. And divine grace is the source of all this.

4. This truth enlightens us still more if we reflect that God alone is eternal and unchangeable, and that all creatures, even the soul, have been created out of nothing. And even if they live, they fall back into nothingness just as soon as God removes His hand from them and ceases to preserve them in existence. But through grace, we are called to eternal life, to the source of all being and life, to God. Here our existence is so secured, as if we were of ourselves eternal; here there is no death. Heaven and earth may pass away and the whole world be shaken to its founda-

tions, but we have in and through grace nothing to fear.

Therefore Holy Scripture says: "But the just shall live for evermore; and their reward is with the Lord, and the care of them with the Most High" (Wis. 5, 16). But the sinners and the godless complain: "Of what use to us is the pride and pomp of riches? Everything has disappeared like a shadow. . . . So also have we, scarcely having been born, ceased to exist, and we are consumed in our malice." They have despised grace, and with it eternal life; therefore they live not eternally but die eternally, that is suffer the most terrible pain, namely, eternal death. If we wish to live, if we wish to be truly like to God, we must take our refuge to the Spring of all life and all being, to God, and seek His grace and preserve it.

5. This truth, my beloved, leads us to a new glory of divine grace. When Lucifer rebelled against God he said: "I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the Most High" (Isaias 4, 14), but he seduced Eve to disobedience towards God with the words: "You will become as gods." This attempt without God and against God to become like unto God of one's own power is boundless pride, and a real self-deification. For this reason Lucifer fell so deeply, and our first parents lost grace in Paradise and learned from their own misery their own nothingness. But with grace we can, yes we should, become like to God. Our Divine Saviour Himself says to us: "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."

It is divine grace that raises us ever more and more to divine perfection. The world is filled with the glory and perfection of God which He pours out over Heaven and earth, and all, even the most insignificant of His creatures, in an infinitely more wonderful manner than the sun spreads heat and light and beauty over the earth. Yet all the perfections and all the beauty of creatures cannot be compared with the perfection and beauty which grace pours into the soul. In this manner it becomes a supernatural likeness of God, in which is contained the perfection of creatures, just as in God the perfections of the whole universe are contained. "The kingdom of God is within you," said Our Divine Saviour to His Apostles, though it may be perhaps hidden and invisible as is the plant in the seed. For this reason St. John wrote: "We are already children of God, but it hath not yet appeared what we shall become when we see God as he is" (1 John 3, 3). As long, therefore, as we cannot see God, we cannot see His likeness in our soul, but grace is, as it were, the aurora of the Divine Sun; if we patiently await and live a Christian life, until this Sun rises and God shows Himself after our death, then the whole glow of the divine beauty will penetrate the soul and transfigure it. Grace offers a secure pledge of this. "We shall be like unto God because we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3, 2). The soul, in the state of grace, awaits this immeasurable happiness in Heaven; there it will enter into its own unspeakable beauty and glory.

6. Oh, who can adequately describe the greatness

and sublimity of divine grace? It elevates the Christian high above his miserable nature and above all creatures; it is the root and the beginning of heavenly bliss. But what is still more glorious in grace is the sanctity which it communicates to man. The most glorious attribute of God is His infinite sanctity. It is the special object of the adoration of the heavenly hosts who without ceasing praise God saying: "Holy, Holy, Holy, art thou Lord God of Sabbaoth." Through grace we share in the divine sanctity, and therefore we call this grace sanctifying grace. It does not mean merely the forgiveness of sin, the remission of the eternal punishment, and the inheritance of Heaven, but more especially that through it the soul becomes a holy likeness of God. Therefore this grace cannot exist in the soul with sin, no more than God Himself can. Sin annihilates neither human nature nor the understanding, nor the other powers of the soul, but it does destroy grace with its supernatural qualities and glory.

Even the most immoral and most abandoned men cannot deny their admiration of the sanctity which shines forth in so many members of Holy Church, and exhibits itself in the practise of the most beautiful virtues. St. Paul calls all the true faithful holy, because through grace they share in the sanctity of God. Amiable and lovable is the sanctity of the soul in innocent children, pure and undefiled in holy virgins, earnest and worthy in pious priests, quiet and submissive in suffering Christians, sublime and admirable in the martyrs. But everywhere, it is the glory and

the crown of the soul which elevates it above human nature, and receives, through grace, from the sanctity of God, a supernatural life.

7. For this reason, grace is truly the greatest good of man on earth, and we understand now the words of Jesus: "If thou hadst known the gift of God!" There is nothing on earth that can be compared in value to grace, for it means as much as the possession of God and eternal bliss.

Oh, how foolishly therefore do so many Christians act, who so carelessly risk their highest good, this heavenly pearl and crown of their soul, by committing sin! They act a thousand times more foolishly than Esau, who squandered his heritage for a mess of pottage. We shudder at a long-continued eclipse, and yet what is it in comparison to the darkness of sin which hovers over the soul, when the light of grace is extinguished. We are shocked at earthquakes, at tidal waves, when thousands of men lose their lives, and yet what can be a more terrible sight than the numberless Christians, who live from day to day in a most miserable condition, having lost the grace of God. We are incensed at the stupidity or carelessness of so many who squander their goods or miss the opportunity to acquire a great fortune, but who are not at all disturbed at surrendering wantonly the treasures of grace, or who despise the opportunity of regaining the grace of God by the worthy reception of the sacraments.

The sight of the desecrated Holy City filled the prophet Jeremias with sorrow; the friends of Job

sorrowed with him for seven days over his misfortune; parents wring their hands in despair when their only child dies; others lose their mind if they lose their fortune—but at the loss of grace they laugh and joke, when, in reality, they could not mourn and weep enough! With the loss of grace, we lose also the queen of virtues, the love of God, with all the former merits of a Christian life, and with it the heavenly view of the soul, the Holy Spirit, the rights of children of God and heirs of Heaven.

We can, my beloved, aptly apply the words of Jeremias to the poor soul that has fallen from grace: “How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! How is the mistress of the Gentiles become as a widow: the princes of provinces made tributary. Weeping she hath wept in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks; there is none to comfort her of all them that were dear to her: all her friends have despised her, and are become her enemies” (Lam. 1, 1, 2). God, the angels, its pure conscience, its good works, its friends—all have left it, and poorer than the widow and more abandoned than the orphan, it now stands alone. Is sin worth such sorrow and such a loss? Oh how little we love our true happiness, our true good, if we esteem grace lightly! “If thou hadst known the gift of God!” This light esteem of grace falls back upon God, upon Jesus Christ, upon Redemption and bliss, yes, upon our own souls.

But let us esteem grace most highly, and preserve it most carefully, and if we have had the misfortune to lose it, seek and find it again through the worthy

reception of the sacraments. Then we can say with joy: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour . . . for He that is mighty hath done great things to me and holy is his name." Therefore I close with the words of St. Paul to the faithful at Corinth: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the charity of God, and the communication of the Holy Ghost be with you all, Amen" (2 Cor. 13, 13).

SERMON XXII

GRACE, THE INCARNATION, AND THE MOTHER OF GOD

“Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee.”—LUKE I, 28.

Grace is truly a great, sublime and heavenly good which surpasses a millionfold all the goods of this world. Earthly goods, after a brief life and possession, pass away forever, but grace leads to eternity. The former can never satisfy the human heart, and much less fill it with peace and joy. But grace can accomplish this, and that, too, in such a measure that sanctified souls are the happiest on earth. But with this the riches of grace are by no means exhausted. It is also the cause of faith, hope and love, the root of all Christian virtues and source of all merits for eternal life. Grace purifies man from all sin and elevates human nature to God and consequently makes men heirs of Heaven. In amazement over this, King David exclaims: “What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little less than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honor” (Ps. 8, 5, 6).

The glory and greatness of sanctifying grace is so sublime and godlike, that it would almost seem that

outside of God there could be no greater mystery in Heaven or on earth, and no more sublime dignity given to man. And yet there is a greater mystery, the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. And there is a greater dignity than that which grace gives to the soul, the dignity of the Mother of God. The more that we meditate on these two most sublime mysteries the more glorious divine grace appears with a new beauty and greatness, so that we can in many ways apply the words of the Archangel Gabriel addressed to the Blessed Virgin Mary to every Christian soul that is sanctified by grace: "Thou art full of grace, the Lord is with thee." Therefore we will meditate to-day on the glory of divine grace with reference to the Incarnation of the Son of God and the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. Our Redemption which God promised in Paradise consists in this, that the Son of God became man in order that He might suffer for us and offer up for us a Bloody Sacrifice of Atonement on the Cross. As God, Jesus could neither suffer nor visibly appear on earth, but as a mere man He could not redeem us either, because His sufferings and Sacrifice could not have had for us that infinite and inexhaustible merit demanded. Not even the angels, even the highest and holiest of them, were in a position to save man from his sins, and to render to God congruous satisfaction. Only the Incarnate Son of God could do this.

The Son of God, through the Incarnation, united His Divine Nature with the human in one and the same Divine Person, so that He was from that time on true God and true man. But the human nature was not transformed into the Divine, but so marvelously incorporated with the Divine that it belongs to it, and has a divine dignity. Now through the grace which Our Divine Saviour has merited for us we are indeed not made divine, but we preserve our human nature and personality, while we are made like to God, receive Godlike qualities, and become children of God and co-heirs of Christ.

The Son of God humbled Himself in that He took on the form of a servant, and became man, in order to redeem us, but we are elevated, since we, poor miserable men, are made like to God and participators in His Divine Nature. Herein consists precisely the wonderful difference between the Incarnation of the Son of God and the grace which is ours by reason of the Incarnation. The prophet Isaias foretold in the most striking manner the humiliation of the Son of God: "Despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity; and his look was as it were hidden and despised; whereupon we esteemed him not. He hath born our infirmities and carried our sorrows: and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted" (53, 3, 4). Truly, my beloved, we need only to consider the bitter Passion and Death of Our Divine Saviour, to behold His sweat of blood, His scourging and crowning with thorns; we need only to

keep before our eyes His Cross, and the unspeakable scorn and contempt, and the hatred which He endured — then we can comprehend the immensity of the love of the Son of God, Who for our sakes offered such a sacrifice of humility and degradation.

How different is the elevation of man through grace! What is in fact more astonishing than that God should give Himself to the world, or that He gives to us poor mortals Heaven? That God should enter into communion with man, or that we should enter into communion with God? that God should be born as a little Child, or that we should be born again as children of God? that God should take on our poverty, or that we should be constituted heirs of His eternal glory? Wonderful is therefore the Incarnation of God, but wonderful, too, is the elevation of man through grace. Just as low as Jesus humiliated Himself, so high has He raised us men. Yes, there takes place, as it were, an exchange whereby the Son of God took on our human nature, whilst we through grace become participators in His Divine Nature. This exchange may be compared to the ladder of Jacob reaching to Heaven. God comes down upon earth, and we ascend to Heaven. We need not therefore be astounded if the saints teach that the Son of God for the sake of grace, in order to elevate us through grace, became man. St. Augustine says: "God became man, in order that man might become God," that is a child and heir of God. Still more plainly and more clearly does St. Fulgentius teach that the first birth of the Son of God was from God, the

second from Mary. And our first birth is from man, our second from God, for we are born again by water and the Holy Ghost, as Jesus said to Nicodemus.

2. If therefore, my beloved, the distance which is between God and man is infinitely great, and consequently the humiliation of the Son of man in His Incarnation infinitely great, so, too, is our elevation by grace marvelously great. The divine dignity which Jesus imparted to His Humanity is reflected through grace on all the faithful who are in the state of grace. He is, in truth, the New Adam, and the faithful are truly His new and spiritual children. In Him is the fullness of all grace, yet whoever is united with Him draws from this Divine Vine a new and a heavenly strength, and this is divine grace.

O my Christian soul, recognize thy dignity with which no other on earth can be compared! Through Baptism we are incorporated with Our Divine Saviour and with His kingdom, and receive as a pledge the indelible mark which gives us a right to the love of God, and makes us like unto Christ, on earth through grace, in Heaven through bliss. If it is, therefore, a great transgression to banish grace from our souls through sin, and to degrade ourselves again to the slavery of Satan and make ourselves like his terrible and hateful image; it is a still greater transgression to rob oneself as a child and heir of God of the bliss of Heaven. This is the greatest sin that man can commit, the greatest robbery which he can perpetrate on his own property. Neither Heaven nor Hell can take away from us our right to bliss; only man can do this,

who carelessly and negligently squanders the grace of God and surrenders himself to the Devil. To be a living member of Christ in the state of grace is a great honor, but to be a dead member, one that has lost grace, is a terrible disgrace. The honor leads to heavenly honor and bliss; the disgrace to eternal disgrace and pain.

Yes, my beloved, the Incarnation gave to us Jesus Christ, the Joy of the human race, and the Happiness of the soul, in whom Heaven and earth rejoice. Grace makes Him also our Saviour and Redeemer, and makes us conformable to Him on earth and in Heaven. But sin and the wretched sensual pleasures of the world rob us of grace, and of Jesus, and of everything. May God preserve us from such a deception, for grace is the cause of blessing, but sin is the cause of His curse.

3. With the mystery of the Incarnation is bound up another glorious mystery, the mystery of the dignity of the Mother of God. As the fullness of grace from which all men draw is inseparably united with Jesus Christ our Redeemer, so, too, is grace on account of the merits of Jesus inseparably united to the Blessed Virgin Mary. For this reason the angel said: "Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee." The mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary rests on this truth. Mary gave to the Son of God His human nature, therefore she was the first to be called, and that in the most sublime manner, to participate in His Divine Nature. Her participation consisted in this that she was full of grace, consequently immaculate and sinless. Her graces there-

fore have the precedence before the graces of all men, of all saints and of all angels. She is the queen of all.

But if we consider the dignity of the Mother of God for itself alone and without any reference to grace, then we may, without fear of offending the Mother of God, assert that grace is a greater good and gives a higher dignity. As the Mother of God, Mary stands immeasurably above all men and angels, and as such merits also all love and reverence. But she herself would rather sacrifice her dignity and her rights as Mother of God than sacrifice grace. Her doubt and her fear which she expressed to the Archangel Gabriel pointed to the fact that Mary would rather have remained a child, a daughter of God through grace, than become the Mother of God through nature, therefore without grace. If she therefore consented to the words of the angel, she did so because grace was inseparably united to her dignity as the Mother of the Saviour.

Our Divine Saviour confirmed this excellence of grace when He at the news that His blessed Mother had come, spoke these remarkable words: "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" He then turned to His disciples and said: "Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister and mother" (Matt. 12, 49, 50). Yes, when a woman of the people expressed her admiration at the teaching and miracles of Jesus, she could find no better way of expressing herself than by saying: Blessed is His Mother, and thereupon Jesus answered:

“Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it” (Luke 11, 28). What can prove more the glory of divine grace than these words of Jesus? Mary was great as the human Mother of Christ, but as such she stood only in a natural relation to Him, whereas in her capacity as spiritual Mother, she was in a high spiritual relationship incomparably greater. She possessed this high spiritual relationship in reality, because she was full of grace, and did the will of God more perfectly, than all the other saints together, heard the word of God and observed it. She was holy above all angels and saints, and that through the immensity of her graces. St. Augustine in a sermon taught this truth, that the dignity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as Mother of God, would have been useless had she not also borne Him spiritually, that is, observed the word of God. Therein, therefore, lies her sublime greatness and high privilege that grace was inseparably united with her. Of what use to us are therefore the highest earthly dignities without the grace of God? Or who will place human glory, renown, or rewards before the grace of God? There is, in truth, a wonderful difference between the desire to appear great before the eyes of men, and the thought to stand in the grace of God, therefore to be inscribed in the Book of Life.

Through grace, we become like to the Mother of God. Grace was her highest privilege. From it came her dignity as Mother of God, her sublime virtues and her heavenly bliss. And if she was full of grace, and thereby surpassed all angels and saints, grace also re-

mains to us as our highest excellence and our highest dignity, and makes us like unto Mary. The same Holy Ghost comes down into our souls, where Our Divine Saviour wishes to be born again, since we become according to His words, His brethren, His sister, yes, and His mother, as soon as we receive His word, and do the will of God. Yes, if we are in the state of grace, Our Divine Saviour comes in His own Person into our body and soul in Holy Communion. Grace gives to us also, as it did to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the right to rejoice and sing: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour; for he that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is his name."

The Blessed Virgin Mary as the Mother of God had to be pure and holy; pure and holy we must also be if we wish to remain in grace like to her. For this reason, sin is the greatest and the most deplorable misfortune which can overtake a Christian, because it robs him of this likeness and of all heavenly honors and privileges.

But the dignity of the Mother of God teaches us another truth. Mary is sublimely elevated above us because she is the Mother of God, but she is also our Mother. She is, of course, not our Mother according to the flesh, but our spiritual Mother, because through grace we are the brothers and the sisters of Jesus Christ, and hence, through grace, God is our heavenly Father, Mary our Mother. O my Christian, into what a sublime relationship dost thou not enter through grace, and how should you not care for and preserve

this heavenly gift, in order not to become unworthy of God, the Redeemer and His blessed Mother!

4. This intimate union of grace with the Incarnation of the Son of God, and with the dignity of the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, makes it clear why God Himself esteems grace so highly. He did not send His Son on earth to suffer and to sacrifice His life on the Cross — for the sake of the sun, or the moon, or the earth with its innumerable creatures — they were not worth such a great price — but in order to gain grace for us men. Grace is, therefore, worth as much as the Precious Blood which Jesus shed for it on the Cross. He purchased for this great price grace not for Himself but for us. How highly, therefore, must not God esteem grace, and how highly the soul in the state of grace! Oh, how foolishly do so many Christians act who believe those on their own word, who promise them freedom, pleasure, and everything on earth, but rob them of their faith and of grace.

Our Divine Saviour, as though He had not done enough for grace in His bitter Passion and Death, instituted the sacraments, and offers Himself continually for us in the Holy Sacrifice in order to place us in the security of grace. And yet this new proof of how highly God esteems grace makes no impression on many Christians, and therefore they remain away from the sacraments. If they knew the gift, if they knew that those who esteem grace lightly, or despise it, also despise Him Who sacrificed His Precious Blood for the sake of grace — if they knew that He who despises grace, despises also the salvation of His own soul and

of eternal life, they would, indeed, become of a better mind, and esteem grace highly, which God esteems so highly.

The creation of the world, of the angels and of men, and all those miracles which Jesus Himself performed on earth, took place by one divine word. But, my beloved, what sufferings, and what labors and blood did it not cost Our Divine Saviour to acquire grace for us! And you, who are in the state of sin, consider that grace is not worth the smallest effort or the least self denial! Every evil on earth that overtakes men, God permits, in order that we may seek our salvation in His grace. So high does grace stand that it outweighs all evil. May we, therefore, on earth, suffer also many things and do penance. Grace will supply everything in an infinite degree; but where grace fails, there is every temporal happiness only a toy which disappears as a shadow. Let us therefore seek grace, and if we have found it in the sacraments, then we share in the Divine Nature, likeness with Jesus and His blessed Mother, and possess salvation and peace on earth, and bliss in Heaven for all eternity. Amen.

SERMON XXIII

THE HOLY GHOST AND GRACE

“The charity of God is poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us.”—ROM. 5, 5.

Our Divine Saviour, His Bloody Sacrifice on the Cross, and the Unbloody Sacrifice of the Altar, the institution of the sacraments, and the foundation of Holy Church, have only one end and object, namely, to secure for us the grace of God. The more glorious the Redemption is, the greater, also, is the glory of divine grace. It is a sublime, supernatural quality infused into our human nature in a most wonderful manner by God Himself. Through it we share in the Divine Nature, and enter into the most intimate, mysterious and living union with God. The Holy Ghost infuses into our souls grace, and with grace Himself, and dwells in us in a real and substantial manner through grace. Hence, Holy Scripture calls men: Temples of the Holy Ghost; or as the Apostle St. Paul wrote to the faithful at Corinth: “Know you not, that your members are temples of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have through God” (1 Cor. 6, 19). The Holy Ghost, according to the words of the same Apostle, has changed us into the likeness of God. But He does not do this exteriorly, like the sun for instance,

which illuminates an object and gives light to it, but He illuminates our soul interiorly through His presence, like a fire that penetrates the iron and makes it glow.

The Holy Ghost is moreover the seal through which God impresses upon our soul the image of His Divine Nature and sanctity. And as the seal comes into the closest contact with the wax upon which it is impressed, so too the Holy Ghost enters into the most intimate union with the soul. But He enters into this intimate union with the soul only by means of grace, as the Apostle writes: "The charity of God is poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us" (Rom. 5, 5). Or as the same Apostle writes also to the Romans: "For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God" (8, 16). I shall therefore to-day speak of the glory of divine grace in its union with the Holy Ghost, and show how the Holy Ghost dwells in our souls through grace.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

I. In a twofold manner and for a twofold reason we are united truly and really with the Holy Ghost through grace. First, the Holy Ghost, as the Author of grace, descends Himself with it into our souls, and unites Himself with the soul in a most wonderful and mysterious manner. Secondly, grace leads us to Him and unites us to Him. The Holy Ghost comes close to us, in order to communicate grace and love as a participation in the Divine Nature and sanctity, as it were, to give us an emanation from the Substance of

God. And grace leads us again marvelously close to the Holy Ghost since it, as a share in participation of the Divine Nature, makes us capable of the immediate possession of the Divine Substance and of the Divine Persons.

God is, it is true, and consequently also the Holy Ghost, present not only through His omnipotence in every creature, but also through His omnipresence. But the presence of God through grace is absolutely different, and a more intimate presence. In the creatures God is present as the Creator, Who through His omnipotence and providence preserves and rules everything; but in sanctified souls He is present as the Sanctifier, Who embraces them in the depths of His own Substance. Hence Holy Scripture says: "The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the earth," thus He dwells in the soul adorned with grace with His special presence in a much higher manner. We cannot properly call creation in comparison with the sanctified soul a temple of God, but if we do, then the soul is the altar of God in this temple. Moreover the world is the house of God, the soul is His holy sanctuary. Yes, the Holy Scriptures call creation the footstool of God, upon which the hem of His garments falls, but the sanctified soul the throne of God which is filled with the glory of God. What should I say more? In the sanctified soul, the Holy Ghost is as intimately present as He is in the heart which He animates, rules and moves.

This presence of the Holy Ghost in our souls continues as long as we preserve grace. Not as a passing guest, and consequently for only a brief period, will

the Holy Ghost dwell in us, but for all time. For this reason Our Divine Saviour said to His Apostles at the Last Supper: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you forever, the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive" (John 14, 16).

O wonderful greatness of grace, which introduces into the soul such a Divine Guest, the Holy Ghost, and unites us so intimately and so sublimely with Him! Zacchæus esteemed himself happy that he could receive His Divine Saviour into his house and entertain Him: the venerable Simeon trembled with joy, when he took the Divine Child into his arms; St. Elizabeth was beside herself with admiration, when the Mother of the Saviour came to her — and yet these visits were only exterior and passing, while the Holy Ghost, in His Divinity, comes into our souls and wills to take up His dwelling in them. Moreover, let others be proud of the honor if a prince, a king or a great statesman visits their homes — we gladly grant them the honor; let the sensual and the unbelieving despise and persecute us on account of our holy faith — we will esteem it as nothing, and will know how to bear with it as long as the grace of God remains in our souls, and we, with it, possess the Holy Ghost in our hearts. St. Peter writes to the Christians of his day: "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be blessed: for that which is of the honor, glory, and power of God, and that which is his spirit, resteth upon you" (1 Pet. 4, 14).

But the Holy Ghost comes into our souls not only

as a Guest, in order by His presence to honor us, but He brings also with Him an unspeakable good, the pledge of a heavenly and eternal good. As we now possess the Holy Ghost with His grace, so shall we one day possess the Father and the Son in their whole Divine Substance, and behold their glory. Hence St. Paul writes: "You were signed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance, unto the redemption of acquisition, unto the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1, 14).

3. "If thou didst know the gift of God!" can I say with Our Divine Saviour to each of you, my hearers; if you did but know how to esteem the great prize of grace, and with it the Holy Ghost as the Divine Pledge of eternal happiness! If, however, you attend not to the grace and the presence of the Holy Ghost in your hearts, you will bring upon yourselves the greatest misfortune and perpetrate a great injustice. The insult which a subject of low degree would offer to his king would be absolutely unpardonable, such a one for example as not to proffer him a welcome on his visit to the poor hut of his subject, or what would be worse, to go away leaving the royal visitor alone. The Holy Ghost comes to us with His grace, yea, as our Lord and our God to take up His dwelling with us. "Know you not," says the Apostle St. Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians, "that your members are temples of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have through God, and that you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body" (1 Cor. 6, 16, 19, 20).

If it is, therefore, a sacrilegious robbery to desecrate or disgrace a church, it is a far greater sin to desecrate a temple of the Holy Ghost. The greatness of the punishment inflicted upon such a desecration St. Paul tells us in these words: "But if any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which you are" (1 Cor. 3, 17). By every mortal sin, but especially by immorality, this temple of God is not only desecrated, but also destroyed, for it annihilates grace upon which it is built. Like Samson who with two pillars of the temple destroyed the Philistines and with their destruction buried himself with the Philistines in the ruins, like him mortal sin destroys the pillars of this beautiful edifice and buries the sinner, all his merits and hopes of eternal life in one fathomless abyss. The godless king Antiochus did not destroy the Temple at Jerusalem, but he did desecrate it and steal its treasures. He soon felt the hand of God, for worms crawled out of his body and consumed his living body amidst the most horrible torture. And yet there is no temple built by man so holy and so venerable as the sanctuary of the Holy Ghost, and that we are when we are in the state of grace. For this reason the Apostle St. Paul exclaimed: "Whoever desecrates the temple of God, God will destroy." Oh, would that we might all recognize how grievous and terrible mortal sin is! Only through mortal sin is the soul robbed of sanctifying grace, consequently of the Holy Ghost, of participation in the Divine Nature, of the sonship of God, of the heavenly, immeasurably rich inheritance, and falls into the slav-

ery of Satan, and takes on, as it were, his devilish nature.

A desecrated temple can indeed be again consecrated, and a destroyed temple can be rebuilt. Our Divine Saviour instituted the sacrament of Penance in order to rebuild this temple of the soul. For this reason, the sacrament of Penance has an immeasurable worth. Happy the one who receives it worthily, in order to reconcile his soul with God again through grace, and to rebuild the temple of the Holy Ghost and reconsecrate it.

4. As the soul, my beloved, dwells in the body as in its house, so, too, the Holy Ghost dwells in the soul as in His house, but through and with the soul He dwells also in our body. Our soul is also the temple of the Holy Ghost, consecrated and sanctified by His presence, holy as the covenant of the Old Testament. How great must be our gratitude therefore for this great gift of the Holy Ghost, and our reverence for the temple of God, especially if we compare the communication of the Holy Ghost with the sending of the Son of God! Our Divine Saviour Himself spoke these glorious words: "God hath so loved the world, that he delivered up his only begotten Son for it" (John 3, 16). But Jesus Christ was on the earth for only a few years, and only in the Promised Land, and among the Jewish people, in order to accomplish His Redemption, yet the Holy Ghost comes over the whole Catholic Church, and to each individual sanctified soul, and takes up His abode with it.

In the same manner, Our Divine Saviour comes

through Holy Communion into every Christian soul, but only for a short time, until the appearances of bread disappear. But the Holy Ghost unites Himself continuously and intimately with the soul and He remains in this wonderful union with it as long as this truly divine and heavenly union is not destroyed by mortal sin. For this reason, we should not at all wonder that every sanctified soul is called the bride of the Holy Ghost, in which the Saviour is born again in a spiritual manner, and of which He Himself assures us that He is its spiritual mother: "Whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, sister, mother" (Matt. 12, 50). The union of the Holy Ghost with the soul moreover breathes into us the consciousness of being sons of God, as the Apostle St. Paul testifies: "For the Spirit giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God. . . . Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings" (Rom. 8, 16,26). Thus the Christian soul is at once a wonderful temple, full of praise, full of adoration and of piety, where the Most Holy Trinity is glorified in the most worthy manner.

Who amongst us, my beloved, would not be seized with horror if he were to see a godless man with unhallowed hand seize the Blessed Sacrament from the tabernacle, and desecrate It? Yet a crime of equal heinousness, yes in many ways a greater crime is committed by the Christian, through mortal sin, when he desecrates the temple of the soul and drives the Holy

Ghost out of it. Whoever has a living Catholic faith approaches Holy Communion with holy fear because he feels in the deepest depths of his soul the truth of the expression of the Apostle: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11, 29). And just as little does the Holy Ghost bear with a sinful, immoral, and least of all, with a heart corrupted by impurity. Therefore, the same Apostle St. Paul, speaking to the faithful of Corinth, warns them against an unworthy Communion: "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? But if any man violate a temple of God, him God shall destroy" (1 Cor. 3, 16, 17).

My God! As wonderful as the greatness and dignity and bliss of the Christian is, to which the glory of grace has elevated him, so terrible is his fall and his judgment. If he sacrifices this sublime heavenly good, this precious treasure of redemption through the Blood of Jesus Christ, lightly, frivolously and in an ungodly manner to Satan and his pomps and his works, to the show and finery, to the pleasures of the world, and to sin and immorality, a thousand and a hundred thousand times more foolishly than Esau, who for a mess of pottage squandered his father's blessing and inheritance, a thousand times more foolishly does such a Christian act. But what is the saddest and the most unbelievable in this is the fact, that he usually imagines that in this unnatural exchange, he is prudent, wise, enlightened and liberal! O my Christians, preserve

the faith, preserve grace, in order that the Holy Ghost may also preserve you in the day of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And whoever may have lost grace, oh let him seek it, and seek it with a great longing, until he shall have again found this heavenly gift. And when he shall have found it again, through the intercession of God and the help of the Immaculate Mother of God, he will find it in the worthy reception of the sacraments, in contrition and sorrow. Then may his soul rejoice, for with the valid absolution of his sin, he finds again through the unspeakable longanimity of God and His mercy, sanctifying grace, and with it the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost will become again to him, according to the words of the Apostle: "a pledge of our inheritance, unto the redemption of acquisition, unto the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1, 14).

And now, I conclude with the hope that my words have sunk deep into your souls, and found a living echo in them, with the beautiful blessing of the Apostle St. Paul upon the faithful at Corinth: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My charity be with you all in Christ Jesus." Amen.

SERMON XXIV

THE LIFE AND BEAUTY OF THE SOUL IN THE STATE OF GRACE

“Now all good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands.”—WIS. 7, 11.

One of the most beautiful miracles recorded in the Old Testament is that of the resurrection from the dead by the prophet Eliseus of the only son of a woman of Sunam who had entertained the prophet. He laid himself on the youth, placed his mouth on the mouth of the boy, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands until life returned to the dead youth. But incomparably greater and more glorious is the miracle which God accomplishes in the soul, through the infusion of sanctifying grace.

Here a mortal man is not called back to life, but a soul is awakened unto divine life, and not a man but God Himself performs this miracle. As the prophet Eliseus lay upon the dead child, so God, filled with unspeakable love, comes down upon His image, into the soul. He lays, as it were, His mouth upon that of the Christian, in order to breathe into him the breath of His divine life and the spirit of His love; He unites His eyes with the eyes of the Christian, that is with his reason and intellect; He takes our hands

in His, unites His Divine Power with the natural powers of our soul. In this manner, the soul is awakened to a new life, through which it lives in God and God in it.

The prophet Eliseus left the child after he had raised him from the dead, because he was needed no longer. But God does not leave the soul, because without Him it could not preserve the new life of grace. He remains in our soul, as the soul in our body which it animates. He breathes into it His Spirit, which works in the soul as the soul does in the body, and is the reason of all its acts. This Spirit moves the soul and enkindles the light of divine knowledge and the warmth of the love of God in it and preserves it. Its natural life is changed into a Divine Life, which is capable and worthy of bringing forth fruits of Divine Love which will not pass away throughout all eternity. The soul is watered with that living water which, according to the words of Our Divine Saviour, springs up into eternal life. Hence the Apostle St. Paul says: "The wages of sin is death. But the grace of God, life everlasting, in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6, 23). In order to show the glory of grace in a new light, I shall speak to-day of the life and the beauty of the soul in the state of grace.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. Life is such a great work of the omnipotence of God that even in the smallest creature, in the least of the animalcules of the earth, it surpasses, in value, the greatest things of inanimate creation. Life is the

crown of the visible creation. And yet be the evidences of life in creation ever so varied and so different, yet that of man surpasses the life of all animals, for it is far more precious and wonderful. And although the natural life of the soul is so precious and wonderful in comparison with the life of the rest of creation, nevertheless it is as far surpassed by the life of grace, as it surpasses the life of all other creatures. Grace gives to the soul a life infinitely richer and more sublime than all natural life; it gives a divine life full of beauty, power and bliss, through which the soul alone is able to leave the earth and its miserable surroundings, and to immerse itself in God, to behold God and to enjoy Him eternally. Just as the eagle wings its flight near to the sun and gazes steadily into its light, so the soul, too, through grace, elevates itself above the miserable and transitory business of this world to God and to divine things, and beholds, adoring, through faith, the bliss of Heaven.

But without grace man clings to the earth. Even though he makes use of his natural intelligence he remains, nevertheless, even as the most enlightened pagan in the footprints of God, in creatures. Of his own power, he cannot rise higher. Yes, as the worm might be said to be dead in comparison with the eagle that soars aloft, so, too, our souls might be said to be rather dead than living as long as they are without the mighty breath of the Holy Ghost, and as long as He does not communicate to them the life of His divine grace. If therefore natural life is worth so much, and is such a great benefit of God, how precious

must not that divine life of grace be, and what an immeasurably great benefit? Oh, may we at least esteem this heavenly life of the soul as highly as we esteem the brief and wretched life of the body, which hastens daily and hourly to its dissolution, to its death. No sacrifice is spared, no pain and no operation is shunned when there is a question of the death of the body, in order to preserve its life for a short space. Should we not also be willing to make some sacrifices not so difficult nor so expensive in order to preserve the life of grace, and to banish the spiritual death of the soul, to banish sin by worthy penance?

2. The life which the Holy Ghost instills into the soul is marvelous; it is the germ of eternal life which knows no age, but grows daily younger. For this reason St. Paul wrote to the faithful at Corinth: "But though our outward man is corrupted, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4, 16). Sanctifying grace is daily strengthened, increased and enriched through prayer and good works, through resistance to temptation, through the Holy Sacrifice and the frequent reception of the sacraments. But the grace of the Holy Ghost gives not only life to the soul but also eternal life to the body. The same Apostle announces this glorious truth: "And if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelt in you; he that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies, because of his spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8, 11). What follows from this, my beloved, but the truth that we should esteem the light of grace highly, seek and preserve

it, in order to obtain the eternal life of the body? If you live according to the flesh, St. Paul says, you shall die, therefore a twofold death, that is of the soul and of the body, and that, too, an eternal death.

But if we do not wish to listen to the warning of the Apostle, we should at least take to heart the words of Our Divine Saviour: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal" (John 12, 25). Oh, how few there are who really know how to esteem properly the true value of the life of their soul and of their body! Of what use are all the sensual joys and pleasures, the soft and idle life, with its finery and style, if both soul and body are jeopardized thereby? The true Christian life is a thousand times more reasonable and wiser, and also happier and more dignified, that wages war with sin, observes the commandments, preserves faith and increases grace!

Another truth follows from the words of Our Divine Saviour. As the life of grace in the soul is infinitely more glorious and precious than the material life of the body, than even the natural life of the soul, so, too, is its loss the most terrible and terrifying death. Nothing is more painful and more hateful to our senses than a dead body. As glorious and beautiful as he may have been in life so unbearable is the sight and pestiferous the effects, as soon as the breath of death has swept over man, and the worms have begun to consume him. And yet, my beloved, the death of the soul through the loss of divine grace is incomparably more terrible, and its condition in mortal sin is far more

loathsome before God and the angels than a body full of corruption is before man. If we could see the soul in such a condition, whilst we are here on earth, we would not bear the sight of it. And the first and most terrible shock for the soul after the death of a body is to behold itself in the state of mortal sin. This shock may be compared to that which one would feel if he beheld Satan in his devilish form. For as we become like to God through grace, so we become like to Satan through sin. And yet how many there are whose souls have long since been in the state of sin, and who carry about within themselves this corpse, and make use of the few days which God in His mercy and grace would allow them on earth in worldly pleasures and revellings. Oh, this want of feeling is terrible, and is the sure sign of the spiritual death of the soul, as the stiffening of the body is a mark that life has fled from it.

3. But, my beloved, as wonderful as the life of the soul in the state of grace is, and as horrible as it is in the state of sin, so heavenly is also the beauty of the soul in the state of grace. From the charity of God towards such a soul we can measure its heavenly beauty which grace endows it with. St. Cyril of Alexandria taught in the third century that we, through grace, were transformed into a divine form, and consequently obtained a supernatural beauty. In fact, there is imprinted on our soul through grace a likeness of the Divine Nature and glory; it is a clear mirror of the beauty of God and mirrors forth this beauty in brilliant lineaments. The soul becomes the child of God, there-

fore like to the Eternal Father, co-heir with the Son, and bride of the Holy Ghost. Whoever therefore wish to represent themselves the beauty of the soul in the state of grace must have a conception of the immeasurable beauty of God, and have seen that beauty which the angels and the saints possess only because they were and are in the state of grace. The words of the Apostle St. Paul are here apropos: "That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2. 9). The world may offer much that is entrancing and beautiful in nature, in the works of art, in the wonderful melodies of music and song—all this can in no way be compared to the supernatural beauty which grace imparts to the soul and makes it the object of the pleasure of God. We can, indeed, not see with our human eyes this beauty, but once the soul in the state of grace is freed from the shackles of the body then is the first glance of its own beauty of measureless joy and the beginning of its bliss, while for the soul that dies in the state of sin, its first glance at its own hatefulness is the beginning of Hell and of eternal despair for it.

King Solomon praised in his Canticle the heavenly beauty of the soul in the state of sanctifying grace. We cannot, it is true, express on earth the kind of beauty that adorns the soul in sanctifying grace, for we would have to first ascend into Heaven and behold God and His saints. But the circumstance that the celestial brilliancy of grace remains hidden to our bodily eyes by no means diminishes its glory. As our eye

is not only blinded by the sun itself but also by its reflection from a glass, from water, or from a shining metal, so on earth we cannot bear the light of the divine glory, not even its reflection in a soul in the state of grace. Even the angels, who behold God face to face, are entranced at the beauty of a Christian soul. God Himself speaks in Holy Scripture of the soul in the state of grace: "How beautiful thou art, my friend, how beautiful thou art." His eye rests with pleasure on the soul in the state of sanctifying grace for its beauty is an emanation of His eternal and infinite beauty. Therefore we need not wonder that God Himself and Heaven with its endless glory and bliss is the most worthy reward of the Christian soul which departs from this life in the state of grace, therefore clothed with its supernatural beauty.

4. But, my beloved, what elevates the beauty of the soul marvelously is the supernatural or heavenly light which grace infuses into it. God is indeed the Sun of Justice and Truth, the Highest Beauty and Infinite Love, and grace is a light which God infuses into the soul, with which He enlightens it, and transfigures and fills it with heavenly brilliancy. It is that light which leads us into the infinite light of God and reveals His glory in all its fullness, and permits us to see Him unveiled, face to face. For this reason Holy Scripture calls Christians in the state of grace children of God, and the Apostle St. Paul writes: "For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk then as children of the light" (Eph. 5, 8). But according to the words of the Apostle St. James:

“Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of light, with whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration” (1, 17). This perfect gift is the grace which according to the Roman Catechism: “Is a light that cleanses our soul from every stain and makes it more beautiful and brilliant.” For this reason the Fathers of the Church called Baptism the sacrament of enlightenment.

Now, what is there even in this visible creation more pure, more beautiful and amiable than the light that entrances our corporal eyes? The poets call this earthly light the beauty of the earth, the smile of Heaven, the joy of nature, the pleasure of the eye, the life of things and the image of God. And yet so lovable and agreeable as this light is, the cause of all beauty, truthfulness and life — what is it in comparison with that heavenly and Divine Life, that emanation of Divine Light and Glory? As the moon and the stars are lighted by the light of the sun, and even sparkle and glisten, so does bliss as an emanation of the Divine Light make the soul into a spiritual star in the Heaven of grace. “And they that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that instruct many to justice as stars for all eternity” (Dan. 12, 3, 4). The mirror without the light of the sun is a worthless object, but brilliant and blinding if the sun shines on it, and his light is reflected from it. So, too, is it with the soul. Without grace it is in total darkness, veiled in sin, but with grace shines forth from it the Sun of the graces, the Holy Ghost. What is, therefore, the reflection of the mirror in com-

parison to the majesty of the soul which with grace is not only a likeness of God, but contains God within itself?

5. All the qualities that light has, grace possesses also, but in an infinitely higher manner. Light penetrates and enlightens, warms and enkindles, animates and enlarges, elevates and forms. Light penetrates and transforms transparent objects, as glass, crystals and diamonds, the air and water. Thus also grace penetrates, as the divine light of the soul to the deepest depths of its being, and transfigures it with heavenly beauty and brilliancy. And although this heavenly brilliancy is concealed from the earthly eye, it shines forth, nevertheless, at times, in good Christians so sublimely that no language of men can adequately describe it. Light enlightens the eye, so that it sees the substance of things far and near, even to the starry firmament. Grace too enlightens the soul so that it through faith beholds God and the eternal truths, and will one day see Him face to face. Light warms the body, so, too, grace warms the soul and fires it with divine love. For this reason, we justly say of holy Christians that they burn with the love of God and are consumed by its flames. St. Peter of Alcantara, St. Stanislaus, St. Theresa and other saints frequently had to cool their breasts with water or snow, because the fire of divine love burned so fiercely within them.

Light awakens and preserves all life in nature. But far more powerfully does grace work in the soul, where it awakens and preserves Christian life with all its heavenly virtues and merits, and with its heavenly

works, the love of God and the neighbor, and transforms the soul into a paradise where the lily of innocence, the roses of divine love and the fruits of eternal merits bloom and blossom. But if this paradise gradually grows wild, or if it is completely made a desert by sin, we alone bear the guilt.

Light enlarges and magnifies objects, but grace enlarges and magnifies our soul, so that it can always receive new and greater graces, yes, so that it can even receive God Himself as in a temple. The world and all its treasures cannot satisfy a soul in the state of grace; God alone can satisfy its longing and satiate its desires. All the saints are witnesses to this sublime truth.

Through the power of light dew arises, plants shoot upwards to drink in the rays of the sun. So, too, grace elevates our souls from the earth to Heaven and to God and unites them to Him. Finally, light forms the creatures into that which they of their own substance should be; therefore without the light of the sun plants, animals, and men pine away. No human art can give so true and exact a picture of man and of other creatures, as light does in the mirror or in a photograph. In the same manner, God cannot give to us a more perfect picture of Himself than He does through the light of grace. It is grace that makes us to the image and likeness of God, and His children. It forms us, according to the peculiar heavenly substance which belongs to us as Christians, as children of God, as heirs of Heaven and companions of the angels. But without the light of grace, man pines away in his soul in a

most wretched manner, as we see daily in the case of sinners.

6. Yes, my beloved, the light and the beauty of the soul in the state of grace is more wonderful and more glorious than I can describe with these feeble words. But to whom must not the thought occur, how namelessly great is the loss of sanctifying grace and how terrible the consequences of mortal sin for the soul? How deeply do those fall who lose grace in frivolity, in blindness or in passion! They were precious rings on the hand of God, and now they lie in the mire of sin. They were brilliant diamonds in the crown of God which His saints form, but now they are become the booty of Satan, and adorn his wretched crown of victory which he welds out of the misfortune of souls. They were valuable members of the golden chain of the saints and the blessed, but now they are incorporated in the devilish chain of the damned.

My God, if the loss of eyesight is such a calamity, who can describe the greatness of the calamity if a soul, having the light of grace, stumbles around in the sad darkness of sin and of unbelief, until finally its lot is eternal darkness? If the loss of wealth through misfortune, of bodily beauty through disease, is such a hard blow that it drives many to despair — how much heavier is the blow whereby the soul loses grace and with it everything, yes everything for time and eternity, and is finally cast into everlasting despair! O my Christians! preserve grace and with it the life and the beauty of the soul, God and bliss! And if your soul is stained with sin, wash it pure in the sacrament

of Penance, in order that the light of grace may again fill and transfigure it. "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God."

Oh, how happy is the Christian in the state of grace! Even if many sufferings overtake him in this earthly life, they pass away, and the consciousness of grace consoles and quickens the soul with joy and pleasure. And if we are all in the state of grace, we all can with right and in truth gratefully praise God with the Blessed Virgin Mary and with all Christian souls: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Amen.

SERMON XXV

THE MIRACLES OF DIVINE GRACE

“Come and behold ye the works of the Lord: what wonders he hath done upon earth.”—Ps. 45, 8.

Yes, indeed, my beloved, Heaven and earth are full of the wonders of the omnipotence, wisdom and providence of God. And so King David could truthfully say: “The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands” (Ps. 18). The sun with its rays of fire, and the moon and the countless starry hosts of heaven in their magnificence, in their gigantic size and the marvelous order of their movements teach us daily with an unmistakable voice the existence and glory of God. But the earth, too, teaches by the mouth of its myriads of creatures the wonders of the Lord. The four elements and the seasons of the year, the sunshine and the storm, the plants and the animal world, down to the lowliest insect that basks in the rays of the sun and hums the praises of its Creator — everything confirms the words of David: “O Lord our Lord, how admirable is thy name in the whole earth!” (Ps. 8, 1). Brief and beautiful is therefore the saying: “The sunshine and the storm praise thee; mountain and ocean declare thy glory and magnificence.” “O men,” calls out the smallest worm, “give honor to my Creator!”

Fallen man in the state of sin is poor and helpless, far smaller than the little worm that he treads on with his foot, or the leaf that is swept past him by the force of the wind. The worm does not perish on account of its own guilt, and the leaf does not fall from the tree because of its own guilt, but because it has performed its service and fulfilled its time. But man has fallen away from God by his own fault, and perishes because of his own guilt, separated from Him Who alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

And yet, my beloved, if we look with faith on the miracles of the omnipotence and providence of God which reach out over Heaven and earth and to the least of creatures, then our souls may be seized with the desire that all these miracles must be referred back to the one which God in His mercy worked for the salvation of our immortal souls. Then the words of the Royal Prophet hold true: "Come and behold ye the wonders of the Lord; what wonders he hath done upon earth!" Come and behold the wonder of Redemption, of the Incarnation of the Son of God, and of His bitter Passion and Death! Come and behold the wonder of the Holy Sacrifice, of the sacraments, and of the foundation and preservation of the Catholic Church. Come and behold especially the wonders of grace which act so gloriously in the kingdom of the soul, and change sinners into saints, unbelievers into believers, and the condemned into the elect, and which stretch out even to Heaven, to the eternal beatific vision of God.

I have thus far spoken of the glory of grace and the

beauty of the soul in the state of grace. I shall speak to-day, in conclusion, of the miracles of divine grace.

O Jesus assist us with Thy grace!

1. Our Divine Saviour wrought a great miracle in the kingdom of nature, when at His death the sun veiled itself in darkness, the earth quaked and the rocks were rent asunder. Astonishing were the miracles of His mercy when He gave to the sick health, to the blind sight, to the deaf hearing, and to the dumb speech, yes, when He raised the dead to life. Yet, my beloved, what are all these admirable and astonishing miracles in comparison with those which He works in the kingdom of souls with His divine grace? The first miracle of grace in our soul is the destruction of the night of mortal sin and its terrible darkness, changed in one instant into heavenly light. This effect of divine grace is doubly precious, because, first, it overcomes the greatest evil of mankind, an evil which no other power could overcome, and wipes all its evil consequences victoriously away, and second, because at the same time it endows the soul with heavenly goods.

The first and greatest evil which afflicts man in time and eternity is sin. It is a real monster, that not only robs us eternally of God and destroys the hope of our soul's salvation, and brings in its train eternal damnation, but it is also the cause and the source of all evil on earth. From sin come as the dragon seed, sicknesses and plagues, earthquakes and cataclysms in nature, the storms of the sea, hunger and need and

death, which like whited ghosts, plague and torment the human race. All the blood that is spilled by the millions who are slaughtered in ceaseless wars, all the pests which devastate cities and countries, all the injustice and tyranny under which men groan and writhe, like worms under the foot, all the malice and wild passions which torment men, in a word, whatever earth suffers, is the terrible fruit of sin. It is the poison of Hell which has poisoned the human race to its very core, and consumes it.

Therefore the Apostle St. Paul exclaims: "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7, 24). The whole human race filled with anxiety can ask the same. But the Apostle himself gives the answer: "The grace of God, by our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 7, 25). Yes, my beloved, there is no other means of salvation against this greatest of all evils than divine grace which Jesus Christ has acquired for us with His Precious Blood. Grace alone can free us from sin and make us, instead of enemies of God, His children. Grace makes us participators in the justice and sanctity of Jesus Christ, and lifts us above that impassable abyss, which in consequence of sin exists between God and man.

But grace works still another miracle in the soul. Neither man nor any power on earth can overcome the will weakened by sin, and the unconquerable inclination to evil, and change it and incline it to good. Grace alone, as the divine means of salvation, can do this. Grace transforms man and infuses into his soul

supernatural love of God. Great and wonderful is the power of grace which destroys in the soul the greatest evil and its consequences, which no other created power in Heaven or on earth could accomplish. Grace even heals the sickness of the soul without regard to its greatness or to the number of the sins. Even if a man had committed every sin, as soon as the rays of sanctifying grace through the mercy of God penetrate his soul, the sins are dissipated and annihilated.

2. The effect is so powerful that not even the smallest trace of sin remains in the soul. Grace does not, indeed, always destroy the inclination to sin which remains from natural perverseness or from former evil habits, but it takes away from the soul everything that was really evil and damnable. The Apostle St. Paul confirms this truth in the words: "There is now therefore no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh" (Rom. 8, 1). Grace destroys the fetters of our passions, conquers evil habits, overcomes the weakness and sinfulness of our poor human nature, and imparts to us the strength to struggle and to practise self denial. As the consequences of sin extend over the whole world, we have numerous opportunities of seeing and wondering at the marvelous power of grace everywhere. With David I can say to each one of you: "Come and behold ye the works of the Lord: what wonders he hath done upon earth." The transformation of a hard-hearted usurer into a benevolent philanthropist, of a prodigal into a temperate man, of a proud person into an humble person, of an immoral man into a pure

Christian, of a scoffer at faith into an humble defender of Catholic Truth, of a fanatical heretic into a zealous Catholic, of a great sinner into a great penitent and saint, these are the miracles of divine grace which take place daily throughout the world. They are miracles, greater than the sudden healing of the sick or the resurrection of the dead, for these place no obstacle in the way, whilst grace triumphs over the power of sin.

Consequently how sublime are the miracles of grace when we behold the saints. The publican Matthew became an Apostle, the raging persecutor Saul became the most zealous messenger of the Gospel, Paul. Moreover, come and behold the miracles of grace which Our Divine Lord wrought in the pagan world in the martyrs and virgins. With the help of grace, they withstood all sufferings and pain at which human nature trembles and shudders; they persevered on the scaffold, in boiling pitch and oil, or when thrown to the beasts in the arena; yes, they rejoiced in their sufferings and converted thousands of pagans. Behold the hermits of old, who willingly sacrificed their wealth and lived in the greatest poverty in penance and fasting, like the angels of Heaven! Behold the holy Christians of all times in their warfare against sin, and in their heroic self denial and self-abnegation, in their patience in spite of all their sufferings, in their amiable virtues, in their purity and innocence, or in their sublime works of the purest love of God and their neighbor. Truly to them may be applied the words of Holy Scripture: "God is wonderful in his saints," for they

are the miracles of divine grace which they exhibit so sublimely and gloriously, that all other miracles on earth and in Heaven in contrast appear insignificant.

3. Now, my beloved, if grace could give to the saints such a wonderful and superhuman power that they raised themselves with heroic courage above their nature, so to speak, conquered their human weakness, and lived a heavenly life even in the flesh — should not grace also give to us the power, as soon as we earnestly wish for it, to live, at least, as ordinary men and Christians, and not as slaves of the flesh and of our passions? St. Paul says: “I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4, 13). And, in fact, he was able with the grace of God to accomplish the most incredible things in the conversion of the Gentiles, to withstand the most difficult struggles, sufferings and persecutions, and even to suffer a martyr’s death. So, too, can every Christian in spite of his weakness and misdeeds say: “I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me.” With grace he can govern his sensual inclinations, control his passions, and bridle his desires, root out his evil habits, observe the commandments of God, lead a Christian life, and die a Christian death.

This is the heavenly power of grace which exhibits itself the more marvelously, the weaker man is in consequence of original sin. St. Paul even says: “Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me” (2 Cor. 12, 9). But we must, my beloved, coöperate with grace if it is to reveal its heavenly power in us. And we coöperate with

it through zealous prayer, through the frequent reception of the sacraments, through contrition and sorrow for even the smallest sins, through the renewal of our good resolutions, and through avoiding the occasions of evil. If the Christian is obliged to withstand many trials and tribulations, he must not become discouraged. To him also apply the words of Our Divine Saviour to St. Paul: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity" (2 Cor. 12, 9). If, therefore, we fall into grievous sin and lose sanctifying grace, grace is not to blame but we ourselves, because we did not labor and coöperate with grace.

4. The heavenly power of sanctifying grace, therefore, destroys sin, heals human weakness, endows the soul with supernatural life, and clothes it with a super-natural beauty and brilliancy. But its power shows itself still more gloriously. Grace infuses into the soul also the three divine virtues of faith, hope and charity. As the soul has for its natural life understanding, memory and will, by means of which man can fulfill his earthly calling, so the Christian should fulfill his Christian calling through the three divine virtues. Man can, indeed, by his own power, acquire the natural virtues, but the three divine virtues are above and beyond him and are the work of divine grace alone. They are the supernatural powers or qualities of the soul, by which it enters into intimate and supernatural intercourse with God. We acquire through the divine virtue of faith a heavenly knowledge of God and of eternal things; in Christian hope we rest in the

fullest confidence on the mercy of God, and in the thought of the immeasurable happiness of once beholding God in eternal bliss and of enjoying Him; and through the virtue of divine charity we are united most intimately with God, submerged in Him, and love Him with a love like to that whereby He loves Himself and us.

These three divine virtues are the miracle of grace with which our souls are equipped immeasurably above their own natural powers, in order that they, as regenerated children of God, heirs of Heaven and companions of the angels, may lead lives on earth worthy of their high calling. This life must be similar to that eternal life which awaits us in Heaven. In Heaven we shall know God as He is, possess and enjoy Him, as He possesses and enjoys Himself, and love Him as He loves Himself. Grace, therefore, gives to our souls those gifts of faith, hope and charity, that lead us to God. Faith is the root of the sanctified soul with which it penetrates into the depths of the Godhead in order to draw from it the nourishment of life; hope is the stem with which it lifts itself to the Sun of Justice in order to find there light and warmth; love is the attractive power with which the soul embraces God and lives in Him. The sanctified soul lifts itself more gloriously than the eagle from the depths of its human nature on the wings of faith, hope and charity, to God and to eternal things. And although the Christian, as far as the body is concerned, still dwells and labors on earth, suffers and struggles, his true home

is Heaven which he beholds in faith, possesses in hope, and longingly desires in love.

5. Great is the goodness of God, great is the glory of grace, and sublime are the miracles which it works in our soul. O my Christians! Did you but know how to esteem this gift of God! Truly not one would lose it, or if he had lost it, he would sacrifice everything, even the highest earthly good in order to regain it through the worthy reception of the sacraments. Oh wonderful is the mercy of God which returns as a reward of sincere contrition and penance His own divine grace. Here, too, in gratitude we may exclaim: "Come and behold ye the works of the Lord: what wonders he hath done upon earth."

Yes, my beloved, there is no greater prize on earth than the possession of sanctifying grace. Christian faith is, indeed, something sublime, Christian hope is most touching, and exalted is Christian love, so much so, indeed, that the heart of the godless cannot grasp it. And the happiness of souls that are in the state of grace is just as exalted. Yes, it is grace and grace alone, that can impart to us that sweet heavenly peace, which Our Divine Saviour brought down to earth, that peace of which the Apostle says: "The peace of Christ that surpasseth all understanding dwell in your hearts" (Col. 3, 15). This peace is the fruit of grace, and a foretaste of heavenly happiness. The peace of a good conscience, the peace of a faithful, hopeful and loving heart, is something so heavenly, so sublime, that the earth does not even pretend with all

its pleasures, joys, and its gold, to give peace like to it. Grace gives this peace. Although many misfortunes and sufferings may try good Christians — of one thing they cannot rob them, the peace of a good conscience. But grace sweetens every suffering and makes it bearable, be it that we receive it from the hand of God and offer it up to the suffering Saviour, or that we bear it patiently as a penance. The sinner knows no peace, consequently, if misfortune overtakes him, the measure of his misery and despair is full. As marvelous as the happiness of grace and of peace in the soul is, so terrible even on earth is the remorse of a conscience punished by the curse of sin.

6. Grace offers still other goods. Innumerable men to-day seek enlightenment in unbelief, freedom in the slavery of sin, and progress in seceding from God. These words have indeed a glorious meaning, but grace alone can fulfill them. It gives the greatest enlightenment, which is the Divine Light that enlightens the soul. For this reason all those who are in the state of grace are called *the Children of Light*. They possess true enlightenment and true culture, that formation, therefore, that makes them like to God and the angels. But whoever seeks enlightenment in unbelief and in the scoffing at faith, is a fool and a son of darkness, and is entering into that terrible darkness which hovers eternally over Hell.

Grace gives to us, secondly, true liberty which Our Divine Saviour brought to us, since He freed us from the yoke of sin and the slavery of Satan. Grace gives to us power and strength to conquer our passions, and

to break the chains of bad habits. Grace penetrates the depths of our human nature, and elevates us to God; it redeems us from eternal death and brings to us perfect freedom. But the freedom which man seeks in sin is a real slavery, and the most miserable of slaves are sinners, both for time and eternity. Finally, my beloved, grace secures to us true progress, a more glorious progress cannot be for the salvation of man than that whereby the Christian proceeds joyfully on the way of Christian virtue and justice; where truth and morality, where peace and harmony reign, and where human nature reaches its highest completion in holy Christians. But the most immeasurable progress is discerned where grace finally leads to God and to bliss. But the apparent progress which ends with the falling away from God is a terrible retrogression, which has always brought only misery and suffering to men, and consequently like the fallen angels ends with their being cast into Hell.

Grace is moreover the source of all other virtues that adorn Christian life. It is the rudder with which the ship of the soul is steered towards Heaven; it is the wings upon which the Christian raises himself above this earthly, carnal life. Furthermore, grace makes us worthy of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord, by which the soul is so filled with the Holy Ghost that it can bring forth those extraordinary virtues, seen in virgins and martyrs, and in Christians of all states and races. Grace has still another sublime virtue, that it enriches all

good works, all sufferings and trials, all tears and prayers of the faithful, and makes them meritorious for eternal life so that the faithful on earth merit for themselves an ever increasing degree of glory.

7. Therefore I can say to you all, my beloved, in the words of Holy Scripture: "Come and behold ye the works of the Lord: what wonders he hath done upon earth." Oh, what a terrible frivolity it is to lose grace for the sake of plunder and miserable sensualities. All the riches, all the merits and glory of grace are lost to the soul as soon as the Christian commits a grievous sin. Other Christians may rejoice in the state of grace; the martyrs with the riches of their passion, the Apostles with the sweat of their labors, the confessors with their zeal for souls, the virgins with the glory of their innocence, yes, Mary the Mother of God and Queen of all saints may intercede for others of the faithful and enrich them; and though Our Divine Saviour Himself offers up His Blood and His infinite merits, and the Holy Ghost has poured out on others the riches of His graces — thou, my Christian, goest empty away, in the state of sin; thou departest from this heavenly community and heapest up only misery for thy soul which God loves with such desire! And why wilt thou load thy poor soul with such a nameless unhappiness? My God, is it possible, for the sake of animal passions or miserable avarice!

O my beloved in Christ, preserve grace, preserve this highest good of your souls, and the cause of all salvation. Frequently receive the sacraments, in order to increase sanctifying grace and to protect yourselves

against the inclinations to sin. From the sacraments grace flows into the soul, and every one who worthily receives them will be constantly filled with newer and more heavenly strength. Especially does Holy Communion increase grace and the life of grace. But let us avoid not only grievous but also voluntary venial sins. If venial sins cannot destroy sanctifying grace they, nevertheless, darken and weaken the soul for the life of grace. The venial sins are the pest of the soul, which disfigure its beauty. May our holy guardian angels ever assist us in our trials and temptations, and may Mary, full of grace, take us under her maternal protection, in order that we may crush the Serpent's head, and preserve the price of the most Holy Blood of Jesus, grace. Grace sweetens our departure from this mortal life and leads us to the heavenly transfiguration and bliss where we shall behold God and possess Him throughout all eternity. Amen.

SERMON XXVI

CHRISTIAN HOPE

“Blessed be the man that trusteth in the Lord, and the Lord shall be his confidence.”—JER. 17, 7.

When the Jews after their exodus from the land of Egypt were journeying across the desert on their way to the Promised Land, a pillar of cloud went before them by day, and by night a pillar of fire, in order that they should not lose the way, which, according to the design of Providence, they should take. The three Magi from the far East had a star as their guide, and this star was their guide, until they arrived at Jerusalem, and even then, it accompanied them to Bethlehem, where they found the Saviour of the world, the Child Jesus in the manger. In like manner, the Christian in his pilgrimage through this mortal life to the home that has been promised to him in Heaven, has a light that goes before him, a star which lights the way for him, in order that he may not go astray, nor lose courage, but rather stimulate his drooping spirits. And this light, this star that precedes the Christian is Hope, Hope, namely, in God.

To what undertakings does not the hope of earthly gain and happiness drive one? It spurs on the mariner midst unceasing tempests of the sea, the soldier in thousands of situations that endanger life, or to acts of

the greatest self-denial, the merchant to daring speculations. Hope of obtaining a good harvest sweetens the labors of the farmer; the hope of again meeting loved ones lends new strength to the weary traveler; hope drives away the sufferings and pain of sickness, or at least diminishes them. And should supernatural hope, that divine virtue, exert less influence on the life of the Christian than does earthly hope on the earthly life of men? Surely not! It is truly a beacon on the way of the good Christian, an inexhaustible source of consolation, patience, and steadfast perseverance amidst all the hardships of life. It is the cause of glorious virtues and works most pleasing to God. Even the sinner and the penitent Christian may hope; this hope means the forgiveness of sin. I shall speak to-day therefore on Christian hope. If there are truths in our holy religion calculated to fill us with a holy fear, there are at the same time others to inspire us with confidence. To these truths belongs principally the one of which I intend to speak to-day, and so I say to you, my dearly beloved, in the words of Holy Scripture: "All ye that fear God, hope in him. . . . Blessed be the man that trusteth in the Lord, and the Lord shall be his confidence" (Jer. 17, 7).

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. Faith, Hope and Charity constitute the threefold bond that unites the Christian in the most intimate manner with God, His Last End. Hope depends on faith, for it is grounded in faith; it depends on charity, because it becomes perfect only through charity. Faith

is, therefore, the foundation of the edifice, hope the superstructure, and charity the coronation. Through faith, we enter into the most intimate relation with God, Who is the Eternal Truth and Infinite Wisdom; through hope we have intercourse with God Who is our Benefactor and our Eternal Promise; through charity we enter into the most intimate relation with God Who is Love, and our highest and most admirable God.

What is therefore hope? It is a supernatural virtue by which we expect with confidence everything that God has promised. It is a virtue, that is a power, a divine gift, which makes the soul capable of expecting with confidence all that God has promised; it is a supernatural virtue because it comes from God, and has God as its object, and because it awaits with confidence all the good things from God that we have no right to in nature. But because of our own power we could not merit these goods, hope has also the means to attain them, the object of its expectation. This means is the grace of God which constitutes us in the state wherein we may live a Christian life on earth, perform good works, and merit Heaven; and because we live for only a short time on earth, in order to pass from here into eternity. But this short mortal life is filled with manifold cares and miseries, so we hope, also, in the holy providence of God that we will not, being oppressed by temporal affairs, lose sight of our eternal salvation.

But hope in God has a fast and secure foundation, and this is the reason why the good Christian hopes with confidence. This is the fidelity of God in His

promise, and with this faith is united faith in His omnipotence and goodness. In fact, we could not hope in God if He was wanting in power or goodness to fulfill His promises. Hence we pray: "I hope in Thee because Thou hast promised it, Who art omnipotent, faithful, infinitely good and merciful." St. Bernard expresses himself beautifully with regard to this point: "Three things I meditated, in which my whole hope consists; the love with which God has received us into His sonship, the truth of His promises, and His power to fulfill them." Therefore the type of hope is the anchor. As the anchor usually has three strong prongs or arms with which the ship is held fast, in order that it may not be swept away by the storm — so, too, our hope has three arms which should hold the Christian securely in the stormy voyage through this mortal life. These three arms are the truthfulness of God, His omnipotence and goodness; for by virtue of the first God must, by virtue of the second God can, and by virtue of the third God will help. This is the true consolation of the Christian, his joyful confidence amidst all the vicissitudes of life, whether of the present time or of the future. And in casting all his care upon God, he offers God the greatest possible act of reverence, namely, his childlike confidence in God's fidelity, his faith in God's omnipotence, his joy at God's goodness and bounty. But we know, too, why God is faithful in His promises to us; we know the reason of His love; it is Christ Jesus. The price of every grace that we hope for has been paid in advance. God Himself has accepted it; He Himself has contracted to

give us everything that we ask for in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ. These merits are infinite, and therefore sufficient to obtain all that we need for our salvation. We may, therefore, make use of them for our own advantage, and employ them with thorough confidence. Wherefore Christ Himself says so often and so emphatically: "Whatsoever you shall ask in my name, it will be given to you. Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you, ask and you shall receive." And Holy Church concludes all her prayers with the words: "Through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour Who with Thee liveth and reigneth in the unity of the Holy Ghost world without end."

And so the Christian who does not show himself unworthy of the merits of Christ, who follows his Redeemer joyfully during his lifetime on earth, and proves his love for Him by keeping His commandments and those of His Church, may hope for everything from God. And what can the Christian not hope for since the promises of God are made precisely for the salvation of his soul?

2. The poor man who in his poverty does not forget God, but places his hope in God, has these promises. And how could God forget him? Does God not glory over His own Providence, for even the brute creation, in the words: "Who provided food for the raven, when her young ones cry to God, wandering about because they have no meat?" (Job 38, 41). For this reason Christ says these glorious words: "Behold the birds of the air. They sow not, neither

do they reap or gather into barns, and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you more than they?" On this account the holy King David gives answer: "The Lord hath heard the cry of the poor, for his eyes are upon the poor." Yes God looks upon me, and knows my misery and can never forget me — this is the consolation of the Christian poor whose hope is placed in God. With holy Job he can say: "Although he (God) should kill me, I will trust him" (13, 15); because He turns everything for the best for those who love Him. And as at the death of poor Lazarus, so, too, at my death, His angels will receive my soul, and as a compensation for all sufferings, bear it into eternal bliss, where there is neither thirst nor hunger any more.

How oppressive and full of despair is the position of many, of the sick, who, for months, suffer on a bed of pain, abandoned by the world; of the innocent calumniated, and of so many who are visited by unmerited misfortunes. But if they have not forgotten God, if they receive their temporal misery as from His hand, knowing that God chastises with one hand and heals with the other, then hope in God will become the balm which will alleviate the pain of their wounds, the consolation that will sustain them. "Our Father who art in heaven! Thou canst not forget me, and Thou turnest all things for the best for those who love Thee." Yes it is true, frequently the sufferings of the body or soul of the good Christian are so oppressive that he almost despairs; yet he arouses himself anew and hopes in God; hopes that He will

lighten his burden and sweeten his yoke; hopes that God will accept his sufferings as a penance for former transgressions, that have not been sufficiently atoned for, and count them as his purgatory on earth. Therefore he says with the Apostle: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8, 18), there namely, "where God will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more" (Apoc. 21, 4).

What have, my beloved, what have Christian parents who have truly fulfilled their duties towards their children, and have striven to raise them in the fear of God, what consolation have they when, on dying, they must leave their children without guardians in this world? It is their hope in God. The words of God are before their eyes: "Can the mother forget her child, and if she could forget, I could not forget it." God, who promised to children the Kingdom of Heaven and spoke the threatening words to those giving scandal to them: "But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matt. 18, 6), this good God should forget them or abandon them on earth, and not raise up a benefactor for them! By no means! And this is also the consolation of Christian children who have lost their parents early in life, their hope in God. To them also has Christ said: "And call none your father upon earth;

for one is your father who is in heaven" (Matt. 23, 9). A youth, standing at the grave of his father, spoke these words, in confidence in the goodness and mercy of God. Some years before he had lost his mother, and his father had just been buried. How bitterly he felt his loneliness! "Oh"—the child cried—"now I have no father. No one loved me so much as did he, my good father. How hard, how very hard it is, to have no father!" Thus complained the orphan child, and tears welling up fell upon the grave of his father. But on a nearby tombstone he beheld a carved angel, who with one hand pointing towards Heaven, held in the other a script with the words: "Our Father Who art in Heaven!" These words were a heavenly ray of light that brought joy to the heart of the boy, and with folded hands he cried: "Oh, yes, O my good God, I had almost forgotten that Thou art still my Father, that I have not lost Thee; Thou hast taken my own father, and Thou wilt now be my Father in his stead." And God did not abandon him.

Hope in God! It is the best consolation of the good Christian, who loves God and observes His commandments. It is a star that goes before, an anchor that holds him, that he may not fall into despair in time of misfortune; it is the balm that heals his wounds. But hope in God is also the consolation of the Christian, who is exposed to manifold temptations to evil in this world. He knows that: "God is faithful in his promises, and does not permit us to be tempted beyond our strength," as His Apostle testifies. He fights against temptation, and calls upon God for help, for

Christ admonishes us to watch and pray that we fall not into temptation. Therefore, the Christian who loves not sin, constantly fights against temptations, for he hopes, if he fights well, to be crowned with an eternal crown, and with every victory over his evil inclinations or over the world, to increase his merits in Heaven and to rise in the grace of God. Hope in God was the reason why the martyrs themselves suffered death rather than deny the faith. "From there," spoke a martyr, with his finger pointing heavenward to St. Adrian whilst the latter, still a pagan, marvelled at the patience with which the martyrs suffered their tortures,—“the grace of God anoints us with the oil of strength, from there hope extends to us its helping arm, and announces to us a reward whose glory no eye has seen and whose sweetness the heart of man has not felt; there is the spring that refreshes our courage, and cools the burning pains of our martyrdom.”

3. Moreover, my beloved, what is the reason of so many glorious virtues, such great works of charity, such faithful observance of the commands of God and the Church? It is the hope which accompanies the true Christian in all his acts; the hope of sharing in the promises of Christ. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall possess the kingdom of Heaven; blessed are the meek, for they shall be called the children of God; blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God. Therefore they love peace and practice mercy, and are meek, and preserve a pure heart, for hope whispers gloriously into their hearts, that they shall obtain the Kingdom of Heaven, behold God, and be eternally

His children and heirs. They have hope that what they have done to the least of the poor will not go unrewarded by God. Yes, the Christian who keeps his heart free from sin, or has rooted out sin by true contrition, has the sure hope that all his works, done in the state of grace on this earth, and offered up daily to God, therefore his labors, the duties of his state of life, no matter how small or common they may be, his fasting, his going to church, his prayers, his recreation, in a word everything that he does for the sake of God, is meritorious for eternal life, and God writes it in the Book of Life, in order to reward him for it. "Well done thou good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful in little things I will place thee over great things; enter thou into the joy of the Lord." Christians, obey the words of Christ: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither the rust nor the moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. 6, 19). Oh, happy thought, not to have lived on earth in vain, not to have lost time, and labors, and works, but by offering up all these things in the state of grace, to know that one has preserved them for Heaven! The hope of the Christian, to find again in Heaven as a reward, as a crown, as a remuneration, as interest, everything that he has done upon earth, Oh, happy virtue!

4. But where, my beloved, does hope exhibit itself more admirably, where does it cause the soul greater consolation, and instill into it greater strength, than in that moment when the soul needs it the most, in the

hour of death, in that important hour, after which follows for all eternity heavenly bliss or the pains of Hell? Yes, then it is, when the Christian during his lifetime has believed and confessed his belief in God, when he has loved Him from his heart, and faithfully fulfilled his duty as a man and a Christian, then it is that he hopes and says with St. Paul: "I have fought the good fight, I have completed my course, I have kept the faith; for the rest there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just judge, will render to me in that day" (2 Tim. 4, 7), "for blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. From henceforth now saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow them" (Apoc. 14, 13). Wherefore, O heavenly Father, I commend my soul into thy hands!—Oh, happy the Christian who hopes, and precisely in the most terrible hour of death is able to hope, because he has laid the foundation of his hope by a good Christian life! Hope was his consolation during life! Hope is his consolation in the hour of death. And this hope in God accompanies him until resurrection day, when his body shall be reunited to his soul. The body was his instrument in this mortal life for all good works. He was careful, according to the words of St. Paul, to crucify within himself his evil inclinations, to deny himself, and to place himself under the domination of the Spirit, and the moderation of the commandments of God, and with his body to offer to God a holy, pure and immaculate sacrifice. Now he has, as in life, so in death, hope, hope that he will be raised up to a new and eter-

nal life, and according to the words of the Apostle be transformed into the life and glory of Christ. In the words of Holy Job he says: "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and on the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again in my skin, and in my flesh I shall see God. Whom I myself shall see, and not another; this my hope is laid up in my bosom" (19, 25-27).

Yes, my beloved, the hope in God, the hope in God's promises, is truly the pillar of fire which goes before the true Christian through the wilderness of this life. It is the star that lights him on the way of pilgrimage of this life; it is the anchor that holds him back and saves him from going down in the storms of temptation. It is the consolation of the poor, the balm of the suffering, the source of patience for the sick, and a spur to good works for all. Hope in God brings back peace to the soul, and alleviates misery and silences grief, preserves from despair and saves from death. Hope in God unites all, it is the verdant vine that unites them, and the rose that beautifies this mortal existence. What is man without hope? A tree without leaves, a well without water, a sodden sinful being, without true interior peace and rest of soul. The sinner is without hope, that is, the sinner who willfully remains in sin. For him there is no hope. It will mean much to have squandered his highest good, the sweetest consolation of the Christian, in sin, and to have rendered worthless the merits of all his good works, by his indulgence in such sinful frivolity. The sinner is a tree without leaves, a well without water; he is with-

out peace and rest of soul, and if he hopes without conversion, he sins by presumption, and all sin through presumption, who imagine that they can obtain forgiveness of sin without abandoning sin and being truly contrite for it. All who imagine that they can live a Christian life, and not yield to their passions without receiving the sacraments, without observing the commandments of God and the Church, all these sin by presumption. Their hope is not only a vain hope, but it is a sinful hope, and unworthy of God, because they imagine that God should wait until it pleases them to be converted; He should make them share in His promises without their doing anything on their part; He should crown them without their struggling; He should glorify them without their suffering. Sin is, therefore, a wall between God and the Christian, and as long as this exists hope is impossible. It is not God Who would be unfaithful to His promises, and Who has, therefore, annihilated hope, but the Christian who voluntarily remains in sin.

Can man, therefore, as long as he is in the state of mortal sin hope for nothing from God? Most certainly! Yes, he can hope for the forgiveness of his sins, and after having obtained forgiveness of his sins, he can hope for all that every good Christian can hope for. For he is forbidden to hope, only if he neglects to confess and bewail his sins, to fly the occasion of sin, if he does not make restitution, and has no resolution of doing better. But if he is animated by true contrition, then does hope in God exhibit itself in its most beautiful light, and in its happiest effects. The

Christian who has had the misfortune of falling into mortal sin, but now longs again for the grace of His Redeemer — he knows that his Saviour is the Good Shepherd Who seeks the lost sheep, and when He has found it, places it upon His shoulders, and bears it back to the fold. There is more joy in Heaven on the conversion of one sinner, than over the ninety-nine just who need not penance. To him the parable of the Prodigal Son softly whispers: “Father, I am not worthy to be called thy son; but . . . the father had already, full of compassion, taken him into his arms. And so the sinful but contrite Christian hopes that he may not be cast away by God, but lovingly received back by Him. He hopes, and rising up, confesses his sins and finds forgiveness, and with it a previously unimaginable joy of soul, and the peace of a good conscience. All merits of his good works that had been lost by sin revive and are awakened again in Heaven.

5. My beloved, what alone saves the soul from the horror of despair, which overtakes many sinners and fills them with terror of the judgment of God? The example of a sick person, of one who almost died in despair, shows us this plainly. St. Philip Neri came to this particular person and said to her: “For whom did Christ die on the cross? — For sinners. — And who art thou? — Woe to me a great sinner! — Therefore Christ died also for you; why do you despair?” — A ray of hope penetrated her unhappy soul, her features lightened up, and through the grace of God and the words of the saint she was filled with sorrow, obtained absolution, and passed away full of consola-

tion, full of joy and the hope of eternal life. Yes, truly, if after we had committed mortal sins, we did not have hope in God, our condition in this life would be a miserable one, for then we would have the certainty of eternal damnation. But if we are filled with true contrition for our sins, hope is the anchor of our salvation. Beware, therefore, my Christians, of sinning against hope, for then it is changed into despair or presumption, and both lead to perdition.

But where this does not take place, there hope is a true treasure of the Christian, and a rich spring of all consolation in God. If I could only describe this divine virtue which God infuses into the soul in Baptism! If I could describe all that it is to the Christian, in order that you, on your part, might do everything that God demands from you as Christians, in order that you might learn to hope as Christians, and share in its glorious fruit! The hope of the Christian in God! Hope in God as his Creator! We are the work of His omnipotence, goodness and wisdom. "Will He, therefore, abandon what He has created?" asks St. Ambrose. God answers by the mouth of the prophet Isaias: "I have made you and I will bear; I will carry and will save" (46, 4). Hope of the Christian in God as his Father! St. Augustine cries out: "Thou art my Father, what more do I need, what more shall I say, what more shall I desire? Thou art my Father!" Will He therefore forget His children, for whom He did not even spare His only begotten Son? The hope of the Christian in God, His Saviour! The Son of God said by the mouth of David: "Be-

hold my hands, behold in my hands I have signed thee. Fear not, for I have redeemed thee and called thee by thy name; thou art mine" (Is. 43, 1). The hope of the Christian in God the Holy Ghost! He is the Comforter, and the God of consolation, and consoles us in all tribulations, and "Behold he is with us all days even to the end of the world."

Should not we, therefore, place all our hope in God? God Himself invites us to do this, He commands us to hope in Him, and promises to give us everything that we ask of Him. Christian hope honors God, since it offers to His omnipotence, His goodness and truthfulness a fitting sacrifice of praise. Oh the hope of the Christian! It brings down upon him the most glorious gifts of God, infuses into his soul courage and constancy, peace and joy. But it must be accompanied by confidence, for as the soldier who fears is already half-conquered, but almost unconquerable, if he bears within himself the firm confidence of victory, so also the Christian. He who presumes on the goodness of God will receive nothing from Him. But He who places all his hope in Him will not be deceived. Hope in God, therefore, my beloved, hope in God and do good! If you have to provide for a family, hope in God and do good! You have perhaps some anxiety concerning the future of your children. Hope in God and do good, and fulfill your duties towards them! You have anxiety for your wants. Hope in God, do good and live as a Christian! You fear for the salvation of your soul midst so many dangers. Hope in God and do good!

And you do good if as a Christian, as a man, as a parent, as a superior, you fulfill your duties in every way; and then you can joyfully say: "I have hoped in thee, O God, and I shall not be confounded," for: "Blessed be the man that trusteth in the Lord, and the Lord shall be his confidence." Amen.

SERMON XXVII

THE VALUE OF PRAYER

“Blessed be God, who hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.”—Ps. 65, 20.

The Apostle St. Paul writes to his disciple Timothy: “God wishes that all men come to the knowledge of the truth, and be saved.” God has, therefore, in His holy providence provided that men, in as far as they wish, can really attain their end. But since we, of our own strength, could not attain our end here below, Divine Providence has provided us with means therefor:

First He sent Our Divine Saviour on earth to lay the foundation on which we should build. He founded the Church, in order that she should receive us at our birth into her bosom through Baptism, later instruct and guide us. He instituted the sacraments in order that they might preserve and strengthen us on the way of salvation, or if we had the misfortune to fall away from God, to lead us back again. But God saw in His holy Providence how we had need of still another means, in order that we could have at all times intercourse with Him, and through this intercourse with God grow in His knowledge and love. He saw the mass of evil to which we are subject in body and soul, threatened by it at every moment and abandoned by every other help. God now chose for us prayer which

should serve as the most excellent means to obtain every good for body, soul, time and eternity from His benevolence, and with His help avoid all dangers, doubts, needs and anxieties. On this account, God in His Providence ordained that prayer be for all, at all times and in every place and for all needs the most agreeable, the most effective and the most common means. Prayer is the most agreeable means, for nothing is more agreeable and easier, than to pray to Him Who loves us, and can help us and longs to hear us; it is the most effective means, because it rests upon the divine promises; it is the most common, for it is suitable for all men, great and small, young and old.

Three qualities, therefore, shine forth from prayer which Divine Providence has shown to us in order to place before us His intention, namely its value, its necessity and its power. To-day we shall speak of the value of prayer. This value consists therein that we learn through prayer to know God and ennoble ourselves. The knowledge, therefore, of God and the ennobling of man through prayer is the subject of my discourse.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. God created man, in order that he might know, honor, love, adore and obey Him, and after he had sufficiently fulfilled this duty on earth, he should be happy with Him in Heaven. But where do we find the most suitable means to rightly know, love and adore God, in order through it to become inflamed with desire also to obey Him? We find the best means

in prayer. To be sure we learn in school, in church, in the Christian family, much about God, but this knowledge comes from without, and, therefore, makes no deep, intimate and lasting impression on the soul, as it does, when this knowledge comes from within. The external knowledge must be the foundation, in order that the internal may be built thereon and the structure completed and suitably arranged. Therefore prayer means the elevation of the spirit to God. The words that we use in prayer are, therefore, only a means to help our weakness, for whoever in prayer does not think or feel anything, his prayer is only of the lips. Prayer is the work of the heart and not of the lips — says St. Bernard — for God does not listen to the words of him who prays, but looks into his heart. The soul as the likeness of God desires to place itself before Him, and this it does through prayer. From this we learn to know God better, and the sweetness and joy of the service of God, and what we otherwise would scarcely do through fear of Hell, that we now do from the motive of love, because we have learned to know how good, and sublime and benevolent God really is.

And, truly, the Son of God could not have given us a better way of learning His love for us, than by teaching us to pray, to call on His heavenly Father as our Father, and to begin our prayer with the words: "Our Father." Among all the names which the Old Testament applies to God we do not find this one: "*Father*," but rather God the Highest, the Omnipotent, or the Lord of Hosts. Not even Abraham, who was especially dear to God, and in whom all nations

should be blessed, dared to address God except by the name of "*Lord.*" Therefore St. Paul says: "For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but you have received the spirit of the adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father)" (Rom. 8, 15) because in the Old Law the fear of God reigned supreme, but now the love of God. What else does the name of Father mean than the bond of love and generosity? Whatever the father possesses that he destines for his children, whom he cannot disinherit as long as they have not become guilty of some great misdemeanor. And we through Christ are become the children of God and co-heirs with Christ. That alone is sufficient to explain the love that God has for us; His love is sufficient for us to hear, as Christ testifies: "I do not say that I will ask the Father for you; for the Father himself loves you." It is not necessary, our divine Saviour says, as it were, that I should become your intercessor, for the love of God the Father is the reason of all His generosity and must be the reason of all your love towards Him. How beautifully St. Augustine expresses himself on this subject: "Thou art my Father; what more need I desire, what more need I demand? Thou art my Father!"

And we learn rightly to know and to understand through prayer this love, this generosity. In prayer the heart raises itself to God; in prayer it takes refuge to this loving Father, where it is seized with His presence since it feels, since, in fact, it knows, that we are the children of God. St. Paul says: "For the spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are

the sons of God" (Rom. 8, 15). Now if God communicates Himself to the one who prays, guides his words and fills him with His presence, if his language and prayers are the work of the Holy Ghost who helps us in our weakness, do you not indeed believe that we only rightly through prayer experience how good and lovable God is. David from his own experience exclaimed: "Taste and see that the Lord is sweet." Do you not indeed believe that we will rejoice in the incomparable mildness of God, love Him and learn to consider ourselves His children as we are obliged to, and to live according to His pleasure. Yes, in prayer we shall be convinced, and more so than all books and all words could convince us, that God is our highest and most amiable Good, our whole happiness in Heaven and on earth. Now He communicates Himself interiorly to the soul, in order that we may obtain a faint conception of what the future bliss of the soul will be. It attains after death to the full vision of God, and eternally enjoys what on earth eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and what has not even entered into the heart of man.

Who could describe the sensations of him who, abandoned by man, tortured by misery and need, tormented by temptations, or oppressed by the realization of his own sinfulness, pours out his heart to God, bewails his need and misery, and now full of consolation, full of peace, full of resignation and confidence in the divine protection he returns to his home? He has really learned more in that moment, and felt more than he could from the perusal of a thousand books, what

God is and wills to be to men. This is the marvelous worth of prayer whereby God communicates Himself to man and in which man enters into the most intimate relations with God; in which the soul is filled with heavenly consolation and joy, and attains a higher knowledge: "Come ye to him and be enlightened" (Ps. 33, 6). Wonderful greatness of prayer! Here is the ladder upon which the creature ascends to the Creator, the servant to the Lord of hosts, nothingness to Infinite Perfection. We are an abyss of misery, God is an Abyss of all good, and behold the abyss of all misery strives after the Abyss of all good, and the latter infuses itself into the former, and the former seeks to be filled. Through prayer we learn to know God.

2. But we not only learn through prayer to know God and to esteem the high value of prayer, but also that it ennobles us. From what we have thus far heard it is evident that prayer ennobles and elevates the Christian, since it unites him with God and enables him to learn to know God more and more. The words of Our Divine Saviour to His disciple Ananias beautifully express the power of prayer. Our Lord appeared to Ananias and quieted him and gave to him the mission to go to Saul, now Paul, who in his raging persecution of the Christians had gone to Damascus in order to deliver the Christians there to prison and judgment. Ananias answered: "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints in Jerusalem. And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that invoke thy name."

And the Lord said to him: "Go thy way, for behold he prays." It is as if the voice of the Lord had spoken: "Fear not to seek out this man. He was a persecutor, frothing and raging after murder, and disseminated everywhere anxiety and terror among the faithful; but behold, *he prays!* He has now become an entirely different man. The storm of earthly passions has subsided. He dwells in heavenly calm, in the quiet harbor of prayer, blessedly elevated into another and better world. Therefore be without fear of him and for him, for 'Behold, he prays.'"

Oh, what a touching sight is a man who prays, who earnestly and truly prays. The world is diffident at prayer; it has a certain anxiety about it. Earthly minded men consider it not without misgiving, and they become really anxious if any one in their presence, with whom they had formerly prayed, betakes himself to prayer. Oh, have no fear of a man who gives himself in earnestness and with his whole soul to prayer! Rather be comforted for he has won; he is on the holy mountain of which the prophet says: "They shall not hurt, nor shall they kill in all my holy mountain, for the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the covering waters of the sea" (Is. 11, 9). If he was before in danger of sin, prayer will preserve him from it, or will fortify him in temptation. If formerly the storms of passion raged in him, the mild breath of prayer will lead him into the silence of the soul. Pure, milder, more amiable, more faithful to duty, more determined in all good, more decided against evil, more submissive, more patient in suf-

fering, happier in joy, he will return from prayer, if it was really an intercourse with God and an opening of the heart to Him.

Intercourse with God! What can make a man more deserving of honor, what can ennoble him more and give to him a higher character and dignity? Yes, the truly praying man is the highest and most worthy sight, one to whom no scorn nor contempt dare be attached. It calls down upon him, as it did upon Moses on Mt. Sinai, the glory, as it were, of the Infinite Majesty of God, with Whom he has the happiness and honor to speak. Therefore, stupid and blind are all who are ashamed to pray! They are proud, if the great of this earth give them an audience, and consider it a shame, a disgrace, to speak with the infinite and unspeakable Greatness, the King of kings, the Lord of all. A most damnable perversion of intellect! Or do you not believe, my beloved, in the true ennobling influence which prayer exercises on the devotee? If even the intercourse with virtuous, wise men exercises an ennobling influence on the soul of those with whom we associate; if this intercourse changes our judgment, our way of thinking, our whole character and life, and as it were, ranks us with those with whom we associate, should not the frequent intercourse with God have this, yea, and a still greater effect, when His grace is so richly poured out upon us? The royal prophet says: "Come ye to him and be enlightened; and your faces shall not be confounded" (Ps. 33, 6). Therefore St. Chrysostom asserts that nothing contributes to awaken in men noble thoughts, as much as the diligent intercourse with God,

that nothing makes the heart of man so sensible to all good, that nothing elevates him so much above miserable earthly business, as frequent prayer.

3. Prayer is, therefore, the source of true ennoblement of the individual, of the family, and of human society. And, in fact, whoever does not preserve himself in good through prayer, will be made better by nothing, and will never become better. Whence originates the heroic courage, the strength to overcome sin, whence the patience and constancy under heavy crosses, whence the love of one's neighbor, if not from prayer? Here is exhibited the true, the great and noble character of man. Prayer, therefore, ennobles man.

But prayer also ennobles the family. For the family, prayer is the angel of peace, of harmony, of Christian charity and mutual patience. In the family, where devotion is the tone of the house, the evil spirit of discord will not readily gain entrance. There the tender flower of chastity in the sons and daughters continues to bloom in its immaculate purity, for the fear of God protects it and carefully watches over it. But where the love of prayer has disappeared, there enters the slimy spirit of sensuality, of disunion and disobedience, and of the forgetfulness of God, and with them vices and sins. Prayer ennobles the family.

Prayer ennobles human society. And in fact as long as individuals and families preserve the spirit of prayer, they will also preserve the treasure of pure morality, of firm Christian virtue, and as long as these are not lost to society, it can never really become unhappy and dissatisfied. Earthly possessions may vacillate, may

be lost, but God's blessing remains. Let the poor rightly pray, and they will, without envying and hating the rich, bear their lot quietly in labor and prayer. Let the rich and the well-to-do rightly pray, and they will love, share with, assist in their need, and not oppress the poor with a hard-heartedness that cries to Heaven. The genuine intercourse with God, the Eternal Love, plants love also in the hearts of men, and from the garden of prayer sprout all virtues which ever adorned men. Prayer, therefore, ennoble the individual man, the family and society, and herein consists its second high value. Knowledge of God, ennoblement of ourselves, this is the glorious fruit of prayer.

4. May God's grace grant that you, my beloved, so rightly understand how amiably Divine Providence desired to act, when it gave to us such an easy means, at all times, in every place, and for all without exception always at hand — namely, to know God, to honor, to love, to adore and to obey Him, in order that we may be happy with Him. Who could describe what God is and will be to us? Who could describe what it means to possess joy, peace and justice, and to be elevated and ennobled above the seeking after gold and pleasures? Yes, that every one can say, who has entered into union with God through prayer and has permitted grace to operate in him, and has delivered himself from sin. The world, indeed, gives to such Christians these ignominious names: bigot, hypocrite. Do not allow yourselves to be disturbed in doing what is the delight of angels, you good souls, that really pray! Continue to praise and glorify Him Whom we

can never sufficiently praise, Whom we should praise for all eternity. Pour out your soul daily to Him in adoration and love, in gratitude and petition for yourselves and others. Unite with prayer the faithful and conscientious fulfillment of duty, patience in labor and in your daily avocations, humility, obedience and harmony. If you unite with labor the right prayer, you will call down upon yourselves and others the treasures of grace. Happy the youth of whom it can be said: "Behold he prays!" Happy every one of every age and sex of whom, no matter what his office or calling may be, one may speak the beautiful words, "Behold he prays!" Salvation to him, salvation to you all especially in the hour of death! The hour of death otherwise so terrible, doubly terrible for the unbeliever, is for the friend of prayer the consoling transition to the blessed vision of Him, with Whom he gladly conversed here on earth, without beholding Him. In Heaven he can, with the angels and saints, continue eternally what he began here below, namely, to adore and praise and glorify God. For God hath prepared for him what eye on earth hath not seen nor ear heard, and what hath not entered into the heart of man, namely, the eternal vision in Heaven of God, eternal joy and bliss. Amen.

SERMON XXVIII

THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER

“We ought always to pray, and not to faint.”—LUKE 18, 1.

In our last meditation we considered the value of prayer. In prayer we learn to know God better, and we ourselves through intercourse with God are ennobled and become better. This truth would be sufficient of itself to convince us of the necessity of prayer, in order to know our destiny, to love and obey God, and thereby become happy in the possession of Him for eternity. But there is still a more convincing proof of this found in the teaching of Holy Scripture and the Fathers, namely that God has decreed from all eternity, in His Divine Providence many things for the salvation of men, which He will grant to them only through prayer. Divine Providence here observes a similar order to that which exists in the fruitfulness of the earth. The earth should bring forth fruit, but man must first cultivate the soil. Therefore, Jesus Christ says: “Ask and it shall be given you: seek and you shall find: knock and it shall be opened to you” (Matt. 7, 7).

Prayer is, as it were, the channel through which our Lord communicates to us His graces, comes to our assistance, and pours out His gifts. It is the ladder

of the Patriarch Jacob which reaches from earth to heaven, upon which the angels ascend and descend, ascend in order to bring our prayers to the throne of God, as the Archangel Raphael said to the pious Tobias: "When thou didst pray with tears . . . I offered thy prayers to the Lord" (Tob. 12); descend in order to bring to us the blessings of God. For this reason, the great Doctor of the Church, St. Augustine, calls prayer the key of Heaven, because it, in fact, not only opens the treasures of divine grace, but also by means of this grace, makes possible our entrance into Heaven. But why should I say more, when Christ Himself in His indescribable love says: "Behold I stand before the door and knock. If any one hear my voice and open the door I will enter in to him." God was therefore not satisfied to give us prayer as a powerful means; He Himself knocks at the door of our hearts, in order that He may compel us to pray to Him, and to come to us with His help and His grace. What else do these words mean: "I stand at the door and knock"? Whoever knocks on the door seeks admission. Although God is the Lord of our hearts, He allows it to our own will to grant to Him entrance or to refuse entrance to Him into our hearts, for He will not enter in by force. What else follows from this than the necessity of prayer, in order that Christ may enter into us with His grace, and assist us in our salvation? Whoever therefore does not pray refuses entrance to Christ. He does not seek or demand His help. But Our Divine Saviour says: "Without me you can do nothing," therefore, he who does not pray

does not seek his salvation. From this we learn, why there are so many Christians who lead evil lives and meet with an evil end, precisely because they do not pray. I shall, therefore, to-day speak of the necessity of prayer, or in other words, that there is no salvation without prayer. God grant us His grace to see this, and after we have realized it to make use of prayer, in order that we may really share in grace and salvation.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. We have all experienced only too vividly, my beloved, the necessity of prayer. Who could count up all the evils that have come upon us in consequence of sin? Evils of body and of soul; sickness, hunger, poverty, misery of every kind; temptations that threaten the soul, enemies seeking its unhappiness, passions that disfigure it, and the greatest evil of all, sin, that drags it down to destruction. Who could bear these evils relying on his own powers alone, who could withstand sin? Whence should we seek help and grace to despise these evils, or rather in spite of them, to issue from the struggle of this life, crowned with the crown of victory, and then to enter upon the eternal reward of Heaven? Here we must, in truth, say with the Jewish king Josaphat: "O God . . . we have not strength enough to be able to resist this multitude, which cometh violently upon us. But as we know not what to do we can only turn our eyes to thee" (2 Par. 20, 12). And how shall we turn our eyes to God for help, where we are unable to help ourselves, excepting by prayer? Wherefore, the holy Pope St.

Celestine has said: "Is there a single hour when we are not in need of the help of God, in the many events and mishaps of life? And it would be an evidence of unbearable conceit in a man to expect to be self sufficient, to vanquish all with his own powers alone."

And it is for this very reason that God in His Providence has given to all men prayer, in order that they may help themselves. Children themselves would seem to teach us this since with their screaming or begging they try to move their mother, and in fact give her no rest until she helps them. So also, God gives to every one strength and power to pray, and excepts not even the greatest sinner from this privilege. "*Whosoever* asks, shall receive." Here indeed Divine Providence takes upon itself something that is everlasting, for as the number of men is countless so also are their needs and wants, countless are their demands, immeasurable their bodily and spiritual misery. Wherefore, Holy Scripture says that when we are filled with sadness at the disappointments of this life we should have recourse to prayer: "Cast all your cares upon him, for he hath care of you." Rejoice therefore, ye poor! God is with you in your poverty; rejoice if you suffer the pangs of hunger, for God Who hears even the cry of the young raven, and gives all animals food in due season will not forget you; and you who are weakened by sickness, God pities you as a father pities his child. But in order that we might always have God's mercy, and that He should turn all things to good, either here on earth or in Heaven, He has given us prayer, for although He is always ready to help us, He desires

nevertheless that we should ask for His help. Prayer is, therefore, necessary.

2. Of greater necessity than for our bodily wants is prayer for our spiritual wants. This necessity is so well established in the Gospel, that no Christian can deny it without jeopardizing the salvation of his soul. It is very evident from the necessity of grace, which as you all know and our faith teaches us, is necessary for salvation for without it no one can perform works meritorious for eternal life. Hence Christ says: "Without me you can do nothing:" yes not even have a meritorious thought, and St. Paul says: "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. 3, 5). But how do we receive this grace and this aptitude which God is not obliged to give us, without our asking for it? Christ gives the answer: "Ask and you shall receive." Therefore, without prayer, there is no grace, and without grace no salvation. Hence, without prayer, there is no salvation. Prayer is necessary for our salvation.

And of course, we must first perform good works, live virtuously, observe the commandments of God, before we can hope for bliss. Only the laborer who has worked the whole day, receives in the evening his reward, and only the Christian who has lived in the service of the Lord, receives at the end of life, his reward in Heaven. Hence Christ says: "Not every one who says to me Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven, he will enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Therefore, the Prince of the Apostles, St. Peter, says to the faithful: "Seek to make your calling (to bliss) sure by good works." These good works, however, are the observance of the commandments of God, the fulfillment of the duties of our state of life, such as mercy, moderation, chastity, patience, love of our neighbor, and other good works. But whence do we receive the strength to practise these good works or to appropriate them? From ourselves perhaps? But Christ answers: "Without me you can do nothing." And St. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, says: "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God." We need grace, and without grace we can do nothing for the salvation of our soul. How can we obtain it? Our Divine Saviour again answers: "Ask and you shall receive; you must pray always and never faint."

Prayer is, therefore, necessary, in order to observe the commandments of God, to fulfill the duties of our state of life and to acquire and practice virtues. Yes, my beloved, we must ask God for the spirit of enlightenment, in order that we may know the way of salvation; we must ask God for the spirit of strength, in order to resist the inclinations of our fallen nature, to overcome the world and the devil; the spirit of penance, in order to purify ourselves from sin; the spirit of submission, in the contradictions and vicissitudes of this life, in order that through penance we may make them meritorious; in a word, we must ask for the spirit of sanctity, in order to live and die as true Christians. By prayer, faith is increased, hope

is strengthened, and charity is enkindled. All virtues are gradually acquired through prayer. This is so true that the Fathers teach: "Whoever knows how to pray well, knows how to live well." For here the grace of God enters in, and the Christian, elevated and borne up by the grace of God, can do all things. Hence St. Paul says: "I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me." How many passions that have crept into the heart from the time of youth on, does not the Christian have to contend with? How many temptations torment him? How many difficulties must he not overcome? How frequently is it most difficult for him to observe the commandments of God? Can he do everything of his own strength? Our Saviour answers: "Without me you can do nothing." Hence He admonishes us: "Ask and you shall receive." Prayer is therefore necessary, for without prayer there is no grace, without grace there are no good works, and without good works there is no salvation, and therefore, without prayer there is no salvation.

How often is one exposed to manifold temptations to sin, even if one were the holiest of mortals and adorned with every grace, in consequence of fallen nature, or by the bad example of wicked men! The Book of Wisdom says: "My child, if you wish to live piously, prepare thy soul for temptations." How can one resist them and, therefore, avoid sin and escape damnation? Or should God deliver one over to so many temptations, from within and without, which one should suffer without any help! To this Our Divine

Saviour says: "Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation." Prayer is, therefore, the weapon of the Christian, whereby he can overcome every temptation, and even make them meritorious for eternal life, and change them into pearls of the heavenly crown. Prayer is, therefore, necessary to overcome temptation.

3. Who assures you, my beloved, who assures you that you will be constant in good and persevere unto the end? For only he who has steadfastly persevered, says Jesus Christ, shall be saved. O perseverance! This is a word suited to fill us with joy or with terror. In this one word, I find the end of all evil and the eternal possession of all good. Should I not strive in every way to acquire such a precious grace and leave nothing untried in order to obtain possession of it? But what am I saying? Precisely this most important of all virtues we cannot merit by all our good works! But thanks be to God, there still remains a means by which we can assure ourselves of perseverance in good until we draw the last breath of our life, even though we cannot merit it. And this means is prayer. The great Doctor of the Church, St. Augustine, assures us that the grace of perseverance can be attained by prayer: "The saints, what else did they ask for, than that they might persevere in holiness?" And in another place he adds: "It is an established fact that God has prepared some things for those who do not pray for them, as the beginning of faith, and some things only for those who do pray for them, as *perseverance unto the end.*" Prayer is, therefore, necessary for salvation and without prayer there is no salvation.

“Ask and you shall receive,” this is the law for us, prescribed by Our Divine Saviour; this is the oracle of eternal life, the key of heaven, the ladder on which we ascend to the throne of God. It is the word of Christ, which no one can call into question, for God has attached His grace to prayer, and no one can hope for salvation who does not fulfill the conditions upon which salvation depends. Prayer is the channel through which our Lord communicates His grace to us; it is the bond which unites man to God, and which brings down God’s blessing upon us; it is the weapon of the Christian, and as little as a soldier can conquer without weapons, so little can a Christian without prayer obtain victory over the enemies of his salvation. Prayer is to the soul what natural warmth is to the body. Through its natural heat, the body is protected from sickness; it preserves strength and drives the good blood through the arteries, and separates the bad. Thus prayer protects the soul from sickness, and preserves it through the life of grace. Prayer is necessary for salvation.

St. Augustine says: “I believe that it is evident to all, that it is simply impossible without the help of prayer to live virtuously, and to end life virtuously.” And St. Augustine adds: “We believe that nobody attains to bliss but those whom God has called thereto; that nobody who is called, can obtain salvation without the assistance of God, and that this assistance is given only in consequence of prayer.” And we have indeed seen that prayer is not only necessary to bear temporal miseries with patience, and to enable us to change them

into merits for Heaven, not only that without prayer there is no grace, without grace no good works, no virtues, no resistance to temptations, no perseverance in good till the end of life is possible, but also that prayer is the ladder on which we ascend to Heaven; the channel through which divine grace flows into our souls, the bond that unites us with God, the weapon that protects us, and the command of Jesus which we must obey. So now, it must become clear and evident to us at a glance, why it is that so many Christians perform no good works, possess no virtues, cannot resist their passions, and fall from temptation into temptation, and from sin into sin. Why? Because they no longer pray. They despise prayer and cast it aside. They arise in the morning without casting a grateful look towards Heaven that has preserved them through the night. Without imploring the blessing of God, without offering up their actions to Him and without asking Him for His assistance, they go through the day. They spend the day without prayer, and without a prayer betake themselves to rest. They do not know that the words of Holy Scripture could also resound in their ears: "Thou fool, this very night thy soul shall be demanded of thee!"

4. Our prayer must ascend to God in order that His mercy may descend to us. In whatever state you may be, if you cease to ask God for His grace and His protection, there remains nothing else in which you can place your confidence, and nothing else can supply the loss you suffer. For the one who does not pray the springs of grace are dried up, the channel is con-

taminated, the warmth of the soul is driven away by the bitter coldness of uncharitableness and ingratitude towards God, and the soul is become as the earth without water, which no beneficent rain fructifies. The living faith dies in the one who does not pray; glad hope disappears, and love grows cold. He is no longer animated with patience, meekness, zeal, to merit a reward in Heaven or to escape the punishment of Hell. Peace and joy and justice have died out in his soul. The joyful and sublime consciousness of being in the state of grace has for him no attraction. In its place avarice, the desire for pleasures, and unbridled passions have celebrated their entrance, so far do these keep him away from Thee, O God, Who does not take refuge to Thee, Who alone could bridle these unholy passions.

O my Christians, what will it mean to have gone through life without prayer! The harmony of Christian life is destroyed; the bond that held it together is rent asunder; and the edifice is demolished. Even though, as men, you are alive and well, as Christians, you are dead. The kingdom of grace is for you almost at an end; the star of your hope for eternal happiness is no longer before you; the thought of God is no longer a joy to your soul, and the innocence of former happy days has disappeared. Everything is hardened, cold and dead!

Do not believe, my Christians, that prayer is such a hard and disagreeable duty. No, the amiable Providence of God has ordained that prayer should be just as agreeable and inviting as it is necessary. And here,

too, the grace of God assists; the Holy Ghost guides our speech and helps us in our weakness. Therefore, what else is the condition of those who recognize this duty towards God, a duty of obedience and gratitude and love? Here they learn to know God Whose children they are; they carry on with Him the most confidential intercourse; they reveal to Him all their needs and sufferings, and what they ask of Him He grants; and what the most eloquent speech could not express their heart can do, for it is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Yes, they have become the true temple of God, in which daily almost hourly amiable holocausts ascend to God, while His Divine Presence fills them with peace, joy and justice. And if tribulations, sufferings and persecutions overtake them, they have a powerful refuge in prayer. The sufferings which they must endure are multiplied a hundredfold by grace and a future reward. And if temptations from within and from without attack them, neither the temptations nor the world nor their own evil inclinations can overcome them, for they possess a powerful weapon against them, the weapon of prayer. "Will you know — says St. Chrysostom, — what prayer is? Friendship cannot accomplish as much with God as does prayer." And even if they have here and there fallen into sin, they have prayer whereby to raise themselves. Their prayers ascend to God, and His mercy descends to them.

Therefore, my beloved, I will conclude with the words of Our Divine Saviour: "We ought always to pray and not to faint," precisely because prayer is so

necessary for salvation. Who amongst you, therefore, could be unmindful of his eternal salvation? Oh hasten to Him, to the God of mercy and all consolation! Cast all your cares upon Him, for He will bear them for you! Behold Christ in His gentle mildness says also to you: "Behold I stand at the door and knock. And if any one hear my voice and open the door to me I will enter in to him." Will you perhaps permit Him to stay outside and wait in vain? Impossible! Therefore ask Him frequently to come to you with His grace and His peace and blessing, and to fill your soul with them. Then you can say with St. Paul: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." Then the time will come, when you will knock at the portal of Heaven, and rest assured that, if you have not driven Jesus from the portal of your hearts here on earth, He will not drive you from the portal of Heaven. He will open it to you, and you will enter into Heaven, into our eternal abode. Amen.

SERMON XXIX

THE INFLUENCE OF EXAMPLE

“Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect.”—MATT. 5, 48.

It is generally asserted that the world to-day is governed by public opinion. Men of science and of literature, men of deep religious convictions, tell us that public opinion is created by the press. There is undoubtedly much truth in this assertion, but it does not contain the whole truth, for there is another power that generates public opinion far more effectively than the press and that is simply, “example.”

Good or bad example exercises an almost unlimited sway over the minds of men. It reaches where the literature of the press cannot. It exercises its influence over the educated and uneducated alike. It is a matter of daily experience in the higher and lower circles of society and when brought to bear upon the religious and moral element of man's life, produces the most surprising effects. The most profound religious convictions are often completely undermined by the bad example of those among whom men live. And they who were once indifferent to matters of religion, are not infrequently led to think seriously on the subject, and end by gaining the Church through the edifying conduct of those by whom they are sur-

rounded. Thus it happens, that the example we see brings forth results which other means would have failed to produce.

This, my dear friends, is a most important truth. It clearly shows that each one of us has it in his power to benefit, or to harm his neighbor; to be the occasion of the salvation or ruin of souls, redeemed by the Precious Blood of Jesus. It teaches us, that each one, however illiterate he may be, can become a powerful champion or a dangerous enemy of the Church. He may assist her in the glorious work of saving souls, and he may render her efforts useless. If the bright light of his example shines before men, they will see her good works; they will enter into themselves, and prejudices against the Church will be dispelled. They will examine her claims, and surrender themselves to her, and thus he has helped to save his brother's soul. Or he may lead a scandalous life, and thus confirm men in their prejudices against the Church, cause her to be despised and persecuted and paralyze her efforts for the salvation of souls. His brother will live and die in unbelief; his soul is lost, and that bad Catholic is responsible before God for the loss of that immortal soul.

My dear friends, to deliver you from this terrible responsibility, that you may be ministers unto salvation and not to death to your fellow beings, I will endeavor to show you the effects which "example" produces on those outside the church.

- I. There is nothing more certain than the fact that the world is very wicked. The fell spirit of atheism

is rampant. It pervades the science and literature of the day, and intrudes itself into politics and business transactions and even the ordinary affairs of daily life. It would seem that men had grown tired of God's revelation, and agreed among themselves to banish religion out of the world into the vast regions of the unknowable. They are not willing to grant it shelter even within the hallowed precincts of the church or cloister. The very men who at present rule the world, and are expected to give a tone to society, practice religion only so far as it subserves their own sordid interests. In theory and practice, they deny the fundamental principles of morality. The Ten Commandments are rejected as men would worn-out garments, they have done their duty and are now out of fashion. Sordid self interest and a regard of what the world will say are the great laws by which men regulate their conduct. Charity and chastity and humility, as inculcated by Christ, are all but unknown virtues, and at no period of the world's history was man more completely of the "earth earthy" than in this age of boasted enlightenment and social progress.

Yet, however deplorably man may degenerate, he will never erase from his mind the knowledge of good and evil, nor will he pluck out of his heart his natural respect for virtue and aversion to vice. His conduct may be at variance with the principles of morality, but in his heart, in his inmost soul, he will never call evil good or good evil. Neither will he say that vice does honor to a man, nor that virtue degrades him. He is convinced that the very contrary of all this is true. So-

ciety may, therefore, degenerate, men may throw off all moral restraint, and corruption may become frightfully prevalent, yet virtue will not cease to command respect. The just man may be persecuted by the wicked, his virtue held up to scorn, men may say that silly scruples have turned his brain, yet it is certain, that in their hearts they will entertain a very profound respect for him. In their sober moments, when the intoxication caused by unbridled passion is over, they will enter into themselves, and acknowledge that the man whose virtue they held up to scorn and ridicule is, after all, a better man than they are.

When men see, therefore, that the priest is the first to respect the sanctity of his state; that the statesman and politician study not their own personal aggrandizement or sordid interests, but the country's welfare; that the lawyer does not prey, like a vulture, on the substance of his client, and undertakes not the defense of an unjust cause; that the magistrate sells not justice to the highest bidder; when they see that the merchant is scrupulously exact in his business transactions, and that the rich man is not an extortioner of the poor, but loves to be their friend and protector; that the employer pays honest wages for work performed, and that the laborer is conscientious in the discharge of his duties; when they see that the young man is industrious, and avoids places of dissipation and company in which no respect is paid to virtue; that the looks and the dress and the spirit and the whole deportment of the young woman betray modest reserve and a delicate sense of honor; when they see, in fine, that parents are

solicitous to train their children to habits of virtue, and that they, in turn, take pride in doing honor to their parents and in giving them pleasure; when men see all this, they will respect the conduct of such as these, and regard them as model men and model women, and they will think how happy the world would be, were it peopled with such men and women. And if, with all this, they see that these persons, though they make no parade of their religion, nor try with unreasonable importunity to force it on every one with whom they come in contact, are yet deeply religious persons, and show on every occasion a profound respect for their religion; when they see that they frequent the church, assist at Mass, listen reverently to the word of God, devoutly receive the sacraments, observe the fasts, and, in short, scrupulously comply with all the observances of their religion; when they see that though they boast not of their faith, that they are neither afraid nor ashamed to confess it, almost without being aware of it, men transfer the respect they have for these persons to the religion which they profess.

2. It is in the province of religion to raise men in the scale of moral excellence and to train them to habits of solid virtue. When men see that our Catholics are penetrated with a deep sense of religion; that the sharpest scrutiny discovers in them nothing worthy of blame, but everything that commands respect and admiration, they naturally conclude that it is religion which has made them what they are, and then they will say that a religion which can form such men and women is a necessity to man's moral wants: that it

is a friend and benefactor of the human race; that they who despise its teachings and yet more they who persecute it, are enemies of our race, since they undermine the whole moral order, and the very foundations on which prosperity is based. Thus by the irreproachable conduct of our Catholics, men are led to respect our holy religion, to admire and love it, and not infrequently seek shelter within her sanctuary from the desolating skepticism and brute materialism of our age.

How many are there not, in fact, among our converts who trace the history of their conversion to the edifying conduct of some Catholic with whom they often came in contact? There are thousands who would never have given a thought to the claims of the Catholic Church, were it not for the bright example of virtue which they saw among some of our good people, and, it may be safely asserted, that the Church has acquired a greater number of converts through the virtues of her saints than the learning of her doctors. Our age is too material and superficial to delight in grand theological disputes; men, as a rule, prefer the flimsy, if not the filthy article of the newspaper, or the silly story of the novel to the ably written works of controversy. And they who do read and are interested in religious matters, read, as a rule, only such as serve to prejudice them against our religion, works in which our teachings are misrepresented, our practices ridiculed, our aims criticised, and our public actions judged unfairly, ascribed, perhaps to motives which have about as much influence over us as the Sultan of Turkey. It is, then,

true, that Catholic books do not exercise any great influence over those outside of the Church. Yet Truth should be made known everywhere, in season and out of season. Indeed, it seems hard to understand how he can be a true disciple of Christ, animated by the spirit of religion, who does not ardently sigh for the happy day which shall witness the true faith of Christ flourishing all over the world, and all men, Jews, and Gentiles, Protestants and Infidels gathered into the one true fold, brought into the Church of Jesus Christ. The Catholic who does not desire this, and who endeavors not, as far as in him lies, to coöperate in this grand work of conversion is, at least, an indifferent and drowsy Christian, and though he may call himself a Catholic, he is certainly a stranger to Catholicity.

3. And now, my friends, if we are to coöperate in this grand work of saving souls, how are we to do it? In the simplest manner, by letting the bright light of our example shine before men that they may glorify our Father Who is in Heaven.

1 Good example is more powerful than mere learned words; it makes an impression where words would be thrown away, and speaks to those whom our words could never reach. Men must see us whether we will or not. If our conduct is correct in every detail, they will notice it, and respect us for it; if, on the contrary, it is scandalous, they will be shocked and treat us with the contempt which we so richly deserve. In either case, our religion will gain or suffer; men ordinarily judge the tree by its fruit, and the impression exists, that religion is intimately connected with our moral

conduct; religion is the tree which bears the fruit of our works.

✓ The irreproachable conduct of our people is, therefore, the most effective argument for the conversion of the unbeliever. It is an argument that can be made use of by all, even if they possess no depth of learning nor readiness in debate. It can be used by the uneducated as well as by the theologian, by the layman as well as by the priest, by the humble servant girl as well as by the lady of fashion and culture. Example speaks more eloquently than words. If, then, every Catholic were to conform his conduct to the teachings of the Church, we might safely burn every book of controversy that has been written; we would need them no more. We would simply tell men to look at us, and study our conduct, and see for themselves what religion has made us, and judge for themselves the tree by its fruit. "By their fruit you shall know them."

4. In the whole history of religion, there is perhaps no fact more surprising than the rapid conversion of the world to Christianity. When we consider the gigantic and humanly speaking insurmountable obstacles which the Christian Faith had to encounter when first preached; when we reflect on the strong and apparently well grounded attachment which the Jews had to the religion of their forefathers, and the aversion which they naturally must have had to a religion, whose Founder they had nailed to the Cross; when we consider the almost irresistible charms which paganism possessed in its teachings, so satisfactory to degraded reason in its morality, so perfectly in harmony with the corrupt

instincts of the human heart; in its worship so alluring to the senses, and with all the magnificence with which power and wealth and genius and art had embellished it; when, on the other hand, we consider that most repulsive character of the Christian religion, its doctrines so mysterious, its morality so unmercifully severe; its novelty and the low extraction of its first teachers, the poverty of its disciples; when we consider that, during centuries of pagan superstition, the worst passions of the human heart had exercised unlimited sway over the minds of men, and how at the very first announcement of Christianity the whole colossal power of the Roman empire was employed to extirpate the very name of Christian from the face of the earth; when we look at the funeral piles erected in every corner of the empire, the wild beasts from Germany's forests or Africa's deserts brought to the amphitheatre, the torrents of blood that flowed and crimsoned the earth for nearly three hundred years, we are struck with amazement, on beholding the Church, issuing forth from the Catacombs, ascending the throne of the Cæsars, and ruling over nations that formed the great Roman Empire, and provinces that during seven hundred years even Roman valor could not subdue.

5. And what, my friends, was the cause of this wonderful growth of the church? Why, coming forth from the midst of darkness and gloom, like the rising sun, has she so quickly attained the glory of meridian splendor? Was it the teaching of her doctors, the eloquence of her preachers, or the miracles wrought? There is to-day as much learning and eloquence in the

Church as there was then, the power of working miracles exists now, as it did then; there are at present living miracles in the Church. Why, then, are conversions so rare in our time? What could be the secret of her success in those early times? It was the patient zeal, the self sacrificing charity of her priests; it was the heroic constancy of her martyrs; it was the purity of her virgins. It was, in short, the extraordinary sanctity of her children. This was the powerful weapon with which she attacked Judaism, and paganism, the superstitions and vices of that voluptuous age, and with this weapon she achieved her most brilliant conquests.

Men saw and admired the astonishing change which the new religion wrought in those who put themselves under its influence — they saw that the very name of sin was detested by men, who but a short time before had been slaves of the vilest passions — they saw that those who had been steeped in sin and iniquity, became almost suddenly the models of the most exalted virtues; they saw and admired the superhuman power of religion which could raise men up from the depths of pagan degradation to the eminent height of moral excellence; they examined it, and became Christians. The most powerful champions of the Church have not been her eminent scholars, but her humble saints; they who lived in a corrupt world, but were not of the world; they who renounced the allurements of pleasure, and spent their lives in the obscurity of the cloister in penance and prayer; they who, at the foot of the Cross, learned the sublime lesson of self denial.

6. Example! Oh, how much more eloquent than mere words? When the children of the Church were animated with her spirit she was happy; then she made amazing progress, notwithstanding the most powerful and violent opposition against her. But when her children became degenerate, then days of grief came upon her, and she sustained terrible losses. Her worst enemies have been her own degenerate children. Every heresy that has arisen owes its existence to a bad child of the Church, and from the ranks of bad Catholics every heresy receives its strength. It is not the dungeon or exile or loss of property the Church fears. She fears not the rack, the fire, or sword or persecution in its bitterest form. No! This is her glory — it is then she appears to the greatest advantage; then that she draws down upon herself the world's attention, and excites the admiration of men, and what humanly speaking should have been her loss proves to be her gain.

But when her own children lose sight of the sanctity of their vocation, and degenerate, then the Church grows weak; then her influence over individuals and over society becomes less powerful; her efforts for the salvation of souls are paralyzed; men either notice her not or if they do, it is only to point at her the finger of scorn and reproach. There is nothing that so powerfully prejudices non-Catholics against the Church, as the scandalous conduct of some Catholics. I know, indeed, that the disedifying conduct of some Catholics is no valid argument against the Church, for if Catholics are bad, they are not so because they are

Catholics, but because they are false to her teaching.

7. No one knew better than our Lord how admirably suited to men's wants the Christian religion is; no one knew better than He, its wondrous power to develop man's moral character, so as to make him the very beau ideal of moral excellence. But Our Divine Saviour Himself plainly foretold that scandals would arise even in His Church. He likens her to a field in which cockle grows up amid the wheat; He tells us that she is like a net in which all kinds of fish, good and bad, are found. And He says that she resembles ten virgins, five of whom were foolish virgins. But what follows from this? Simply this, that religion does not destroy man's free will,—does not annihilate man's natural inclination to evil, that it does not force men to live up to their convictions. It is not fair, therefore, to hold the Church responsible for the crimes of her children. But we must not forget that men generally do not reason very logically on the facts that come under their observation. The majority of men are at most only superficial thinkers, and the shrewdest logicians will reason correctly on but few subjects. It is certain that men connect the Church with the bad lives of her children. "He is a bad man," they think and say, "and he is a Catholic; yet the Catholic Church thinks herself better than other churches."

We cannot change men's ways of thinking, and it matters little whether a man loses his soul logically or illogically, but it is of great importance to us that we be *not* the cause or occasion of his ruin. It may be very true, that men cannot plead a valid excuse for their

unbelief; it may be true that they lose their souls through their own fault; but if through our disedifying conduct, we have confirmed them in their prejudices against the Church, and thus prevented them from examining her claims, how terrible will not our responsibility be, in the sight of God? It is a dreadful thing to be obliged to answer to Almighty God for a single soul, lost through our fault. And oh, my friends, how do our accounts stand regarding this matter?"

If then, my friends, we love the Church of which through the great mercy of God we have the happiness to be members; if we love the precious souls for whom Jesus Christ died upon the Cross; if we would not see reprobates rising up against us on the day of judgment, accusing us of their eternal ruin; if we would not have God himself on that dreadful day demand the blood of those unfortunate reprobates at our hands, let us strive to live so that we may never be a stumbling block to any one. Let our lives be conformable to the teachings of the Church. Let the bright light of our example shine before men, that, seeing our works, they may recognize in us children of our Father in Heaven. Scandals there must needs be, but let each one take heed unto himself lest it be through him that scandal cometh. For our Lord has said, "it were better for that man had he never been born; better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he be buried in the depths of the sea, than that he should live to be the cause of another's ruin." Amen.

SERMON XXX¹

ST. PAUL

“This man is to me a vessel of election, to carry my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.”

—ACTS 15, 9.

The mission of the Holy Ghost in the world and in the souls of men is the most mysterious operation of God. Of all the mysteries which we shall never fathom until the day of Judgment, this is surely the most inexplicable; how that the Holy Spirit having, after an effort which, the wise ones tell us, extended through a bewildering series of ages, at length brought order out of chaos, should so soon behold His blessed work defaced and ruined by His ungrateful creatures. We cannot think that any of those holy angels who sang the praises of God on the lovely morning of the new creation, and bade God-speed to the human race, as it set out upon its journey down the ages, like some stately ship, could see or apprehend that the all-favoured, all-applauded race would immediately swerve from the right and sunny path, into the dark ways and troubled waters, and shatter itself upon the rocks. No eye but the all-seeing eye of Almighty God beheld this

¹ Compiled and preached by the Editor on the Feast of St. Paul, Jan. 25, 1903, at the St. Paul Seminary.

dismal, shameful future in store for the children of Adam. We blush for our common nature, when we survey the annals of our race. It was a fit and ominous prelude to the scenes of horror which were to follow, that the very first created man fell from rectitude, and the first-born of woman into the deeper abyss of a brother's hate and murder. With succeeding generations the process of degradation went on with a frightful rapidity. In every department of public and private life, "all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth," and the corruption was most palpable and noisome in the most elevated spheres of human energy.

But if we look more closely, we will discover that the Blessed Spirit had been ever moving silently over this seething mass of human passions. Throughout this period of gloom and tempestuous lawlessness, God has been constantly in the midst of men, though men knew it not. Indeed God, Whom men strove to drive from their hearts and thoughts and memories, has been all along the Principal Agent, forcing human passions to serve as the blind, unwilling instruments of His sovereign counsels; for it is His sublime prerogative, out of evil to bring forth good.

If now we survey the world of human kind as it existed at the birth of Christ, we shall find in its condition a very remarkable analogy to the situation of the physical world just previous to the creation of light. All the earth-rending convulsions of ancient history are ended, and the earth lies exhausted, pacified and united at the feet of its imperial master. Unruly barbarians have submitted to the yoke of law, and subjugated

provinces circle about the capital of the world, the mighty centre of an all-embracing system. Thus the roving atoms, the wandering hordes of savages, have coalesced into organized bodies; and by divine agency, the ambition of successive conquerors, and the powers of warlike peoples, have been used against their natural disposition, as instruments of harmony and civilization, to prepare the way for the kingdom of light.

But withal, it was still a hard and cruel world. And when we have said all that can be said for it, there remains so sad a picture that the heart instinctively shudders, a picture of might dominating right, of labor despised, and poverty trampled upon, of slaves without rights, children without moral training, and women without honor or respect. The moral sense was all but dead. Philosophy had lost its power over the multitudes, even if it served to console or guide an unhappy few. Letters were yet a thing of joy, a refuge. But when did learning ever fill the craving of the human soul that is morally weak and unsettled? Moral advice never flowed more elegantly than from the lips of Seneca; yet who followed it? He himself as little as any one else. The Stoics themselves felt that what was wanted was a model, a perfect, just man, in whom every virtue should see mirrored all its possibilities. It was this personality which Christianity offered. It bridged, by the life of Christ, the hopeless gulf between the abstract and the concrete. And then it sent forth universal teachers who lived over again as men, the life of their Divine Teacher, and shed on all sides the aroma of His infinite virtues.

Such a teacher was St. Paul, whose feast we celebrate to-day.

1. But no teacher becomes such without preparation. He may be called out of the regular order, and his doctrine may be delivered to him from on high. Yet, he is a man, with a mind and a heart. He has behind him infancy, boyhood and youth. There are in him indestructible elements of heredity, parental, racial, mental.

Thus St. Paul, born at Tarsus in Cilicia, bore all his life traces of his early education. It colored his teaching, his arguments, his language, his similes. He was a Jew of the soundest stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, "a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law, a Pharisee." He had gone through the primary school of the Jewish quarter of Tarsus, had learned the text and interpretation of the Law. He had worshipped regularly in the synagogue by the blue and tideless waters that laved the wharfs of his native town. There he read the Scriptures through in a three years' course, commented on them and heard them commented on. In the observance of Sabbaths, foods, fastings, purifications, none were stricter than Saul of Tarsus. And when he went up between the age of thirteen and sixteen to the advanced school of Gamaliel at Jerusalem, every Pharisee and Scribe rejoiced, for now a new strength appeared upon the horizon, even a youth of destiny.

Nevertheless in all these years, he had not escaped the influence of Greek letters, Greek art, and Greek philosophy. Asia Minor counted numerous cities of Greek

origin scattered among the ancient inhabitants of its high valleys and table lands. This was notably so along all the great roads, by sea or by land. And Tarsus was at the juncture of two such roads. In the time of St. Paul, it was even an academic centre. Roman law was, doubtless, taught in its schools, for we find in the great Apostle something of Greek culture, and a thorough knowledge of the laws of the empire.

The soul of Paul, then, must have undergone a remarkable formation. It was filled with the intense religious enthusiasm of youth. It was forced into profound acquaintance with the theology of Judaism. Its fibre was hardened like the finest steel by hourly conflict with self, reasoned contempt of human glory and wisdom, above all by the worship of an ideal Messiah of Israel, who should one day reward him and his for their most painful fidelity of the Law — a Messiah who should come, even now, in splendor, and majesty and power, and inaugurate, in the Holy City, the final reign of the just.

It was a mighty time, large with the new humanity, one to which all the ages had been looking forward as to their complement, the very fullness of time. It was a turning point in the world's history. The Holy Spirit was silently operating in the hearts of men. The melodious Virgil and the aged Simeon echo the same cry of the yearning human heart. The political world was taking on an entirely new bent and trend, just as the material cover of the earth was finally warped, and swollen, and sunk into its actual state.

The agitation of the times developed extraordinary characters, in the mad race for universal dominion.

But for firmness and tenacity of purpose, as St. John Chrysostom says, clear vision of his scope, and the means to realize it, utter devotion to an espoused cause; for long abiding patience, intense sustained activity, iron will that laughs all obstacles away; for thorough domination over men and situations, and the power to compel the whole army of his workers within the lines laid down by his own personal genius; in a word, for the qualities of a commander, St. Paul is more than equal to any man of his time.

In St. Paul, character shines out dominant, supreme. And by character I mean the firm habitual disposition to truthfulness, honor, integrity, generosity and a resolute energy of purpose, without which no man ever was or can be a true man. St. Paul was a man rude, and hard and stern, if you will, but certain, self-reliant, and reliable. He sees all things in one clear, strong, unwavering light, a light that so permeates his conscience and floods its remotest corners, that he may not be false to it. This is the man whom the Holy Spirit chose to be the teacher of the gentile world, to carry the light of the Gospel to the nations.

This zealous, enthusiastic and devoted young Pharisee was appointed by Theophilus, the high priest, a special commissioner to destroy the Church in Damascus. He left Jerusalem on this errand, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." It was while on this journey, that the new in-

fluence, which was to make him what he is to Christendom, was brought to bear upon his life.

It was some six days from Jerusalem to Damascus, and Paul had nearly completed his journey. He had traversed the burning plains and uplands of Ituria, and was now in the beautiful valley about a mile and a half from Damascus. The hour was noon, when all is hushed in those southern climes, even to the very birds upon the trees. Suddenly there was a light from Heaven above the brightness of the sun, shining around about St. Paul, and them that journeyed with him. He was stopped in his mad career, and stricken to the earth in penitence and humiliation. His stupefied companions fell to the ground; and Jesus the Master was present to reprove him and convince him of his sin, to change his rage against Him into a burning zeal for His glory, and to send him on the work of His own ministry and apostleship. He heard the words of Jesus, Whom he had persecuted, and he was obedient to the heavenly vision. He arose from the earth, and sight was gone. God's light had shown the darkness of his soul, and the world of sense was shut out from his view that he might look within and be alone with God. He entered Damascus not at the head of his cavalcade, bent on schemes of violence and persecution, but led by the hand as if he himself were a prisoner, to the house of Judas. There for three days he fasted and prayed; he passed seventy-two hours in silence, in darkness alone with God.

The shock of the occurrence passed; its meaning, its consequences, its ineffaceable consequences re-

mained and unfolded themselves before his mind's eye. The world was another world to him, life was for him another order of existence. He had given his will, his inmost self to the Being Who spoke to him from Heaven. The strength and secret of his new life was this: that he henceforth belonged not to himself; he had abandoned himself without reserve to a perfectly Holy Will. That was the determining fact of his new life. In the train of that act of self surrender all else followed. The old had passed away, all things had become new. He was restored to sight at the entrance of Ananias,—an humble minister of Christ at Damascus — and was received into the Church by the Sacrament of Baptism.

It was natural that in the first fervor of conversion, St. Paul should wish to make others sharers in his illumination and his joy. He appeared without delay in the synagogues at Damascus. His appearance had been expected as that of the accomplished Pharisee, who had been commissioned by the high priest to exterminate the Christian heresy in the ancient Syrian capital. What must have been the blank astonishment of his old co-religionists when he straightway preached in the synagogues that Jesus was the Son of God! What must have been their indignation when the first stupor of surprise had passed! And how great must have been the thankful wonder of the Christians, when their declared enemy, thus publicly and at the imminent peril of his life, owned himself a disciple and preacher of the faith, which he had so recently persecuted to the death. The highest interests of human life are liable

to surprises, but few that ever happened can have rivalled this!

The life of St. Paul from his Baptism is so well known to us all that it need hardly be dwelt upon here. For over thirty years this extraordinary creature travelled the highways and the by-ways of Greek and Roman antiquity. Through every city and land, even to the ends of the known world, he carried the Gospel of salvation, and zeal unquenchable was the chief characteristic of him who once raged so bitterly against the disciples of the Lord. It is doubtful, if any Roman official was more frequently on the great roads that bounded the principal cities; it is certain that none travelled them more foot-sore, worn and weary, but radiant with faith, and beaming with resolution. It is supposed that excepting our Divine Master and His Blessed Mother no one ever suffered more than he did; for his cup was ever full of care and pain, such as would befit the sacrifice to which he was called. The marks of Christ were in His body, ever exposed to the chain and the scourge. He was crucified with Christ, and was ever as one dead to the world. He did not live, to use his own words, but Christ lived in him.

It was a time of infinite curiosity, and endless peregrination, this golden age of peace and wealth, but in Paul of Tarsus there is no trace of things that were then and to him minor and insignificant. On every journey, he is the herald of Jesus Christ. Whether he toils among the mountains of Cappadocia, or the plateaus of Galatia, or the swamps of Lycaonia; whether he goes from one Macedonian town to another,

or crosses the Midland sea to face great Cæsar himself, he is everywhere and always teacher, apostle, prophet, founder. In all history, there is no such example of sustained energy and anxiety for the growth of an idea. And if the origins of our holy religion are lowly, and humble and mean, as far as power and wealth and grandeur go, they are grand, sublime, if we reflect upon the men who planted it, the hardships that they bore, the contempt which they lived down, the hatred which they turned into love, the love which they lifted to the enthusiasm of martyrdom.

As teacher, as a missionary St. Paul has no equal in the history of humanity. Overflowing with the consciousness that his doctrine is not of man, but of God, he knows no wavering but goes straight to the point at issue — Jesus Christ is God and man. He was crucified and rose again from the dead. In Him our broken, weakened nature was recreated, as it were, and a new love and a new energy added to it. We are again by these mysteries children of the Father now appeased, and brothers of the Son of God Who has atoned through all eternity for the short-comings of human nature; has wiped out the contractual slavery under Satan, and re-opened the narrow but straight path to eternal life, to reunion with the Juridical Head of the race, Jesus Christ, foreshadowed by Adam's original headship and responsibility.

It is a deep and subtle teaching this. But Paul has seen; it has been revealed unto him, in the blinding light of that dread hour of conversion, in those three years of meditation and communion with God in the

Arabian desert. Here God transformed, in the silence and peace of nature, the proud and ardent soul into a vessel of election. Here he rose to a sublime conception of God, of the one true God, as Father of all mankind, all-merciful, all-gracious, and all-kind. He learned that Judaism is not the end of creation, but Christianity was the legitimate and necessary development, completing that unveiling of the Divine Mind that the Jewish Law commenced, and this alone was the reason of the Messias, His kingdom, His triumph and His glory.

In long and tender communings with the Master, Paul rose above all mankind, and took on something of the personal manner and authority of Jesus Christ. His own person sinks away and is lost, he is voice, hand, channel, only an instrument fitted to the Will of Jesus Christ. Faith and love have all but drowned his individual self, he is willing to be anathema, a cast-away, a thing of scorn and pity for his brethren, because he is consumed with a burning zeal for their salvation.

2. A holy zeal for the salvation of souls should be the motive power of every act of every priest of God. There opens before us a world not unlike that into which St. Paul went down and came out victorious, a world to be won again for Jesus Christ, by the example of our lives and the victories of the mind, a world as proud and self satisfied as any Rome or Greece, yet gentler, milder, more refined and accessible. And yet, as has been well said, it is far more difficult to convert it to the Christian view of things,

for it has once fallen away, and the saving dew of Heaven falls seldom twice on the same pastures. To speak to this world, to be believed by it, we must appropriate something of the spirit and the methods of the Apostle of the Gentiles. We must be filled with the love of God, and the love of man, our hearts on fire with burning zeal for the salvation of souls.

When we give ourselves and all our strength and energy to the work of saving souls and leading them back to God, their Creator, we are said to have zeal. This virtue is simply indispensable to the priest, and he is constantly reminded of its necessity by everything in him and about him.

When Jesus Christ sends a workman into His vineyard, He does so that he may cultivate it and make it bring forth fruits of grace and sanctification: "I have appointed you that you should go, and should bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain." The life of a priest is a life of labor and of suffering; he cannot remain idle and be guiltless. Every name applied to him by the Saviour of the world implies toil and hardship. He is called a soldier, because he must battle for the conquest of souls; a fisher of men, because he must put out to sea, and let down his net to rescue those who are drowning in the waves of sin; a harvester, because to gather in the harvest he must courageously bear the burden of the day and the heats; a steward, because he must render a most rigorous account of his stewardship; a pastor, because he must scale mountain and precipice in search of sheep that have gone astray, and bring them back to the fold; he is,

as St. Paul says, a debtor to all, to the weak and the strong, to the learned and the ignorant, to the wise and the unwise.

The priest, therefore, is a man of God, an instrument of the Holy Ghost, charged with whatever pertains to God's honor and glory. He must make God known and loved; he must rescue and bring back to Him the sheep whom the Devil has seized; he cannot save himself alone, because his salvation is inseparably bound up with the salvation of others. If he gives all his strength and energy, if he sacrifices health and devotes his entire life to the work of spreading the kingdom of God and gaining souls, he does no more than his bounden duty, he only discharges a debt and fulfills an imperative obligation.

To spend himself in the sanctification of souls, this is the primary, the most imperative duty of the priest. And this duty should inspire all his actions and guide his every movement. If impelled by faith and charity, he does not use every effort to bring back the erring; if he does not exhort and entreat them, if he does not reprove with mildness or severity as the occasion demands; if he does not teach the ignorant, comfort the sorrowful and encourage the righteous; if he does not lift up pure hands to Heaven to placate the offended justice of God and bring down the dew of divine mercy upon the people committed to his keeping, if he does not do all this, then he is no pastor, he is not a father, he is but a mercenary, a hireling.

The most ardent desire of every real priest is, that God should be known, loved and glorified, that all men

should be saved. He is ready to make every sacrifice and endure all things to extend the kingdom of God and fill up the number of the elect. This was the habitual disposition of St. Paul, who in his Letter to the Corinthians says: "I will most gladly spend, and myself be spent for your souls." To snatch souls from the devil and restore them to Jesus Christ Who purchased them with His Blood was the one great thought that filled the mind of this Apostle.

Behold him as he enters Athens. What is it that attracts his attention in that great city? Is it the name and the glory which splendid achievements and the magnificent productions of human genius had done for her? No, he sees only the frightful condition to which her errors had reduced her. His heart was rent within him, and he was seized with a vehement and impetuous desire which he could not resist or control, to rescue that blinded people from the darkness of idolatry and the slavery of their passions. "His spirit was stirred within him." How strong and vivid that expression! We can almost fancy that we see the heart of this man of God all on fire, and his great soul leaping forward to snatch these unfortunate people from eternal perdition: "His spirit was stirred within him, seeing the city wholly given to idolatry."

Fancy in St. Paul's place the vain and curious Christian drawn to this home of arts. He would love to gaze upon the proud monuments of that celebrated city and to witness the magnificence of its citizens. St. Paul took no notice of these treasures so precious to others, save to deplore the abuses of which they were

the instruments. His heart was at once born to God, Who was unknown in that city, and Whom he desired to announce to its citizens. Hence he broke forth into that eloquent and sublime discourse which resounded through the Areopagus and produced such marvelous effects.

Zeal is the flower of charity, and the enthusiasm of love. Its purpose is to fulfill the eternal designs of God upon men. Who are those men for whose salvation we labor? They are immortal beings, this is their greatness; they are purchased with the Blood of God, this is their worth; they are destined to possess and glorify God forever in Heaven, this is their end. Now, to enable them to secure this glorious end, is not this the grandest, the most sublime work to which mortal man can put his hand and give his life?

We complain that faith is losing its hold upon the minds of men, and that our labors bear little lasting fruit. If this be so, we ourselves are to blame for it. For the Catholic Priesthood possesses the most sublime and most magnificent power that exists on earth. Its origin was the fountain that was opened on Calvary, and there divided into two great streams, the one going back through the patriarchs and the prophets to the first man, and thence to the bosom of God; and the other coming down through tradition and an uninterrupted succession of legitimate pastors to our own day. Its end is the perfection and happiness of the human race in time and eternity. It was instituted to develop whatever is sublime, and noble, and Godlike, in

man, to lift him up to God Himself, his Last End, the Completion of his being, and his Supreme Good. The means that it employs are truth, grace and charity.

A sublime power like this should make easy the conquest of the world. Oh, if we priests only clearly understood and fully appreciated the immense power which our divine mission confers upon us; if we only had a living faith and abiding trust in Him from Whom we receive our mission; if we only worked with the zeal, charity and disinterestedness of the first Apostles, the whole world would be converted, subdued, and kneel at our feet.

God grant that we may all become worthy instruments of the Holy Spirit, and that the operation of the Holy Ghost in the world may become, through us, more and more manifest every day. God grant that the number of the disciples of St. Paul may ever increase, and that, under the ægis of his spirit and his faith, there may go forth, from this seminary of St. Paul, a sturdy priesthood, worthy of so sublime a guide and teacher! God grant us an ever larger number of men, men devoted heart and soul to the sacred work of the priesthood, possessed with one purpose, filled with learning, the old and the new, but especially the *old*, passionately fond of their own age and country, with great hearts and noble souls, sure and clever instincts, enlightened minds and transcendent enthusiasm.

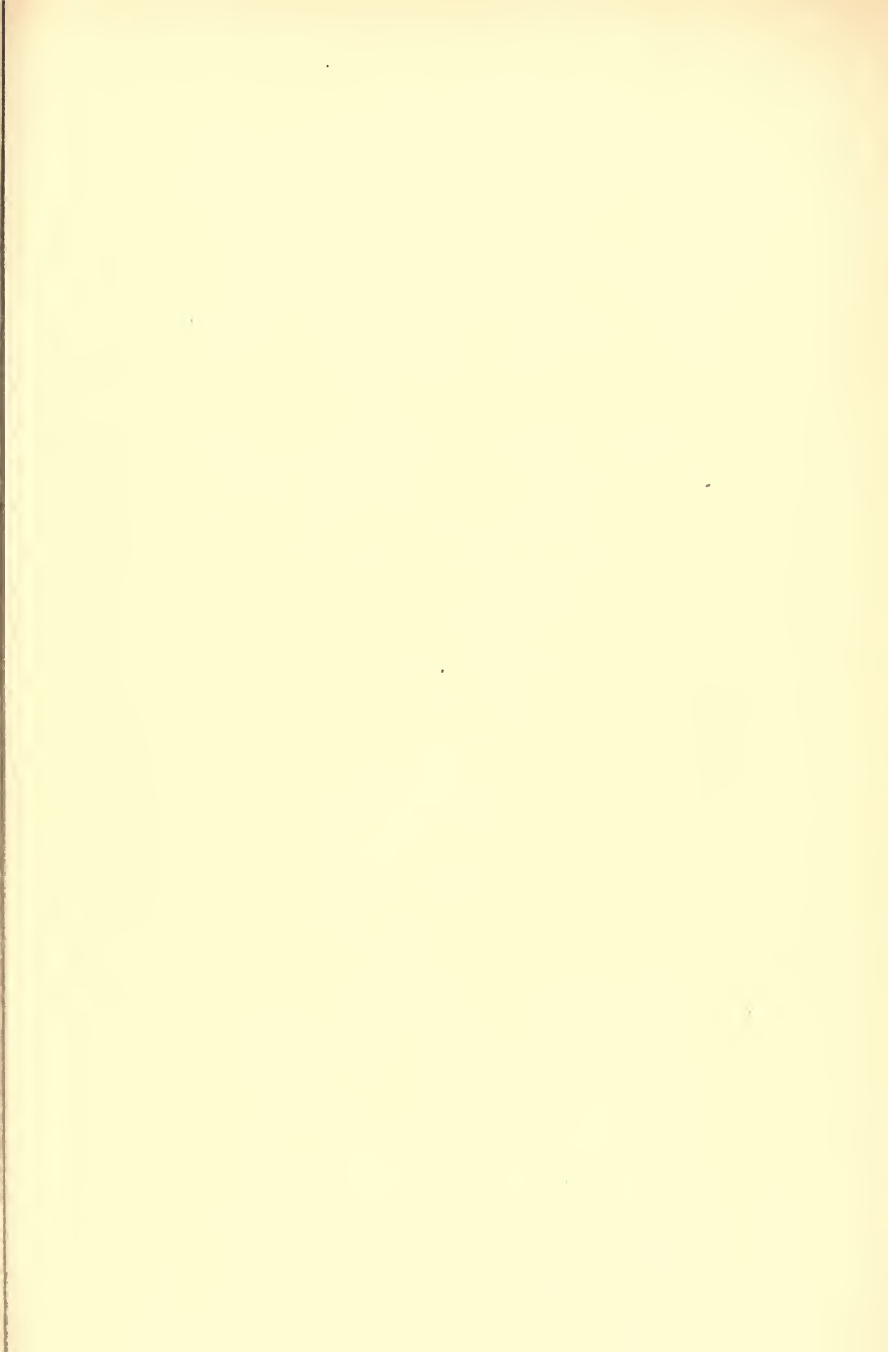
Mighty deeds remain to be done for Jesus Christ, even the re-conquest of an apostate world. And they can only be done in the uncalculating warrior spirit that

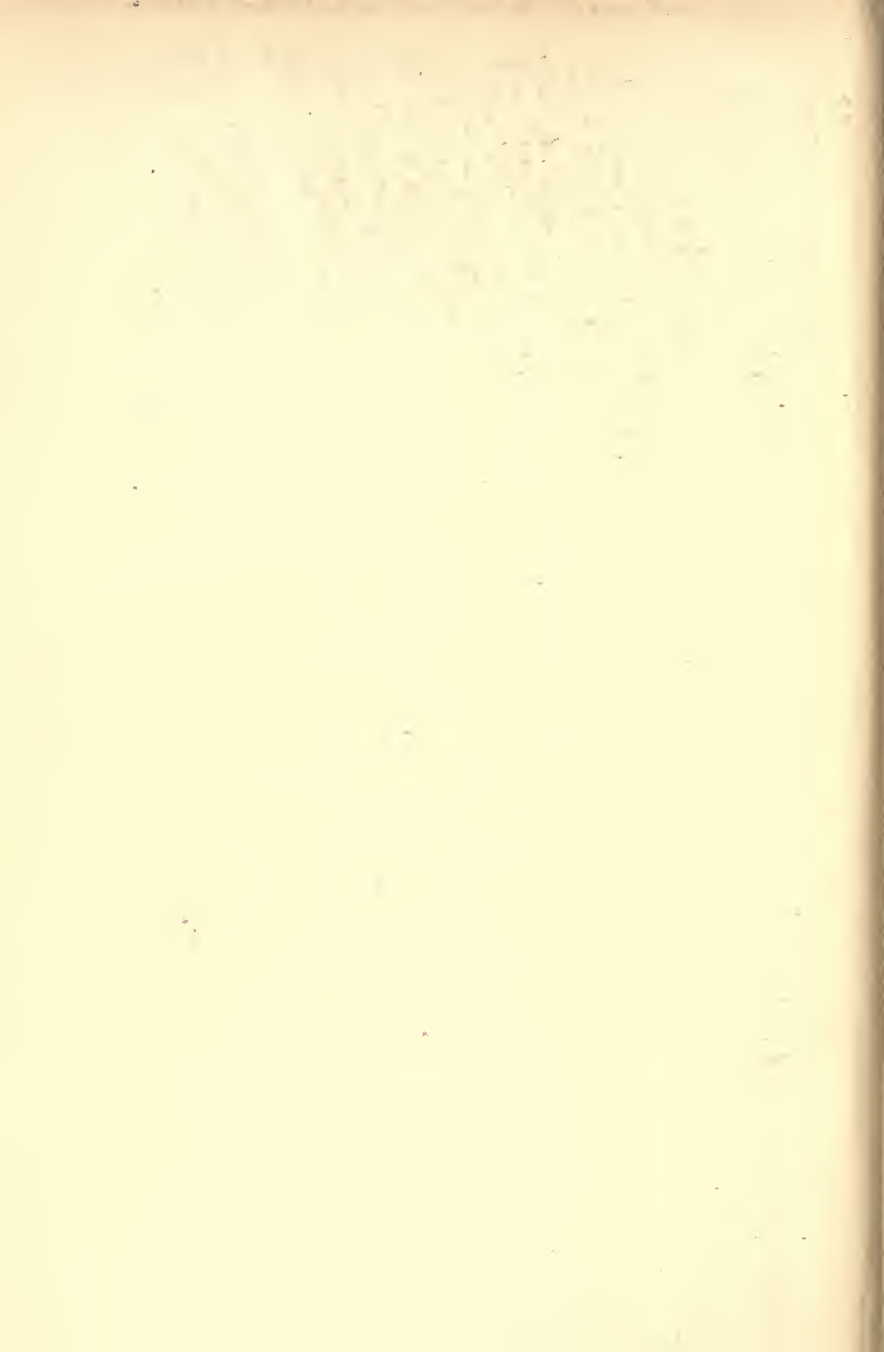
sustained St. Paul. Forward, then, with the sword of the Word, and the shield of Faith, all obedient to the same head, all animated with the same spirit; vice and error will flee at our approach, victory will be ours, and the world will be saved. Amen.

THE END









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