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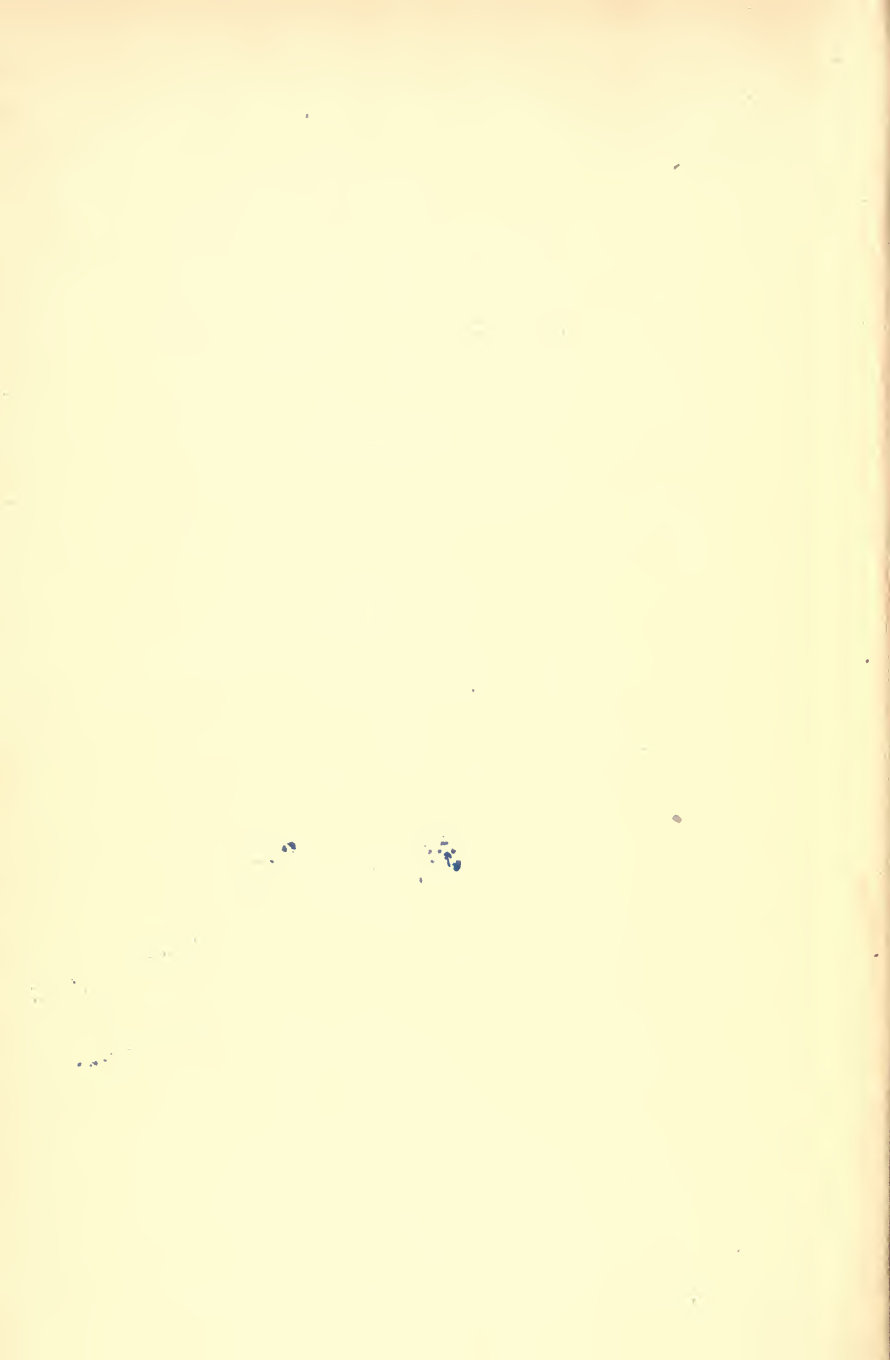
BEAUTY AND TRUTH
OF THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH
— • —
JONES





TRANSFERRED





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
MOST REV. JOHN IRELAND

ARCHBISHOP OF ST. PAUL

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NOTICE.

The instructions of the Most Rev. Archbishop Ireland on the new Marriage Law, promulgated by His Holiness, Pius X, are added to this present volume with the permission of his Grace. These instructions, so eloquent and luminous, form a most fitting conclusion to the sermons on the Sacrament of Matrimony, contained in this volume, and make the treatment of this important Sacrament complete in all its relations, duties and obligations.

THE EDITOR.



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THE BEAUTY AND TRUTH OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

SERMON I

THE POWER OF CONSCIENCE

“ And the Lord said to Cain . . . What hast thou done? ”—
GEN. 4, 10.

After Cain had killed his brother Abel, the voice of God called to him: “ Where is thy brother, Abel? ” But when Cain gave back the surly answer: “ I know not: am I my brother’s keeper? ” the voice of God made itself heard all the more insistently: “ What hast thou done? ” It was the God of mercy who wished to call Cain to an acknowledgment of his guilt, to contrition and thereby to penance and conversion, in order that He might pardon his grievous fault and show him mercy as He did to Adam and Eve after their fall.

The call of God still goes forth to all men, who have rendered themselves guilty of mortal sin and thereby have made themselves amenable to eternal judgment, for it is the will of God that all men should be saved. Nothing is better calculated to make us understand this glorious truth than the bitter Passion and Death

of our Divine Saviour who came into this world with the sole purpose of seeking what was lost. His wounds, His blood, His Cross announce to us this truth. The yearning of His Sacred Heart for the salvation of our souls, His joy over the penitent sinner and the joy of the angels over every one who sincerely does penance for his sins, are further proof of the same truth.

Or do you imagine for a moment, O Christian soul, that the Saviour will supinely permit Himself to see a sinful soul lost — a soul that has cost Him so dearly? Do you believe that He is willing, without an effort, to behold the loss of His blood and sufferings which attach to that soul? No, forevermore no! He wrestles with that soul to save it from perdition. He wrestles with it to save in it and with it His precious blood. He does so by the voice of conscience, which is none other than the call of His mercy.

Do you believe that God, the heavenly Father, will lightly permit a soul, that has fallen into grievous sin, to go to eternal ruin? No! Her also did He create according to His own image and likeness; for her sake He did not spare even His only-begotten Son. This soul was His child and the apple of His eye; she was chosen to see and to praise her heavenly Father for all eternity. Behold then, O Christian soul, how great is the anxiety of the heavenly Father to save His child from eternal perdition. For this He wrestles with the soul; He wrestles with her by the voice of conscience, that she may again be converted unto Him. This voice is the voice of the Father of all mercies.

Do you believe that the Holy Ghost will behold with equanimity such a soul go to her eternal destruction? For her sake He came down from heaven; He sanctified her, He made her His temple by holy baptism, He filled her with His graces and endowed her with the virtues of faith, hope and charity. How great, therefore, is His sorrow when such a soul falls a prey to sin and His grace is lost in her! Hence He wrestles with her by His inspirations, by the voice of conscience, so that she may be converted. This voice is the voice of the Holy Ghost.

It is therefore my purpose to speak to you to-day about the power of conscience, so that we may all the better understand the nature and the eminent dignity of the Sacrament of Penance and recognize the greatness of God's mercy.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

I. God, whose marvelous wisdom is manifest in all His works, foresaw that man would entirely disregard his obligations and sink into an abyss of degradation, unless something within him would admonish, warn and torture him whenever he failed in his duties, or would reward him and fill him with sweet peace whenever he was faithful to them. Therefore God has placed in our souls a certain feeling, which always makes known to us if we have done right or wrong. This feeling is conscience.

Conscience is the stern judge whom we possess within ourselves, from whom we can hide nothing and who always pronounces a just judgment over all our

deeds and omissions. It is wonderful that this divinely constituted judge can never be bribed nor ever entirely silenced. All men are subject to him, emperors and kings, the mighty and the rich, citizens and peasants, old men and children, saints and sinners, the well and the sick, the living and the dying. And though many men, especially the mighty of this world, acknowledge no one as their judge, still in their own bosoms they carry with them a stern judge in the form of the voice of conscience. For the godless conscience is a worm that tortures them unceasingly, that leaves them no peace and that in broad daylight, in the stillness of the night, in the midst of their worldly pleasures, in suffering and sickness, reprimands them severely and threatens them with the judgments of God. For the good Christian conscience is the source of peace and interior happiness, the consciousness of God's grace, consolation in suffering and sweet hope in the hour of death.

The cause of this twofold power of conscience in the good and the wicked is none other than that conscience comes from God, is His voice, which in our day rings as mightily to us as it once called to Adam, to Cain, or as the word of the Saviour spoken to Judas on Mount Olivet. No man, therefore, can overthrow this dispensation of God or banish his conscience. Yea, verily, if the godless, the tyrants, the murderers, the adulterers and the sinners of every kind, could silence the voice of their conscience, what sums would they not sacrifice, and how gladly would they not do it, in order to stifle their conscience and to rid themselves forever

of the hateful presence of this inexorable judge!

Oh, how wonderful does not the mercy of God show itself in this! He wills that all men be saved, and for their sake Jesus bled upon the cross that they might gain the remission of their sins. Behold, while the justice of God holds before the eyes of the sinner the eternal punishments that he has deserved, His unbounded mercy tries to save him from them. For this reason God granted conscience a power so vast that no man shall be able to overcome it. It possesses an insistent voice, which now tenderly calls to penance, now warns and threatens, now tortures and terrifies, now points to the mercies of God or to His eternal judgments. Therefore, happy the sinner who listens to the voice of his conscience, for what until now has been to him a punishment and a pain, after he has made a contrite confession, is changed for him into a voice of jubilation, of joy and of peace, into an amiable reward for his obedience.

How wonderful is the call that the voice of conscience sends to every man! Man may be deceived in many things, he may harbor many errors, one thing, however, always remains certain, and that is the voice of conscience. Man may cast aside the commandments of God, instantly the sentence of the judge follows him, and it is his conscience that announces it to him.

2. Man heard the call of his conscience before and after his fall into sin. Before the fall it said thus: "But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. For in what day soever thou shalt eat

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of it, thou shalt die the death." (Gen. 2, 17.) But immediately after the fall there came the sentence of the judge: (Gen 3, 19) ". . . dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return," and with the sentence came the punishment of the sense of guilt and of an uneasy conscience.

What happened to our first parents in paradise happens invariably and at all times to all men and to every single one of us. This voice becomes all the stronger and louder the better a man knows his duty and the more thoroughly he is instructed concerning the commandments of God and of the Church. This power of conscience clearly tells us of our immortality, of eternal life, of the bliss of heaven or of the damnation of hell, and therefore of our real destiny on earth, namely to serve God and to become eternally happy.

Therefore let godless men deny everything, God and the Saviour, the Catholic Church and her doctrines, the holy sacrifice of the Mass and the sacraments; let them scoff at and revile the commandments of God and of His Church — there is one preacher whom they cannot fail to hear, there is one voice that rings in their ears and preaches insistently into their hearts about God, about the Saviour, about the Church, about heaven and about hell. This voice is the voice of their conscience, which announces to them the sentence of the judge. And those who fear not and blanch not, fear now and tremble because of the worry and horror they experience at themselves.

Such, indeed, is the divine power of conscience.

Therefore we may indeed fail to listen to the voice of the Church, to the warnings of our priests, to the admonitions of Christian parents and friends, but no man can stifle the voice of his conscience. We may indeed succeed in deadening it for a short time in the turmoil of sin and of business, but sooner or later it will return to us with greater force than ever. This voice pursues the sinner whithersoever he may flee, and stamps on his forehead the sign of guilt, for conscience writes its record in indelible characters. The Apostle St. John confirms this in the Apocalypse when he speaks about the judgment of God: "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works." (Apoc. 20, 12.) This book, which accompanies us in the hour of death and before the judgment-seat of God, is our conscience. But the power of conscience is so great that the just God only confirms what is written in the conscience, therefore disgrace or grace, eternal life or undying death, for the voice of conscience is the voice of God and the sentence passed by conscience is the sentence of God.

3. It is the voice of conscience that calls to the sinner in life and in death and before the judgment-seat of God these fatal words: "Dost thou think of it?" He may make every effort to silence this cry, but ever and anon he will hear it in his soul "Dost thou think of it?" Deep in a forest, bordering on the ter-

ritory of two neighboring villages, a man had murdered a traveler. Whilst he was plundering him a postilion, passing on the highway, sounded on his horn the song entitled: "Dost thou remember?" Struck with terror the murderer hastened away. On the morrow the corpse was found and buried in the presence of a great throng. The officiating priest preached a strong sermon: "Thou hast been stricken down in thy journey. Who knows for what thy heart yearned and what hearts beat for thee? May God comfort thy beloved ones! Raise your hands with me and swear that they are innocent of this blood-guilt. But thou, who didst murder thy brother in the gloom of the forest, know, that wherever thou mayest be, the avenging sword of God's justice hangs over thy head! It will fall and crush thee. Return while there is yet time! Lay not crime upon crime, for on that day, when the trumpet of judgment . . ." But suddenly from the near-by highway the wind wafted clear and strong the melody blown by a post-horn: "Dost thou remember?"

All were deeply moved, but in the midst of the assembly a man fell down with the cry: "I am the one!" He was instantly seized, and with deep contrition he suffered the death-penalty for his bloody deed.

In a like manner does the voice of conscience cry out to every one of us, but especially to the sinner, to the adulterer, the thief, the desecrater of the Lord's day, to every Christian, young and old, great and small: "Dost thou remember?" Dost thou think of the sins which thou didst commit from the days of thy

youth until the present day and which thou hast neither confessed nor amended? It is well for him who follows this voice! It is the voice of the God of mercy, who willeth not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live. It is well for him who follows this voice, for on the day when the trumpet of justice shall sound the voice of conscience will wail in terrifying accents: "Dost thou remember?" Forever will it resound, forever will the worm gnaw and eternally will it call to the most dreadful despair: "Dost thou remember?" Dost thou think of the mercy of God, which thou didst despise? Dost thou remember the sacraments for which thou hadst no use? Dost thou remember the blood of Christ which flowed in vain upon the cross for thy salvation? Do you think of all this?

4. Many sinners, indeed, recognize the terrible state of their conscience. They know that there is much to be brought into order, much to amend, much to restore and many occasions to be avoided, but they do not possess the courage and the self-denial to do penance and be sincerely converted. What happens therefore? They invent the most ingenious devices to gain peace and to reduce hateful conscience to silence. Many sinful Christians apparently make a treaty with God and perform some good works, confer some favors on their neighbors, give alms, visit the church more frequently and say all kinds of prayers, without, however, avoiding their pet sin or confessing it.

Peace obtained by such a transaction, however, does not last long. Such treaties and such good works,

though good in themselves, have no value in the sight of God as long as there is no true conversion. Conscience will energetically demand its rights sooner or later; it will vindicate its power with renewed force. Its reproaches are multiplied, anxiety and unrest increase with time, the artful devices to which we have had recourse prove themselves useless, and the old wretchedness of the soul becomes even stronger. This experience is the more confirmed as the years of indiscretion vanish, passion becomes weaker and the maturer years warn us more earnestly of approaching death and of the judgment of God.

Years ago Divine Providence led a priest, who was sojourning in disguise in a Protestant country, to the bed-side of a dying man. He found the patient tossing in bed, a prey to the blackest despair. In vain did the priest offer him all the consolations that were at his command. "I am beyond help," wailed the dying man, "I am a Catholic, but have fallen away from the true faith." "Brother," exclaimed the priest, "God has sent me to you. I am a Catholic priest and have the power to forgive sins!" New life seemed to enter into the dying man; a ray of hope lighted up his poor soul. He confessed his sins, received absolution and with tears in his eyes, with gratitude towards God pouring from his lips, with a soul filled with hope, and a heart replete with joy, he surrendered his soul into the hands of the Lord.

5. Behold here the power of conscience, the voice of the God of mercy, the greatness of His untiring mercy and the comforting beauty of Christian penance.

Happy the man who obeys his conscience and listens to its voice. A good conscience is the greatest boon on earth, the source of peace and contentment, the cause of devotion and of a pure heart, consolation in suffering, patience in sickness, hope in death. The poor man, the servant, the farmer, the child and the old man and all, who possess a good conscience, are more contented and happier than countless rich men, who, with all their money, cannot buy for themselves a good conscience. A good conscience is the confidential companion of the soul, paradise on earth and the prototype of eternal bliss. But an evil conscience is the book of Satan, the worm that never dies, and the torturing spirit of man. Oh, listen to the voice of your conscience! It leads to God and His grace, to Jesus and His redemption, to the Holy Ghost and His sanctification. But if our conscience reproaches us with sin, with transgressions of the commandments of God and of His holy Church, then the only means to regain a good conscience is Christian penance. By its use we can rejoice in renewed peace, and on the day of judgment we will hear the sentence of eternal life, where peace and happiness have been promised to us for all eternity as a recompense for a good conscience on earth. Amen.

SERMON II

THE VERY NATURE OF MAN DEMANDS CONFESSION

“ So I say to you, there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance.”—LUKE 15, 10.

We cannot look into the Sacred Heart, we cannot enter into its most secret recesses, there to behold the greatness of the love and the mercy of God for us men, but we can see them manifested in the wonderfully divine works and benefits of creation, of redemption and sanctification, and above all in the Incarnation, in the bitter Passion and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ. None can be so blind, none so devoid of intelligence as not to know that he also is an object of the love of God. God hates nothing that He has created, least of all man for whose sake He did not even spare His only-begotten Son, nay, whom He offered for us. The whole human race is the great family of God, every individual man is a member thereof, God in heaven the Father, who preserves each and every one, overwhelms them with His benefits and calls them back if they have turned away from Him.

Our Divine Saviour could not represent Himself in a more amiable manner than under the figure of the Good Shepherd; He could not show more touchingly His sympathy, His care and anxiety for the sinner

than under the figure of the shepherd, who leaves the ninety-nine sheep in order to find the one lost one: He cannot more fully express His care than under the figure of the poor woman, who has lost a penny and is anxiously trying to find it. Yea, her anxiety is all the greater, the more it represents to her the day's wage earned with a great deal of hardship, the more it means for the support of a numerous family, which she is obliged to clothe and feed by the work of her hands. We men represent a recompense that was won by much labor and toil, a day's wage, which our Divine Saviour was obliged to earn in the bloody sweat of His brow, under untold sufferings, aye, and by His death upon the cross. How great, therefore, must not be His care and anxiety for the Christian who has strayed into the paths of vice! how great are not His anxious efforts to find him, to call him back by the voice of conscience which warns and admonishes him constantly!

But from this we can also in a measure understand the joy which our Divine Saviour experiences when a sinful Christian is converted to Him with all his heart, in contrition and uprightness. Just as the Good Shepherd calls together his friends, the poor woman her neighbors, so that all may rejoice with them over their good fortune of having found again the lost sheep, the lost penny, so in like manner does our Divine Saviour call together the angels and saints of heaven to rejoice with Him over His good fortune. O wonderful love of the Divine Saviour! The sinner who has obtained the immense grace of conver-

sion, of pardon for his fault, of remission of the eternal punishment and a claim to the bliss of heaven, does not appear to have attained to so great good fortune that heaven and earth should rejoice with him, but it is Jesus Christ Himself who calls Himself fortunate that the sinner has been converted. O Christian soul, who dost live in sin, can this love of the Saviour not touch thee, can it not move thee to turn away from thy sins and be sorry for them, so that thou mayest prepare for thy Saviour the happiness of pardoning thee and of saving thy poor soul? He does this and does it joyfully in the Sacrament of Penance. Here He manifests particularly His mercy and His love. If many understood this better they would not hate this splendid sacrament and flee from it; they would love it and receive it worthily for the joy of their own conscience and the salvation of their soul. It is therefore my intention with the help of the Holy Ghost to speak to-day and on the following Sundays about this sacrament. To-day I shall especially try to show you that confession responds to the needs of the very nature of man.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. If we wish to understand that the confession of our sins supplies what our very nature demands and that therefore it is not a new invention and a contemptible institution, we need only look down the vista of the centuries until the time of our first parents in the garden of Eden. Even before the coming of Christ we find that confession was practiced by the

Jews and even by the pagan nations. This appears to be sufficient proof that confession answered a need of the very nature of man. This becomes still clearer when we consider that before the coming of Christ such a confession was not a sacrament, which brought in its train the pardon of the sins so confessed. Jesus Christ alone, the Saviour of the world, can institute the sacraments and infuse into them His grace. Such confessions were therefore mostly voluntary ones. God Himself brought Adam to the confession of his sin when He asked him if he had eaten of the forbidden fruit.

Like our first parents God wished to move Cain to an open confession of his anger against his brother Abel by asking him: "Why art thou angry? and why is thy countenance fallen?" (Gen. 4, 6,) and later when He asked him: "Where is thy brother Abel? . . . What hast thou done?" (Gen. 4, 9, 10.) Is it not the same only true God, who tried to move Adam and Cain to a confession of their sin, who said to Moses: "Say to the children of Israel: When a man or woman shall have committed any of all the sins that men are wont to commit, and by negligence have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and offended, they shall confess their sin, and restore the principal itself, and the fifth part over and above, to him against whom they have sinned." (Numbers 5, 6, 7.) In accordance with the mandate of God this confession was to be made in the presence of the priests and, as the rabbins testify, was as follows: "The guilty one, laying his hands between the horns of the sacri-

ficial victim, spoke: 'O Lord, I have sinned, I have transgressed thy commandment, and in this or that (naming the particular fault) I have done evil before Thee. Behold, I am sorry and am ashamed of my deed; I purpose nevermore to commit it.'” For this reason, when God in punishment for their sins sent poisonous serpents among the Israelites, they hastened to Moses and cried out: “We have sinned, because we have spoken against the Lord and thee.” (Numbers 21, 7.) Centuries later David said to the Prophet Nathan: “I have sinned against the Lord.” (2 Kings 12, 13.) The prodigal son cried out: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, I am not worthy to be called thy son.” (Luke 15, 21.) We have often read in the Gospel how John the Baptist preached in the wilderness and baptized. (Matth. 3, 6.) Many came, were baptized, and “confessed their sins.”

Now if we should find even in paganism the most evident traces of the confession of sin, what better proof could we desire? But such is the actual case. Long before the birth of Christ we find testimonies concerning the antiquity and the frequency of the practice of confessing sins that prevailed among the pagan nations, and these proofs are of a most convincing kind. We have a remarkable one of these that dates over 400 years before Christ. It tells us of the Parsees, a pagan nation that practiced the confession of sins. The following was the manner of it: the guilty one appears before the Doctor of the Law or before the priest and begins with a prayer to Ormusd,

the heathen god, and to Sesiosch, his servant on earth. He accompanies this prayer with the resolution of doing all the good he can, and with the deepest self-abasement before God. We still have the record of the words that the sorrowing one spoke and are as follows: "I am sorry for all my sins and renounce them. O God, have mercy on my body and soul both in this world and in the next! I renounce all evil in thought, all evil in word, all evil in deed. O just judge, I hope to be stronger than Ahriman, the author of all evil; I hope that all will be well with me after my resurrection. Therefore I am sorry for my sins and renounce them."—The penitent concluded his accusation of sins against God, against the neighbor and against himself with the following words: "For all the sins which Ormusd makes known in the law, I beg pardon in purity of thought before Ormusd, the just judge, who is above heaven and earth, and before Sesiosch the teacher of the law. I am sorry for the sins against father, mother, brother, sister, children; I am sorry for my sins against my superiors, against my neighbors that I have in this world, against my companions in business, against my fellow-citizens; I regret the sins of injustice that I have committed against these persons; finally I regret and detest every kind of sin, every kind of weakness, every kind of crime, in thought, word and deed."

2. Hence, we can readily understand why neither the Jews, nor the Apostles and disciples gave any sign of astonishment or anger, when Christ prescribed confession and raised it to the dignity of a sacrament.

When He said to the Jews and His disciples: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him"; many therefore said: "This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" And according to the words of St. John many of them walked with Him no more. (John 6, 57, et ss.) Such, however, was not the case with confession, because Jesus gave no new commandment, but only confirmed and perfected one already in existence. Hence, neither the Apostles nor the Jews were astonished, because they were already accustomed to the confession of sins and by its frequent use were thoroughly convinced of its necessity. Hence we read in the Acts of the Apostles that soon after the ascension of Christ into heaven, hearing the preaching of St. Paul at Ephesus: "Many of them that believed, came confessing and declaring their deeds." (Acts 19, 18.) The Apostle St. John in his epistle writes to the faithful: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity." (1 John 1, 9.) What therefore, until the time of Christ, was only a matter of custom, became, after Christ, a sacrament and a commandment for the sinner. We have a mass of proof that makes it clear to us that from the earliest days of Christianity through nearly nineteen hundred years it has existed in the Church. For this reason Tertullian, a noted ecclesiastical writer, in the second century pronounced these remarkable words in a treatise on Penance: "Many avoid declaring their sins, because they are more concerned about their honor than about their salvation. In this they are like to those

who, when they suffer from some secret illness, conceal their malady from the physician and thus perish. Now which do you prefer: to conceal your sins and be damned, or confessing them be saved?" St. Clement, the disciple and successor of the Prince of the Apostles, St. Peter, as the Supreme Head of the Church, expressed himself convincingly in the first century: "Let him, who hath a care for his soul, not be ashamed to confess his sins to the priest so that he may be cured. St. Peter taught that we must confess even our evil thoughts to the priests. As long as we are in this world, let us be sincerely converted, for once we are departed from it we can neither confess nor do penance." (2 Ep. to the Cor.)

3. What does the confession of the Jews and pagans, and the commandment that the Saviour gave the Christians teach us? That confession corresponds to one of the needs of human nature. We can easily recognize the truth of this from experience, from the effects of sin in the soul and from the effects of a frank confession of our wrong-doing. What follows when we conceal from the physician the existence of some secret ill? It grows without opposition, it tortures us with pain and hastens our death. But the very fact that we reveal the malady to the physician is already a matter of benefit to us. The progress of the evil is stopped, the pains are assuaged and the danger of death is eliminated. Who will say that the discovery of a sickness is not in conformity with the nature of the sick man and of the sickness itself? The same holds true for the evils of the soul. If any one

labors under the burden of a heavy care, he feels himself doubly relieved and strengthened as soon as he has had the opportunity to confide his troubles to a loyal friend. But if he is forced to carry his trouble locked up in his bosom he is consumed by its bitterness. What, in fact, is more natural than the inclination of the heart to pour out its sentiments and anxieties into the ear of one towards whom it feels itself drawn! The man stricken by misfortune needs some confidant who will listen to him, sympathize with him and inspire him with new courage. It is not different with the evils of the soul, with sin. No sooner has man committed sin than God sends him remorse of conscience. This messenger of God enters into the heart of the guilty one, establishes his abode there and stings him unceasingly. If he has kept the living faith in God the just judge, if he remembers the innocence of former days, if he remembers the joy that his soul experienced at the thought of the love of God and of His Christ, and how his soul was filled with deep peace at the mere thought thereof — oh, how bitter is then the fruit that he is forced to taste, especially if this is the first sin that he has committed! God! I have left my promises unfulfilled, the innocence of baptism is lost, the covenant of my first communion is broken; Christ no longer dwells in my heart, and I am dishonored in the sight of the angels. He is disgraced also in his own eyes; he dare not cast a look into his soul without blushing.

What will become of him, my dearly beloved? The tempter magnifies before the eyes of the sinner the

greatness of his guilt ; he makes him feel more ashamed, increases the difficulties that apparently grow in the path of him who wishes to obtain pardon, and pictures to him the impossibility of ever regaining his former virtue. He grows weary and discouraged ; he falls again and again and finally despairs of ever being able to break his bonds. Weakened by this tempest of the soul, he surrenders himself completely to the fierce ardor of his passions, and lo, sin becomes a habit, and faith, hope and charity are dead ; he lives on heedless of his eternal welfare, heedless of God, of heaven or hell. This is an every-day story.

What is it that gradually reduces Christian souls, especially youthful ones, to this deplorable condition? Is it not the despair of ever completely reëntering upon the life of virtue? Is it not from a lack of courage to return to an orderly life and to restrain the growing passions? Is it, therefore, not necessary for man to have an assured and easy means whereby he may regain lost grace and the full strength of his soul? Yes, it is a necessity of our nature ; guilty man must have a means of restoration, or else there is no help for him. In spite of redemption he will be submerged in the torrent of perdition and will be overcome by his passions : he will go to temporal and eternal ruin. He must have such a means ; our nature, corrupted by original sin, demands it.

What is this means that can alone remove all the ills of the soul and heal its wounds? O, all of you, who have frequently experienced its beneficial effects, and many others who are in urgent need of it, have pos-

sibly pronounced it with trembling lips; it is confession. Here the heart reveals itself, here the wounds are opened, here are disclosed all the maladies and the tortures of sin. Here a cure is possible, for the poison is extracted like matter from a wound. How calm is the sick man who has told the physician all his troubles, and now looks forward to a complete restoration to health! How comforted is the unfortunate one who can share his worries with a loyal friend! And finally, how happy does not the guilty Christian feel, and what a burden is not taken from his heart, as soon as he has been able to unload the painful secrets of his conscience, his sins, his embarrassments, his fears and tortures of soul in confession! Verily, confession corresponds to one of the essential needs of human nature.

Confession restores peace to the soul, and as though a thunder-storm were past there now reigns deep peace in the heart. Life, that has hitherto been desolate and unbearable, now brings unsuspected pleasures, and even death loses its terrors. Ere Christ bestowed the power of forgiving sins on His Apostles, He said to them: "Peace be with you." The penitent Christian knows that the words, "Peace be to thee," which he hears in confession are confirmed in heaven. Peace with God and peace with himself — this certainly is the cause of his joy, doubles his strength for the beginning of a new life, for the keeping of his good resolutions, and lo, in his heart there is courage and in his eyes there are tears of joy. Faith, hope and charity are revived; the prospect of eternal happiness again

accompanies his steps. Confession truly fills a need of human nature. It is particularly in this point that the incomparable mercy of the Saviour manifests itself most thoroughly, though many may not believe it. By His ministers He continues to heal the wounds of the soul of each and every one. "Be comforted, my son, thy sins are forgiven thee. All ye who are burdened and heavy laden, come unto me and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke and my burden, for my yoke is sweet and my burden is light."

4. If any one should still doubt that confession corresponds to one of the greatest needs of human nature, let him be convinced by what daily experience teaches concerning the effects of confession and the consequences of its neglect. Whence, do you think, come all the crimes that are rampant on the face of the earth, that destroy families, subvert communities, cities and states? Do they not proceed from the hearts of men? Here all misdeeds are conceived, prepared and well planned. If therefore we wish to preserve or revive in families, in communities, in cities and states loyalty, justice, unselfishness and purity of morals, we must first see that these virtues are cherished in the hearts of men, that they gain the mastery there and that the source of vice be completely dried up. Who will undertake this gigantic task? Is it the prison, the theater, the saloon, or the numberless places of amusement? Just the contrary. Religion alone can accomplish this. No society can continue to exist without faith and morals; but there is no faith or moral law without religion. There is no truly effective religion

possible unless it be applied to every individual man and there is no effective application of religion possible without confession. The most striking proof of this assertion is, that confession is the very first obligation that we throw overboard when we set aside religion and good morals.

In fact, it is by confession that Christianity comes into effectual contact with the human heart; but the heart is the source of the weal or woe of human society. In this matter neither external laws, nor measures of repression, nor soldiers can be of any avail; confession alone is the proper remedial measure. It is in the heart that confession protects the dignity of parents against the disobedience of their children, the prestige of kings against their subjects; here it impresses on parents, princes and magistrates their duties toward their children, subjects and fellow-citizens. Here it is where it defends innocence, good name, property, life, peace against the criminal passions that threaten them, passions that are to be found, at least in germ, in every heart. We could fill volumes with the record of all the disorders that confession has prevented or made good again; the passions that it has quenched, the dangers that it has averted, the hatreds that it has smothered, the restitution of ill-gotten goods that it has effected. What, in our day, is the origin of the disruption of families, of communities, of cities and of states? What is the cause of the ever-increasing number of crimes — crimes the mere mention of which makes the blood run cold? Why have immorality, adultery, robbery, embezzlements, murder and

suicide become so frequent in our day that they no longer cause any astonishment? Whence come all their inseparable companions, misery, poverty, the high cost of living, sickness and other scourges of God, that tower menacingly above us? What is the origin of all this? I need not tell you; you know it yourselves either out of your own experience or from the experience of others. It all comes from the fact that so countless many neglect going to confession. If everybody would go to confession and go frequently, the result would be quiet, peace and the blessing of God. Therefore the very nature of man demands confession. But it is also the saviour of families, of communities, cities and states. Learn to know it by its fruits, for its effects confirm the divinity of its institution.

5. When Naaman, the general of the armies of the King of Syria, was stricken with leprosy, he came with a great retinue before the house of the Prophet Eliseus, to find a cure that he had in vain sought elsewhere. The prophet sent him the following message: "Go, and wash seven times in the Jordan, and thy flesh shall recover health, and thou shalt be clean." (4 Kings 5, 10.) Naaman was angered by the simplicity of the remedy, thinking it little worth his while to have made for it so long and costly a journey. But his servants approached him and said: "Father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, surely thou shouldst have done it: how much rather what he now hath said to thee: Wash, and thou shalt be clean?" (4 Kings 5, 13.) Had God laid heavy pun-

ishment on us if we wished to be cleansed from the leprosy of the soul, since the Son of God was obliged to suffer so severely for us, we should have had no choice but to accomplish it, if we wished to be healed of our sins and to escape the eternal punishment of hell. But now God bids us: Go, wash thyself in confession, and thou shalt be clean! And yet many Christians are deaf and not only deaf, but also entirely insensible to their own welfare.

Go, ask the reprobates in hell what they would do if the opportunity of confessing were again offered to them. Ask them why the eternal punishment due to sin has been inflicted on them. Is it perchance because they have confessed well and with a contrite heart? Every one can answer this for himself and act accordingly. But he who approaches confession with contrition, with uprightness and a firm purpose, will see the fulfilment of the words of the prophet: "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains." (Isaias 12, 3.) Yea, confession is truly a fountain from which sparkle grace, innocence, peace, joy, and justice. It is well for the Christian who, now that he is free from fault and guilt, preserves his soul in its newly regained purity. The consolation and peace which he experiences after a good confession are a foretaste of eternal bliss.

Therefore St. Paul says: "For our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience." (2 Cor. 1, 12.) Others may boast of their treasures, but our greatest glory is the testimony of a good conscience, which refreshes us in life like unto an unending banquet, and

grants us everlasting life in the future. And verily, what ever surpasses the peace of heart? For how inexpressible is the joy of the soul, when it knows by the testimony of its conscience that it is living in such a state so that should death come suddenly upon it, it could not inflict any injury upon it for eternity? It is this gladness of a good conscience that is a kind of paradise on earth, in which the fruits of justice are far lovelier than all the fruits of injustice. Recall to your mind the days of your greatest joy, when were they? In the days of innocence and of the love of God, when you were still accustomed to accusing yourself in confession of the slightest faults. It will be well for all of us, if we often draw from this fountain of the Saviour! He quenches the thirst of the soul and washes it clean. God demands a pure soul, so that after peace on earth she will participate in the eternal peace of heaven where Jesus the shepherd of our souls, who now calls us to penance, will reward us for the fidelity with which we have followed His call. And this reward will be the unending bliss of heaven. Amen.

SERMON III

CONFESSION IS A LAW OF DIVINE MERCY

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity.”—I JOHN 1, 9.

During the whole of one night Simon Peter and his companions threw out their nets into Lake Genesareth without catching a single fish. But when our Divine Saviour bade him try once more, and Peter obeyed after making the following observation: “Master, we have labored all the night, and have taken nothing; but at thy word I will let down the net.” (Luke 5, 5.)—behold, they caught so many fish that their nets tore and they were obliged to call their companions to help them. But Peter prostrated himself at the feet of Jesus with these words: “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” (Ibid.) For great was the astonishment that seized upon Peter and his partners at the sight of the multitude of fishes they had taken. But our Divine Saviour said to Peter: “Fear not: from henceforth thou shalt catch men.”

It is certainly wonderful that a poor fisherman, as Peter was, should be chosen as an Apostle and receive the divine power of taking men. On Lake Genesareth it was the Divine Omnipotence that drove the fish into the nets. In like manner, at a later date, countless

Jews and Gentiles followed the all-powerful impulse of divine grace and were converted to the Christian faith by the word of the Apostle Peter. The numbers became so great that he could no longer take care of them alone. He was therefore obliged to call on his brother-Apostles for help, and everywhere he ordained Bishops and priests to lend him their assistance in the fulfilment of his apostolic duties.

And in fact, my dearly beloved, our Divine Saviour chose to convert but few people by His miracles and His teachings. To His Apostles and disciples and their successors He left the multitudinous conversion of the Jews and Gentiles after His bitter Passion and Death. Half of the world followed their call and became Christian, and to this very day countless souls are won from error and from sin and reconciled with God. Our Divine Saviour left the net to His Apostles and their successors, the Bishops and the priests, but the hook He has reserved for Himself. The net is the power of remitting sin in God's stead in the Sacrament of Penance. The hook is the miraculous grace by which Jesus especially calls certain souls in an extraordinary manner, as He did Saul.

The Sacrament of Penance is the plank of salvation, which God throws to us by His priests in the deluge of sin. All who wish to escape destruction and the danger of being lost in the eternal abyss must cling to this plank of safety. Hence the divine mandate of confessing our sins is a commandment that satisfies one of the greatest needs of the human soul. Yea, it is a commandment that has been given us rather by

the mercy of God than by His justice. Therefore I shall try to demonstrate to you to-day that confession is a law of Divine Mercy.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. If we consider confession from a purely human viewpoint we find that it is a confidential communication of the most hidden secrets of our heart. There is nothing more natural for man — yea, it is one of his characteristics and a real need of his heart — than to share his secrets, his pains and cares with a loyal friend, with a father, a mother, a benefactor. It is only when the heart has unburdened itself, when it has found sympathy, consolation or encouragement, that it regains its wonted calm or at least great relief. For this reason the mercy of God, independent of the sacrament, independent of grace and the remission of sin, has made provision in confession for a real need of the human heart.

But confession is a sacrament and not merely a confidential communication of our secret sorrows. It is a real acknowledgment, an humble and contrite accusation of all the faults and sins of which we have rendered ourselves guilty before God. In this sense confession is truly a law of Divine Mercy.

In fact God makes the remission of our sins, without which we can hope for neither peace nor grace nor salvation, conditional upon our acknowledging them. This apparently is a mandate of justice, that whosoever has sinned and wishes to obtain pardon for his trans-

gression, must first acknowledge his guilt in a contrite and humble manner. But nevertheless this commandment is far more a law of mercy and of the most loving solicitude for the peace of our souls. It is still more the school of Christian humility, that divine virtue which is the mother of all virtues and of all merits. It is a super-abundance of mercy that we can obtain the remission of our sins and regain the grace of God by the simple confession of our misdeeds. We cannot imagine for ourselves a more extraordinary tribunal than the tribunal of confession, where we are pronounced guiltless and just, if we humbly and contritely acknowledge our sins, whereas God will declare us guilty and condemn us if we try to excuse ourselves or do not confess our sins.

The procedure of worldly courts is far different. There every guilt that has been acknowledged or discovered will be punished. Not so in God's holy tribunal of confession; all that we confess will be pardoned, and all that we conceal or do not confess will be punished. If thou, O Christian soul, revealest thy sins and thus becomest thine own accuser, God will cease to be thy judge. But if thou dost not confess thy sins, God becomes thy accuser and thy judge on the day of judgment. Our self-accusation on earth must not be forced nor wrung from us, but it should be made freely and unrestrainedly, in sorrow and in love. And why? Because we know by our faith that such an acknowledgment is not to our perdition and condemnation, not to our shame and dishonor, but that it is to our greatest honor and advantage and will

be rewarded by God with His grace and His mercy. Hence confession is a law of Divine mercy.

2. The effects of confession make this truth appear more clearly to us. Let us not be astonished if God shows Himself so amiable and lenient after a contrite confession. What does such a self-accusation effect? Three divine things: it humiliates the sinner when he recognizes his sins; it fills him with sorrow and contrition, and leads him more promptly to the amendment of his life and to the atonement of his sins. But it is exactly this threefold effect that obliterates the guilt and punishment of sin. Humility tears up sin by its very roots, and pride and vanity lie at the root of all sin. Contrition obliterates the guilt and the eternal punishment of sin, and satisfaction remits either in whole or in part the temporal punishment due to it, so that we must again joyfully confess that confession is a law of Divine mercy.

This becomes the more evident when we consider confession in its higher aspect and look upon it as a school, which God uses to keep the Christian humble. In confession we Christians learn to humble ourselves before God. As much as Jesus warned us to be humble when He frankly told us that unless we became as little children we should not enter into the kingdom of heaven; as wonderful as Jesus Himself was in His adorable humility in the manger, on the cross, during His whole life and now always in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar — so little are we inclined to be humble. But without humility there is no grace, no Christian virtue, no merits and no salvation. Con-

fession is therefore the powerful and effective school of humility. And in fact, there is nothing that humiliates the Christian so, as the acknowledgment of his sins, for this acknowledgment is not merely a general, indefinite one whereby we confess in a general way that we are sinful creatures as the pagans did, but it is one in which we accuse ourselves of each and everything in thought, word and deed in which we feel that we have rendered ourselves guilty. I speak of that accusation in which we do what God will do on the day of the last judgment, where every fold and re-fold of conscience will be made manifest, and everything that man has ever done will be brought to light.

But this school of humility also shows its fruits in the Catholic Church in a wonderful manner. Whence comes it that, as a rule, Catholics are more amiable, more patient, more merciful, more conciliating, more tolerant, more obedient and more believing than the pagans, the Jews, the Protestants and the unbelievers? It comes from confession, this wonderful school of humility. What produces the great saints of the Catholic Church, the virtuous faithful of every station and class in life up to the thrones of the mighty and down to the hovels of the poor or to the stricken in the hospitals? Confession has slowly instructed and raised them to this. Whence come the armies of the blessed in heaven? Confession has preserved them for heaven. Therefore I again assert, and that with the most perfect right, that confession is a law of Divine mercy.

3. But besides humility confession brings another great blessing in its train for the welfare of the soul.

It is the contrition and sorrow for sins committed which it awakens and nourishes. We never understand and feel more vividly the greatness and malice of sin than at that solemn moment when we kneel down to accuse ourselves of them. Now the scales fall from our eyes and sin shows itself in its whole repulsiveness. We are confounded and contrition and sorrow are awakened in our heart. Outside the confessional, in the pressure of business or in our everyday life we pay little attention or reproach ourselves but little. But when we kneel before the priest and begin our accusation — behold, these reproaches become strong and powerful, they arouse the heart and soften it for God. Faith and grace approach and move us still more, until contrition takes hold of our soul. Everything coöperates to make confession a worthy one and so secure a pardon. But without confession we would scarcely, if ever, feel contrition, and hence would never obtain pardon. And in truth, how many Christians are there, who have closed their hearts to contrition and to grace and die in their sins, and why? Because they no longer go to confession. Therefore I repeat it again that confession is the law of Divine mercy.

It is this all the more since it not only remits the eternal punishment of sin, but even begins to take away the temporal punishment due to sin. For confession is at the same time the best atonement for sin. The reason is clear. The acknowledgment of our sins is most difficult to our pride and self-love. We therefore experience a great aversion for confession. It

costs us a hard struggle to overcome this. But what, my dearly beloved, can be more meritorious, more abundant in atonement than just this victory over self, this struggle, this conquering of self-love and this humble self-accusation which teaches us not to spare ourselves? Hence, after confession, millions rejoice because of this victory over self, hence millions of poor souls have less to suffer in purgatory, hence other thousands have entered the sooner into eternal bliss, because of the greater satisfaction they have made, the more difficult this self-conquest was and the more determinedly they subjected themselves to it. They cry out to us from heaven and from purgatory: "Yea, verily, confession is the law of Divine mercy!"

4. Has all that I said exhausted the force of my assertion? No, not by any means. This law of Divine mercy shows itself still more efficient for the welfare of our soul and the peace of our heart, when we consider that it is confession which furnishes us with a wonderful means of laying restraint upon our hearts and of suppressing our passions and evil desires. The very thought, "thou must confess this sin," is more convincing and powerful for the Christian than the most emphatic admonitions, warnings or sermons, especially if we have the praiseworthy habit of confessing often. Under such conditions the thought of approaching confession will make as strong, if not stronger, an impression on us than would the thought of death and of judgment. To say to ourselves, "Tomorrow, or next Sunday I will go to confession, and then I must accuse myself of this or that sin," is often

as effectual as to say, "To-morrow, or in a few days I must die and appear before the judgment-seat of God, and how can I defend myself there?"

Who can count the souls whom the thought of confession has kept from sin or saved from eternal perdition? Who can number all those whom this thought, day by day, keeps in the path of rectitude in the midst of temptations and dangers and in spite of their weakness and frailty? They all acknowledge that confession is indeed a law of Divine mercy.

Yea, in very truth it is! Deprived of confession, countless souls would fall into despair. They have fallen, they have sinned, but they still have the faith and they battle with themselves and the terror of their conscience. Whither shall they now flee? where is the heart into which they can pour out the burden of their conscience? where is the friend to whom they can have recourse, and upon whose silence they can securely count? But lo, when no one is touched by our torture of soul, when cold and heartless all pass us by, there is God who still has compassion with His child and whispers to him: "Go, show yourself to the priests." (Luke 17, 14.)

Who can count the thousands of those who, if they obeyed this voice of God, were saved alone by confession, were brought back to a consciousness of their position and were snatched from the brink of the abyss? Who can number the thousands who have found instruction for an erring conscience, healing for a wounded one, peace and calm for a terror-stricken one? God alone knows the tears that have been dried

here, the sighs that were changed to joy, the lamentations that were changed to rejoicing, the graces, the virtues, the heavenly patience and purity, that were planted in the souls. On the day of Judgment countless souls will raise their hands in gratitude to their Divine Judge and acknowledge before the whole world that confession was a law of His Divine mercy. But, at the same time, countless fools and blasphemers, who scoffed at confession while they were on earth, will howl and gnash their teeth in despair, because they insanely reviled and contemned this law of Divine mercy to their own ruin.

5. Moreover, the power of confession is so great, that it even exerts a salutary influence on the body. Famous physicians, even Protestants, have made and confirmed this experience in their daily practice. And in fact there can be no doubt that the condition of our soul has a powerful influence on our bodily welfare. The body shares in the peace and happiness of the soul. In health a peaceful joy and a security of well-being permeates it; in sickness it suffers and bears all things more easily and willingly. How many men are in constant excitement and unrest? This comes from the disordered state of their soul. How many sick people are without comfort, in constant excitement and unrest? How many suffer without deriving the slightest benefit from all the remedies they take? This comes from the unrest and terror of soul, and from an evil conscience. Yea, if so many people succumb before their time to the attacks of disease, if the tried skill of eminent physicians offers them no re-

lief, they have frequently but to seek the cause in an evil conscience. It lames and hampers the influence of the medicine, just the same as anger, envy, hatred, fear, take away the appetite from a man who is well and render the best food tasteless and even injurious. I therefore repeat it again that even for our corporal well-being confession is the law of Divine mercy.

6. But we will finally be fully convinced of the greatness of this commandment when we consider the benefits it confers upon the family and human society. What is the origin of all the crimes that bring misfortune over the individual, ruin families and overthrow Christian order? The origin thereof is the human heart. It is in the heart that every species of vice and crime, hatred, lies and theft and envy and enmity and all godlessness is nourished, brewed and ripened for action. The heart must therefore be purified, tamed and made good. Human laws, the surveillance of the police cannot tame the heart, the Christian religion alone possesses this beneficent power. It enters into the heart by means of the Sacrament of Penance; it is here more than elsewhere that it speaks to the heart and cleanses, purifies and heals it.

In confession, without the knowledge of the world, the respect due to parents and superiors, the moral and even the physical life of children, one's good name, property, innocence, the peace and life of all are protected against the lawless instincts and passions that make themselves felt in the bosom of every man. On the day of Judgment we shall know how many thousands owed it to confession alone that they did not be-

come the victims of the malice, the injustice and the enmity of other men.

Faith and Christian life and morality are preserved and strengthened in confession to the immense advantage of each and every one. Nothing demonstrates so well its greatness and advantage as the experience that every one, who throws aside faith, morality and justice, and speculates on the misfortune of his neighbor, first gives up going to confession as a thing that will hinder him in his wrong-doing. We might fill volumes if we wished to recount all the benefits that confession confers upon human society; if we wished to recount all the crimes which it prevents, the passions, the anger, the hatred and envy which it suppresses, the restitutions of ill-gotten goods, the reconciliations, the restorations of peace, the patience, the mutual support, the temperance, the fidelity to duty, the love of work and the greater prosperity of families of which it is the cause.

Confession is a law of Divine mercy, because it has Jesus, the Saviour, as its author. Just as He was mildness, meekness and love itself, so does this work of His bear the imprint of mildness, meekness and love. It humbles and exalts us; it releases us from the pressure of sin and fills us with grace; it whispers consolation to the tortured soul and fills it with peace and joy. Out of sinners it makes just men and out of reprobates it makes children of God and saints.

Where therefore, my dearly beloved, is the foolish one who still wishes to revile and scoff at confession, this wonderful work of Divine mercy? And if he

does so he only shows thereby what spirit animates him, since he commits a crime against the best means of salvation for his own soul. But in company with millions of faithful Christians, in company with the countless hosts of the blessed and of our own who are near and dear to us and are now in the enjoyment of eternal bliss we will praise and honor God for this law of His infinite mercy. Here we find peace and reconciliation, renewed zeal and devotion, grace and pardon; here we always find Jesus again, who lovingly says to us: "Be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee!" Therefore I say with millions of Christians, I say it with the saints in heaven, and on the day of Judgment we shall all acknowledge it, the just with rejoicing, the sinners in despair: Yea, verily, confession is a law of Divine mercy. Amen.



SERMON IV

THE ESSENTIAL PARTS OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity.”—I JOHN 1, 9.

Our Divine Saviour could scarcely have chosen a more charming illustration of the mercy with which God receives the sinner who returns to Him with humble and contrite heart than the parable of the Prodigal Son. We find portrayed therein the full depth of the misery into which the sinner plunges himself as soon as he has turned away from God his heavenly Father. But here also we find plainly indicated the manner in which he can return to God. The prodigal son demanded of his father the part of the inheritance that was coming to him. But scarcely had he obtained possession of it when the presence of his father became irksome to him. . . . He betook himself to a foreign country where in the company of evil companions he lived riotously and squandered his patrimony. Then there came a famine; in order to escape starvation he found himself obliged to become a swineherd. But withal he found himself so badly off that he would willingly have eaten of the swill given to the swine, but nobody gave him thereof. (Luke 15, 16.)

At last his eyes were opened. Poor and famished in the midst of the swine he began to turn an earnest look upon his interior. He there recognized the wickedness of the life he had been leading and the enormity of his ingratitude toward his father. He learned to know his sins because he examined his conscience. "Oh, if I had only not lived as I have! How many laborers in my father's house have bread in abundance, whilst I, his son, must perish here of starvation." The scalding tears coursed down his cheeks. His sins grieved him, or in other words he had contrition for them. "No, I will no longer remain here; I will go to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against thee!" No hardship or obstacle prevented him from carrying out the resolution he had taken. The journey presented almost insurmountable difficulties; he was emaciated and weak, and because he was without money he was obliged to beg. On the day he left his home he was clothed in purple and fine linen; now poor and in rags he returns to his father's house. How often must not the thought have come to him: "What will my father say, what will the people say when they see me coming home in such wretched guise?" But undismayed he set his face homeward. In this, in truth, he gives us the example of an earnest resolution. The father, who beheld his lost son from afar, was touched with compassion at the sight of his wretchedness and hastened to meet him. Prostrate at his father's feet and with tears streaming from his eyes the prodigal son confessed as he had resolved to do: "Father, I have

sinned against heaven and against thee." This was the contrite and sincere confession of his sins. "Father, I am no longer worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy servants." It was plainly his purpose to atone for his sins and to give his outraged father an evident proof of the sincerity of his amendment; in other words; he did penance and made satisfaction.

In this parable our Divine Saviour wished to point out to us the essential parts of the Sacrament of Penance. These parts are five: examination of conscience, contrition, firm purpose of amendment, confession and satisfaction. By the means of these the sinful Christian, like the prodigal son, can return to his heavenly Father. With the assistance of the Holy Ghost I shall speak to you to-day about these five essential parts of the Sacrament of Penance, so that we may know what is required for a good and worthy confession, what we must do in order to gain from it peace and comfort of heart, and to obtain true pardon for our sins.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. The Christian who has had the misfortune of falling into mortal sin is in very truth the prodigal son who has gone away and left his father. Until the moment when he committed grievous sin he was in the state of grace. This means nothing less than that in this state he is the child and the heir of God, the co-heir of Christ. His name was recorded in the book of the denizens of heaven and on earth the complacency

of God rested upon him. His soul was the abiding-place of God and the temple of the Holy Ghost. Wherefore God was his Father not only in name, but also in love and in His providence for him from the moment of his birth until he fell into sin. There was not an hour of his life that God did not bestow upon him a multitude of His extraordinary fatherly love for him. Yea, He had bidden His angels to carry him upon their hands and to protect him in all his ways. But in the measure that his soul was pleasing to God, his works were likewise acceptable to Him. Be it that he ate or drank or otherwise fulfilled the duties of his state in life, as long as he was in the state of grace they were pleasing to God. All of his actions obtained for him an increase of grace and an augmentation of his future glory. Like a faithful guardian, God watched over this treasure which the Christian acquired for heaven by the good works that he performed. His own soul told him that he was living in peace with God and with himself. And doubtless the consciousness of the complacency of God was frequently the cause why the soul rejoiced in God her Saviour. Even untoward exterior circumstances were not capable of undermining his confidence in God, or of robbing him of the happiness of a good conscience.

But, alas! now comes the time when the passions assert themselves with greater strength, the Christian grows lax in saying his prayers and in the reception of the sacraments. He waxes indifferent in his service of God and in the affairs of his eternal salvation — he is becoming slothful and the thought of God has

become annoying to him. When this time has come, he is gradually drawing away from God. Sin and temptation come upon him and before he is rightly aware of it he has committed grievous sin. The tie that bound him to God is torn asunder and his desertion of God is complete. In accordance with the word of God: "He that hath sinned against me, him will I strike out of my book;" (Exod. 32, 33.) the name of the sinning Christian is stricken from the record of the children and the heirs of heaven. He has squandered his inheritance in the dissolute company of sin; he has squandered the grace of God, he has flung to the winds the fatherly love and providence of God, the communion of saints; he has wasted all the good works he has hitherto performed, and the whole treasure of merits he had gained for himself. Vanished are peace and joy, good conscience and confidence in God, innocence of soul and justice. All has disappeared like smoke into the air. The soul is famished and vainly tries to still its bitter hunger with further sins and injustice. Pleasure flees, but the bitterness of the sin committed is deeply grafted on the mind. But when the allurements of sin has ceased to flatter the mind, the soul experiences in all its fullness this bitterness. As long as the sinner is filled with the love for sin he is tortured but little by his conscience; but when the fire of passion is extinguished and the inclination for sin is allayed then conscience becomes for him a living torture. The soul cries out to have its hunger stilled and none there is to sate it. We can say in the words of the Prophet Jeremiah (Lam. 1, 1, 2, 5, 8, 9.):

“ 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 among all them that were dear to her : all her friends have despised her, and are become her enemies . . . because the Lord hath spoken against her for the multitude of her iniquities. . . . She hath grievously sinned, therefore she is become unstable . . . she hath not remembered her end : she is wonderfully cast down, not having a comforter : behold, O Lord, my affliction, because the enemy is lifted up.”

The thought of the fatal consequences that mortal sin inflicts on the soul, can never fill it with peace, but on the contrary must cause it sadness and misery without end. However, this sadness will open the Christian's eyes and will lead him to the full cognizance of the crime that he has committed. Hence St. Paul writes to the Corinthians : (2 Cor. 7, 9.) “ Now I am glad : not because you were made sorrowful ; but because you were made sorrowful unto penance. For you were made sorrowful according to God. . . . For the sorrow that is according to God worketh penance, steadfast unto salvation.” It often happens that God in His mercy leads a soul to the recognition of its sinfulness by means of temporal misfortunes just as was the case of the prodigal son. Hence an old preacher very tritely said : “ Sufferings and tribulations are the hounds that God sends out to bring the erring sheep back to their shepherd.”

Every recognition of sin, every return to penance is a grace of God. Whoever, therefore, wishes to know his sins, must above all ask God to help him to do this and implore the Holy Ghost to assist him. Without this awakening and helping grace it is impossible to acquire the true knowledge and to return to penance. Therefore the Prophet Jeremiah exclaims: "Convert me, and I shall be converted, for thou art the Lord my God. For after thou didst convert me, I did penance." (Jer. 31, 18.) Jesus Christ has plainly enough intimated this necessity of grace: "Without me you can do nothing. No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him." (John 6, 44.) Wherefore David exclaims: "Create a clean heart in me, O God; and renew a right spirit within my bowels. Cast me not away from thy face; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and strengthen me with a perfect spirit." (Ps. 50, 12-14.)

2. Whoever, therefore, is seriously minded to know his conscience will carefully consult it, in other words, he will examine his conscience. Just as in the matter of curing bodily ailments, it is necessary to know the seat of the trouble, so also in the matter of healing the suffering soul, it is not less of the first importance to know the sins that have been committed. The penitent must use his intelligence to examine the injuries of his heart. It is often a painful examination and therefore deserves to be called the penance of the intelligence. Man in his self-love not only wishes to appear better than he is in the eyes of his neighbors,

but also in his own eyes. Pride willingly covers up one's own shortcomings with the veil of self-deception. The examination of conscience has the purpose of tearing asunder this self-deception and of allowing the light of knowledge to penetrate into the most hidden recesses. This is certainly a difficult undertaking that above all requires the grace of God. But with the help of the Holy Ghost the conscience becomes a faithful mirror in which the Christian can see all the spots that are in his soul. According to the words of St. Chrysostom it is a book that God has given to us all and in which all of us can read. All the other spiritual books are destined mostly to adjust this one, to explain it or to amend it. The Christian should diligently read this book, for of all his library this is the only book he will take along with him into eternity.

The worthiness or unworthiness of confession depends on the examination of conscience. The true, genuine examination of conscience does not content itself with merely examining the commandments of God and of the Church, but it also calls to mind the duties of one's state of life, one's own sins of thought, word and deed, and the sins we have caused our neighbor to commit. It is not satisfied with a few minutes, for it knows that no real knowledge is possible under such circumstances. It does as did the prodigal son; it repeatedly recalls the transgressions, and now it really recognizes the state of the soul and thereby becomes the mother of contrition. But what greater grace can come to the sinner than the grace of contrition? Earnestly and persistently must this grace

be asked of God, for the sinner in the state of disgrace in which he finds himself is of himself incapable of awakening true and salutary contrition. But this grace of contrition, according to the words of Pope St. Gregory the Great, will not enter into the soul before we have made to ourselves a faithful representation of the greatness of our failings and have placed them vividly before us.

3. Contrition, the penance of the heart, is always a difficult matter. But it becomes still more difficult when sin is deeply rooted in the heart. Now contrition is destined like a corrosive or a sharp knife to cut the bond that fastens the heart to sin and makes it its bosom friend. This friendship must be torn asunder and the separation must be strictly carried out. This is doubtless painful. The vain heart must set aside pride which it has learned to love and which has brought it many a praise. The avaricious man must abhor deceit and every kind of injustice, everything that has helped him to obtain his ill-gotten money which has been for so long the golden calf that he has adored. The angry man must give up his sweet revenge and cast away from him the darling wish to become even with his enemy. He who has been addicted to the sins of carnal pleasure must now become pure in mind and heart. Carousers and all those who make their belly their god must turn their back to the source of so many pleasures. All this is very difficult. Let no one therefore deceive himself; to sin is easy but to be sincerely sorry for sin is no easy matter. Contrition is a bitter penance for the heart.

It is easy to say: I am sorry for my sins from the bottom of my heart; but frequently the heart knows not whereof the mouth speaketh. It is only with the help of God's grace that man can really and truly be sorry for and abhor sin from the bottom of his heart, especially if the sin is one that he has practiced for a long time. Hence true contrition is always a miracle of the merciful love of Jesus. We too must pray: "Lord, help us, or we perish."

Jesus, the good shepherd, who carries the erring sheep on His shoulder back to the herd, will deny no one who asks Him for it, the grace of contrition, since without contrition no forgiveness of sin is possible and Christ died for us sinners upon the cross. In such wise our contrition becomes for us a second, but more painful baptism, whereby we are again cleansed from our sins. In the first baptism we were baptized exteriorly with water, and now we must baptize ourselves inwardly with the water of the tears of penance. But verily the first thought of what we were before sin and what we have become by mortal sin; the thought of the terrible judgments of God that will be visited on the sinner and the remembrance of the Passion of the Saviour and of the love of God are well calculated to move the sinner to contrition if he be not entirely hardened. Call to mind the days of your innocence, the love for God that filled your heart, and the deep joy that a good conscience produced in you! They were happy days. And now how lonesome and deserted your soul dwells in her misery, your soul that was once so rich and so beautiful. Like a widow she

has become, she who was the Spouse of God. With sins, with the swill that is cast to the swine she seeks to satisfy her hunger, and cannot be sated, she who once had the grace of heaven and the Bread of Angels for her nourishment. She was once an heir of heaven and destined to reign with Christ in eternal glory and unending bliss, but by sin she has become an heiress of hell.

Look upon the cross! there is Jesus in torment who calls out to you: Thou, O Christian soul, thou art in sin! What have I done to thee or how have I injured thee that thou shouldst treat me so! This, indeed, is reason enough why we should in sorrow for our sins cry out with the prodigal son: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee; I am not worthy to be called thy son," but Thou, O Lord, be Thou mindful of Thy mercies!

4. True contrition combines with it a real and sincere purpose of amendment. Contrition is the soul of confession, but the firm purpose of amendment is the consequent execution of what we have earnestly resolved and promised to God. The depth of our contrition is the measure of the sincerity of our purpose of amendment, and the firmness of the purpose of amendment tells us the depth of our sorrow. If we truly regret a thing we surely will not commit it again, but we will make use of the means best calculated to protect us against a relapse into our former faults. I am sure that you all find that this is self-evident. Experience teaches us sufficiently that the firm resolution is a severe penance of the will that should amend

itself. How often do we not find people sigh and bewail their errors, yet soon after they fall back into the same faults. Why? Because they have no true penance of the will nor a firm purpose of amendment. The purpose of amendment consists in this that the sinner determinedly tears away his will from sin and all injustice and turns it effectually to what is good. But it is difficult to bend a tree that has grown crooked, and it is often still more difficult to turn a crooked will in the right direction. Once sin has become a habit, it is like an iron shirt of which we can hardly rid ourselves. Therefore let none deceive themselves! To sin is easy, but true conversion is a difficult thing, and as the prodigal spared no pains so must we spare no effort in this affair. Hence a special grace of God for which we must pray, if we would have our weakness strengthened. Here the advice that is frequently given to sick people finds its fullest application: strict abstemiousness, namely, the firm purpose of avoiding every occasion of sin, of fleeing from temptation and of frequently using the means that God has instituted for our strengthening and of keeping the promises we have made.

5. But the prodigal son also confessed his sins because he was filled with contrition and a firm resolution. Our Divine Saviour Himself says: "Whereof the heart is filled the mouth overfloweth." If the heart is filled with sorrow the confession will also be sincere and contrite. If the heart harbors no true contrition, the confession will not be honest and sincere. If it is already a difficult matter to acknowledge our sins to

ourselves, wherefore the examination of conscience is a real penance of the mind, how much more difficult will not the confession of our sins be, since it is a real penance of the mouth? Man does not willingly acknowledge his transgressions to himself, how much less disposed is he not to do so to another? In confession he is his own accuser, but see how pride and self-love protest against it! St. Chrysostom therefore very aptly says in the 4th century: "The devil takes away from man the sense of shame when he sins; but just before confession he returns it to him." This false shame may be compared to the seal that the enemies of Jesus imprinted on His sepulcher. The enemy of our souls presses his seal upon our lips so that they remain closed in confession. He, therefore, who, like to his Saviour, will not tear away the seal cannot arise as a new man in the grace of God, but will bury himself all the more deeply in his sins. Hence Pope St. Gregory in the 6th century says: "It ordinarily requires more self-command and effort to confess one's sins than to avoid the sins one has committed." Therefore according to the words of St. Augustine, true confession is the saviour of souls, the obliterator of sins, the champion of the soul against the evil spirits. It closes the gates of hell and opens the portals of paradise. Confession reconciles us with God, rejoices the angels, lightens the heart and conscience, blunts the sting of fear, makes the hope of salvation to blossom, and pours the balm of comfort into the wounded soul.

6. Once we have contritely and sincerely confessed our sins there still remains the duty of making satis-

faction for them. The penitent owes this atonement to God for the insult he had inflicted upon Him. Coupled with this is the obligation of restoring to our neighbor the injury we have caused him either in his property or in his good name. The Saviour, indeed, has made infinite satisfaction for us, and without it no reconciliation with God were possible. But as little as the medicine can help the sick man if he only looks at it, or if in other ways he acts contrary to the advice and prescription of the physician, just so little will the satisfaction of Christ benefit us, if we do not co-operate with it. The atonement of Christ does not free us from the obligation of restoring unjustly acquired goods or the good name of which we have robbed our neighbor. For this reason satisfaction is a difficult penance in deed. It does not consist merely in the slight works of penance that have been imposed on us in confession, but especially in this that we amend our lives and placate God with our good works. But how many obstacles do we not encounter in the accomplishment of this penance in deed? Deep-rooted habits, numberless vexations and temptations, false shame, fashion and the alluring example of the world and the attachment to unjust possession, all rebel against it. Here again the prodigal son has given us a beautiful example. He offered himself to work as a common servant in the house of his father in order to atone for the pain he had caused his father. He was willing to put his hand to the most common labor, to be satisfied with the poorest food and the simplest raiment and to suffer every contumely. Zacchaeus also gives us a splendid

example of restitution: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him fourfold," (Luke 19, 8).

7. If we thus worthily receive the Sacrament of Penance and return to God in true contrition, we shall meet with the same loving reception that fell to the lot of the prodigal son. The father overjoyed at the return of his lost son hastened to meet him, fell on his neck, kissed him, did not leave him to complete his accusation, but commanded his servants to bring the best garment and a precious ring with which to clothe and adorn him as was becoming to a son. A banquet and music were to proclaim the joy the father felt because he had regained his lost son. In the same way does God, our Father, hasten with His grace to meet the sinner who wishes to do penance.

The first fruit of penance is therefore the forgiveness of sin and the remission of the eternal punishment due to sin. God himself has promised this: "But if the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed . . . I will not remember all the iniquities that he hath done." (Ezech. 18, 21, 22.) Just as at the word of the angel the chains fell from the hands of the Apostle St. Peter, so also do the bonds of the devil fall from the sinner when the priest pronounces the words of absolution over him. God opens His heart to the penitent and receives him again as his child. The wounded soul is healed, the weak one is strengthened. The soul is again adorned with sanctifying grace and as the heiress of heaven she lives in

renewed innocence and justice. Oh, that all had eyes to see the beauty with which God in His loving generosity adorned the soul upon her return to Him. Upon her rests again the complacency of God, His fatherly care and mercy, and the angel of God protects her that she may not return to the bondage of sin, for the angels in heaven also rejoice when a sinner returns to God. How wonderful is the power of true penance! Just as the soul arises again to renewed life so also are all her former good works and merits revived. Yea, the contrite Christian feels the presence of God: he experiences the marks of divine love in that inner peace which delights him more powerfully and sweetly than all the injustice of sin. This peace is a paradise for the soul and a foretaste of eternal peace. "Come and taste," exclaims the holy King David, "how sweet is the Lord." And in truth, if in loyalty and sincerity we fulfill all these things that are required in the Sacrament of Penance, we can with hearts filled with joy and thanksgiving also join in the hymn of praise of the royal penitent David: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and let all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all He hath done for thee. Who forgiveth all thy iniquities: who healeth all thy diseases. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction: who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion. As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear Him . . . in every place of his dominion, O my soul, bless thou the Lord." (Ps. 103.) Amen.

SERMON V

UNWORTHY CONFESSION

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”—I JOHN I, 8.

The parable of our Divine Saviour concerning the Prodigal Son gave us clearly to understand the incomparable love and mercy with which God receives the penitent sinner. Nay more, we saw that in His joy over the conversion of the sinner He goes to meet him with His grace, remits his guilt and punishment and endows his soul with such gifts that even the angels and saints in heaven cannot refrain from rejoicing. God asks but one thing, namely, that the sinner be animated with the spirit of penance and of sincerity. And indeed who would not, encouraged by this exceeding great mercy, make use of the opportunity that God presents to him, and in accordance with His holy will?

Who would believe that just in the act in which the mercy of God shows itself to its fullest extent, it is oftenest misused? And yet this occurs in an unworthy confession. God himself complains of this in the words of the Prophet: “They turned not to me with their whole heart, but lied to me.” Their conversion He calls a lie, a lie their apparently penitent disposition, a lie their promises since they do not execute the reso-

lutions they have made, nor do they abhor in their hearts what with the lips they have confessed: finally the acknowledgment of their sins he calls a lie. Hence King David says (Ps. 77, 36): "And they loved Him with their mouth: and with their tongue they lied unto Him," or (Ps. 80, 16): "The enemies of the Lord have lied to Him: and their time shall be forever." God is now silent and lets them live on unpunished and allows them to do as they please, but there will come a time when He will break this long silence and will pour out on their heads the punishments that have been gathering during His long patience. "My time," says the Lord, "is not yet come, but your time is always ready."

When we render ourselves guilty of an unworthy confession we do not lie to the priest but to God Himself. It is therefore my purpose to speak to you today about this important matter. May the Holy Ghost assist me to do so in a worthy manner.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. In the matter of our bodily ailments it is our daily experience that if we wish to cure them, it is a prime requisite that we know the exact nature of the disease. The same must be said of the ailments of the soul. Every man who wishes to return to God must have this knowledge. Conscience is the mirror in which the Christian can behold the condition of his soul, it is a book in which he can clearly read his sins. He, therefore, who is anxious to know his sins will diligently look and read, and that all the more diligently

the longer the time since he was to confession last. This is the obligation of a real examination of conscience. But, alas, how many are there not who prepare their confession with the most superficial of examinations! They imagine that they can know in a few minutes all that they have done against God, against themselves and against their neighbor in thought, word or deed during the course of many months or even of a year. This is impossible. Perhaps they console themselves with the thought that they have not purposely forgotten any of their sins, but this comfort is a vain one. Sins are purposely forgotten when they have been forgotten because of negligence. We have to consider not only the ten commandments of God but also the six commandments of the Church. Every one has his duties in his state of life: but the state of life comes from God, and God demands a strict accounting of the manner in which we have fulfilled the duties connected therewith. Father and mother have serious obligations toward their children; married people have mutual obligations towards each other; superiors and inferiors have their obligations, obligations upon the fulfilment or the neglect of which one's own welfare and frequently the weal and the woe of many others largely depends. In the matter of these obligations the most sins of commission and omission are committed. Here, too, one becomes mostly responsible for the sins of others.

Who does not remember the saying of the Saviour that from the heart come thefts, injustices and adul-

teries? The heart is the source of sin, for if sin were not first entertained in thought and willed by the will, there would be no sin in deed. We must therefore examine the heart to see how it has conducted itself in the matter of thoughts and desires, whether with the help of God's grace it has withstood temptation or not. For the interior sins, the sins of thought and desires, are far more dangerous and far more difficult to heal than the outward sins of deed. Both are indeed essentially equally grievous, but the only difference between them is that the sins willed in desire have not found their outward accomplishment because of attending circumstances. And it is just for this reason that interior sins, the sins of thought and desire, are far more dangerous, because they are hampered by no exterior obstacles and consequently they can be committed all the more readily and obtain a greater hold upon the soul. Hence our Divine Saviour bids us watch and pray lest we fall into temptation. There are many who never examine themselves about their thoughts. They console themselves with the idea that they cannot control their thoughts. No, Christian soul, thoughts are not without their attendant responsibility. Everywhere God loves the good and detests the bad, but most of all in the heart. Many confessions therefore are invalid and unworthy because of a lack of a careful examination of conscience, and in consequence the soul is plunged still deeper into sin.

2. But of what value is the most careful examination of conscience without contrition? Contrition must be the soul of confession. It grieves over and

abhors sin more than all other evils out of love of God, because we have offended God or also because we fear the eternal punishments of hell. Contrition therefore must not be merely upon our lips, it must be in our heart, and then it becomes a devouring fire that destroys sin. Contrition is so necessary that under given circumstances when it is impossible for us to make a close examination of conscience or to go to confession it will replace everything: but without it everything else is without value. For this reason, it is a great grace of God, for with it we can regain the greatest good. Hence all those who do not ask for this grace and wait until they are in the confessional to make an act of contrition do very wrong. Contrition, as we have said, is an interior sorrow for the sins we have committed and the greatest detestation and hatred for every sin above all other evils, prompted by the love of God or by the fear of His punishments. There are many, however, who express indeed their sorrow in words, but who, in their hearts, continue to love sin and deny what the tongue has spoken. "And they loved Him with their mouth: and with their tongue they lied unto him." Their confession is invalid and unworthy.

Every Christian possesses in his firm purpose of amendment an almost infallible sign whereby he can judge whether his contrition was real or not. For contrition without the purpose of amendment is nothing. What we detest as the greatest of all evils, what grieves us most deeply because we have committed it, is something that we will not so soon do again or at

least not without having undergone a very severe struggle. Naturally if we really mean what we say, namely, that we are prepared to suffer death rather than again offend God, we will avoid everything that leads us to sin, and we will make every effort to break up the habit of sin. It is thus that we can show our sincere purpose of amendment; without it there is no forgiveness of sin. But how many do we not find that return directly from confession to the same old sins, to the same old sinful habits, to the same occasions of sin. To such can be applied the words of Holy Scripture (Ps. 77, 36): "And they loved him with their mouth: and with their tongue they lied unto Him." The tongue says yea and the heart says nay. Can any one herein find a true contrition, an interior sorrow and horror for sin combined with a serious intention of never again committing sin and of using all the means necessary to do better? Such a confession is evidently invalid and therefore unworthy. It may happen, indeed, that we have had true contrition for our sins and a sincere purpose of amending our lives and, notwithstanding, have later again fallen into the same or into other sins, for the heart of man is inclined to sin from the days of his youth, but this does not happen without a struggle, nor without often having made an act of contrition or implored God for His help and having used the proper means of obtaining grace; it did not happen immediately. But when we do nothing the hand of God cannot assuredly be with us nor the grace of the sacraments nor a sincere

purpose: we had the same attachment for sin and hence confession was unworthy.

True contrition and a firm purpose of amendment combined with a sincere desire to be reconciled with God our heavenly Father are the mother of a complete and upright confession. We will endeavor to free ourselves from sin and from the burden that lies upon our conscience. Our confession will be exact and entire. Here is where many a one fails through a negligent or superficial examination of conscience. They console themselves with the thought that they did not purposely omit any of the sins that later on they may remember, but this comfort is no comfort, for it is their fault, their own fault. They were obliged to examine their conscience carefully and seriously. The Sacrament of Penance does not make good this neglect of duty; only the penitent can make it good again by repeating his confession. Others deliberately and knowingly avoid telling some sins, especially those that bring the blush of shame to their cheeks. This is indeed the seal that the enemy presses upon their lips. They have not the courage to tear it away. It is the great punishment of sin and the difficulty of ridding oneself of it. Those who go about with the sting of conscience and can find no cure for it are indeed wretched and much to be pitied. It is a wound that is putrid and pains but is kept away from the eye of the physician. How great on the one hand is the peace and consolation of him, who, trusting in the help of God, overcame himself and now enjoys the recompense

of God in the joy of conscience. How great on the other hand is the unrest of him who conceals and denies his sins. But just as the heart is the source of all sin, for from the heart come injustice, adultery, impure desires, the spirit of vengeance and of envy and of pride and of all other sins — so also these interior sins are oftenest deliberately concealed. And yet where the heart is pure there also a sin in deed is impossible, and it is to become pure by means of the Sacrament of Penance, pure by means of an upright confession which placates God and takes away the burden of sins. For this reason our Divine Saviour spoke the consoling words: “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.” It is often indeed very difficult for us to confess our sins, especially those against holy purity. If we have forgotten ourselves we should strengthen ourselves for an upright confession by saying: My God, I have sinned and have not been ashamed before Thee, therefore as a mark of sincere penance I will now not be ashamed to confess my sins to Thy priest, yes, just because I must feel ashamed of myself this will be my best penance.

Wherever we find true contrition and an upright confession we also find as a necessary consequence the honest disposition to make satisfaction. By this I mean not only the accomplishment of those little works of penance that have been imposed on us, but consisting rather in the amendment of our lives and in the works of mercy, of the love of God and of our neighbor. All these things we offer up to God in atonement for the offense we have committed against Him. The

amendment of our lives is the fruit of the sincere purpose of amendment. Unfortunately there are too many who in no wise amend their lives after receiving the Sacraments. To such as these St. Bernard says: "He who beats his breast and does not amend his life, tramps down his sins and does not take them away."

But satisfaction also consists in this that we restore ill-gotten goods and make restitution to our neighbor for the injury we have inflicted on him in his property or in his good name. "You know that ill-gotten goods do not thrive; are you disposed to restore what you have acquired unjustly, or make good the loss you have caused? For you will remain in sin as long as the goods unjustly acquired are in your hands, or that you have not made restitution for the injury you have inflicted on your neighbor." "Yes, I will." "Sure?" "Sure." And many say yes with their tongues in order to obtain absolution and in their hearts they say no. "And they loved Him with their mouth, and with their tongue they lied unto Him."

Herein we often find the confirmation of the truth of what a hermit once saw in a vision. He beheld Lucifer the prince of the devils seated on his infernal throne berating a devil who returned too late from earth: where did you stay so long? "I remained so long on earth to persuade a Christian who just came from confession not to restore his ill-gotten goods as he was told to do." "You fool," laughed Lucifer, "do you not know that he who has unjustly acquired the property of another will not make restitution even

without your persuasion? Why then lose so much time over preventing a thing that will not happen?"

Whether this vision was true or not, it nevertheless contains a bitter truth. How many are there not who declare that they would rather die and suffer everything than to offend God, their highest good, and to hate sin above all things. And still they do not restore ill-gotten gains in spite of the fact that their mouth overflows with assurances of the holiest kind.

Hence it comes that God is most offended in the very matter wherein He shows us His greatest mercy and all the wealth of His Fatherly love. At the moment when He hastens to meet the sinner with His grace and offers him pardon and the heritage of heaven He is, as it were, cheated of the desire of his heart. The unworthy reception of this sacrament of reconciliation reaches its climax in an unworthy communion — a greater crime heaped upon an already great one. Judas, with a kiss dost thou betray the Son of Man? Instead of the feast that the angels in heaven would have celebrated, the devils in hell now rejoice. The one or the other in whom the attachment for sin has gained the upper hand may deem himself superior to this, and refuse to believe what we have just said, but the enemy of our souls does not refuse to believe it and therefore he rejoices. He knows that Christ is the Son of God; he knows the truth of the words: "You will seek me, but you will die in your sins." This divine sentence invariably finds its accomplishment whenever an unworthy confession has been made good neither in life nor in death. The words of Jesus

find an apt application here: "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace: but now they are hidden from thy eyes." (Luke 19, 42.) When we are come to judgment our enemies will arise against us. These enemies will be the superficial examinations of conscience, all false contrition, all those resolutions that said yes on the lips and no in the heart. There will arise against us the confessions in which we loved the Lord with the mouth and lied to Him with the tongue. There will arise against us the satisfactions and restitutions that, in confession, we promised to make and failed to accomplish during our life. These are the terrible enemies that will surround and worry and cast down the soul at the judgment.

Long-suffering and merciful is the Lord and of exceeding great compassion for all those who return to Him with their whole heart. As a father takes pity on his children, so does God take pity on those that fear and love Him. But terrible are His judgments when His longanimity is abused and His mercy despised. A hundred years' time did God give men to do penance: then He Himself closed the only door of the ark of Noah as a sign that His longanimity was exhausted and that the deluge would begin. Thirty years He waited for the conversion of the Jews and then Jerusalem was destroyed to its very foundations. God looks upon the doings of the sinner for a long time, then He leaves him to his fate and death carries him away. My time is not yet come, says the Lord: it will come as soon as my patience is exhausted, or

that your time ends in death. Hence it is the very wisest thing we can do, to follow the well-meant advice of the saints, who counsel us to examine ourselves carefully whether we have ever deliberately failed in anything in our confessions, be it in the negligent examination of our conscience, or by a lack of true contrition and of a firm purpose of amendment, or in the acknowledgment of our sins, so that, if there is still time, we may be able to repair the fault by remaking our confessions, beginning with the first unworthy one and so may finally gain forgiveness for our sins. If a merchant finds it necessary to go over his accounts frequently in order to keep them correct, how much more reason has not the Christian to frequently revise his accounts with heaven since from them depends his whole eternity. God does not ask much and He constantly helps us with His grace so that we may obtain peace and quiet of conscience, joy and justice in the Holy Ghost, the childhood of God and the inheritance of heaven. For this reason we should render this little to God in all uprightness and sincerity. How many are there not who, for the sake of some trifling temporal advantage, expose themselves to the storms and the dangers of the ocean, to the dangers of war, who make long and difficult journeys or wear themselves out at home. And now should not the return to God, the prize of eternal life and the escape from everlasting suffering be worthy of some effort and self-denial? Hence we should often examine our conscience, make a good act of contrition with the firm resolve to do

better, for as in earthly things so also in heavenly affairs does practice make perfect. But just as in earthly affairs the lack of practice makes us forget everything that we have learned, so also a lack of practice in the matter of confession makes us forget everything, and that is the chief reason why so many receive the Sacrament of Penance unworthily. Heaven suffereth violence and only those who use violence will capture it.

But thou, O Christian soul, who hast always sought the Lord in sincerity, rejoice! He is merciful and kind. And though thou hadst fallen seven times seventy times, still God is long-suffering and exceedingly compassionate, and He will receive thee again and again if only thou wilt return to Him in contrition and uprightness. He knows our misery and our weakness: He knows that the heart of man is inclined to evil from his youth. Therefore He has instituted His remedies, the holy Sacraments, to heal the wounds of the soul. He who does not refuse to show the wounds of his soul to the priest who is the physician and to use the sacraments frequently, will always improve in health and strength and, as time flies by, hastens with firm step, confiding in the goodness of the Lord, toward the recompense of his fidelity, the unending happiness of heaven. And verily, an upright confession is a wonderful balm for the tortured conscience, a real joy and a blessed relief. Let us prepare for ourselves this consolation, this peace of soul and this joy. Christ in His mercy and goodness calls us, let us follow His call: "Behold I stand at the door

and knock: with him who opens for me will I abide.” Blessed the soul where Jesus enters with His grace and His love: but still more blessed if the soul enters to Jesus in His heavenly glory as a reward for her humble confession. Amen.

SERMON VI

INDULGENCES

“With the Lord there is mercy, and with Him plentiful redemption.”—Ps. 129, 7.

The Sacrament of Penance is truly a marvelous work of divine mercy for the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind. The confession of sin corresponds perfectly to the needs of the human heart which finds no rest and no peace until it has confided to the priest its oppressive secret and heavy burden. And this confession has a wonderful atoning power and assurance in the divine mercy and grace. No matter how grievously and how much one has sinned, as soon as he has contritely confessed his sin, he is conscious of his right to pardon, and that the more so, the greater the humiliation and the self-denial his confession has cost him, and the greater the atoning power such a confession possesses.

But the effects of a good confession are great and efficacious, for only now we realize the greatness and ingratitude of sin. Many a man who knows otherwise no fear and trembles at no danger is here seized with fear and trembles. The power of his Christian conscience moves him for his salvation, and peace and rest and joy return to his soul. Oh, how consoling

and how blessed is the consciousness to have found again the forgiveness of all sins and the grace of the love of God! Yes, if many Christians have not heaped sins upon sins upon their poor souls from presumption, but from despair: if they feel themselves literally martyred by their bad conscience and experience no joy and no peace any more, the only reason is, because they do not follow the desire of their hearts for a good confession nor obey the voice of their conscience which says: "Go, show thyself to the priest and thy sins will be forgiven thee."

Oh, how many million souls rejoice now in heaven over the happiness of a good confession! Christian society itself feels its benevolent influence. It protects, more than all human laws and judgments, the life, the property and the honor of the neighbor; it furthers the welfare and the peace of the congregation and the family, the unity and sanctity of matrimony, the obedience and gratitude of children, the care and love of parents and the fidelity of servants. It nourishes the innocence of youth, the purity of heart and all virtues and every human ordinance and prevents vice.

It is a consolation and a happiness for every faithful Christian that to the Sacrament of Penance is joined indulgence, that is, the forgiveness of temporal punishment after forgiveness of grievous sins and their eternal punishment has been obtained. I will therefore speak to-day on indulgences, and answer the question: what is an indulgence? On the two following Sundays we will speak of the power of the Church to impart indulgences, in order to understand her treasure

of grace and the great worth and meaning of indulgences.

O Jesus, assist me with Thy grace.

1. In the Sacrament of Penance, my dearly beloved, God forgives us our grievous sins and the eternal punishment of hell due to them, but the temporal punishment in purgatory or on earth remains.

The sinful Christian, although Christ performed an immeasurable satisfaction to God for sin, is bound in order to participate in this satisfaction of Christ, to co-operate on his part and make good the evil which he has done to God. Therefore St. Paul to encourage the faithful says: "I fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh." (Colos. 1, 24.) The Passion of Christ is indeed for us an inexhaustible fountain of satisfaction, but it depends upon us to use it. We must co-operate and unite our satisfaction with the satisfaction of Jesus Christ, in order that it may have worth and merit in the eyes of God. For no one is allowed to believe that Christ has done everything for us and that we would have nothing more to do than to enjoy the fruits of His Passion. Christ has done enough for our sins, but we must also make satisfaction to God for them, or else He Who forgives us the eternal punishment on account of Christ, allows us to make satisfaction for the temporal punishment. Hence Christ relates in St. Matthew, in Chapter 5, of a jail in which a debtor, who had not paid his full debt, was cast and compelled to remain there until the last farthing was paid. The

Christian who has indeed repented of his sins and died pardoned by God will be in the other world so purified until the divine Justice has been entirely and thoroughly satisfied. Therefore St. Ambrose says: "When the Apostle says: he will be saved but through fire, he shows that this indeed makes for bliss but that he must suffer the punishment of fire, in order that by fire he be purified, and yet not eternally punished by fire like the godless." But this fire — writes the great St. Augustine — although it is not eternal, is nevertheless in a marvelous way painful, for it exceeds every pain that man has or can suffer in this life (*de igne purgat*). Who could perfectly describe the longing and the pain of yearning of these suffering souls in purgatory, since they are so long separated from God and eternal bliss? God, the highest and the most perfect Good, hides His Face from them. They seek Him with the most ardent desire, but find Him not; they try to behold Him, but their endeavors are not satisfied. Oh, this love and yearning is a second grievous fire which they must endure as the remnant of their punishments until they have been purified from the smallest stains and have paid the last farthing to divine justice.

The Justice, but also the Wisdom and Mercy of God are here in evidence. The Justice of God, for it is only right that the sinner, whom God has forgiven the eternal punishment due to his guilt, should atone for his sins by temporal punishment, since Christ has suffered for him: His Wisdom, so that here on earth we may not be tempted to the abuse of the Goodness of God and think that no punishment will follow our sin

and thus entirely lose the spirit of penance. But herein the Mercy of God especially manifests itself, for it places at our disposal the means of judging ourselves, as St. Paul says, so that we may not be judged: hence by works of penance, alms-giving, fasts and the patient bearing of adversities, we may satisfy divine Justice and thus pay off our temporal punishments.

But who is in a position to perform severe works of penance in order to make perfect atonement for his sins here on earth as the holy penitents and Christians did before us? Behold here again the Mercy of Jesus. He has given His Church the power not only to forgive the eternal punishment due to sin, but also to remit the temporal punishment. She does this by granting indulgences which we can easily gain if only we show a little good will.

2. But what is an indulgence? An indulgence is the remission of the temporal punishment still due to sin after the priest has given absolution. Indulgences are based on the merits of Christ and the Saints which Holy Church applies to us to make satisfaction to God. Every sin, even the smallest, will be punished either in this life or in the next. If it is mortal sin, its punishment is eternal in hell; if it is venial, its punishment is temporal either on earth or in purgatory. It is only seldom that God forgives in the Sacrament of Penance the temporal punishment together with mortal sin and its eternal punishment, and this only when there is present an extraordinary degree of contrition; generally, the temporal punishment remains to be atoned for. How true this is we can easily learn from

the examples which God Himself gives us. Adam and Eve repented of their sin in paradise and lived from thence on in the greatest sanctity. Nevertheless they were obliged to do penance for nine hundred years and to earn their bread in the sweat of their brow, lost paradise and finally were obliged to die, although God had forgiven the guilt of their sin and even had promised them a saviour. Moses, an extraordinary man, chosen by God to be the leader of the Jewish people, was obliged to die in the desert on account of doubting the word of God, in spite of his ardent supplications to be allowed to enter into the promised land. The holy king David and his people were afflicted with a pest which destroyed eighty thousand men in punishment for vanity in his power, in spite of David's repentance, fasting and weeping. Now if God punishes such and other holy and chosen men after they have repented of their faults with fasting and weeping what have we to expect after the forgiveness of our numerous venial and mortal sins? How great then will be the temporal punishment which awaits us after death? Therefore it is the opinion of Holy Church and of the Saints of God that the pains in purgatory are just as great and terrible as in hell, with this difference that they do not last eternally and that the suffering souls are holy souls, in the state of grace, children of God, brides of the Holy Ghost and heirs of heaven. They suffer patiently, they do not despair, but are nevertheless poor souls, for whom we can never intercede enough that their sufferings may be lessened or shortened. Oh, think well of it, who deem the grievous

sins so little to say nothing of venial sins, think what you may expect one day, if holy souls upon whom God looked with pleasure were obliged to suffer so much, what, I say, may you expect even after the forgiveness of sins in a truly contrite confession.

The early Christians, animated with this faith and with this fear, and profoundly moved by the thought of the justice of God, always strove to perform great penances on earth. For this reason also Holy Church in former times obliged her children to perform great penances for their sins. St. Paul himself excluded a man, guilty of grievous sin, from the communion of the faithful, from divine services, from the sacraments and from the holy sacrifice, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ!" (1 Cor. 5, 4.) Some of these ecclesiastical penances were: for perjury, the penitent was obliged to fast on bread and water for fourteen days and to do penance for seven years; for inducing one to commit perjury and to bear false witness the penitent was obliged in addition to these seven years' penance never to go to communion. For cursing the penitent was obliged to fast seven days for the first offense and fourteen days for the second; for public blasphemy against God, the Blessed Virgin or a Saint, the penitent was obliged to remain standing at the church door on seven Sundays, to fast on bread and water for seven Fridays and was not allowed to enter the church. For servile work on Sunday the penitent was obliged to fast on bread and water for three days; for talking in church ten days; for cursing his parents forty days and if he

struck them he was obliged to do penance for seven years; for the sin of intoxication the penitent had to fast for fourteen days; for manslaughter the penitent was never allowed to enter the church again, but must remain standing at the church-door and could only receive communion on his death-bed; for fornication the penitent was obliged to do severe penance for three years; for public scandal the penitent was obliged to do penance for months and years by standing at the church-door and asking forgiveness of the faithful, he was not allowed to receive the sacraments nor assist at mass nor contract matrimony until his penance was finished and he was received again among the number of the faithful.

Yes, it is true, these were severe penances, but on that account, my beloved, that was a time when Christians were conscious of what they were, children of God and heirs of heaven. It was a time of saints, it was a time when men went to heaven, it was a time when Christians trifled neither with the Mercy nor with the Justice of God, neither with His commandments nor with the commandments of the Church, neither with the sanctification of Sunday nor with fast-days. It was a time when grievous sins were a seldom and a deeply deplored occurrence, when Christians lived together in harmony, in charity, in peace and were of one heart and one soul; when lies and deceit, adultery and robbery, blasphemy and infidelity, perjury and law-suits were things almost entirely unknown. It was a time when the faithful were always ready in defense of their faith and for the name of Jesus to sacri-

face their wealth and their blood. This severity of ecclesiastical penances remained almost until the twelfth century, when they were gradually abandoned until they sunk to the degree of to-day when many a great sinner imagines that the rosary is too hard a penance. For this reason the Church wills that the priest sometimes remind the faithful of the old penances in order that no one may deem himself free from earnest penance in order to escape from the justice of God in the future and that all may know the benefit of indulgences and to more zealously make use of them.

3. What is therefore an indulgence? An indulgence is on the part of the Church a forgiveness of former fixed ecclesiastical penances due to sin which we would be obliged to take upon ourselves before God and His Church. Whoever in former times contritely undertook these penances made a perfect or at least a great satisfaction to God for sins committed for which God forgave him the guilt of the temporal punishment in purgatory entirely or at least in great part. If the Church therefore grants to us a plenary or a partial indulgence of the ecclesiastical punishments which we were obliged to perform for the penance of our sins, God grants to us so much of the temporal punishment as we would have merited by really doing the penance. Therefore, a seven, a forty, or a fifty year indulgence is a seven, forty or fifty year ecclesiastical penance, which we in olden times would have been obliged to perform for one or more grievous sins. God permits us to gain by indulgences so much of temporal punishment as we would have made satisfaction for by these

penances. A plenary indulgence is a pardon of all ecclesiastical penances and therefore a pardon of just so much temporal punishment in purgatory as we would have merited by these penances. A Jubilee indulgence is a plenary indulgence, which is nevertheless to be distinguished from other plenary indulgences in so far as the priests during the time of a jubilee indulgence have the power to absolve from those particularly grievous sins which otherwise the Bishops have reserved to themselves and from which only they and those to whom they give special faculties can absolve. The priests also have the right to change vows without the interference of the ecclesiastical authorities to other good works which at other times only the Bishops have the power to do.

My beloved: we can understand the greatness of sin from the justice of God even towards the greatest saints on account of small sins and from the severity of former ecclesiastical penances, apart from the Passion of our Divine Saviour, or the eternity of hell and its pains or from the pains of purgatory. Yes, if we read that the time of penance lasted from ten to twenty years, and for great sins often for life; when we hear, that a Christian, who had given great scandal and wished to be admitted to penance stood in sack-cloth and ashes at the threshold of the church and begged for forgiveness and intercession; when we know that the penitents during the time of penance were not allowed to enjoy a meal, to drink wine, to contract marriage, but had to spend their lives in prayer, in fasting, in vigils and in giving alms, what do we learn but the

greatness of sin, the justice of God, the great obligation to make satisfaction? Therefore in those times on Ash-Wednesday the penitential words were more emphatically expressed than to-day: "Remember, oh man, that dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return," the grace and mercy of God! but remember also that in those times the relapsing sinner was usually never allowed to go to confession; what can make the relapse into old sins more terrible? What can restrain more those frivolous Christians who put off their conversion from year to year and even until their death-bed in the deceitful hope that in their last moments they will be saved — what can restrain them from such a dangerous condition more than the earnest thought of God's justice and the great necessity of making satisfaction as much as possible in this life? Precisely the doctrine of indulgences impresses us with this truth and the more careful attention we take to make use of the time of grace and to gain indulgences the happier we will be before the judgment of God and in eternity.

4. Indulgences are just as easy to gain as penitential works are to perform. The mercy of God proves this and the glorious power of the Catholic Church also.

What is then necessary to gain an indulgence? The answer to this question is very important, for upon it depends the gaining of an indulgence. Certainly, my beloved, the merits of our Divine Saviour are immeasurable and far outweigh all the sins of men. However, these immeasurable merits are useful only to those to whom they are applied, and they are applic-

able only to those who do what is necessary. And wherein consists this? In an earnest penance and in a sincere confession. Indulgence does not cleanse us from sin nor does it supply a bad or an imperfect confession, oh no! Its object is to take away temporal punishments, consequently the eternal punishment must already be forgiven and therefore all sins. A contrite confession is therefore the first and the most important condition.

If we have faithfully fulfilled this first condition then we must unite our penitential works with the merits of Christ and of the Saints, for an indulgence frees us from most but not from all penitential works. The duty of controlling his passions and denying himself still binds him who desires to gain an indulgence, and as long as life lasts he must never cease to do penance and to be sorry for his former sins. Our penitential works therefore are supplementary to the merits of Christ. In this sense St. Paul says: "I fill up those things that are wanting of the suffering of Christ in my flesh." (Col. I, 24.) This is the mercy of God that He gives to us the means, as it were, to supply the remission of the penitential works necessary to make complete satisfaction for our sins. If the Catholic Church desired the Christians to still perform long penance as the first Christians freely did with zeal and contrition — there would scarcely be any found who would be willing to do so. The most of them do not hesitate to undergo a more difficult and painful one in purgatory, but now comes indulgence, and our penance and indulgence together effect for us the for-

giveness of God of temporal punishment. From this you may see therefore that we cannot gain an indulgence without penance and that without an indulgence our penitential works are too small and too insignificant.

The Catholic Church prescribes for the faithful who wish to gain an indulgence, besides contrite confession and holy communion other good works, as prayers for all the faithful, living and dead, for the conversion of sinners and infidels and for the welfare of the Church, alms according to one's means, visits to churches or other easy penitential works. Indulgences should inflame the zeal of the faithful to become perfectly reconciled with God, since they, unlike the holy sacraments, do not effect grace by their own virtue but only in so far as we co-operate with them.

What is more meet than that the Christian who lays claim to an extraordinary grace such as the forgiveness of temporal punishment than to omit nothing on his part to gain it? Therefore whoever does not fulfill one of the prescribed conditions gains no indulgence. And these prescribed conditions of the Church must be performed in the state of grace or at least completed in the state of grace.

5. My beloved, let us thank God that in His mercy He has given us such grand means to make satisfaction to His justice. Yes, if the Church imposed hard penitential works, severe fasts, long prayers or alms, many a one could excuse himself from the want of means or weakness, but thus the holy Catholic Church is always inclined to mildness as her Founder Jesus

Christ was. What she therefore demands is in accordance with our ability and a little self-denial, and a little self-denial is not difficult. If the suffering souls in purgatory could find an opportunity of gaining an indulgence how joyfully would they not do a thousand times more than what the Church prescribes, in order to make satisfaction to the justice of God, to end their sufferings and soon to come to heaven and see God face to face and enjoy Him forevermore! But they have no choice any more, they must suffer until the justice of God is satisfied. But we have the choice, my beloved, to make use of the proper means now, or to suffer painfully in the purifying flames of purgatory. But this will never be the case if we, with zeal and devotion, make use of this shortened penance, as the holy Fathers call the proffered opportunities of gaining indulgences, and throw ourselves into the arms of divine mercy. "Now is the time of salvation, now is the acceptable time," exclaims St. Paul. These days of salvation should in consequence of our true zeal for the eternal happiness of our souls be changed to the eternal days of bliss, and lead us to the vision of God whose Mercy we shall always praise with all the Saints. Amen.

SERMON VII

THE CHURCH'S TREASURE OF GRACE

“Because with the Lord there is mercy; and with him plentiful redemption.”—Ps. 129, 7.

Truly consoling and gladdening are those words which already filled the royal David with joy and confidence in the unbounded mercy of God: “With the Lord there is mercy, and with him plentiful redemption.” Yes, His mercy shines wonderfully through the whole world. Beginning with the promise of a Redeemer in Paradise until the Cross on Calvary, where Jesus offered Himself as a bloody sacrifice of atonement, divine mercy has spread itself over the whole human race like a heavenly rainbow. It is again the holy King David, who, in the joy of his heart, calls upon himself, his people and on all the world in the following words to honor and praise the mercies of God: “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and let all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all he hath done for thee. Who forgiveth all thy iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion.” (Ps. 102, 1-5.)

But since the bloody sacrifice of Jesus on the cross

the mercy of God shows itself a thousand times more adorable. It is in truth like to the sun that pours its graces over the entire world; it glorifies and beautifies life, it fills us with childlike hope, it drives away the storms of fear and despair and approaches the dying man on his death-bed like a dove of peace. No matter how poor and wretched a man may be, no matter how grievous the sins he has committed and how strongly the terror of the judgment assails him — one thing remains to him yet, one thing that comforts his poor heart, the thought of the mercy of God.

Hand in hand with it goes its heavenly companion, *plentiful redemption*. It spreads out from the cross over the whole world and seeks an entrance into the soul of every human being. The holy sacrifice of the Mass, the Sacraments, the blessings of the Church, prayer, faith — they are all ways and means by which redemption with all its graces communicates itself to men. Whosoever is redeemed and sanctified on earth, whosoever is in the state of grace, whosoever is eternally happy in heaven — they all owe their happiness to this plentiful redemption.

But there is still another splendid means that God has confided to His Church, and that still more manifests the mercy of God and His plentiful redemption in an exquisite manner — and that is indulgence.

I will therefore speak to you to-day about indulgence and particularly about the Church's treasure of grace out of which indulgence proceeds.

O Jesus, assist me with Thy grace.

I. Last Sunday I spoke to you about what an indulgence is and about the conditions that are necessary to gain an indulgence. An indulgence is a remission of all the ecclesiastical penances which from the earliest times were imposed as a satisfaction for grievous and especially for public sins. God also remits so much of the temporal punishment of purgatory as we would have gained by undergoing those penances.

The horror which, in the early ages of the Church, all fervent Christians felt for any and all forms of apostasy from the faith, from the commandments of God and of the Church and the consequent severity with which the Church treated the fallen sinner, were founded on the knowledge of the justice of God in punishing even the smallest of transgressions and on the knowledge of what our Divine Saviour suffered for the sins of men. But both, the horror and the severity, kept in view the sanctity of the baptismal vows which were broken by grievous sin. Hence the sanctity of the baptismal vows was the reason why the newly converted Jews and Gentiles were admitted to holy Baptism only after long and careful probation. But then, after they had sworn allegiance to God and to the Christ, Baptism was administered to them in the presence of the whole Christian congregation in a manner far more solemn than is the custom in our day. When therefore a Christian broke his sacred promises he justified perfectly the displeasure of the congregation which in those days more so than now was indeed a community of Christians with body and soul, with one mind and one heart, an assembly of Saints. But

this violation of the vows of baptism also justified the severity of the penance which was imposed as a necessary condition for re-instatement in ecclesiastical communion, for the re-admission to divine services, to the public prayers and to the Sacraments. Hence the indulgences are for us not only a solemn admonition of the justice of God and of the greatness of sin as well as a reminder of the zeal of the Christians of old to satisfy here on earth for their sins, but they remind us also most solemnly of the sacredness of the vows we have taken in baptism. They likewise give us solemn warning that every mortal sin is a violation of these same vows of baptism, a breaking of the oath of allegiance we have taken to God and to His Church.

Indulgences therefore teach us to know the greatness of our disobedience towards God and the Church and the grievousness of the transgressions of the commandments of God and of the Church. How does it come then that in olden times the public sinners, whether they were of high or low degree, were willing to subject themselves to such severe and long penances to regain admission into the fold of the Church? They did it because Jesus was for them the way, the truth and the life, and because they knew that what the Church binds on earth is also bound in heaven, and that what she looses on earth is also loosed in heaven. Therefore for them the exclusion from the communion of the Church was an exclusion from Christ, an exclusion from God and thereby an exclusion from the heavenly Paradise.

Indulgences therefore, my beloved, will teach us to

value at their true worth the godless sentiments of those so-called Catholics of our day who sneer at the Church, at her commandments, her fasts and abstinences, her devotions and pious practices; who profess their disbelief in all these things and maintain that all is well as long as a man is honest. From the indulgences we learn to know that everything depends on the Church, on communion with her, that only in communion with her, and by obeying her commandments we can have a share in her holy Sacraments, in her prayers, in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, in the merits of Jesus Christ. It is only through the Church and through communion with her that we can reach Christ, through Christ alone we come to God, through God alone we can attain the salvation of our immortal souls. It is therefore the height of folly to say that we care nothing for the commandments of the Church, for then also we care nothing for communion with the Church. Language of this kind is only a mark of the lack of principle, of the unbelief and the pagan frame of mind of a multitude of men in our day. And in sooth our Divine Saviour Himself passes judgment on such as these when He says: "If any one will not hear the Church let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican." But we can better understand this judgment from the treasure of grace and the communion of the Saints upon which the indulgences are founded.

2. If, according to the consoling and blessed words of our Divine Saviour, the Church has the power to bind and to loose, she has also the right to impose penance on us, or also to remit such penance. She did the

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former and she also does the latter, and that by means of the indulgences, and as penance has value in the eyes of God so also have indulgences. This is a holy doctrine, a consoling power which should fill us with gratitude towards our good Saviour and with love, attachment and obedience towards His Church. Just as the father in his family, the king in his kingdom, has a right to punish the disobedience of his subjects, but also enjoys the glorious privilege of showing grace, so has holy Church, our Mother, who has regenerated us in holy baptism, instructed us in her doctrine, raised us by her holy Sacraments, and nourished us for eternal life — she has also the glorious privilege to show to her children, the Catholic Christians, grace before right. If our sins, together with their eternal punishment, are forgiven by their priests in virtue of their power, there remain nevertheless for us powerful obstacles to eternal bliss. Divine Justice, according to the words of our Divine Saviour, must be requited to the last farthing, either here below by severe ecclesiastical penances or in the next life in purgatory by severe punishment and sufferings. In this also the Church has the power to bind and to loosen, and in consequence she has the glorious privilege of granting grace for the consolation of the faithful. She practices this by the granting of indulgences. Is there then no satisfaction made to God for sins committed? Most certainly. He receives a greater satisfaction than we of ourselves could make even were we to perform the greatest penances. And here, my beloved, I wish to call your special attention to this, in order that you

might rightly understand the worth of indulgences, and for your own consolation to make better use of them.

The object of indulgences is to supplement the small penances which are usually performed nowadays after confession. Indulgences do not absolve us from every penance, but they elevate those which we freely and contritely undertake, or perfect the penance which we receive in confession and make it as much as possible a perfect satisfaction. When the Catholic Church in the consciousness of the power of the keys grants an indulgence, she only follows the example of God Himself. What else is salvation but a great indulgence which is granted to sinful mankind in consideration of the blood of Christ. Man is guilty, but because he is a sinner he cannot obliterate the least sin in himself, and yet, the divine Justice demands the obliteration of sins by satisfaction. For this reason the Son of God became man; His passion and His obedience unto the death of the Cross are the satisfaction, the ransom for the guilt of the world. This satisfaction He has applied to us. Christianity itself, therefore, is an indulgence from sin and from eternal punishment. The other indulgence is an indulgence from temporal punishment, which the Church has the privilege to grant. And as the indulgence which God granted is based on the saving death of Jesus Christ, so too the indulgence of the Church is based on the treasure of graces of the merits of Jesus Christ and His Saints. God has committed this treasure of grace to the administration of the Church.

3. Yes, my beloved, the acts of our Divine Saviour,

His marvelous holiness, His obedience, His passion have merited for Him as man not only the highest glory and bliss and the highest power above all in heaven and on earth so that in the name of Jesus all knees must bow in heaven, on earth and in hell — they are also in relation to us the source of all salvation. They therefore obliterate not only in the Sacrament of Penance sins with their eternal punishment, but also by indulgence the temporal punishment. Thus according to the prototype of the sublime works of our Divine Saviour, the good works of the Saints and the just have a double virtue. They merit for them not only heavenly bliss but eradicate also especially the passions, in consequence of their atoning power the temporal punishment of sin. But if a great Saint has no sins to atone for or his merits surpass his guilt, his holy life receives only a part of the reward, namely that which makes for the eternal life, meritorious; but on the other part, the satisfying, penitential or atoning power is lost to him since he has no, or at least very little, sin to atone for. Remember that the pure and immaculate Virgin and Mother of God has certainly nothing to atone for, and yet she suffered more on earth than all the other Saints. It is true that in consequence of her great merits, she is raised in heaven above all Saints; but since suffering has not only a meritorious but also an atoning power she lost this part because she had nothing to atone for. Who can deny that many martyrs, who preserved their baptismal innocence or led at least a holy life, suffered far more than they had to do pen-

ance for? Who can count the Saints who spent their lives in fasting, in penance and in suffering of every kind? Why? Should all these atoning merits be lost to other Christians who stand in need of them? That would contradict our glorious faith in the communion of Saints.

Moreover, should the atoning power of all those thousands and thousands of holy Masses which are offered up for the dead, who are either already in heaven or in hell and therefore useless to them — should they be lost? By no means! That God does not and can not allow. In truth all these atoning merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of the holy Apostles and Martyrs, Confessors and Virgins and just Christians flow together and form with the immeasurable merits of our Divine Saviour the marvelous treasure of grace whose administrator the Catholic Church is. From this treasure she continually draws for all who are bound to her through obedience. In virtue of this treasure she grants to her faithful indulgences, remits to them the severe penances and unites to their contrition and penance the satisfaction of Christ and the Saints, which till now were without effect. Thus by indulgences the right and the demands of divine Justice are brought into beautiful harmony with divine Mercy. Divine Justice receives its satisfaction, but Divine Mercy allows, as it were, the innocent artifice of the sinner and the amiable excuse of the Church and, by the surplus satisfaction of Christ and His Saints, supplements his own contrition and thereby renders as perfect as possible his penance

so that he does not become a long sacrifice to divine Justice in Purgatory.

4. Here you see again, my beloved, the glorious doctrine of indulgence and the wonderful communion of Saints where the surplus of the one supplies the want of the other. You recognize the truth, goodness and care of the Church for us, and also the unpardonable stupidity of separating oneself from her communion by disobedience and contempt for her commandments and therefore from her treasure of grace, from the Saints, from Christ and from God. Moreover, you see the miserable lack of intelligence to condemn or despise indulgences, because one cannot grasp a glorious doctrine of the Church. God grant that none of you may become guilty of one or the other of these faults; and may God grant that none of you may sin against the Justice of God or against His Mercy. One sins against the Justice of God when he despises such a salvation-bringing and yet an easy means of reconciling himself with God; man sins against the Mercy of God when he despises the means which He so condescendingly offers him. On the day of judgment we must give an account of every idle word, how difficult it will be then to give an account of the holy Sacraments, indulgences and other means of grace? They are for us the confided good upon whose diligent use or misuse depends our eternal salvation. If an Apostle Paul ardently wished to be dissolved, even if it were by severe suffering, in order to be with Christ, should not we at least desire to escape as soon as possible the temporal punishment in order soon to

be with our Divine Saviour in His glory and to rejoice in the communion of the Blessed Virgin and all the Saints? For this reason their surplus merits are at present offered to us in order that we may opportunely supply our own wants. We can accomplish this without great difficulty by gaining indulgences.

5. But if we were not animated by this yearning and love for our Divine Saviour, indulgences will indeed profit us little, but then this will be our fault. But far be from us such sentiments! Oh, that we might all enter upon the treasures of grace of the Church, upon the possession of the merits of Jesus Christ and of all His Saints! In such manner we shall be enabled to exclaim and confess with the royal Prophet through all eternity: "With the Lord there is mercy and with him there is plentiful redemption." With thousands of other blessed Christians let us be animated with the wish and zeal to procure for our souls after this mortal life an earlier abiding-place of bliss by gaining as many indulgences as we can — a place there in heaven with Jesus and His Saints, where suffering shall be no more, where only joy and happiness and eternal life await the blessed soul in the unending vision of God. This happiness I wish you all. Amen.

SERMON VIII

THE INTERCESSION OF THE SAINTS

“In this present time let your abundance supply their want, that their abundance also may supply your want, that there may be an equality.”—2 COR. 8, 14.

One of the most glorious articles of our faith is the Communion of Saints. The Catholic Christians remain truly united among themselves whether they are in heaven, on earth or in purgatory. This communion is not a communion of bodies but of souls, which confines their love, their desires and their compassion for their brethren to no place, and therefore they mutually remember each other throughout all space and time and continue their love and compassion towards each other forever. Every day Catholic Christians depart from this life, but yet in such a way that they are not completely and forever separated from us, in so far as they go into eternity in the grace of God. And as our Divine Saviour is the head of all Christians in heaven, on earth and in purgatory, so the Catholic Church always remains by the Communion of Saints in heaven as triumphant, in purgatory as suffering, and on earth as the militant Church. The more the blessed in heaven are united with Jesus, the greater is their love towards us, their brethren on earth, in order that we

may share in the same happiness. The more the poor souls in purgatory suffer, the stronger is their desire for bliss, and the greater their wish that we Christians on earth may lessen their pains through our prayers and zealously make use of the means of grace of holy Church for ourselves and for them. And if the poor souls are unable to help themselves by prayer to God, they the more zealously pray God for us, the more we help them.

Yes, marvelous is this Communion of Saints. The saints in heaven who behold God are holy; we all, my friends, have been sanctified in Baptism and should become still holier by the Sacraments; and the poor souls are holy, for although they still suffer and do penance, they are nevertheless on the way to their bliss. Hence St. Paul says so beautifully and truly speaking of the Communion of Saints, that the abundance of the saints in heaven supply our want that there may be an equality. And they do it, since the abundance of their merits and sufferings on earth and intercession in heaven come to our aid, while we again on earth effectively help the poor souls and can apply the abundance of our means of grace to them. This takes place especially by indulgences. Therefore I shall speak to-day on the intercession of the saints and show how their abundance of merits are applied to us through indulgences.

O Jesus, assist me with Thy grace.

1. The Apostle St. Paul imposed on a public sinner of the Christian congregation at Corinth which he —

the Apostle — by his indefatigable zeal and preaching the Gospel had established, a severe and public penance. He dismissed him from the communion of the faithful “with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and excluded him from participation in divine service, in the holy sacrifice and the holy sacraments, “in order that he might be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ,” as the holy Apostle expresses himself in his epistle to the faithful at Corinth. After the example of this great Apostle, and by virtue of the power confided to her by the Saviour, Holy Church has also imposed similar and long penances upon public sinners. And after the example of that sinful Christian of Corinth, and other Christians who had the misfortune to fall into public and grievous sins, have with the same willingness, yes, mostly of their free will, submitted to such penances in order that they also “would be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” St. Paul later remitted to this sinner the remainder of the penance and that, too, as he himself writes in his second epistle to the Corinthians: “For what I have pardoned I have done it for your sakes in the person of Christ.” (2 Cor. 2, 10.) The holy Apostle therefore grants to this sinner an indulgence. But from his own words we learn two important truths in reference to indulgences: the first is that St. Paul, and consequently the other Apostles and in general the Church, has the power to grant indulgences in the person of Christ. Secondly, St. Paul made use of this power on account of the intercession, the prayers and merits of the faithful at Corinth; “for your sakes.”

Indulgences show forth in the most resplendent manner the Communion of Saints and intercession for fallen Christians. For, where one member of the body of Christ, namely of the Holy Church, rejoices, there rejoice also the other members, the other holy Christians; but where one member suffers, there suffer also the other members with him. His misery of soul, his unhappiness to have fallen so low goes to their hearts. Therefore they offer for his welfare their prayers, the holy sacrifice, the reception of the sacraments and their merits. And just as God for the sake of the faithful grants to many sinners the grace of conversion so also the Church for their sake grants to the contrite, but still penitential sinners, pardon of their penance, that is an indulgence. Just as Jesus Christ in the hour of His death besought God to have mercy on us poor sinners, and in order to be heard, applied his merits to us, so those holy Christians at Corinth turned their compassionate eyes towards their fallen brother and besought the Apostle to pardon him.

This constantly takes place in the Church of God. The holy Martyrs who fearlessly professed the Christian faith before the courts of the heathens, amidst the greatest pains on the rack and were thrown into prison, joyfully beheld a bloody death — the Martyrs, who on account of their courageous profession, still living in prison, the objects of the joy of the Church, were the admiration and honor of the faithful, these holy Martyrs thought constantly of the suffering of their fallen brethren and made intercession for them. If in spite of their wounds they were still able to write,

they wrote the names of the penitents whom they made intercession for, which are called libella or the books of the martyrs; if they could not write they simply gave the names of their protégés to the deacons, who visited the martyrs in prison, administered to them holy communion, bound up their wounds or brought them food, which privilege they bought from the heathen jailers. The deacons brought these written or verbal recommendations to the Bishop, and the Bishop, for the sake of the martyrs, shortened the penitent's time of penance. He granted therefore after the example of the Apostles an indulgence. The glorious doctrine of the Communion of Saints, and consequently of the faithful on earth consists especially in this that the merits and good works and prayers are of benefit to one another. Therefore we behold how whole congregations interceded for those who had fallen on account of the fear of martyrdom, or who had denied the faith, if they saw that they were really contrite. We see how saints in prison and on the rack, by the glory and the constancy of their faith, in the greatest sufferings encouraged the faithful and caused public sinners to return to the faith and like the dying Saviour in compassionate love besought the Church to forgive them.

How should in that solemn moment, when by the last struggle of the martyrs our Divine Saviour was glorified before the world, the Church seals with a new glory her truths, when the martyrs are crowned with an eternal crown and the faithful celebrate with joy the victory of their brethren — how should in that

solemn moment any member of our holy Church remain excluded from the common joy and continue in sadness? The very sight of the courageous confessors and martyrs was pain enough for the penitents that they had fallen so deeply by their sins. Therefore they should participate in this common joy, and for the sake of the martyrs and their intercession they were received again into the communion of the faithful and therefore granted an indulgence of the rest of their penance. Here the words of the Apostle are applicable: "That their abundance supply your wants that there may be an equality." An indulgence is consequently the forgiveness of ecclesiastical penance on account of the intercession and the merits of the saints and especially of Christ, and God pardons just as much of the temporal punishments in purgatory as we would have atoned for if we had really performed this penance. In indulgences we learn, my beloved, at the same time what a glorious consciousness once penetrated the Christians, how intimately they were united to the Christian community and were of one heart and one soul. Here we see that Christian morality and purity was the common spirit, the disapproval of vice and disobedience towards God and the Church was general, sorrow for sin was a common grief, love and intercession for the penitents in public prayer during divine service and the holy sacrifice of the Mass was performed by the common bond of charity. Yes, indulgence which the ignorant and unbelieving, puffed up with a miserable pride, despise and with vulgar stupidity ridicule — indulgence is one of the most beau-

tiful and consoling doctrines of the Catholic Church.

3. Is intercession made no more for the sinner and the fallen? Most certainly, but in a different way. We have in the present day no martyrs and no public penances; ecclesiastical penances are supplemented by indulgences. Therefore, indulgence teaches us again that neither God nor Holy Church has joy in punishment, and that punishment is not inflicted in order to injure, but in order to make satisfaction to the divine Justice, in order — as the Apostle says — that the soul may be saved in the day of the Lord. If therefore this satisfaction to the divine Justice can be made in another and a milder way, then the temporal punishment is all taken away. This is done by indulgences. The Church, my beloved, wishes to lead us to God by indulgences for our justification as she formerly did by penance. She relies on the free and willing zeal of the faithful and admonishes them to works of charity. She announces to them who wish to sanctify themselves and fulfill the conditions of indulgences, forgiveness of ecclesiastical penance on earth and temporal punishment in purgatory. By sincere zeal to gain indulgences reverence for the justice of God, which punishes the least sin, is always manifested. Who therefore does not strive with his voluntary penance to obtain indulgences exposes himself on the day of the Lord and will more deeply feel the penance of purgatory, the less he strove to make satisfaction to divine justice on earth.

Those Christians who are not satisfied with only contritely confessing their sins, but strive earnestly to

do penance for them and as often as possible to obtain indulgences for them, obtain the intercession and the merits of the martyrs and confessors, the intercession and merits of the whole Church and of all holy people, the same as the penitents did in the first ages of the Church. Moreover, they share in the public prayers for sinners and penitents, the holy sacrifice, the good works, the suffering and persecution of the just. The catechism teaches us that the prayers, the merits and the good works of all the faithful are of benefit to all. This continually takes place on earth and will until the end of the world, but especially by indulgences.

The Saints will also make intercession for us. They give to us, when we strive to attain an indulgence, the abundance of their satisfying merits in order that there may be an equality. But the Saints grant to us not only their superfluous merits in indulgences as a charitable rich man would give of his surplus fortune in alms to the poor, but they intercede also for us at the throne of mercy. Once the holy martyrs and the faithful in the early Church called upon the Church for compassion and mercy to the fallen and the penitent, in order that they would, after the forgiveness of their penance, the sooner be received into the communion of the faithful and allowed to attend divine service and share in all the rights of the worthy Christian. At present we see in spirit the same confessors, martyrs and all the saints imploring for us the divine mercy at the throne of God in order that with the help of indulgences and the merits of the saints we may the

sooner be permitted to share with them the celebration of the eternal Sunday and to join in the hymn of praise of the heavenly hosts around the throne of the immaculate Lamb. The holy longing of the Blessed is that we may not be for long years excluded from the doors of heaven and obliged to go the hard way of penance and pain in the fires of purgatory.

4. Oh, that you would all learn to understand rightly the glorious doctrine of indulgence and earnestly and zealously strive whenever possible to gain an indulgence! Then the saints in heaven would look down upon you with greater love when they would see that their penance on earth, their suffering and abundant merits are applied by the Church to you by indulgence. Yes, this application is the reason that the saints in heaven love you with a twofold and a threefold love, and always continue to be your protectors in the hard struggle for life on earth against the devil and sin, and your zealous intercessors at the throne of God until you have happily, with their help, escaped the deluge of sin on earth and have arrived at the portals of heavenly bliss. How consoling and mysterious, my beloved, appears indulgence to us in the glory of its truth, and if considered in that love, which, as an outpouring of the divine love of our Saviour, also penetrated the saints. Oh, if you could behold the hearts of those great saints who were inflamed with divine love, who passed their holy angelic pure lives in continuous self-denial, penance and suffering, and freely, just as our Divine Saviour, offered themselves to the divine Justice for the sins of their Christian brethren,

so that they gained not only for themselves celestial glory but atoned for the punishments of others. Yes, at this sight you would be seized with the desire to strive to become good children of our holy Mother, the Church, and to make use of her treasure of grace by gaining indulgences. You would even be inflamed with the fire of Christian charity to come to the help of your suffering brethren in Christ as much as possible by prayers and good works, in order to do for them what the saints in heaven have done for you.

5. There remains, my beloved, another glorious truth, a rich source of consolation in suffering in regard to indulgences which I will communicate to you. From what you have already heard, have you not experienced the amiable beauty of this doctrine? Yes, truly, enlightened by this article of faith we learn first to appreciate the innocence and the suffering, the prayers and the penances of the just Christians in their entire supernatural greatness. They are precious in the sight of God, so that they have obtained not only for the saints an eternal bliss but also have atoned for the temporal punishment of their neighbors. What a consolation for all who suffer innocently! What a joy for holy Christians who experience sufferings, trials and tribulations! Who will still accuse God of injustice, who will continue to blaspheme Him?

You sinners, when you contemptuously speak of the divine Justice and say: "I sinned yesterday, and what happened to me? I will sin to-day, and nothing will happen to me." You sinners, who trample on the commandments of God and of the Church and go still un-

punished and even joyfully and blessed with temporal prosperity continue to live — whom have you to thank for this? Indulgences, the good works, the prayers and sufferings of holy Christians. You purse-proud people, you frivolous Christians, who so often laugh and scoff at the piety of your servants; whom you often torment on account of their faith and devotion — whom have you often to thank if the judgment of God has not overtaken you, whom else but the piety and suffering innocence of Christian souls? They pray for you. You parents, who at the sick-bed of your little innocent children accuse God of cruelty — indulgence places for you the sick-bed of your child as an altar of atonement, the suffering innocence as a sacrifice of atonement for your sakes and for your sins. This sacrifice not infrequently turns aside the punishment from the guilty head of the parents and obtains for them mercy and grace.

May you all therefore be filled with reverence for this article of faith of the Catholic Church, which has a beauty and a truth which the miserable scoffers never dreamed of. May you strive by gaining indulgences to share in the merits of the saints in order that divine Justice may be appeased and that you may be spared in time and eternity. Amen.

SERMON IX

THE INTERCESSION FOR THE POOR SOULS

“Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, at least you my friends.”—JOB 19, 21.

In indulgences the eternal mercy of God is manifested as a most consoling truth. God gave to His Church the power not only to forgive grievous sins with their eternal punishment in the Sacrament of Penance, but also outside of this Sacrament the power to remit in part or in whole temporal punishment due to sin. But besides this power of the Church, the doctrine of indulgences shows in a special manner the faith in the Communion of Saints in its most touching beauty. This is especially so in regard to the communion of the faithful on earth with the poor souls in purgatory. According to the expression of the Apostle St. Paul the Church is the body of Christ, but He is the head (Eph. 5). As in the human body all the members are not only united with the head in the most intimate union, but also among themselves, so that the whole body feels what each member feels or suffers, so is it also in the Church of Christ. She is united with her divine Head in a most intimate manner, and so are all the faithful as members of the Church united with Jesus Christ and among them-

selves most closely. Therefore, the graces and merits of our Saviour penetrate the whole Church, the triumphant Church in heaven, the militant on earth and the suffering in purgatory, and flow over all the faithful who are united with the Church, just as the blood in the human body flows through all its members. In like manner the prayers and sacrifices, the merits and good works of the just and the saints flow out in all directions and benefit the faithful on earth by indulgences, and the dead in purgatory by intercession. Holy Scripture says: "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead." (2 Macch. 12, 46.) If we consequently pray for them and if the Church by her priests can offer the holy sacrifice to God for the poor souls, why should she not also have the power to apply through the intercession of the faithful indulgences to the poor souls? Whoever would deny this truth, would also be obliged to deny that we could not in general pray for the dead and consequently could not offer the holy sacrifice for them. Such a denial contradicts the experience and the practice of the centuries and offends Christian sentiment. Precisely by the doctrine of indulgences the Catholic Church shows herself in her true light, in her true greatness as the one kingdom of God in heaven, on earth and in purgatory. By indulgences the militant Church on earth grasps with one hand the triumphant Church in heaven, with the other the suffering Church in purgatory. From heaven she takes the abundance of the merits of the sufferings of Jesus Christ and the Saints, and applies them by indulgences to the faithful

on earth and applies them by intercession through the faithful to the poor souls.

Now if this truth is so firmly established that we, by intercession can apply indulgences to the poor souls on account of our communion with them, how great is our duty, my beloved, to do so as often as possible. Just as the Saints in heaven joyfully apply to us the abundance of their penitential works, in like manner we should compassionately come to the assistance of the poor souls, in order that God may lessen their sufferings, shorten or entirely remit them. Therefore I will speak to-day of the intercession for the poor souls and of our duty to assist them by indulgences in order that you may see indulgences in a new and touching light.

O Jesus, assist me with Thy grace.

1. The real object of the holy Catholic Church is the intimate union of the faithful with God. Therefore all the faithful have a communion among themselves. They enter into this communion by baptism and as its indelible mark lasts for eternity, so this communion continues in eternity for all who obtain eternal life. We live, it is true, still in this visible world, which is the battlefield of the Church, but we are nevertheless inseparably united with the blessed in heaven and with the poor souls in purgatory. Year after year the triumphant Church in heaven receives new armies of holy Christians from earth and from purgatory. And the number of its blessed adherents exceeds by far the number of the faithful on earth. And who knows how many of our friends, acquaintances, brothers and sis-

ters, parents and ancestors are in the number of the Blessed with Jesus in His triumphant Church?

And in the same manner, my beloved, year after year the suffering Church in purgatory receives a great number of Christians who died in the state of grace, but still have much to atone for before they will be worthy to join the triumphant Church in heaven. And in fact the suffering Church also exceeds in extent and in the number of the poor souls by far the militant Church on earth with its millions of faithful. The suffering Church in purgatory is that holy kingdom of grief but also of sinlessness where the poor souls suffer, indeed, suffer severely, but in heavenly patience and with that marvelous silence which adores the Justice of God. They are holy souls in the state of grace who can sin no more; they are the chosen of the Lord, the suffering sacrifice, who have submitted to the will of God, but will be tormented no more by the fear of sin nor doubt of their early coming bliss. Even the most bitter suffering of the poor souls is accompanied with the greatest peace, which this world cannot conceive. No complaints, no murmurings, no impatience overshadows this holy place, for they all persevere faithfully until their painful time of penance is past and the angel of God takes them and leads them into the land of their most ardent longing, into the kingdom of the blessed.

Yes, my beloved in Christ, if the quiet meek suffering even on earth is something most estimable and touching what a sight must the suffering Church in purgatory offer, this marvelous likeness to the suffering Saviour on the cross and of the sorrowful Mother

of God? Therefore you will clearly understand that the poor souls remain in the most intimate union with Jesus Christ, with the saints in heaven and with us Catholic faithful on earth. Jesus Christ is the Head of all in the militant, suffering and triumphant Church, which is only one holy Church in heaven, on earth and in purgatory.

But yet let us not deceive ourselves! The pains of the poor souls are great and terrible, and last long, according to the number of their sins and the great or little penance which they have performed on earth for them. No tongue can adequately describe this suffering, and no intellect can grasp it, for we know that they are almost equal to the pains in hell, but yet with this twofold difference that these pains are not eternal and that the poor souls are not tormented by despair. Therefore their greatest pain is their separation from God and His bliss. The poor souls feel themselves powerfully drawn to God and this power becomes the stronger the longer the separation lasts.

But what makes the suffering souls, truly poor souls, is their boundless helplessness. Neither the angels nor the saints in heaven can help them or make intercession for them, much less can the poor souls help themselves or one another. They can acquire no merits, make no satisfaction, receive no sacraments, gain no indulgences; no consoler stands by them and no charitable Samaritan relieves their pains. They can only suffer and do penance. They are a thousand times more helpless than a helpless sick person, than a paralytic or the little child, and present in their helplessness a won-

derful picture of our Divine Saviour in His Passion on the cross. Their helplessness becomes the more awful, the more these poor souls are ungratefully abandoned and forgotten by their own relatives, friends or children.

2. Yes, my beloved in Christ, I repeat again, the helplessness of the poor souls in their unspeakable pains becomes the more terrible the more they are abandoned and forgotten by their relatives. If the angels and saints cannot help them, God in His adorable mercy has nevertheless imposed upon us Catholic faithful on earth the duty to help the poor souls. Therefore God has given us such a glorious power over the dead that their lot almost seems to depend more on us than upon heaven. We can sweeten the sufferings of the poor souls; we can lessen and shorten them, if we pray for them, have the holy sacrifice offered up for them, and especially if we gain indulgences for them. We can consequently apply to them the abundance of the means of grace which are at our command on earth and we can offer for them the merits of Jesus and the Saints, for they are in communion with us.

Just as the holy martyrs and confessors formerly interceded for penitent Christians who had been excluded from the communion of the Church and obtained for them the remission of their penance, so should we Catholic faithful intercede for the poor souls who are still excluded from the triumphant Church in heaven and shorten their time of penance. And this we can do in addition to praying for them and

offering up the holy sacrifice and communion for them, especially by gaining indulgences for them.

Hear how a mysterious whispering rises from grave to grave, and numberless voices cry out from purgatory: "Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, at least you my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me." These are the voices of the poor souls who cry to us for mercy, and our mercy is their one hope of help and a quick redemption from their pains. Redeem souls, my beloved in Christ, redeem souls from purgatory, which are precious in the eyes of God. Even if they are now victims to His Justice, nevertheless His love and His pleasure rests upon them.

3. Oh, what a thought, to be able to save souls, holy, precious souls, to redeem them from pain and before the end of the time allotted to their painful penance to lead them before the throne of God and into the circle of the Blessed! What a consoling thought for zealous Christians, thereby to glorify God and to rejoice the heart of our Divine Saviour by leading souls sooner to His Beatific Vision! Therefore the Catholic Church daily prays in holy Mass for the poor souls and grants to her faithful indulgences which can be applied to the Holy Souls. The Catholic Christian has nothing else to do than to faithfully fulfill the conditions of an indulgence, therefore to worthily receive the Sacraments and to perform the indulgenced prayers. If he has worthily done this he can offer to God the plenary or the partial indulgence for the poor souls.

Why, are there not many, who once loved us on

earth, nourished, instructed and suffered for or by us as we may hope now they are on the way to bliss, therefore in purgatory? Parents, brothers, sisters, relatives, friends, teachers, benefactors, priests? Oh, behold, how they in the midst of their sufferings raise their hands to you and beseechingly say: "Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, at least you my friends." Lay your hand on your heart, my beloved, and let each one ask of himself: Is there a single soul in purgatory on my account? Is there no father, no mother, no brother, no sister, no friend, is there no soul there who must suffer grievously for my sake? who sinned on my account, whom I enticed, scandalized or induced to sin? Who can, who will have the courage to answer: Not a single soul suffers on my account? Therefore, Christian justice demands that we help them as much as possible, confidently gain indulgences for them. Oh, how beseechingly do many parents look to their children on earth, how many brothers, sisters, relatives or friends look to those who belong to them and cry out: "have mercy on us at least you our friends." And if they do not receive help from those who owe it most to them, oh, how bitter is this cold indifference and heartless injustice!

4. In order that we may help the poor souls, God in His adorable mercy has given to us a power which even the angels and saints in heaven do not possess. We, and we alone can intercede for the poor souls, we can have the holy sacrifice offered for them, yes, we can gain indulgences for them. Therefore there are few devotions, which are so pleasing to God, as the

devotion for the poor souls. There are few good works by which we can show such service and such honor to God as to redeem the poor souls from their pains and to help them on their way to eternal bliss. Behold here the grateful Christian who, as it were, repays the mercy which God grants to him day by day. Like our Divine Saviour, who applies to us daily in the holy sacrifice of the Mass His merits, His Passion and Blood, and like the saints who interceded for us and allowed us to share in their penitential works on earth, so also good Catholic faithful remember in love and mercy the poor souls and apply to them by indulgences the Church's treasure of grace.

How such love pleases God our heavenly Father! He has, as it were, committed to us the care of the poor souls, in order that we may make satisfaction to His justice for them by gaining indulgences. We should make it possible for His mercy to admit them before their time to the Beatific Vision. Oh, how very much our Divine Saviour will be pleased, if we lead these souls to Him in His glory! What a service of love we render the Holy Ghost as soon as we redeem the poor souls from their suffering and lead them, the brides of His grace, to the ardent embrace of His love! How happy does Mary the Mother of Mercy feel when we strive to requite her love and intercession for us by leading the poor souls to her motherly heart, in freeing them from suffering in purgatory! It brings joy to the Angels of God, and the saints in heaven rejoice as often as a poor soul is freed from purgatory and enters into the heavenly

Jerusalem before the throne of the Most Holy Trinity and into the blessed number of the heavenly hosts.

5. Oh, how great is the Catholic Christian in this power over the poor souls and how like to our Divine Saviour he becomes in its exercise! Can you show, my friends, your love, your gratitude and your faith better than when you remember the poor souls and return the grace and the mercy of Jesus to you with mercy? Can you become more like the Angels and Saints in heaven who lovingly look down and share in your joys and sufferings than when you, like an angel full of compassion, look down into the silent, sinless kingdom of the poor souls and pour out upon them the merits of Jesus and His Saints! Our Divine Saviour says: "Make unto you friends that they may receive you into everlasting dwellings." (Luke 16, 9.) The poor souls whom we free from their suffering are these friends, who richly requite us before the throne of God by their intercession for what we have done to them.

How glorious, therefore, is the Catholic doctrine of indulgences, how touching the love which it announces! It is love that animates the blessed souls towards us, and it is love that urges the Christians to help the poor souls. We should therefore never miss an opportunity when we can gain indulgences for ourselves and for the dead, in order that we may as soon as possible after our Christian life on earth enter into the eternal Vision of God and into the blessed communion of the Saints. Amen.

SERMON X

WHY EXTREME UNCTION WAS INSTITUTED AND THE GRACES IT CONFERS

“Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”—JAMES 5, 14.

One of the works of mercy which our Divine Saviour during His earthly life practiced with a special love was to visit the sick and dying, to console them, and not infrequently entirely cure them. Who can describe the love manifested by Jesus to the dying Joseph, His holy foster-father? Armies of sick, of paralytics and lepers, of blind and dumb took refuge with Him and found mercy and health. The humble petition of the pagan captain of Capharnaum for his sick servant, the tears of the royal officer Jairus for his just-deceased daughter, the grief of the widow of Naim for her departed son, the prayers of Magdalen and Martha for Lazarus, touched the divine heart of Jesus, and he tendered them His divine assistance.

Yes, our Divine Saviour, who, in order to sanctify and to bless childhood, willed to be born as a divine child Himself; He, who took upon Himself poverty and suffering in order to console the world of the poor and the suffering and to strengthen them with His

example — He took also upon Himself our death in order, by his death on the Cross, to bless the world of the dying and to sanctify their death. Therefore as He gave even in the last moments before His Ascension into heaven the command to the Apostles to go into the whole world and to preach the gospel to every creature, He gave also the command to lay their hands upon the sick, in order that they might become well (Mark 16, 18) if not in their body at least in their soul.

This love towards the sick, this compassion for the dying, this care for their good death and the anxiety for the salvation of their souls was the reason why our Divine Saviour instituted the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. Here it is where He comes in the person of His priests to us as the merciful Samaritan and pours the oil of salvation into our sick souls, in order that it may nourish us unto eternal life. Therefore it is a holy command and an earnest duty in dangerous sicknesses to receive at the proper time the Sacrament of Extreme Unction worthily and consciously. In obedience to our Divine Saviour the holy Apostle St. James, and also the Catholic Church, says to us: "Is any sick man among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." (James 5, 14.) Therefore I will speak to-day on the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, of the reason of its institution and of its graces.

O Jesus, assist me with Thy grace.

1. What was the life of Jesus Christ on earth but a constant sacrifice from the Crib to the Cross? With His entrance into this world the words which King David placed in His mouth were already true: "Burnt-offering and sin-offering thou didst not require; then said I, behold I come, that I should do thy will, O my God." (Ps. 39, 8.)

During His whole life Jesus was obedient unto death, yes, obedient unto the death of the Cross. He had at all times and in all places, in all His thoughts, words and deeds, in His longing and in His love the Cross before His eyes.

We are also called, my beloved, to become conformable to Christ on earth, in order that we may become conformable to Him in heaven. But this likeness must not only consist in this that we imitate His virtues, His humility and mercy, His placableness and charity, but also His obedience unto death, therefore even unto His death. As His death was a sacrifice unto the honor of God, so must also our death be a sacrifice. Therefore St. Peter says: "You are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 2, 5, 9.) For this reason we are consecrated and anointed in Baptism and Confirmation, but the completion of this consecration takes place in the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. Our life must be consumed in the service of God just as the candles on the altar. Man, and even more so the Christian, owes the sacrifice of his life to God.

God is our Lord and Creator, and all that we possess does not, in the final analysis, belong to us, but to God who has given it to us. He therefore can demand from us the return of His property. Life, the body, the soul, health, parents and children, all earthly possessions are the property of God. We should offer everything to God as a sacrifice and be prepared to give it back to Him if He demands it. God does this at our death when we must separate ourselves from everything. This separation is the lot of every man, consequently we should always have it before our eyes and be prepared to leave our temporal goods, the body to the earth, but return the soul to God. What the patient Job said in the midst of his misfortune should always be the attitude of the mind of every Christian: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job I, 21.) This willingness to obey the Will of God, is the interior sacrifice of the Christian.

But God demands of us also external sacrifices in life and in death. In life we are obliged to publicly profess God before men, to observe His commandments, to sanctify His Sabbath, and at divine service, where everything praises, blesses and thanks God, to unite in this adoration. And if God visits us with sicknesses or other trials we must bear them patiently. Such a sacrifice is a glorious one, a sacrifice pleasing to God and truly worthy of a Christian.

If we, my beloved, are really mindful that we are sinners and have very frequently offended God, we

realize that we owe to His justice still a special sacrifice. If our Divine Saviour died on the Cross on account of our sins, then we must bring our life to God as a sacrifice and be prepared to accept death from His hands whenever and wherever it is His holy Will. Death is indeed the punishment of sin, and if we die, we suffer only the punishment due to us. We can also truthfully say with the converted thief on the cross: "We receive the due reward of our deeds." (Luke 23, 21.)

2. Our death should be like the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross, a sacrifice of satisfaction, of atonement and of impetration, which in union with the bloody sacrifice of Christ obtains power to make satisfaction to God for our sins, to propitiate Him and to assist us in the salvation of our souls. This sacrifice must be a pure, holy and immaculate one, as St. Paul writes: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service." (Rom. 12, 1.) My God, how is such a pure and holy sacrifice possible at our death, since we are such sinful men? But yet do not despair, my beloved! Our Divine Saviour instituted the Sacrament of Extreme Unction in order that every faithful and dying Christian can bring such a sacrifice in that decisive moment upon which the whole eternity depends. This Sacrament consecrates us, as it were, co-priests with Jesus Christ who shall bring the sacrifice of life by willingly submitting to death and by uniting it to the sacrifice of the Cross. The Sacrament of Extreme

Unction separates also the body from all earthly things, consecrates it and makes it the property of God, which should participate in the Vision of God and in the glory of Christ.

Even in the Old Testament God ordained oil and the anointing for sanctification and consecration. Thus the kings, priests and prophets, the temple and the altars were anointed with oil, and whatever was anointed could never be put to common use any more. It belonged to God and His service: it was consecrated to Him, sanctified and had become His property. It is just the same in the holy Catholic Church. Everything that is used in the immediate service of God is anointed, therefore consecrated and sanctified. Therefore the priests are also anointed. The faithful in Baptism and in Confirmation are anointed with holy oil and with chrism as the chosen generation, as a kingly priesthood, in order that they may become worthy of the grace of holy communion and of the service of God. And again at that solemn moment when the faithful bring their last sacrifice with their death, when they are called to enter into celestial bliss and to assist at the eternal service of God, they are anointed for the last time.

By the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, my beloved, you must be completely freed from everything that is sinful, unholy and earthly, and consecrated to God. The body is anointed and consecrated for the temple of God, in order that it may rest in consecrated ground as the property of God and await the day of a glorious resurrection. The body should also participate in the

Vision of God and in the glory of the glorified body of Christ. The soul is purified and sanctified, in order that it may appear more worthily before its Judge and consequently find grace and happiness before the judgment-seat. Thus the death of the Catholic Christian becomes in reality by Extreme Unction a pure and holy sacrifice, which is offered to God in thanksgiving and adoration, in atonement and satisfaction. Therefore these glorious words of Holy Scripture are fulfilled always in the death of the Catholic who worthily receives Extreme Unction: "Oh, how precious in the eyes of God is the death of the just!"

3. But, my beloved, death is not easy; it is a terrible thing, especially if life was not always a Christian one. In death all things appear in their true light. The struggle is hard and grievous, and without grace it is impossible to be victorious. Therefore Jesus Christ instituted this sacrament in order to strengthen us in the hour of death and to sanctify our souls. He took upon Himself all our weaknesses and miseries, consequently also the death-agony of all the dying. He did it in His adorable mercy by His agony in the garden and on the Cross. Wonderful love of Jesus Christ! He even deigned to receive from an angel the chalice of strength to be an example to us in order that we, as visible angels, might call the priest to us with the strengthening oil in our death-agony. The agony of death is something terrible even in the case of good Christians, to say nothing of the bad who have spent their lives in sin and forgetfulness of God. There disappears then the deceitful hope in money and

property, in honor and friendship: then earthly life, this world and sin lose their glamour when the anxious soul looks back over its life and forward to the judgment and to an endless eternity.

Just as the young Christian entering upon public and independent life has no longer the assistance of parents or priests to guide and protect him from the numberless dangers to his Catholic faith and to his baptismal innocence, and is exposed to grievous struggles — so the dying Christian is threatened with the last and the greatest struggle. His Christian hope and confidence in the mercy of God are especially exposed to attack. The moment has come when all earthly hopes abandon the dying on his death-bed. Like false friends in the day of our need they turn their back upon us and depart from the sick-room. Then disappears the hope in money and property, in power and prominence, in office and influence, in friends and favorites, in the physician and his art. But what remains, oh, that is the misery: the pains of the body and especially the anxiety, the grief and anguish of soul.

Yes, my beloved, if the dying man concerned himself little in the days of his health about God, about His judgments and about his own sins — on the death-bed it is entirely different. The look backwards on a life poor in meritorious and good works, but rich in guilt and sin, and the look forward to the judgment and the endless eternity, to the just Judge and the just requital — my God, how terrible and terrifying is this look! How very much does the dying not need

supernatural strength in order that he does not lose his last and only support, Christian hope in the mercy of God! How much does he not need the divine assistance in order that he does not fall an irredeemable victim to despair! How much does he not need grace in order that he may patiently and submissively accept death from the hand of God for the salvation of his soul! Behold then this hope, this divine assistance and this grace Jesus offers to us as the merciful Samaritan, as the Consoler of the dying, in His Sacrament of Extreme Unction: "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."

4. But now the attentive listener will justly ask: "What does Extreme Unction effect in the soul of the sick or the dying?" The Catholic Church teaches us that this holy sacrament in the first place increases sanctifying grace in those who receive it in the state of grace. This increase of sanctifying grace is a great good, for it increases the bliss which according to the degree of grace becomes more wonderful and glorious. But the Sacrament of Extreme Unction also remits venial sins, even without the Sacrament of Penance as the Apostle St. James confirms. When the sick person is unable to confess but has awakened contrition, or if he is not any more conscious of many grievous sins, then Extreme Unction in this case, but only in this case, obliterates grievous sin. But if one refuses to go to confession, or conceals grievous sins, or has no contrition nor purpose of amendment,

he not only does not receive forgiveness by Extreme Unction, but loads his soul with a sacrilege.

This sacrament, moreover, obliterates in the hearts of the sick and the dying the remains of sin, and therefore the evil inclinations and the weaknesses of the will, and purifies the soul and in this way obliterates partially the temporal punishment of sin. But what is most consoling in this sacrament is that it imparts strength for the agony of death, so that the sick patiently and submissively accept death from the hands of God and thereby merit for themselves great reward in the last moment. Therefore the Apostle St. James says: "The Lord will lift him up."

5. The benefits of this sacrament are, however, not yet exhausted, for it very often effects relief in sickness, yes, often restores the health of the body, if this is necessary for the salvation of the soul of the sick one: "The prayer of faith will help the sick," the Apostle teaches. How many physicians can confirm the truth of this statement? When the patient is quiet and has peace of mind, patiently and submissively suffers, this happy disposition affects the whole body and breathes into him new life and strength, so that the medicine often has better effect and the power of the sickness is lessened and weakened. Yes, if the sick one or his relatives wait until death is sitting on his tongue then of course this sacrament is not beneficial for the health of the body, and God does not perform a miracle. If thousands die before their time and to their destruction, it is very often due to the delay in receiving Extreme Unction, and is a well merited pun-

ishment. Therefore it is stupid and superstitious to imagine that one must die when he has received Extreme Unction. Yes, he dies, but not because he received Extreme Unction, but because he received it too late, when otherwise in virtue of this sacrament he would perhaps have recovered his health.

6. May we, therefore, my beloved, be with our Divine Saviour obedient unto death, in order that our death also may become a pure and holy sacrifice, a sacrifice of impetration and atonement which will obtain for us heavenly bliss. May our Divine Saviour come to us again in Extreme Unction, in order to heal the wounds of our souls, to obliterate our sins and their remains and to console us and to strengthen us for the last struggle of death. Marvelously beautiful are the words of Holy Scripture: "Oh, how precious in the eyes of God is the death of the just." And in order that these words may be fulfilled in us also, and that our death may be precious in the sight of God, follow the advice of the Apostle St. James at the right time and not when it is too late: "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."

Then the consoling words, which the priest prays over the dying after he has administered Extreme Unction, will come true: "Depart, oh Christian soul, depart from this world in the name of the Father, who created thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who redeemed thee, in the name of the Holy Ghost who sanctified thee: in the name of the

Angels and Archangels, of the Thrones and Principalities of the Cherubim and Seraphim, in the name of the Patriarchs and Prophets, of the Apostles and the Evangelists, of the Martyrs and the Confessors, in the name of the Virgins and of all the Saints of God. Dwell in the peace of holy Sion through Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen.

SERMON XI

EXTREME UNCTION

“Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”—JAMES 5, 14.

These words of the Apostle St. James do not merely express a pious wish, but rather the positive command of the Lord to receive the sacrament of Extreme Unction worthily whenever we are grievously sick. By His holy sacraments our Divine Saviour has so well provided for all the needs of our soul, that he who receives them worthily can be sanctified in every condition of life in which he may find himself and participate in the Redemption. All men are born in sin. Hence all those who wish to be Christians and to attain eternal salvation must be baptized. But no matter how wonderful the effects of holy Baptism are in the soul of the baptized, the young Christian will inevitably encounter many difficulties in the exercise of his holy faith. For this reason the Holy Ghost strengthens him in the sacrament of Confirmation, so that he may steadfastly profess his faith and live in accordance with its teachings. The Blessed Sacrament of the Altar nourishes the Christian for eternal life and fills him with grace, the sacrament of Penance purifies

him from sin and reawakens him to the life of grace. The sacrament of Holy Orders gives to the faithful consecrated leaders on the road to salvation and dispensers of the holy mysteries, teachers of faith and counselors in doubt. The sacrament of Matrimony sanctifies married people and gives them the necessary grace faithfully to persevere, to mutually bear with each other and to raise their children in a Christian manner.

Could it be possible, my dearly beloved, that perhaps our Divine Saviour forgot the sick and the dying, after in His adorable mercy He had instituted His holy sacraments for every important position or for every decisive state of life of the Christian? But the most solemn and the most decisive moment is the hour of death, when there is a question of eternity, and when the Christian more than ever needs grace. Therefore Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament of Extreme Unction for the dying, in order that by its assistance we may be consoled and strengthened at the end of our life and go holy into eternity, as by Baptism we began life in the kingdom of God on earth, in His holy Church. Extreme Unction is the way to obtain a blessed death. And therefore as the reception of Baptism, of Penance and Holy Communion, is a divine commandment, which cannot be neglected without endangering the salvation of our souls, so is also Extreme Unction for every one grievously sick, who is able to receive it.

Therefore we will speak to-day on the important truth that the worthy reception of Extreme Unction

is a commandment of divine Mercy and its neglect or omission a grievous sin.

O Jesus, assist me with Thy grace.

I. To receive worthily the sacrament of Extreme Unction is truly a commandment of divine Mercy. This we readily perceive if we reflect on the grace which it dispenses, or upon the good death which it provides. I spoke the last time about the graces of this sacrament, but there still remains one to be considered, which the Apostle St. James mentions in these words: "And the Lord shall raise him up," i. e., strengthen him for the agony of death and fill him with Christian courage. The anointing with oil indicates this grace. As the athletes anointed themselves with oil before they went to battle so also should the Christians be filled with Christian courage for their last battle. Oil is also the sign of joy, and joyful courage gives strength and power. In fact, the consciousness that this sacrament increases grace, obliterates the remains of sin and consecrates the body for the resurrection, fills the sick person with confidence. For this reason Extreme Unction is also called the sacrament of hope, as Baptism is called the sacrament of faith and Holy Communion the sacrament of love.

It is the hope of a good death which strengthens and consoles the Christian sick. It moves him to accept death from the hand of God as the Lord over death and life. It teaches him as a sinner to suffer death for penance, and as a Christian for the honor of the bitter Passion of Jesus and consequently in the last

moments to bring to God the most glorious homage. Therefore, Extreme Unction, which sanctifies the sick for the agony of death, consoles and strengthens him, is truly a commandment of divine Mercy.

Death is a terrible thing, the last and hardest struggle, a true death-battle, the battle for eternal life or eternal death. Three enemies join in the attack: death with its pain, conscience with its reproaches and Satan with his temptations. If death with its pains cannot shake nor discourage the dying, there appears to him, as it were, lightning from the approaching eternity, his conscience is awakened by this light and he looks over his past life with its good and bad deeds. Fear and terror, anxiety and discouragement, then attack the poor soul. Finally the third enemy approaches, and he with his whisperings and temptations increases the anxiety to despair in the mercy of God — my God, who will in this horrible struggle console and strengthen us?

Behold, then, my beloved, the sacrament of hope, the sacrament of Extreme Unction, which announces peace to the sick as the dove with the olive branch announced peace to Noah, the peace of God, the quiet of a good conscience and the grace of a good death. As the Angels of God at His command brought to our Divine Saviour in His death-agony and in His bloody sweat on Mount Olivet the chalice of strength, so by order of and in the name of Jesus the Catholic priest appears at the death-bed of the sick and administers to him the sacrament of Extreme Unction, fills his soul with hope and strengthens him for the last struggle. Therefore

is the worthy reception of this holy sacrament a command of divine Mercy.

Marvelously beautiful are the words of Holy Scripture: "Oh, how precious in the sight of God is the death of the just." The innocent child in its baptismal grace, the just and holy Christian in his life rejoices the heart of God, and consequently precious in the sight of God is the death of the just, since with a Christian death he closes his earthly career and enters upon eternal life. And even if the dying during life was a great sinner, yes, even a very great sinner, and troubled himself very little about the commandments of God or of His holy Church, just as soon as he is really converted in his serious illness, grieves from his heart for his sins and worthily receives the holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction, behold also here these words hold true: "Oh, how precious in the sight of God is the death of the just," and in heaven reigns joy over the conversion of the sinner. My God, can divine Mercy show itself still more lovingly than when it comes to us even on our death-bed and offers to us again the olive-branch of peace and atonement?

2. Here, my beloved, we must answer an important question, namely, when and how we must receive Extreme Unction, in order to share in its graces and to fulfill the command of divine Mercy in a worthy manner. The *when* depends on the grievousness of the sickness, for only sick persons can receive this sacrament, and not those who are well, though they may be exposed to the danger of death, as, e. g., soldiers who are going to war, sailors who are overtaken by a severe

storm, or criminals who are condemned to be executed. On the other hand, Extreme Unction can be received by those who are dying of old age, because old age itself is a sickness. However, whenever possible, the sick person should be fully conscious when he is to receive Extreme Unction, because he must make a contrite confession before receiving this sacrament if he wishes to share in all the graces that it is called to bestow upon him. If, therefore, any one puts off the reception of Extreme Unction until the moment when he is unconscious under the mistaken impression that he will have to die as soon as he has received the last sacraments, he acts imprudently and to the detriment of his poor soul.

The sacraments, my beloved, are not instituted to hasten death but to make it easy, yes, even to prevent it, if it serves for the salvation of the soul. "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man: and the Lord shall raise him up." The sacraments therefore do not bring death, but grace, consolation and strength. It is therefore a serious duty of the relatives to take care that at the proper time the sick receives the holy sacraments with full consciousness.

This duty becomes the more evident if we answer the question how must Extreme Unction be received in order that it may make for the salvation of the soul. This question is easy to answer. The sick one must, in the first place, be in a state of grace, because Extreme Unction is a sacrament of the living and not of the dead. Therefore he must above all have worthily confessed or awakened perfect contrition. Sec-

only, the sick one should, as far as possible, awaken faith, hope and charity, and, thirdly, the relatives of the sick should, as far as his condition permits, pray with him these acts of virtue and other prayers slowly and devoutly. These are Christian works of mercy which we owe to the sick and which please God and move Him to mercy.

3. But sad to say this important duty is often frivolously neglected, particularly by postponing the reception of Extreme Unction intentionally until the patient has become unconscious. Yes, and not infrequently it is entirely neglected. For your instruction and warning, my beloved, I will discuss the greatness of this sin and its consequences. In reality our Divine Saviour instituted this sacrament for our consolation and sanctification and for the amelioration of the death-struggle, yes, even for the alleviation of the pains of sickness. Can there be a greater sin in the last moments of life than to postpone the reception of this sacrament until unconsciousness has set in, or even to neglect it entirely? Can there be a greater crime than to refuse entrance to the priest who is sent by God as an angel of consolation to the sick, and to rob the dying of the chalice of strength? If the priest is only called when death is already imminent, or when the patient has already lost consciousness, what kind of an alleviation can the sick one obtain? If the very thought of having atoned for our sins and made peace with God and of having well fulfilled our last duties offers such a beneficial and effectual consolation that the cleansed conscience becomes a source of peace and patience, how

much will the relatives therefore sin against the temporal welfare of their sick if they call the priest intentionally or frivolously too late? Consequently it is a contempt for the priest, a crime against God, and a real transgression against the soul of the dying, if the priest is called to a corpse that is already cold and stiff. "The enemies of man are his own household," says our Divine Saviour Himself.—

What more should we say of that cruelty and that murderous compassion of the relatives towards the sick by which they hold a veil before his eyes, conceal his condition and tranquilize him by deceitful hopes! They, the relatives, are guilty, that the sick has lost consciousness, therefore unconsciously or not at all receives Extreme Unction, and consequently awakes in eternity without having been appeased with God. My God, this is a terrible thing! Furthermore, the relatives or household know the state of the soul of the sick, and usually even his sins; they know well that he has not received the sacraments for years, for years has transgressed this or that commandment of God or of the Church, and yet he will be condemned by those who belong to him to die without the sacraments or unconsciously! The paralytic complainingly said to our Divine Saviour: "I have no man to put me into the pond." (John 5, 7.) Thus the unfortunate soul of the sick complains, too, I have no man that bears pity for me; have pity on me, at least you, my friends, my children, my relatives, and send for the priest. But no, the sick man must first become unconscious, without a sign of life! Grewsome and criminal trifling

with the soul, with the sacraments, with eternity! "It was not enough that I robbed your life, I want also to destroy your soul," said an enemy to his mortal enemy, when he induced him to blaspheme and then stabbed him. It is often not enough for the relatives to deprive the dying of the last consolations of grace, of the peace of a good conscience reconciled with God and therefore also of the alleviation of the sickness, but the soul too must be lost, and all in order not to disturb the sick, or annoy or terrify him. Grewsome, laughable pretense. As if the sacraments brought terror to the soul and not joy, grace and atonement. As if a bad conscience and the anxiety before death and the judgment are not a thousand times more harmful to the sick! As if the sacraments were instituted for death and destruction and not rather for the consolation and the salvation of the souls! "Cursed be you, mother, exclaimed once a dying daughter, cursed be you; you are guilty! Just God, I demand that where I go my mother shall come also!" And in truth, if the blood of the innocent Abel, if the blood of every murdered man calls to God for justice, how much more will not every unhappy soul, for which Christ, our Lord, bled on the cross, but who by the guilt of relations die in the state of mortal sin and without the sacraments, how much more will they cry to God for vengeance! Here there is no longer question of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, but a soul for a soul.

But "thou art just, O God, and just are thy judgments." This dying man spent half his life without

receiving the sacraments and postponed his conversion until his death-bed, and now he dies unconscious, consequently without the sacraments which could have helped him. This dead man restrained his relatives from sending for the priest and refrained from receiving the sacraments, and now they pay him back! He dies, but without the sacraments, or receives them unconsciously, therefore usually unworthily, in the state of mortal sin. Learn to understand the justice of God at the death-bed! At the death-bed learn that God will not be despised. Learn there, too, that as a man lives so will he die. If he lived as a Christian he will also have the grace of a Christian death; if he lived as a non-believer or a pagan, spent his life in sin, surely the words of our Divine Saviour will be fulfilled: "You will seek me but you will die in your sins."

4. Yes, my beloved in Christ, the death of a Christian should be a holy sacrifice, a quiet, blissful death, a death in the grace of God of which in truth may be said, "Oh, how precious in the sight of God is the death of the just!" For this reason our Divine Saviour instituted the sacrament of Extreme Unction, and consequently to die without the sacraments is something terrible. The animal dies peacefully and quietly, but the death of the Christian is something terrible if he has not obtained the higher blessings. The last sacraments do not dispense terror and destruction, but salvation and blessing, grace and atonement. Yes, precisely then when the human body is tortured and disfigured by sickness, when it has become by death the

object of disgust and the food of worms, precisely then the Christian obtains his last dignity and his highest consecration: he becomes a warrior for immortality, and like our dying Saviour, the Christian by the worthy reception of the last sacraments confesses his faith and hope in the Mercy of God. The day of his death is then the day of his new birth. And as he is born again and sanctified by holy Baptism for the entrance into the Church of God, so by the sacrament of Extreme Unction he is born again and sanctified for the entrance into the triumphant Church in heaven.

You parents, you children, you men and women, relatives or household, do not therefore act criminally towards your grievously sick! Trifle not with the salvation of their souls and with the mercy which God offers them! Call the priest at the proper time, in order that he, as the angel of the Lord, may dispense to the sick the chalice of strength. Whether the sick wants it or not, you are not answerable for; it is his affair. But your souls must answer for it, if you have neglected your most sacred duties, if on your account others have died without the sacraments or unconsciously. God will not be mocked, but happy the sick, happy you, when he dies in the state of grace. Then it is truly and beautifully said: "Blessed are they who die in the Lord." Amen.

SERMON XII

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS

“As the Father hath sent me, so also I send you.”—JOHN 20, 21.

Marvelous is Jesus Christ, our Divine Saviour, in His threefold office which he came to exercise on earth, and continues in and through His holy Church until the end of time. As Divine Teacher He announces to us the heavenly truths and unites mankind to God by faith. He is truly “the light, that enlighteneth every man, that cometh into the world.” (John I, 9.) Therefore the living Catholic faith is the heavenly light, which enlightens the soul and dispels the darkness of infidelity and error; it is the beacon-light, which leads us on the way through our wanderings in this world to heaven, and the wonderful telescope through which we can behold the throne of God in eternal bliss, and can look also into hell and into purgatory.

But Jesus Christ is also the King of heaven and of earth who has established for Himself a glorious kingdom, His holy Church, where He rules with wonderful power. The Angels and the Saints pay Him homage, the Christians on earth and the souls in purgatory pay Him homage, and even the visible creation proclaims

His praise. His kingdom endures eternally, for He is the King of immortality.

Our Divine Saviour is also the eternal High-priest, who offered up His bloody sacrifice on the Cross for the salvation of the world. He is "the Lamb of God, who was slain from the beginning of the world" (Apoc. 13, 8), to which all the sacrifices of men pointed and which gave a value to them. As High-priest, Jesus entered the Garden of Olives to begin His bloody sacrifice and consummated it on the Cross where He offered it to God for the atonement of the sins of the world. In His own blood He entered into the Most Holy, into heaven, and tore asunder the curtain which separated mankind from bliss. As High-priest He continues His marvelous sacrifice in an unbloody manner on our altars until the end of time, and unites here all praise and all prayers of Christianity and brings them before the throne of God. For this reason the Prophet Habacuc rejoiced, and later the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the thought of such a Saviour: "but I will rejoice in the Lord: and I will joy in God my Jesus." (Haba. 3, 18.)

But our Divine Saviour, my dearly beloved, before His Ascension into heaven, instituted visible representatives in order that in His name and in His place and with His power they might announce the heavenly doctrines, guide the faithful, administer the Sacraments and offer up the holy sacrifice. "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you." I will therefore speak to you to-day on the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

O Jesus, assist me with Thy grace.

1. Just as our Divine Saviour raised Matrimony to the dignity of a Sacrament so that parents might be able to persevere in a God-fearing manner in the state of married life and raise their children in a Christian manner, and that the propagation of the human race might thus be sanctified, so also has He instituted the Sacrament of Holy Orders that His visible representatives "the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God," as St. Paul calls them (1 Cor. 4, 1), might be perpetuated. Not in a corporal manner, not by birth, like the children of a family, but in a higher and supernatural way, in conformity with the glory of our Divine Saviour and the dignity of the priesthood, this continuation takes place. It is accomplished by the sublime Sacrament of Holy Orders. All the other Sacraments, as Baptism and Confirmation, the Blessed Sacrament, Penance and Extreme Unction, have as their object especially the salvation of the individual Christians. Matrimony, however, has in addition to this, the object of furthering the temporal and spiritual welfare of the child, and Holy Orders that of the salvation of all Christians. The priests, of course, receive at their ordination great and sublime graces from the Holy Ghost, because they obtain a great and sublime power, they receive these graces not only for their own salvation but also that they may exercise this power worthily for the salvation of the faithful.

There belong to every Sacrament, as you know, three things, namely, the visible sign, the invisible grace and the divine institution. In the Sacrament of

Holy Orders we find all three are united. When the Apostles in Jerusalem sent Paul and Barnabas to the Church in Antioch in order that the people there might be taught and baptized, "they prayed over them and laid hands upon them," as we are told in the Acts of the Apostles (13, 3). When the congregation at Jerusalem had chosen seven men of good repute and full of the Holy Spirit, among whom was St. Stephen, they presented them to the Apostles who prayed over them and laid hands upon them and ordained them deacons (Acts 6, 6). What took place then takes place still to-day. With the ordination the invisible grace is united, wherefore the Apostle St. Paul writes to his disciple Timothy: "For which cause I admonish thee, that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee, by the imposition of my hands" (2 Tim. 1, 7). Our Divine Saviour Himself breathed upon the Apostle when He gave to them the priestly power to forgive sins and said: "As the Father hath sent me so also I send you. Receive the Holy Ghost."

2. Great and marvelous is the priestly power which is given in the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Yes, through it grace, salvation and faith are to be preserved on earth, through it our Divine Saviour continues to live in His servants and His work subsists until the consummation of the world. Therefore this power consists especially in the fullness of authority to change bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ: "Do this for a commemoration of me" (Luke 22, 19). It consists further in the wonderful authority to forgive sins in the stead of Christ:

“ whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained.” (John 20, 23.) It consists, thirdly, in the fulfillment of the divine commission: “ Go and teach all nations and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” (Matth. 28, 20.) Everything that belongs to the faith and to the life of grace of the Christian is included in this threefold fullness of authority or power. From the birth until death the priests are to teach in the name of the Lord and with His power as the dispensers of the mysteries of heaven, guide the faithful to a Christian life and to the observance of the commandments, prepare them for a worthy reception of the Sacraments, in the hour of death assist them to make their peace with God and prepare them for a Christian death. As our Divine Saviour in His office of Teacher, High-priest and King was everything to us, so should the priests with His power and in His name be everything to us and offer us in the kingdom of salvation, of grace and of faith everything, until our life on earth is completed and has been transfigured into eternal life in heaven.

Nevertheless, as everything which our Divine Saviour did on earth found its completion and crown in the bloody sacrifice, yes, as this sacrifice of the Cross was in reality the object of His life and the fulfillment of His High-priestly dignity, so also the calling and the power of the priest is crowned in the offering up of the holy sacrifice, by which God is most glorified,

adored and appeased. The holy sacrifice is the crown of all divine service, the well-spring of all graces which flow from it through the holy Sacraments into the souls of the faithful and through the whole world, it gathers within itself all adoration, all faith, all love, all prayers, all services and good works. Moreover, in the holy sacrifice is united all the praise which the Church, the faithful and even the visible creation gives to God. The offering up, therefore, of the holy sacrifice is the holiest and sublimest destiny of the priesthood. St. Paul writes, "for every high-priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins." (Hebr. 5, 1.)

For this reason our Divine Saviour instituted the Sacrament of Holy Orders, in order that the priests in His place and in His name might continue the work of salvation on earth and therefore proclaim to the faithful the heavenly doctrines, administer to them the Sacraments and their graces and offer up the holy sacrifice of the Altar, the perpetual memorial of His bloody sacrifice on the Cross. The Catholic priests fulfill in truth the promise of God which He made to the Prophet Malachy: "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 sayeth the Lord of hosts." (Mal. 1, 11.) Our Divine Saviour as eternal High-priest, Prophet and King is called Christ, that is, the Anointed, and as in the Old Testament the priests,

prophets and kings were anointed, so for this reason the priests also in the Sacrament of Holy Orders are anointed with Chrism and are also the anointed of the Lord.

3. This Sacrament, my dearly beloved, imparts to the priests great and glorious graces, in order that they may worthily fulfill their holy calling for the salvation and the blessing of the faithful and become like unto their sublime prototype, Jesus Christ. This Sacrament imprints upon the soul of the priest also an indelible mark. Just as Baptism and Confirmation imprint upon the baptized and confirmed eternally the mark that he is a Christian and a child of God and has become a soldier of Christ, so the mark of the priestly character is indelibly imprinted upon the soul of the priest to remain forever in heaven or in hell. Therefore, if a Catholic priest or Bishop should fall away from the faith, become a worldly official or should even against all right and against his vow get married, he would not lose his consecration nor the power of it, even though he would be forbidden to exercise it. As this indelible mark of the priestly character imparts to the priests a particular glory and honor and transparency in heaven so it is the cause of greater suffering, greater despair and greater damnation in hell.

4. The holier and sublimer therefore that the priesthood is, and the greater and more heavenly its power is, the more careful must the young men, who feel themselves called to the priesthood, prepare for its reception. If holy Baptism, if every Sacrament is a marvelous grace of God and the call to eternal life, the

priestly vocation is much more so. As little as man can create himself and call himself to Christianity, just as little can one choose for himself the priestly state. He can indeed force himself into it, but to his perdition. This choice from the number of the faithful is the work of God. Our Divine Saviour said to His Apostles: "You have not chosen me: but I have chosen you; and have appointed you that you should go, and should bring forth fruit; and your fruit should remain." (John 15, 16.) And as He called the Apostles and disciples so He continues to call and choose from the faithful those whom He has selected to become His priests. Now it is the duty and the task of Holy Church to carefully prepare those young men who feel within themselves the call of God for Holy Orders and gradually lead them to the service of the sanctuary. Just as there are in all states of life, in the army, among officials, artists and workers, different grades through which one must pass in order to go to a higher one, so it is also in the service of the Church.

As a preparation for the Sacrament of Holy Orders the four Minor Orders were instituted by the Church in the first centuries. They are preceded by the tonsure, an ecclesiastical ceremony by which the youth is incorporated in the spiritual state and receives the right to wear the ecclesiastical garb, without, however, any power to perform any ecclesiastical function. The four Minor Orders follow the tonsure, namely, the Ostiarius, or the ordination of the guardians of the church-doors, the Lector or the ordination of the reader, the

Exorcist or the ordination of the one who receives the power to exorcise the evil spirits, and the Acolytes or the ordination of the candle-bearers. In ancient times these Orders were of great importance, for these were still the days of persecution. It was the duty of the Ostiarii to prevent pagans and spies from entering into the meetings of the Christians. It was likewise one of their functions to notify the faithful of the time and place of divine service, for in those days there were no public churches. The Lectors read the Holy Scriptures for the faithful and also the letters of the Apostles, after which the Bishop gave the explanation and preached the sermon. The Exorcists received the power to lay hands upon the possessed and recite the prayers of the Church over them. The Acolytes prepared for the lighting of the subterranean chapels for divine service, carried the lights for the Bishop during the sacrifice and received the gifts of the faithful. Only the most distinguished Christians were permitted to receive these ordinations with their ecclesiastical functions since they were the more necessary, the fewer priests there were in those days of bloody persecutions. And although in the present times circumstances are now different, nevertheless every priest must first receive Minor Orders just as in former centuries. They do not belong to the Sacrament of Holy Orders, because they were instituted by the Church as a preparation for the priesthood and for the performance of ecclesiastical functions.

5. The subdeaconship stands higher, for it has greater duties and power, and for this reason it is

numbered among the higher Orders. The subdeacon must serve the priest or Bishop at High-Mass, when he sings the Epistle and presents the bread and wine for the holy sacrifice. He takes the vow of chastity and promises to devote himself to the service of God and of the Church forever.

Above the subdeacon and next to the priest are the deacons whom even the Apostles solemnly ordained. Who has not, my beloved, heard of a St. Stephen or of a St. Lawrence, who as deacons and martyrs lived and died so gloriously? The deacons have the power to sing the Gospel at High-Mass, to immediately serve the priest at the altar, to give holy communion in the absence of a priest and to preach. They must remain unmarried and daily say the breviary. Their ordination belongs to the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

The priest must have already received all these Orders before he can be permitted to receive the ordination to the holy priesthood. The priests are the successors of the disciples of Jesus, and just as these were under the direction of the Apostles so the priests are under the direction of the Bishops, who are the successors of the Apostles. The Bishops are placed by the Holy Ghost to rule the Church of God. No one can become a Bishop who is not already a priest, and as the consecration of a Bishop is greater and more solemn, his power is also greater than that of the priests. Finally, above all stands the Pope as the successor of St. Peter, the Vicar of Jesus Christ and the head of the whole Church. All Bishops of the world, all priests and all the faithful must obey him; he is the

Holy Father of Christianity, the high priest and infallible teacher of the whole Church. He is the Rock upon which our Divine Saviour built His Church, so that the gates of hell cannot overcome it.

Therefore, the whole greatness of Holy Church rests in the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the preservation of the faith and of the holy Sacraments, the continuation of the Holy Sacrifice and of redemption, the salvation of souls and the conversion of nations. And although the priests, the Bishops and the Popes may die, still, according to the words of St. Peter, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, will come forth from the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

6. For this reason, my dearly beloved, the Catholic Church admonishes us to pray to God for worthy priests, especially at the time when ordinations take place. For a worthy priest is a true gift of grace for the salvation of the faithful, the happiness of children, the consolation of sinners, the support of old age, the teacher and counselor of the despairing and the visible guardian angel of the dying. Our Divine Saviour Himself spoke these beautiful words: "For God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." (John 3, 16.) All generations are to be helped through Jesus, all filled with divine mercy and grace and all blessed in Him. For this reason our Divine Saviour founded His holy Church and instituted the Bishops and priests as teachers of His heavenly truths and as dispensers of the divine mysteries. He said full of love and compassion

for the salvation of millions of souls for whom He was to bleed on the cross: "The harvest is indeed great, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into the harvest." (Matth. 9, 37, 38.)

Oh, yes, the harvest is indeed great, if we consider how terrible is the progress infidelity and immorality are making, and how the enemies leave nothing undone to tear the faithful from God and the Church, to slander our holy faith and to degrade the priestly calling. Alas! how many Christians who live in sin; how many children who grow up without religion; how many thousands who seldom or never receive the holy sacraments, and how many die without the priest? My God, how great is the harvest, and how insufficient are the laborers! Truly, worthy priests, zealous pastors and good confessors are a real grace of God, and if there are such, we may thank God and praise Him that He has visited His people.

Let us therefore pray God that in these days of infidelity and persecution He may send to His Church zealous priests, for the salvation of our souls, the peace of our conscience, our faith and our Christian life depend upon the priests. But let us also honor the priests as the representatives of our Divine Saviour in order that we may show that we believe in Him, hope in Him and love Him and show ourselves worthy to come to Him as our eternal High-priest in the celestial courts of heaven. Amen.

SERMON XIII

THE MISSION AND POWERS OF THE PRIESTHOOD

“Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech.”—Ps. 109, 4.

Our Divine Saviour and Redeemer truly continues to live on in His priests. And if He frequently aroused the admiration of the Jewish people by His heavenly doctrine so that they cried out: “A great prophet has risen among us and God hath visited His people”; so too He continues to-day to be the teacher of the faithful in His priests. The priests are His ambassadors and His representatives. Through them He admonishes, warns and instructs us: “Who hears you, hears me.”

The astonishment of the Jewish people was still more powerfully aroused when our Divine Saviour spoke the consoling words to Mary Magdalen and to other sinners who had contritely taken refuge to Him: “Be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee.” They exclaimed indeed: “Who can forgive sins but God only?” (Luke 5, 21.) But our Divine Saviour had in truth this power and His priests exercise it in His name. And even if the Angels in heaven came down to earth and wrought all kinds of miracles, one thing they could not do, and that is,

Speak effectively the consoling words: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." What they alone could do would be to awaken the power of conscience in every sinner: "Go and show thyself to the priests." (Luke 17, 14.) This power the priests possess above all Angels and Saints of heaven, for in them our Divine Saviour lives on and works.

Still more glorious is the power of the priest in the Holy Sacrifice which, as the visible representative of Jesus Christ, he offers up on the altar of God. Joshua, the successor of Moses and the leader of the Jewish people, once in battle with the enemy commanded the sun to stand still, but by the word of the priest the Sun of Grace, Jesus Christ, comes down upon our altars and renews his bloody Sacrifice of the Cross in an unbloody manner for the perpetual salvation of the world: "Do this for a commemoration of me."

And even if the life of the individual priest is sometimes a sad contradiction to his holy mission, nevertheless his power is thereby never lost, for it is given to him, not for his sake, but for the salvation of the faithful. I will therefore speak to you to-day about the Mission and the Powers of the priesthood.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. The same reasons that induced the Son of God to become man, induced Him to institute the priesthood. The Son of God became man, to teach us the heavenly truths, and to be our guide and shepherd on the way of salvation and to offer up the bloody sacrifice of the Cross for our redemption. In order to con-

tinue His work Jesus Christ sends forth His priests: "As the Father hath sent me so I also send you." (John 20, 21.) The mission of the priests refers to God, the Church and to mankind.

The nearer, my dearly beloved, a subject stands to his prince, the more he himself grows in power and dignity and influence. Now God has chosen from among His faithful some in order that they may be His representatives, His servants and His ambassadors. They are the priests who by this election stand in a most particular relation to Almighty God. They are the ones who proclaim the commandments of God to the world, represent His cause, defend His honor and speak in His name: "He that heareth you heareth me; he that despiseth you despiseth me." (Luke 10, 16.) The priests spread the kingdom of God on earth and plant the divine grace of redemption in souls.

The priest is therefore the servant and the representative of the heavenly Father who should gain and raise for Him children of God in order that they might love Him, keep His commandments and enter into His heavenly kingdom. But the priest is also the servant and the representative of the Son of God, whose Gospel he announces, whose body and blood he offers up in the unbloody sacrifice of the altar, whose Sacraments he administers, and whose grace and redemption he communicates to souls. Finally the priest is the ambassador and the servant of the Holy Ghost; he is the mouth, through which the Holy Ghost enlightens the faithful, the instrument, through which

He purifies the hearts, sanctifies them and changes them into His own dwelling-place. The priest is therefore in truth the man of the Triune God and stands through his priesthood in a most particular relation with the Most Blessed Trinity.

2. The priest, moreover, by his mission stands in a most particular relation with Holy Church and takes in her the place of honor. Yes, my beloved, when we consider what the Holy Church is, then we will all the more readily grasp the dignity of the priesthood. The Church is, according to the expression of Holy Scripture, the Bride of Christ whom He has purchased with his blood: she is the Mother of the living, that is of all who are called to eternal bliss; she is the kingdom of God on earth, the ark of Noah, the second paradise and the community of the Saints. Now the priests are the protectors of this holy Bride. As our Divine Saviour confided His most holy Mother to His beloved disciple John for protection, so must the priests defend the sanctity, the truth, the honor and freedom of Holy Church. The Church is also in her sufferings and persecutions like unto the Sorrowful Mother of God at the foot of the Cross, and the priests suffer with her, fight for her and console her in her sorrows. The Church is the second ark, and the priests are the sailors who fight against the storms and save the faithful from the dangers of the journey in the deluge of sin. They seek in the Church as the second paradise on earth to warn the Christians before the representations of the serpent and to keep them in the community of Saints. What would the Church be without the priesthood

and consequently without a sacrifice? What would the kingdom of God on earth be without servants, the ark without sailors and the Mother of the living without priestly sons, who manage her heavenly household and instruct her children and sanctify them with the holy Sacraments and nourish them for eternal life? The mission, therefore, of the priest is holy, if we consider him in his relation to Holy Church.

3. In the third place the priest by his mission stands in a particular relation to mankind. God has, my dearly beloved, made the priest his co-operator in the great work of the redemption of the human race. This work is greater and sublimer than even the participation in governing the world or the power to order the seasons of the year and direct the course of the stars, for here is a question of immortal souls, of eternity and of eternal bliss. And if the priests are not called with the powerful ones of this earth to rule, to make laws and to decide upon peace or war, they have, nevertheless, a higher and holier calling which reaches beyond this world even unto heaven. They send inhabitants to heaven, snatch innumerable victims from hell, sanctify souls and forgive sins: "As the Father hath sent me I also send you." Our Divine Saviour lives on in His priests and continues the work of redemption forever and for aye for the salvation of souls. And therefore, alas, even if many priests show themselves unworthy of their high dignity the Catholic Christian looks higher and forgets in the priest the sinful man. He looks upon our Divine Saviour who, through the Catholic priesthood, continues His

work of redemption for the honor of God and the salvation of mankind. Our Divine Saviour, my dearly beloved, continues still to announce His heavenly truths; He forgives sins in the Sacrament of Penance and offers Himself upon the altar, but He makes use of His visible representatives, the priests: "I am with you all days even unto the consummation of the world."

Therefore, the priestly mission is so great and holy, and the greater and holier, the closer the relation of the priest is to the Holy Triune God, to the Church and to the faithful, and the more he is the servant of Christ and the dispenser of His mysteries.

4. The mission shows itself all the more fruitful in blessings, the more closely we consider the powers which our Divine Saviour entrusted to His priests. He expressed their fullness and extent in those words which He spoke to His Apostles on the day of His Ascension into heaven: "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth. Therefore go and teach all nations and baptize them." These powers of the priesthood are also unlimited with regard to time, to place and to men. Even though in the individual priest they be limited to the term of his life, to the place and the persons entrusted to his ministration, yet in the whole of the priesthood they are not limited. The priestly powers will endure unto the end of the world. Just so long as there are souls that are to be sanctified, children to be baptized, sinners to be saved, ignorant to be instructed, dying to be consoled, just so long will the priesthood endure: "I am with you unto the consummation of the world."

Therefore these powers are also unrestricted with regard to place; they extend over the whole world. Jesus, the Saviour, wants to be everywhere, everywhere loved and adored. All nations are His inheritance and all should believe in Him and keep His commandments. This is done through the priesthood, through which the Christian faith and the divine commandments are spread over the world: "Go and teach all nations." Yes, the priestly powers reach out above this visible world; they are effective even unto heaven and in purgatory. Through the priestly power innumerable souls enter into eternal bliss and our Divine Saviour comes down upon our altars. The priest applies to the poor souls the holy sacrifice and the intercession of the faithful.

But the priestly powers are also unrestricted in relation to persons. Princes and subjects, the powerful and the weak, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, young and old — all are subject to the power of the priest. No one finds, without the priest, forgiveness of his sins, no one the graces of the Sacraments, no one the atoning virtue of the holy sacrifice. Not the bodies but the souls are subject to the priestly power. Let the powerful ones of this world rule over the bodies of their subjects; let them have whole treasures of gold and silver and large dominions under their power — immortal souls purchased with the blood of Jesus, the treasures of grace and redemption and the keys of heaven are confided to the priests. Even the princes of this world must take refuge to the priest if they would find the forgiveness for their

sins, the grace of God and the salvation of their souls. What can, therefore, my beloved, make the mercy of God and this longing of Jesus for the salvation of our souls appear in a more adorable light than precisely these marvelous powers which He has confided to His priests? And the more adorable and amiable is this mercy and longing, the more the priests themselves and sinful mankind are in need of redemption and therefore need also the forgiveness of their sins and the grace of God.

5. These powers are evident in all their greatness when we consider the priests in the pulpit, in the confessional and at the altar. In the pulpit they are the teachers of the faithful in the name of Jesus, and the messengers of God to announce His gospel: "For Christ therefore we are ambassadors, God as it were exhorting by us. For Christ we beseech you be reconciled to God." (2 Cor. 5, 20.) Therefore, when the priests preach and instruct the faithful, hear confessions, console the sick, or publicly or privately admonish to good works, warn against evil, blame, encourage or give counsel — wherever there is a question of the salvation of souls and the honor of God they take the place of Christ. Whosoever, therefore, despises and scorns them, refuses to listen to them, or makes them ridiculous, he despises not the man but the representative of Christ and the ambassador of God: "He that heareth you heareth me; he that despiseth you despiseth him who sent me," therefore he despises God.

The powers of the priest show themselves especially

marvelous in the confessional. There is evidenced the eternal worth of the blood of Jesus Christ which redeemed souls from their sins; and there is also evidenced the greatness of the priestly power which applies this blood to individual souls by absolution. Oh, what mercy and wisdom of God is seen here! The same priest who at the altar offers up the Lamb of God has also the power in the confessional to forgive sins on account of the same blood of this Lamb of God. At the altar he calls to the faithful: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world!" And in the Sacrament of Penance he says to the contrite sinner: "Be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee," since he really forgives him his sins. Neither the Angels in heaven nor the emperors and kings on earth possess this power, the priest alone has it in truth and reality. How venerable then is not the priesthood? In very truth the consolation and the salvation of our souls! If millions of souls rejoice in heaven, if numberless sinners are made happy again on earth, renewed in grace and in the peace of a good conscience — the priestly power in the confessional is the cause of it. How miserable and godless at the same time are, therefore, the slanders about the priests.

The priestly powers appear still in another greatness, my dearly beloved, when we consider the priest as the "dispenser of the mysteries of God." He baptizes in the name of the Triune God and receives the baptized into the number of the children of God and into the Communion of Saints; he gives communion to the faithful, he blesses the marriages at the altar, applies to

them the graces of this Sacrament, he assists the dying to make peace with God and with the Sacrament of Extreme Unction takes away the remains of sin. But in all these functions it is our Divine Saviour, who in the person of the priest grants mercy to the faithful, sanctifies and redeems them.

But the Catholic priesthood is most marvelous and is exhibited in all its supernatural greatness at the altar. There the priests are truly the visible representatives of Jesus Christ who offers up the unbloody sacrifice to God, and unite with this sacrifice the devotion and the prayers of the faithful. It is at the altar where heaven is opened and the Son of God comes down; on the altar the blood of Jesus Christ flows over the faithful and the poor souls; here the Angels of God are present in adoration, and here His grace and mercy and richest redemption. More beneficial and more glorious than the light of the sun spreads over the earth, giving joy and blessing and growth, flows from the holy sacrifice the blessing of redemption over the souls, over the living and the dying, over the just and the sinners, and reaches up into heaven and down into purgatory. And who as the visible representative of Jesus offers up this holy sacrifice? Not an Angel nor an Archangel, nor the princes of this world; it is the priest, the priest who often enough is poor and abandoned, despised and persecuted by the world, and nevertheless precisely in and with this Holy Sacrifice he spreads abroad over the world blessing and grace.

6. Let us therefore, my dearly beloved, honor the priests, for the honor or the dishonor falls back upon

our Divine Saviour. In truth he is a bad Catholic who does not honor the priests. He shows that he has lost the faith, has long since forgotten the gratitude due our Divine Saviour and has driven out of his heart the love for Him. And even if some priests show themselves unworthy of their high calling and of their priestly dignity, that is their and not our affair, their and not our responsibility. But to rejoice over their terrible fall, to blaspheme and slander is the work of the followers of Satan. Good Christians are silent, sad and pray, but never rejoice. The priesthood is too holy and too venerable. The faith which is spread over the world, the innumerable hosts of Christians, the blessed in heaven, the converted heathen nations and the whole endless succession of glorious works are the fruits of the labors, sufferings and cares of the Catholic priesthood. Even if we are in the state of grace, have living faith, love for God and a good conscience; if our parents and ancestors are in heaven — it is, after God, the fruit of the works of the priesthood. And if we die a Christian death and enter into eternal bliss we shall fully realize how marvelous God was in the institution of the Catholic priesthood. Until the end of time Jesus will live on in His priests, and yet He is eternally Himself our High-priest and we should with Him praise and glorify God in the heavenly Jerusalem, in the kingdom of the blessed for all eternity. Amen.

SERMON XIV

CELIBACY

“I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service.”—ROM. 12, 1.

These words St. Paul addresses in the first place to all Christians, for, faith teaches us that the body of the Christian is the temple of the Holy Ghost. The same Apostle says: “Do you not know that you are the temple of the Holy Ghost who dwells in you?” For this reason also the body of the Christian is blessed and anointed in Baptism, in Confirmation and in Extreme Unction. It is blessed and sanctified by holy communion, when it is nourished by the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ and receives the divine germ of immortality and future glorification. This germ lives on in the body like a hidden fire until the day of resurrection when it will flame up in heavenly splendor and glory and make the body together with the soul capable of entering into the beatific vision of God. Therefore every Christian must preserve his body pure on earth as the temple of the Holy Ghost, in chastity according to his state of life, in order that he may offer to God a living and holy sacrifice and that his service of God be a reasonable one.

Our Divine Saviour classifies purity of body and soul among the eight beatitudes: "Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God." In fact, my dearly beloved, chastity is the ornament of the Christian and the adornment of his body, and therefore its promised reward is so great. Still more glorious and more marvelous is its virginal dignity. It is the purest and most perfect sacrifice which the Christian can offer to God. There is nothing earthly in it, it has its origin in heaven. Our Divine Saviour Himself planted it on earth; He is the King of virgins and Mary as the purest virgin is the queen of virgins, and she alone was worthy to become the virginal Mother of our Divine Lord. Virgins in heaven follow the Lamb of God and sing a special hymn of praise. On earth purity and innocence are the most precious pearls which can adorn the soul; it is the paradise of Christians which raises them above the miserable world and its vices and fills their hearts with a knowledge of God and of higher things; it ennobles prayer and makes the soul worthy of frequent communion.

For this reason the Catholic Church, following the example of Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the Apostles, firmly established celibacy as the unconditional requirement for the reception of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. I will therefore speak to-day of this celibacy and show its dignity, its vow and its blessing. It is a subject all the more necessary since now-a-days it is derided or at least little appreciated.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. When the Sadducees wanted to tempt our Saviour in regard to the resurrection they put to Him the question: to whom would the woman, who had several times been married, belong after the resurrection. He answered: "In the resurrection there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage, but they will be like the angels of God in heaven." Therefore the holy Bishop and Martyr Cyprian in an address to consecrated virgins said: "You possess already on earth the glory of the resurrection; you are like to the angels of God." For this reason also the holy Fathers call the virgins the flowers of the Church, the masterpiece of grace, the mirror of the divine Word and the pure image of God. They never tire in praising the virginal dignity as the temple of God, the sanctuary of the Holy Ghost, the life of the Angels and the crown of the Saints. Who will be surprised at this, my beloved, since our Divine Saviour Himself raised the virginal dignity above everything by His words and more so by His example? It shines forth in heavenly beauty in Mary, for which reason she is so great before God and before men, and as the thrice marvellous Virgin the Queen of all Virgins.

From the ranks of the virgins went forth during all Christian times the most martyrs. From among them God sought His most faithful warriors and servants, who, with the sanctity of their lives and with their own blood, spread abroad over the earth the holy faith. Holy Church honors virginity in her priesthood and in the sanctuary of the cloister and protects it with all her power and authority. In Heaven it shines forth

in Jesus and Mary and the most glorious Thrones, and Virgins, like the Apostle St. John, follow next to the Lamb of God and sing a new canticle which no one else can sing.

2. We see, therefore, my dearly beloved, how since the days of the Apostles holy Christians of both sexes have been filled with enthusiasm for this most glorious virtue and greatest adornment of Christianity. Our Divine Saviour Himself chose a virginal mother and as the Divine Child confided Himself only to a virginal foster-father, St. Joseph. He chose for His Apostles only those who led a virginal life, or if they were married like Simon Peter, as Apostles they remained continent. Therefore, the priests to whom is entrusted our Divine Saviour in the holy sacrifice and in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar must be virgins, or at least pure. Even among the Jews there was a law which required the priests during the time of sacrifice to be continent, although their sacrifices consisted only in animals and were weak types of the sacrifice of the New Law. Even the heathens demanded that their priests be pure when they entered the temple. They only permitted virgins to keep the so-called holy fire in the temple. It was so deeply impressed on all peoples that the service of God should be performed by pure hands that even the feelings of the pagans would not permit it to be performed by impure hands. But if our holy and marvelous sacrifice is the pure, holy and immaculate gift, is Jesus Himself, whom the priest offers to God, how could the Catholic priesthood be free from a law whose aptness

and reasonableness was recognized even by pagans? A married priest and the Holy Sacrifice and the administration of the Sacraments by his hands is offensive to the Christian sense. It feels the sharp contradiction between the sanctity of the sacrifice and the Sacraments, with such a state of life.

The relation of the priest to the mystical body of Christ, that is, to the Church and to the faithful, also obligates him to a particular holiness and purity of life. The Church is, according to the words of the Apostle St. Paul, the Bride of Christ. As Eve was formed from the side of Adam, so God formed the Church from the wound of the side of Jesus on the Cross. And as our Divine Saviour on the Cross confided his Holy Mother to the care of the virginal John alone, so He confides also His Church to the protection of virginal, or pure priests and Bishops. Our Divine Saviour purchased for Himself a spiritual generation, the children of grace, and the priests should bring to Him in virginal purity spiritual children, the faithful. Even the faithful receive more readily the divine graces from pure hands and accept the word of salvation and divine commands only from a pure mouth.

In truth, my dearly beloved, the relations between priest and faithful are of so delicate and sacred a nature that they can be cultivated only by him, who by his vow of celibacy is elevated far above the others. Confession is so delicate a matter and demands such a degree of confidence that it alone would demand this vow. The priest should be the salt of the earth, and by deed, word and example protect others from the

contamination of sin. He should be the light that enlightens the congregation with heavenly truths, the teacher of the children, the father of the widow and the orphan and the consoler of the dying. He must ever be ready, by day and by night, by rain and tempest, in time of pestilence and even at the risk of his own life, to render assistance where, when and how it is asked of him. But this readiness is only then possible, if he himself have no cares, no family, no tears of a wife, no worries and a thousand other considerations to hold him back. He finds this independence, and promises the same for the best interests of the faithful, in his vow of celibacy.

3. This vow is solemn as the ordination of the priest itself. No one is compelled, but each one follows freely the call of God and his own choice. It is preceded by four years of strict examination, and if they are happily passed the great moment approaches upon which eternity depends. Clothed in white, in the alb, the symbol of innocence, the ordinandi appear before the altar and before the Bishop. The Bishop addresses these words to them: "Until now you were free, but one step more and you will be bound by the vow and ordination forever, and can never return to the world again. Think well on it! And if your resolution is unchangeable in the name of the Lord approach."—With the ordination this condition is accepted, the threshold of the sanctuary is entered and the eternal "yes" is spoken. Like victims which are offered to God the ordinandi at this moment prostrate themselves on the floor, for they belong no

more to the world but to God. And the words of the Apostle in their full meaning are realized: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service." This vow is fully sealed in that solemn hour of ordination by the oath upon the Gospels, by the touching of the holy vessels and by holy communion. Its most natural explanation is found in the calling, in the dignity and in the duties of the priest. The closer the relation of man to God is, the more solemn and sublime are his vows. Every Christian in his baptism becomes a child of God, one redeemed and the temple of the Holy Ghost; for this reason he promises to believe in the Triune God and renounce Satan and all his works. And the more faithful the Christian observes these vows, the richer are the graces of God and the greater the heavenly bliss. The Christian virgin, who espouses herself to God, receives at the solemn profession of vows from the Bishop the veil, a ring and a cross, the signs that she is from now on the bride of Christ and has renounced forever the world. And if the holy martyrs were once the glory and the splendor of the Catholic Church, so now the consecrated virgins are the flowers and the blossoms of the Church and of the faithful. As the martyrs offered to God a pure and holy, and at the same time, a bloody sacrifice in their bodies, so now the consecrated virgins bring to God a pure and a holy, but an unbloody sacrifice, and glorify during all times Jesus and Mary whose example they follow.

So it is also with the Catholic priests. They are the servants and representatives of Jesus Christ, the eternal High-priest and divine Shepherd of our souls. They offer up daily the Lamb of God as the purest, holiest and immaculate sacrifice and also the sacrifice of constant prayer. They announce the mysteries of God and dispense the graces of the Sacraments, and for this reason also is their vow so solemn and holy and truly worthy and in conformity with their holy calling. It is the crown and the adornment of the priesthood and the cause of its zeal and of its blessed work.

4. Yes, my beloved in Christ, the blessing of the priestly celibacy is extraordinarily great and rich for the whole world, for every parish and for every individual Christian. If the Apostles, the disciples of the Lord and their successors, the Bishops and priests, had been married and oppressed with the cares of their families, when would the world ever have become Christian? The first storm, which arose already in Jerusalem, would have intimidated the Apostles and disciples and much more so their successors. As it is, however, neither the Jews nor the pagans, neither prisons nor the most painful death could prevent them from preaching the gospel. The bloody persecutions lasted three hundred years. Every Pope, every Bishop and every priest was certain of his martyr's death. And yet as many as were murdered, as many and more entered the ranks of the priesthood. They converted the pagans less by their work than by their blood and made the world Christian.

Our Divine Saviour gave to the Apostles this com-

mand: "Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16, 15.) And they went forth and to the present day the missionaries go forth into all the world even to the most distant and wildest people. Thousands find their death and new thousands follow them. And if we find in the most distant parts of the world large numbers of Christians, it is the fruit of the zeal of the Catholic priests. Truly, an absolutely impossible thing if they were crippled and oppressed with the care of a family. Behold, my beloved, France and Portugal where the enemies of the Catholic Church strive with might and main to annihilate her. A Protestant writer says: "Truly the world beholds with astonishment those men whom nothing can induce to do something contrary to the ordinances of their Church. They allow themselves to be driven from office and home, they allow themselves to be plundered, they allow themselves to be thrown into prison; but unconquered they persevere, to-day driven back, to-morrow they stand again at their old posts. They are priests, they are warriors, they are men. Not the least distinction of the Roman Church is that in her priests are to be found men of action and not of words."

"It may be a half a year ago when the terrible news came that a French vessel in the darkness of night was cut in two by a Spanish steamer; within ten minutes the crew and passengers sank into the bosom of the sea. While the waves poured into the ship and aroused from sleep the passengers, who assembled in the wildest disorder upon the upper deck, some weep-

ing, some praying, some in the wildest despair, a Catholic priest hastened from one group to the other and announced to all the contrite the pardon of their sins in the name of God before whose judgment-seat they must appear in a few moments. Sublime picture of a priest! Praise your generals, who in the whirl of battle bare their breasts to the enemy's bullets; praise your statesmen who look with a steady eye into the bore of the pistol which an assassin has raised against them:—in contrast with this priest they are thrown into the shade. When all had lost possession of themselves, he remained calm; when all revolted before the open revenge of death, he seized with a sure hand heaven and offered the dying life. And among the hundreds of priests in the Catholic Church you find ninety-nine who will do the same thing." These are the words of a Protestant preacher. In fact, in consequence of his vow of celibacy the priest is free and independent and can therefore give himself entirely to the salvation of the soul of his neighbor. When tyrants made the nations tremble, when they gave themselves up to the greatest vices, when everyone was silent, then the Catholic priest went fearlessly before them and warned them of the judgments of God. In times of epidemic, of pestilence, of cholera, when all fled and left the dying to their misery, it was and is the Catholic priest who shows no fear of death. Catholic priests and religious have founded the schools, the hospitals, the orphan asylums, the houses for the aged poor and the countless institutions of charity that we find in the world. From their midst came forth

the great Saints, the Doctors of the Church, the shepherds of the faithful, the fathers of the poor and of the deserted children, the counselors of their people, the refuge of the oppressed, the peace-makers and the mediators between rival parties. What is the cause of this beneficent activity of the Catholic priesthood that embraces all the world, all the nations, all the different classes of human society for nineteen centuries, if not the marvelous fruitfulness of its vow, whereby the priesthood, freed from the bondage of the world, can accomplish its sublime mission in accordance with the example of our Divine Saviour? Yes, it is this vow that gains for the priests the respect, the love and the confidence of all the faithful and makes the fulfillment of their duties the easier.

My beloved, even though individual priests may fall and give scandal, because they, too, like other men must battle with their passions, still never forget that the scandal of individual priests can never rob the Catholic priesthood of the honor and respect that are due to it. There was a Judas among the Apostles, and even Peter denied in a short time his Divine Saviour. But for one fallen priest there are a thousand bad Catholics. Who will on that account despise all who are of the Catholic faith? Consequently let it be far from us to rejoice or to contemn if a priest has forgotten himself, for that is the business of Satan and the proof of a bad disposition. If every sinner merits compassion and merciful prayer much more so does the priest who has fallen into sin. Thus we pay back to the priesthood what it has done for us and

for our parents and ancestors. And if we honor the priests our Divine Saviour will also honor us, and reward the priestly zeal with the salvation of the faithful in order that once both the priests and the faithful may find themselves in the triumphant Church of God and there rejoice with each other in the eternal bliss of the communion of all the Saints. Amen.

SERMON XV

THE REVERENCE DUE TO PRIESTS AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DISRESPECT SHOWN THEM

“ He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him who sent me.”—LUKE 10, 16.

Our Divine Saviour is marvelous in the heavenly truths which He announced, in the bloody Sacrifice which He offered on the Cross for the salvation of the world, and in His Resurrection and His Ascension into heaven. He is marvelous in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, He will be marvelous on the day of the last judgment, when all knees will bend before Him, and all tongues praise His justice. Finally, He is marvelous in heaven, the cause of every bliss. But Jesus is also amiable and consoling in His life and in His example which He gave to all the faithful when on earth. To Him the world of Christian children looks and rejoices in the Divine Child whose grace and loving innocence flows over all child-like souls. The Christian youth finds in the Divine Boy, in His devotion in the temple of Jerusalem, in His eagerness to learn among the priests and teachers and in His obedience towards Mary and Joseph — the Christian virtue that is an ornament before God and man. In the

poverty of Jesus the poor are consoled, in His mercy the rich are admonished to have mercy towards the poor. On beholding the suffering Saviour the world of sufferers and sick find courage and consolation, and the dying Christian resignation to the Will of Almighty God. The Divine Saviour became all things to all men. His example stands forth as a beacon light to all the world and instructs the faithful and leads them as His followers to eternal bliss.

But our Divine Saviour gave in a particular manner to His servants and representatives on earth, the Catholic priests, not only an example how they should shine as teachers and shepherds of the faithful and the life of sacrifice they should lead, but also the honors and the sufferings they were to experience. Jesus participated in many honors on earth, but by far greater sufferings followed Him. As Divine Child He was adored by the angels and the shepherds, but hated and persecuted by Herod. For his mercy towards the sick and sinners and for the miracles He wrought He earned the gratitude of the people and the hatred of the Pharisees. At His entrance into Jerusalem He was hailed as King, and a few days later He was saluted by the terrible: "Crucify Him!"

This was, therefore, His reward for his inexpressible love, for His heavenly doctrines, for the miracles of His mercy,—a reward which pressed from Him tears as He announced to Jerusalem the consequences of this ingratitude and hatred. The same reward his priests must also expect to receive in a greater or lesser measure. Our Divine Saviour Himself prom-

ised His Apostles no other lot in life: "The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my words they will keep yours also." (John 15, 20.) But He also expressed the consequences of this twofold manner of action towards His priests in the following words: "He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me." But the contempt for the Divine Saviour and Judge of all men is something terrible for time and eternity, consequently also the contempt for His priests.

I will therefore speak to you to-day on the reverence due to the priests as the servants of Christ and of the consequences of the disrespect shown to them.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. It is, my beloved in Christ, self-evident to every Catholic that to the priests, as representatives of Jesus Christ, as the dispensers of the divine mysteries and as the teachers of the faithful, is due reverence and respect. Jesus Christ Himself selects His priests: "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you." He gives to them the power to baptize and to teach: "Go and teach all nations and baptize them"; He imparts to them the power to offer up the holy sacrifice and to feed the faithful with His body: "Do this for a commemoration of me." Finally, He gives them the power, which otherwise only God Himself possesses, namely to forgive sins: "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them." But in order that no one might doubt that our Divine Saviour Himself by His

priests baptizes the faithful, dispenses to them His graces, or forgives their sins, offers up the unbloody sacrifice and perpetuates the redemption, He gave the assurance in these words: "Behold, I am with you all days even unto the consummation of the world." (Matth. 28, 20.) Our Divine Saviour, in order to encourage and console His Apostles and disciples in their difficult calling, solemnly declared that all honor given to them, and all dishonor heaped upon them would be shown to Him and heaped upon Him: "He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me." Yes, in order to quiet them still more in their difficult calling our Divine Saviour declared that the disrespect shown to them was also shown to God and consequently God would be the avenger: "And he that despiseth me despiseth Him that sent me."

It is, therefore clearly evident that our Divine Saviour is honored or despised in His priests, more evident and more natural than that a king is honored or despised in his officials, the father in his children, a teacher in his pupils, a master in his work. For this reason even the pagan nations honored their priests because they were the mediators between them and their gods, offered sacrifices and cared for the divine service. This reverence and esteem is deeply imprinted in the soul of man, for all nations felt and knew that without priests religion and the service of God is impossible. Among the pagan Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Persians and other nations of ancient times the priests were the teachers and the judges, frequently the

instructors and counselors of kings and enjoyed many privileges, so that even kings exercised the priestly office and offered up sacrifices. Still more in the Old Testament among the Jews were the priests honored, because God Himself through Moses instituted the priesthood, and the high-priest was anointed the same as the kings. He alone, as the type or the figure of the Divine Saviour, was allowed to enter the holy of holies in the temple once a year with the blood of the lamb on the great feast of the Atonement.

2. And yet, my dearly beloved in Christ, the Jewish priests were only types or precursors of the Catholic priests. Their sacrifice, their power, their consecration, were only a shadow of the sacrifice which the Catholic priest offers, of the power which they, as the dispensers of the mysteries of God, possess and of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Therefore, to the Catholic priest, as the servant of our Divine Saviour, is due respect and reverence: "As the Father hath sent me I also send you." Therefore, just as the heavenly Father gave expression to His eternal love towards us poor human beings that He would not even spare His only-begotten Son, but would sacrifice Him for us, so also our Divine Saviour revealed His mercy towards us, not only in His bitter Passion and Death, but also in the institution of the priesthood. He perpetuates His redemption by the priests. And even if since the death of Christ on the cross all the hatred and persecution of the world has been heaped on the priestly state, nevertheless, the priests will continue to announce in the name of Jesus, the divine truths and the command-

ments of God until the end of the world and will carry on the work of the salvation of mankind.

Therefore, the priesthood should be sacred to us all, because our Eternal High-priest, Jesus Christ, has instituted it; it should be sacred to us in its priestly power, sacred for our own sakes and for the sake of our neighbors and sacred for the sake of virtue. And verily, to the one to whom Jesus Christ is not sacred in His priests and the object of reverence, to him the doctrines of our holy faith, the commandments of God, whose proclaimers the priests are, the Sacraments of Christ, and the unbloody sacrifice of the altar, whose administrators the priests are, are no more sacred: "He that heareth you heareth me, he that despiseth you despiseth me."—When the priest stands at the altar or in the pulpit, when he administers the sacrament of Penance in the confessional or holy communion to the faithful at the altar-railing; when he baptizes and instructs the children, when he marries and blesses the bridal couple, when he administers the last Sacraments to the dying and gives to them the last consolations of religion and when he blesses the dead and accompanies them to their last resting-place; when he admonishes the souls or instructs the faithful — everywhere he works in the name and with the power of our Divine Saviour.

Whoever, therefore, my beloved, always honors and loves Jesus, whoever believes in Him and, with the Blessed Virgin Mary, magnifies the name of the Lord and rejoices in God his Saviour, he will also honor and reverence His priests. This honor comes back

to Jesus: "He that heareth you heareth me." Yes truly, for everything that the priests do for the salvation of our souls, what they did for our parents and ancestors, what thousands and thousands of them through all times have suffered, sacrificed and struggled for God, for the Church, for the faith and the salvation of souls, for all this we owe them reverence and gratitude, good will and obedience in spiritual things and also frequent prayer, in order that God may protect them and preserve them in His grace. Not with sighs and pains, as the Apostle St. Paul writes, should your pastors on the day of judgment give an account of you, but be able to say with rejoicing to Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who shed His blood for you on the cross: "Lord, here are the faithful whom you have entrusted to me; not one of them has been lost."

3. Therefore, let the priesthood be sacred to us. Yes, even if there are priests who have forgotten their calling and their dignity and live as sinful men, yet such priests exercise also in the name of Jesus their power, and the faithful receive from their hands the holy Sacraments worthily. What the faithful are allowed to do when an unworthy priest is in their midst, yes, what will be a work of real Christian mercy and charity, is deep compassion, silence and diligent prayer for him to Jesus, the Eternal High-priest, in order that He may exercise His mercy and dispense His grace to him. And wo to the man, who like a Cham, the son of Noah, or like an Absalom, the son of David, exposes the sins of a priest to all the world

and rejoices and makes capital of this misfortune to scoff at all priests and to slander them! It is true that such men will never annihilate the blessing and the divine institution of the priesthood, for the words of Christ are a pledge for this: "Behold I am with you all days even unto the consummation of the world," but in their own souls they stifle the Christian faith, grace and redemption. Listen to the sentence of Jesus: "He that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me." For this reason the contemners of the priests have seldom ended well. May this warning be sufficient, and may you be animated with Christian compassion and mercy towards unfortunate priests. Our Divine Saviour also exercises mercy towards you. A few unworthy priests can no more darken the splendor and the benefits of the priesthood than Judas could depreciate the work of the Apostles, or than bad Christians are able to destroy the glory and blessing of Christianity.

Nevertheless, there reigns to-day an almost universal contempt for priests. It is a sad manifestation which proves the great falling away from the Christian faith and announces the sad consequences to the salvation of Christian nations. In fact, the more venerable and the more holy a calling is, the more it comes from God the more it will be hated by the enemies of God, despised and persecuted. Thus it was in the time of St. John the Baptist, and still more so at the time of our Divine Saviour, His Apostles and the holy Martyrs. As St. John the Baptist, as the Apostles, as the martyrs,

yes, even as our Divine Saviour, was hated, persecuted and despised by the infidel world, so too is it still more so to-day. Great, marvelously great was our Divine Saviour; great was St. John the Baptist, great were the Apostles, but also to-day there is something great and holy about the episcopal and priestly dignity. Upon the Bishops and priests depends in an extraordinary manner much for the temporal and the eternal welfare of the nations, for the preservation of the faith and of morality, so that their respect or disrespect decides the weal or the woe of the individual as well as of the nations.

4. The reason is clear. They are the servants of God, the visible representatives of the Divine Redeemer, the ambassadors of the heavenly King, the priests of the Eternal High-priest and the successors of the Apostles and the disciples of the Lord. The fullness of the redeeming power of our Divine Saviour dwells in the Pope, in the Bishops and the priests. Therefore they offer up the unbloody sacrifice, administer the holy Sacraments, forgive sins, teach the young and instruct the adults. Yea, whatever the earth has ever beheld of holy, what of miracles of faith and virtue, it owes, after God, to the Catholic priesthood. As one nation after the other entered into the pale of Christianity, into the kingdom of grace, when paganism was overcome and barbarous peoples were made Christians and ennobled, it was the Bishops and the priests who were the instruments in the hand of God to effect all this. The customs, the laws, the arts and learning, even the cultivation of

most of the countries of Europe have to thank the priesthood and religious orders for their prosperity.

And to-day Catholic Bishops and priests after the example of the Divine Saviour go forth into all the world, announce amidst endless difficulties the Gospel to the Indians in the Americas to the heathens in China, to the Negroes in Africa and change them into virtuous men and into zealous Christians. Twenty-nine Popes died a bloody death as martyrs, and thousands of Bishops and priests have sacrificed their lives for the faith, for the salvation of souls. Their blood was the seed of Christians and transformed the heathen into believers. Their blood united itself to the blood of Jesus for the atonement of the sins of the world and called down the mercy of God. And at the present time in China, in Japan and other heathen nations numberless Bishops and priests offer their life and their blood for the holy faith.

Moreover, my beloved, who is the one that is not affrighted at the sick bed, who wrestles with the dying for the salvation of their souls? It is the Catholic priest. In the days of devastating pestilence, when even the physicians flee and the bonds of blood-relationship are not to be considered, then the Catholic priests hasten day and night to the dying. And even if many fall victims to their duty, others take their places. In the deepest valleys, on the highest mountains, in lonely forests, at all times the Catholic priests hasten, in storm and blizzards, in snow and rain whenever their duty calls them. He goes to the garrets, to the cellars, to the hospitals, to the battle-fields, to every place where

souls are to be saved, dying to be assisted, the despairing to be reconciled with God, the sorrowful to be consoled, the poor to be helped — everywhere you find the Catholic priest. Schools, poorhouses, hospitals, reformatories, have mostly to thank their existence to Catholic priests and Bishops. Yes, there is no misery, no suffering, no want, and no place where you will not find a Catholic priest as consoler, as helper and as an angel of peace.

The Catholic priests, with the courage of a St. John the Baptist, have raised their voices against tyrants, against cruel or immoral princes; they took the part of the people for liberty, for morality, for the sanctity of matrimony. Before the tyrant Ezzelino, at the sight of whom every one trembled, appeared St. Anthony of Padua and threatened him with the judgment of God; before the all-powerful King Louis the Fourteenth of France, before whom all silently bowed, appeared a Catholic priest and said: "You are not allowed;" a St. John of Nepomuc contradicted the cruel king Wenceslaus of Bohemia and suffered pains and death rather than betray the secrets of the confessional, and to-day, even if they, too, suffer and suffer much, Pope Pius X, the Bishops and priests defend our holy faith. And if there have been, and if there are, unworthy Bishops and priests they can no more besmirch the dignity of the priesthood than bad Catholics can degrade the holiness of the Church and the greatness of the Catholic faith.

5. Therefore, because the episcopal and priestly dignity is so high and such a blessing for the world

our Divine Saviour spoke these remarkable words: "He that despiseth you despiseth me." And in fact, if the ambassador of a king is honored the king himself is honored, if the ambassador is ill-treated and mis-used the disgrace falls upon the king and he seeks to avenge this disgrace even with a bloody war. The Bishops and priests are the ambassadors of God and the servants of Jesus Christ. Their disgrace, the contempt in which they are held, and the persecution to which they are subjected fall back upon the Saviour. Our Divine Saviour Himself loudly and powerfully announced this to the world. When Saul was commissioned by the Jewish authorities to go to Damascus in order to persecute the priests and the faithful, on the way there resounded a powerful voice in his ear: "Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?" Our Divine Saviour did not say: "Saul, why dost thou persecute my disciples and my priests," but "why dost thou persecute me?" When Herod cast the Apostle St. Peter into prison, had James beheaded and St. Paul scourged, it was not said: "The clergy are persecuted, but the Church and in her Jesus Christ Himself."

It is therefore, my dearly beloved, a miserable attempt of the persecutors and contemners of the priesthood to separate the priests and the Bishops from the faithful, these from the Church and the Church from Jesus Christ. Let them once make this miserable attempt among the Jews and Protestants and despise their rabbis or the preachers. At once — to their honor be it said — all the Jews or all the Protestants would

rise and with one voice declare that this disgrace strikes them and their whole religious faith. Truly, whoever scorns and despises the Bishops and priests, wounds the Catholic conscience, scoffs at all Catholics, scoffs at the Church and scoffs at the Saviour Himself. My God, how the Bishops and the Catholic priests are slandered in public meetings, in hotel lobbies, in theaters and in the yellow press, both by word and cartoon, and flooded with the spittle of the most repulsive filth! If an officer, if a citizen, if a peasant, or still more a policeman, an official, an imperial boot-black, would be one hundredth part so reviled they would all rise and demand that the slanderer be brought to justice, but in regard to the Bishops and the priests, yes, that is of course entirely different! In this regard they are liberal, sharp-sighted and enlightened. In this respect everything is permitted.

6. What are the consequences, my beloved in Christ, of such universal contempt for the priesthood? Yea, they are terrible for the individual, as well as for whole nations. Wo, if God, tired of this contempt for His servants, withdraws His grace from those men who seek their revenge in calumniating the priests! Then they are irretrievably lost. In their souls is revealed an abyss of infidelity and hatred which awakens horror. But wo to whole nations where this contempt for the priests has become a universal custom! there reign no more the blessing of Christianity and the glory of the Catholic faith, and the beauty and the happiness of the Catholic life are extinguished. There abide infidelity and apostasy from God; there reign dis-

content, ruin and extinction of families, of parishes in the State. All the bonds are loosened and insecurity of life and goods and revolt are rampant. Where the priests are eternally despised and slandered the blessing of God is withdrawn and the curse of the fourth commandment lies heavily upon the whole nation and nests in the huts of the poor, in the houses of the citizens and in the palaces of the rich. It rests upon the business, upon the cultivation of the soil, upon labor, upon public intercourse, upon politics, upon the destiny of the country and oppresses with its dreadful consequences all conditions. Jerusalem is witness to this fact. Jerusalem, that stoned the prophets and killed those whom God sent to her. Jerusalem, that despised our Divine Saviour and nailed Him to the cross and persecuted the Apostles — Jerusalem in the day of its grief and despair with which God visited it is the type of the Christians and the Christian nations who, in a like manner, persecute the priests and religious orders and deliver them up to public contempt.

Yes, if the blood of the innocent Abel called to God for vengeance; if the oppression of the poor, of widows and orphans or the non-payment of the wages of the day-laborers cries to heaven, then truly the tears of innocent calumniated priests, the grief and mortification of zealous pastors, the misery of peaceful religious and nuns who are driven like the beasts of the forest, cry to God for just compensation. They suffer, they endure, they eat out their hearts with sorrow, they are despised on account of our Divine Saviour and persecuted on account of justice. Well may they, according

to the promise of Jesus, rejoice because their reward is exceeding great in heaven (Matth. 5, 12.) — but woe to those who attack the servants of God! They have God as their judge, and it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for God will not be mocked.

Therefore, my dearly beloved, never forget the words which our Divine Saviour addressed to His disciples: “He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.” As we must honor our parents, be they good or bad, in order to participate in the blessings of the fourth commandment, so we must also honor the priests even if some, as men, forget themselves and fall into sin. God the eternal Father did not create us without the assistance of our parents, and so He will not save us without the assistance of the priests. God the Son has placed the eternal riches of his graces and merits in the hands of the priests, in order that the rich fullness of them may be poured out over souls by the priests. God the Holy Ghost has chosen the priests as His instruments, in order to sanctify us by them and to instruct us for the bliss of eternity. Let us therefore honor the priests in order that God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost may also honor us and lead us to the heavenly honors in the kingdom of eternal salvation and eternal bliss. Amen.

SERMON XVI

THE CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD AND THE FALSE PROPHETS

“Art thou he that is to come or look we for another?”—
MATTH. II, 3.

The precursor, St. John the Baptist, stands magnificently before us. He was the keystone of the Old Covenant, the last member of that marvelous chain of Patriarchs and Prophets, the holiest among them all. But he was so magnificent, so praised even by our Divine Saviour Himself, and yet he called himself only the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Now who was this crying one? God who sent him, God who called by him. John was, as it were, the speaking trumpet, the voice of the calling God. Nevertheless, in vain was his cry with the exception of the Israelite country people and a few better disposed heathens amidst the wilderness of the infidel and morally ruined hearts of the higher and more wealthy of the Jewish people.

Yes, the greatest of all Prophets, the holiest of all Saints of the Old Testament met no other reception than that of the prison and a bloody death. Did St. John, perhaps, seek his personal advantage and strive after his own advancement? No, a thousand times no!

St. John represented the cause of God, the rights of the divine commandments, the salvation of souls and the true welfare of the Jewish people. In the person of St. John, therefore, the cause of God and the welfare of the people were assailed and persecuted. Who can doubt that this persecution embraced with its deadly hate our Divine Saviour?

The Bishops and priests of the Catholic Church are also the voice of God calling. Jesus Christ still goes through the world and calls by the Catholic priests individual souls and whole nations to acknowledge Him. Do the Catholic priests perhaps teach their own private opinion? Do they seek their own private interests or strive after their own personal influence? No, and again, No! They, too, stand for the rights of God, for the divine commandments, for the truths of the Catholic Church, the salvation of souls, for clean living, consequently, for the true temporal and eternal welfare of the individual as for whole nations. Nevertheless, the Bishops and priests reap no other reward from unbelievers and the false prophets of the present day than the lot of the forerunner of the Lord, yes, of our Divine Saviour Himself.

But it is marvelous, my beloved in Christ, that St. John the Baptist, this miracle of holiness and of faith, at the entrance of our Divine Saviour into public life sent his disciples to Him with this question: "Art thou the one that is to come, or shall we look for another?" Did St. John, perhaps, suffer shipwreck in his faith? He, who was still the precursor of the Lord, and had instructed the Jewish people about the

immediate appearance of the Saviour, yes, at the sight of whom he cried out: "Behold the lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world." Yes, he it was, who baptized Jesus and heard the voice from heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matth. 3, 17.) But no, the precursor of the Lord had not suffered shipwreck in his faith in the Saviour already come. But he wanted to send his disciples to Jesus in order that they might be strengthened in their faith by His teachings and miracles.

The Catholic priests, too, send the faithful to Jesus, to Him in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, to His grace in the Sacraments and to Him in eternal bliss. But a swarm of false prophets arises against them and sows infidelity and ruin. Wherefore I will speak to-day on the Catholic priests and the false prophets, on the miracles of faith and the miracles of infidelity.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. To-day, my beloved in Christ, we see whole swarms, not only of Jews, but also of so-called Christians, who from unbelief put this question: "Art thou the one who is to come or shall we look for another?" And even if the whole world, if hundreds of converted nations and the spread of the Catholic Church over the world, and even if thousands of houses of God and altars, yes, if even nature itself gave the answer: "The Divine Saviour has come, the heavens declare His praise and marvelous is His name throughout the world"—nevertheless this great and glorious truth

finds no credence among our modern infidels. They deny the arrival of Christ, they deny His person and His miracles, His Church and the history of the world and listen to false prophets. How many such prophets are there to-day, to whom half the world runs and applauds? They are swindlers, charlatans, infidel newspaper scribblers and liberal phrase-makers, who give themselves out as men of the people. They carry themselves as the prophets of the people and promise a new era of happiness for the proletariat and welfare of the people in general, and of freedom and enlightenment, of civilization and toleration and at the same time lead a most deadly battle against the faith and Holy Church.

As St. John the Baptist sent his disciples to Jesus in order that they might learn to know Him, the Saviour and Redeemer, so, too, the Catholic priests send men to Jesus in order that they may find in Him the Saviour of their souls and the Redeemer of the world, but also consolation, peace and grace and that they may obtain together with eternal salvation also their temporal well-being. Whither do the false prophets send their followers? To Jesus? To the faith, to Christian virtues, to the service of God or to the holy Sacraments? Indeed, that would be fanaticism, the darkness of the Middle Ages and ultramontane superstition! They send their followers to shameless theaters, to dram-shops, to noisy societies, or to the houses of shame. They estrange the youth from Christian discipline and tear away the school from the Church, they hound defenseless Sisters and Jesuits

and give to the poor, bewildered people godless and immoral papers as the new gospel and prayerbook.

2. Our Divine Saviour pointed out to the disciples of St. John the Baptist as a luminous proof of the truth of His teaching the miracles which He had already wrought: "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." (Matth. 11, 5). Thus, too, the Catholic priests show the faithful and all who are still of good will the miracles which in the course of nineteen hundred years have been wrought in order to confirm the divinity of the Saviour and the truth of the Catholic Church. They point to the miracles which Catholic priests throughout the world have wrought as a proof of their mission from God. And, in fact, there is not, and has not been, a nation so barbarous that has not been gradually improved by the voice of Catholic priests and would not adopt gradually Christian customs and the Christian faith. The priests teach the sanctity of Matrimony as the first foundation of the family and of nations. They sanctify the family, instruct the children, teach the faithful, admonish the sinner and console the dying. They teach Christian justice, condemn sin, deceit and vice and lead the faithful to the salvation-bringing and blessed road of Christian life and Christian living. Verily, what the world has ever seen that was great and sublime, mild and moral, innocent and full of grace, was, after God and His grace, the work of Catholic priests, the fruit of their zeal and their teaching. The Catholic priests still continue to perform

those wonders to which our Divine Saviour as a witness to His heavenly mission for the salvation of the world called them. They heal the blindness of the spirit from error and infidelity; they heal the lame, inasmuch as they teach and assist them, in order that they may enter the more quickly on the road of Christian living; they cleanse the lepers, whom in the Sacrament of Penance they cleanse from the leprosy of sin; they open the ears of the deaf so that they again listen to the Christian doctrines and commandments; they wake the dead to the life of grace and eternal salvation, they preach the gospel to the poor and enrich them with heavenly grace. These are the miracles of faith and of salvation, and the world is full of them. They give testimony of the divine mission of the Catholic priesthood for the eternal salvation of souls and for the temporal welfare of nations.

But to what miracles do the prophets, the pretended men of the people and phrase-makers of enlightenment, point? They have, verily, worked miracles also, but the miracles of hell. Those abortions of swindles and cheats, of lust and luxury, of the destruction of morality and godlessness as the world has never seen before. The desecration and destruction of family life, the increase in poverty and the high cost of living, the insecurity of life and property, the numberless robberies and suicides, the filled prisons and pesthouses of immorality — are they not real miracles with which modern enlightenment has surprised the world? Oh, what a flood of suffering and misery, of sorrow and tears, of sin and vice, spring forth from these miracles

of enlightenment! Who can count the broken hearts, the lost innocence and the unhappy souls who, day after day, fall sacrifices to this enlightenment? Satan began already in paradise to preach this enlightenment and what was its consequence? You know them all. The loss of grace and innocence, the loss of paradise and immortality were the consequences. The miracle which was wrought was the curse of sin, the first fratricide and the sicknesses and death which overtook poor and foolish humanity. To-day the false enlightenment of false prophets continues to bring forth the same fruits.

For this reason, my beloved in Christ, one can rightly ask so many thousands of baptized men what did you go out into the desert to see? In the desert of misery, of sin and godlessness? Oh, return to the gentle fields of the Catholic Church! There flourishes only faith and virtue, peace and blessing, well-being and eternal salvation. Oh, do not believe the modern and false prophets! They will rob you of everything, of the faith, of the peace of a good conscience, of well-being and blessing. Listen to the miracles of Jesus, to His teaching, to the faith of holy Church, as the Catholic priest announces it in the name of God!

3. In fact, how glorious and sublime is the Catholic faith! Our Divine Saviour praised the faith of the poor woman who, in order to recover health, touched the hem of His garment: "Be of good heart, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole." (Matth. 9, 22.) Oh, there is something great about the living faith, this source of all truth, of all grace and of all peace! It is

the light that enlightens all, the medicine that heals the ills of the soul, the balsam which has the power to heal every care and pain and dispenses in every condition of the care-laden life consolation and peace. In very truth, faith is that heavenly good and that sublime grace of a merciful God which He offers to us by His priests. Faith is that marvelous power which took the heathens from the altars of the false gods and transformed them into Christians; it is that heavenly power, which makes out of the enemies of the Church zealous faithful, out of sinners saints, out of immoral men the most wonderful penitents.

Behold the miracles of faith and of grace which shine forth from the innocent souls of children! behold the holy martyrs, the glorious hosts of Confessors and Virgins, the numberless glorified Christians who rejoice in the eternal bliss of heaven! They all proclaim the miracles of that faith which the Catholic priest announces in the name of Jesus. At the present time and among us there are innumerable Christians who in their peace of soul praise the happiness of the Catholic faith. There are thousands of sick, who in the most bitter pains, give evidence of heavenly patience and resignation; thousands of poor and worried who are resigned to the Holy Will of God and feel even consoled; thousands of dying who look with a happy longing for the hour of their dissolution. My friends, these are the miracles of our holy faith, of the faith which the Catholic priest announces and this faith is as old as the Catholic Church itself. Nineteen hundred years have passed by and the Catholic faith re-

mains always in the same beauty and strength, and dispenses everywhere and through all circles of human society blessing and grace, peace and joy, rest and resignation, consolation and patience.

4. Finally, the Catholic faith shows itself glorious in our houses of worship, where it unites mankind in one family of God, in one heart and one soul to praise the thrice holy Triune God. In truth, my beloved in Christ, for the Catholic Christian who is mindful of his heavenly calling, there is nothing more solemn and sublime than to enter into the circle of all the faithful, in union with Jesus Christ, our eternal High-priest, in the unbloody sacrifice and in the communion with the Angels and the Saints in order to praise God in this union in the Church, to adore Him and to assist at divine worship. The holy canticles of the Church raise the heart above earthly life and voices to the sweet devotion of those souls who are not entirely insensible to their eternal salvation. Nothing gives one such a vivid impression of the heavenly Jerusalem as a Christian congregation assembled in the name of the Lord, and devoutly and solemnly singing the praises of God, and of Jesus Christ. The great St. Augustine says in his "Confessions" that his heart was frequently touched and that he wept sweet tears at the sight of a devout congregation praising God. How many sinners have been seized by the solemn heavenly song, entered into themselves, did penance and began anew the Christian life. Just as worldly songs excite the passions of the heart, destroy morals and urge on to immorality, so too, contrariwise, holy songs awaken

pious thoughts, strengthen the soul in good and raise it up to a longing for heavenly things. Wherefore St. Paul writes to the Colossians: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly, in all wisdom: teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and spiritual canticles, singing in grace in your hearts to God." (Col. 3, 16.) But who is it, as the representative of the eternal High-priest, Jesus Christ, that unites the faithful in such divine service and offers their praise, their petitions and prayers to God in the Holy Sacrifice, if not the Catholic priest? My God, what a wide difference between the house of God and those places where the false prophets assemble with their followers. What a difference between the solemn service of God and the boisterous noise and uproar in the dram-shops and other places of assembly.

5. However, the Word of God and the teaching of our Divine Saviour form also the second part of divine service. This teaching raises the soul to heaven. By means of the sermon we are to enter upon, and become strengthened in, the Catholic faith which unites all peoples and all tongues in one language — unites them for their first stammering of the praise of God which the blessed in heaven continue in a wonderful manner. Yes, by means of the sermon we unite ourselves with the faith of the Catholic Church, the faith of the Apostles and the Martyrs. With them we are the constant witnesses of our Divine Saviour, of His life and His sufferings, of His Resurrection and Ascension into heaven, the witnesses of His love and mercy and of the miracles of His grace. But the Holy Ghost accepts

the spoken word and accompanies it with His grace, in order that it may enter into the hearts of the faithful, be understood by them and bring forth fruit for eternal life. That is the service of God of the Christians, to the zealous fulfillment of which our Divine Saviour by word and example teaches us all. Here it is where our Divine Saviour and His doctrines are proclaimed; here we learn the commandments of God and our Christian duties; here we are inflamed with love for our neighbor, confirmed in good and filled with horror for every sin and injustice. And here, too, the words of Jesus hold good: "He that is of God heareth the word of God." And again, the Catholic priests announce the Word of God and instruct the faithful in the heavenly truths and preserve in faith the Christian world.

What a divergence again, my beloved in Christ, between the Word of God, the heavenly truths and the Christian moral law which the Catholic priests announce in the Church in the name of our Divine Saviour, and those blasphemous and immoral speeches which the false prophets hold in their quarters, in taverns, in societies, in the theaters and in the newspapers. Truly such scandalous talk about the priests, about the religious orders and about the Catholic Church the world never heard before, and yet this scandalous talk is surpassed a thousand times by the blasphemies against God, against our Divine Saviour, against the Blessed Virgin Mary, against heaven and hell and the holiest mysteries of faith. It is surpassed by the filthiest and dirtiest witticisms about everything

that is pure, that is holy, that is honorable and virtuous. Even the devils believe and tremble, according to the expression of Holy Scripture, and yet these men believe and tremble not.

But the miracles of their enlightenment are terrible. It can escape no one that the number of men from all classes, from childhood to gray old age, who fall victims to this scandalous and immoral talk is large. It is the source of that deplorable degradation of morals and of that hate-filled godlessness, of that apostasy of the Christian State, of that dissolution of families and of that bewilderment of youth which awakens terror. This venom-breathing enlightenment, sprung from pestilential hearts, moreover, does not hesitate to enthrone adultery and the most degrading vices upon morality, and to degrade man to the very beast, and to deny to the soul immortality and redemption, to the Saviour Divinity and to God justice.

The miracles of this enlightenment fill all honorable Christians with horror, for they reveal themselves in curses and blasphemies and in an immorality which no longer seeks to hide itself, but brazenly stalks through the streets in broad daylight. From this come murders and suicides, lies and calumnies, lost peace in families, in parishes and among nations, and from it comes the grief, the misery and the suffering of thousands of poor souls whose faith and honor and innocence for time and eternity have been murdered by these false prophets.

6. Oh, my beloved in Christ, with our Divine Saviour I speak to you from the fullness of my heart, and

for the sake of your eternal and temporal weal I say: "Beware of false prophets." (Matth. 7, 15.) Preserve the holy Catholic faith, this heavenly gift of grace, which in the midst of suffering humanity appears as the messenger of peace, as a heavenly consolator. Faith solves all riddles about eternity, and offers true and marvelous enlightenment about God, about ourselves and our eternity. It consoles the soul and strengthens us in joy and in sorrow and points out to us a better and an eternal life, where God will wipe away all tears. And even in this earthly life a living faith has alleviating balm for every pain, and knows how to mix in the chalice of suffering for every Christian some few drops of sweet consolation.

The Catholic priests in the name of God and of the Church announce this glorious faith, and to them alone our Divine Saviour said: "He that heareth you heareth me." Yes, to hear our Divine Saviour, that is the joy of the soul, and if we have heard Him in His priests on earth we will hear Himself in heaven. There we will hear His voice which lovingly says: "Be of good heart, thy faith has helped thee." The reward of eternal bliss is truly a miracle of faith, and its most marvelous explanation follows in the beatific vision of God and in the communion of all the blessed for all eternity. Amen.

SERMON XVII

THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

“This is a great sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in the Church.”—EPH. 5, 33.

Our Divine Saviour has truly come, not only to save us and to announce His heavenly truths, but also to sanctify every state of human life, childhood, youth, the working class, the poor and the rich, the sick and the dying, and especially the family and marriage. For this reason His first appearance in public life was at the marriage feast at Cana in Galilee. There in the circle of His disciples and of the nuptial guests He was the most friendly picture of benevolence and beneficence. He showed that the Christian religion does not reject innocent amusements, but permits them as long as the measure of good order and moderation is not exceeded. He showed that Christian charity and virtue go hand in hand with cheerfulness and innocent joy. Wherefore He saved the poor bridal couple, by changing water into wine, from great embarrassment and shame before their guests and filled their hearts with joy and gratitude. But this, His first miracle, was not the principal reason of His presence at this nuptial feast. He had come to regenerate Matrimony, the root and foundation of the human race, and to save

it from the condition of decay and degeneration, and to establish it upon a holy basis, upon the basis of the sacrament of Matrimony. And not satisfied with that, He wished that His own union with the Church should be the type of Christian marriage. Hence St. Paul says: "This is a great sacrament: but I speak in Christ and in the Church."

The Apostle St. John advisedly writes: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee" (John 2, 11), therefore at the celebration of a marriage. Where will be the end of His miracles? The end of His miracles was at the Last Supper in the institution of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Matrimony is the central point of earthly and bodily life, but the Blessed Sacrament is the center of the Christian and spiritual life. In Matrimony the man and woman solemnize their inseparable but corporal union; in the Blessed Sacrament, however, the Christian soul solemnizes its nuptials with Jesus Christ, the Divine Bridegroom of souls. Therefore, by this first miracle, by changing water into wine, is promised to Christian marriage the earthly blessing of God; by the second and last miracle, however, the Christian soul shares in the heavenly blessing, grace and eternal life. As the union of the Christian soul with Jesus Christ, surpasses a thousandfold in dignity, nobility and grace the matrimonial union of the man with the woman, so the second miracle, namely, the changing of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ surpasses a thousandfold the first miracle, the changing of water into wine.

I have already spoken sufficiently about the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar and will therefore to-day speak on the Sacrament of Matrimony, of its ceremonies and its graces and of its duties.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

I. Almighty God Himself, my beloved, instituted Matrimony in paradise, in its unity and indissolubility. It is the first and oldest union of mankind, the foundation of the family, the corner-stone of the human race and the reason of its preservation. But the more mankind, after the fall in paradise, sank into idolatry and vice, the more the unity of Matrimony was loosened, and its sanctity among the pagans was almost entirely destroyed. Woman sank into slavery and lost all rights which female dignity and honor demanded for the welfare of the family and of the children. The degradation of marriage was so boundless that from this source the misery, the suffering, the immorality and the barbarous treatment of children came which so terribly devastated the world. The re-establishment, therefore, of Matrimony in its original unity and sanctity was the highest necessity, if the poison from the degraded matrimonial state was not to gradually spread abroad through all mankind, and nullify salvation. This re-establishment was the first care of our Divine Saviour and for this reason He appeared at the nuptial feast at Cana, where He performed His first miracle as the type of the blessing which should be spread abroad over the world by the new and sanctified Matrimony.

Jesus Christ performed here two great works as Divine Legislator and a third and still greater as Saviour of the world. As Divine Legislator He first re-established Matrimony in its original unity as God had instituted it in paradise, so that the matrimonial union, as between Adam and Eve, could only take place between one man and one woman. Secondly, he gave back to Matrimony its original indissolubility as it had existed between Adam and Eve and down almost to the time of Noah. "Every one that putteth away his wife, and marries another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her who hath been put away from her husband, committeth adultery." (Luke 16, 18.) With these words our Divine Saviour, as Legislator of the world, re-establishes the original indissolubility of Matrimony. As the soul is inseparably united to the body until death, so should the matrimonial union be inseparable until the death of the one or the other spouse.

This divine law effectually protects the child and its mother from the waywardness and caprice of the father. The child needs as much the care of its mother as it does the love and consideration of its father, if its common education is to make any progress and its future is to be secure. If it could be by force separated from its mother, its holiest and happiest feelings would be stifled and it would be placed in an inconsolable position. But the indissolubility of Matrimony protects also the woman from the wilful dismissal into misery. It thereby places a dam to passions and effectually closes the door to faithlessness

which is only too often made use of for a divorce. Even the thought of a possible separation would disturb the matrimonial love and harmony and inflict upon it a deep wound. Yes, open for it the eternal door for jealousy and you annihilate the common home activity for the success and progress of the family and destroy the peace and harmony at home. Differences among the relations, law-suits about temporalities, and numberless recriminations would be the other and necessary consequences. But with the indissolubility of Matrimony the unity and peace among the relatives will also continue.

As celestial type and example of this indissoluble Matrimony our Divine Saviour places His own spiritual union with His Church. Until the end of days this union will continue on earth: "Behold I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world." Jesus is the head of His Church and her Divine Bridegroom, but she is His Bride and the Mother of the Living, of the children of God on earth. Our Divine Saviour shed His blood upon the Cross for His Church, and until the present day the Church suffers for His sake. For His sake she is hated and persecuted and martyred, but, notwithstanding all, she perseveres in loyal love. Our Divine Saviour has entrusted to her His treasures of grace, redemption and His doctrine, yea, even His body and blood in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, she on her side administers the household of Jesus on earth, cares for her children, the faithful, with motherly love, nourishes them with the holy Sacraments, purifies them from sin

and brings them up for heaven. In accordance with this splendid type and example Christian Matrimony is also an indissoluble union. The Apostle St. Paul calls the attention of the faithful to this matter in the following words: "Because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church. . . . Therefore as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for it." (Eph. 5, 23-25.)

2. Our Divine Saviour, in order to ensure this unity and indissolubility, raised Matrimony to the dignity of a Sacrament, so that married people might possess the grace to remain mutually true to each other and remain steadfast in a Christian manner, and raise their children in a manner pleasing to God. Hence St. Paul cries out: "This is a great sacrament: but I speak in Christ and in the Church." And, truly, my beloved in Christ, this Sacrament, in its graces and blessings, is great and important for Christian society. St. Augustine even goes so far as to compare Christian Matrimony with Baptism and Holy Orders, because between living spouses there also exists a bond which cannot be dissolved either by separation or by a new union, just the same as a baptized person or a priest cannot lose the mark that has been indelibly imprinted upon their souls even though they should fall away from the faith.

It is the dignity of this Sacrament which lends to Christian marriage its character of sanctity and its powerful influence upon humanity. The Christian

husband should be the living image of the Saviour, not a tyrant, but the vicegerent of God and truly a father to his family. The wife should be the living picture of holy Church, therefore she should show reverence towards her husband, motherly love to her children and announce peace and should show the way to salvation by her Christian example.

For this reason Matrimony, on account of its importance and because it is a Sacrament, must be publicly entered into before the face of the Church. If a marriage is to be happy, if it is to possess the grace of the Sacrament, the bridal couple must prepare themselves worthily for it. And because this step is so earnest and so important, and decides the happiness here on earth, and as a rule also eternal happiness, the bridal couple must appear before their lawful pastor. Their first duty is to see whether all prescribed conditions are fulfilled, or whether there are any impediments of blood relationship or of affinity, and if therefore a dispensation from the Bishop is necessary. Secondly, the pastor must examine the bridal couple in order to see whether they are sufficiently instructed in the Christian faith. For how could married people properly fulfill their Christian duties towards themselves and their children if they are not well instructed in them? At the same time the bridal couple must be in the state of grace, and therefore make a good confession in order to receive the Sacrament of Matrimony worthily.

3. If these conditions are fulfilled the nuptial couple go before the altar, therefore, into the presence of God,

in order to receive His blessing and His grace, as Adam and Eve were blessed by God in paradise. The priest, as the representative of God, blesses the marriage ring. He then asks, in the presence of witnesses, the bridegroom and the bride if it be their earnest will to marry each other. The consent for the validity of the marriage must be voluntary and not compulsory. In confirmation of their earnest will the bridal couple clasp hands as a sign that their future life will go hand in hand until the grave. The ring indicates the fidelity that should continue unchanged as long as life lasts. And the priest in the name of the holy Triune God blesses their matrimonial union.

The marriage ceremony should take place in the morning immediately before the nuptial mass, during which the bridal couple will receive holy communion together. In former centuries both of the bridal couple were crowned. The wreath was of olive branches, the symbol of peace, and remained in the church as a blessed object. There was also a veil spread over the bridal couple as a symbol that the happiness of the young married people would grow and flourish, not in the distractions of the world, but in the home circle and quiet retirement. They had burning candles in their hands which symbolized the light of good works in order that they might not be excluded from the heavenly marriage feast like the foolish virgins. They also gave on their day of honor alms, in order that in their own happiness the poor might rejoice and ask God's blessing for them.

4. But, my dear friends, let no one deceive himself.

The duties of Christian marriage are also great, as the Sacrament and its graces are great. As the duties so also the graces of this Sacrament continue to last through the whole of life. The first and most necessary duty of married people is mutual love, for without love, and that Christian, not sensual, such an intimate and close union forever is absolutely unthinkable. Without Christian love Matrimony only too often becomes a hell on earth, and the house the theater of wild scenes. Without Christian love, Matrimony very frequently loads upon the married people only a curse and unhappiness. My God, how terrible, if the Sacrament of blessing is changed into the source of curses! The second duty is irreproachable fidelity until death which the married people have promised in the sight of God before the altar. Hence adultery is such a great crime, if we only consider the Sacrament of Matrimony which is outraged, like the Blessed Sacrament by an unworthy communion, or if we consider the hateful injustice towards the other party and the deception towards the lawful children whose inheritance is diminished. Besides this, adultery is a crime against the family and a crime against social order, because it destroys family life and neglects the children. It is, moreover, a crime against God, who instituted and sanctified the matrimonial bond. Disgrace, poverty, suicide or the murder of children are frequently its consequences and temporal and eternal curse its fruit. May God preserve every marriage from such a crime.

Another duty of married people, my dearly beloved, is the mutual assistance and participation in all condi-

tions of life, in happiness and unhappiness, in sickness and in health. The married couple promised this duty at the altar, and this vow is holy. For this reason the married couple must also mutually sanctify each other, in order that after this earthly life they may obtain the heavenly life. Over and above this mutual duty of the married people for an eternal life, they have the mutual duty of the Christian bringing up of their children as an indispensable condition of their salvation. The children are the most precious boon which God has entrusted to the parents, in order that they may return it to Him on the day of judgment with interest. This interest is the true Christian education, that holy and highest duty which gives to the Church zealous faithful, to the community useful citizens, to the Redeemer grateful redeemed and to heaven heirs. Especially is it the mother, who, according to the words of the Apostle St. Paul, should be blessed by her children. But woe to the parents who permit this sacred duty to go unfulfilled by their frivolous negligence or indifference in regard to the salvation of their children! They sin against themselves, against the children, against Christian society, against the Church and against God. They have sworn at the altar to faithfully fulfil this duty. This oath decides their eternal salvation and usually also their temporal happiness, for especially on account of the children our Divine Saviour in His adorable mercy raised Matrimony to the dignity of a Sacrament.

Therefore Christian parents have always been a real blessing for the children, for society and for holy

Church. From them come forth, after the grace of God, those great teachers of the Church, that army of martyrs and confessors, of holy founders of orders, Bishops, priests and faithful. And what the world has ever seen that was glorious in grace and innocence, in piety and Christian works, was sowed by Christian parents and then developed to its full perfection.

5. This Sacrament, therefore, is great in Christ and in the Church and reaches by its worthy reception over into eternal life. For this reason the nuptial couple should consider it well before they take this decisive step. And yet, how frivolously is not Matrimony frequently entered into, and how unworthily the Sacrament is received! The young Tobias said to his bride: "For we are the children of saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God." (Tob. 8, 5.) My God, would that all young people who wished to marry were of the same mind as the young Tobias and his bride, Sarah, then that misery and discontent would not overtake so many before they are scarcely married. Sometimes two young people have hardly become acquainted when they hasten to get married, without choice or examination, without really knowing themselves or their Christian duties, without a good and pure intention, just like the heathens, from passion alone, or from the desire of riches or success in life or only to be without care. And yet, if, my beloved, there is not added a threefold crime, a threefold sacrilege, if one or the other party or both of them at the same time make an unworthy confes-

sion for a frivolous reason, make an unworthy communion and therefore receive the third Sacrament, the Sacrament of Matrimony, unworthily — then, believe me, the blessing of God is changed into His terrible curse. Whence arise those ruined marriages, those endless bickerings and contentions, that hell in the home, those tears and despairing condition of the husband or the wife or of both together, if not mostly from the unworthy reception of this Sacrament? Whence arise the ruin of housekeeping, the destruction of well-being, the vain labor and cares after a comfortable income, the misfortune with the children, after the tavern life and the drunkenness of the man, the infidelity of the wife if not from the altar where both obtained instead of the blessing the curse of God? My God, is there no salvation more? Yes, there is. It consists in true contrition and penance, in a worthy confession and communion, which will wipe out the sins committed and prepare the way for a true Christian life. This conversion alone can appease God and move Him to still give His blessing. Yes, this Christian conversion is alone able to unite the contradictory temperaments unto true peace and harmony.

6. May therefore all those who intend to enter into holy wedlock prepare themselves well, and earnestly consider this important step, and with a pure heart worthily receive this Sacrament! The bridegroom should look upon his type or symbol, our Divine Saviour, and upon His fidelity and love for His holy Church. The bride should constantly have before her eyes her type or figure, the holy Church and her love

and, in spite of sufferings, her constant obedience to the Saviour, in order that God might bless their union with His heavenly blessing. Yes, my beloved in Christ, like the nuptial couple at the marriage feast at Cana, all Christian bridal couples should invite Jesus Himself to their day of honor, to close their contract in His presence and seal it with the Sacrament of the Altar. Then the Blessed Virgin, too, will be a mild, a good intercessor, and in the day of want and care come to their assistance. Thus Christian marriage, if lived in faith and grace, leads to the eternal marriage feast, to Jesus in the circle of the blessed. Amen.

SERMON XVIII

THE DIGNITY AND HOLINESS OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

“This is a great sacrament: but I speak in Christ and in the church.”—EPHES. 5, 32.

In my last sermon we saw how our Divine Saviour by His presence in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, gave a splendid example to parents and children. And in truth, our children can only then increase in age and grace and wisdom before God and men, can only then preserve purity of morals and grow up for the welfare of the family and of society, when they are thoroughly instructed in the Catholic religion and with this instruction combine true piety and deep faith, constant prayer and a frequent and worthy reception of the sacraments.

Our Divine Saviour had come into this world to sanctify and bless every condition of the human race — childhood, youth, the working-man, the family. That is why when He entered upon His public life, He made His first appearance the occasion of assisting at a function which is of the utmost importance to the human race, and so by His presence sanctified and blessed the state of Matrimony. It was this that impelled Him to show His wonderful mercy and condescension

by being a guest at the wedding-feast of Cana. Oh, how happy did the presence of Jesus make this poor bridal couple! And in truth His presence was not an empty and a meaningless one. On this occasion Christ performed His first miracle by changing water into wine, and thereby saved the young couple much embarrassment. But He assuredly did more than this; the wonders of His grace were bestowed in lavish measure on them; He blessed and sanctified their day of honor, and gave His full approval to what they had done; and we have every reason to believe that because of His presence their after days were passed in peace and harmony. And in very truth, if Jesus has entered into the circle of the family, if Jesus unites the hearts of the married couple, if both are well grounded in piety and Catholic life, they can hope that God will approve their union, and that peace, harmony and blessing will abide in their midst. For this reason our Divine Saviour has raised this most important union to the dignity of a sacrament for the benefit of mankind.

Notwithstanding this fact, my dearly beloved, and in spite of Our Divine Saviour, the modern tendency has everywhere and always been to destroy the sacramental character of Matrimony. This has brought in its train the absolute and practical denial of the sacredness and indissolubility of the marriage bond, and the doors have been opened wide to every infidelity, vice and crime. It is evident that this, like the godless school, has the avowed purpose of de-Christianizing the peoples.

On almost every page of the gospels we encounter

numerous examples of Christ's infinite mercy for the sick of body and of soul, as well as of the sublime grandeur of humility and of true faith. But this mercy of Christ, this grandeur of humility and real faith are not dead, they continue to live in the true, the Catholic Church. The decree has gone forth that they are to be ravaged and destroyed. The true faith is destroyed by so-called toleration, which opens wide the gates to every falsehood and impiety, whilst everything that is Catholic is misrepresented, vilified and raked through the muck. Christian humility is destroyed by the pride of life and the unbridled license of the intellect. All this is done under the sacred guise of liberty and enlightenment.

Doubtless, the time will soon come when we shall find more faith among the pagans than among those who were formerly considered Christian nations, just as Our Divine Saviour found more faith among the pagans than among the Jews.

I shall therefore speak to-day about the Sacrament of Matrimony.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. There are many who count themselves among the intellectual aristocracy. They criticise and ridicule everything that, because of a lack either of knowledge and intelligence or of a lively faith, they do not understand. The creation of Eve from the side of Adam is one of the mysteries so ridiculed. And yet, my dearly beloved, this mystery in relation to Jesus Christ and to the human race, finds its accomplishment every

day. The body of Adam was taken from the earth not merely because it was to return to the earth by death, but in general to indicate the vocation of man, who was destined to win his bread from the earth in the sweat of his brow and to be chiefly concerned with the outside world. But Eve was taken from the side of Adam. This expresses the intimate union that should exist between husband and wife, the dependency of the wife upon the husband and the duty that the husband has of loving his wife as himself. But it also expresses the vocation of the wife. The wife is especially charged with the care of what immediately concerns the body, to her is particularly confided the bringing up of the children, the care of the sick, the household duties and the preparation of the food. Until the end of the world man and wife will continue to fulfill the vocation that is so mysteriously indicated by the manner of their creation. It was God Himself who then united Adam and Eve in the bonds of Matrimony. Therefore Matrimony is the oldest and most sacred union among men. Instituted by God Himself at the beginning of the world, it received the first blessing that came down from heaven upon earth, and in this divine blessing the pledge of its endurance until the end of the world and until the human race should be completed. Adam received his inseparable companion Eve in paradise from the hands of God, and on that occasion pronounced the prophetic words that are ever finding their fulfillment: "This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. . . . Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to

his wife: and they shall be two in one flesh." (Gen. 2, 23, 24.)

But marriage is also the most sacred union among men. God, who instituted it, is holy; Adam and Eve were holy for, at that time, they were still in the state of innocence and grace like to the angels; its object was holy, for in the hands of God it was the means of pro-creating children. But when men, in consequence of their fall into sin, departed from the sanctity of marriage and violated it, the Son of God Himself, Our Divine Lord and Saviour, restored it to its original dignity and glorified it by His first miracle of note. But, not content with this, He raised it to the dignity of a sacrament and constituted His own wonderful union with His Holy Church the exemplar and model of the union that should exist between Christian husband and wife. Therefore St. Paul says: "This is a great sacrament: but in Christ and in the Church." (Ephes. 5, 32.)

The Son of God, as it were, left the throne of His heavenly Father and came down upon earth, in order to unite Himself with His Church. God sent a mysterious sleep over Adam. During the time that Adam slept God took a rib from his side and formed Eve. In like manner did Christ sleep the death sleep of the Cross, and from the open wound of His side proceeded His immaculate Spouse, the Catholic Church. Through the water which flowed from His sacred side we are born again as Christians in holy baptism, and through the blood we are redeemed and nourished for the Christian and eternal life. But the Church is composed of Chris-

tians. Christ acknowledges only one Church as His Spouse, He loves but one, and He is the head of only this one and only true Church. His union with her is indissoluble, for He will remain with her all the days until the consummation of the world. But the Church also acknowledges only one bridegroom, the Divine Redeemer; she assumes but His name—the Church of Christ; for the last nineteen hundred years she thinks only of Him, hopes only in Him, believes only in Him and loves only Him. She is obedient and faithful to Him in spite of all the sufferings and persecutions that she must bear at the hands of an impious world and hostile governments. The purpose of this indissoluble union of Christ with His Church, which St. Paul also calls the body of Christ, is the regeneration of a redeemed progeny, the faithful. Everything is directed to this end; hence Our Divine Saviour bestows His richest graces upon His Church, and confides to her even His own sacred body in Holy Eucharist. The Church like a true mother takes the best care of the children whom the Saviour has entrusted to her in holy baptism. She nourishes them with her doctrine and her sacraments, she brings them up for God and heaven and will sacrifice anything rather than the salvation of souls. This is the exemplar and model of marriage which our Divine Saviour proposes to all those who receive this sacrament.

Hence, as the living image of our Divine Saviour, the Christian husband and father should be the object of holy love for the wife and respect for his children. The position that he holds as head of the family should

not make him a tyrant as were the pagan husbands. But he must remember that he is the representative of a God who governs firmly, but also mildly. The sacramental dignity of marriage gives the Christian wife an honored position of which the ancient pagans did not even dream. In the sacrament of Matrimony she is not a slave, not a hand-maid, but the living image of the Church, the tenderly loved bride of the Divine Saviour. Yea, what the Church is for the world, that should the wife be in the bosom of her family: the messenger of peace and the guide on the path of salvation.

2. In consequence of the fact that Matrimony is a sacrament the children have become for the parents what the faithful are to Christ and His Church. From this you can conclude, Christian parents, how sacred are the obligations you contract when you enter the holy bonds of wedlock. The father as the head of the wife and of the family is obliged to care for their temporal and eternal welfare. Jesus Christ not only laid down His life for His Church, but He continues to care for her; He protects and defends her, He guides her with His heavenly grace, He nourishes her with His own flesh and blood in Holy Eucharist. Hence St. Paul says to all Christian fathers: "Husbands love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered himself up for it." (Ephes. 5, 25.) And if they model their love on that of their divine exemplar, it will be a holy, faithful and constant love. They will then also treat their wives with patience and respect, mindful of the fact that God has confided them

to them as helpmates, just as He gave Eve to Adam as his life companion. On the day of judgment God will demand these wives from them. In consequence of this the father, who is the head of the wife and of the family, has the eminent responsibility and obligation before God and the world to be a shining example in the fulfillment of his Christian duties, in the observance of the laws of God and of the Church, so that a Christian spirit may pervade his family and thus call down upon them God's blessing from above, just as our Divine Saviour has brought blessing and salvation to His Church by His example and His teachings.

But you also, Christian wives and mothers, have special obligations towards your husbands and families. These duties are traced out for you by the example of Holy Church. Just as the Church thinks only of One, loves but One and obeys and respects Him, so should every Christian wife think only of one, love but one, and obey and respect him. Here again St. Paul tells us what we should hold in the matter: "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord: because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church." (Ephes. 5, 22, 23.)

This duty of obedience extends itself to everything that is right and Christian, but ceases as soon as the husband's will is in contravention with the will of God, for we are bound to obey God rather than men. But the wife also owes the husband mildness, patience and courtesy, because God has assigned her to him as his life-companion, as his help-mate, as one who is destined to share with him, lovingly and bravely, all

the vicissitudes that life brings with it. She is given him, however, especially as a companion on the way to life eternal. Hence she should be distinguished for her fear of the Lord, her piety and modesty, and should sedulously avoid everything that may cause discord. The words that St. Peter addresses to the women on this subject are very beautiful: "Let wives be subject to their husbands: that if any believe not the word, they may be won without the word, by the conversation of the wives, considering your chaste conversation with fear. Whose adorning let it not be the outward plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel: but in the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptibility of a quiet and meek spirit, which is rich in the sight of God. For after this manner heretofore the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands. As Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord." (1 Pet. 3, 1, 6.)

Moreover, it is the wife's special duty to care for the household. The husband is necessarily forced to appear in public; the wife, on the contrary, finds her proper sphere in the family circle; here she finds a grateful field for the exercise of her own gentle gifts and qualities. The grace of God will never be wanting to her in the faithful and ready accomplishment of the duties of her vocation.

3. There is one duty that father and mother have in common, and that is the bringing up of their children in the fear and the love of the Lord. On the proper fulfillment of this duty hinges their own tem-

poral and eternal welfare. The children are a precious treasure that has been confided to the watchful care of the parents. Father and mother are bound to lead them to never-ending happiness by means of a Christian education and by teaching them by word and example to lead a life entirely pleasing to God. It is particularly for the sake of the children that our Divine Saviour raised Matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament. His own union with the Church as the prototype of Christian wedlock has no other object in view than the raising of a holy race. Matrimony, therefore, can have no other object than the raising of holy children. God placed two angels at the entrance to paradise in order to keep watch and guard over it. In like manner father and mother have received the sacred mission to be the visible angel guardians to their children. Innocent and resplendent with the grace of God they have received the souls of their children from the saving waters of baptism, and now it is their duty to watch over and defend this paradise so that sin may find no entry there. Parents are the gardeners whom God has placed in His garden, there to care for His lilies and His roses. They share with the bishops and the priests the divine mission of educating their children, of instructing them by word and example, and of raising them for a Christian life. "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me, for the kingdom of heaven is for such." These words, though spoken by our Divine Saviour to both the parents, apply particularly to the mother, for during the tender years of childhood her influence on the

children is paramount. Anent this matter St. Paul well says: "Yet she shall be saved through child-bearing; if she continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety." (1 Tim. 2, 15.) The child must become Christian on the lap of the Christian mother. It is she who must imprint the sign of our redemption on its forehead; it is she who must inspire it with love for God its heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ its Divine Saviour; she it is who must teach it to fold its little hands in childish prayer, so that the good seed that has been planted in its heart may spring up and bring forth good fruit to the complacency of God, to the joy of the parents and to the salvation of the child itself. Christian parents, take this to heart, for on the day of judgment a holy and a just God will demand the souls of your children at your hands, and your own immortal souls will have to stand guaranty for them. But if Christian parents have not only faithfully cared for the temporal welfare of their children, but have given far more attention to their spiritual upbringing, they offer God the most precious of gifts; He Himself will be their debtor and will richly repay all their cares and worries.

Because Christian marriage is so great a mystery in Christ and in the church, as St. Paul says, it possesses great similarity with Baptism, with Confirmation and Holy Orders. These sacraments, as long as life lasts, confer the graces necessary to live holy as a child of God, to steadfastly confess the faith and to worthily fulfill the duties of the priesthood. In like manner the sacrament of Matrimony confers upon the married

couple the graces that are necessary to enable them to persevere in mutual fidelity and to raise their children in a Christian manner. The former sacraments imprint an indelible mark upon the soul, which can be eliminated neither by sin nor by apostasy. In a similar manner a bond has been established between husband and wife that cannot be dissolved during the lifetime of either, but which only death can rend asunder. For a like reason Christian marriage may, in a manner, be compared even to the Blessed Sacrament. Christ is present on our altars as long as the species remain undestroyed; Christian marriage endures until death, the grim destroyer, comes and carries either the one or the other of the married couple to his last resting place. Therefore death, and only death, can disrupt the bonds of Matrimony.

My dearly beloved, everything is solemn and important in the sacrament of Matrimony. It is the foundation of human society; it is the happiness of the family, the necessary condition of the children's prosperity, the mainstay of morality. Hence the Son of God began His public career on earth by sanctifying and blessing marriage and, in the sequel, by raising it to the dignity of a sacrament. Therefore, wo to the man who lays a sacrilegious hand upon this sacrament! His action is subversive of the Church, of human society, of the welfare of the family and of the best interests of the children. All ye who are united by the sacrament of Matrimony, remember the union of Jesus Christ with His Church; remember the sanctity of the sacrament, remember your sacred obliga-

tions towards each other and towards your children, so that God may ever approve of your union, so that He may assist you with His grace and His mercy and render your union forever indissoluble in heaven among all the sainted couples, who now praise and glorify God through all eternity. Amen.

SERMON XIX

MIXED MARRIAGES

“This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the church.”—EPH. 5, 22.

The union of our Divine Saviour with His Church is marvelous. He sanctifies the Church and abides with her to the end of days, in order that she may continue in His place and in His name on earth the work of salvation by sanctifying, instructing and educating mankind for eternal bliss. This union of the Church with the Saviour embraces all times, all generations and the whole world. Whoever among men, from Adam to the last man, has found grace and redemption belongs to Jesus and His Church on earth and in heaven. The Church as His Bride is one with Jesus through her faith, her hope and charity, in her Sacraments and in her Sacrifice. Wherefore she announces to the whole world no other faith and no other message than those which her Divine Head, Jesus Christ, announced on earth. She administers no other Sacraments and offers no other Sacrifice, than those which He had instituted. With her all her children, all the faithful Christians should be united in the same language of heaven, in the same hope and love for God, and in the same Sacrifice and divine service. They are

all one heart and one soul, truly the holy family of God on earth and the beautiful type of the triumphant Church in heaven.

What Jesus and His holy Church are for the whole world and the entire human race, that Christian marriage should be in the circle of the family. As a living picture of the Saviour, the husband should be the object of love for the wife and of reverence for the children. In the home circle he has the calling of an apostle who announces to the family the Christian faith and the commandments and unites them to the same service of God around the same sacrifice. The wife, as the living type of holy Church, should educate the children, instruct them in piety and the fear of the Lord, and lead them on to our Divine Saviour. Her calling is like unto the Church, to form children of God and heirs of heaven. Hence our Divine Saviour placed before their eyes the heavenly mystery of His union with the Church as a luminous example of Christian marriage and raised it to a Sacrament, in order that a higher dignity and consecration and grace might lift it above earthly turmoil and pagan notions to a union blessed by God. In this sense the Apostle St. Paul exclaims: "This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the church." Now, my beloved in Christ, how can this celestial type of the union of Jesus with His Church be typified in a marriage, where one or the other party belongs to a Protestant or non-Catholic denomination? How can such a marriage possess the sanctity and dignity of a Sacrament, or fulfill its calling as the Church in miniature

for the eternal salvation of the children? In mixed marriages where one part is Catholic, the other Protestant, frequently the children are not instructed in the Catholic faith, consequently the dignity, the grace and the blessing and harmony of Matrimony frequently does not obtain. I will therefore speak to-day on mixed marriages and show their dangers and disadvantages to the married couple as well as to their children.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. From the most ancient times holy Church has forbidden the faithful to contract marriage with those who have fallen away from the Catholic Church and gone over to heresy. In the year 340 the meeting of the Bishops at Elvira in Spain decreed that it was not allowed to give maidens in marriage to heretics. The General Council of Chalcedon in the year 451 issued the same decree, provided the unbeliever was not willing to return to the Catholic faith. And this has been the law of the Church through all centuries down to the present day. Mixed marriages are not allowed and are only tolerated if the Protestant or non-Catholic party promises to raise the children in the Catholic faith. This prohibition of the Church, my beloved, is based on the prohibition which God gave to the Israelites: "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them. [Namely with the neighboring pagan nations.] Thou shalt not give thy daughter to his son, nor take his daughter for thy son"; God Himself gives the reason for this prohibition with the words: "For she

will turn away thy son from following me, that he may rather serve strange gods and the wrath of the Lord will be kindled, and will quickly destroy thee." (Deut. 7, 3-4.)

The same reason which induced God to make this prohibition also induced the Catholic Church to decree the same prohibition. The great dangers which threaten the Catholic party in a mixed marriage, the endangering of the education of the children, the dissimilarity of the rights and duties, the lessening of the dignity of the Sacrament and the happiness of a common faith, have justified this prohibition through all time.

In fact, the dangers for the Catholic party in a mixed marriage are frequently so great that he either entirely neglects his Catholic duties, or according to the words of God to the Israelites, is led on to fall away from the faith. But to suffer shipwreck in the faith is the greatest misfortune which can overtake a Catholic. Even if he has committed other grievous sins, so long as he keeps his faith, he still has hopes of salvation. Here the words of our Divine Saviour which he addressed to the greatest sinner hold true: "Thy faith hath helped thee." (Luke 7, 50.) But where faith is wanting what can save them? In the constant intercourse with men who do not esteem the Catholic faith, yes, even despise it and scoff at it as a superstition, my God, how great is the danger gradually to entirely lose it. This danger is the greater, the more intimate the relation and the greater the love or dependence is towards any one. The most intimate relation, how-

ever, is marriage, therefore the danger for the Catholic party is so great, either from love or for the sake of peace to deny his faith and to share in the other's unbelief. Solomon was the wisest of kings, but nevertheless he finally fell away from the faith in the one true God, and built idolatrous temples because contrary to the divine command he had taken pagan wives. They led him astray in spite of his wisdom. And this happens only too frequently to Catholics in mixed marriages. In the beginning they give the greatest assurance that they wish to persevere, constant and true, in their faith. But after some years their fidelity is shaken, their constancy disappears and with it their Catholic faith.

2. Granted that the open apostasy from the Catholic faith is of more rare occurrence, still the danger of religious indifference is all the greater and the more frequent. It manifests itself already in the very contracting of a mixed marriage, for no Catholic Christian, who still loves and knows his faith, would think of doing this. By his faith he has the certain knowledge that the Catholic Church is the only true Church and hence every one who knowingly does not belong to it, finds himself in error and outside the pale of salvation. Can there, therefore, be anything more natural than that the Catholic party gradually imagines that it is a matter of indifference whether one possesses the true faith or not? Finally, if the immediate relatives acquired by a mixed marriage are Protestants, the intimate association with them, their ridicule and innuendoes must necessarily extinguish the little flame

of faith completely, and cause the absolute neglect of receiving the Sacraments as prescribed. Thus the Catholic party will live without God, without the service of God and without the Sacraments. And the end? Yes, the end is absolute indifference in matters of faith.

But the mixed marriage appears still worse, my beloved, if we consider the endangered education of the children. The weal or woe of humanity depends principally upon the Christian or the un-Christian education of the children. What is omitted in this can, as a rule, never be supplied. Hence St. Paul says: "But if any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. 5, 8.) In fact, one of the holiest, yes, the holiest duty of the parents is the Christian education of their children, upon which their own eternal happiness or misery largely depends. But how can parents, who are separated in the holiest bond, that of religion, how can they carefully and in common fulfill this holy duty? What the Catholic father builds up the Protestant mother tears down, or what the Catholic mother teaches the Protestant father scoffs at. Now whom will the poor child believe? Must it not fall into error and from youth on become indifferent and even atheistic? But how will it be if all the children in spite of all the promises are raised Protestants? If the mother stands alone and abandoned and is even scoffed at by her own children as superstitious or ultramontane? There she stands in her old age, provided she still has the faith, full of

sorrow and misery, full of care and anxiety, for the salvation of her children. In truth, this position outweighs the temporal advantages of a mixed marriage!

3. But this condition will become still more painful, my dearly beloved, through the dissimilarity of the duties which a mixed marriage entails. The Catholic marriage gives to both parties the same rights and the same duties, not however the mixed marriage. The Protestant party can have himself divorced at any time, and according to his principles contract a new marriage, but to the Catholic party it is forbidden, since according to the divine law marriage is indissoluble. Then let the Catholic wife see how she will get along! One thing is certain, that she can wander around in misery while her legal husband, carefree, amuses himself with another. And such cases are not rare, but always well deserved if in such an important matter conscience and faith have not been consulted, but only passion or self-advantage.

How could, my dear friends, the dignity of the Sacrament and with it the glorious type of the union of Christ with His Church be honored in a mixed marriage, since the Protestant party does not acknowledge marriage as a Sacrament, but only as a human bond, as a contract? And yet St. Paul says: "This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in his church." But whoever does not acknowledge Matrimony as a Sacrament will very likely enter into it without grace and without Christian preparation. My God, what will then be the consequences? It is an old saying that everything depends upon the blessing of

God, and yet in mixed marriage, where one party renounces beforehand the blessing of God and the sacramental grace, can the Catholic party be satisfied! This marriage is seldom a truly Christian one; as a rule it is not according to the prototype of Christ and the Church and is usually without the grace of the Sacrament, because it is generally entered into from a sudden inclination, from an advantage or from passion. It does not possess the higher bonds and with the years the passions disappear. Therefore mixed marriages are not to be allowed on the part of the Sacrament.

4. Mixed marriages miss in a particular manner the happiness which the community of faith gives in joy and suffering, for can intimacy reign there where the separation is precisely in that which must be the highest and the holiest good of the Christian, namely his faith? The faith alone sanctifies hearts and also marriage, ennobles it and raises it up to a similarity between Christ and His Church. The lot of the Catholic wife can never be a happy one when her husband is a Protestant and frequently sneers at the Catholic Church, and bars her the way to the service of God and denies her the fulfillment of her Catholic duties. How painful it is if the bells ring for the solemn service of God, when high festivals unite the faithful for the praise of God, and the husband goes one way and the wife another! No common prayer, no home devotion, no common reception of the holy Sacraments unite both the married couple for the fulfillment of their Christian calling. Precisely in that point where the

hearts should be most united, they are the most separated. If then the Protestant party dies without confession and penance, without the holy Viaticum and without Extreme Unction, in which he did not believe, then indeed is such a death for the Catholic party full of pain and agony, and again the difference in faith bitter. Yes, felt indeed to be very bitter. In the years of indiscretion, the Catholic husband or the Catholic wife thinks little about such matters, but in the advanced years when the passions die down, more earnest thoughts and bitter hours remind them of their lost happiness, of their common faith and fill their souls with a deeper agony and with a deeper suffering. Experience has taught this truth in innumerable cases, and for this reason is the prohibition against mixed marriages a prohibition which will save the Catholic party from unhappiness.

And if in some mixed marriages these dangers are not always present; if there are cases where the non-Catholic party places no obstacle in the way of the Catholic and the education of the children is not endangered they are honorable exceptions, the more honorable, since there are Catholic marriages where religion, the celebration of Sunday, the observance of fast-days are despised and trodden under foot and the children are raised in the most un-Christian manner. There are even mixed marriages where the non-Catholic husband is converted by the zeal of the Catholic wife, or where the Protestant mother out of love for her children in order to educate them in accordance with her promise, as Catholics, enters the Church her-

self. Here God and grace were present, as it always is when one strives for the salvation of his own soul and for the souls of his children.

5. The Catholic Church, therefore, my beloved, tolerates in special cases mixed marriages, namely if the Protestant party promises to raise all the children Catholic and secondly, to give the Catholic party absolute freedom in the practice of her Catholic duties. These conditions the holy Church owes to our Divine Saviour, to whom she must render an account of the souls confided to her care. She has the sublime task to preserve the faith and redemption until the end of time for all generations and to save souls for God and for heaven. Therefore she cannot suffer Catholic Christians to endanger the salvation of their souls and to break their baptismal vows at will in a mixed marriage. Consequently she must remind the faithful of such dangers and as far as it is in her power seek to set them aside.

But holy Church owes the prohibition of mixed marriages to herself also, because she alone is the true Church. It cannot be indifferent to her whether her faithful are exposed to the danger of falling away from the faith, or to the greatest religious indifference. As the Saviour came on earth, to save souls, so, too, the Church has no other calling than to save souls for heaven, to teach the ignorant and to win the coming generations to God. She owes therefore also this prohibition to her children. If the divine and the natural law command the parents so earnestly to educate their children in a Christian manner, then the Church has a

sacred right and a holy duty to insist that the parents fulfill this commandment, and to banish the obstacles which stand in the way of it. As a rule a mixed marriage is such an obstacle. The Catholic Church, therefore, owes it to God, to herself, to the faithful and to their children to prohibit these marriages. And in this there is no intolerance towards other denominations on the part of the Church, but the effort to advance the honor of God and the salvation of her own children and to protect them from the dangers of apostasy.

6. And even if holy Church is disobeyed by the frivolous who wish to marry and her prohibition contemned, there remains, nevertheless, my friends, the earnest truth which our Divine Saviour Himself proclaimed with the words: "He that will not hear the church let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican." Therefore those Catholics sin grievously against their holiest duties who, deaf to the prohibition and the warnings of holy Church, without certain conditions, especially the Catholic education of all children, enter into a mixed marriage. The parents are also seriously obligated to prevent their sons and daughters from such marriages, or at least to place such conditions, without the compliance of which, they will not and cannot give their consent. If the entrance into the married state usually decides the weal or the woe for time and eternity, then believe me, this decision will be much more serious in mixed marriages. If God our heavenly Father should give His blessing to every marriage, yes, if the marriage should be concluded in heaven, then, my friends, must also faith reign, the

Sacrament be held in honor and those Christian sentiments animate the bridal couple which promise them peace and harmony, love and fidelity. If they will go hand in hand through life and in joy and sorrow mutually bear with one another, then must also the bond of the same faith embrace their hearts and be consecrated by the Church. For this reason it is in many places customary to celebrate the anniversary of their nuptials in the church with prayer and the reception of the holy Sacraments, in order that the blessing of God may accompany them through their whole earthly life and weave their bond for an eternal bond, for their blessed nuptial feast with Jesus and all the glorified Saints. Amen.

SERMON XX

THE BLESSING "POST PARTUM"

"And then coming thou shalt offer thy gifts."—MATTH. 5, 24.

These words are addressed in the first place to all Christians. With grateful and contrite hearts they should betake themselves to the church and offer their gifts on the altar of God. The highest and most marvelous gift is Jesus Christ, whom the priests and the faithful offer to God in praise and benediction and gratitude in the holy Mass, in order that through this holy Sacrifice we may again share in the grace and mercy of God. The second gift which we must offer to God, is ourselves as the Apostle writes: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service." (Rom. 12, 1.) The body is also sanctified and consecrated by Baptism, by Confirmation and holy Communion, just as the soul is sanctified and consecrated. Therefore the Christian should consider it as the temple of God for the benediction and praise of God. As our Divine Saviour and the holy martyrs offered up the bloody Sacrifice, so must every Christian at least, according to his body, be an unbloody sacrifice, in so far that he withstands the temptations to sin and preserves chastity according to his state of life.

Another sacrifice which the faithful offer to God and which every one must offer according to his means, are the alms which they dispense for the love of God to the poor. Alms are the most beautiful work of gratitude for the temporal blessings of God, for His mercy in the forgiveness of sins and the best means to placate God. Hence our Divine Saviour ranks the offering of alms among the eight beatitudes with the words: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Matth. 5, 7.)

There is still, my beloved, another sacrifice which is especially pleasing to God, and which the words "Come and offer thy gift" denote as more valuable than alms. This sacrifice parents with their children must offer to God. The Christian mother in particular is admonished by the call: "Come and offer thy gift." Her child is the gift of God; it is His property which the mother must return to God. But where and on what occasion should the mother present her child and offer it as a holy sacrifice? This occurs in the blessing of the mother after the happy birth of her child. This is a most ancient custom that takes its origin from the example of the Blessed Mother of God. Therefore I will speak to you to-day about the blessing "Post Partum," so that you may all understand the meaning of this Christian custom.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. It is a matter of common knowledge that in accordance with the commandment of God every Jewish mother was obliged to present her child to God in

the temple at Jerusalem and make the prescribed offering. And the Lord spoke to Moses saying: "Speak to the children of Israel, and thou shalt say to them: if a woman having received seed shall bear a man-child, she shall be unclean seven days, according to the days of the separation of her flowers. . . . She shall touch no holy thing, neither shall she enter into the sanctuary until the days of her purification shall be fulfilled. But if she shall bear a maid-child she shall be unclean two weeks, according to the custom of her monthly courses . . . and when the days of her purification are expired for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the door of the tabernacle of the testimony, a lamb of a year old for a holocaust, and a young pigeon or turtledove for sin and shall deliver them to the priest." (Levit. 12, 1-6.) The priest sacrificed the lamb for a holocaust as an acknowledgment of the dominion of God and in gratitude for the happy birth of the child. The pigeon or turtledove was sacrificed for sin. But if the mother was poor a pair of turtledoves were offered, the one as a burnt-offering and a thank-offering, the other as a sin-offering. With this twofold sacrifice the mother was again allowed to touch holy things and to enter the sanctuary. By this she was to be reminded before all that her delivery was not joyful since she brought into the world a sinful creature, a child in need of redemption, who was already condemned to death if God had not wished instead of death much more the sanctification and the happiness of the sinner. This commandment contained a deep article of faith, a source

of humility and a holy fear for the parents, but also an earnest admonition to raise their children for God and for a holy life in order that they might not fall under the condemnation of an eternal death. But the sacrifice which the Israelite mother offered in the temple in place of the child, was for her and the whole Israelite people the confession that once the Saviour would come and offer Himself in a bloody sacrifice in the place of mankind. This sacrifice really took away the condemnation of death which in consequence of sin hung over humanity and sanctified the child through holy Baptism. Mary, the Blessed Virgin, who by the birth of our Divine Saviour became purer and holier, was certainly not subject to this commandment of God and was an exception to this legal purification; the birth of the Divine Child was an event of joy for both heaven and earth. And yet she submitted herself in humility and joy to this law. As the most faithful disciple of her Son who concealed His divinity under the helplessness of a child, Mary wanted also to conceal her sublime dignity as Mother of God, and show herself in all things as the humble hand-maid of the Lord. Thus she, the Blessed one among women, went up to Jerusalem like every other Israelite mother, climbed unobserved the temple mount, and was not ashamed to buy the offering of the poor, a pair of turtledoves and to offer the one as a burnt-offering and the other as a sin-offering.

The purest Mother of God stood in the temple of Jerusalem before the altar and offered the Divine Child to the Lord from whom she had received Him.

Her faithful mother-heart understood indeed how hard this sacrifice one day would become, for she knew only too well, that the Divine Saviour was come into the world, to suffer as the Lamb of God for the sins of mankind. Therefore she could ask herself with St. Elizabeth and her relatives: "What will become of this child?" (Luke 1, 66.) And while she thus stood meditating and praying, she looked down upon her child and prayed again and again to God for His grace and constancy to raise this Divine Child for the salvation of the world — and behold there approached the venerable old man Simeon, took the child from the arms of its Blessed Mother, raised it on high and praised and blessed God, trembling with joy, that it was given to him before his death to behold the Saviour of the world.— But he spoke, too, the prophetic words to the mother, that a sword would pierce her heart, namely then when she stood at the foot of the Cross and beheld for the second time the awful and bloody sacrifice of her Divine Son consummated.

2. Christian mothers during all centuries have imitated the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Mother of God. They were not too vain and too proud to follow the glorious Mother of God, this glorious mirror of true womanhood and motherhood — they were not ashamed to follow her to the church and to the altar of God. The Jewish customs have indeed been abolished since the announcement of the Gospel, and Christianity knows no other uncleanness than sin. The child by Baptism is purified from original sin, and there is no other sacrifice than the bloody sacrifice of

our Divine Saviour on the Cross and the unbloody sacrifice of the Holy Mass which is offered constantly also for the child. Nevertheless the custom has obtained among Christian mothers, of high or low estate, who have been delivered of children in a legal marriage, to imitate the example of the Mother of God who submitted to a law which was not for her. Christian mothers direct their first steps to the church in order to give testimony of their gratitude to God. They go first to the church in order to receive the blessing of the Church of God through the priest and in his person the good wishes of the Christian congregation. They go first to the church in order to offer there on the altar their child to God, to beg of Almighty God the grace that they may be able rightly to take His place in regard to the child and to raise it for God and for heaven. With the grace of God they should become the guardian angels of their children and watch over the Paradise of the innocent souls of their children sanctified by Baptism, in order that the poisonous breath of sin may not reach them and destroy again what the grace of Baptism has accomplished. At the altar Christian mothers dedicate their child to the Lord; at the altar this sacrifice is pleasing to Him. Yes, as once in the temple of Jerusalem, so now also God looks down with pleasure, with grace and mercy on those mothers who follow in the footsteps of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the same sentiments and with the same good will. But how should the blessing of the mother still confined to the bed or to the house have a meaning, a blessing and a Christian

spirit which alone in the Church has sense, meaning and blessing.

3. But in order, my beloved, that you may understand better the meaning of the blessing of Christian mothers we will learn the prayers which are used by the Church in this ceremony. Nothing is better adapted to understand, and love this holy custom, as also to learn to feel in this regard the prayers of the Church used in this sacramental. The Christian mother, who after a happy delivery wishes to obtain the blessing of God through the priest, remains standing at the door of the church, her child in her arms or in the arms of the nurse. She receives a lighted wax candle to indicate her living faith and burning longing to share in the blessing and the mercy of God. For this reason the priest begins in the name of the Church with the words: "This one will receive the blessing and mercy from God her Saviour, for she belongs to the nation which seeks the Lord." And now he prays the 23 Psalm: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof: the world, and all they that dwell therein," etc., etc. This beautiful psalm announces to the mother the Christian virtues which bring to her and to her child the happiness to come to the King of glory, to Jesus. For he is the King of glory and the Lord over all. Consequently to Him is due obedience and gratitude. In acknowledgment of His supreme power over life and death the Christian mother places before Him her child in order, according to the words of the same psalm: "He shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and mercy from God his Saviour. This

is the generation of them that seek him, of them that seek the face of the God of Jacob." As a sign that her prayer for the blessing of herself and child is heard, and her vow to bring up her child for God is pleasing to God, the priest gives the mother the stole and leads her to the altar. Here he prays over her and calls to God that His grace may give to her strength and constancy to fulfill her high and earnest calling as a Christian mother to this child for its salvation and for the honor and joy of God. The priest says: "O Lord, save Thy handmaid," and the server answers in the name of the mother, "O my God, who putteth her trust in thee." "Send her help, O Lord, from Thy holy place" and the server answers: "And defend her out of Sion." "Let not the enemy prevail against her."—"Nor the son of iniquity draw nigh to hurt her." And then the priest prays: "Almighty, everlasting God, who, through the delivery of the Blessed Virgin Mary, hast turned the pains of the faithful at child-birth into joy; look mercifully on this Thy handmaid, who cometh in gladness to Thy holy temple to offer up her thanks; and grant that after this life, through the merits and intercession of the same Blessed Mary, she may prove worthy to obtain, together with her offspring the joys of everlasting happiness." The priest then addresses again a few words to the mother in which he again emphasizes the duty of the Christian education of the child and then sprinkles her with holy water.

4. My dearly beloved, is there a Christian mother who really understands her calling and her duties if she

fails to receive the blessing of the Church, yet disregards it? No, Christian mothers should, after the example of the Blessed Mother of God and in accordance with an old pious custom, offer their child to the Lord and place it in the arms of a still better mother, the Catholic Church. Both mothers, the corporal as well as the spiritual, behold on this day with tenderest care the child. Both provide for the welfare of the child, the corporal more for its temporal weal, for its bodily nourishment, for food and preparation for later life. But the spiritual mother provides for its eternal welfare. The Church, as the Immaculate Bride of the Lord has regenerated the child; it allows it to enter into the treasures of redemption, of which she is the administratrix. She instructs the child later in the faith and dispenses to it until the end of its life the holy Sacraments and consequently the grace of the Lord. Both mothers, therefore, may well ask on the day of churching: "What will become of this child?" Will it preserve this first blessing, or must the blessing recede at the curse of sin? Will it wound the hearts of both mothers with the sword of sorrow in consequence of its future ingratitude and un-Christian life, or will it highly rejoice and console both by its innocence and grace, by its Christian piety and gratitude. Finally will its corporal mother, in consequence of deceptive hopes, hasten to an early grave, and the spiritual mother, holy Church, in consequence of its later un-Christian life and infidelity intone a sad Miserere instead of the song of praise, the Magnificat of the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of God? Behold

then what should the more induce a Christian mother on the day of being churched to offer her child at the altar to God and more devoutly than ever to beseech the divine assistance to obtain also the blessing of the Church for herself and her child. But at home or in child-bed this blessing should take place. Truly there it is inefficacious, without meaning and without consecration and blessing.

As the Blessed Virgin Mary showed herself the model of women in every condition of life, as daughter, as maiden, as wife and as widow, so she showed herself before all by her entrance into the temple of Jerusalem as the type of the Christian mother. As daughter Mary teaches the daughters child-like love and obedience towards the parents, and as maiden she teaches the maidens to preserve their most beautiful ornament, innocence, by real piety and retirement from the world. She is the most beautiful and the purest mirror for daughters and virgins; may these diligently look in this mirror as in the one in their rooms where they satisfy only their vanity and self-esteem. As wife Mary teaches the women to make use of those means which took away the curse pronounced over Eve and gave to her the influence which she should possess for the happiness of the family, for her own welfare and for the whole of mankind. Mary obeyed, prayed and was silent. Joseph speaks and Mary goes to Bethlehem, to Jerusalem, to Egypt and to Nazareth. Meekness, obedience, prayer and silence, that is the condition for the salvation for women.

Mary appears in public for the first time only to

perform a work of charity. She hastens to bring the blessing of God into the family of St. Elizabeth. Love and good works are the beautiful circle of activity for Christian women. That is their vocation. God has richly bestowed upon them all the qualities that are necessary for them to fulfill this calling, namely, compassion, patience, meekness of character, activity and love for the home. These qualities are another condition of their salvation.

But Christian mothers, Mary as mother, gave you a most glorious example how to fulfill your holiest duties conscientiously. From the manger to the Cross you behold her solicitous for her Son. You behold her in the temple at Jerusalem again and again offering her child to the Lord from whom she received it; you behold her imploring blessings for herself and for her Child, for grace and assistance to worthily and patiently fulfill her difficult duties. Can one speak with more eloquence to Christian mothers than the example of the Mother of God does? Christian mothers! upon you before all, rests the future of your children, upon your education their happiness or unhappiness and also the happiness or unhappiness of many others. Imitate, therefore, the example of the sublime Mother of God! Your first visit after delivery should be to the church, to the altar; there offer your children to God when you are churched, there beseech heaven to bless you and your children, to give you grace and assistance, in order that you may be able worthily and patiently to fulfill your holiest and most difficult duties as mothers. Only with the grace and with the blessing

of God will the temporal and eternal welfare of your children be firmly established. Then your children will be the ladder reaching to heaven upon which you yourselves are called to enter into eternal bliss, just as our Divine Saviour took His Mother up into heaven as a reward for her faithful love and solicitude. Amen.

SERMON XXI

ADDRESS TO A BRIDAL COUPLE

You stand, my beloved, on this happy day before the altar for the purpose of mutually pledging to each other your troth. May God in His grace and mercy confirm your mutual pledge. This day should remain in your memory the more significant, since you both enter into this bond of Matrimony. Yes, truly, Matrimony is a holy bond which God already instituted in paradise and which our Divine Saviour by His presence at the marriage-feast at Cana sanctified and glorified. In His mild goodness and love for the welfare of mankind and for the salvation of the parents of the children he even raised Matrimony to the dignity of a Sacrament, in order that the grace of God and His blessing might ever rest upon truly Christian marriages and for the married people become a means for their transition into celestial happiness.

Therefore according to the holy decree of God, the earthly life must always lead to the heavenly, how much the more, must the married people mutually sanctify each other since Matrimony itself is so holy! It is holy in its origin, in God; holy in its object, the increase of the army of the chosen and the blessed; holy in its effects, the richest and lasting until death,

dispensing grace by the worthily received and worthily preserved Sacrament. But how luminously amiable does the goodness and condescension of our Divine Saviour exhibit itself towards all those who, saved by His precious blood, enter into the bonds of wedlock, since He, in order to sanctify them still more and to preserve them in mutual love and fidelity until death, represents Himself to them in His union with His Bride, with His One True Church, as a prototype, as it were, a mirror! Oh, would that Christian married people would take to heart this emphatic type! Would that they would often look into this pure mirror, how blessed and happy they would then be, how harmonious and satisfied! Matrimony would then be, as it were, a peaceful, sure asylum against the manifold difficulties and evils of the external world!

Our Divine Saviour did indeed leave His throne with His heavenly Father and come down upon this earth in order to found His holy Church and to unite Himself with her for eternity. Just as Adam during his mysterious sleep — just as from his side Eve was created, so also our Divine Saviour slept the sleep of death upon the Cross, and from the open wound of His side went forth His Bride, the holy Church. By the water which flowed from the wound He makes in Baptism, men children of God and Christians, and by His blood He sanctifies them in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar and nourishes them unto eternal life. But His holy Church consists of the redeemed, of the children of God, of Christians. Our Divine Saviour knows only one Church as His Bride; He loves only

one, and of this one alone is He the head and the protector, and His union with her is indissoluble. And the Church, too, recognizes but One as her head, our Divine Saviour. She calls herself after Him, believes, hopes in and loves only Him, is obedient and subject only to Him.

The object of this marvelous union of Christ with His Church is the creation of a spiritual posterity of redeemed, of children of God. To this end everything points and for this purpose our Divine Saviour grants to His Church the richest graces, His merits and His sacraments, yes, He gives to her His most holy Body and His Blood in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. What care and love, according to the example of the Divine Bridegroom, does not also holy Church bestow upon her children as a true mother to the Catholic Christians who have been confided to her in Baptism by our Divine Saviour! She nourishes them from youth on with her teaching and her Sacraments, admonishes them, begs and conjures them to lead a life pleasing to God, educates them for heaven and would sacrifice everything rather than the salvation of the souls confided to her. This is the type and the model for truly Christian married people. Hence St. Paul says to them: "Marriage is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in his church." (Eph. 5, 32.) May you also, my beloved in Christ, ever have this type before your eyes! May you often look in this pure mirror in order that the firm resolution which animates you now may never waver and grow cold, and in order that you may faithfully fulfill the holy

duties which you assume to-day until the end of your life.

It is the duty of the bridegroom in accordance with the example of your Divine Saviour only to recognize this present bride as your future lawful spouse, only love her, live with her in indissoluble union and give her the good in the fulfillment of all your obligations, especially as a Catholic Christian in living up to the necessary duties for your eternal salvation. And as the representative and with the governing kindness of God you must take your place as the head of the family. As the merciful God in His goodness and kindness has borne with all your faults and sins until this moment and in His sweet providence has protected your life, so must you as a Christian and a husband bear with forethought and kindness the possible faults of your wife and provide carefully for the needs of her and of your family. Then you will find happiness and peace in your marriage and the grace of God will not abandon you.

The Sacrament of Matrimony instituted by our Divine Saviour has secured for women in Christianity an important and honorable place never even dreamed of in paganism. She is now no more the slave, no more the servant, no, she is the living type of the Church, this tenderly beloved Bride of the Saviour. May you also, the bride, always have this type before your eyes! You, too, must know only one, love only one, call yourself after him, honor him as your head and be obedient to him, your lawful husband. With goodness, forethought and patience you should also

bear with his possible faults; you should assist and accompany him in fidelity and loyalty in all the steps of his life, take care of him in sickness, console him in difficult conditions and sweeten his life by your tender love. What the Church is for the whole world, that you should be for the family circle, the preacher of peace and the guide on the way of salvation.

To you both, my beloved, our Divine Saviour gives another and highly important example by His union with His Church. For what else is the object of His spiritual marriage with the Church than the education and the formation of saints, for the happiness of those called to be the children of God? And what else should marriage intend if not the education of truly Christian children? As God placed before paradise angels to watch it, so too, He places guardian angels before the paradise of innocent children's souls, sanctified by Baptism. The father and mother should preserve them from the poisonous breath of sin. The parents are also the gardeners of God whose duty it is to water the lilies of innocence and by a Christian education to raise them for Christian life and real piety. Oh, may you both take this well to heart!

May this earnest, and for you decisive, duty which will bring you future happiness or unhappiness, the duty of the education of your children, be ever before your eyes! As human beings you are obliged to give more to your children than animals do for their young, and as Christians more than pagans do for their children. The animals provide only for the nourishment of their young, and the pagans and infidels only for the

temporal welfare of their children, and take no care of the salvation of their souls. But from Christian parents God also demands the souls of their children. If you educate them only for worldly vanity and show, for temporal welfare and worldly culture, and by word and example become guilty of allowing your children to lose the grace of God, the faith and Christian piety, then it will no more be an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, but a soul for a soul. The souls of the parents will be held on the day of judgment for the souls of their children. My God, how many parents lose their eternal happiness on account of their badly raised children!

Oh, both of you offer to God the most precious of all presents by the Christian education of your children; then He will be Himself your debtor and richly reward your endeavors on earth and in heaven. You especially, the bride, are obliged to fulfill this earnest and important task in the Christian education of your children. The man has more to do with the external world, with his calling or his business, and to provide for the support of the family, and therefore on the knees of the mother the child must become Christian, and for this purpose she receives from God the qualifications, the talent and the graces. The mother is the one who should impress upon the forehead of the child the sign of salvation, the sign of the holy Cross; she must breathe into it a love for God, its heavenly Father and for Jesus Christ, its Divine Redeemer, and must teach it to fold its little hands in childish prayer. The mother has the duty to warn the child from sin

and to stifle in it the germ of evil, in order that the baptismal graces planted in the heart of the child may sprout for the pleasure of God, for the joy of the parents and for the salvation of the child, and bring forth good fruit.

May you both take these holy duties to heart! Strive always with the grace of God to faithfully fulfill them, then your marriage will be a happy one, and to-day will prepare for you a greater joy, even on earth and once in eternity! If you wish to succeed well then build in all things upon God, and may the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost descend upon you and abide with you through all eternity. Amen.

SERMON XXII

ADDRESS TO CHRISTIAN MOTHERS FOR THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

We celebrate again to-day, Christian women and mothers, a great festival which brings joy to the Catholic Church and with her to all the true faithful. On Christmas it was the Angels who rejoiced; the Angels glorified God and praised the happiness of man on account of the Incarnation of the only-begotten Son of God: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men who are of good will." This song of praise constantly resounds for the glorification of God the Father; it re-echoes again in the most glorious churches, and in the poorest chapels throughout the Catholic world. This song of praise finds an amiable echo in thousands upon thousands of grateful Christian souls. But eight days after His birth, on the first day of the year, the Divine Child received the glorious name Jesus, Redeemer. With this name He obligated Himself to shed in consequence His precious blood for our salvation. For this reason also the name of Jesus was the most beloved by Him, and if He suffered the Jews to dispute His Divine dignity, His sanctity and His miracles He never permitted them to rob Him of this Name. And in fact, as at the be-

ginning of His life this Name stood, so at the end of His life stood this Name above His head on the Cross of the dying Saviour: Jesus of Nazareth.

With this new year, with which the mercy of God has lengthened our lives, our heavenly Father offers us also the most precious of all new year's gifts, namely Jesus, the Saviour and Redeemer. Through Him alone can and will this new year become a year of grace, of salvation, of peace and blessing and the pledge of eternal life. Yes, Jesus wishes to be our leader, helper and nourisher during this new year. God does not wish to guide us during this year through the desert of this life with a cloud as He led the Jewish people through the desert, or by an Archangel Raphael who accompanied the young Tobias on his dangerous journey, but Jesus Himself wishes to be our guide and our helper. God will not feed and nourish us with manna as He did the Israelites in the wilderness, nor by a raven as He did the Prophet Elias, Jesus Himself in this new year will be our food in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar and will strengthen us with His graces in the other Sacraments. Happy the Christian, who permits himself to be guided, assisted and nourished by Jesus! And Christian mothers can offer to their children no more precious new year's gift than Jesus, the Saviour of souls. They should choose Him for the guide, helper and protector of their children, then the new year will become for them and their children truly a year of peace, of blessing and of grace, of temporal and eternal weal.

But to-day, Christian mothers, holy Church places

before our eyes the Divine Child in another way. To-day should be our feast, the festival of the faithful, a happy thanksgiving festival that we too, have been called to the glorious Catholic faith and to salvation; a feast of joy, that Jesus by the goodness of the heavenly Father belongs also to us and we to Him. The star which lighted for the Magi the darkness of night and called to the manger of the Divine Child, has also led our ancestors and us to the Crib of the Divine Child, to faith in Him, as the Divine Redeemer of our souls. This star still enlightens millions of men and calls them to the faith, to grace and to Jesus. Thousands of Christian souls still, like the three Magi, offer to the Divine Child the gold of their love, the incense of their devotion and their piety, and the myrrh of a patient, God-resigned life. Yes, may this day be for us also a day of joy when we were called to the glorious Catholic faith; the day when we glorify the Lord and rejoice in God our Saviour, the day when we, too, offer to the Divine Saviour of our souls the gold of our grateful love, the incense of a happy devotion and piety and the myrrh of a God-resigned Christian life! Then we will find in Jesus everything that can rejoice and quicken the heart of man: sweet joy in holy exaltation, consolation in suffering, strength in the cares and dangers of life, the peace of a good conscience, grace and mercy and eternal salvation.

For what is man without Jesus? What are Christians, who have lost Jesus again through infidelity or sin? From their souls the happy echo of the Angels' song is not heard: "Glory be to God in the highest

and peace on earth to all men who are of good will." To them Jesus is not the most precious new year's gift, not their guide and helper, not their protector in the new year. From them shines not the amiable star of grace, of faith and of peace and as little of joy, of patience and of consolation is found in their souls, and on their death-bed the lost precious happiness of the Christian, the blessed hope of immortality in Jesus is completely extinguished!

But, my good Christian mothers, to-day's festival teaches you especially two mysteries, which you should preserve in your hearts and strive to fulfil them in your life and with your example.

You yourselves, Christian mothers, should be the star which God's holy Providence permits to shine on the horizon of the children's world. Led and guided by this star your children, like the three Magi, should find the way to the Crib of the Divine Child. Led by this star your children should find the way to the faith, to innocence and purity of heart, to grace and pleasure before God and man. Oh, happy the child whom such a star enlightened from its earliest childhood on and also later in the innumerable dangers of life and really led it to Jesus, to piety and to a Christian life! Well for him! Then if the child is bereft of its mother, if grown-up and independent, and has entered upon the stormy sea of life and chosen for itself a calling,— this star will in all places and in all times enlighten him as a friendly remembrance of his mother, warning, consoling, and admonishing him. Yes, if the child has gone astray upon the way of vice— this star will

sooner or later lead him back to the Crib of the Divine Child.

To-day's festival, Christian mothers, teaches you still a second mystery. You should also, like the three holy Kings, offer to the Divine Child in grateful joy, gold, frankincense and myrrh and that, too, not only the gold of your own love, the incense of your own piety and devotion and the myrrh of patience in your richly blessed, though heavily burdened, calling of a Christian mother,— you should especially offer to our Divine Saviour the precious gold; innocent souls of children; the most amiable incense, childlike piety aroused by you, and the most meritorious myrrh, childish suffering as the sacrifice of atonement for the sins of parents.

And may the Divine Child, as He blessed the gifts of the three holy Kings, so may He also raise His divine little hands over your gifts and bless them! Yes, may He pour out over your children and all Christian children the innocence and the grace of His own Divine Childhood! And Mary, the sublime model of all Christian mothers, and St. Joseph, the best of all fathers, may they, as they gratefully receive the gifts of the three holy Kings — may they also receive your best gifts. May they intercede at the throne of the Divine Saviour for you and obtain for you strength and grace in your holy calling, and blessing and salvation for your children! Amen.

SERMON XXIII

THE EXAMPLE OF THE HOLY FAMILY

The mercy of God be eternally praised! He was not satisfied to have given us such a marvelous Redeemer in Jesus Christ, who suffered for us on the Cross, enlightened us with His heavenly doctrines, strengthens and sanctifies us with His Sacraments and guides us in His Church — Jesus is also in every condition of life an example for us to whom we look up and consider ourselves accordingly as His redeemed. The whole Christian world of childhood finds in the Divine Child sweet peace, grace and innocence: a world of poor people find consolation and satisfaction in the example of our Divine Saviour, who Himself was poor and blessed and sanctified poverty; another world of sufferers finds resignation and patience in beholding the suffering Saviour who by His Cross and suffering has sanctified the sufferings of this life and raised them to the royal road to heaven. In the mercy of our Divine Saviour the rich learn mercy, in His humility the powerful humility. There is no state, no calling, no age and no sex which cannot learn from the life and the example of Jesus Christ virtue and find peace and grace.

But, dear Christian mothers, what makes God's

mercy and providence still more adorable is His amiable care through examples from our own midst. He shows how we can follow and imitate Jesus. Glorious and sublime are the hosts of the Apostles, of the Martyrs and Confessors, of the Virgins and Saints from every state of life. They are the glory of God, the honor of Jesus and the adornment of the Catholic Church: they are the pride of the Christians, the ornament of mankind, the crown of Christianity and are beacon-lights in this earthly life. The purest diamonds which shine in this crown of Saints are Mary and Joseph. Verily, after the love and adoration of Jesus there is no love and no reverence which so joyfully moves the hearts of Catholic Christians and which is spread throughout the world as the love and the reverence for the Blessed Virgin Mary and the foster-father, St. Joseph. Jesus, Mary and Joseph are the three glorious names which live on the tongues and in the hearts of all. Jesus, Mary and Joseph are the three most blessed names which at all times dispense joy, consolation and grace. They are on the tongues and in the hearts of the children and fill the childish soul with sweet joy. They are on the tongues of the adults and impart strength and courage. In the mouths of the suffering they inspire patience and resignation; on the tongue of the sinner they are the greatest hope and on the lips of the dying the last and only confidence.

No tongue can say, no pen describe, what Jesus, Mary and Joseph are in heaven in the circle of the blessed, and what they are too for us, at the throne

of God as our intercessors. But as they lived once upon earth, they are for all, especially for Christian families, the most glorious model. Oh, may this picture be engraved on the hearts of all families, how happy, how blessed and harmonious would then be the family, father, mother and child!

If we, Christian mothers, reverently enter the modest dwelling at Nazareth, then we would see the holiest family that ever lived upon earth. It consists only of three persons, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, as it were, an earthly Trinity, a reflection of the eternal and divine one. They are indeed poor, very poor, but contented; they are unknown, unesteemed by men, but all the happier. Quiet, order and peace reign in the modest home — a picture of Paradise. Labor and prayer, sweet conversation and recreation elevate the harmony and increase the joy. Oh, happy the Christian family which takes the holy Family, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, as its prototype, where everything as at Nazareth breathes peace, love and order! Happy the Christian family, when the father imitates St. Joseph, the mother Mary, and the children the Divine Child! Happy the family where man commands with the gentleness and the kindness of Joseph and with the love and joy of Jesus and Mary obeys: where one heart and one soul unites all labor and prayer and peaceful recreation taken in the circle of the family increases the harmony, draws down the blessing of God and increases grace.

It is true, St. Joseph had to bear with many anxieties and sufferings on account of Mary and the Divine Child, in the stable at Bethlehem, on the flight to

Egypt and at the loss of the Divine Boy in the temple at Jerusalem. But all his cares and pains could not shatter his patience nor disturb the peace and the harmony of his family. Joys followed sorrows, and now St. Joseph is marvelously rewarded in heaven and more than happy at the sight of the glory of Jesus and Mary.

You also, Christian mothers, will have to undergo many struggles in order to preserve in your families order, peace and piety. But if you strive and labor for it, it is the more meritorious for you. St. Joseph prays for you. You will have many cares on account of the true Christian welfare of your children. St. Joseph will share these cares with you. You will have more than ever the calling to protect your children from the prevalent immorality in order to save them for God and the Catholic faith. St. Joseph will protect you in your holy calling, if you often recommend yourselves and your family to him. And when you have faithfully fulfilled your life's work, then may you also once like St. Joseph rejoice in your own and in your family's eternal happiness and be united and remain like Jesus, Mary and Joseph in heavenly bliss eternally. Amen.

SERMON XXIV

THE FEAST OF ST. ANN

St. Ann was, according to ancient traditions, born at Bethlehem of God-fearing parents. In Catholic Christianity she holds a high position, first as a God-fearing wife, and secondly as the mother of the Blessed Virgin. She shows us therefore in two ways to what consideration and renown the wife obtains before God and man if she is really guided by religion and fulfills her holy calling as virgin and wife in a Christian manner. For this reason holy women have always been great instruments of the Providence of God for the salvation of mankind. In the Old Testament there were Sarah, Judith, Anna, the mother of the Prophet Samuel, but above all, Sts. Elizabeth, and Ann, the mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose feast we celebrate to-day. In the New Testament pious women stood by the side of our Divine Saviour and persevered with Him even in that terrible hour, when He suffered and died on the cross, while the holy Apostles, with the exception of St. John, remained away from fear and terror. Holy women have at all times offered assistance to the Apostles, the Martyrs and the missionaries and supported them. The Sisters of Mercy and other sisterhoods accomplish more

to-day by their works of mercy than the most eloquent words of the messengers of faith; they soften the hearts of sinners, of infidels and heathens and prepare them for the conversion of life or for the reception of Christian faith and eternal salvation. But if the wife begins to become frivolous, if she banishes Christian piety from her heart and treads underfoot her holiest duties as maiden, as wife and mother in order to give herself up entirely to a worldly life, then she loses not only the higher consecration, the nobility and the dignity which alone give grace and piety and surround her with a halo of glory, but she sinks deep, and always deeper than a man can fall.

St. Ann was, however, Christian mothers, not only a holy woman and on that account highly esteemed before God and man, she was also a good mother, the mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her first visit after her delivery was to the temple to pray and to thank God. She gave, therefore, a beautiful example to Christian mothers, for it is a praiseworthy and pious custom to thank God after overcoming dangers and to ask His blessing in order that the child may not in consequence become a source of anxiety and suffering, but by a Christian education be preserved and become the source of joy and consolation. St. Ann is usually represented as an elderly woman with a book in her hand, and Mary, her marvelous child, stands by her side and attentively listens to her. By this picture is represented, in a beautiful manner, the blessed task of Christian mothers, and the confident and intimate reception of the motherly instruction on the part of

the children. Yes, that is the happy and blessed calling of Christian mothers, to instruct their children already in their tenderest years about God, about the Saviour and about heaven. For this reason an enlightened man says that the education of man is completed in his first youthful years on the lap of his mother. Everything that is later taught in the Grammar and High schools is only a continuation, and therefore can never supply the first and motherly instruction, nor make good its omission with its awful consequences. Hence, where this first education is neglected, the mother commits a kind of murder of the soul of her child. We are filled with horror when we see how the poor children are neglected by their mothers and left in the care of easy-going servants, or confided to governesses without conscience and without religion.

To strive against these evils with their awful consequences for time and eternity and to prevent them, if possible, is the task and the calling of the Christian mothers. Salvation and grace for the faithful fulfilment of these duties, strength and constancy in the many difficulties of to-day, grace and salvation will be given to you by the All-merciful God! And may St. Ann take every truly Christian mother under her special protection in order that, as their cares and difficulties increase, they may rejoice at the sight of pious Christian children, and like St. Ann be marvelously consoled in the innocence of their children as she was in the amiable child, the Blessed Virgin Mary. All Christian mothers should unite, in order that by the

renewed Christian education, the work may be continued which was undertaken by holy women at all times, namely, to advance the honor of God, the spread of our holy faith and the welfare of the children at least in the family circle.

Happy the child who has a Christian mother! Happy the child whose Christian mother follows him in his later or early years of error, weeps and prays for him. Poor, very poor is every son and every daughter who finds himself or herself on the way of sin and destruction, but the poorest of all the poor, is the one about whom no soul, no father, no mother weeps. If thousands already in their youthful years go to destruction and nevermore obtain grace and conversion, the fundamental reason is that they have no Christian mother at their side. Poor child, if the rest of the world passes by your anxiety of soul without compassion! But the poorest of all children is, when its own father and its own mother remain cold and untouched, yes, even drive it to the destruction of its soul. The Christian mother wins sooner or later with her prayers and her tears to God the conversion of her child, for verily such prayers and tears remain not unanswered by God. But the poorest of all erring children will always be the one who has no mother at its side.

Would therefore that the picture of St. Ann with her child Mary remain in the memory and in the hearts of all! Christian mothers, see in this lovely picture your own duties, in order that you may faithfully fulfill them in your own family circle! Ann and Mary,

the mother and her child and both before God and in God,—behold there the Christian mother and her child! If they are both united in the higher love for God, in faith in Jesus, in hope for eternal life, and in the faithful fulfilment of all Christian duties, then the Christian mother fulfills her calling, and the child may rejoice that it has such a mother. And both will once, like St. Ann and Mary, rejoice in heaven, praise and glorify God the Lord in eternal happiness. Amen.

SERMON XXV

THE FEAST OF THE GUARDIAN ANGELS

We celebrate to-day, Christian wives and mothers, the feast of the Guardian Angels. The Gospel for this Sunday relates the story of the widow of Naim, whose tears and sorrow induced our Divine Saviour to raise her son to life. Truly, two important points for Christian mothers from which they may learn how to fulfill their calling.

One of the most touching proofs of the sublime providence of God for the welfare of our bodies and of our souls is the mission of the Holy Angels for our protection. It may appear strange to many that the Angels, who by their nature are so high above us, surround the throne of God and ceaselessly behold the face of God, should care for the earthly needs of mankind. But then it must, by far, appear more incredible, that the eternal and immortal God has made not only man but even the worm that crawls in the dust and the grass that grows unobserved in the fields the object of His Providence. Precisely this Providence over all, even over the smallest of His creatures brings the Majesty and Power of God nearer to the heart as to the understanding. Behold, thus increases the dignity of the Angels who, in a certain measure, share

the sublime privilege of God in providing for the life of His creatures.

And, in fact, the activity of our Guardian Angel is shown especially in the following: 1, they protect us in body and soul; 2, they encourage us to good and keep us from evil, and 3, they assist us in death.

1. The holy Guardian Angels protect us against the dangers that threaten body and soul. The body becomes the object of their solicitude because it is the dwelling-place and instrument of the immortal soul which is, as it were, the sister of the Angels and in the eternity of bliss the companion of the Angels in the beatific vision of God and in the praise of God.

This truth is confirmed in Holy Scripture emphatically, and also in the marvelous saving of so many Christians, especially children, from great dangers. But the soul is, more than the body, the particular object of the protection of the Holy Angels. Our soul is the sister of the Angels who never forget the high price by which they were purchased with the blood of Jesus. The soul is, moreover, the temple of the Holy Ghost, who watches over it. For this reason the Angels watch with such care over the souls confided to their protection. They are careful for the preservation of holy innocence and fight with indignation against the tempter. Our Divine Saviour Himself earnestly admonishes us: "Beware lest you scandalize one of these little ones," that is, lead them into evil, "for their Angels behold the face of my Father"; they are the accusers of the criminals against childish innocence.

2. But the Angels also encourage us to good and keep us from evil. As often as a good voice is heard within us, behold there is the voice of the Angel who encourages us to good or warns us from evil. If sin has been committed, then the Holy Angel speaks in our conscience in order to induce us to return. Soft and mild is his voice, and if we listen to it, it lisps from the justice and mercy of God. Well for the Christian who follows the voice of the Angel!

3. But the Guardian Angel also assists us in death. As he beholds full of pity the little child in the cradle, just baptized, so he beholds with still greater compassion his protégé when attacked by the agony of death. There he appears to the dying, as the Angel appeared to our Saviour in His agony on Mt. Olivet and reached to Him the chalice of strength. The Guardian Angel inspires the dying Christian with contrition and confidence and leads the soul to the judgment of the Lord. Thus, too, you Christian mothers, share with the Angels the privilege to provide for the life of your children. With the Angels, Christian mothers should protect their children from dangers to their bodies and their souls, encourage them to good and keep them from evil, and if God wills, assist them in a good death. The adults need above all in the manifold dangers of soul the invisible Angel as protector and counselor, but the children need the visible angel in the form of their parents and especially of their mother. Yes, God has placed over the paradise of innocent children's souls the mother in order that she by word and example may cultivate it and keep

far from it the poisonous breath of sin. In union with the Angels of God she should stand by the side of the child, in order that in this protecting hand it may not lose the right path through this earthly life. As the Angel of God battles with the soul of the adults, as soon as it is in danger of giving itself up to sin, so must the Christian mother battle with the weakness, the sickness and the death of the child. She assists the child against the partisanship of the brothers and sisters and against the excessive strictness of the father: she helps him through the gulfs of youthful inexperience and passion and through the different trials of this earthly life. And if the heart of the mother has gone silent to the touch of death, the child still looks back to the memory of her as to a friendly star.

Have you, Christian wives and mothers, after the example of the Angels of God, striven with might and main to be, by word and example, visible guardian angels to your children, and is the success, nevertheless, lamentable: are the grown-up children in consequence of many dangers, of bad example and allurements of the world gone astray, then there remains to the Christian mothers still an example for imitation and a consolation for a better future. It is the widow of Naim, who by her tears moved our Divine Saviour to compassion and to call back her dead son to life. Yes, verily, the tears and prayers of Christian parents for the salvation and the betterment of their wayward children are not lost, they arise to God and move Him sooner or later to dispense grace and mercy. There-

fore, Christian mothers, never give up the hope to obtain the betterment and conversion of your sons and daughters. Well for the wayward son, for the wayward daughter, well for them if a Christian mother weeps and prays for them! But the poorest among all poor children is the one who has no father or no mother to weep over him, for whom no father, no mother moves the Sacred Heart of Jesus to compassion in order that He might stop the funeral procession to open destruction and the child dead in sin be called back to life again.

Therefore, may the mercy of God grant you, Christian mothers, always His grace and His blessing, in order that you may fulfill your dignity and task as visible guardian angels for His honor, for your salvation and for the welfare of your children. And may none of you be placed in the position of the widow of Naim and be obliged to follow your children with a broken heart, with tears and entreaties. Amen.

SERMON XXVI

THE FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

The revelation of this glorious mystery begins with the promise of the Saviour. With the Saviour there was promised already in paradise His mother, and a mother who is worthy of the Son of God. God owed it to our Divine Saviour. If, therefore, the faith is once firmly established in the Incarnation of the Son of God, it permits no doubt of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. No one is a Catholic Christian who does not believe in it, and no one is a reasonable man who doubts it.

This faith teaches you, Christian wives and mothers, that Mary was conceived and born without original sin, just as the first Eve was created in grace and innocence, in order that Mary might become the worthy mother of our Divine Saviour, and also the worthy mother of the living, of the children of God and of the redeemed. Mary was through the foreseen merits of Christ preserved from original sin and all its consequences, the passions and inclinations to sin, which reign in all men. She was conceived in grace and born and remained therefore pure and immaculate through her whole life, just as we are purified from original sin by Baptism after birth on account of the merits of

Jesus. Behold then the stream of grace which from the day of that mystery began to spread itself abroad, that stream of grace which flows through the holy Sacraments also into our veins and communicates the spirit of life to the whole Church. Therefore faith in the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is as old as the world. It is older than the Church, older than the Gospel: it was with Jesus Christ before Abraham was. With this faith Holy Scripture opens: "Behold I will put enmity between you—the serpent—and the woman. She will crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." Who then is the heel? The heel are we, Catholic Christians, who honor Mary and imitate her example, with her believe in the Redeemer and observe His commandments. Mary is the sign of heaven and the miracle of earth because she was a virgin according to her soul also, without every stain of sin and also without original sin.

This faith is written in the hearts of Christians: it is contained in the treasury of faith which the Holy Ghost imparted to the Apostles on Pentecost, and therefore is the conviction of the whole Catholic world. It is repulsive to Christian feeling the very thought that Mary was even for one moment a child of sin, of wrath, and of Satan. How could we form of her that high, glorious opinion which we possess of her as the purest virgin and the holiest Mother of God if we did not accept the faith in her Immaculate Conception? This faith is the crown of all her privileges, graces and titles of honor. In this faith

she is the worthy, sinless Mother of God, the Virgin of virgins, the Mirror of Justice which is for the whole world a mirror, clear and plain, without the least stain of sin in whom all can recognize the glory of a pure soul, and the hatefulness even of the smallest sin. In this faith in her Immaculate Conception she is truly also the Queen of all Saints.

But now, Christian wives and mothers, what does this glorious mystery teach you? Yes, as Mary, in order to be the worthy Mother of our Divine Saviour, had to be without all and every stain of sin and even without original sin, so must you live as worthy mothers of children of God, heirs of heaven and companions of the Angels. You must strive with the grace of God to vanquish sin and the inclinations to sin within yourselves and in your children, and remain pure and immaculate, in order that you may obtain the dignity of Christian mothers like Mary for your honor and your happiness. As Mary is the prototype for the whole of Christianity, so you should be for your family by your Christian life and by your love for God. As Mary is the Mirror of Justice for the whole world so should the Christian woman be a mirror of justice for her family by piety, by zeal for the commandments of God, by faith and a Christian life. The Christian mother must be a mirror, in which her children recognize more than by words the beauty and worth of Christian life and imitate her. Yes, as Mary crushed the head of the serpent for herself and for us, so should the Christian mother also crush the head of the serpent not only in themselves but also in their children. They espe-

cially must guard the paradise of their children's souls from the poisonous breath of sin and protect them from error. The serpent will indeed very often lie in wait for the truly Christian mother: the world, its bad principles and examples will violently attack her children in order to seduce them, but as Mary always prays for us, so also a Christian mother will never grow tired of praying for her children. May you, therefore, Christian women, frequently recommend your children to the protection of the Immaculate Virgin, in order that they may through her intercession preserve grace and innocence. And you also often raise your own hearts in childlike reverence and love to the Blessed Virgin and call upon her at all times, in order that you and your children may preserve with the grace and purity of manners, the piety of heart and the innocence of life. And may the Blessed Virgin Mary and Mother of God be ever mindful of you and of all Christian mothers and take them under her special protection in order that they may work in a blessed manner for the honor of God and the salvation of Christian families. Amen.

SERMON XXVII

THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION OF THE CHILD

“Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me: for the kingdom of heaven is for such.”—MATTH. 19, 14.

Our Divine Saviour during His public life found, in the midst of His trials and sufferings, His greatest consolation among the little children. The sight of them gladdened His heart; they joyously greeted Him with “Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.” With a heart filled with emotion He pronounced these sweet words to His Apostles, who wished to prevent the crowds of children from coming to Him: “Suffer the little children and forbid them not to come to me; for the kingdom of heaven is for such.”

And in His infinite mercy our Divine Saviour Himself wished to be born a small child in order to sanctify and to bless childhood. An indescribable charm surrounds the infancy of Jesus and rests like a blessing on all Christian children. The Holy Ghost, as it were, hovers over the years of childhood and breathes into them the attractiveness of innocence and gladness. He bestows upon the infant soul that wonderful radiance which so plainly indicates the peace and the grace that dwell therein.

Hence as the feast of Christmas is a day on which

heaven and earth rejoice at the sight of the Divine Child, so also are the feasts of children the feasts of God — of the Father who made them His very own in holy Baptism, of the Son who redeemed them, and of the Holy Ghost who sanctified them. The feasts of children are the feasts of angels who rejoice with them, the feasts of men who are reminded of their own childhood days when they behold innocent children.

Yes, we gladly turn our thoughts to the days of our childhood, for they are days of joy, of grace and of freedom from care: days that are often the only glad ones life has given us: days that have left in their souls sweet echoes of heavenly melodies: days that bring consolation and refreshment to the decrepitude of old age, and give a foretaste of the bliss of heaven. Therefore our Divine Saviour in His unbounded love and mercy for children spoke those beautiful, but withal, pregnant words: “Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me, for the kingdom of heaven is for such.”

To whom were these weighty words addressed if not to parents and to the school? Hence it is my purpose to speak to you to-day about the obligation that parents have to give their children a Christian education. On a subsequent occasion I shall point out to you the crime and the menace of the godless school.

O Jesus! assist us with Thy grace!

I. “Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me, for the kingdom of heaven is for such.” For nineteen hundred years these glorious words have

been deeply imprinted on the heart of the Catholic Church, of Christian parents and teachers, and great things have been accomplished for Christian education. It was especially for the sake of the children that our Divine Saviour wished to become a little child, for He desired that the grace, the innocence and the holiness of His infancy should become the birth-right of Christian childhood. Just as the dewdrop and the polished prism reveal the glorious colors of the sun, so do the grace and innocence of Christian childhood reflect the splendors of the Divine Infant. Hence our Divine Saviour said lovingly and impressively, "Suffer the little children to come to me."

Who then, my dearly beloved, is called to carry out these divine words most carefully, if it be not the parents themselves? Yea, it is for the parents that these words were specially spoken. To them God has confided the children; for these are the creation of His love, and the parents are only the chosen instruments of their being. God has destined them for heaven, for an eternity of bliss. Hence God the Father has transformed them into His own beautiful image and likeness in holy Baptism, God the Son has made them sharers in His redemption and in His heavenly inheritance, and the Holy Ghost has poured out sanctifying grace into their souls. And then as the handiwork of God, the objects of God's predilection around which the angels hover, they are restored to the arms of their parents. It is a treasure of innocence and holiness that these receive and their duty it is to become the co-operators of God and strive to watch over, preserve

and increase with care and fidelity what God has so richly and generously placed in the hearts of their children.

When erstwhile God in His infinite justice drove the first sinning human couple from the garden of paradise, He placed two Cherubim with flaming swords at the entrance to that abode of bliss, to prevent sin from ever again gaining admission thereto. In like manner He has stationed two Cherubim — father and mother — before the paradise of the child's soul to guard it and to defend it against any and all dangers that may threaten it. They are bound indeed to be bishop and priest, teacher and educator, in fact everything, to their children, for these are dependent on them. The fourth commandment, with its promises and threatened punishments, has been given to enforce their obedience. Thus parents can lead their children to a knowledge of God, and by word and example, by instruction and Christian education, they let them come to the Divine Saviour, and with the advancing years they will also grow up for the kingdom of heaven. "Let the little children come to me for the kingdom of heaven is for such."

The faithful fulfillment of the duties incumbent on a Christian father and a Christian mother is of such paramount importance for the temporal and eternal welfare of their children, that before the judgment-seat of God it will be the weightiest question upon which the salvation of the parents will be decided. Christian parents must not imitate the example of animals devoid of reason whose young, as soon

as they are able to walk and find their own food, are no longer the objects of their care and attention. Christian parents must not imitate the pagans who, having secured the temporal welfare of their children, care nothing for their immortal souls. Christian parents, as human beings, are obliged to do more than the animals, and as Christians more than the pagans; they are strictly bound to spare no pains in bringing up their children as good Christians and useful members of society.

God rules His immense family, namely, the world, in such a manner that He is the support, the pastor, the teacher and the judge of men. In like manner parents should rule their household like a little world in which they are the support, the teachers and the judges of their children. For this purpose God has sanctified the children in holy Baptism and endowed them with a receptive disposition that prepares them to accept and preserve every good thing that the parents implant in them. They are like soft wax which the hands of the parents can mold into the fairest of forms; they are like the ivy that clings to the tree and embraces it closely in whatsoever direction it may turn. But their tendencies in the future will be and will remain such as they have imbibed from the early instruction of their parents. Children, in their power of absorption, may be compared to a plant. Behold what takes place in nature; the branches of a tree draw the life-sap, good or bad, from the trunk: the plant draws its nourishment from the soil in which it is imbedded and converts it into itself. Similarly children appropriate

to themselves whatsoever of good or evil they receive from their parents either by word or example. Hence it remains forever true that as we have been accustomed to do in the days of our youth so shall we continue to do when old age has overtaken us. Or, as Holy Writ has it: "A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Prov. 6, 22.)

This will bring home to us the force of the words of Christ: "Let the little children come to me, and forbid them not." Parents, therefore, have the grave responsibility of preparing a solid foundation in the hearts of their children in the days of their childhood that will suffice them in their maturer years. Hence from the earliest days when the young intelligence shows the first signs of awakening, parents must familiarize the child with the idea of God its heavenly Father and of Jesus Christ its Saviour, and inspire it with a filial love for them. The grace of God, conjointly with the words and example of the parents and their monitions and punishments wisely and justly administered, bears wonderful fruit. During the tender years of childhood parents can easily eradicate every evil inclination from the childish heart, for the roots thereof are not yet deeply seated. It is the parents therefore who lay the foundation which will eventually determine the eternal happiness and the temporal prosperity of their children. And if in maturer years these children are good Christians and useful members of society in consequence of the early training

they have received at the hands of their parents, these latter will have honor and glory before God and men.

2. This, my dearly beloved, is the best inheritance that parents, be they rich or poor, can leave to their children. No better portion indeed can be left to son or daughter than a good education which instils into their hearts the love for God, modesty and obedience, loyalty and generosity — which exterminates evil tendencies, rescues them from the dangers of sin and of vice and fills them with a vivid horror for everything that is wrong, and will not alienate them from either Church or school. Armed with such an education for the battle of life, they will always be able to succeed, no matter where they are, much better than those children who have been neglected or brought up for the world only. They possess the love and good-will of their fellow-men, and serve as a living example to others. The spirit of live Christianity that they have acquired from their parents wields a wide influence and makes for the betterment of those with whom they come in contact. This is in very truth the best inheritance that parents can leave their children, for the blessing of God rests upon it. Holy Writ says: "For God hath made the father honorable to the children, and seeking the judgment of the mothers, hath confirmed it upon the children." (Eccles. 3, 3.) This passage evidently means that the rectitude and virtue of the parents have the effect of drawing down God's blessing upon their children. It is therefore not to be marveled at that God, who loves Christian parents, be-

stows His choicest gifts upon their children, since these children are practically one with their parents. We have ample confirmation of this in Holy Writ and in a multitude of examples taken from daily life.

Parents, doubtlessly, sin grievously when they fail to provide their children with the necessaries of life, namely, food and clothing, or squander their inheritance, but how much more grievously do they not sin against their children when they deprive them of everything that is necessary for the life of their souls, and squander their eternal inheritance. And this they do when they forbid them to come to Christ their Saviour. Can parents be so cruel? Yes, by their negligence and indifference, by keeping their children away from Church and school, from divine service, from prayer and the sacraments — all this they accomplish by word and example.

What is there on earth that can save such parents who thus neglect their most sacred obligation toward their children? Nothing else can save them but an humble acknowledgment of their guilt and a contrite return to God. It is a difficult matter indeed to bring back grown-up children from the error of their ways, for the bent of earlier years has entered into their very blood and bones; but parents, by a better example and, above all, by their constant supplication of God, can bring back their children to the ways of true salvation and of Christian life. The mercy of God is unbounded, and a parent's tears are fountains of salvation for erring children. In Mary likewise they find a loving intercessor, through whose mediation

countless souls have again found the life of grace and obtained salvation from God.

3. But if father and mother, animated by a true Christian spirit, have faithfully raised their children by word and example, and have gradually led them to the Saviour by means of instruction and prudent chastisement, then, when the time shall have arrived for them to appear before the judgment-seat of God, then such a father and such a mother can gather their children around their death-bed and confidently say: "O God, my heavenly Father, Thou hast entrusted these children to my care, I have kept them in Thy name and have lost none of them through my own fault. Be Thou now, O God, Thou best of Fathers, according to Thy promise, their heavenly Father. Abide with them on earth with Thy blessing, so that we may all celebrate a happy reunion in heaven."

These parents will be borne to the grave like all others. Their children will shed abundant tears over their loss, and those who attend the obsequies will weep with them for they know that their sorrow is sincere. But the good that these parents have sown on this earth by the Christian education of their children will make itself felt among all future generations. Their memory will be held in grateful remembrance by their children, and frequently this petition will be offered up for them: "O Lord, give them eternal rest in recompense for their truly parental love and faithfulness towards us, and may perpetual light shine upon them." The parents have passed beyond the grave and now stand before the judgment-seat of God, where the evil

will be punished and the good rewarded. The first and most peremptory question is, how they fulfilled their duty as parents toward their children. Hark, there is a cry that ascends from the souls of the children to the very throne of God: "O Lord, give them eternal rest in recompense for their truly parental love and faithfulness towards us. They have led us to Thee by means of instruction and education, they have been our constant guides by word and example. We owe to them whatever of good there is in us." And the Judge will look upon these parents with an eye of kindness and mercy, and will say to them: "You were the guardians and my co-operators for the salvation of your children on earth, so be you now the same from now on in heaven. Good and faithful servants, enter into the joys of your Lord."

Oh, parents, in the name of Jesus Christ and in that of your children I make to you this earnest appeal: Have mercy on your children; you have given them the life of the body, do not therefore destroy the life of their innocent souls. Have mercy and do not forbid your children to come to Jesus, their most loving Saviour, in school, in instruction, and in church. Have mercy on your children and do not rob them of the treasure of their innocence and joy, the grace of God, do not destroy in them their childlike faith by words of mockery, do not undermine their hope by your scandalous conduct, and do not extinguish their childlike love of God by your own lovelessness. Have mercy on your children, for they have been confided

to you by God our heavenly Father. Do not destroy in them the sacred image of God, do not devastate the paradise of a child's innocent soul, do not strip the lily in the garden of God. Have mercy, and God your heavenly Father will reward you for it, and the obedience of your children will gladden your hearts. O God, Thou the Father of the children, grant that this request which is offered by the soul of every child to its parents may not fail of its purpose; grant that Thy commandments, Thy promises and Thy terrible menaces, all given to impress upon parents the seriousness of their obligations, grant that they may not have been issued in vain.

And that heaven's bliss may be the portion of all parents present here I will close with the words of the great Apostle St. Paul to his disciple Timothy (2 Tim. 4, 1): "I charge thee before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, by his coming and his kingdom: preach the word: be instant in season, out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine." Let it be your endeavor to raise your children in accordance with these words of the Apostle. If thus you act, you will possess the temporal blessing of your children's love and obedience in their youth, of their gratitude and faithful care in the days of your old age, and finally after death you will obtain an eternal recompense.

And you, the children's heavenly friends and angels guardian, who as the exemplar of all human educators always see the face of the heavenly Father, yet never

desert your wards on earth, you I specially implore that through your mediation parents and relatives, superiors and teachers, may always co-operate with God the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost for the temporal and eternal welfare of the children. Amen.

SERMON XXVIII

THE SPLENDID SACRIFICE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

“Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me.”
—MATTH. 19, 14.

“Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me,” are the really touching words that our Divine Saviour addressed to His Apostles, when they, in their solicitude for the Master, who was footsore from the long journey and weary with much speaking, wished to keep away from Him the mothers who had brought their children to have them blessed by the Saviour. But no, when there is question of the children’s welfare, our Divine Lord knows no fatigue — He forgets His complete exhaustion: “Suffer the little children and forbid them not to come to me.” These words so full of love and tender solicitude cannot fail to make a deep impression on the hearts of fathers and mothers and of all those to whom the care of children is entrusted. Will they not feel themselves impelled to lead the children to the Saviour so that He may bless them? Will they not hold up to their children the youth of the Saviour as the exemplar of obedience, of respect and filial gratitude towards parents? Yea, they will earnestly strive to have their children well instructed in all things appertaining to

faith, to the commandments, to the sacraments, so that by their lively faith, their exact observance of the commandments of God and of His Church, and the frequent and worthy reception of the sacraments they may increase in virtue and in grace before God and men. Parents will assuredly strive above all things to preserve their children in innocence and grace, so that they may continue and complete their span of life as good Christians and worthy men, and that they will correspond perfectly with their first and last end, namely, eternal salvation. Without a doubt parents and all those to whom the care of children is confided will be most anxious to procure for their wards in the most perfect manner possible by means of a Christian education that greatest and most precious treasure of man, namely, faith, grace and eternal salvation.

In fact, my dearly beloved, parents can offer God no grander sacrifice than the souls of their children who, through the instrumentality of Christian care and education, have retained their innocence and are growing up for God and His Church. But, on the other hand, parents can bring no more terrible sacrifice than to bring up their children for sin and Satan by means of an un-Christian, godless education.

Therefore I shall endeavor, with the help of God's grace, to picture to you to-day the splendid sacrifice which parents offer to God by means of the Christian education of their children; but I shall also point out the terrible sacrifice that un-Christian parents make of their children to sin and Satan.

O Jesus assist us with Thy grace!

1. It is a well-known fact that every Hebrew mother was obliged, forty days after her confinement, to present her first-born child in the temple of Jerusalem and there offer a sacrifice for it in thanksgiving and adoration. Mary, the immaculate Mother of God, humbly subjected herself to this commandment and so journeyed with Joseph to Jerusalem. There she stood before the altar in the temple and presented her divine child to God. There she ceased not to implore God to grant her the grace, the constancy and the blessings necessary for her to fulfill worthily her sublime vocation of raising her divine child for God and for the salvation of the world.

This journey of the immaculate Mother of God to the temple is still continued in the Catholic Church. Following the example of the immaculate Mother of God, the glorious model of all Christian wives and mothers, from time immemorial Christian mothers, after successful parturition, have bent their steps to the church, there to thank God before His altars, to receive the blessing of the Catholic Church from the hands of her priest and in his person to receive the congratulations of the Christian community. Hence the priest immediately begins with the words: "She shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and mercy from God her Saviour, for this is the generation of them that seek him." He then recites the 23rd Psalm, which begins with these words: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof: the world and all they that dwell therein." He finally closes with a prayer, in which he calls down upon the mother and the child

the grace of God and the intercession of our Blessed Lady.

On this day of her churching the Christian mother places her child in the arms of a still better mother, the Catholic Church, with the purpose that the latter will make her child participate in grace and salvation and will open for it the gates of heaven. But our Blessed Lady teaches us a still greater mystery and gives all mothers and parents a more serious lesson. We see her stand at the foot of the altar offering her son to God the Eternal Father, from Whom she had received him, and though on that day he was given back to her, still she knew that she was obliged to raise him for the Cross, that she would be forced to offer him in a bloody manner on the Cross for the honor and glory of God and the salvation of the world. And yet, for all that, the immaculate Mother of God submitted to the Will of God: "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word."

God demands a sacrifice from all of us; therefore Jesus, our Divine Saviour, offered Himself as a victim upon the Cross not only to save us, but also that we in our turn might be able to bring to God sacrifices acceptable to Him. What else were the holy martyrs but a glorious sacrifice offered to the honor and glory of God? What else are the sufferers of every kind but victims of sacrifice? What else the virgins who have dedicated themselves to the service of the Lord? Every Christian who daily offers up his hardships, worries, labors, duties of his state in life, battles and self-denials, prayers and good works to God, he also

is a victim with and through Jesus Christ. Every sick or dying person who suffers or dies patiently is a splendid sacrifice to the honor and glory of God. But from you, oh Christian parents, God demands another sacrifice that is very agreeable to Him — innocent souls of children. Christian parents, especially the mothers, offer their children in pleasing sacrifice to God, when they accept them from the hands of God and raise them in grace and innocence for God, for their temporal and eternal welfare.

Oh, parents! Oh, mothers! the innocent souls of children, children who have been brought up in a Christian manner are most precious victims, and if erstwhile God looked with favor upon the sacrifice of the innocent Abel, and upon the sacrifice of our father Abraham, and upon the gifts of bread and wine which His high-priest Melchisedech offered up to Him, He looks with infinitely greater pleasure upon the souls of children that have been sanctified by holy Baptism and redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. Christian parents! Christian mothers! your dignity and vocation are indeed sublime; you are, as it were, other priests of God, who offer Him in sacrifice what is holiest on earth, namely, the children, in adoration of the majesty and the glory of God manifested among His living creatures, in thanksgiving for all His graces and mercies, in atonement for your own transgressions, and as a sacrifice of impetration to call down upon yourselves, upon your children and your whole family every grace and blessing.

But so grand a vocation, so sublime a dignity, de-

mands the grace of God, constancy and enlightenment from above. We read of another occasion when Mary, the noble exemplar of all Christian parents, of all wives and mothers, stood before the altar of God and humbly implored Him to grant her the blessings, the grace, the fidelity that she needed for her sublime but onerous vocation. The Christian mother likewise often kneels before the altar of God and prays to God the eternal Father from whom all blessings come, and to God the Son, the divine friend of the children, and to God the Holy Ghost, the counselor and enlightener of human hearts. She begs for grace so that she can worthily take the place of God toward her child; for fidelity, so that she can be the visible guardian angel of her children on the dangerous paths of human life and be enabled to watch over the paradise of the innocent souls of her children, so that the poisoned breath of sin may gain no admission thereto.

If you also, my dearly beloved, will be guided by the example of Mary the blessed Mother of God, then all fathers and mothers will be a light blessed by God for their children. It is the quality of light to make all things light; so should parents show their children the way on the paths of salvation and through the dangers of this earthly life by word and example. The flame of the light burns upward; so should Christian parents draw the hearts of their children upwards from this sinful earth to grace, and faith, and virtue, and finally to God. But light also gives warmth, and so Christian parents should warm the hearts of their children by their love and solicitude, their instructions

and warnings. Then parents will receive a reward exceeding great from the hands of Him, from whose divine lips fell these gracious words: "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me, for the kingdom of heaven is for such." Trusting in the mercy of God truly Christian parents can cheerfully say with the venerable Simeon: "Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace. Because my eyes have seen thy salvation." (Luke 2, 29, 30.) They have faithfully and successfully offered God the most magnificent sacrifice it was in their power to give by the Christian education of their children.

2. The Christian education of the child is the greatest boon, the source of all peace, of all morality, and of all prosperity, not only for the family, but also for the community and the nation at large. But the most terrible of all evils, the source of all misfortunes, of all immorality and vice, of temporal and eternal ruin — is a godless education. In ancient times mothers offered their children in sacrifice to the god Moloch. This was a brazen steer, hollow inside, which was heated to a glow to consume the holocaust. When the mothers heard the pitiful cries and screams of their unfortunate children pierce through the sides of the fiery idol they danced about the dreadful altar in frenzied joy, confident that their god was well pleased with their frightful sacrifice. But, my dearly beloved, these unnatural mothers destroyed only the bodies and not the souls of their children. Herod ordered the slaughter of hundreds of innocent children because of

the divine Infant, but he destroyed only the bodies and not the souls of these children. They are now in heaven, where they rejoice with Jesus Christ forevermore: they are glorious martyrs whose feast the Church celebrates to this very day.

Christians and countless parents have undertaken the terrible task of destroying the souls of children. They accomplish their purpose by giving bad example and by their infidelity. They live for the world only, and their sole anxiety is to have their children cut a figure in the world. For this reason they bend all their energies to develop in their children a taste for dress and idle fashions, for parties and dances, for theaters and entertainments, and for a brilliant appearance in society. Everything is of vastly greater importance than God or religion, and therefore they keep them away from church, from divine service, from the sacraments and from the love of Jesus. They smother the innocence and grace of Baptism in their children, out of children of God they make of them children of pride and of sin, out of temples of the Holy Ghost they make of the hearts of their children abodes of passion and deceit. If in former times children cried for pain and suffering in the bowels of the fiery steer, there are to-day countless ruined souls of children that cry out to God against their parents, who have robbed their own offspring of the most sacred and precious treasures that can be found in heaven or on earth, namely, innocence, grace, the love of God, faith, and Jesus the delight of children's souls. A prominent man, though he himself was barren of

faith, spared no pains to have his children well brought up in the Christian religion. When questioned about this apparent contradiction in his conduct, he gave the following heartfelt answer: "I want my children to have more happiness, peace and joy, than have fallen to my share, and all these they can obtain in the Catholic religion." He was a good father in spite of his unbelief, but examples like this are rare in our days. Because parents are so steeped in worldliness and have long since cast all religious belief and practice overboard, they have decided that their children too shall grow up without religion. For how can they learn anything if parents, guardians and teachers prevent them from assisting at any religious instruction at all, or if they do permit them to go they do not contribute by any effort of their own to imprint indelibly in the mind and the heart of the child the lessons it has received. On the contrary they afford it every opportunity of speedily and thoroughly forgetting the little it has learned.

If such parents, although they themselves have lost every spark of Christianity, would at least have their children carefully instructed in religion, so that they would have more calm of conscience, interior peace and joy in life. But no, what they do not possess others shall not have, and hence they keep their children away from instruction, from divine service and the sacraments. Perhaps they are better satisfied to see their children degenerate from day to day; probably, too, they prefer to have their children disobey and prove unmanageable; it may possibly be a matter of

pride to them to know that their children are either covertly or openly giving themselves over to the practice of immorality; they must evidently delight in the knowledge that their sons or their daughters are living in open defiance of every law, human or divine, and are of no particular use or credit either to themselves or to anybody else. In view of such a contingency Our Divine Saviour said: "Suffer the little children and forbid them not to come to me — (Matth. 19, 14), but wo to the man who should scandalize one of these little ones." (Matth. 18, 6. ss.)

3. This is one kind of godless education. We encounter it frequently, but because of the grossness of the neglect to which it testifies, it is not half so frequent as the second kind. The latter is the more ruinous, and to it the majority of unfortunate children fall a prey. This second species consists in this, that though the parents allow their children to receive instruction, still by their speech at home, by their scandalous conduct, by their bold transgressions of the laws of God, by their desecration of the Lord's day, by their contempt for the laws of fasting, they uproot from the hearts of their children the living faith and the fear of God. These unfortunate children find themselves at the parting of the ways between good and evil — whom shall they now believe? the priest or their parents? They know from their catechism that they are obliged to keep holy the Lord's day, that it is a grievous sin to miss Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation; from the lips of Christ they know that he who does not hear the Church in her command-

ments, who does not observe the days of fast, who does not receive the sacraments during Easter time, that he is a public sinner and a pagan. They know and feel it in their souls that prayer is the Christian's chief duty, that the love of God is manifested only by the observance of His commandments. Whom shall they, whom will they believe? The catechism? In that case their feelings of filial regard will be deeply wounded by the un-Christian lives of their parents and by their contempt for the laws of God and of His Church. But if they believe their parents and their bad example — a course that is the most natural and most in accordance with their filial feeling — their faith will be shattered, the fear of God will be at an end, the awe for the commandments will disappear, they will gradually become just as indifferent, just as filled with disgust for the commandments of the Church, for the sacraments and divine service as their parents, and more so, because scandal causes untold ravages, and weeds grow luxuriantly.

In such a manner numberless unfortunate children are de-Christianized by their parents, by them estranged from God, accustomed from the days of their childhood to transgress the laws of God and of His Church. It evidently must appear better so to their minds. Wherefore it is said: "Wo to the man who shall scandalize one of these little ones." Most children succumb to the scandal given them by their parents. But the angels of the children resist such parents; let them do what they will, the children's guardian angels will resist them, and the might of the

angels will overcome them. God resists such parents; do what they will, nothing has value in His eyes, prayers, alms, good works, all is lost. The guardian angels of these children resist them, and God resists them. "Wo to the man who shall scandalize these little ones," but a thousand times wo to the parents who give scandal to their children. This woe is the curse of un-Christian parents, and this curse will accompany them before the judgment-seat of God. You remember the question that God the just Judge addressed to Cain: "Where is thy brother Abel?" And he answered: "I know not; am I my brother's keeper?" And he said to him: "What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the earth." (Gen. 4, 9, 10.) The same question will be put to such parents on the day of judgment: "Parents, where are your children?" Will they perchance also answer: "What care we for our children?" "What have you done? the souls of your children cry to me for vengeance." Soul for soul! one soul for the soul of a child, for two, for four, for six souls of children! Wo to the man who shall scandalize one of these little ones.

Oh, parents! take to heart the words of your Saviour and future judge! "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me." On your Christian or un-Christian life and example depends the good or the bad behavior of your children, as the good or the bad fruit depends on the good or the bad condition of the tree. Believe in the word of the Son of God and be convinced that it is your children who

will pave your way either to heaven or to hell: "Let the little children come to me, but wo to the man who shall scandalize any of them."

Oh, parents! as much as Christian education is a lovely sacrifice which you offer to God by and with your children, so the un-Christian education of the children is the most terrible sacrifice that parents can bring to the world, to sin and to Satan. So therefore may your sacrifice be a lovely one, one pleasing to God, one that promises you His grace and His mercy, but to your children peace and prosperity. Though the cares of education be great, still the reward is much greater, that reward which God has promised good and faithful parents in heaven. Amen.

SERMON XXIX

THE RESULTS OF AN UN-CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

“Jesus said to them: Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me: for the kingdom of heaven is for such.”—
MATTH. 19, 14.

The anxiety and care of St. Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus, in protecting and guarding the Divine Child is touching, for He is the most precious treasure confided to him by God. Therefore he spares no labor, no dangers and no difficulties. The word of the Angel who appeared to him at midnight and warned him against Herod was sufficient to St. Joseph to make him flee into distant Egypt, in order to save the Divine Child from snares. He understood indeed the immeasurable worth of this jewel. He looked confidently into the future and beheld the salvation of the world, the immeasurable consequences for time and eternity and the millions of redeemed souls who depended upon the preservation of this Child. Therefore is his care, his obedience and his fidelity so touching and so beautiful.

Would that the foster-father St. Joseph, might be a luminous example for all parents! God has confided to them also a precious good, immortal, and in Baptism, sanctified souls of children. The temporal and eternal welfare of the children depend largely

upon their fidelity, their zeal and their care. Christian parents consider that St. Joseph knew how to protect and to save the Child Jesus from the snares of Herod. Save in like manner and like fidelity your children, for also Herod lays snares for them; infidelity, sin and the bad principles of the present times, strive to poison and to kill the poor innocent souls of the children.

Christian parents who are anxious and zealous for the salvation of their children through a truly Christian education are like unto the foster-father St. Joseph and merit the gratitude of God and His merciful reward in eternity. But un-Christian parents who do not concern themselves about the eternal salvation of their children, yes, who by an un-Christian education destroy their baptismal grace, stifle childish piety and faith, are guilty of their later godless life, and consequently are the murderers of the souls of their children. They are like King Herod, the murderer of so many innocent children at Bethlehem. His reward will also be theirs, perhaps greater and more terrible, for Herod killed only the bodies of the children but not their souls, which rejoice now eternally in heaven. The un-Christian parents spoil their children in regard to temporal affairs in life and ruin their souls for a Christian life on earth and for the blessed and eternal life in heaven. I will therefore speak to-day on the results of an un-Christian education.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace.

1. The Son of God came into this world in order to save all, and therefore also children. Hence His

beautiful words: "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me: for the kingdom of heaven is for such." Children should also make use of the superabundant merits of His redemption; they should also draw waters from the spring of grace which He opened for all. With the seal of the kinship of God they should be signed in Baptism, and with the other Sacraments sanctified in order that Jesus would see them during their earthly career numbered among His faithful Christians and once in heaven among His Saints.

Who then, my beloved, has the calling and the holy duty to fulfill this longing of Jesus after the temporal and eternal salvation of the children, if not the parents? God confided to them the children and placed their destiny in their hands. In fact, from a Christian educated child whole generations of good Christians could come forth. And who can say whether God has not chosen from the small hosts of children some for the execution of great plans, pious teachers, holy priests or other instruments of His holy Providence for the saving of thousands of souls? How would the parents of those great Fathers of the Church and Saints, an Ambrose, a Gregory or an Augustine, a St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis Xavier, Stanislaus, Aloysius, Vincent de Paul, Alphonse de Liguori, St. Elisabeth, Catharine and innumerable others — how would they have been amazed if they had been told before what would one day become of their children, and what great things they would accomplish for God and for the Christian world? The

majority of children may indeed go the usual Christian way, nevertheless through them the families and the parishes will be renewed and the good education which they have enjoyed will be handed down to their own children. Thus Christian families and parishes are formed and preserved, and the good seed of Christian parents bears a hundred and a thousandfold fruit.

The kings of earth have their favorites, but the favorites of God are innocent souls of children. The Holy Ghost sanctified them in Baptism and transformed them, therefore the soul of the child is like a virgin soil which only awaits cultivation to bring forth glorious fruit. It is a soft, supple plant which takes on the form and the direction that the parents give it. It is like soft wax in the hands of the parents from which they can form them into angels or devils in human form. The heart of the child is still pure from sinful inclinations and therefore receptive for all good, especially for childish faith and piety. Oh, how easy is it to bring forth in a child emotion, love for God, horror for the least sin and joy in the service of God! How easy is it to plant in the souls of children, which are the dwelling places of the Holy Ghost, of grace and of innocence — fear of God, obedience, gratitude and other childlike virtues. Yes, truly, Christian parents should be the gardeners of God, in order to cultivate these lilies of innocence and to protect them, the guardian angels before the paradise of the holy souls of children, in order that the pestilential breath of sin and the poisonous, godless example may not enter and lay it waste. Therefore

our Divine Saviour admonishes in particular the parents with the touching words: "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me: for the kingdom of heaven is for such." But nothing can call down the just anger of God so much as the parents, if they lay waste with a frivolous hand the paradise of innocent souls of their children by an un-Christian education and by bad example. Then the words of our Divine Lord refer to them: "But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depths of the sea. Wo to that man by whom the scandal cometh." (Matth. 18, 6-7.)

2. In fact, my dearly beloved, when we see how tares are sowed in these gardens of God and rise to luxuriant growth, and how the innocent souls of children are spoiled from earliest youth, we can, with the servants in the Gospel, say in astonishment to the father of the family: "Lord, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field?" Didst thou not sanctify these child-souls in holy Baptism and enrich them with thy superabundant grace? "Whence then the tares?" And then the Lord can also answer us: "The enemy hath done that." (Matth. 13, 27, 28.) This enemy are first the parents who, by an un-Christian education and the scandal they give, ruin their children.

The first cause of an un-Christian education is the manner in which Matrimony is contracted and the way the Sacrament is received. The state of grace, there-

fore, the worthy reception of this Sacrament is the indispensable condition for parents to participate in the blessing of God for themselves and for their children. But if we ask in what manner and with what intentions Matrimony is frequently entered into, then one must shudder at the frivolity, at the low lust and especially at the unworthy confession and communion which precede the Sacrament of Matrimony to desecrate the marriage state with a threefold sacrilege, instead of consecrating it with the blessing and the grace of God. If both parties have committed this crime then this marriage is burdened with the terrible poison of a sixfold sacrilege, as long as it is not made good by a worthy confession. From this originates the misfortune and the ruin of so many marriages which cannot free themselves from the horrible guest in the form of a sacrilege.

What consequences then will such a marriage have for the children? No other than that parents, who are not conscientious towards themselves, will be just as little conscientious towards their children. Will they instill into their children religion, love for God and piety, which they do not themselves possess? Thus the misfortune of sacrilege is soon enough bequeathed to the children, and from youth on they are estranged from God. The hearts of children are extraordinarily receptive for good or for evil, as it will be offered to them from youth on by their parents. Moreover, my beloved, the house is the grave of a spiritual murder, where the father or the mother send the poisonous arrows of frivolous scorn against religion and its

ministers into the eager absorbing hearts of their children; if they, by scandal in word or deed, give to their childish innocence the last blow of death: if they, by their own indifference towards God or towards the service of God, seduce also their children and compel them to desecrate Sunday by work, to miss divine service and to despise the commandments of the Church — my God, what will then be the consequences for the poor children? Hand in hand with the most terrible indifference usually goes all kinds of loose company for the children, even if they lose the most precious treasure of innocence; but wo to them if by inattention they should break the smallest dish in the house! But how the grown-up or half grown-up sons and daughters spend Sundays and festivals, with whom they associate, what books they read, or whether they are on the serpent's path of sinful lust to their own and others' destruction — many parents concern themselves very little. Whether they receive the holy Sacraments at the prescribed times, whether they make the church a show-place and give scandal to ordinary Christians, that is not worth the while for many parents.

What seeds of destruction are sowed in the artless hearts of children between the age of twelve and fifteen years by conversation and example, by carelessness and indifference, by neglect of prayer and divine service? Since every one from youth on is more inclined to evil, how must this evil slowly but surely sprout and break forth in a fatal way for parents and children and others? You all know the almost uncon-

querable power of evil example, and if it has been the example of parents through many years it must necessarily become the nature of the children. From this originated the proverb: "As the sapling is inclined so the tree grows." If the children are brought up without religion and without the knowledge of God, they will also live without religion and without God and remain indifferent towards a better life and cold in their duties as Christians. The sins of the parents live mostly in an enlarged measure in their children. These will also seldom bring up their future children better and are the cause that others too will be affected by their example and spread abroad the scandal. Therefore, not only the sins of their children fall back upon the parents but also all others which in the future are the outgrowth of the first sowing.

3. But verily, the judgments of God are just. The punishment of parents forgetful of their duty usually overtakes them immediately. As the parents estrange their children from God so will these in riper years be estranged from their parents. As the parents squandered the capital of a good education for riper years, so too the children squander the capital which the parents should have laid away for their old age. It happens frequently enough that parents in their old age are treated with ingratitude and coldness, yes, even with rudeness. With bitterness they look back upon their long life: they see themselves abandoned and helpless in sickness, in poverty without support, or thrust upon the charity of a stranger, while their adult sons squander their prosperity in drink and in play,

and the daughters in the frivolity of fashions. But if they have given over their property to their children with a provision and even if other people would faithfully observe the contract, their children certainly will not, even if it were legally made.

Who can enumerate the cares which the conduct of their children later brought to so many parents and which they, without having the consolation not to have merited it, must swallow. Truly a bitter but a just fruit, for whoever sows the wind will reap the storm, and whoever sows weeds and thorns, cannot hope for wheat and roses. Then if the parents must taste the fruits of their sowing in their children, you hear the complaint: If I thought I would have experienced such a thing in my children! They will drive me into my grave! Yes, indeed, unto the grave, the requital on the part of your children will accompany you. Here they will, for the sake of appearances, squeeze out a few tears, and then all the more surely nevermore think of you. But have you ever thought, oh, father, or mother, what awaits you beyond the grave! If you did not feel on earth the just requital, flee at least, if you can, the Almighty Judge beyond! Jesus Christ said: "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me," but He said also: "But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matth. 18, 6.) If this threat applies to every one without distinction, what judgment then will confront parents, who have

given to their own children scandal and the greatest and most effective scandal by word, by example and by un-Christian education? Parents, who before all others, were called to be helpers and co-workers of God for the salvation of their children?

Great God, if Thy judgment is already so terrible for those who bring damnation to the souls of their fellow-men by word and example and temptation; it is more terrible than that in which Thou alone art offended and may be soon also appeased, what then may be prepared for such unnatural parents beyond the grave? The day of wrath, the day of vengeance, when such a father, such a mother, after the separation of the soul from the body has to appear before the judge! Listen! What kind of a cry is that from the souls of your children whom I confided to you, gave to you holy and demand them back from your hands holy? Murderers; murderers of the souls of your children! Slowly murdered by carelessness, murdered by scandal given, by estrangement from God and from Christ, from the Church and her commandments; souls poisoned by immorality which they saw and by scoffings and cursings which they were obliged to learn.

4. In fact, my beloved in Christ, how many parents are there who treat their children not as the holy property of God, but as an unwelcome consequence of their marriage, not as such who should be educated for heaven, but exploited for the earth. Oh, unhappy children who fall into such hands! As the ivy climbs up the tree, so must these unhappy ones cling to un-

Christian parents; as the wax receives every impression, so must they receive every bad impression from their parents. Thus instead of being led to heaven, they are pressed down to earth. What else can be the consequences than that they will wither away? They gave every confidence to their parents and imitated them in all things. This childish confidence is made use of by the parents to estrange them from God and from the Christian life, from morality, from piety and innocence of heart, and in their place to plant the foulness of sin. Who does not praise the innocence of a child? The grace of God and peace shines forth from its eyes. But after a few years, how changed is the whole nature of this child? How forward and passionate, how deceitful and obstinate still in youthful years? What can be expected of the future! Who has destroyed the leaves of this flower destined to flourish in the garden of God? Its own parents did it! From its own mother, instead of speaking to her child of God and having taught it to love Him from its heart and to fold its hands in prayer—it heard only scoldings and imprecations; from its father, instead of having impressed upon his child the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom, and of having admonished it to walk in the ways of the Lord, it heard only scoffings against the Church and her priests or other expressions of infidelity. These poor children hear nothing and learn nothing of that which every Christian must know and believe, if he wants to be saved. What can then, the most zealous efforts of the priest who must act in

accordance with the commission of our Divine Saviour: "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not,—" what can be accomplished under such circumstances? Nothing, absolutely nothing, for these children have learned at home only one thing, how to laugh at the priest. We can now understand the words of our Divine Saviour who, full of compassion for the unfortunate children estranged from God by the guilt of their own parents, when He said: "But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the sea."

The calling of parents is sublime and honorable. They are in the hands of God the instruments which He makes use of to lead their children to the high calling, for which they are created, namely to know and honor God, to love and adore Him and thereby be saved. The parents are the representatives of God; the children are, as St. Chrysostom says, a holy pledge which God has confided to them in order that they may act towards them in accordance with His holy intentions, therefore to instruct them in the knowledge of God and of His commandments and faithfully provide that this instruction will be completed. Oh, you pious and conscientious parents! You are the light of the Gospel in your families: from you shines forth light, from you comes warmth into the hearts of the children. Your words, your good teachings effect more and earlier and more lasting than all other teachings. Upon you must the school and the Church later

build, and prepare the hearts of the children for the temple of the Holy Ghost. But you — as the great St. Augustine says — you can also represent the office of teacher in your houses, you can work with the Bishops and priests and impart to them the sermon and the word of God, in order that after you have taught your children, warned and corrected them, you can once in confidence and consolation lead them to the judgment-seat of the highest judge of the living and the dead. But the reward of good Christian parents is also great, for if they have to answer for the sins of their children, so also everything good in them is ascribed to their faithful efforts and they participate in their reward. On earth, your memory will live on in the hearts of good children and like a beacon-light, like a guide, the Christian teachings will accompany your children in all their ways, and as an invisible power draw them back from the ways of vice and of forgetfulness of God. It is as if they said: “No more will I see the kindly smile of my good father, which rejoiced me if I was obedient: the tongue from which I heard such beautiful instructions is silent. No more will I see the countenance of my faithful mother who so carefully taught me of God, taught me to pray, and prayed with me. But never shall her instructions disappear from my memory and my life shall never desecrate her memory! What they were to me on earth, they are still more to me in heaven before the throne of God until we see each other there again.” Therefore, I repeat in con-

clusion once more for all, and especially for the parents the words of Jesus: "Suffer little children and forbid them not to come to me, for the kingdom of heaven is for such." Amen.

SERMON XXX

THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND SCHOOL

“They found him in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors.”—LUKE 2, 46.

“Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me.” These are the words that our Divine Saviour uttered, prompted by His wonderful love and solicitude for the true welfare and Christian education of the children. Who can resist these words and refuse to care for the children upon whom the blessing of the Saviour rests. For their sake He was born a child so that His innocence and grace, the love of the Heavenly Father and the love of men might abide with them.

Millions of childish hearts beat for the Divine Child and feel themselves richly blessed in their faith and love of the Child-God. The grown-up man has but a faint intimation of what so deeply moves the children's hearts when they are still in full possession of grace, innocence and piety. Children are happiest and most carefree in the sheltered bosom of the family, far from the distracting gaze of the world. For this reason our Divine Saviour wished to pass the first twelve years of His life in the intimate circle of the

holy family at Nazareth, unknown to the world and unconsidered by its votaries. His purpose was to bless and to sanctify the years of childhood, which form for the majority of mankind the only truly happy period of life.

But with the beginning of His twelfth year we behold the boy Jesus in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors. This is the only event of His Boyhood since His return from Egypt to Nazareth of which we know anything. This event must assuredly have a special significance since it is the only one recorded in the Sacred Scriptures. And it has such significance. It was to serve as a new example to growing youth. And in truth, advancing youth will only then receive blessing and grace, will only then retain innocence and modesty, and will only then increase in wisdom and age and grace before God and men, when in imitation of the divine Boy Jesus, it is found sitting in the temple in the midst of the doctors, namely, when youth is well brought up in Catholic faith and life and is held to its prayers, to works of piety, to a regular and dignified attendance at divine service and to a frequentation of the sacraments.

It is not only the parent's task and duty to keep a watchful eye on these matters, but the Catholic Church has the selfsame obligation. It was she who sanctified the child and gave it its spiritual birth as a child of God in holy Baptism. Christian children are also the children of the Church, and as their spiritual mother she teaches them the doctrines of heaven, administers to them grace and the sacraments, forgives them their

sins, nourishes them with the sacred body of Christ, educates them as Christians, as heirs of heaven, for youth can attain eternal salvation only through the Catholic Church.

Upon the Christian education of our children depends the hope of a Christian future, the preservation of the faith, the welfare of families, the prosperity of nations and the Christian character of our civilization. The Catholic Church therefore has not only the duty, but the right to watch over the Christian education of the children for the welfare of the human race. No one can deny her this right, without sinning in the most frightful manner against God, against Jesus Christ, against the children's guardian angels, against the parents, and against the children themselves, and without calling down upon themselves the most awful curse of God: "Wo to the man who shall scandalize one of these little ones, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matth. 18, 6.)

Nevertheless, in spite of the rights of the Church over Catholic childhood, in spite of the command of our Divine Saviour: "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me," in spite of the awful warning: "Wo to the man who shall scandalize one of these little ones." We hear from the camp of all those who are hostile to the Church the cry rise up: "We want no sectarianism in the school, we want no religion in our schools!"

I shall therefore speak to-day about the schools and

about what the separation of Church and School means.

O Jesus, assist us with Thy grace!

1. What are schools for? Schools are evidently intended to instruct and educate children for their twofold vocation as men and as Christians, therefore for the human but also for the Christian life, for the temporal but also for the eternal welfare. Schools, in so far as they fulfill their true destiny, must therefore keep this double object in view. Schools are not merely institutions where awkward youths may receive a certain amount of training or polish, like riding-schools where young horses are trained and riders may practice, or like dancing-schools, drawing- and music-schools, that occupy themselves exclusively with dancing, drawing or music. The schools have a higher and a nobler mission. The schools must make of our children useful men and women, but also good Christians, they must educate them for the human but also for the Christian life, they must instruct them for their temporal but also for their eternal welfare. The school cannot fulfill this mission in any manner without God, without religion, without the Catholic Church, in fact without these it cannot even make decent human beings out of our children.

Who was the first teacher, and where was the first school? God Himself was the first teacher. He taught Adam not only the knowledge of creation, He bestowed on him not only deep penetration and wisdom, but He taught him also to know His will and

His commandments, so that Adam might worthily fulfill his twofold vocation of king of creation and of beloved of God equally well. Paradise was the first school, the tree of the knowledge of good and of evil was the first catechism. Because Adam did not learn this catechism well he rendered his descendants unutterably unhappy not only as children of God, but also as mere men. It is a fact made evident by the experience of ages that mere human knowledge is incapable of rendering man even as man happy, or of worthily fulfilling his purely human vocation.

Cain and Abel did not only learn agriculture and other human knowledge from Adam, but they also learned to adore God and to bring Him sacrifice. The same holds true for the Patriarchs. The Patriarchs were the rulers of the family, but they were also the teachers of the children; they instructed them in tradition, in the commandments of God, in sacrifice and in prayer. Among the Israelites the child remained under the tutelage of its mother until its fifth year, and from her it also learned the first commandments. When it was five years old it entered under the guidance of its father, who was especially obliged to care for its religious formation. Education among the Jews was characterized by firmness and severity, just as God was obliged to employ sternness and severity in leading the Hebrew nation. Besides, there were the schools of the Prophets, where pious and talented boys completed their studies under the guidance of the Prophets. There was an advanced school for girls in the temple at Jerusalem, where our Blessed Lady

spent the days of her childhood. In every city and village religious instruction was given in the synagogue three times a week to young and old. The same was done in the temple at Jerusalem. Extracts were read from the books of Moses, of the Kings, and of the Prophets. These were explained, questions were put to those present, or their questions were answered. Hence in the gospel we see the divine Boy Jesus assisting at one of these public instructions; we hear Him answering questions and asking them, so that all those who were present, the priests and the audience, were astonished at His wisdom and His answers.

2. Now is it conceivable that the Catholic Church, whose richest inheritance and sweetest duty, namely that of loving her children, was confided to her by Jesus Christ Himself with the words: "Let the little children come to me," should display less earnestness in the Christian education of her children than did the Jewish synagogue for hers? By no means. The Apostles themselves and their immediate successors were already much concerned for the Christian education of their youth. The terms "catechist," for the teacher, and "catechetical" instruction were originated in Apostolic times. Pagans, who wished to be converted, were, like the young Christians, known as "Catechumens," that is, those who were being instructed in Christian doctrine. Tertullian in the third century very aptly calls them the "Novices of Christianity." The instructions were very solemnly begun with the laying-on of the hands of the Bishop, with prayer and the sign of the cross. Deaconesses (vir-

gins and widows dedicated to the service of God) were selected to impart, in a private house, instruction to those of the female sex. Solemn instruction to all without exception was given in the assembling places of the Christians. But parents also considered it their sacred duty to be the first to instruct their children. The Apostolic constitutions exhorted them earnestly to do so. In default of the parents the sponsors were obliged to assume this duty, and hence they were called the spiritual fathers and mothers of the children for whom they stood. The best proof of the excellence of this instruction is furnished by the glorious multitudes of martyrs, of confessors and holy virgins; another proof we find in the galaxy of those noble Doctors of the Church, who so gloriously defended Christianity during the early ages. Parents vied with the bishops and the priests, especially such holy mothers as SS. Nonna, Monica, Anthusa, Aemilia, Macrina, who brought up for the Church of God a Gregory of Nazianz, an Augustine, a Chrysostom, a Basil, a Gregory of Nyssa, a Peter of Sebaste and thousands of other saints and martyrs. Verily they were great as men, being admired even by the pagans, because they were great as Christians. It is an incontestable fact that no man can be great, able, and command the respect of his fellow-men as a man, unless he be all this as a Christian.

In succeeding ages we find that cathedrals and especially the monasteries, since the days of Charlemagne, opened schools where instruction not only in religion but also in every secular science was imparted. The

universities, which in former times, and even in our day still, enjoyed world-wide reputation and esteem for their learning, were the creation of the Popes. The state universities of our day cannot compare with them. One religious order after another sprang up in the Catholic Church, such as the Benedictines, the Jesuits, the Brothers of the Christian schools and others, whose special vocation it was to educate the youth, while numerous orders of women devoted themselves to the education of the girls. The Catholic Church had everywhere established schools, academies and universities, long before the State showed any concern about such matters. The greatest saints, scholars, statesmen, generals and rulers were produced by the schools of the Catholic Church. The credit of having taken the barbarian in hand and of having transformed him from the savage being, the nomad warrior and hunter that he was, into a civilized Christian being, belongs to the Catholic Church and not to the State — which did not then exist — and to all those who now arrogate to themselves such wonderful rights. The old monastery schools were the fruitful mothers of the Arts and Sciences, of Music, Poetry, Architecture and the Trades, aye and of Agriculture itself. The very formation of municipalities, the erection of libraries, even the postal system were mostly copied and largely corrupted by the State from what the Church had long well established. And now for all the thanks that the Church so richly deserves, she is to be ejected from what is her very own, and that by those who owe their very existence chiefly to the

Church! Is such a line of conduct gratitude or justice, or rather a crime against God, against the Church, against Society, that cries to heaven for vengeance?

It is true that through the centuries the governments erected schools in cities and villages, but the supervision of them was left to the bishops and the priests. The views then still prevailed that the schools were not mere institutions where uncouth youths were to receive a certain polish, but institutions where the children were to be instructed and brought up for the Christian, as well as for the human life. It was then still the common opinion that a man could only then be a useful, model, law-abiding citizen, when he was a good Christian. It was then still generally considered that the hope of the future, the welfare of the family, the prosperity of the nation were founded on a Christian youth. Yea, it was then still commonly believed that, as the soul could no more be separated from the body without destroying life, so no more could the child be separated from piety and religious instruction, the school deprived of God and the Church, without plunging our youth into the depths of corruption, of infidelity and immorality. The present state of our public school education is the best proof of the correctness of these views.

At no time has the Catholic Church displayed greater energy in the matter of Christian education of her children than at the present time. The needs of the occasion have called into being a numerous progeny of devoted women who cheerfully sacrifice their lives to the education of the young, to the care of the found-

ling and the orphan. Look at those children, my dearly beloved, consider their unaffected piety, their modest behavior, their cheerful obedience, their willingness to learn, their childlike simplicity, and compare their comportment to the behavior of the pupils of the public schools who, under the tuition of worldly-minded teachers, learn indeed all kinds of fads, but do not receive the faintest notion of morality, know nothing of grace or innocence. You have here a living example of the truth that education cannot be separated from religion, the school from the Church, the young from piety, without ruining the children as men and as Christians.

3. Those who constantly insist on the separation of Church and school can have no other object in view than to deprive the children of Catholic life and faith and thus endanger the future of Christianity. Every attack directed against Catholic schools has this end in view. Indeed, our opponents are making less and less a secret of this. They openly admit that in the un-denominational school they possess the best means of spreading irreligion and infidelity. Hatred against the Catholic Church is the animus that in final analysis dictates their action.

The destruction of all positive religion has been decreed, therefore we must have non-sectarian schools. The product of this system is thrown broadcast over the land, and what have we? Nothing but a multitude of educated savages who acknowledge no law but the police-law. Can we look with equanimity into the future? We must not forget that religion alone can

restrain and tame man, especially the young; piety and prayer and the worthy reception of the sacraments can alone give our young people the courage and the strength that they need to overcome the fierceness of their passions, and to combine, with the grace of God, the innocence of morals and the graciousness of youth. I shudder at the consequences of the divine curse, "Wo to the man"; I shudder at the curse of parents against the seducers of youth; I shudder at the cry for vengeance that the guardian angels send up to heaven against those who have ruined the children who were confided to their care, and I shudder at the cry that betrayed childhood shall raise to God against the murderers of their souls. "Wo to the man!" A murderer is a terrible being, but a thousand times more terrible is the murderer of souls, and amongst these the worst are the murderers of youth, those men, who with malice prepense, deliberately rob the children of faith and of grace, in order to corrupt them for their plans. They are truly the enemies of God and the real enemies of the human race. And were I never able to understand the curse that God uttered against the murderer of souls: "Wo to the man," now I can fully comprehend it.

I beg of you, my dearly beloved, not to allow yourselves to be deceived by the smooth phrases and the specious arguments of those who would wean you away from the principles that can alone save you and your children. The serpent of old hid its malice and venom under the guise of fair phrases and brilliant promises, but withal it plunged mankind into unuttera-

ble misery. Remember that your child belonged to God before it belonged to the world, and that it is destined to return to God. Remember that the Church alone has the right to decide what kind of an education you are obliged to give to your child. Remember also that he who has the youth on his side also controls the future of faith or unbelief. Nations are to be de-Christianized, that is why they are seizing upon the children.

Oh, ye fathers and mothers, and all ye who are listening to my voice, I beseech you have mercy on our children! There never was a time when they were in danger of losing so much as now. They never were in such danger of being deprived of the greatest treasure, the greatest boon they possess on earth, namely, grace and faith, as now. What we have done to one of these children we have done to the Saviour Himself, and what we have saved for that child we have saved for heaven. It is our vocation to be the visible guardian angels of our children by word and example, so that our lot in a blessed eternity will be cast with the angels. The souls of Christian children, whose faith and grace we have saved, will intercede for us on the day of judgment, will call down upon us the mercy of the Judge and will reward our Christian charity with life everlasting. Amen.

SERMON XXXI

INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING THE NEW MARRIAGE LAW, PROMULGATED BY THE SOVEREIGN PONTIFF, PIUS X

By

The Most Reverend John Ireland, D.D., Archbishop of St. Paul

Beloved Brethren: Around the solemn act by which man and woman become husband and wife, and together found an enduring home in which they and the children whom divine providence may commit to their loving care should find both the bliss of earthly life and the means of winning the joys of eternity, the Church of Christ has ever been solicitous to throw the securest safeguards of wise laws and maternal vigilance, in order to build up that home into a living image of the Sanctuary of Nazareth, where dwelt, with Mary and Joseph, the Incarnate Word Himself.

In the teaching of the Church, along the ages, the contract of marriage among Christians is held to be, by the immediate institution of the Lord Jesus, a holy sacrament — one of the seven divinely established channels through which the graces of the Redemption rain down upon the soul, to elevate it into nearness with the life of the very Godhead, and endue it with the strength of Heaven, to the fulfillment of the divine

commands, despite the trials and the temptations into which it may be cast during its journey towards the Paradise of its immortal hopes. Human as it is in its primary elements, since the parties entering into it are human, social and civil as it is, in view of the social and civil consequences resulting from it, the marriage contract, within the Church of Christ, is, pre-eminently, supernatural and divine. The Saviour has vouchsafed to take it into His own keeping: He becomes sponsor for it: He ratifies it of His own authority: He enriches it of His own celestial graces. Christian marriage is a sacrament — an act permeated to its inmost core with divine activity, wrapt up into the region of divine life, under the control of new laws befitting its supernal character. This supernal character the Christian is not allowed to put away from the marriage contract: God's gifts are not to be spurned and set aside by the will of those to whom they are offered. To the Christian the marriage contract can never be a mere natural engagement between man and woman, ruled by laws adopted by their own freedom: nor is it a mere social or civil contract, made binding only through civil enactments, lasting only so long as those enactments order it to last. Necessarily, by the laws of the Almighty, the Christian man or the Christian woman, once born unto God in baptism, receives, in the marriage contract, a sacrament, to be approached in holiness of soul under penalty of sacrilege, to be followed out, in all its consequent obligations, under penalty of defiance of the divine authority, which at its initial moment blest and ratified it.

Vital to the marriage contract, under the laws of Christ, are its oneness and its indissolubility. The sacredness of the contract and equally the high purposes which it is bidden to serve, impose upon it the one and the other of those sacred characteristics.

The union of soul and heart in Christian wedlock is so holy, so entire, that it ever must be that of one with one. Division of plighted troth must not be permitted, not even thought of. Parents themselves recede before the loyal affection which spouse owes to spouse. "For this cause," says the Lord, "shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife." Single in its holiness, unreserved in its fullness, even as the love between Christ and His spiritual bride, the Church, should be the love between husband and wife. "Husbands," writes the Apostle, "love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it." Those, the teachings of revealed religion as to the oneness of the marriage contract. Who does not admire their sublime beauty? Who does not see in a departure from them the fatal lowering of wedlock to base sensualism, the destruction not only of the supernatural in man and woman, but, also, of the ideals which human honor and hope of human bliss approve or allow?

In the teaching of Christ the marriage contract is one, and, furthermore, it is indissoluble. The marriage contract, freed from impediments that disable it of due force and effect, once ratified and consummated, cannot be broken or dissolved by any power upon earth save only by the death of either of the

contracting parties. Human laws cannot dissolve it: they are powerless before the command of God. The Church, in all its spiritual supremacy, cannot dissolve it: its indissolubility is a divine law, proclaimed by Christ and held ever in Christ's personal keeping.

The words of the Lord, as reported in the Gospel of St. Mark, are these: "What therefore God hath joined together let no man put asunder." . . . "Whoever shall put away his wife and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if the wife shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery." In the words of the Lord, as written by St. Luke, there is the same universal condemnation of a second marriage while the partner of the first still lives: "Every one that putteth away his wife, and marries another, committeth adultery, and he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." So, also, speaks the Apostle Paul, divinely appointed to teach as the Master taught: "But to them that are married, not I but the Lord commandeth, that the wife depart not from her husband. And if she depart, that she remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband. And let not the husband put away his wife. . . . For the woman that hath a husband, whilst her husband liveth, is bound by the law. But if her husband is dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband." Nothing clearer and more precise: no second marriage is possible to husband or wife while the partner of the first is still living. The law is universal: it allows no ex-

ception. By some it is thought that an exception is found in St. Matthew: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery." But here no exception is made in the law forbidding a second marriage while the partner of the first is still living. There is, indeed, the permission to put away the wife for cause of crime: but the permission to remarry is refused: "He that shall marry her that is put away committeth adultery." The words are general, without limitation. Even were there at first sight a seeming obscurity of meaning in the text of St. Matthew, the obvious course to pursue is to bring light upon it from other texts of the New Testament bearing upon the same matter, which allow no room for doubt or misapprehension. St. Matthew must be read side by side with St. Mark, St. Luke and St. Paul. This done, the law is clearly seen to be universal in its application, without exception whatsoever.

I repeat, the marriage contract is indissoluble, to be cancelled only in death. Unless it be so, it were lacking in supreme oneness. The merest wandering thought that the contract may some day be broken takes from wedlock, even while the tie seems the fondest and the strongest, the fullness and the exclusiveness of the union of soul which is its true binding force. The ideals and sacred purposes that consecrate wedlock, the giving of new progeny to society and to God, exact in the contract stability and permanence. The cessation of the contract, the remarriage to another

of husband or of wife, renders fatherless or motherless the children of the first marriage, dissipates in their souls the sanctity of the home, rends into shreds the protection and tender guardianship with which it should have blessed them. Oh, the curse of divorce! The vision of its possibility opens the portals of the heart to the temptation of every passion: its coming is the announcement of most dismal ruin. Divorce breaks up the home, which God had intended as the sanctuary of love and safety for husband and for wife, for son and for daughter. It undermines civil society, which in its vital construction is an organic aggregation of families, finding in the stability of the family its own stability: in the purity and integrity of the family, its own purity and integrity. Divorce, too, despoils the Church of God of its spiritual progeny, the children of its baptismal fountains, entrusted by it to the vigilance of a home of love, who perish in the coldness of a pitiless world when that home ceases to enshrine them. Christ did not will divorce: the Church does not will it; the Christian man or woman must never will it. That, in order to obey the law of the indissolubility of the marriage tie, trials, sometimes most severe, are to be endured, it matters not. The particular welfare of an individual must cede to the general welfare: if breaks in the law were possible, the whole law should soon crumble — so subtle and cruel is the passion that threatens it — and all were over for Christian marriage, and for the priceless interests wrapt up in the foldings of its garment. Christ was wise and farseeing, even in that wisdom which the

world must admire, when He proclaimed marriage to be, ever and in all cases, one and indissoluble.

The Catholic Church has never wavered in her duty to uphold the laws of Christian marriage. Often the combat was most violent: the loyalty to her sway of entire nations was not seldom the issue. But, always, she stood upon the immovable rock of principle, defying every attack, counting as gain the severest loss, provided her own fidelity to the teaching of Christ remained unquestioned and unsullied. And, surely, she will not recede to-day from the battlefield, however numerous and powerful the enemies that confront her.

To-day, as never before, war is made upon Christian marriage. The contract of marriage is stripped of all religious ceremonial, of all sacred meaning. It becomes a mere natural barter of hearts and fortunes, hastily entered into as the most insignificant of commercial exchanges, to be no less hastily burst asunder and forgotten. Divorce is almost the fashion: it has conquered the sensitive scruples of polite society: it has reined into its service legislatures and courts of justice. Nations vie with one another in yielding up their statute books to its decrees. Our own America leads in the race to do honor to its empire. Our record in this regard is most shameful. As things are, the question may well be asked — Whither are we drifting? Is the family hearthstone to be no more? Are private and social morals which sought there inspiration and strength doomed to depart from the land?

The Catholic Church remains undismayed: with olden-time fearlessness, she stands guard over the

Christian family, and declares that so long as she lives — and she lives until the end of time — it shall not be without its defender. The moment is solemn for the Catholic Church. She is on exhibition, before the world, as the one Christian Church, since she alone holds steadfastly to the teachings of Christ on marriage: she is on exhibition, as the one unconquerable guardian of the family and of the social fabric itself, which reposes, as upon its very foundation, upon the family and the virtues that are begotten of it. The duty of Catholics is evident. With the Church they must be, in mind and in heart, proud admirers of her fidelity to Christ, loyal adherents to her teachings in their own resolves and acts. Catholics must never know the courts of divorce. To them the marriage contract must ever be the sacrament, to be received in holiest dispositions of soul, to be remembered in its supreme obligations until death separates spouse from spouse.

It is in full accordance with the Church's unvarying guardianship of the Christian family that the Sovereign Pontiff Pius X has given forth the recent encyclical on marriage, of which we now make authoritative communication to the Faithful of our Diocese.

The aim of the legislation, enacted in the encyclical, is to throw stronger safeguards around marriage — removing from espousals and from the contract of marriage the fatal peril of haste and thoughtlessness. To haste and thoughtlessness in entering upon the marriage state we may well attribute the unhappiness so frequently witnessed within the family circle, which

makes life almost intolerable, and in the absence of Christian fortitude suggests divorce as a possible means of escape from the bitterness and despair it engenders. And, furthermore, to such haste and thoughtlessness is often to be laid the cruel fact that, owing to existing impediments, as for instance a previous marriage on the part of one or the other of the contractants, the marriage is null and void, and the innocent man, or the innocent woman, is driven into misfortune and dishonor.

The remedy to this haste and thoughtlessness is the presence of the priest at every marriage, and the opportunity allowed him to ascertain beforehand whether or not there are pre-existing impediments to the marriage, and to give to the parties who are to be married such salutary counsel as will fit them for the worthy reception of the sacrament and to secure to them the plenitude of its spiritual graces.

Heretofore in the United States, with the exception of some few localities, as in several other countries, the Decrees of the Council of Trent, annulling marriages of Catholics, not entered into in the presence of the priest, had not been promulgated and put in force. The command of the Church was, indeed, that all marriages were to take place in the presence of the priest, and it was always a grave sin of disobedience to contract marriage otherwise. However, the marriage without the presence of the priest was recognized by the Church as valid and binding. This was the case for marriages formally and intentionally contracted, privately or before witnesses, as, also, for

marriages contracted before civil magistrates, or ministers of religion, other than those of the Catholic Church. Henceforward, all such marriages are not only forbidden to Catholics, but they are absolutely null and void, of no binding force whatsoever, and those who live under such marriages as husband and wife, in the eyes of the Church and of God, live in a state of concubinage.

That the Sovereign Pontiff should, in this instance, make use of the supreme power of the Church to declare the contract to be, in its very initiatory stage, null and void of all effects, is evidence of the importance to be attached to the worthy reception of the sacrament of marriage. The power to set conditions that annul in its very essence the contract of marriage, to declare who are and who are not capable of giving a valid and binding consent, has been exercised in the Church from the earliest days of her history. Among Christians, we have said, marriage is a sacrament. As a sacrament it is part of her spiritual domain, placed by Christ under her guardianship, and by Him made in its intimate nature subservient to her authority. Civil governments take to themselves full charge of contracts among their subjects, so far as those contracts bear upon matters of civil polity and are regulated in their effects by civil laws. The Church established by Christ as a perfect society, all the more superior to civil societies that she is of immediate divine origin, and is endowed with divine life, cannot be devoid in her spiritual domain of the power which appertains to civil societies, as to contracts within their prov-

ince, and she must be allowed to legislate upon contracts coming so intimately as does that of marriage, a sacrament of the new law, into the charge of her imperial guardianship of souls. The impediments to a valid contract of marriage are not few, as all Catholics well know. Marriage between relatives, within certain degrees of consanguinity or affinity, are held as null and void. So with marriage between persons baptized and non-baptized. So, again, with marriages to which flagitious crime has led the way. To all such annulling impediments is now added throughout the Catholic world the impediment, as it is called, of clandestinity, which has place when the contractants are not married before a duly authorized priest and in the presence of at least two witnesses.

The new legislation, promulgated in the encyclical, is twofold, one part declaring what marriages are to become null and void, of no binding force: the other setting forth what marriages, while valid and of due effect, are still held to be unlawful and to be contracted in disobedience to the authority of the Church.

Marriages that Are Null and Void of Effect.

All marriages are null and void that are not contracted in the presence of a duly authorized priest and two witnesses. This applies to marriages when both the parties to the contract are Catholics, and, also, and with equal effect, when only one of the parties is a Catholic, as it happens in the case of so-called mixed marriages.

Under this law of annulment all are reputed Catholics who have been baptized in the Catholic Church, or who later have been converted to it from heresy or schism: and all such remain subject to the law, and bound to all its penalties, even though afterwards, to their misfortune, they fall away from the Church.

The law, of course, has no reference to non-Catholics who contract marriage among themselves, whether they are baptized or unbaptized.

We have said — before a duly authorized priest. Such, the bishop for the whole diocese; such, every duly appointed pastor within the territory of his parish: and such any other priest duly delegated by the bishop, or by the pastor himself. The authority of the bishop or of the pastor to assist at marriages, or to delegate another to do so in his stead, begins so soon as he has entered into possession of his charge and ceases so soon as the possession of it ceases.

In the diocese of St. Paul all duly authorized assistant-priests have delegation from the bishop for all matrimonial causes. The marriages contracted before them, within the territory of the parish to which they have been assigned, are valid, as if contracted before the pastor himself, although, of course, under the disciplinary rules of the diocese, no assistants may lawfully take part in a marriage ceremony without the permission of the pastor.

With that of the priest, the presence of, at least, two witnesses is necessary to a valid marriage.

The law further stipulates that the priest be invited and asked by the contracting parties, with full freedom

on their part, to receive their consent — their coming freely before him with the avowed and manifest intention of contracting marriage sufficing — and that he be himself free in demanding and receiving their consent, not being in any way compelled thereto by violence or by grave fear.

Contracts of espousals or betrothals, when entered into before marriage, are subject, as to their validity, somewhat as the marriage contract itself. The law reads: Only those espousals are considered valid and produce canonical effects which have been contracted in writing, signed by both parties and by either the parish priest or the ordinary of the place, or at least by two witnesses.

Marriages that, While Being Valid, Are in Violation of the Rulings of the Church.

To be lawful the marriage ceremony must take place before the pastor of the parish in which the contracting parties have their domicile. A residence of one month in a parish constitutes a sufficient domicile for marriage. When the bride resides in one parish and the bridegroom in another, the marriage should take place in the parish of the bride.

That a priest be allowed to perform the marriage ceremony for persons who have not domicile within the limits of his parish, he must have received the authorization of the bishop or of the pastor of the contracting parties. When the contracting parties have domicile in different parishes, the authorization must

come, if not from the bishop, from the pastor of the parish to which the bride belongs. In cases of grave necessity no authorization from the bishop or from the pastor of the contracting parties is required.

Catholics should be careful to bear in mind the law of the Church as to their domicile, and should not under one pretext or another present themselves for marriage before a priest other than their proper pastor.

Other laws of the Church, heretofore in existence, regarding impediments of marriage, or the proper celebration of the ceremony itself, remain in force, none being abrogated or altered by the new decree of clandestinity.

The decree of clandestinity, of which explanation is given in this letter, is hereby published in the Diocese of St. Paul, and will be further published in each parish of the Diocese by the public reading of this letter in each Church on Sunday, March 29th, the fourth Sunday of Lent.

As determined by the Encyclical of the Sovereign Pontiff, the new law on marriage goes into effect on the Feast of the Resurrection, in this year of grace, 1908.

In conclusion, I repeat the exhortation, given often before, that Catholics have the marriage ceremony made doubly sacred by drawing down upon themselves the blessings of God in the holy sacrifice of the mass. Afternoon or evening marriages should be unknown among Catholics. The forenoon is the fitting time when mass can be said, and the nuptial blessing given, in the name of the Saviour present upon the altar.

The best warrant for happiness in after life, amid the trials and troubles which are sure to come, is the grace of the Almighty God pouring down in plentiful streams upon the young man and the maiden in that great moment of their lives, when they pledge to each other the pure love of their hearts, with the solemn promise that it will abide until death bids them part.

I pray God to bless the Clergy and the faithful Laity of the Diocese of St. Paul.

✠ JOHN IRELAND,
Archbishop of St. Paul.

SERMON XXXII

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS TO PRIESTS REGARDING THE NEW MARRIAGE LAW

By

The Most Reverend John Ireland, D.D., Archbishop of St. Paul

Reverend and Dear Father: Apart from what has been said in the general Letter upon the new marriage law, addressed to the priests and the laity of the Diocese, special instructions, I believe, may be given with profit to the priests upon whom devolves the application of the law in its several details. Those I now beg leave to present to your careful attention. They are, for the greater part, either excerpts from the Papal Decree itself, or legitimate deductions therefrom,—the few additions being such as are counselled by local circumstances and the particular rulings and customs of the Diocese of St. Paul.

Besides reading the general letter, as already prescribed, it is advisable that on subsequent Sundays you take occasion to recall to the Faithful the chief provisions of the Decree — those, particularly, that relate to the nullity of marriages contracted elsewhere than in the presence of the duly authorized priest. Such a radical change in the legislation of the Church as is implied in the present annulment of certain marriages heretofore held as valid, though unlawful, will not be

readily understood or remembered by the people, upon whom, usually, habit and tradition leave deep impress. Frequent reiteration of the provisions of the new law is necessary, to the end that even the most thoughtless and most unwary be not unmindful of its meaning and significance.

The priest authorized to receive the consent of the contractants to a valid marriage is: 1. The Bishop within the territory of the Diocese. 2. The Pastor within the territory of his parish. 3. The assistant pastor (deputed in the Diocese of St. Paul, ad universitatem causarum matrimonialium) within the territory of the parish to which he is assigned. 4. Any other priest duly delegated by the Bishop within the territory of the Diocese, or the Pastor within the territory of the parish, or the assistant pastor within the same territory.

The Vicar-General, in virtue of his office, assists validly at marriages, and grants valid delegations, without being specially authorized to do so.

Pastors and assistant pastors have authority to assist at marriages only from the time they have entered into the possession of their charge. Their arrival in the parish and the public assumption of their official work mark sufficiently this possession. But to avoid possible doubts and misunderstandings in future time, a formal notice that possession has been taken, with exact date of the act, should be written out and duly signed in the Parish Register of Marriages, on pages left blank in the Register for this specific purpose.

No delegation can be given to have effect beyond the

jurisdictional territory of the Bishop or the priest making the delegation.

The delegation must be made to a specific, definite priest. The delegation to such priest may cover one or more specific cases of marriages, or may be more general as to the number of cases, covering, for instance, all those occurring in the parish within a given period of time.

The priest receiving the delegation must “*ad validitatem matrimonii*” hold himself strictly within the limits of his delegation as to the case, or the cases, to which he has been delegated.

The assistant pastor, whatever his canonical right to assist validly at marriages, or to delegate his authority to others, will never, in practice, either assist at a marriage, or grant a delegation, without the permission of the pastor of the parish.

A priest appointed to the temporary charge of a parish has, in the case of marriages, the self-same authority as that which appertains to the office of a regularly appointed pastor. The notice of his appointment to his temporary charge should be written out in the Register of Marriages in the same manner as is prescribed for the regularly appointed pastor.

Similarly, notices of all duly given delegations should be inscribed on the pages of the Register.

All marriages contracted within the above-mentioned conditions are valid.

But that they be lawful as well as valid, the contracting parties must have, in the parish where they are to be married, a regular domicile, or a residence of at

least one month or thirty days,—the residence continuing to the time of their marriage.

Two conditions constitute a domicile: 1. Actual habitation within a parish. 2. The bona-fide intention of living there indefinitely. The intention of staying within the parish for a time, more or less prolonged, even the greater part of a year, does not suffice. A domicile is at once acquired by the fact of habitation within the parish, joined with the intention of living there indefinitely. To constitute a residence, there must be the month or the thirty days. An occasional brief absence, for business or recreation, does not break up the month, provided it be, to all intents and purposes, a bona-fide residence, not a mere series of visits.

With a residence of a month in one place and a regular domicile in another, the contracting parties are free to choose, as the place of their marriage, either the parish of their domicile or that of their month's residence.

For good and becoming reasons the contracting parties may be allowed by the priest of the parish of their domicile, or of that of their residence, to present themselves for marriage before the priest of another parish. The authorization for such a change of place must be given through a formal letter, addressed to the priest of the parish, other than their own, in which they seek to be married. I have said — for good and becoming reasons. Catholics should be encouraged to have their marriages blessed in their own parish. This is the rule of the Church: departures from it should be few and

rare. Good and becoming reasons, however, for such departures may now and then exist: and in such cases, priests, no doubt, will be willing to assent to them,—being more solicitous for the welfare of souls, the avoidance of scandal, or of grievous inconvenience to the contracting parties, than for local and personal interests, however praiseworthy and imperative these usually are.

In case of grave necessity a priest may, within his own parish, assist at the marriage of parties belonging to the territory of another parish. By a case of grave necessity we may understand any case involving a serious inconvenience if the marriage did not take place — public scandal, the defamation of character, notable financial loss, etc., etc. In cases of this kind the supposition is that it is impossible to reach, by letter, telegraph or telephone, either the proper pastor of the contracting parties, or the Bishop of the Diocese to whom an appeal may be made not only when the proper pastor is beyond reach, but, also, when the latter is unreasonable in refusing his permission to the marriage outside his own territory.

Any priest, authorized or not to assist at marriages, may anywhere receive the consent of the parties, if either is in probable danger of death, whenever the presence of the pastor of the place, or the assistant pastor, cannot be secured, and time is not had to obtain a formal delegation from one or the other, or from the Bishop. When a marriage has been performed in those circumstances, due care should be taken later to have it recorded in the parish register.

In the case of persons having nowhere either domicile or residence, the so-called vagi, the marriage may take place before the pastor, or the assistant pastor of the parish, within the territory of which they happen to find themselves for the time being, the permission of the Bishop of the Diocese having been previously obtained.

When the bride belongs to one parish and the groom to another the marriage should take place in the parish of the bride. The Decree adds—"nisi aliqua justa causa excuset." To avoid in this regard practical doubts and difficulties, we hereby make the rule, that in the Diocese of St. Paul the Bishop alone decides what in each case constitutes a "justa causa."

Whichever the parish in which the marriage takes place, the rule remains that the banns must have been proclaimed in both the parish of the bride and in that of the groom, and due information received as to the right of one and of the other to contract marriage.

In view of the present legislation on marriage it becomes specially necessary that pastors be most careful to know the exact limits of the territory of their parish.

The limits of the territory, as approved by the Ordinary, should be inscribed in the Historical Record of the parish.

Where no specifically defined territory has been assigned to a parish, the boundary between that and the adjoining parish is the "half-way line"—persons living nearer to one church than to another being parishioners of the former.

Where doubt exists as to parish lines, pastors will,

without delay, have recourse to the Ordinary for the settlement of such doubt.

Where different parishes have been established to serve Catholics of different languages, the territory assigned to each one is altogether independent of the lines circumscribing the territory of adjoining parishes of other languages. Over this territory the pastor has full jurisdiction, whether it covers more or less territory embraced within the lines of the parishes of other languages.

It may not, however, be always so easy to determine whether certain persons or families belong to a parish of the English language or to one where a foreign language is in use. According to a decision of the S. Congregation of the Propaganda, the descendants of foreign-born Catholics, and foreign-born Catholics themselves, knowing sufficiently the English language to fulfill in it their religious duties, have the right to become members of the parish in which the English language is spoken. But as to when and how, precisely, the transference of their parochial allegiance becomes operative, the Congregation has given no formal ruling. Until further orders, the following observations will govern pastors in the Diocese of St. Paul:

The transference of one's parochial allegiance must be made, in bona-fide, because of an avowed preference for the use of the English language in matters of religion — not through a temporary whim, or as the result of a local or personal quarrel or disagreement.

It must be plain that the persons or families wish-

ing to adhere to an English-speaking parish understand and speak the English language quite sufficiently to acquit themselves readily of their religious obligations in that language.

Once their adherence is given to an English-speaking parish, persons or families are not allowed to return to their former parish. The adherence must be definite and final.

The adherence to an English-speaking parish becomes an established fact either by a formal announcement made to the pastor of such parish, or by public attendance at its services, and participation in its affairs continued sufficiently long to show clearly that the intent and purpose of the parties is to adhere definitely to such English-speaking parish.

Occasional, or even frequent, attendance at mass in the church of an English-speaking parish, for convenience' sake, does not constitute or indicate permanent membership.

Minors belonging to the parish of their parents or guardians are not allowed to choose for themselves an English-speaking parish.

Pastors of English-speaking parishes must not make advances to Catholics of foreign languages to induce them to abandon the parish of their first allegiance: and where doubt exists as to which parish persons or families belong the presumption is always in favor of the parish of their olden language.

The Encyclical reads: "Parochi qui haec hactenus praescripta volaverint ab Ordinariis pro modo et gravitate culpaepuniantur." It will be a matter of con-

science for the Bishop, from which he is not free to liberate himself, to impose in each case of violation a canonical penalty, measured by the degree of the fault in the case of each particular pastor, who may have proven himself oblivious of his duty.

The penalty defined in the Decree, in the case of a priest performing a marriage of parties not duly subject to his jurisdiction, without the proper permission, is that the fee received on the occasion of the marriage ceremony be remitted to the pastor who legally would have been entitled to perform the marriage.

The Decree makes no mention of fees received by the priest assisting at marriages of parties who are not subject to his jurisdiction when duly authorized to do so, either by the necessities of the case, or by permission granted by the Bishop, or the pastor of the contracting parties. In such an instance we take it to be fair ruling that fees follow labor, and that, apart from special understandings between the pastor and the priest delegated by him, the fees belong to the one who has actually assisted at the ceremony. Of course, this does not apply to assistant priests, subject as these are to the regulations of the pastor in regard to the disposal of fees received in parochial ministrations.

Before every marriage the priest will make sedulous investigation as to whether the parties coming before him are free from all diriment impediments. This investigation is particularly necessary in cases of mixed marriages, as to whether the non-Catholic needs a dispensation from "impedimento disparitatis cultus," or is prevented by a first marriage from proceeding to a

second. Where the parties are unknown to the pastor, their own declaration should be taken "sub juramento," and as far as possible reliable witnesses should be summoned, capable of giving adequate testimony.

The registration of marriages becomes a matter of even more serious obligation than it heretofore has been. We bespeak for this registration the most conscientious attention on the part of pastors.

One point, however, I must emphasize. It is the personal duty of the pastor, or of the acting pastor, as official custodian of the Register, to care that the proper record is made of each and every marriage performed in the parish. When he himself has been the celebrant, he signs as such, adding to his name his title of pastor, or of assistant pastor. When the marriage has been performed by a priest delegated to that effect, the pastor or the assistant pastor puts his own signature after that of the celebrant, testifying hereby to the correctness of the preceding inscription.

Of every marriage performed in this parish, the pastor will, without unreasonable delay, forward a formal notice to the pastor of the parish, in whatever country, where the contractants, or either one of them, were baptized. A record of all such notices, giving dates of sending, names of pastors to whom the notices are sent, will be carefully preserved in the parish where the marriage took place: copies of such notices will be entered in the Register of Marriages.

When the pastor is able to discover the proper address of the priest to whom the notice is to be sent, he will, himself, forward it to its destination. When the

information obtained is somewhat insufficient, as, for instance, when the post office of the addressed is not found out, the notice will be sent to the Bishop of the Diocese in which the parties were baptized. If all this, for one reason or another, is impossible of execution, the notices will be sent to our own Chancery office, to be there disposed of as best may happen.

The pastor, receiving notice of the marriage elsewhere contracted of parties who have been baptized in his parish, should without delay enter such notice in his baptismal register, immediately after the record of the baptism of the one and of the other. When he assists at the marriage of parties baptized in his own parish, he will at once, so soon as he has written the record of the act in the marriage register, write it out equally in the baptismal register. As in past times no space was left in the Register for the insertion of this notice, immediately after the record of the baptism it will be inscribed on the remaining blank pages, with a reference duly marked on the margin of the page bearing the record of the baptism.

THE END





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