

THE PREACHER'S ENCYCLOPEDIA

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LENT AND EASTERTIDE

SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION TO
ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

TWELFTH TO LAST SUNDAYS AFTER
PENTECOST

THE PREACHER'S ENCYCLOPEDIA

*Compiled and Edited under the Supervision of
His Eminence*

ANGEL CARDINAL HERRERA
Bishop of Málaga

English Version Translated and Edited by
MGR DAVID GREENSTOCK, S.T.D.
Rector of the English College, Valladolid

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ANGEL CARDINAL HERBERA

Bishop of Malaga

English Version Translated and Edited by

MGR DAVID GREENSTOCK, S.T.D.

Rector of the English College, London

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First Sunday of Advent

THE LAST JUDGEMENT

SECTION I. SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Epistle: Romans 13. 11-14 Gospel: Luke 21. 25-33. Cf. Matt. 24. 33-35; Mark 13. 21-31

Texts which refer to the judgement

1. *After death, the judgement:*

(a) **We know not the day nor the hour:**

Man's destiny is to die once for all; nothing remains after that but judgement. Heb. 9. 27.

But as for that day and that hour you speak of, they are known to none, not even to the angels in heaven; only the Father knows them. When the Son of Man comes, all will be as it was in the days of Noe; in those days before the flood, they went on eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the time when Noe entered the ark, and they were all taken unawares, when the flood came and drowned them all; so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Matt. 24. 36-39.

You are keeping it clearly in mind, without being told, that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 1 Thess. 5. 2.

But the day of the Lord is coming, and when it comes it will be upon you like a thief. The heavens will vanish in a whirlwind, the elements will be scorched up and dissolve, earth, and all earth's achievements, will burn away. 2 Pet. 3. 10.

(b) **Apocalyptic threats:**

Yes, the day of the Lord is coming, pitiless, full of vengeance and bitter retribution, ready to turn earth into a wilderness, ridding it of its sinful brood. The stars of heaven, its glittering constellations, will shed no ray; sunrise will be darkness, and the moon refuse her light. . . . So terribly will I shake the heavens and move earth from its place, to show that the Lord of hosts will be patient no longer, and the hour of his bitter vengeance has come. Isaias 13. 9-13. Cf. Isaias 34. 4; Ez. 32. 7-8; Joel 2. 10; Amos 5. 18.

(c) **A day of wrath:**

Trust me, a day is coming that shall scorch like a furnace; stubble they shall be before it, says the Lord of hosts, all the proud, all the

wrong-doers, caught and set alight, and neither root nor branch left them. Malach. 4. 1-2. Cf. Soph. 1. 15-16.

Dost thou not know that God's kindness is inviting thee to repent? Whereas thou, by the stubborn impenitence of thy heart, dost continue to store up retribution for thyself against the day of retribution, when God will reveal the justice of his judgements. He will award to every man what his acts have deserved; eternal life to those who have striven for glory, and honour, and immortality, by perseverance in doing good; the retribution of his anger to those who are contumacious, rebelling against truth and paying homage to wickedness. Rom. 2. 4-8.

2. *The Resurrection:*

Here is a secret I will make known to you; we shall all rise again, but not all of us will undergo the change I speak of. It will happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when the last trumpet sounds; the trumpet will sound, and the dead will rise again, free from corruption, and we shall find ourselves changed; this corruptible nature of ours must be clothed with incorruptible life, this mortal nature with immortality. 1 Cor. 15. 51-53. Cf. 1 Thess. 4. 15-17.

3. *The coming of the Judge:*

And there will be a day when God (according to the Gospel I preach) will pass judgement, through Jesus Christ, on the hidden thoughts of men. Rom. 2. 16. Cf. Ps. 9. 9; Acts 17. 31; 2 Thess. 1. 5, 9-10; Jude 14-15; Apoc. 1. 7.

(a) *All before the tribunal of Christ:*

We shall all stand one day before the judgement-seat of Christ . . . and so each one of us will have to give an account of himself before God. Rom. 14. 10-12.3

All of us have a scrutiny to undergo before Christ's judgement-seat, for each to reap what his mortal life has earned, good or ill, according to his deeds. 2 Cor. 5. 10.

(b) *The Son of God is the Judge:*

So it is with judgement; the Father, instead of passing judgement on any man himself, has left all judgement to the Son, so that all may reverence the Son just as they reverence the Father. . . . John 5. 22-23.

4. *The judgement according to Christ:*

(a) *The fact:*

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit down upon the throne of his glory, and all nations will be gathered in his presence, where he will divide men one from the other, as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats; he will set the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King

will say to those who are on his right hand, Come, you that have received a blessing from my Father, take possession of the kingdom which has been prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry. . . . Then he will say to those who are on his left hand, in their turn, Go from me, you that are accursed, into that eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels. . . . And these shall pass on to eternal punishment, and the just to eternal life. Matt. 25. 31-46.

(b) *Comprehensive:*

And I say this, that in the day of judgement men will be brought to account for every thoughtless word they have spoken. Thy words will be matter to acquit, or matter to condemn thee. Matt. 12. 36.

(c) *According to our works:*

You appeal to God as your Father; yes, but he judges each man impartially by what he has done; look anxiously, then, to the ordering of your lives while your stay on earth lasts. 1 Pet. 1. 17. Cf. Eccles. 16. 12-15.

(d) *As we judge, so shall we be judged:*

Do not judge others, or you yourselves will be judged. As you have judged, so you will be judged, by the same rule; award shall be made to you as you have made award, in the same measure. Matt. 7. 1-2.

The merciless will be judged mercilessly; mercy gives its judgement an honourable welcome. James 2. 13.

(e) *Different fate of just and unjust:*

Cf. Ps. 1. 5-6; 36. 28; John 5. 28-29.

(f) *Second-thoughts of the unjust:*

How boldly, then, will the just man appear, to meet his old persecutors, that thwarted all his striving! And they, in what craven fear they will cower at the sight of him, amazed at the sudden reversal of his fortunes! Inward remorse will wring a groan from those hearts: Why, these were the men we made into a laughing-stock and a by-word! We, poor fools, mistook the life they lived for madness, their death for ignominy; and now they are reckoned as God's own children, now it is among his holy ones that their lot is cast. Wis. 5. 1-5. Cf. *ibid.* 16-17.

(g) *Judgement of the great ones of this earth:*

Cf. Wis. 6. 3-10; James 3. 1.

(h) *Life and death of just and unjust:*

But the souls of the just are in God's hands, and no torment, in death itself, has power to reach them. Dead? Fools think so; think their end loss, their leaving us, annihilation; but all is well with them. The world sees nothing but the pains they endure; they themselves

have eyes only for what is immortal; so light their suffering, so great the gain they win! God, all the while, did but test them, and testing them found them worthy of him. . . . But dearly shall the wicked pay for their error, for the claims of right forgotten, for the Lord's will defied. Their case is pitiable indeed, who make light of true wisdom and of ordered living. . . . Wis. 3. 1-11.

(i) **Harsh judgement for those who resist the light:**

For the man who believes in him there is no rejection; the man who does not believe is already rejected; he has not found faith in the name of God's only-begotten Son. John 3. 18. Cf. Matt. 10. 15; 11. 21-24; 12. 41-42.

SECTION II. GENERAL COMMENTS

I. LITURGICAL

1. *Historical synthesis:*

From the historical point of view Advent began as a preparation for Christmas. Like all preparations for a solemn feast, it has the character of a penitential season. It began in the fifth century, although there are signs of it in Spain as early as the year 380, and from the very beginning this Gospel was read on the first Sunday. This may be a sign or symbol of Christ, the Alpha and Omega of the ages of the spiritual life. Although the liturgy was not born according to a pre-conceived plan, it seems logical that, in order to prepare the Christian for the coming of Christ in mercy, a Gospel should be chosen which reminds us of his second coming as Judge which we may both expect and prepare for in our lives.

There can be no doubt that there is a close relation between the two comings of Christ. The Incarnation had for its purpose the life of glory after a favourable judgement. The first step in this is Christ's birth, the last that of our resurrection. In order that the second coming may be a happy one for us it is first necessary to receive him well when he comes in humility. With this thought in mind the *Dies Irae* was sung frequently during Advent in the early days of the Church. The mind of the Church became clearer when to the Gospel of St Luke was added the Epistle of today, so similar in its argument.

2. *The liturgical idea:*

The Church does not wish us to limit ourselves to a mere memory of these great feasts. She wants us to live them. She longs for us to prepare for Christians as the Jews prepared for the coming of the Messiah. From this we can draw two conclusions: (1) the Jews hoped for the Redeemer. We hope for the final coming of Christ in which our personal redemption will be fully accomplished (Gospel). (2) The Jews lived in this hope and were expected to prepare themselves for

it by a life of penance and holiness. Therefore it is the moment for us to leave the works of darkness and put on the armour of light (Epistle).

The character of this Sunday is one of hope and encouragement. Lift up your heads! We must begin the liturgical year by looking at Christ—in the words of St Paul, by putting on Christ! The world lived in darkness before his first coming. There are souls who still live in the darkness of tepidity. They should hear the voice of the Child in the Manger and give up the works of darkness for those of the light which shines from that humble stable (cf. 2 Cor. 3. 18).

II. EXEGETIC AND MORAL NOTES

A: The Epistle: Romans 13. 11-14

1. *General meaning:*

Today's epistle is meant to wake us up from our lethargy, because the day is at hand, the light is coming; also to give us courage to undertake the liturgical year ahead of us. 'It is high time for us to awake out of our sleep' is equivalent to 'lift up your heads' in the Gospel. The Pauline ideas can be reduced to this:

Christ is the salvation of all, Jew and Greek alike. In Adam we all sinned; Christ redeemed us. Therefore, abandoning sin, we should all live as grafts on to the true vine, Christ. By way of moral reflections, Paul ends by speaking of brotherly love as the summary of all the virtues he has previously mentioned. He interrupts this idea to warn us to be quick! Now is the time to live according to the ideas of Christ.

2. *The essential parts:*

There are three ideas in this passage, arranged so as to form a whole:

- i. now is the time to awake from sleep;
- ii. therefore we should put away the works of darkness;
- iii. and put on Christ.

The last thought is one which runs through the whole of the liturgical year. When, at its end, we again come face to face with Christ, the Judge, we must be able to show him within us, not a man merely, but another Christ.

(a) **It is high time for us to awake out of our sleep:**

The hour—not merely the day or the year! You have no means of telling what the morrow will bring: What is your life but a wisp of smoke, which shows for a moment and then must vanish into nothing? (James 4. 15).

To awake out of our sleep—here Paul goes from one idea to another. The first is to shake us out of that lethargy in which we are so accustomed to pass the major part of our lives. But at once comes

another; if you awaken out of your sleep you should leave the works of darkness and put on those of light. The dream world of the sleeper may appear real to him, but when he awakes, it vanishes like smoke. To live in a dream world is not to live reality nor by real values. Sigismund, in Calderon's drama, on waking in his prison cell, thinks that the splendour of his court life was but a dream. Therefore he says: The rich man dreams of his riches. . . . The sleep or dream world of which Paul speaks here is, therefore, all which does not come from Christ or which is not Christ.

Sleep, according to Bellarmine, differs from death in that the sleeper retains his faculties; but it is like death in so far as those faculties are impeded in their operations. Spiritual sleep is not the death of the soul; nevertheless, he may well be said to sleep who does not attend to his spiritual life because of the flood of worldly occupations which overcomes him.

Just as one asleep still tosses and turns, undertaking great enterprises, which do not exist in reality, so he who is spiritually asleep thinks that he lives in the midst of triumphs and misfortunes; but once he awakens, he realizes that he has done absolutely nothing.

Our salvation is closer to us now than when we first learned to believe. The thought can give us courage, because it is not merely the man who feels himself to be faced with grave danger (the judgement) who leaps from his bed, but also the traveller as his pilgrimage draws to a close.

(b) Let us abandon the ways of darkness:

A biblical image of sin, of which Paul mentions several in the previous passage to this one. They are the sins which our Lord warned us of before (cf. Luke 21. 34).

(c) Put on Christ:

In the Pauline phrase, this is the armour of light. In the Epistle to the Ephesians he repeats this metaphor and describes the arms of the Christian soldier, giving them a spiritual meaning, since our struggle is not against enemies in this world (Eph. 6. 10-16).

To understand the theological significance of this putting on of Christ it is as well to relate the idea with a passage of the Epistle to the Galatians (3. 27): All you who have been baptized in Christ's name have put on the person of Christ. The Greek phrase is equivalent to being plunged into Christ—the idea in Paul's mind being that Christ fills the world with his love, his spirit, his directions and graces. The material immersion of the Sacrament of Baptism is a symbol of the spiritual immersion into the flood which is Christ.

The word 'put on' implies being possessed by, compenetration with, to be impregnated with. We are absorbed in Christ in such a way that we do not lose our own personality, but our wills are joined in such a way that we no longer wish for anything which he does not

wish, we live, not with our own lives, but with his. This we do, both by imitating his virtues and also by reason of the dwelling within our souls of the Blessed Trinity (cf. Col. 3. 12-14).

When St Augustine heard the words 'Take up and read' his eyes came across this passage of St Paul, and having understood its meaning, he decided to cast far from him the works of darkness and apply his brilliant talents to the full practical meaning of the phrase 'not in lust and wantonness . . . spend no more thoughts on nature and nature's appetites'.

3. A text of John Chrysostom:

This text is taken from Hom. 9. on 1 Thess. in which he unites the ideas of the Epistle and the Gospel of the day.

Talking of the phrase 'the works of light' the Saint quotes 1 Thess. 5. 4: Whereas you, brethren, are not living in the darkness, for the day to take you by surprise like a thief . . . and he adds: The day will visit those also who are not sunk in the sleep of vice—and it will come unexpectedly. However, it will do them no harm, just as a thief can do little or no harm to those who are watchful and in the light, even though he may enter their dwellings. . . . This is the night of the soul, its sleep—vice. But just as the natural light comes, even against our will; so, on the contrary, should we wish it, we can live our spiritual lives in perpetual sunlight.

The Saint goes on: Any vice can be called a sleep, because the soul which is sunk in any one vice can perform no virtuous activity. Also because, in such a state, the soul sees nothing but a dream-world of phantoms and visions without any reality. Riches and glory are dreams of this kind. Watch then, and do not fall asleep!

B: The Gospel: Luke 21. 25-33

1. Historical situation:

Today's section of the Gospel forms part of the eschatological discourse of our Lord on Holy Tuesday, which should be read in the three Synoptics and completed by the reading of the various passages of St Paul (cf. 1 Thess. 4. 15-17; 2 Thess. 2. 1-2; 1 Cor. 15. 12-17). Christ arrives at the Temple and provokes the Jews with the parables of the repudiation of Israel. As a united front they attack him in return and at length he hurls against them, especially against the scribes and Pharisees, the terrible invectives we can read in the Gospels.

On the way back to Bethany the Apostles call his attention to the magnificence of the Temple buildings. The reply is a definite one: Amen I say to you, there shall not be left a stone upon a stone!

They continue on their way to the Mount of Olives and there Peter, John, James and Andrew ask their Lord, When shall these things be and what shall be the sign of your coming?

2. *The two questions:*

Any apologetic difficulty this passage may contain comes from the fact that our Lord is answering a double question, and that the replies are mixed together. The reply is a difficult one to interpret, as are all prophecies. Therefore it is hard to see where exactly the borders lie between the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and that of the end of the world. However, one thing is easy to see; our Lord gives definite signs of the destruction of the city, while he reserves to himself the actual date and hour of the destruction of the world.

3. *The argument:*

This part of the Gospel read today refers only to the end of the world and has four parts: the preliminaries to the coming of Christ; the actual coming itself; the judgement (about which Luke says nothing); and a final exhortation to be watchful, which is developed by our Lord in the two parables of the virgins and the talents. Therefore the Gospel has a double aspect, the punishment of the wicked and the joy of the just. The former is clearly shown in the parable of the virgins, in the man from whom the talent was taken, in the words of reprobation; the latter is represented by the wise virgins, the good administrators, the welcome given to the just by the Judge.

The conclusion is: Watch! You do not know the day nor the hour when the judgement will overtake you, for in spite of all the signs predicted, it will come like a flash of light and will surprise all, as did the flood. We must not be caught by it, as birds in a snare.

4. *Texts:*(a) *Preliminaries:*

The signs in the sun, moon, and stars. These may be understood in the literal or in the metaphorical sense. According to the former interpretation, they imply some physical calamity which will bring about the end of the world as we know it, without attempting a full scientific explanation by any means. In the latter sense, Christ is using words and phrases common to all apocalyptic literature of his time—phrases used to describe any great calamity; without any need to interpret them in their strictly literal sense. The prophecies used almost the same phrases to describe the doom of Babylon, that of Tyre and Sidon, etc. (cf. *Isaías* 13. 10; *Jer.* 15. 9; *Joel* 2. 10; *Amos* 8. 9).

Whatever the meaning of these signs, one thing is clear—behind them all is the figure of Jesus Christ, the Judge. That is the one reality which will remain to us once the sun has ceased to give us light and once the world as we know it has vanished like a dream. The world will have finished for us, but there is one thing which can

remain, our good deeds. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord . . . but the deeds they did in life go with them now (*Apoc.* 14. 13).

(b) *The coming:*

It is the Son of Man who will appear—an obvious reference to Daniel's prophecy (*Dan.* 7. 13; *Apoc.* 14. 14). He will come on the clouds of heaven; this was a special picture of the throne of God well known to the Jews. In great power and majesty, to show the personal triumph of Christ, perhaps to encourage the Apostles, who would see him in his apparent failure on the cross. Also to encourage us in the practice of virtue.

The standard of Christ has always been understood to mean the cross. It will appear before him for many reasons: to proclaim his triumph through it; to show that he died for all men, so that the evil will have no excuse; for the glory of those who have served him faithfully. St Augustine says: You have seen the wonderful power of this cross. The sun's light is obscured, the moon is hidden from our eyes; but the cross shines more brightly than all the stars of heaven, blotting out their splendour with its own. Just as a king, on entering a city, is preceded by his troops, with his banner waving in the breeze and the sound of music announcing his coming; so, when Christ comes, the angels will go before him, bearing his personal standard, that is to say, lifting up over his shoulders the triumphal banner of the holy cross.

St John Chrysostom says: The Lord brings the cross with him as a silent accusation against the evil doers; just as one who is stoned to death accuses his executioner by the mere presentation of his garments torn by the stones and stained with his blood. They will weep as they see his cross, because they will then realize that they did not take advantage of the death of Jesus and crucified him whom they should have adored.

These considerations lead us to meditate on the fact that it is by the cross that we are brought to the light—*Per crucem ad lucem*. Through Christ's obedience even unto the death on the cross, he came to his glory. Then as now, the cross, sign of contradiction, of opprobrium and shame, reveals the secret thoughts of the good and the wicked. From the time of Calvary the world has been divided into two camps, those who love the cross and those who hate it. Now, at the judgement the same division will be made. The book of Wisdom describes the despair of those who realize, when it is too late, the error of their ways (*Wis.* 5. 6-13).

(c) *The judgement:*

The angels and the trumpets imply the solemnity of the moment, just as an earthly king, when there is some special case to be decided, brings his chief ministers with him and surrounds the affair with some solemnity. (We might think of the solemnity which surrounds

our own Assize Courts.) Notice, too, that this is the first time in such circumstances that Christ is called King (Matt. 25. 34), to remind us of the triple power of the Son of God, that of legislator, administrator, and judge! Those who did not admit his power as ruler will fall beneath his power as their judge.

The reasons given for the reward of the blessed and the condemnation of the wicked are not exclusive, but illustrate the fact that many things will come under consideration, but principally mercy and care for our neighbour's good.

The contrast should also be noted: heaven was prepared for all men, hell, for the devil and his angels. If man falls into that it is his own fault.

5. Conclusions:

Encouragement:

Lift up your heads . . . Luke 21. 28. These words are most important from the liturgical point of view, because they are words of encouragement and support for us all. The full redemption is at hand and we should be glad of that fact. In spite of Christ's redemption, we are still subject to many ills of body and soul. Even after the particular judgement we shall still be subject to the tomb—but for a time only. The day of the general judgement will bring us complete freedom.

The redemption of mankind has three stages in its development:

- i. *in the Old Law sins were forgiven and grace received*, but in such a way that the flood was not abundant nor the ritual complete; neither were the gates of heaven opened. They were as children, according to the Pauline idea.
- ii. *after the coming of Christ we have the full rights as sons of God*, but our bodies are still subject to concupiscence and death.
- iii. *confirmation*. This generation will not have passed. . . . If this means the Jewish people then the significance is obvious; if it refers to the end of the world then the word generation will apply to either the Jewish people or to humanity as a whole. Though heaven and earth should pass away. . . . Notice the firmness of the divine word compared to the passing nature of this universe. As St Teresa said: Only God remains!

SECTION III. THE FATHERS

I. ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

In Hom. 76 in Matt. the Saint explains the theme of today's Gospel (cf. PG. 58. 694). We shall also give a translation of other passages from his works in which he deals with the general argument of this Sunday.

Some moral applications:

(a) What we lose through not making some small efforts:

I weep to think of how much glory we shall lose for ever simply because we will not make a small effort. Even if much were demanded of us and even though the law were a heavy burden, we would still be bound to keep it. . . . Our worst suffering, apart from that of hell itself, will be the thought of the glory we have lost through the desire to avoid a little hard work. In spite of the fact that time is short and the labour demanded of us slight, we are still remiss and apathetic. . . . You fight on earth and receive a reward in heaven. You run in the race for a few days and win infinite centuries of glory gained through that race. Our fight is in a corruptible body; the honours of our triumph are in an incorruptible and glorified body.

(b) Making use of labours and sufferings which we cannot avoid:

It is wise to remember that, even though we may choose to suffer some things for Christ, there are other sufferings we cannot avoid, no matter how we try. Even though we must die for Christ, that does not mean that we can avoid death; nor can we take our riches with us into the next life just because we choose to renounce them for Christ's sake. Christ demands from you those things which you would have to give him, even if he did not demand them. He only wishes you to do with pleasure those things which you would have to do in any case. His one aim is that you should do them for him. . . . Do you see how easy the struggle really is? The money you thought of giving, give it to me, he says. I will pay you better interest and with greater security. That body, which you thought of enlisting under another's banner, enrol under mine, because the rewards I pay are greater than those of others. . . .

Alas! When it is a case of others, you will always choose the one who pays you most. It is only in the case of Christ, the most generous of all, that you refuse to admit him or apply this principle. . . . Yet his love is so great. If you wish to lend to him, he is always ready to admit your loan. Should you wish to sow, he will pay for the seed. As for building, he will give you the site. Why do you run after men, who are powerless to help you? Instead seek after God, who in return for little things gives you great gifts. Yet we insist in seeking after those things which only lead to wars, conflicts, quarrels and calumnies.

(c) In Christ we have all things:

Is he not being merely just when he punishes and rejects us, who have already rejected and despised him? He offers himself to us in every way. He says to us: If you wish for beauty, then clothe yourself

in mine; to arm yourselves, here are my arms. My table is yours, my way is open to you. Should you wish to inherit, you are my heirs. . . . I do not ask you to pay anything for what I give you. Rather, I would be your debtor, since I ask you to make use of all that is mine. . . . I am your friend, your member, your brother and sister; I am your mother—everything. All I ask is to be an intimate of yours. I am poor for you, a beggar for your sake, buried for you, after a dire crucifixion. In heaven for you before God, your Father; on earth, his legate before your eyes. You are everything to me—my brother, co-heir and fellow member of the Body. What more do you require? Why will you labour for the world, rejecting him who loves you so much?

(d) **The Holy Ghost, pledge of the resurrection of the body:**

Do not imagine that the Holy Spirit is idle in your souls. Even now the effects of his work endure and we receive gifts which are far and away above the miracles which the Apostles worked in his name. To raise a man from the dead is less important than giving life to a soul—a thing which happens every day in baptism. The cure of a sick person is less difficult than the lifting of the burden of sin; while restoring sight to the blind is nothing compared with the flooding of a soul with light.

If you were not in possession of these divine pledges through the Holy Spirit then there would be no baptism, no pardon for sins, no redemption, no justice or sanctification nor a share in his sacraments. The mystical flesh and blood cannot be with him, nor can priests receive ordination unless he descends upon them. . . . You have received the pledge of the Spirit, then, the life of the soul. Have no doubts about the future. Meditate on the resurrection and make yourselves worthy of this dogma through your holiness of life.

II. ST EPHRAEM

On the Second Coming and the Last Judgement *

Patience:

Listen to Paul, who says that a man will reap those things which he has sown. Sow in the spirit, that you may reap the harvest of life everlasting. Do not neglect your task, but set before your eyes the goal of hope, for where there is contest there is also reward; in war there are victories and also a crown. Looking to this end, anoint yourself with the virtue of patience. Go forth bravely and till your field—that field which is this present life; taking with you the hoe of the Old and New Testament. Put a hedge of thorns about it, which is the prayer and fasting you shall do for the Lord, together with doctrine. If you are protected by this enclosure the devil shall not invade you at any time. . . .

* Vossio, *St Ephraem*, I, 161.

Yet be watchful of your enemy, because he may seek to possess your soul as a field and sow there his unclean and unfitting thoughts. Resist and oppose him with the shield of faith; put on the helmet of hope and draw the sword of the spirit, which is God's word. So armed, stand fast against him, standing fast and showing yourself sober and vigilant in all things. We are not ignorant of his designs. . . .

Therefore let the fear of the Lord be always in your hearts; which does not mean that you must be a timid soldier nor a lazy, slothful workman. Do not reject the crown prepared for you, for while time is short, the judgement is long. . . . For your sword, take into your hand the fear of the Lord and hold it fast, for the fear of God is like a two-edged sword, cutting off every desire. Be mindful at all times of the last dreadful day, when the heavens shall be consumed with fire, and the earth, together with all that is on it, shall perish. That day when the stars shall fall like leaves, the sun refuse to give its light and the moon be darkened. . . .

What place then for avarice, that desire for earthly possessions from which springs hardness of heart? Where the swollen pride which disposes of all things and believes that it alone exists? Where now the fleeting and vainglory and success in this life; the human might, the tyrant or the king? . . . Think upon the end of sinners, as they are led before that mighty tribunal. What terrors will lay hold on them in the presence of the just Judge, having no means of escape before them, no refuge to which they can flee! The shame that will be theirs as they are placed at the left hand of the king, the gloom that will cover them as he falls upon them in his anger! . . .

Where then shall be the false pleasure of sin, since there is no other joy than to fear the Lord and love him in whom alone there is true happiness? Then sinners shall curse themselves and the evil they have done and confess that the judgement of God is just, saying: We used to hear of these things but we took no notice of them and would not cease from our evil ways. But then, at that moment, it will avail nothing so to speak of that which is past and gone. The time has been lost and nothing can restore it to us.

Since, then, I have sinned, to you do I come, O Lord, because of your great mercy. I have provoked you to anger, but because of your clemency I seek you now. I have spurned you in the past, but because of your goodness and mercy I return to you, with a plea for mercy. . . . I have provoked you to anger, and now I fly to your mercy. I have spurned you, yet because of your supreme goodness and kindness I return to you. . . . I have nothing to offer you; no good work, not even a clean heart. Relying only on your mercy I beg of you to create a clean heart in me and strengthen me with a perfect spirit, that I may not speedily fall back into sin. From this day I shall serve you in holiness and justice all the days of my life.

III. ST AUGUSTINE

(He has two sermons on the same theme, that of Ps. 49. 3, from which we shall quote some passages only. Cf. PL. 38, 124 and 128.)

1. *Christ speaks through the mouth of preachers:*

Christ has not ceased to speak to us, if we refer to that doctrinal teaching which is necessary for our salvation. In former times he spoke through the prophets, then he himself addressed us and even now we have his words in Holy Scripture. He also speaks to us through our preachers, when they speak to us of his truth. . . . No; Christ is not silent. What is required is that we should hear him in our hearts, with those ears of which he spoke when he said: He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

2. *The responsibility of the preacher:*

Such words (those of Ezech. 3. 5-7) terrify me, because they are the mirror in which we should contemplate the prelates, whom God has placed over you to speak to you in his name. I look at myself in such a mirror; do you in like manner. I must obey the command which I have heard: Sinner if I threaten with death, and warning thou give him none to leave off his sinning, die he shall, as he deserves to die, but thou for his death shall answer to me. If warning thou givest, and he will not leave off his sinning, he dies by his own fault, and thou shalt stand acquitted (Ezech. 33. 8-9).

This is the reason why I preach to you, to save my own soul, because if I did not, then I would run grave risk of losing it. And since I fulfil my obligation, take heed then of the danger in which you find yourselves. What is my desire and my intention? Why do I speak and seat myself in this place? Why do I live, except for one purpose, that we all may live in Christ Jesus! This is my desire, my honour and my glory, my joy and riches. If I preach and you refuse to hear me, then, certainly I shall save myself, but I do not wish to save myself without you all.

3. *Sinners do not listen to the voice of Christ:*

Those men who think only of this life, and not of the future, see that both the good and evil things here below are common to all men, whether bad or good. If they desire riches, they see rich men who are evil and other rich men who are good. If they are terrified at the miseries of this life and its sufferings, they observe that both the good and the wicked have to endure them alike. From this they tend to conclude in their heart of hearts that God does not turn his eyes on human things nor bother himself with their government.

Yet it is possible to discover that God does observe the things of this world and that, on occasion, he does judge them here and now, not leaving it until later. He puts off that judgement as he pleases.

And why does he act thus? Because if he were always to defer judgement we might think there was no God; and on the other hand, were he to judge everything now, then there would be nothing left for the other judgement. If he leaves a great deal for the day of judgement and still judges some things now, it is so that they may fear and repent to whom he extends this added chance, giving them time. God, to tell the truth, does not like to condemn, but to save. That is why he has patience with the wicked, so as to turn their hearts towards good.

Therefore, brethren, do not hold these faults as small ones—faults to which you have perhaps already become accustomed. Custom tends to make us appreciate little the gravity of sin. The man who becomes hardened loses his sensibility. A thing which is already corrupt suffers no pain, not because it is healthy, but because it is dead. If we pinch ourselves in some part and it hurts, that is a sign either of health or at least of the hope of a cure. If it does not hurt us, it may be necessary to cut it off, as being already dead.

He ascended into heaven, where he is seated at the right hand of God, from whence he will come again one day to judge the living and the dead. But meanwhile he is silent. . . . Do you hear his voice when you commit your adulteries, thinking that no one sees you just because there is no human eye upon you? Or when you rob . . .? Listen then to the psalmist: Such were thy ways, and I made no sign, till the wicked thought came to thy heart that I was such as thou art.

Among sinners and also among those who feel remorse for their evil, there are many who murmur to themselves that if God were really disgusted by sin, would he allow the wicked to triumph on this earth? Listen to me. You think that I am like you and that I take pleasure in evil things. . . .

4. *Do not delay conversion:*

He will not hide himself on that day. On the contrary, he will make himself visible, which is the real meaning of the phrase: He will not remain silent. The reader of the gospel has said it today, and no one pays heed to him. The bishop who expounds the gospel says it and is mocked. Will it be the object of ridicule when the omnipotent Judge himself repeats it? . . . Then men will say, with tardy repentance, If we could only return to earth and there put into practice that which we despised. . . . Then they will repent, but it will be a repentance which does not heal, but which only serves for torment. Do you wish for a salutary penance? Here it is—here and now. Because if you do penance now you will correct your lives and then that chest in which you guard your evil works will empty itself and that of good works will be filled.

But perhaps you will say to me that the day of judgement is far off. How do you know that? Is your own day of judgement so far off? How many have gone to their beds healthy and have been dead in

the morning! Glass is fragile; but we are even more fragile still . . . our life is so very short, no matter how long we may think it. Every day we assist at the death of someone or other, we attend the funeral services and their burial—yet we continue to promise ourselves a long life. Hardly anyone says: I am going to amend my ways, lest what has happened to this person today should be my lot tomorrow.

IV. ST GREGORY THE GREAT

(Extracts from Hom. I, *in loco*. PL. 76, 1077.)

1. *Lift up your heads . . .*

In Scripture the head is often used to mean the soul; therefore to lift up your head means to raise the heart to the joys of our heavenly home. They, therefore, who love God are told to be glad and rejoice at the end of the world, since they will soon meet him whom they love and because that is passing away which they have never loved. . . . He who does not rejoice at the end of the world testifies in that fact that he is its friend, and at the same time an enemy of God. This should be far from the faithful, from the hearts of those who, in their faith, believe in a future life and love it in very truth. Only they who have their roots in this world should grieve over the end of it; those who never look for the life to come or who, perhaps, are not even aware that it exists.

2. *Look to your heavenly home, to the end of the journey:*

We who have learned of the joys of our home in heaven should hasten towards it as quickly as possible, desiring to go there with all haste and to arrive by the shortest way. And how the world, with its miseries, urges us on! What sorrow or misfortune is there that does not press upon us? What is this mortal life but a road, a journey? And what folly it would be to be weary with fatigue and not eager to end the journey?

3. *My words shall not pass away:*

All this is confirmed under a mighty pledge when he says: Amen I say to you. . . . Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away. Nothing in this world is more durable than the heavens and the earth, while nothing in the order of nature passes more quickly than the spoken word. Words, so long as they are not complete, are not words; but once they are completed they cease to be, because they cannot be perfected save in their own destruction. Therefore he says: Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass. As if he were to say openly to us all: All that seems to you to be unchanging and enduring is not enduring or unchanging in eternity. But everything of mine which seems to pass away is, in fact, enduring and without change. For my speech, that passes away, utters thoughts which are to endure for ever.

4. *Example from worldly disasters:*

The day before yesterday, brethren, you will have heard that an ancient plantation was uprooted by a sudden and terrible storm, that houses were destroyed, churches razed to the ground. How many there were who, safe and well on the previous evening, believed that in the morning they would fulfil some task or other. Yet that very night they were overtaken suddenly, caught in the trap of this disaster?

But we must always keep it in mind that, in these happenings, it is the invisible Judge who moves the breath of the faintest breeze and also arouses the fury of the storm or razes the buildings to their very foundations. And what shall happen when he appears visibly and when his anger burns against the wicked, if we cannot now endure his wrath when he inflicts upon us the slightest tempest?

5. *Think on the last end:*

Reflect with all your minds upon this last day, my brethren. Remedy all that is now defective in your lives and amend your ways. Conquer evil temptations by standing firm against them. Repent with tears for the sins you have committed, for the more you make ready against the severity of his justice by serving him in fear, so much the more serenely shall you behold the coming of the Just Judge.

V. ST BERNARD

(Some extracts from PL. 183, 35-40 on our Lady, instrument of Christ's first coming and the way of salvation for us all.)

You will already comprehend, if I mistake not, that the royal Virgin is herself the Way through which the Saviour comes to us, coming forth from her womb like a bridegroom coming out of his bridal chamber. Holding fast then, to this way, let us ascend through her to him who, through her, has come down to us. Let us try to reach, by her aid, his divine forgiveness, who came by way of her to take away our sorrow.

Through thee we have access to thy son, O blessed discoverer of grace, Mother of life, Mother of salvation! May he forgive us through thee, who by thee was given unto us. May thy blameless virtue plead for us with him, that he may not look upon our corruption. May thy humility which so pleases God obtain for us the pardon of our pride.

Let thy boundless charity cover the multitude of our sins, and thy glorious fruitfulness bring us an abundance of mercies. Our Lady, our Mediatrix, do thou present us to thy Son. Speak for us to him. Grant, O most blessed Virgin, through the graces thou hast earned, through the merits thou hast won, through the mercy thou hast received, that he who deigned by means of thee to become a sharer

in our infirmity and sorrow, may, through thy intercession, make us sharers in his glory and in his joy, Jesus Christ, thy Son our Lord, who is, above all, God the blessed for ever and ever. Amen.

SECTION IV. THEOLOGIANS

I. ST THOMAS AQUINAS

Christ the Judge

1. *As Man:*

To judge the world is proper to God, our Lord by right of creation, the supreme legislator, infinite wisdom. But it has also been given to Christ in his Sacred Humanity, for these reasons:

(a) because he is the head of the human race:

God has given judicial powers to all those who are placed in authority on earth, in such a way that, when dictating justice, they do it in his name. Having made Christ the head of the whole human race and of the Church, and having subjected all things to him, he has also given to him—and with greater reason—the power of judgement.

(b) having fought for justice and having been himself judged;

(c) because, by his redemption, he made us his subjects:

This by the right of conquest. Creation subjected us to the power of God; redemption to that of Christ (3p. q. 59. a. 2 and Supp. q. 90. a. 1).

2. *Qualities of Christ, the Judge:*

(a) Wisdom:

The first quality required in a judge is sufficient knowledge. How great this must be in the case of the sacred humanity, united to the infinite wisdom of God!

(b) His glory:

He will come in glory:
 i. *to make up for the ignominy of the passion.* They shall look on him whom they pierced—a prophecy which was begun on Calvary, but which will be fully completed when he comes, clothed in his glory of his crucified body. When men shall see the sacred wounds, not as a sign of present weakness, but of that strength which knew how to triumph (Supp. q. 90. a. 2. *ad 5.m*).
 ii. *to make that judgement more glorious.* It seems only right that he who is to be judged should appear in the garb of humility; in the same way the judge should appear full of glory. Even more so when we remember that the judge should be superior in every

way to those he judges and at the last judgement there will be among the latter the glorified bodies of those who have risen from the dead.

(c) Universal judge:

His judgement will be as wide as his kingdom. He redeemed us all, therefore he will be the judge of all. . . . When he judges all our actions we shall realize that all of them have a relation to our ultimate end (3p. q. 59. a. 4).

3. *The judgement:*

St Thomas gives three reasons for the final judgement at the last day:

(a) so that the justice of divine providence may be clearly manifested:

To that act of creation by which all things came forth from the hand of God there corresponds this further act by means of which they all return to him. The particular judgement might seem sufficient, but the total providence of God and the very nature of man as a social being seem to demand a social and collective restoration.

Here in this world Providence often puts off both reward or punishment until later, thus attending, not so much to the good of the individual, but rather to the common good of all, which at times demands such delay. Therefore, so that this providence, which seemed to many to be unjust, should shine forth, it is convenient that it should be publicly and solemnly manifested, together with the reasons behind it.

(b) so that society as a whole may be judged:

Society as a whole, together with the men who form part of it, merit judgement—there is such a thing as social justice, after all.

(c) so that the consequences of our actions may also be judged:

The life of man, so far as its effects are concerned, does not end with death. The memory of it remains—those great monuments erected over the tombs of men who were unworthy of them, while great saints lie in obscurity. When can we see the end of the work of saint or heretic? Just as a man's actions cannot be judged until after his death, so it is convenient that we should wait until the end of time to judge the total effects of his work (3p. q. 50. a. 4).

II. ST ROBERT BELLARMINE

(The Saint has various homilies on the Epistles and Gospels, many of them in the form of sermon plans. Therefore, instead of quoting directly the passages from such works, we shall attempt to give a scheme of the general plan.)

The twofold redemption of mankind

1. *Accommodated and literal meaning of the texts:*

The general thought in this homily is that of courage inspired by the total redemption of man which will be accomplished at the day of judgement: Lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand.

The phrase we are explaining has two meanings, one accommodated and the other literal, but inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Church is accustomed to choose for her feasts passages which have some connection with the general idea of the day.

In this case the accommodated sense is that of encouragement because of the redemption of souls—the first coming of Christ. The literal sense is the redemption of our bodies by the resurrection at the last coming of Christ.

2. *Redemption of souls:*(a) **Man is a sinner, subjected to a threefold servitude:**

i. *Subject to God's anger.* Just as a father, offended by his son, deprives him of his inheritance, so God, through the sins of men, deprives them of the privilege of being his sons through grace. What a terrible thing, to be subject to the just indignation of an omnipotent God (Ps. 138. 7).

ii. *Subject to the devil.* Man allows himself to become a voluntary subject of the devil, for which reasons God allows the devil to lead man from sin to sin until he plunges him into hell. Horrible state indeed, because man cannot free himself from it by his own efforts and because the devil desires nothing but evil for man. Those thus subjected are in dire need.

iii. *Subject to sin itself.* It supposes a stain on the soul, a blindness of mind and heart, a turning away of the will from God, also loves and desires which are disordered. Slavery indeed, because by his own power man cannot arise from sin and while he is in that state cannot merit or do any good work.

(b) **Christ redeemed us from this triple slavery:**

i. *From God's anger.* By giving him the honour which is his due. He is the propitiation for our sins . . . and for those of the whole world (1 John 2. 2). He bought us back from the Father, whom he paid in the coin of his perfect obedience, not so as to leave us free from the Father, but so as to unite us once more with him in loving sonship.

ii. *From the slavery of the devil.* By vanquishing the devil and therefore by right of conquest (Luke 11. 22; Col. 2. 15). The devil is now more subject than he was before, because the cross reigns in his place and men of faith need not fear him.

iii. *From that of sin.* Our Lord's blood wipes away sin, merits grace for us and gives us an opportunity to free ourselves, through his blood (1 Pet. 1. 18-19; 1 Cor. 6. 18-20).

iv. *We should prepare ourselves for his coming.* On commemorating the first coming of Christ we should think of it as taking place here and now. Is he not really and truly born in the souls of those who confess and thus see themselves freed from their sins, those who receive the benefits of the redemption? This new birth comes to us in baptism and in confession.

3. *Redemption of our bodies:*(a) **Total redemption in the resurrection:**

i. *We are not yet completely redeemed.* Our souls are completely redeemed, being able to live free from sin and as sons of God; but our bodies are not. They are still subject to illness, death and the torments of the temptations of Satan and our own passions, which lead us to sin (Rom. 7. 24; 8. 23).

ii. *Total redemption on the day of the resurrection.* Lift up your heads, for your redemption is at hand. Then, in our immortal bodies, we shall be free completely from all ills, spiritual or temporal.

Yet they are greater in number who fear that day than those who rejoice and long for it. Most of mankind try to prolong this life, or at least wish to leave their memories alive in statues of bronze or marble. We should be like the pious Jews who prayed that the heavens would rain down the Just One.

Even though we may not yet see the signs of the end of the world, the signs of the end of our own life are there, be we old or young. After death will come our particular judgement and the soul will receive its definitive sentence. The body will lie in peace, awaiting its reward. Lift up your heads, therefore. If we do not, it is not merely because we are not perfect, but because we do not even realize our own imperfections.

SECTION V. SPIRITUAL WRITERS

I. ST THOMAS OF VILLANOVA

The need for a general judgement

(As famous a preacher as he was a saint; Ferrier, his biographer, tells us that the Emperor Charles V and his wife Isabel used to mingle with the crowds to hear him preach. We give here a summary of the ideas contained in one of his sermons on this theme.)

1. *Necessity for the judgement:*

(a) Man can be judged because he is a free agent—liberty being the source of merit:

Man can be judged because of all the creatures on this earth, he is the only one with liberty of action—a wonderful gift to any creature (Ecclus. 15. 14-18). This liberty is the source of merit. Other creatures are good in so far as they fulfil the idea which God has of them, but in the case of man there is also, above and beyond this natural goodness, a moral goodness which consists in his conformity with the law which governs our actions and affections. He can obey this rule—or disobey it.

(b) Man should be judged:

i. *So that he may be a perfect work*, coming from the hands of God.

ii. *So that he may be in line with the rest of creation*—ordered to their end.

Without any judgement there would be complete chaos . . . unpunished crimes, virtues without reward. Will we be so bold as to say that God who made the world does not know how to govern it? The world is God's house, and like every good house, in complete order. If he should allow some disorder, he later applies his justice and from that disorder forges a harmony which makes his wisdom shine forth.

The saint gives the example of one who blasphemes, of one who robs the poor and of another who gives free rein to his lust. All of them live in apparent happiness. If they are not punished, then it would be logical to ask: Where is God? Where is the law, truth, or justice? He ends by saying: The punishment of the wicked and the rewards of the just are necessary to complete and to order the universe.

2. *Need for a general judgement:*

So that reward and punishment may be duly recognized as such by all:

You may say to me: But for that all that is necessary is the particular judgement; there is no need for a general one. But virtue does not merely need a reward—it also requires a public admission of the honour due to it. Sin does not merely require punishment, but also public humiliation. Public shame is the best punishment which can be given to a man. You may beat an animal, treat it badly and kill it even; but you cannot humiliate it. But man, however bad he may be, would prefer any type of punishment rather than public shame.

3. *The person of the judge:*

(a) God himself:

No angel will judge us, but God himself, because that is an honour proper to the one who created human nature and united it to his divinity. It is an infallible and divine judgement.

(b) *in a human form, with full knowledge of our weaknesses:*

Who would dare to present himself before such a majestic tribunal? Lord, you are good and merciful! But I tremble and fear your face. You have never known our human frailties, which accompany us from our very childhood. Therefore, I beg of you, send us as a judge one who has known our hunger and our sadness . . . who has proved in himself the bitter state of man. I will willingly accept such a one as my judge, because he has saved me, and to do so became a servant, was judged himself and was condemned to death. I will not reject him who came as my redeemer. He is of my blood and of my flesh.

The Lord hears our pleas; he will not send any other to judge us except his only Son, who was the Lamb of God for the sins of the world. He will not reserve judgement for himself, but has given it into the hands of his Son.

(c) *Awake from sleep:*

Seeing that we do not feel any fear when we hear these things, would not anyone say that we act as though they had nothing to do with us? As if we had not a part to play in these events and as if we would never hear sentence pronounced against us? Yet time presses, and when we least expect it the day will come. St Paul and the Lord himself both give us due warning, now is the time for us to rise from sleep. How he will rejoice who has not been deaf to those words!

II. BOSSUET

(Summary and extracts from schemes prepared for sermons in the church of St Thomas.)

A: *The three motives for divine justice*1. *Introduction:*

Fear, the beginning of love:

Fear goes before love; and it is necessary that man should learn to fear God before we talk to him of confidence, because otherwise that confidence could degenerate into temerity. Shortly the Saviour will come, full of grace and truth, but the Church, who during Advent prepares you for his coming, makes fear lead the way.

2. *Divine justice irritated:*(a) **First motive: His power despised (Lev. 26. 21-30):**

In this text there is reference to human liberty, because what God wishes from us is that we should do voluntarily that which we are bound to do by nature—serve him. If we refuse him our obedience then it is we ourselves who give him a just title to punish us.

Yet with this liberty we fight against God, breaking both tables of the law. Christ came down from heaven to destroy his enemies with one breath; but the weak has arisen against the strong one of God, who offered him peace. Instead, he chose war. Who will win? If we could obtain happiness by fighting against God, then God would not be God. There is no chance for us in such a fight, because the forces are not equal, and if we persevere in such evil ways, then we shall be destroyed.

(b) **Second motive: love offended by ingratitude (Deut. 28. 63):**

An angry God shows himself to men in thunder and lightning; but he is even more terrible when he shall come armed only with his favours and seated on the throne of his graces. Love which is despised, rejected, unable to do any more because of the excess of the abundance of its favours, tends to stop the wells of grace and open up that of revenge. . . . From whence do you think those flames come which devour ungrateful Christians? From the very altars, from the sacraments, from those wounds and from that side which was opened on the cross to be a very fount of love and graces.

God's graces are not lost; God collects them within himself and there they are transformed into fiery darts to wound those who are ungrateful. Thus, ever living, yet dying always; immortal for suffering, too strong to die and too weak to face their torments, they shall groan eternally on their beds of flames. For ever they will carry with them the infinite weight of so many sacraments profaned, so much grace rejected; no less afflicted and weighed down by the goodness of God than by the intolerable weight of his revenge.

(c) **Third motive: His sovereignty violated (Deut. 28. 47-48):**

No empire was so just, for by creation we are his subjects and by redemption we are his sons. We carry his seal, created to his image and stamped by his Holy Spirit. It is a gentle reign, because it is a natural one. All who live in that state demanded by their nature are at peace. No one knows better what is good for us than he who made us; and no one can give us better gifts, because God is all-powerful.

What should be the reward of those who refuse to submit to such a gentle government? Instead of a sweet yoke they will find one of iron; instead of their true Lord, one who is a usurper; in place of abundance, hunger, thirst and dire misery. Do I have to tell you

who he is that God will raise up as your enemy against you? It is he who, having declared himself to be God's enemy yet unable to prevail against him, turned against those who are made in God's image. Then he attempts to destroy and dishonour, pretending thus to obtain his revenge.

We should remember our baptism, when the priest said to Satan: Leave him, unclean spirit . . . and give place to the living and true God. . . .

When we sin then we erect once more that throne of Satan in our souls; corrupting our very baptism, we give rise again to that empire of iniquity, wiping away the cross of Christ impressed on our foreheads, rejecting his holy anointing which had made us kings, Christs, anointed ones of God.

3. *Conclusion:*

The Lord, vested with all his rights against sinners, will come to establish his throne for ever. Let us throw ourselves into the waters of baptism once again, through the sacrament of penance, never to leave them again until Christ calls us and leads us out of them.

B: On the hardening of the heart of the sinner*1. *Introduction:*

Now is the time for us to awaken from our sleep. In the very court itself there are many who lie asleep, with a mortal lethargy in their hearts. . . . He alone is awake who is prepared to attend to his own salvation. . . . That is the reason why the Church reads to us this day the story of the last judgement; and that is why I appeal to you all in those words: Now is the time!

2. *The proposition:*

The cause of the sins and disasters of the human race is a lack of vigilance. If this is necessary to prevent sin it is just as necessary if the sinner is to arise from his sin and ruin. There are many passages of Scripture which repeat this warning: Watch!

3. *First part: Hardness of heart of the sinner:*(a) **Not to think of God and his justice is a kind of atheism:**

Let the sensual man be on his guard, lest God should abandon him and allow him to fall into the true atheism.

But there is another kind of atheism, that of those who do not think of God, even though they profess to believe in him. If we do not think of a thing it is almost as if it did not exist for us. You

* This sermon had a special reason for being preached as it is, because it was delivered in the court of Louis XIV on 1 December 1669, when the king's way of life was a scandal to many. It is a good example of Bossuet's genius as a preacher and as a diplomat that he was free to preach it and had no hesitation in doing so.

give yourselves up to your pleasures and live in the midst of criminal delights, without even the suspicion that he who has forbidden such things will come suddenly to disturb your pleasures with the rigours of his justice.

(b) The reason for this hardness of heart:

This lack of awareness has its explanation in the limitations of our understanding, which is self-centred. When we are angry we think that everyone else is the same; when we sleep we think that all the world is drowsy. When the sinner lies in idleness, in the midst of his pleasures and impenitence, he thinks that God also sleeps. But even though those unfaithful women, those men who are themselves corrupt and who also corrupt others, may try to hide themselves in the darkness of the night. . . . they will be brought to light on that day which the Lord hath made.

I do not wish to speak to you merely of the judgement and of hell, but to make you see, in the midst of that spiritual blindness in which you live, that your very calmness is your worst punishment. At times an angry God keeps his anger in check within him; then the sinner, who all the time marvels at his own prosperity and tranquillity, thinks that he has nothing to fear. This is the worst of punishments; it is the sleep which kills but does not heal.

The Fathers say that the more severe the sinner is with himself the more kind God is in his judgements of him. But when we have the misfortune to reach an agreement with our own sins, then there is almost no remedy for us.

Quoting Isaias 51 as an example, he goes on: This is a perfect image of great sinners who lose all thought of God. They sin without scruple, remember their sin without sorrow, confess without true compunction, fall again without fear, persevere in their sin without becoming uneasy, and end by dying without repentance.

4. *Second part: The lazy:*

Watch, because you do not know when your Lord will come. Time, says St Augustine, tends to imitate eternity in this, that day follows day, and we do not give heed to the passing of time. Therefore, watch.

Some try to give the lie to God and say to him: I will get in before your judgement and go to confession before I die. But that day is a secret known only to God himself. Even the end of the world, in spite of the signs prophesied by our Lord, will be a sudden thing. Death lies hidden in the air we breathe, in our food, even in our medicines. That was God's will. Augustine says: The last day is hidden so that we may watch every day. Even though we were sure to live a long time, still the habits of sin will be stronger than our wills. The preacher recalls the sin of the ancients who accused Susanna and those of Solomon in his old age.

Do not deceive yourselves. When that passion which now dominates you, that secret tyranny of your heart, has lost its force, you will not be free because of that. If you do not watch, another vice will take its place. There will be a successor of the same category.

He gives the example of one who walks around the palace satisfied with himself, but not understanding that he has already lost the royal favour. God's justice also has its secrets and at times the sinner, without knowing it, is already condemned. He reminds his hearers that the withdrawing of grace and the hardening of the heart of the sinner are the greatest of all punishments.

He ends with a moving paragraph, addressed directly to the king, which is a model of its kind:

O great king, outshining all your predecessors, whom we see occupied with the great business of state, which covers all Europe! I suggest to your intellect and genius a labour which is more important and an objective more worthy of your attention—the service of God and of your own salvation. For what will it profit Your Majesty to have lifted your kingdom of France to such a high pinnacle of glory if, after having filled the world with your name and the history of your deeds, you do not consider that those very deeds might have been worth something in the sight of God and be written in the Book of Life? . . . If the stars, the elements, those tremendous works which the hand of God appeared to have constructed for all eternity, see themselves threatened with ruin and destruction, what will be the fate of the deeds done by men?

Do you not see those flames, which devour in one day cities, fortresses, palaces and country houses; which envelop in flames and then turn to ashes the monuments of kings. Where is the greatness of those things which will one day be nothing but dust? There are other deeds, other writings—for God keeps the diary of our lives.

III. DOM COLUMBA MARMION

(Both in *Christ, the Life of the Soul* and also in *Christ in his Mysteries* he develops the idea of Christ presenting his Church triumphant to the Father, in total union with him at the day of judgement.)

1. *Christ asks for this glory:*

I have glorified thee on earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now glorify thou me, O Father, with thyself, with the glory which I had, before the world was, with thee. . . . Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me may be with me; that they may see my glory which thou hast given me (John 17. 4-5, 24).

Christ Jesus first asks that his Sacred Humanity may share in that glory which the Word possesses from all eternity. Then, as Christ

never separates himself from his mystical body, he asks that his disciples and all those who believe in him, may be associated with him in that glory. It is his will that we should be 'where he is'. And where is he? *In gloria Dei Patris*: in the glory of God the Father. There is the final term of our predestination, the consummation of our adoption, the summit of our perfection, the plenitude of our life.

Let us hear how St Paul sets forth this truth. After having said that God, who wills us to be holy, has predestined us to be made conformable to the image of his son, in order that this Son may be the Firstborn among many brethren, he immediately adds: And whom he predestined, them also he called. And whom he called, them he also justified. And whom he justified them he also glorified. These words point out the successive phases of the work of our sanctification: namely our predestination, and vocation in Christ Jesus, our justification by grace, which makes us the children of God, and our supreme glorification, assuring eternal life to us.

2. *The work of Christ is to bring us divine life:*

I have come that they may have life. But the only true life is that which is eternal. All our knowledge and all our love of the Father and his Son, Jesus, must tend to the eternity of that life which makes us children of God. *Haec est vita aeterna ut cognoscant te solum Deum verum et quem misisti, Jesum Christum*. Here on earth it is always possible for us to lose the divine life which Christ gives us through grace; only death 'in the Lord' fixes and assures this life to us in a permanent manner. The Church notes this truth in calling the day on which the Saints enter into eternal possession of this life their 'birthday': *Natalitia*. The life of Christ in us here below by grace is like the dawn of day; it only attains its noon-tide—a noon-tide without decline—if it comes to its fulness in glory. Baptism is the source whence this divine river rises; but this river, which makes glad the city of souls, flows at last into the ocean of eternity. That is why we shall have only an incomplete idea of the life of Christ in our souls if we do not contemplate the end which, of its nature, it must reach.

3. *Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Apoc. 19. 6-9):*

This is only a shadow of the divine reality of the beatitude awaiting us. We received the germ of it at baptism. But this germ needs to grow, to develop, to be secured against briars and stones; by penance we have put away from it all that could destroy or diminish its growth; we have maintained it by the Sacrament of life and by the practice of the virtues. The divine life communicated to us by Christ now remains hidden in us: *Vita vestra abscondita est cum Christo in Deo*. But in heaven it is revealed, its splendour appears, its beauty is manifested. . . .

There is yet something more. We shall enjoy God according to the measure of grace that we have attained at the moment of our going out of the world.

Do not let us lose sight of this truth: the degree of our eternal beatitude is and will remain fixed for ever by the degree of charity we have attained, by the grace of Christ, when God shall call us to himself. Each moment of our life is then infinitely precious, for it suffices to advance us a degree in the love of God, to raise us higher in the beatitude of eternal life.

And let us not say that one degree more or less is a small matter. How can anything be a small matter when it concerns God, and the endless life and beatitude of which he is the source? If, according to the parable spoken by our Lord in person, we have received five talents, it was not that we might bury them, but that we might make them bear increase. . . .

Let us then be vigilant ever to put away from us the obstacles that might lessen our union with Jesus Christ; to let the divine action penetrate us deeply, and the grace of Jesus act so freely within us that we may 'come to the fulness of the age of Christ'. . . . Therefore let no suffering cast you down; 'for that which is at present light and momentary of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.' Let no temptation hold you back, for if you are found faithful in the hour of trial, the hour will come when you will receive the crown which will be given to you on entering into the true life 'which God hath promised to them that love him'. Let no senseless joy seduce you, 'for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' Time is short, and the world passes away. That which does not pass away is the word of Jesus Christ: *Verba autem mea non transibunt*. These words are for us the principle of divine life: *Spiritus et vita sunt*.

IV. BEDE JARRETT, O.P.

(From his *Meditations for Layfolk* we have selected the meditation on the Judgement.)

1. Perhaps for many the terrors of death are as nothing compared with the terrors of judgement. . . . Even the saints can do little for us, for the judgement must be righteous and just, and this means assuredly that God cannot go out of his path of justice because of the pleading even of those whom he holds dear. What else indeed is the judgement, as far as we can grasp it, but the naked setting of our soul as it is now at this moment in the sight of God. He knows absolutely the state of my whole being. He knows what I do not, whether I am worthy of love or hatred. To me that blinding vision may be a tremendous revelation, a rolling back of all sorts of hidden

curtains with which I had shrouded my soul from my own gaze; all the little deceptions that I had practised on myself, the little ways in which I had hoodwinked my conscience and pretended to myself that I did not think that in certain things I had done there was any great sin. Many times I had salved the conscious pricks of my heart by distinctions and devices: now in a flash all these are laid bare.

2. Nay, so lonely shall I be that even the very judge may be none other than myself. To the Son, indeed, is given all judgement: he must apportion the praise and the blame, the rewards of the punishment. Yet in that moment, when the veils of ignorance and deceit are torn from my eyes, I must become awfully conscious of the pageant of my life. I can need no external voice to point out to me the evils of my life, for the loud cry of conscience itself will be the sole decisive voice required. . . . Deserted therefore even by one's own pride, conceit, one's fond hopes that all was well—oh, the biting, piercing loneliness of that utter desolation!

3. Yet even so, there is consolation for us. There will be One who will be to us, then, a comfort, a refuge, a hope. The very figure of the Judge will be itself the sole sight that will give us any gleam of brightness in so horrid a scene. The five great wounds—will not their light illuminate even the dark corners of the stricken soul and give it hope in the weary waste of its bitter isolation? Through him will all our good actions take on an infinite value. The comfort that he himself has given in his own wonderful description of that day is found in the gracious text: 'Inasmuch as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it to me.' . . . Thus through the terrors and horrors of the awful judgement there will always be the light lit by friendship; the unswerving love that we have shown to him who is ever faithful will not be forgotten: there can be no loneliness so long as he is there.

SECTION VI. HISTORICAL AND LITERARY MISCELLANY

I. THE TENTS OF TAMERLANE

The story is told of the cruel emperor Tamerlane that, whenever he surrounded a city, it was his custom to put up three tents of different colours on different days. On the first day the tent would be a white one, on the second its colour would be red, on the third day black. By this he gave the inhabitants to understand that, if they chose to surrender the city to him on the first day, they would all find him merciful to them. Should they wait until the second day then he would put to death the principal dignitaries of the city

while sparing the rest. But the third tent had the colour of mourning to signify to them that, if they had not surrendered by that time, they would find the gates of mercy entirely closed to them, and that all, great or small, rich and poor, men, women and children, together with the entire city, would perish.

Jesus Christ, emperor of the heavens, at the time of his first coming on earth, set up a white tent, as a sign of peace and mercy. Peace on earth to men of good will, was his message.

The second day was the Passion, when he erects the red tent, because although there is mercy for the guilty, still it has been purchased by blood—the blood of our Head, on whom bloody justice was done so that the people might go free.

But on the day of judgement he will come as the Judge and, *nubes et caligo in circuitu eius* (Ps. 96. 2), in a black cloud, like a black tent, as a sign that there is now no pardon for those who are his enemies, but only strict justice, cruel war, and the fire of destruction. Then justice and judgement will be the foundations of his tribunal. (Adapted from Fray Alonso de Cabrera, serm. 2, on the 1st Sunday of Advent.)

II. ST PHILIP NERI AND THE YOUNG MAN

In the life of St Philip there are many stories of his power and genius as a confessor. On one occasion a young man asked him to hear his confession, and when the absolution had been given Philip began to question the youth about his life and his future.

'What are you going to do with your life?' asked Philip.

'At the moment I am studying law,' replied the young man.

'And then?' said Philip.

'Oh, then I shall go into my father's business and work with him for a while until I establish my own.'

'And then?'

'Well, I presume that I shall get married and have a family.'

'And then?'

'I suppose that, like all men, I shall live to care for my family, grow old in their service and then die.'

At this point Philip turned and looked at him closely before he continued: 'And then?' . . .

The young man went away and, it is reported, became a Carthusian monk.

SECTION VII. SERMON SCHEMES

I. LITURGICAL

A: The beginning of the liturgical year: Put on Christ

1. *The ideal of the Christian life: our likeness to Christ:*

The spiritual life has as its one aim to produce in us the image of Christ. It is not a mere question of possession of sanctifying grace and its conservation in us until death, but a thinking like Christ, acting like him and making our own his sentiments and his virtues (Phil. 2. 5).

(a) *The final end of the present economy of grace is our likeness to Christ:*

God has predestined us to be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom. 8. 29).

(b) *This assimilation unites us to the Trinity:*

By it we are members of God's family, we enter into intimate social relations with the Father and the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2. 18).

2. *The liturgy—an authentic method instituted by Christ to make souls like unto him:*(a) *An annual programme of intellectual renovation:*

If the faithful will only consent to follow Christ step by step through the liturgical year, their progress will be certain. This programme can be summed up thus: to make the Christian participate in the sentiments of Christ in his various mysteries and so to make him live the life of God.

(b) *Moral renovation:*

- i. each feast proposes to us the virtues we should imitate here and now;
- ii. to attain this, to each feast there are special graces attached.

3. This programme is attained through the different feasts, the centre of which is the Holy Mass and the frequenting of the Sacraments.

B: The Christian during Advent

1. *Preparation for Christmas:*

Christ was born of our Lady in Bethlehem, and the Jews prepared for his coming in the old Law through the directions given them by the prophets. On Christmas Day the Church commemorates this coming of Christ. But it is not a mere memory—there is a reality behind it. The graces of that first coming will, in some way, be granted to the modern world and to each of the faithful. Not all

will receive those graces, but only those who have prepared themselves for them, just as not all received Christ in Bethlehem.

2. *Three figures: Isaias, the Baptist, and Mary:*

In these three we can see the ideal preparation for the coming of Christ.

These three persons knew how to wait for the Messiah in whom they firmly believed, and therefore they appear repeatedly in the liturgy of Advent.

(a) *Isaias: Prayer:*

He is the prophet who had the clearest vision of the Messiah, for which reason he has been called the Evangelist of the Old Testament. He saw that the promised Liberator would come, therefore in the name of Israel and in that of the whole human race he sighed and longed for his coming (Isaias 45. 8). The Church also sighs for his coming and uses the very prayers of Isaias to express her desire.

We, too, must pray—and that is the first condition for a true, perfect preparation—that God may send upon us his Christ, his Messiah and our Redeemer.

(b) *The Baptist: Austerity of life:*

The mission of the Baptist was to prepare the way for the coming of Christ; therefore he does it by preaching a baptism of penance for the remission of sins, because the kingdom of heaven is at hand. His very figure, in the desert, in camel's hair garments and living on rough food, is a reminder that we should do penance.

The Church reminds us of this by her penitential liturgy during this season and she also preaches to us austerity of life. In the olden days these were weeks of fasting, which has now been suppressed; but the spirit of austerity still remains. We should live by it.

(c) *Mary: Grace and the virtues:*

The Church could not leave out the one who was most closely concerned with the coming of Christ on earth. She will help us to prepare for that coming in the liturgical season. Her Immaculate Conception was the very beginning of the Redemption itself and the guarantee of the coming of the Messiah. This feast reminds us that Christmas is at hand and preaches to us the characteristic of the feast itself: hatred of sin, flight from temptation, occasions of sin; sanctifying grace, the virtues and purity of life.

3. The final coming of Christ is yet another reason why we should be careful to prepare for this coming at Christmas. The Church puts before us yet another reason why we should prepare for this coming at Christmas—as we receive him now, so he will receive us at his last coming. This is the relation between the Gospel of today and the whole spirit of Advent. At his second coming not all

will lift up their heads or rejoice in it, but only those who knew how to receive him when he came in humility, poverty and patience. Those knew how to make the most of his first coming.

II. THE EPISTLE

A: The hour to awaken from sleep

1. *Sleep—dream state:*

Cf. Exegetic and Moral notes.

(a) Something which, when the light appears, has no reality (John Chrysostom);

(b) the light by which to judge our actions is that of the judgement;

(c) in the judgement it will be plain that everything which has no relation to God is but a dream;

i. *because it is evil*—hence the condemnation of the wicked (Matt. 25. 41);

ii. *as being useless, unworthy of reward*. Affairs which occupy us to such an extent that we have no time for spiritual things.

2. *Awake—but how?*

(a) By a renunciation of all that is prejudicial to our salvation and unreal. *Abnegantes . . .* (Tit. 2. 12);

(b) and acting on reality only: *Sobrie et juste vivamus . . .* (Tit. *ibid.*). Not as foolish men, but as wise ones who know how to make use of our time (Eph. 5. 15-16).

3. *Conclusion:*

Thus, when the day of light comes, we shall merit the reward: Come, ye blessed . . . (Matt. 25. 34).

B: Putting off the works of darkness

1. *The works of darkness in Scripture:*

Cf. Exegetic and Moral notes.

(a) *punishment for sin:*

i. *in the temporal order*. Cf. Isaias 59. 8-12.

ii. *in the eternal order*, the 'exterior darkness' of Matt. 8. 12; 22. 13.

(b) *Error and sin . . .*

Works of sin are error and darkness (Ecclus. 11. 16).

2. These works of darkness can be summed up in a refusal to accept Christ, who is the Light shining in the darkness, which could not understand the light (John 1. 5).

3. He who hates his brother also walks in darkness and does not follow Christ (1 John 2. 8-11).

C: The armour of light

1. *Arms of light, works of light, the life of the light:*

Cf. Exegetic and Moral notes. Thus is the work and the life in God. To this sense we can apply the idea of St Augustine, that when God made the light he also made the angels, some of whom fell, and thus gave rise to darkness. The light is God's work, darkness that of the fallen angels.

2. *Light and truth are the same thing:*

The devil, according to Christ, is a being who did not know how to remain in the truth, who is the father of lies, just as he is of darkness.

3. *Let us walk in the light, practising truth by the way of light:*

(a) There is one path laid down by God which is common to all mankind—that of the commandments:

He who keeps the commandments walks in the light, walks towards God who is a light in whom there is no darkness (1 John 1. 5).

(b) *Those who have lost their way:*

Humanity, apart from God, walks in darkness. Man is lost, falls and dies. The same is true of nations.

4. *Let us come to the light:*

St John writes: Anyone who acts shamefully hates the light, will not come into the light, for fear that his doings will be found out. Whereas the man whose life is true comes to the light, so that his deeds may be seen for what they are, deeds done in God (John 3. 20-21).

Lead us to the light, Lord that we may walk in thy truth. May we ever be clothed in the light and walk the way of truth, seeking the light of men, full of grace and truth, Christ in the flesh. May we never be part of the darkness, through our evil deeds, nor merit only to live in eternal darkness.

III. THE GOSPEL

A: The value of time

At the very beginning of the liturgical year and in the presence of the judgement at which all the moments of our lives will be passed in review, we have to exhort the faithful to make the best use of their time on earth. Therefore the Church:

(a) makes us read that passage from the Epistle of Paul (Rom. 13. 11-12);

(b) presents to us in the Gospel the final judgement which will come as a surprise.

(c) From both we should learn the lesson of the value of time and the rapidity with which it slips through our fingers.

1. *Do men know, as a rule, the value of time?*

(a) We are not speaking of the habitual sinner; for him St Paul reserves one of his most severe admonitions: Thou, by the stubborn impenitence of thy heart, dost continue to store up for thyself retribution against the day of retribution, when God will reveal the justice of his judgements (Rom. 2. 5).

(b) We are speaking of those who, without falling into grave sin, at least not all the time, live in a sterile routine, without thinking about anything else.

i. *Life slips through the fingers of most of us without our realizing it.*

It can be said that today does not worry us very much, because it will be followed by tomorrow—and so we lose both of them.

ii. *This is not altogether due to the monotony of what we have to do,* because a monotonous life can still be one which is full of meaning and useful activity. The learned man in his studies, the professor in his patient investigations are men of fertile lives. So is the ascetic, even after a life-time of the same thing day after day.

iii. *The uselessness of life and its sterility* come from a lack of appreciation of the value of time and its purpose. To be born, to live, to feed oneself and reproduce oneself—that is the synthesis of the instinctive life of the animal. Intellectual life, on the other hand, is distinguished from this animal life in so far as it can judge all things in relation to their purpose. In that life man should set a great value on time.

2. *The judgement of God gives us an idea of the value of time:*

(a) Time is something which flows—and has an end:

i. *if there is anything which seems permanent and settled it is the heavens and the earth.* In today's Gospel we see that they will have an end. Will my life, such a passing thing as it is, not have an end too?

ii. *on all sides I am surrounded by the signs of the end which is in sight for me.* Where, now, is my childhood; where is youth? The end will come as a surprise, because men will see the signs of the end of the world and will not understand them. In the same way, I see in others the signs that their lives are reaching their end, but I do not see those signs in my own life.

(b) Time has the value of eternity; because eternity is purchased by it:

When the Judge asks us to present our account, the only thing we can offer him is the time we have lived. Full, or will it rather be

empty? Time is golden. No; better to say that time is heaven, if we wish it to be so.

3. *Therefore, realizing the value and the passing nature of time:*

(a) we should not waste it in vain dreams, but should realize that the bad use of it may imply a violent awakening from our lethargy;

(b) we should contribute something every day to the edifice of our spiritual lives, to the work of our own perfection;

(c) since, after the scrutiny of the last judgement, the only things which remain of value will be our good deeds, let us fill our lives with them.

B: Christian optimism

1. *All things pass:*

Illusions are never realized; the reality is sad. For all of us there comes a moment in life when we have to say: Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity. Or as Sigismund said: In life, all is but a dream, although we do not realize it. In the words of St Teresa of Avila: Let nothing disturb thee, nothing frighten thee, for all things pass. Only God remains.

2. *What solution can we give to this pressing problem?*

That of some modern philosophers, who see in man such an unhappy being that his only remedy is suicide?

3. *But God never wished for an evil world or one which was overcome by sadness:*

He looked upon all his works and they were good (Gen. 1. 4, etc.). We have to look towards that which is eternal in us.

4. *The last judgement shows us what is of value here below:*

That which has some relation to eternity. God only remains.

5. *Therefore the Christian solution is to put on Christ:*

(a) To live the life of Christ on earth; real deeds are the deeds of the light.

(b) Living in and with Christ, our works have the value of divine grace—the life of God in us.

(c) When all that is earthly has passed away, those who have put on Christ will live eternally with Christ.

C: The judgement of the good: motive for encouragement

1. *Our conscience, as sinners, usually presents the judgement to us as something terrible:*

This is a salutary thought; but the Church also wishes to encourage us, by showing to us the reward which the Lord will give us, in the phrase 'lift up your heads'.

2. *The soul's reward:*

(a) Not to be compared with the work which merited it:
Few people will have suffered as did St Paul, to whom life became almost intolerable. Yet he can say that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with glory (2 Cor. 11. 26; Rom. 8. 18).

(b) Without compare in duration.

3. *The reward of the body:*

(a) The soul loves the body as its companion during life;

(b) it has subjected the body to discipline;

(c) from which it follows that the soul rejoices when it is once more re-united with its brother, the body, and the latter receives the reward, because it sees itself immortal and free from its former weaknesses. Having served the soul—and Christ—it now sees itself spiritualized and like Christ himself (1 Cor. 15. 43-45; Phil. 3. 21).

4. *Made public:*

The very presence of the wicked:

(a) allows us to see clearly the evil we have avoided;

(b) makes us appear wise in the eyes of those who have taken us for fools;

(c) shows us as victors over the devil and the world itself.

5. *Given a share in the triumph of Christ:*

(a) on the day of the triumph of Christ and his mystical body;

(b) in a final ceremony prepared by the Father in which:

i. *Christ conquers death*, and once the dead have risen again says, O Death, where is thy victory?

ii. *Christ is crowned as the centre of all creation*; his enemies beneath his footstool, his friends together with him on his throne (Eph. 2. 6).

iii. Christ presents himself to the Father, together with all the just, having finished his work, to reign now with us for all eternity.

6. *Conclusion:*

When the mother of the Machabees wished to encourage the youngest of her sons to meet his death she said to him: Look around at the heaven and the earth . . . (2 Mach. 7. 28). When the struggle on this earth tends to overcome us, let us too look up at the heavens. Lift up your heads!

D: The judgement of the sinner

The terrible signs of the coming in judgement; the heavenly bodies, the fear of the people, the sound of the trumpets, the coming of Christ in the rôle of judge.

1. *The judge: Christ, God made man:*

(a) infinitely wise and just;

(b) prepared to break that silence which he had observed for so many centuries;

(c) angry at love despised, commandments broken, sovereignty rejected.

2. *The accusers:*

(a) God, who reads us through and through; and who has been so good to us, while we have rejected him;

(b) the devil, our enemy;

(c) our own conscience and our faith.

3. *The judgement:*

(a) **procedure; public and solemn:**

The condemned, overcome with shame, will pray the mountains and the seas to cover them.

(b) **material for judgement:**

i. *actions and omissions*—thoughts, pleasures, avarice, lust, neglect of the poor and the weak, no works of mercy, etc.;

ii. *everything connected with God*, yourself and your neighbour.

(c) **The sentence:**

i. *characteristics*: no appeal, definitive, condemned to an eternity of pain in exchange for a moment's pleasure or the lack of some slight effort.

ii. *its effects*: despair of the damned when they see that others have saved their souls so easily, at the price of a cup of cold water. Dante's inscription: Abandon hope, all ye who enter here.

(d) **the hour:**

When you least expect it; your own judgement may happen at any moment.

4. *Conclusion:*

Now is the time to awaken from sleep: before it is too late; before that day comes upon us. The rich man asked to be allowed to preach the truth of hell to his brethren; he was told that they already had the prophets. We have the Church who preaches this doctrine to us today.

E: The three motives for divine justice

1. *Within a few days we shall stand in the porch of the stable at Bethlehem:*

So that we may not be deceived by the humility of that Child, let us see him in that terrible day when he condemns the wicked.

2. *Christ condemns them:*

(a) because they have despised his power and neglected his commandments;

(b) because they have rejected his love, which gave him up for us and which is now changed into justice and anger;

(c) because they have rebelled against his sovereignty, exchanged his sweet and gentle reign for that of Satan.

3. *At Christmas time we shall go to Bethlehem:*

And during the whole of our lives we shall go to Christ, hidden in the Eucharist.

(a) We will recognize his power by the observance of his law:

by the commandments which refer to God and those which touch our neighbour.

In the hidden God of today we shall see the legislator of Mt Sinai and the Judge of the world.

(b) We will recognize and admit his love, being grateful for it and responding to it:

We shall not have to observe the stern law, but the gentle promptings of love. Love will go beyond mere precepts, and by seeking the will of Jesus we shall observe also the evangelical counsels. We shall do his will: Love one another!

(c) We will admit his sovereignty:

He will be to us the king of peace, justice and love, to whom we dedicate, not merely the main room of our house, but the whole edifice, all our being and all our life.

4. And tomorrow before the crib, just as today in the Eucharist and also on the day of judgement, we shall repeat: *Regem cui omnia vivunt...*

F: The day of judgement—a day of glory

Glory to God

1. *All that happens in this world is ordered by God to his glory:* Although now this plan is wrapped in shadows and we cannot understand it.

2. *But on the day of judgement that order will shine forth because:*

(a) the hidden secrets of God's providence will be made manifest:

- i. why he permitted certain things and not others;
- ii. why evil appeared to triumph in this life;
- iii. who accepted his plan and who did not.

(b) the universal order of justice will be established:

- i. the wicked punished eternally;
- ii. the good rewarded and around Christ in glory.

(c) Christ will present himself to the Father to pay him due homage:

after making his enemies his footstool and bringing to full triumph his mystical body (Marmion).

Glory of Christ

1. In life he was unknown, calumniated, condemned to death.

2. Through the ages he was denied and persecuted in his Church.

3. In the day of judgement he will bring all things to himself, judging all.

Glory of the just

1. In life, misunderstood and persecuted like their master.

2. In the day of judgement, triumph with him.

G: The silence of Christ

1. *Now Christ remains silent, in spite of our sins:*

(a) Sin does not always receive immediate punishment. Many wicked men live apparently happy lives.

(b) Since they do not see this immediate punishment, men begin to sin; later sin becomes a habit, and the habit breeds hardness of heart.

(c) Others apply to God their own standards, thinking that he does not bother about the sins of men.

(d) Even though he sees and hates all sin, Christ remains silent for the time being, because he does not wish to condemn, but to save.

2. *But he will speak out at the day of judgement (Ps. 49. 3):*

(a) Did you think that I loved evil as you do? Behold, here are all your evils written down (St Augustine). He did not cease to see you at every moment (Bossuet).

(b) Until now you did not wish to open your conscience? Now I will place it before you (St Augustine).

3. *Conclusion:*

Did you not know that the goodness of God draws you to repent? (Rom. 2. 4). Do penance now, because afterwards it will be useless.

H: Almsdeeds and the judgement

1. *Are the goods of this world good or evil?*

The formula of the judgement solves this question by telling us that they are good.

- (a) Because they help us to gain heaven:
- i. if we are sinners, by a sincere petition for grace and accompanying that petition with our alms;
 - ii. if we are in a state of grace, we can obtain our final perseverance by means of alms.

(b) Because Christ has shown himself to us in the persons of the poor:

And what we give to them we really give to him. If you give to the poor that which it hurts you to give—your money, then he will give to you what cost him most, his grace (John of Avila).

2. *After so much labour, must we abandon altogether our earthly possessions?*

The judgement also solves this problem.

(a) If during life we bank our money in the heavenly coffers by means of alms, we shall find them there at the hour of judgement.

(b) Like St Peter, who was received by the poor and shown the results of the charity of Tabitha and for that reason raised her from the dead (Acts 9. 36-41); so Christ at the day of judgement, on seeing the poor who were helped by our alms, will take us by the hand and lead us to his Father.

I: The sentence

1. *The Lord forms it thus:*

Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire because:

- (a) I was hungry and you did not feed me;
- (b) thirsty and you did not give me to drink;
- (c) a pilgrim and you did not take me into your homes;
- (d) naked, and you did not clothe me;
- (e) sick and in prison and you did not visit me.

2. *The five points mentioned are sins of omission:*

There are many who will be very surprised at the day of judgement:

(a) Because they had not realized that Christ shows himself to us in the persons of the poor and the sick; those who are in prison or wanderers.

(b) Because they did not realize the extent of the first commandment and had sinned against it so many times, not by positive acts against it, but by sins of omission.

(c) They will realize that their ignorance was culpable. So many times, in parables, in example and by command Jesus told us this truth, that the whole law is included in this precept of charity—love of God and the neighbour.

- i. the parable of the good Samaritan;
- ii. that of the talents;

iii. the condemnation of the merciless servant who was pardoned by his master, but who did not know how to pardon his fellow servant (Matt. 18. 32-33).

3. Mercy is the very soul of the Gospel. God himself calls himself the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation. A religion which is made up of purely external acts of piety, ostentatious at times, is nothing but a religion of Pharisees; it is also hateful to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Let us practise mercy if we do not wish to be condemned.

J: The three comings of Christ

1. *The first coming:*

(a) He redeems us and opens out the way of salvation to us.

(b) He gives us motives:

- i. of love;
- ii. of gratitude;
- iii. of imitation through his example.

2. *The third coming:*

He also gives us motives for courage and joy:

- (a) fear of the judgement;
- (b) hope and the desire for our reward.

3. *The second coming:*

(a) An anticipation of the third, which makes us temples of the Holy Trinity:

(b) Because of it we should:

- i. eliminate anything which may impede the presence of God in the soul;
- ii. put on Christ, so as to become more like him.

J: Jesus Christ, yesterday, and today, and the same for ever

1. *Christ, the only light:*

Outside Christ all is darkness; the heavens fall, the stars go out, the sun is extinguished; but the light of Christ remains—the only light.

2. *Jesus is the only life:*

(a) Outside Christ there is nothing but death:

- i. the material universe dies;
- ii. the spiritual and moral world too;
- iii. empires, dynasties, civilization as we know it . . . the whole of history passes away. All will end definitely at the last day; even the powers of heaven will move and fall.

(b) Christ will appear before all in power and majesty—the only life.

3. *Jesus is the only truth: i.e. the light of the intellectual world:*

(a) Then there will be an end to so many conflicting theories, so many schools of thought, so many systems.

(b) And there will be an end to wars, passions, revolutions.

(c) Vanity and lies will pass away.

(d) All that there may be in life of truth, all the eternal and divine, will be concentrated in Christ.

4. *The reality of the divine in life:*

This will not merely come into being on that day; it already is and always was. . . .

(a) Now there is no other truth, no other reality but Christ, for the man who contemplates life with the eyes of the Gospel.

(b) Outside life as illuminated by Christ and his precepts and love there is nothing but vanity and lies.

(c) Christ, yesterday, today, and for ever the same.

5. *May Christ, then, be our life:*

(a) In affection and in truth, following the precept of the Apostle:

Your life is hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3. 3).

(b) What does this mean, to hide oneself in Christ? Paul himself tells us:

i. to seek the things which are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father;

ii. to think of the things that are above, not on those of this earth;

iii. to clothe oneself in the virtues of Christ (Col. 3. 1-2, 12).

6. *Our final triumph in Christ:*

(a) Christ is your life, and when he is made manifest, you too will be made manifest in glory with him (Col. 3. 4).

(b) Already it is high time for us to awake out of our sleep (Rom. 13. 11).

(c) Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light (Eph. 5. 14).

7. *Exhortation:*

(a) Let us put on Christ from this day until the last; may he illuminate us, so that we may find ourselves at the last day enveloped in the majesty of his splendour. Now let us be light in grace, that later we may shine with the light of glory. . . . Put on the armour of light.

(b) Baptized in Christ, dead and buried with Christ, risen together with Christ.

(c) Putting all our hope in Christ and in heaven, where he reigns in glory, so that on the day when so many shall be flattened under the mighty power of their Judge, we shall shine with his glory, even in our bodies.

(d) Let us share perfectly in the life of Christ, with joy, because for all eternity our lot will be that of co-heirs with him in his kingdom.

IV. SOCIAL APPLICATIONS

From the social point of view also we must rise from sleep

1. *Present fears because of the situation of the world:*

In the midst of this general terror there is still heard the voice of hope: Lift up your heads, for the day of your salvation is at hand. This phenomenon is not a new one:

(a) It happened to the faithful of Thessalonica, fearful that the end of the world was at hand;

(b) it happened at the end of the first Christian millennium;

(c) in general, in other periods of social upheaval and unrest.

2. *The motives for this fear:*

Is it war? This is an element of the punishment God inflicts for so many disorders, but the problem is a deeper one than that, for wars end—and the problem still persists.

(a) The Popes have seen it and warned the world of it:

Leo XIII saw it clearly, and in prophetic vision gave his warning—all was due to abandonment of God, the base of all true society life.

(b) In our day the Second World War came, for the same basic reason:

It was again a war to end wars—but the results were feeble in the extreme. In fact, we might say that the world is worse now than it was before. God has been torn from his place in the social life of nations; millions are active in anti-God campaigns; more millions are indifferent to him. The basic social injustice remains.

(c) Pope John XXIII has put it in a nutshell:

A provident God grants sufficient means to the human race to find a dignified solution to the problems attendant upon the transmission of human life. But these problems can become difficult of solution, if not insoluble, if man, led astray in mind and perverted in will, turns to such means as are opposed to right reason and seeks ends that are contrary to his social nature and the intentions of divine Providence (*Mater et Magistra*).

(d) In the same encyclical is one phrase as true today as at the beginning of time:

Let men make all the technical and economic progress they can, there will be no peace nor justice in the world until they return to a

sense of their dignity as creatures and sons of God, who is the first and final cause of all created being. Separated from God a man is but a monster, in himself and towards others; for the right ordering of human society presupposes the right ordering of man's conscience with God, who is himself the source of all justice, truth and love.

3. *The Church and Catholics face to face with this crisis:*

(a) The Church has no fear for herself, she is protected by the hand of her Founder. She has no fear for her own, God will care for them in his own way. But she—and all Catholics—have their obligations. The Church does her best by her teaching. We have only to think of that great Encyclical *Mater et Magistra* to see how well she undertakes that task.

(b) But all will be in vain unless we, her children, study her doctrine and do our best to put it into effect.

(c) We cannot remain inactive—that would be sinful; nor merely flee from the danger or ignore the problems, because that would be the act of a coward.

i. *We must study the doctrine of the Church in social matters*—there is still great ignorance among Catholics in this regard; many of them do not even know that the Church has a doctrine which can solve many social problems; still more do not know what that teaching is;

ii. *we must act when we can*, working for the extension of the Church's teaching as applied to practical cases;

iii. *be filled with the spirit of abnegation and self-sacrifice* in this matter.

(d) The solution lies in the fact that Christ is the founder of human society, in truth and justice—and always in charity. At the same time, we must realize that justice comes before charity in this matter.

Second Sunday of Advent

THE MISSION OF THE BAPTIST

SECTION I. SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Epistle: Romans 15. 4-13

Gospel: Matthew 11. 2-10
Cf. Luke 7. 18-27

Texts concerning almsgiving

1. *It is obligatory:*

It may be that one of thy brethren, thy fellow-citizen in the land that the Lord thy God means to give thee, will fall on evil days. Do not steel thy heart and shut thy purse against him; be generous to his poverty, and lend him what thou seest he stands in need of. . . . For indeed there will be no lack of poor men in the land that is to be thy home; I must needs warn thee, then, to be open-handed towards thy brother, thy fellow-countryman, when he is poor and in want. Deut. 15. 7-11. Cf. Ex. 22. 22-27.

2. *It cleanses us from sin:*

Use thy wealth in giving of alms; never turn thy back on any man who is in need, and the Lord, in thy own need, will have eyes for thee. Shew to others what kindness thy means allow, giving much, if much is thine, if thou hast little, cheerfully sharing that little. To do this is but to lay up a store against the day of distress; alms-deeds were ever a sovereign way of escape from guilt and death, a bar against the soul's passage into darkness; none has less to fear when he stands before the most high God than he who does them. . . . Share thy bread with the hungry and the poor; in thy garments let the naked go clad. Tob. 4. 7-12 and 17.

Prayer, fasting and alms, said he, here is better treasure to lay up than any store of gold. Almsgiving is death's avoiding, is guilt's atoning, is the winning of mercy and of life eternal. . . . Tob. 12. 8-9. Cf. 14. 11.

3. *Exhortation to give alms:*

Alms if thou givest, thou hast the sign-manual of his favour; treasured as the apple of his eye is the record of man's deserving. Eccles. 17. 18.

The good deed treasured in poor men's hearts shall ransom thee from all harm, shall more avail than stout shield or lance to ward

off thy enemies. *Ibid.* 29. 15-16. Cf. *ibid.* 3. 33; 7. 36; 12. 3. Ps. 81. 4. Dan. 4. 24.

4. *We should not be proud of our almsdeeds:*

Thus, when thou givest alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in synagogues and in streets, to win the esteem of men. Believe me, they have their reward already. But when thou givest alms, thou shalt not so much as let thy left hand know what thy right hand is doing, so secret is thy almsgiving to be; and then thy Father, who seeth in secret what is done, will reward thee. Matt. 6. 2-4.

5. *They will have their reward:*

And if a man gives so much as a draught of cold water to one of the least of these here, because he is a disciple of mine, I promise you, he shall not miss his reward. Matt. 10. 42.

If thou hast a mind to be perfect, go home and sell all that belongs to thee; give it to the poor, and so the treasure thou hast shall be in heaven; then come back and follow me. Matt. 19. 21. Cf. Mark 10. 21; Luke 18. 22.

No, it is your enemies you must love, and do them good, and lend to them, without any hope of return; then your reward will be a rich one, and you will be true sons of the most High, generous like him towards the thankless and the unjust. Luke 6. 35.

6. *Efficaciousness of almsdeeds:*

Nay, you should give alms out of the store you have, and at once all that is yours becomes clean. Luke 11. 41.

There was at Caesarea a centurion named Cornelius . . . a pious man who worshipped the true God, like all his household, gave alms freely to the people, and prayed to God continually. He, about the ninth hour of the day, had a vision, in which he clearly saw an angel of God come in and address him by name. . . . Thy prayers and almsdeeds are recorded on high in God's sight. Acts 10. 1-4.

Always I have tried to shew you that it is our duty so to work, and be the support of the weak, remembering the words spoken by the Lord Jesus himself, It is more blessed to give than to receive. Acts 20. 35.

7. *Alms and charity:*

Meanwhile you must remember to do good to others and give alms; God takes pleasure in such sacrifice as this. Heb. 13. 16.

And now suppose that a man has the worldly goods he needs, and sees his brother go in want; if he steels his heart against his brother, how can we say that the love of God dwells in him? 1 John 3. 17. Cf. James 2. 15-16.

SECTION II. GENERAL COMMENTS

I. LITURGICAL

The spirit of this Sunday, like all the others in Advent, is that of sustained expectation of the coming Messiah. He is presented to us thus in both Epistle and Gospel. Likewise from this Sunday onwards there are two great figures held up to us, the Baptist and Isaias, both because they were to prepare the way of the Lord for his first coming. The Stational Church is that of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem, because we must never forget that the Cross is the end of the Incarnation. The spirit of the liturgy is summed up in the prayer of the Mass: Move our hearts, O Lord, that we may prepare for the coming of thy only-begotten Son.

II. EXEGETIC AND MORAL NOTES

A: The Epistle: Romans 15. 4-13

1. *General meaning: unity in the charity of Christ:*

A part of St Paul's epistle has been chosen which completes the Gospel. In the latter we see Christ as the Messiah, his mission confirmed by prophecy and miracles. In the Epistle this Messiah is shown to us as the universal hope and union of nations. For a complete understanding of this epistle it is as well to read the three verses which go before the passage chosen for today.

2. *Argument:*

At the end of the Epistle to the Romans St Paul finds himself up against a problem which to us seems of little importance today. The Jewish converts to Christianity were shocked at the fact that the Gentile converts ate pork. In his solution of this problem Paul calls on general principles which will be of use later to solve other, and greater, problems—especially he relies on the idea of the charity of Christ.

He goes on, in fact, to solve yet another, and a greater, problem, that of the division between Jew and Gentile. It hurt him always to be writing about this. The charity of Christ should wipe out all such differences. We all form part of the one tree which sprang from the root of Jesse. Christ unites all peoples and all men.

3. *The charity of Christ: Rom. 15. 1-7:*

Have compassion and bear with the neighbour and his weaknesses. There are two motives for this:

(a) *the example of the Lord:*

Christ, after all, would not have everything his own way (v. 3). Instead he suffered for us, in our name, when we were the guilty ones.

(b) Christ embraced us all:

You must befriend one another, as Christ has befriended you, for God's honour (v. 7). These are the real fruits of charity, that we should befriend one another, not for human motives, but for God's sake. Charity is a unanimous will of all in Christ, a feeling together with Christ; in which all our actions have one motive and one end, the honour and glory of Christ, through us.

4. Universality in Christ:

Jews and Gentiles (v. 8 ff.). The centre of Pauline ideas and part of what he calls the mystery of Christ is this unity of the whole human race in Christ, our integration in Christ.

It is true that the Jewish converts owed their conversion to the promises made to Abraham and which God intended to fulfil; while the Gentiles were called through his mercy. But at the same time, once called, all form one sole body with Christ, all form part of the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3. 16). He develops this idea to the full in Ephesians 2. 11.

If only we understood to the full the meaning of that 'befriend one another'! If only nations could keep it in mind and practise this charity which stems from the fact that we are one body in Christ. The Child born to us on Christmas day is the one who has broken down the wall which prevented our salvation. Would that he might also be able to break down the wall of human hatreds as he did that of the just anger of God.

B: The Gospel: Matthew 11. 2-10**1. Historical background:****(a) Passage of great apologetic value:**

In it Jesus affirms his mission as the Messiah explicitly, with proofs.

At the beginning of his public life he did not proclaim his mission explicitly. He had to proceed with great prudence, preparing the way by his miracles, little by little leading the Jews to faith in a religious saviour. Any sudden manifestation of his claims might have led to a revolt against Rome; a thing which almost happened on the occasion of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes.

But when the second year of his public life dawned, the ground is now prepared for a more public manifestation of his designs. St John provides him with one of these occasions. He sends his envoys to Christ, and the result is one of the most vivid passages in the Gospels. It has three phases: the sending of the envoys; their reception by our Lord and his reply to them; the apologia for John the Baptist which follows.

2. The Baptist's question:

Leaving on one side the opinion of some unorthodox writers, for whom John's question was prompted by the fact that only at this moment did he begin to believe that Christ was the Messiah (an obvious error) we have other solutions to consider, solutions which seek to determine the reason for the Baptist's question.

(a) John is impatient:

He sees that Christ delays his public manifestation and wishes to announce it publicly. This opinion, held by Riciotti among others, does not seem to fit in with the humility of St John, who some time before had protested that he was not worthy even to untie our Lord's sandals.

(b) John is ignorant?

According to other writers, John did not know the exact extent of the messianic Mission of Christ, especially since the Jews expected the appearance of others together with the Messiah, such as Elias and Enoch. Hence his question—to the mind of these writers, among them Lagrange—implies: Are we to expect others after you, especially one who will be the Judge of the world, since you have appeared in such humility? Since the progress of revelation was a slow one, John did not know as much about the Messiah as we do; even the Apostles knew more than the great prophets of the old Law.

It seems that one has to twist the reply of Christ, as well as John's question, too much to fit in with this interpretation. We know that to every prophet is given sufficient knowledge of his message to enable him to deliver it fully. Are we, then, to suppose that John, the immediate fore-runner of Christ, his ambassador, one who is 'more than a prophet,' did not know this much about the Person he is to announce to the people?

(c) The traditional explanation:

So deeply rooted in tradition that it would seem unwise to depart from it without very good reason. The disciples of John were so envious of Christ that they refused to admit him as the Messiah. John sent them to Christ with this message so that they would be convinced by the authority of Jesus and the real proofs which he would offer them.

3. The mission of John:**(a) From prison:**

The Baptist was in the prison of the fortress of Macheronte, on the east side of the Dead Sea, one of the Herodian palaces, simply for speaking the truth about Herod's scandalous life. The Ruler did not wish to put John in prison, but he obviously had no option; however, even there, he continued to listen to him, until the day came when he was forced to put him to death.

Many lessons for us: not to give way to the first steps on the downward path, when it is easiest to resist—especially in the matter of lust, which blinds the intellect and weakens the will; not to be afraid to speak the truth when necessary. John is in chains, Herod lives in luxury. But which of the two is the free man?

Today, in the Stational Church, the cross is placed before us, even as a preparation for Christmas, because we may not forget it, even at a period of rejoicing. It is always there.

(b) The works of Christ:

John, in his relatively easy bondage, was allowed to receive visits from his friends. Like wildfire the news of the miracles of Christ went the rounds. They tell John. How like human beings all the world over. Ever curious and interested when confronted with the miraculous; but equally slow to take heed of the doctrine which the miracle is intended to teach us. We love to hear about the apparitions at Fatima and the miracles there, but what attempt is there to imitate the virtues of Mary, obey her commands to do penance and reform our lives? The true path is from the miracle to the doctrine and its practice. John wishes his disciples to follow that path.

(c) He sends two of them to Christ:

What more could he do for Christ, even now, in prison? Send him his disciples. Let him solve their doubts with the truth of his omnipotence. As one runner passes the torch on to another, so John acts.

In the midst of his sufferings, John remembers others; in your sufferings, act in like manner. Do not waste them. Like Paul, we too have to fill up in our bodies what is wanting to the sufferings of Christ. John is concerned with those under him and is far from envious of one who overshadows him. We must seek only Christ, and his glory and if we work for any other end our labour is in vain.

4. Our Lord's reply:

Is it thy coming that was foretold . . .? Go and tell John what your own ears and eyes have witnessed!

It is a reply implicit in form, perfect in its effects. It implies a double proof; works, and the fulfilment of the prophecies. The coming which was foretold obviously implies a Messianic title, according to Gen. 49. 10.

(a) The works:

The resurrection of the widow's son at Naim was fresh in their memories, and perhaps it is to that event he refers when he talks about the dead rising again. What you have seen . . . The Acts sum up the life of Christ simply by saying that he went around doing good! (10. 38).

There are still visible miracles; but more important are the invisible miracles of grace. Example is all-powerful; therefore the Christian should be known, not merely by his words, but also by his acts. How many remain in their error or unbelief because our acts are not in conformity with what we believe!

(b) The prophecies:

Christ refers to two famous ones of Isaias 35. 4-6; the liberation of Jerusalem and the freedom of the Gentile nations under the rule of the Messiah (cf. Isaias 61. 1-2). The key-note of his mission is this latter, the Gospel preached to the poor, not poor in the material sense only, but the Gentiles, who did not possess the riches of the Jewish revelation.

(c) The poor have the Gospel preached to them:

The meaning of the word in Isaias is 'the meek, or the down-trodden ones of the earth'—but Christ takes the normal Jewish interpretation of the word, to signify the 'poor' in general. His words imply that here is the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaias, since he preaches to the poor, rather than to those in power—the Scribes and Pharisees. He lived among the poor; his apostles were poor men; those first converts to Christianity were, in the main, poor (1 Cor. 1. 26-28; cf. James 2. 5).

The poor followed Christ; the rich and powerful crucified him.

The reason why he preached mainly to the poor, says Cornelius à Lapide, is that his teaching concerning the rejection of this world and its goods, mortification, the cross, were listened to by them and consoled them; but the rich were saddened by those same doctrines.

(d) Blessed is the man who does not lose confidence in me:

The Douai version uses the words 'not scandalized in me'. Perhaps this is the real meaning of our Lord's admonition.

But how can Christ, Son of God, made man, give scandal? But he did! The fact that he was always surrounded by publicans and sinners gave scandal to the pious Jews of his time; also the fact that he proclaimed himself to be the Son of God—which was to lead him to his death on the cross.

Envy, hypocrisy and pride are always scandalized by what is good.

Above all, his teaching gave scandal, because in order to follow him it is necessary to dominate the passions, and it is always easier to be scandalized than to practise this doctrine. Felix was scandalized when he heard St Paul (Acts 24), as also were the Athenians. Herod took scandal at Christ's silence, dressing him in garments of mockery.

5. Praise of John:

After the disciples had left him, Christ gave wonderful praise to John, for his firmness, his austerity of life, his mission and his personal qualities. Yet to be least in the kingdom of heaven is to be

greater than he (Matt. 11. 11). For to be in the kingdom is to be in the fullness of the supernatural order. A great lesson for priests and religious, to whom God has given such great dignity, but who must live up to it if they wish to be perfect.

SECTION III. THE FATHERS

I. ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

(Extracts from *Hom. 36 in Matt. PG. 57, 415 ff.*)

A: John's motives and the envy of the others

Speaking of John, he says: Did you not preach him to all men, even before these signs and wonders? Why then, when he is known to all and when his fame spreads in all directions . . . do you send to ask this concerning him? What has happened? Were all those testimonies of yours false; nothing but fables and old wives' tales? Who of sound mind would say such a thing; certainly not of John who leaped in the womb of his mother at the approach of Christ, who, then unborn, had still proclaimed him; the dweller in the desert, of angelic life. Even were he the lowest of men, he could not be uncertain about Christ after his own testimony and that of others.

Therefore it is plain that he did not send to Christ through any doubt of his own; nor did he enquire as one in ignorance of the facts. Nor can anyone say that he did know the facts but had become timid in prison. For he did not expect to be freed from prison, nor if he did was he prepared to deny the truth, for which he was more than once ready to die. Unless he had been more than ready to die he would never have shown such courage before a people who were well known for their proclivity to shed the blood of the prophets. . . .

We must then give an answer: Why did he send to ask this question? The disciples of John were moved to envy against Christ, as is seen from what they once said to their Master (John 3. 26), and again from the complaint made by one of them, together with the Jews: We and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not. They did not yet know who Christ was and, thinking him a mere man, however great, and that John was more than a mere man, they were grieved to see Jesus' fame increasing, while that of John was in eclipse. This attitude had kept them back from drawing near to the Lord. So long as John was with them, he tried to convince them of the truth regarding Christ; but now, when he expected nothing but death at the hands of Herod, he was concerned about them. He was afraid to leave them in this uncertain state; afraid that they might remain thus, apart from Christ, to whom he had tried to lead them. . . . Had he said to them: Go, follow him, for he is greater than I, they would not have obeyed through conviction. He sends them to Christ so that he may convince them.

B: Almsdeeds

(A summary of his doctrine on this point taken mainly from PG 51, 261 ff.)

Motives for almsdeeds:

(a) A source of good for poor and for rich:

A farmer, who is only sure of a mediocre harvest at the best of times, is still generous when it comes to sowing his seed; yet we who sow for eternity show ourselves to be miserly in the extreme at times, especially in this matter of almsdeeds. God, who could have given to all an abundance, allowed some to be poor, for his sake and for ours. He permits this because poverty is a better breeding ground of virtue than riches; for your sake too, because those who have sinned find in the poverty of others a magnificent way of reparation for their sins.

(b) We have only the use of our goods:

I often have difficulty in containing my laughter when I read wills! I leave to so-and-so this land, this money! But no one has the real ownership of anything in this world, and when the end of our life comes, we cannot take it with us after all. God created the necessary things, like air and water, in abundance, because had he not done so, the rich would almost certainly have cornered such goods for themselves, and so deprived the poor of them. . . .

The poor are to us as doctors, protectors and benefactors. . . . For in helping them you receive more than you give. You alleviate poverty and receive heaven in exchange; you give earthly things and receive heavenly ones. For that reason we are accustomed to see the poor at the doors of our churches, so that even the hardest of hearts may be softened at the sight of so much misery. Just as we have water to wash our hands before we lift them up to God in prayer, so our ancestors used the poor to wash away their stain of sin by almsdeeds before sending their prayers up to God. . . . Give alms, that you may pray with pure hands.

(c) Vain excuses:

But I have to feed my children, keep my house going and my wife. I have many expenses to meet. My money does not go far enough. . . . Cold and useless defence. You say that you have to support your children and for that reason you cannot give alms? All the more reason why you should give even more, so that with a little money you may win the favour of the God who gave you those children, thus leaving them a mighty advocate when you die. By spending a little now you will win great and heavenly favours for them. . . . Almsdeeds are given the name of seed, because, rather than an expense, it is capital which is productive. . . . If the earth makes good

return for that which is buried in it, the hand of God makes an even greater return for all that is put into it.

(d) **Exhortation:**

Obtain the greatest fruit possible from your earthly possessions, by giving and giving freely. Do not allow it to shame you when you serve the poor with your own hands, because Christ is not ashamed to stretch forth his hand to plead for your help, through the hands of his poor. . . .

There are some who set out to investigate the life, habits and health of the poor before they give anything in the form of alms. . . . If God had demanded that we conduct such an investigation before giving help, we would have considered it a heavy burden laid on us. Give him thanks then, because he has freed you from that obligation. Instead, he promises us abundant rewards, even though we do not investigate. Whether they are good or bad to whom we give alms, God rewards us alike.

(e) **Christ gives us all things. What return do we make to him?**

God gave you his Son, yet you will not even give bread to him who gave himself for you and died for you. The Father, for your sake, did not pardon even his own Son, but you, when you see him hungry, will not even help him with the very goods which he has given to you, even though you know that it is to your own advantage. Is there anything worse than our evil natures? He gave himself for you, died for you, suffered want for you, the goods you give he has already given to you. . . . It did not seem to him to be enough to die for you on the cross; he became poor and a wanderer for you, naked, in prison, in pain—to see if you would listen to him. . . .

He says to you: I, who could feed myself, have chosen that you should feed me instead, so that you may glory in the fact that you are benefactors of mine. My love reaches such a pitch that I wish you to feed me and to share your table with me; I glory in that and show you to the whole world as my benefactors.

II. ST AUGUSTINE

(Augustine has six sermons on the birth of the Baptist and one on the passage read in today's Gospel. His theme is the same all the way through—the superiority of Jesus over John and the lack of envy in the heart of the humble Baptist. We shall select the more important passages of his homilies.)

I. *Argument:*

First of all, it was convenient that one should give testimony to Christ who himself had a band of disciples, himself preached to the multitudes and himself baptized.

Christ baptized and so did John. The disciples of John were concerned because the people ran after our Lord and also after John, but while John sent his baptized to Christ, the latter never sent any baptized by him to John. The disciples were perplexed at this and began to dispute with the Jews, who said that Christ was the greater and that it was to his baptism they should go. The disciples defended that of John. Therefore they went to him and asked him to solve the question for them. Well might he have replied: You are right, my baptism is the greater, because I baptized Christ himself. Had he no reason to take pride in such a thing, had he desired to glory in himself? But well did he know how to humble himself and before whom. . . . He knew that his salvation was in Christ.

2. *John's motives:*

Of his fullness we have all received. This is to confess his divinity. From what fullness can men receive if it be not that of God? . . . He is the source, the stream; it is men who drink. Those who drink from the fountain may well do so because they are thirsty; but the fountain itself does not suffer thirst nor need water. Men need the fountain and with dry mouths draw near to it to slake their thirst. The fountain pours forth its water to satisfy their thirst. Such is the Lord Jesus.

3. *A man must be content to receive the gift which is given him from heaven:*

What do you say? Should we not forbid them and make them come to thee? . . . As a man that I am, what I have I receive from heaven. . . . And merely because I have received it from above, do you wish me to lose it by speaking contrary to the truth? Why have you yourselves proposed the question to me? Have you not said to me: Master, there was one with thee on the other side of Jordan, to whom thou didst then bear testimony . . .? And am I to deny now what I said then? Did you not hear me say: I am not the Christ? . . .

You are not the Christ? And what does it matter? After all, you are greater than he because you baptized him. Yes; but I am only an envoy; I am the herald, he is the Judge. I am what he made me.

4. *The bride is for the bridegroom:*

This theme is a favourite one with Augustine. Christ is the spouse of souls and of the Church. The function of the friend of the spouse is to look after the bride for him; should he act in any other way he is an adulterer and no true friend. John loves the Church and wants it for Christ. In this passage he compares the action of the Baptist with that of the Donatists, who did not love Christ or the Church, but merely used baptism for their own ends. A useful example for meditation on true priestly zeal.

5. *John's purpose:*

He must become more and more, I must become less and less (John 3. 30).

Before the coming of Christ men were so proud of themselves and self-sufficient. This Man came to diminish the glory of men and increase that of God. He came without stain of sin and found the filth of it in us. God's rôle is that of pardon, ours is to confess our sin. The humility of man is to confess his stain; that of God's greatness is in pardon. So that God may forgive let man know his own misery. Let the glory be his, mine the confession.

Let man know his rôle, confessing God and listening to the Apostle who says: What have you that you have not received? Let man decrease in himself and increase to God's glory. May the glory of God increase in us and our own decrease, because that is how the latter will increase in God's sight. Do you wish to glory in yourself? Do you wish to increase? It will be for your ill, not for your good!

6. *How God increases in us:*

The more you know about him, so much the more does he increase in you. He cannot increase in himself, because he is perfect; but just as the light seems to increase in strength as a sick eye gets better, so the interior of man's soul increases in God and it seems as if God himself increases. Man decreases in his own glory, only to increase in that of God.

Envy and its remedies

1. *Definition:*

What is envy but sadness at the sight of another's good? . . . Evil rejoices in another's evil; envy is saddened at another's good. But let no one confuse emulation with envy; because they are very near to one another and for that reason one is often confused with the other. Emulation is a sadness of soul which exists when we see someone obtain something which two or more desired and which could only be given to one. The remedy is peace, in which we desire that which unites in one all who wish for it. Envy is sadness at the sight of one whom we think unworthy and yet who has obtained some good. Its remedy is meekness, by which each one submits to the judgement of God and his designs. . . .

2. *Envy the daughter of pride:*

Those who enjoy a chaste marriage, when they look at you who have consecrated your virginity to God, give you great honour, because they consider you to be better than they are. But as much as they honour you, you in your turn should honour them. If you are holy, then be a little afraid lest you lose that holiness. How? Through pride. The holiness of virginity can be lost by impurity, but also by pride. I would almost dare to say that humble married

people are better than the virgin who is proud. Look at the devil. Do you think that God can accuse him of adultery or of fornication? . . . It was pride and envy which sent him down to hell.

When pride takes hold of a servant of God envy appears on the scene at once. Pride cannot help being envious, for envy is the daughter of pride, and such a mother is never sterile. No sooner is she born than she begins to give birth.

3. *Remedies:*(a) *Consider the greater value in others:*

So that envy may not be in you remember that not merely Agnes the virgin won the crown of martyrdom, but also Crispina, a married woman; that some virgins gave themselves to apostasy, while others who were married won their crown. . . . You should think more on what you are lacking than on what you possess. Be careful not to lose that which you have and ask God to give you that which you lack.

(b) *Since pride is the mother of envy, the remedy lies in charity:*

It is charity alone which wins the battle, without which no other virtue has any value. It is charity which envieth not. Do you know why? Because charity is not puffed up. The first of all the vices is pride, and after that, envy. Envy does not give birth to pride; the contrary is the case, because envy comes from self-love. That is why St Paul, in his praise of charity, says that it is not envious, and afterwards, that it is not puffed up.

(c) *Envy, mother of many evils:*

Of such is the kingdom of heaven, i.e. of the humble, those who are spiritually children. Let there be no disputes among you, no hatreds. . . . Pride gives birth to envy. And what envious person does not desire evil for him whose good torments him? Envy gives birth to malice, from which come deceit, flattery, gossip, and all kinds of evils which we would not wish anyone to inflict on us.

III. ST GREGORY THE GREAT

(We have selected the extracts from St Gregory's Sermon PL. 76, 1095-1099 which refer to the lay Apostolate. The complete Homily is a commentary on the passage of today's Gospel.)

But what went you out to see? a prophet? . . .

It is the prophet's office to foretell future events, but not necessarily to point them out when they happen. For this reason John was more than a prophet, because he also pointed out Christ, going before him and also showing him to his own disciples. Since he is not a reed shaken by the wind, nor a man clothed in soft garments, since the

name of prophet is inadequate to describe him, let us hear what may be affirmed of him. This is he of whom it is written: Behold I send my angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee. That which is called *angelus* in Greek is in Latin called a messenger. Fittingly then is he called an angel who is sent to announce the coming of the heavenly Judge; so that he may be in name what he fulfils in his office.

Would that we say not this to our own damnation, namely, that all who are called priests are also named angels, as the prophet testifies when he says: For the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth, because he is the angel of the lord of hosts (Mal. 2. 7).

You also, brethren, can attain to the sublimity of this name if you wish, for each one of you, in so far as he is able, can be an angel of the Lord. When, in response to the grace from heaven, he recalls his neighbour from the doing of evil or helps and encourages him in the practice of good; when he reminds him of the eternal kingdom or of the punishments given to evil-doers; whenever he speaks the word of holiness, then indeed he is an angel. And let no one say, I am not worthy or capable of warning others, nor a fit person to exhort others. Do what you can, lest your single talent be unprofitably employed and thus be required of you with punishment. . . .

And when you consider that you have made some little progress, draw others along with you; seeking to make comrades on the road to God. Should one of you stroll to the forum or the baths, he is accustomed to invite a friend whom he thinks is not busy, to keep him company. This simple act of our ordinary lives is pleasant to you, and should you be going towards God, make sure that you do not journey alone. It is written: He that heareth, let him say: Come (Apoc. 22. 17); and so let him who has heard in his heart the invitation of divine love, pass on that message to the neighbours around him, together with its invitation. . . . For it is a greater thing to give strength by the nourishment of the word which will fill the mind forever, rather than to fill with earthly food the flesh which will perish.

SECTION IV. THEOLOGIAN

I. ST THOMAS AQUINAS

(Synthesis of his teaching concerning envy, with some comments taken from Natalis Alexander.)

1. Definition:

. . . Sadness at the good of another; and it can happen in four ways. Firstly, when we deplore the good things of others because they can cause us some harm, as for instance when an unjust enemy prospers.

Such was the sadness of the Jews at the rise in the fortunes of Aman (Esth. 3). Nevertheless, St Gregory warns us that we must be very careful not to hide our own hatred under the cloak of the good of another.

The second motive for sadness arises, not because my neighbour possesses some good, but from the fact that I do not have it, thus encouraging me to work harder to attain it. This is not an evil thing at all, but is what we call emulation, which can be most useful in the spiritual order.

The third kind of sadness is that which is caused by the sight of the good things enjoyed by those who are unworthy of them. This is not a sin either, although it is unlawful to feel indignation at the thought that the grace of justification is given to those who are not worthy, because no man can merit it in any case, and salvation granted to those who are evil at the last moment should make us rejoice.

So far as material prosperity is concerned, if the wicked have these in plenty, the Christian should remember the rules of divine providence, which not merely directs everything, but which also gives to everyone his reward at the right moment.

The fourth type of sadness is true envy; when we are sad at the thought that the good of our neighbour detracts from our own glory, excellence and esteem. I would like to deprive my brother of that which is his by right. We resent that in which we should delight, says St Thomas (2-2, q. 36. a. 1. c.).

Those who love the world and its honour are the most envious of others. Also those who never undertake any great work. The former because they want everything for themselves; the latter because, not daring to do anything themselves, they think that anything is more important than what they themselves possess (*ibid. ad 3ium*).

2. Gravity of this sin:

By its very nature envy is a grave sin because it is opposed to the virtue of charity, the very life of the soul and a virtue which rejoices in another's good; also it is opposed to mercy, which is sad when another is afflicted. However, on many occasions it is a venial sin through lack of advertence or through light matter.

On many occasions teachers hide from their students knowledge which they themselves possess, so that their students may not know as much as they do. This can be a grave sin.

To envy in another the grace of God or the gifts of the Holy Spirit or the good he does for the Church of God is the greatest sin of envy, especially if it is the increase of grace which is the motive of the envy.

Daughter of pride, envy is a capital sin, because he who loves the

vanity of this world is the one who feels that others are going ahead of him. It is also the mother of other sins, such as gossip, detraction and public defamation. It gives rise to hate (a. 4).

3. Remedies:

Think of its gravity. Envy was the sin of Satan (Wisdom 2. 24); it was the beast that devoured Joseph (Gen. 37. 3 ff.); and the cause of our Lord's condemnation (Matt. 28. 18). We must remember that it is a vice proper to weak souls, women and children. Be mindful always of the one family we form with God and the Church.

II. ST ROBERT BELLARMINE

(He has three sermons on John the Baptist, of which we have made an extract.)

1. His qualities:

(a) He is not a reed shaken by the wind:

He is not a witness who can be corrupted; he is not like a reed but like a firm and healthy tree trunk. He is not swayed by the promise of being the Messiah, which meant royalty and power for him. In fact, when asked if he were the Messiah he denied that honour. What a contrast to the attitude of so many, who use any art in order to advance themselves.

He is not swayed at the thought of death, but gives his life in order to reprove the vices of Herod.

(b) He is not dressed in soft garments:

John, who came from a priestly family of moderate means, could have had many things, but he despised the world, living in isolation in the desert, deprived of even the necessities of life. He was poor in spirit, and for that reason inflexible in virtue. There are many who stray from the path of virtue through love or through fear. He loved only God and feared nothing except to offend God.

(c) An angel rather than a prophet:

The prophets received more light than the rest of men; what then will he have not received who is called more than a prophet? He was so indeed, because he prophesied in the womb of his mother, he himself being the object of prophecy in Isaias and Malachy. He made even his own family prophets of God and himself pointed out the Christ.

It may seem at first sight more important to prophesy a Messiah to come than to point out one who has already come, and it would be so, perhaps, if Christ had come in power and majesty, instead of in a guise so humble that it was difficult to recognize him. John pointed him out and also prophesied about him in the clearest of

terms, showing him as the Lamb of God, the Son of God and the Spouse of the Church. . . .

He is described as an angel to show the depth of his faith, the extraordinary purity of his life and his love of God. Like the angels, he neither eats nor drinks, is not married and possesses nothing; his only thought is the love of God and the bringing of souls to him. His life was a summary of the whole Gospel.

2. Example to men:

All those who, within the Church, have the office of preparing the way of the Lord, such as preachers, fathers of families, and even the individual, so far as the salvation of his own soul is concerned, must imitate the Baptist. Firm and incorruptible, they must teach truth and correct error. As examples we can see those who do not forgive injuries, although they preach this doctrine, so often taught in the Scriptures. . . . But, they say, my honour will suffer. Is there any greater honour than the imitation of Christ? Even wild beasts can get angry; but patience is of the perfect. But what will the world think? That is to be a reed shaken by the wind, by every idle word. What will Christ say? Which should interest you more, what he says or what the world thinks?

To act like John we must despise the world, because worldly love and fear are like coloured windows which affect everything seen through them. He who loves the world will not act justly, even though he may know what is right, because love directs all things to the beloved. The worldly man is possessed of a spirit of tyranny which makes him act contrary to justice, knowingly too. Keep in mind the example of Herod, who had John beheaded to please Salome; and that of Pilate, who condemned Jesus.

3. Remedies: Imitation of the Baptist:

(a) Be like angels, imitating John:

The angels always see God's face. Be a man of prayer. St Francis prayed always, in the midst of all his labours. That is to be an angel.

(b) work for souls:

For those of others and for your own. Think of those who, afraid of being condemned to death at the end of a trial, think of nothing else and bother about nothing else; or think of one who is crossing a dangerous bridge; of one fighting a duel, who does not worry about anything else. . . .

(c) lead a mortified life:

The angels do not sin and are pictured for us as pure young men. Avoid sin, and should you fall into it, confess at once. It is difficult not to sin; but it is easy to wipe out the sin. If you put off taking the medicine the cure will be more difficult.

SECTION V. SPIRITUAL WRITERS

I. ST THOMAS OF VILLANOVA

On the Incarnation

(A summary of two Homilies on the Incarnation; the first containing the proofs for it from miracles, prophecy and the testimony of John. The second speaks of its fruits.)

The proofs:

The Lord, foreseeing the difficulties which people would have in believing in his coming, wished to solve them beforehand. Taking advantage of this occasion he brings forth as proofs of his divinity the fulfilment of the prophecies, his miracles and the testimony of John.

John, lamenting the hardness of heart of the people, wishes before he dies to give Christ an occasion to manifest himself to the world and to his disciples. He sends them to Christ in order to leave them in the care of such a good Master; a wonderful example of how we should care for those under our charge, and seek the spiritual good and the salvation of those entrusted to us. Never say: I pay their wages; they themselves must look after their souls! On the day of judgement the Lord will demand an account of their souls as well as of your own. . . .

Moved by John's zeal, the Lord gives the best possible reply, relying on deeds, not words, so that no one can say that he gives testimony of himself.

(a) Miracles:

Only Christ can work them by his own power and never in confirmation of error.

(b) prophecies:

Since all the circumstances of his life had already been foretold, the Lord could say: Search the Scriptures . . . they give testimony of me (John 5. 39).

(c) preaching to the poor:

In an active sense it is a miracle to see such poor people, and such uncultured people by the world's standards, announcing the good news. In the passive sense, the poor, on receiving the instruction of the Gospel, are an evident sign of the messianic character of Christ. . . . The other prophets were sent to kings and princes, while the Lord comes to preach to the poor and to console them. The spirit of the Lord is upon me, wherefore he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor. I am not the Master and teacher of kings or princes, but of the needy.

He passed his life among such as these, living and growing up among them. From the moment when God became poor for our sakes poverty enjoys great esteem in heaven and on earth; since his example surrounded it with glory. He was born of a poor mother, in a poor place; he was wrapped in poor linen garments and laid in the poverty of the manger. He was announced to the poor shepherds, educated among the poor, associated with poor apostles. He made the poor free of his company and his faith (cf. 1 Cor. 1. 26-29). Let not the rich despise the poor, for they have their Advocate (cf. Ps. 11. 6; 139. 13).

(d) the testimony of John:

Once the disciples had withdrawn the Lord praises John, not merely to do him honour, but also to rely on his testimony. Indeed it could not be more valid testimony, since John, as one who was more than a prophet, had sufficient knowledge of what he was doing. His austerity of life—neither that of a weak reed nor of one living in luxury—gives credit to the truth of what he says. His testimony is not twisted by other motives, by frivolity, desire for gain or popularity.

Fruits of the Incarnation

1. Introduction:

What a great question John proposed from his prison cell; one which is disputed among Jews and Christians. Thank God, we do not need to convince ourselves, but rather learn day by day in a more perfect manner the great advantages to us of this Incarnation.

From the very beginning the world knew something of this coming. The very fact that God announced her maternity to Eve, even in the midst of pain, makes us imagine a restoration of the human race, since a merciful God would not allow humanity to propagate itself under the sign of punishment. But the exact manner of this restoration was only revealed to man little by little. Only a few knew that it would be God himself who came to restore man. What wonder filled their souls at such a secret! What joy and what longing! (Cf. Isaias 16. 1; 45. 8.) Our Lord said that blessed were the eyes which saw him, so long desired by so many kings and prophets (Luke 10. 23-24).

We know it, and now our task is to meditate on it so as to see its motives more clearly.

2. Motives for the Incarnation:**(a) the glory of men:**

There were many ways by which we could be redeemed, but none which gives us such great honour. God made man, seated at the right hand of the Father, judging, ruling, adoring and pardoning.

Forgive me, O ye angels, but our glory is greater than yours. God never joined himself to the angelic nature, but he did unite himself to that of the sons of Abraham.

Thank you, Lord! Even if Adam had not sinned it would have been an inestimable honour. *O felix culpa!* St Ambrose says: *Amplius nobis profuit culpa quam nocuit.*

(b) the destruction of sin:

God came into this world, as John testifies, to destroy the works of the devil, not merely by paying the debt for us and by tearing up the decrees of condemnation, but also by uprooting from man that terrible facility for sin. If we had any feelings at all, after considering such mercy, who would dare to sin? God dies for sin, and you delight in it?

From the very beginning God shewed his hatred of sin and the punishment for it. The most beautiful of all the angels was cast out of heaven. For his sin man was cast out of paradise. God punished the human race with the flood and with the destruction of Sodom; with the plagues of Egypt. But nothing should frighten me more, O my God, nor drive me from sin, than the sight of your only Son crucified between two thieves. The sight of the remedy demonstrates to me the gravity of the evil.

(c) to rescue man:

Man was created in God's image, but sin destroyed that image. The Son of God, the Word and image of the Father, taking our human nature, would restore that image and its lost beauty. Christ is God dressed out as a man; a man united to God. Our humanity has once more been restored to that cast which served as a model for it. Only God could do it, because only he is our mould and model, our creator and our redeemer. The restoration of man is no less a work than the creation.

(d) to draw us to his love:

If the work of our restoration had been done by an angel men would not have felt themselves attracted to God. It was necessary for that attraction that it should be the work of God.

At the beginning of the world God attempted to draw men through punishment; remember the flood and the destruction of the cities of the plain. But all in vain. Then he tried another method, that of gaining the world by his favours instead of by fear. Remember the favours given to Israel! Again he failed.

What did he do then? Seneca says: If you wish to be loved you must first love yourselves. The Lord came on to this earth to be our companion, and at the sight of his life, his passion and his mercy the world fell, overcome by love and overwhelmed by so many favours.

You have triumphed, O Lord. It was necessary to be stronger than the world, and that you have been. By the fire of your love you have melted the hardness of my heart. You have had revenge on me—a sweet revenge indeed!

Do you wish to know the principal cause, the only cause of this mystery? I will tell you in one phrase of St Paul: He loved me and gave himself for me (Gal. 2. 20). For no other cause has he saved me; for no other reason. No service of mine, no merit; simply love on his part. God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son . . . (John 3. 16).

What a wonderful force of love, which has overcome the Almighty, which has put God himself in chains! Jacob struggled all night through and with the dawn he appeared to be defeated; but he had overcome God. Man, after a battle lasting centuries, has also defeated him. And with what weapons? With those of love. He hurled himself over the very walls of heaven, storming the eternal fortresses, putting in chains the Son of God with the iron bands of flesh and carrying off immense riches. . . . Truly, love is stronger than death (Cant. 8. 6).

Thank you, O my God! In your defeat you have triumphed, overcome by love, and you have defeated my evil. You have won it all through your love. Give me the love which I need in order to overcome in my turn.

II. ST TERESA OF AVILA

Sanctity and honours

I. *The harm done by love of honours:*

Be very careful about your interior thoughts, especially if they have to do with precedence; may God, by his passion, keep us from expressing or from dwelling upon such thoughts as these: I am her senior in the Order; I am older; I have worked harder; but that other sister is being better treated than I am. If these thoughts come you must quickly check them; if you allow yourselves to dwell on them then they will spread like the plague and in religious houses they may give rise to great abuses. Remember, I know a great deal about this. . . .

Still, believe me in this; questions of honour and desires for property can arise within convents as well as outside them, and the more temptations of this kind are removed from us, the more we are to blame if we yield to them. Though persons who do so may have spent years in prayer, or rather in meditation (for perfect prayer eventually destroys these attachments), they will never make great progress or come to enjoy the full fruits of prayer. . . .

God deliver us from people who wish to serve him yet who are mindful of their own honour. Reflect how little they gain from this;

for, as I have said, the very act of desiring honour robs us of it, especially in matters of precedence; there is no poison in the world which is so fatal to perfection. You will say that these are little things which have to do with human nature and are not worth troubling about; but do not trifle with them, because in religious houses they spread like foam on water, and there is no small matter which is so dangerous as are punctiliousness about honour and sensitivity to insult. Do you know one reason, apart from others, why this is so? It may have its root, perhaps, in some trivial slight—hardly anything, in fact—and the devil will then induce someone else to consider it important, so that she will think it a real charity to tell you about it and to ask how you can be insulted so; and she will pray that God may give you patience and that you may offer it to him, for even a saint could not bear more. The devil is simply putting his deceitfulness into this other person's mouth; and, though you yourself are quite ready to bear the insult, you are tempted to vainglory because you have not resisted something else as perfectly as you should.

This human nature of ours is so wretchedly weak that, even while we are telling ourselves that there is nothing for us to make a fuss about, we imagine we are doing something virtuous, and begin to feel sorry for ourselves, particularly when we see that other people are sorry for us too. In this way the soul begins to lose the occasions of merit which it had gained; it becomes weaker; and thus a door is opened to the devil by which he can enter on some other occasion with a temptation worse than the last. . . . My sisters, never for the love of God let charity move you to show pity for another in anything to do with these fancied insults, for that is like the pity shown to holy Job by his wife and friends (*The Way of Perfection*, Chap. XII, 4-8).

2. *The error of holy souls who think to defend their honour:*

I see some people whose actions are very holy and who do such wonderful things that everyone is astonished at them. God bless me, then! Why are such souls still on earth? How is it that they have not reached the summit of perfection? What is the reason for this? What can it be that is impeding one who is doing so much for God? Why, simply his punctiliousness about his reputation! And the worst of it is that this sort of person will not realize that he is guilty of such a thing, the reason sometimes being that the devil tells him that punctiliousness is incumbent upon him.

Let such people believe me, then; for the love of the Lord let them believe this little ant, for she speaks because it is the Lord's will that she should do so. If they fail to remove this caterpillar, it may not hurt the whole tree, for some of the other virtues will remain, but they will all be worm-eaten. The tree will not be beautiful; it will neither prosper itself nor allow the trees near it to do so, for the fruit

of good example which it bears is not at all healthy and will not last for long. I repeat this; however slight may be our concern for our reputation, the result of it will be as bad as when we play a wrong note, or make a mistake in time, in playing the organ—the whole passage will become discordant. Such concern is a thing which harms the soul whenever it occurs; but in the life of prayer it is pestilential.

You are trying to attain to union with God. We want to follow the counsels of Christ, on whom were showered insults and false witness. Are we, then, really so anxious to keep intact our own reputation and credit? We cannot do so and yet attain to union, for the two ways diverge. When we exert our utmost efforts and try in various ways to forgo our rights, the Lord comes to the soul. Some will say: I never have anything to forgo, nor have I an opportunity of giving up anything. But if anyone has this determination I do not believe the Lord will ever allow him to lose so great a blessing. His Majesty will arrange so many ways in which he may gain this virtue that he will soon have more than he wants. I would urge you, then, to set to work and root out things which are of no consequence, just as I used to do when I began—at least, some of them. They are mere straws, and as I have said, I throw them on the fire. I am incapable of doing more than that, but the Lord accepts it. May he be blessed for ever (*Life*, Chap. 31).

III. BOSSUET

(A homily on the miracles of Christ and our scandal)

The three miracles of Christ in our time and our scandal

1. *The miracles:*

The world of today is very like that blind man, the lame, the leper; deaf and blind, it can no longer hear the voice of Christ. It is like the lame man, who cannot walk straight, having lost the moral law; like the leper, or one who is dead, since it cannot find anyone who will free it from sin and purify it of stain.

Christ restores hearing and sight to the world when he preaches his faith to it. He heals the lame when he gives the world the rules of morality. He cleanses the leper and raises the dead when he gives his Church the power to forgive sin. These are the three miracles by which Christ demonstrates his divinity to us.

2. *Our scandal:*

These three great qualities of Christ are those which, at the same time, give us motive for scandal. The profound nature of the truths of faith causes us to rebel against the authority of the Lord; the exactitude of his rule of life moves us to complain of its rigour; the

ease with which we are pardoned we often convert into an occasion to abuse his patience.

Miracle and scandal of truth

1. *The miracle: The triumph of the truth:*

(a) It vanquished the world without relying on human reasons or arguments, sure of its heavenly origin: it demands a hearing:

He preached immense truths to us, such as that of the Trinity and that of the Incarnation, giving as his only proof: Thus says the Lord! He can demand our belief. One day he will show us the truth unveiled; now he demands faith from us.

The Apostles conquered the world with this faith, not by any oratory of their own, but by some secret power which persuades us against all the rules of rhetoric; which captivates hearts and minds, since this power is from above and remains in spite of poverty of expression or lack of oratorical style. Just as a river, flowing across the plains, keeps that impetuosity which it had in the mountains where it was born.

(b) It overcame in spite of persecutions:

The Christian faith, in spite of the fury unleashed against it, did not ask help from anyone. She herself formed intrepid defenders who, not knowing how to do anything except confess their faith and die for it, hurried to that death with such ardour that they convinced their very persecutors. By suffering, by prayer and by their deaths, they obliged their enemies in very shame to change the laws against them.

2. *The scandal:*

(a) Those who deny the faith offered to them:

Many there are in every nation who deny the faith, refuse to accept it; like blind and deaf men, they have torn the faith from their hearts and have separated themselves from the Church. They do not see the darkness which is all about them, the weakness and ignorance in their intellects.

(b) Those who are indifferent:

There are many who neither know nor care if they believe or not. They are completely indifferent to the truth, and they will end badly unless they are careful, because soon they will care for nothing but their own pleasure and their business preoccupations.

The miracle and scandal of the Christian morality

1. *The triumph of that morality:*

The majority of unbelievers praise Christian morality; but faith and morals are inseparable. Neither in religion nor in heaven are

there two suns. He who was sent to teach us the rule of morals is also the one who preaches our faith.

(a) *The miracle of its expansion:*

The Son of God proved his divinity better by directing human life without error than he did by healing the lame. In the midst of so many passions, so many errors and evil customs, he knew how to keep the middle way, as no mere man could. Thus to reform mankind is a second creation, for which that wisdom which created man is necessary. Philosophers tried to do it, and although they were able to preserve some vestiges of the truth, it would take years to enumerate their errors.

(b) *The miracle of its perfection:*

It leads us to God, our Father, with love and also with salutary fear. It teaches us to reverence his authority, believe in his word, rely on his power, trust in his goodness, fear his justice, abandon ourselves to his love, hope for an eternal life from him.

So far as we are concerned, it teaches us that we may become victims of his justice and to avoid that it teaches us to dominate our weakness and passions.

So far as society is concerned it teaches justice, charity, pardon and mutual love. It sanctifies the family with a sacrament, that of matrimony; preaches love, obedience, education.

Behold the immortal beauty of the moral law, which forces me to believe in one who has taught me to live. Faith teaches me moral truth; and moral truth demands faith of me.

(c) *Scandal: sinners:*

Sinners, what is it that offends you? What part of the law do you wish wiped out? Who dictates your demands, reason or your passion? Do you ask for more liberty? I understand; it is that miserable liberty, which is at the same time a slavery, for which you are asking.

Do not tell me that the law is too perfect. That is the remark of cowards, or of those who are lazy. Do not say that anything is impossible with the grace of God behind you.

The miracle and scandal of pardon

The miracle: infinite mercy of God:

Tertullian says: O happy water, which washes us but once and cannot serve as plaything for the sinner! On the contrary, the bath of penance, through the very ease with which it washes clean the sinner, sometimes gives rise to that contempt which comes from familiarity.

In vain do we preach the truth to you. . . . Do not think so much that God has promised pardon. Think rather on the fact that he has

never promised time to repent. However, the fact of the repetition of this doctrine has made you deaf to its importance. Remember that your very blindness makes God your accomplice in your hardness of heart—and that is a sin against the Holy Spirit.

God himself can do no more to recall us from our sinful ways. He calls us, waits for us, holds out his arms to us. And that is what encourages you in your evil ways. But remember, once his patience is exhausted, his anger will have full rein. You could not lead more abandoned lives if you knew that the gate of pardon had been already closed to you!

Let the thought of pardon cease to be a source of scandal to you! May it be a remedy, not a lethal poison. May hope be the support of the weak, not a motive for fresh sin for the bold and daring. May it be an expiation; not a source of fresh sins!

SECTION VI. PAPAL TEXTS

(A brief summary of the most important papal documents which have a relation to this Sunday's Epistle and Gospel.)

1. *The obligation of preaching the riches of the Gospel, especially in the social order:*

Dear Brothers, the social doctrine of the Church is clear in all its aspects and it is obligatory. No one can depart from it without danger to his faith and also danger to the whole moral order. Therefore it is not lawful for any Catholic—and much less for any member of your organization—to depart from that doctrine in order to adhere to theories and social systems which the Church has rejected and of which she has warned her followers (Pius XII, *To Catholic Action*, 29 April, 1945).

2. *Teaching:*

For that very reason it is important that in all branches of society there should be a better social formation, corresponding to the different grades of intellectual culture; and especially the social doctrine of the Church should be spread among the workers. Minds must be filled with it, the will of our workers must be urged to apply it as a rule and guide for life, in the many duties of a social reform. There are many who are faithful in the matter of their religious duties, but who fail lamentably when it is a question of their social, industrial, obligations (*Divini Redemptoris*, 55).

3. *Economics, sociology, morality and salvation—the unity between them:*

It is true that economics and morality, each in its own sphere, has its own principles; but it is false to suppose that economics and the moral order are so disparate that the former has nothing to do with

the latter. While the so-called laws of economics, derived from the nature of things and from the body and mind of man, do indeed determine what human effort cannot do in the economic field, what it can attain and by what means; so reason itself also deduces from the individual and social nature of man and things, what in the designs of God the Creator is the end and object of the whole economic order.

Now, the same moral law which commands us to seek in our general conduct our supreme and final end, also commands us in every particular kind of activity to aim at those ends which nature, or rather the Author of nature, has established for that order of action, and to subordinate particular aims to our last end. If this law be faithfully obeyed, the result will be that particular economic ends, whether of society as a body or of individuals, will fall into their proper place in the universal order of needs, and we shall rise by them as by steps to the final end of all, God, who is himself, and to us, the Supreme End and Good (*Quadragesimo Anno*, 41-42).

4. *The poor still have the Gospel preached to them—Pope John XXIII:*

We should take notice, at this point, that the right of private property is clearly established in the Gospel. Yet at the same time the Divine Master frequently extends to the rich the insistent invitation to convert their material goods into spiritual ones by conferring them on the poor. Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth . . . (Matt. 6. 19-20). And the Lord will look upon the charity given or refused to the poor as given or refused to Himself: Amen I say to you, as often as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me (Matt. 25. 40).

5. *Agriculture:*

(After a discussion of the modern aspects and solutions to this problem, the essential extension of public services to agricultural areas, the need for a suitable economic policy, lesser taxation, more credits, social insurance and security, together with price protection, the Pope goes on:)

In the work on the farm the human personality finds every incentive for self-expression, self-development and spiritual growth. It is a work, therefore, which should be thought of as a vocation, a God-given mission, an answer to God's call to actuate his providential plan in history. It should be thought of, finally, as a noble task, undertaken with a view to raising oneself and others to a higher degree of civilization (*Mater et Magistra*).

SECTION VII. HISTORICAL AND LITERARY MISCELLANY

I. SPIRITUAL ALMS

Let us take special care, sisters, to pray for them (those in mortal sin), and not to be negligent. To pray for those in mortal sin is the best kind of almsdeeds—a much better thing than it would be to loose a Christian whom we saw with his hands tied behind his back, bound with stout chains, fast to a post and dying of hunger. . . . Would it not be extremely cruel to stand by such a man and not to give him this food to eat? And suppose you could loose his chains by means of your prayers? You see now what I mean. For the love of God, I beg you always to remember such souls when you pray (St Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, VII, Chap. 1).

II. SCIENCE WITHOUT GOD

In December 1951 Mr Thomas E. Murray, member of the Commission for uses of Atomic Energy of the United States of America, gave a conference in Atlantic City, the title of which was 'Some limits in science'.

In the course of this conference he said that, although man could make still more progress in the science of what was divisible, he could never hope to reach the answer to certain fundamental questions, entirely beyond his reach. What is man? What is his destiny? What is God?

Simply because all things that exist were made by God, the attention of man must never become so intent on scientific discoveries that he forgets the facts of religion or philosophy, both of which are capable of directing our reason on the lines of morality and charity. Many of the recent scientific discoveries were, beforehand, known only to our Creator. That is sufficient motive for humility.

He ends by saying that we should not forget that we shall have acquired the conquest of matter at too high a price if what we have to pay for it is the loss of this humility, by which it is alone given to us to see behind all created nature the magnificent designs of Divine providence (*Ecclesia*, 6 Feb., 1952, pp. 9-11).

III. ST THOMAS OF VILLANOVA

The story is told of this saint that, when he was dying, he was told that a poor man was at the door asking for alms. By this time Thomas had already given away all that he possessed, so he told those who were at his side to lay him on the floor and give the poor man his bed. When he saw that they had no intention of doing this

he told them at least to go to the door and ask the poor man if he would grant Thomas the use of the bed until the moment of his death (*Ano Cristiano*, t. 3, p. 571).

SECTION VIII. SERMON SCHEMES

I. THE EPISTLE

Let us live in hope

1. Importance of hope:

Among the many ideas developed by St Paul in today's passage that of the importance of hope stands out as a theme proper to Advent. It appears in the first and last verses.

2. Sacred Scripture written for us:

(a) St Paul refers here principally to the Old Testament; but the ideas can also be applied to the New:

All the words written long ago were for our instruction; we were to derive hope from that message of endurance and courage which the scriptures bring us (Rom. 15. 4; cf. 4. 23-24).

(b) Speaking of the punishments administered to sinners in the Old Law:

He reminds us that these things happened to them in figure and were written for our warning (1 Cor. 10. 11).

(c) No text is so descriptive as that in the Epistle to Timothy:

Everything in the Scripture has been divinely inspired, and has its uses; to instruct us, to expose our errors, to correct our faults, to educate us in holy living (2 Tim. 3. 16).

3. The Scriptures demand hope from us:

That is the fundamental idea of Paul in today's Epistle. The Scriptures, by the direct texts of the prophetic and sapiential books, or through the heroic examples of which we read in the historical ones, lead us to have confidence and patience. This brings us peace and consolation in our trials. As a final result of our patience and consolation our hope is increased (cf. Rom. 15. 4; 5. 4-5).

4. The Old Testament lives in the hope of the Messiah:

An idea which is very frequent in the prophets. The whole of the Jewish nation, so afflicted and oppressed, lived in the hope of the Messiah, redeemer of the people.

5. Advent is a time of hope:

Christ will come to free us from sin and from that concupiscence which binds the soul. Hope must be the motive force which leads us to prepare properly for his coming. That is why the Church

encourages our hope by announcing his coming in such dramatic terms: People of Sion, see how the Lord comes to save the nations and will make his voice heard amidst the rejoicing of our hearts (*Introit*).

6. Conclusion:

Encourage the reading of the Scriptures during Advent, as the Church does in her liturgical prayer, especially the great messianic passages of Isaias. As Catholics, we should know and read the Bible more than others, but how seldom we make any effort. Now is the time for us to awaken from our sleep. Thus we shall learn to prepare ourselves for the Lord's coming.

II. THE GOSPEL

A: The greatness of the Baptist

1. The figure of John the Baptist—unique in history, adorned in life with super-human prestige, a figure standing, silent and mysterious, between the Old Law and the New (Tertullian). Until John, the Law and the Prophets; after him the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 11. 12-13). He was the end of the Old Law and the beginning of the New.
2. *Everything about him is unique:*
 - (a) The announcing of his coming (Mal. 3. 1);
 - (b) his mission is also announced (Isaias 40. 3);
 - (c) grace is given to him in the womb of his mother (Luke 1. 44);
 - (d) His birth (Luke 1. 57):
 - i. the prophecy of the angel;
 - ii. the prophetic canticle of Zachary;
 - (e) the austerity of his life in the desert;
 - (f) his apostolate, intimately united to that of Christ;
 - i. he does not announce the Messiah as did the Old Law prophets—he points him out: Behold the Lamb of God (John 1. 29);
 - ii. he does not appear as a disciple, but as a fellow-worker;
 - iii. Christ is baptized by him.
3. *His prestige during his lifetime:*
 - (a) Among the people:
 - i. they held him up as a true prophet (Matt. 14. 5; 21. 26);
 - ii. they flocked to him from all the regions of the country (Mark 1. 5; 11. 32);
 - iii. all classes of people, publicans, sinners soldiers—wondering if he were not the Messiah (Luke 3. 15; 20. 6).
 - (b) Among the Jews:

To the extent that they sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him if he were the Messiah (John 1. 19 ff.).

(c) Before Herod:

- i. who was afraid because the crowds considered John a prophet (Matt. 14. 5);
- ii. because he knew John for a just man and a holy man (Mark 6. 20).

(d) Praise of John from the mouth of Christ:

- i. he is more than a prophet (Matt. 11. 9); one who is the greatest of the sons of men (Matt. 11. 11);
- ii. one who came by the path of justice (Matt. 21. 32);
- iii. a light which shines among men (John 5. 35).

4. *His prestige among the saints:*

(a) The saints who have borne his name are legion:

They are more than those who have the name of Peter. After Christ and our Lady there is no saint so much an object of Christian art. In one word—he is unique.

B: The virtues of the Baptist

1. *The fullness of the Spirit and his docility:*

- (a) From the time when he is yet a child in his mother's womb, he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost (Luke 1. 15).
- (b) And as the child grew, his spirit achieved strength, and he dwelt in the wilderness until the day when he was made manifest to Israel (Luke 1. 80).

2. *His knowledge of Christ:*

- (a) One is to come after me who is mightier than I, so that I am not worthy to bend down and untie the strap of his shoes (Mark 1. 7).
- (b) Look, this is the Lamb of God; look, this is he who takes away the sin of the world (John 1. 29). Now I have seen him, and have borne my witness that this is the Son of God (John 1. 34; cf. 3. 31 ff.).

3. *His love of solitude*—he lived in the desert.

4. *His penance:*

He wore a garment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle about his loins, and locusts and wild honey were his food (Matt. 3. 4).

5. *His zeal:*

He preached throughout all Judaea. The whole region flocked to him, were baptized by him and confessed their sins (Matt. 3. 5; 3. 6).

6. *His fortitude:*

According to St Francis de Sales he supported the most difficult of all trials, that of living apart from Christ. Knowing that he was near at hand, he still waited until Christ should come to him.

7. *His apostolic liberty:*

In his preaching to the people (Luke 3. 7-11); to the publicans (Luke 3. 12-13); to the soldiers (Luke 3. 14); to the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 3. 7-10); to Herod (Matt. 14. 4).

8. *Heroic self-sacrifice:*

(a) He continues to preach after the baptism of Christ, when it would have been natural enough for him to retire into the desert, since the comparison with our Lord could only diminish his prestige. He would lose both authority and disciples.

(b) Instead he proclaims that Christ must increase while he decreases.

(c) He rejoices in death so that Christ may reign in souls.

9. *Complete perfection:*

A total despising of self; of his body, fame and work. He hands all over to Christ. The pure love of God was his only motive.

C: I must decrease

1. *Ambition—a universal passion:*

(a) There is no class, condition or age of man which does not pay it tribute.

(b) It is almost the first passion to awaken in the child, in the shape of a desire to be recognized and esteemed. Ambition, greed and the accompanying vice of envy are the principal childhood passions.

(c) Simply because we wish for the esteem of men, thinking ourselves worthy of their honour and praise, we feel hurt at any honour given to others. The good of others saddens us, in so far as it seems to take something away from our own excellence.

2. *Ambition in spiritual souls:*

It attacks even these, among them many who show great apostolic zeal. Love of honour and glory is the moth which destroys the cloth of their spiritual lives. Take away vainglory from among the clergy, says one writer, and you will easily overcome all other vices. It is the most dangerous of all our adversaries.

3. *Collective ambition:*

Having once been defeated in the individual, it often presents itself in a collective form, in the shape of honour and glory sought for the Order or Institution. From this arises a collective vainglory, with the consequent harm to charity and scandal given to the weak. Meanwhile the devil and the world rejoice.

4. *The example of the Baptist should be the study of any apostle:*

(a) His austere life in food, dress, dwelling-place; it was almost the life of an angel, not a mere man.

(b) More admirable still is the John we find on the banks of the Jordan, the leader of a school of disciples, the great preacher who had won such fame among men, greater than any other prophet, yet one whose name was to die a slow death, whose school was to vanish. All this because a greater prophet than he had come to eclipse him. At last he would die a miserable and obscure death.

(c) We should admire this great figure, who did his duty in spite of all the difficulties which surrounded it.

5. *John not the only example:*

(a) There are many saintly souls in the priesthood, in convents, in ordinary homes, in factories and workshops, who rejoice in doing good in silence and without the honour or praise of men.

i. *Christ called John a burning and a shining light.* It is in that mirror we should look for those who, doing good by stealth, are burnt out like lamps, so that others may have light and warmth;

ii. *those mothers whose quiet work in the home is so tremendous,* yet so little appreciated;

iii. *souls who burn themselves out for God in reparation,* in the silence of convent or monastery;

iv. *priestly souls,* who live lives of real self-denial so that Christ may reign in the hearts of men;

v. *all those who do good unseen* and without thought of praise or reward from men. All these should see themselves in the Baptist; leaving it to God to give them their reward in the next life.

(b) Few deaths are so sad in the eyes of men as that of John; beheaded in an obscure prison cell at the whim of an adulteress and at the command of a weak ruler. No struggle, no chance to put up a public defence of himself or his work. Sad indeed to the eyes of the world; but what glory was his in the sight of God!

D: Envy

1. *The motive behind the minds of John's disciples as they went to Christ was envy:*

John sent them to Christ so that the Master would be able to cure them of this evil mentality. Unlike John, the disciples are afraid that Christ will eclipse their master, that he will capture some of the glory due to John. The latter has only one thing to say—he must increase, while I must decrease. He has only one thing to do—send his own to Christ, so that they too may come to know and love the Messias.

2. *Universal nature of envy:*

St Robert Bellarmine says that envy is the most universal and common of all sins; while Bossuet affirms that it is probably the most common of all the passions, of which few souls are really

free. Together with sins of the tongue, this is the most common of all vices, even in really spiritual people. John's disciples were afflicted by it; even friends envy one another.

3. *St Thomas's definition:*

He defines envy as a sadness produced by another's good in so far as it is thought of as bad for us, since it diminishes our own excellence. Above all, it is a sentiment or passion which arises naturally from our lower nature, corrupted by sin. It is born with a man and grows with him. Other passions remain latent until adolescence, but envy is born even in childhood—as mothers know only too well.

4. *A sin against charity:*

When this feeling is agreed to and accepted freely, then it is a disorder and a sin against charity. It is also a sin against mercy, which is a compassion for others in their sadness.

It is often a grave sin and can be terrible in its consequences; as it led Cain to kill his brother and the Jews to kill their God. It is the very crime of Satan, which led him to try to reduce the whole world to hell together with him.

5. *The advice of St Thomas:*

It is worth while remembering his advice when he says that envy affects those who are in some way near to us or those whom one wishes to overcome or to whom one wishes to be superior. This does not usually happen with those who are far from us in time or space, but with those who are near to us in some way (2-2, q. 36. a. 1. *ad 2um*).

Thus the man from a village does not usually envy the king, nor a business man envy a lawyer; it is the business man who envies another in his same business, the lawyer likewise.

6. *God's punishment:*

God punishes the envious man in this world as well as in the next. The Fathers insist on this thought time and again—it is a sin which gnaws at the very vitals, tormenting the spirit. Was not the devil's sin one of envy? And no sooner did it arise than it tormented its very author? The envious man is never at peace. O envy; the most just and most unjust of all the passions. Unjust, because you afflict and torment the innocent; but just, since you also punish the guilty. Unjust, because you molest the whole human race; but just, since you begin your torments in the heart of the man who gives you birth (St Greg. Naz.).

The envious man knows no rest; he breathes only sadness. He lives in the midst of worry and unrest. He is always afraid of being left in the shadows of oblivion, equalled or bettered by others. His life is a hell of torment, and he is his own executioner.

7. *Against envy—charity:*

The masters of the spiritual life are of the opinion that there are few men who despise and ignore the suggestions of envy. It is necessary to fight valiantly against these temptations by contrary acts of charity. Charity demands that we should desire the good of our neighbour and rejoice when we see it. An efficacious remedy is this; to ask God to give greater honour and glory to those we envy, working for that end by all the means at our disposal.

E: Effects of envy

1. *Envy makes us objects of scorn to others:*

(a) It is a passion and a sin which all, even pagans, have despised:

i. Seneca and Cicero use terms to describe it which are very like those employed by St. Cyprian, Chrysostom and Augustine.

ii. Bossuet describes it as 'vile, low, hateful'. The most despicable of all the passions, it dishonours and degrades a man, and all feel deeply hurt when they find themselves described as envious.

(b) Janvier, the French theologian, gives a good description of it:

The envious will not permit others to triumph, be more esteemed, praised. . . . The sight of their virtues and their victories exasperates them, fills their soul with bitter gall. If you dare to relate in their hearing something of the virtues and superiority of your brethren, they hear your words with evil looks, twisting their faces and showing their disgust.

(c) Envy demonstrates a heart which is vile and poor in the extreme.

A disgrace of our fallen nature, this one; that we feel ourselves offended by others who have not merely no intention of hurting us, but are also unaware of the fact that they have done so. Just because they are better than we are, happier than we are, they annoy us and we wish them ill (Bossuet).

2. *Envy in the Christian:*

(a) *Contrary to the Holy Spirit:*

It is contrary to the Holy Spirit whom we received in baptism and who brought us the virtue of charity. We should walk according to the Spirit (Gal. 5. 16). Envy is one of the works of the flesh and a sure sign that we are not living according to the Spirit (Gal. 5. 22-26).

(b) *Contrary to the whole idea of the mystical body:*

Envy would be impossible if we really considered ourselves as members of one and the same body. The eye does not envy the hand, or the heart which beats within us. We each have our place

in that body—and the graces which go with it; our own specific mission, some greater and some less. Why envy one who has received more, if it is for the good of the whole body?

3. *The daughters of envy:*

(a) Envy is a capital vice:

Its daughters are exaggerations, twisted interpretations, commentaries, gossip, calumny and hatred. From the latter even crime may come, as in the case of Cain. It was envy which induced the High Priest and the Pharisees to put Christ to death. Many crimes have their origins in the same vice.

(b) Envy is sadness at another's good:

We cannot suppress that good in reality, but we try to do so in our hearts and in our speech. We play down the merits of others, reduce their virtues to nothing if we can, exaggerate their faults and defects, or we invent faults which do not exist. We desire that others should not be seen to possess those good qualities which we wish to possess ourselves and for our own glory.

4. *Remedies:*

To be certain of the remedy we must examine the causes of envy. We have already indicated that it is one of the 'works of the flesh' and is born from vainglory. St Thomas Aquinas indicates this (2-2 q. 36. a. 4. *ad 1um*). Unless pride is attacked it is impossible to overcome envy. Therefore we must pray for humility and accept the humiliations which God sends us from time to time.

F: Envy in the Church

1. *The human spirit of the disciples of John:*

Their envy. The divine spirit of John himself seeks nothing but peace and harmony.

2. *This is the distinctive sign of the disciples of Christ:*

(a) That they may be one (John 17. 21).

(b) Where there is charity and love, Christ is also there (liturgy).

3. *Then why should there always be envy and jealousy in the Church?*

(a) These do exist:

- i. among individuals;
- ii. in the form of a party spirit among various organizations in the Church.

(b) It has existed always:

- i. in the early days of the Church between the Jewish and Greek converts to Christianity.

ii. St Paul was forced to reprove those who said, some that they belonged to Paul, others to Peter, others to Apollo.

(c) Why?

On the one hand the spirit of Christ always seeks the glory of God, but for itself only humility; at the same time the spirit of the world enters in, which seeks one's own glory and applies the criterion of friendship at times instead of reason.

4. *The harm it does:*

(a) Not merely harm, but also the total loss of the glory of God and the good of souls, very often.

(b) Disputes, rancour, quarrels. . . .

(c) The loss of the merits of our deeds. . . . For whom were they performed?

5. *Remedies:*

(a) Seek only God. John 3. 30 should be our watch-word.

(b) St Paul knew that there were those in Rome who preached Christ from the sole motive of outdoing Paul; but he did not care, so long as Christ be preached.

G. The scandal of Christ

1. *False scandal and its kinds:*

(a) There is a scandal which is taken, but not given:

The reason for its existence is in the one who takes it, not in him who is supposed to have given it. Christ could not give scandal to anyone; so that some who pretended to take scandal at his actions, did so without motive.

(b) This scandal, which is taken but not given, can have many causes:

i. *the poverty of intellect and narrowness of spirit of the one who takes scandal.* It is the scandal of the weak, of the man who does not know how to interpret the law and so takes scandal at exceptions which can be made in case of necessity, charity, etc.

ii. *the perverse intent of the one taking scandal;* the scandal of the Pharisees, from whom it takes its name. This is the scandal of the jealous man, of the wicked, who wish to hide the true virtue of others so that their own evil will not appear clearly; of the hypocrite, who pretends it so that his own pretended virtue may appear more true to life; of the sinner who, since he does not wish to be converted, likes to see other sinners around him, even though may be they are only sinners in his eyes;

iii. *of the man whose only remedy it is,* when he has been reprovved for some fault or corrected by his superior.

2. *Christ, the object of scandal:*

- (a) He was persecuted by the Pharisees for this reason;
- (b) if he healed someone . . . it was the Sabbath (Mark 3. 4; Luke 13. 14);
- (c) if he cast out devils, it was by the power of the chief of the devils (Matt. 12. 27; Mark 3. 22; Luke 11. 15);
- (d) if he proclaimed his divinity, it was blasphemy (Matt. 9. 3; Mark 2. 7; 14. 64).

3. *The Church, an object of scandal:*

- (a) If she preaches the obligations of charity and the right use of riches she is called a demagogue;
- (b) if she talks about the right to private property she is called a friend of the capitalists;
- (c) if she preaches obedience to the government she is called a friend of tyrants;
- (d) if she defends the rights of individuals against the use of power, she is called revolutionary.

4. *The just man, the object of scandal:*

- (a) The disciple is not better than the master, and like him, his actions may be given an evil interpretation. It is very easy for such things to happen and their proportion will increase according to his virtues.
- (b) But the just man may also be a real cause of scandal to the weaker elements, who may think that they can ask of him more than he can really give in terms of virtue.

5. *Rules against scandal:*

- (a) Let us not speak about the man who gives scandal voluntarily, especially the one who gives it to children. We know what is in store for him (Matt. 18. 6).
- (b) So far as the scandal given to the weak is concerned, we should be careful to avoid giving it so far as we can, especially when it is a question of simple souls to whom it may do much harm. Charity obliges us to this.
- (c) Pharisaical scandal must be despised—never let it impede the work of virtue or truth. It may have a place in our prayers, in which we can ask God to illuminate the minds of those who are subject to it, that they may see the light.

H: The Messiah and the Jews

1. *Art thou he who is to come?*

The Jewish people, whose mission it was to wait for and receive the Messiah, who should have known clearly his mission, so often explained to them by the prophets, present this question: Are you he who is to come, or have we to wait for another? In this we can

see two periods of development in the life of the Chosen People; one of growth and another of decadence. The latter due to divine punishment.

2. *The Jewish people in the Old Testament:*

(a) In spite of their infidelity, suffering at the hands of God, we can still say that the people of Israel were the 'star in the east'.

(b) *Their true greatness: their intimacy with God:*

- i. God promised that, if their conduct with regard to the Covenant between himself and them was satisfactory, he would consider them as his own among all the nations of the earth (Ex. 19. 5-6);
- ii. he gave Moses the mission of sanctifying his people (Ex. 19. 10);
- iii. he would be in their midst, represented by the Ark (Deut. 4. 7);
- iv. among all the nations of the time the Hebrews are the only ones who have an exact knowledge of God, the creator; their history is a hymn of praise to the God who governed them and guided them personally.

(c) *Their legislation:*

The only one among the ancient people which respected the rights of liberty, equality and fraternity. Includes all aspects and life, from morality to liturgy.

(d) *Distribution of riches:*

To assure the right distribution of riches the Jubilee year was established.

(e) *Jerusalem:*

That 'vision of peace' is a symbol of this great people, called by God to be the greatest on the earth.

3. *The Jews in the New Testament:*(a) *Christ reproaches them bitterly:*

He weeps over Jerusalem (Luke 19. 41). He laments the terrible destruction which will come upon them and their city.

(b) *The people are dispersed over the whole earth:*

They are despised by others, with a stain of blood on their hands which has yet to be removed.

4. *The cause of this change: Infidelity:*

Their vocation was to receive Christ; but blinded by political notions of his kingdom they did not recognize him when he came. His own received him not (John 1. 11). On the contrary, they accuse him, persecute him and end by crucifying him. See the lament of Christ himself (Matt. 23. 37).

5. *This history is frequently repeated in the life of souls:*

(a) The Fathers see in Jerusalem the symbol of the Christian soul:

- i. *like this people*, the soul also was sanctified in baptism;
- ii. *it forms part of a royal race*, a kingly priesthood (1 Pet. 2. 9);
- iii. *it is the object of God's special providence*, and all this so that it may fulfil a vocation similar to that of the Jewish nation, that of receiving Christ, living his life, accepting his word and reflecting that word in actions;
- iv. *the secret of the fulfilment of this vocation* is nothing else than fidelity. All men are called to sanctity of life in imitation of Christ. Those become saints who do imitate him; those who are faithful. On the other hand, those who are not become sinners. What would have happened to Paul had he not been faithful to Christ? A great man, but unhappy, scandalous, a sinner. What would have happened to Julian the Apostate had he been faithful to Christ? He would have been one of the wisest and most saintly of rulers.

(b) Through infidelity to Christ men fall into sin:

For the same reason there are many souls who wish to be saints, but who live without giving much fruit, without being at peace with others, nor finding it in themselves. These are always liable to fall into serious sin.

(c) Let each one examine his fidelity:

In the matter of the love of God and of his neighbour, the fulfilment of his duties, his prayers and mortifications, so as to avoid a punishment which he will merit if, like the Jews, he is unfaithful to his vocation.

I: Miracles

1. *The Gospel scene:*

Why does God work miracles?

2. *The purpose of a miracle:*

(a) God has written a book—that of the whole of creation—in which may be read the story of his existence and his attributes.

(b) But:

- i. at times men refuse to read that book, forget God and forge a false notion of him for themselves (Rom. 1. 18-20);
- ii. at times God himself wishes to reveal to men truths which are not contained in that book.

(c) When God wishes to remind man of things which he should already know, or can know; or when he wishes to teach men new truths, he speaks to man and accompanies his speech by miracles, as proof and signature.

3. *The fact of miracles:*

(a) Before Christ, God spoke in many ways to his people:

- i. the miracles of Sinai;
- ii. those of the prophets.

(b) Last of all he spoke to us by means of his Son (Heb. 1. 2):

- i. *miracles* followed his steps everywhere;
- ii. *over inanimate nature*; Cana, multiplication of the loaves and fishes, the calming of the storm, the walking on the waters, etc;
- iii. *in animal nature*; the swine, the fish with the piece of money in its mouth;
- iv. *on the human body*—all types of cures;
- v. *in the dead*—raising them to life;
- vi. *in souls*—reading their thoughts, forgiving their sins already known to him;
- vii. *over evil spirits*, casting out devils;
- viii. in short, over the whole of nature whose Lord he is.

(c) Christ ascended into heaven, but he left his Church on earth to prolong his mission.

(d) Miracles followed her steps too, as we see in Lourdes and Fatima.

4. *Face to face with the facts of miracles:*

What is the logical and rational attitude?

(a) Not that of the incredulous man who refuses to admit them, such as Zola, who saw a miracle with his own eyes and refused to believe.

(b) Not that of those who refuse to admit their possibility *a priori* and then reject them without any examination of the facts. The true scientific approach should be an examination of the facts as they stand and then, if there is no natural explanation of them, to accept the possibility of divine intervention.

(c) It is neither logical nor rational to adopt an attitude which implies that everything has a purely natural significance and explanation—even though we may not know what that explanation is. There are certain laws of nature which we know cannot be broken or bypassed by natural means. A blind man, whose optic nerve is destroyed, cannot see again by any natural means.

(d) The position of an Alexis Carrel is the rational one to adopt.

(e) To be completely logical we should bow the knee before the evidence of a true miracle and say: Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.

J: A moral miracle

1. *The miracle of the Catholic Church:*

There are such things as moral miracles. The life of the Church is one of these, and has brought many into her fold.

2. *The words of Gamaliel:*

Have nothing to do with these men, let them be. If this is man's design or man's undertaking, it will be overthrown; if it is God's, you will have no power to overthrow it. You would not willingly be found fighting against God (Acts 5. 38-39).

3. *From the merely human point of view the history of the Church cannot be explained:*

We may leave on one side the proclamation of her rule fifty days after the death of Jesus; her development in apostolic times; her conquest of the whole Roman empire in such a short time, and we may come down to our own day.

Macaulay, after praising the English Constitution, the most perfect which men had ever known, and the solidity of the Empire, to all intents and purposes, something which could never be broken, added: However, there is another institution—and we have to recognize the fact—which is even more admirable than our own: the Roman Pontificate, which is the oldest of all the European dynasties. Which is the most venerable in Europe? That of Charlemagne? He was crowned by a Pope whose throne was already eight centuries old! In the future England may have disappeared, but the Roman Pontificate will still exist. There will come a day in which this vast plain on which the City of London stands will be nothing more than a mass of ruins. Then the traveller who comes from far off New Zealand or Australia or from wherever civilization is at that time, leaning on the last broken arch of London Bridge, will notice the ruins of the Parliament buildings; but meanwhile the Roman Pontificate will continue to send out its missionaries to savage regions of the world, ready to preach the doctrine of Christ with the same love and the same faith which brought Augustine to the shores of Kent to preach the Gospel to the English.

4. *After two wars the prophecy of Macaulay is fast becoming a fact:*

Kings have fallen, great Empires with them—Russia, Germany, Japan, Austria. Even the power of the British Empire is not what it was before. But the Church is stronger than ever.

5. *The four marks:*

We may say without exaggeration that the four marks of the true Church of Christ shine today as never before in her history: she is one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

(a) *The unity of the Church:*

i. *the dogma.* Never before has this unity in faith been so obvious—for example, the Second Vatican Council—a clear demonstration of the unity in the faith of the whole Church.

ii. *discipline:* the unity of priests with their bishops, of bishops with the Pope. We saw it in the pontificate of Pius XII and even more so in the pontificate of John XXIII. All nations gather at the feet of the successor of Peter to hear his words and to accept his decisions.

iii. *Law:* the unification of the law of the Church in the Canon Law was a moral miracle, when we think of all the nations to be governed by it and the difference in custom and tradition.

(b) *The holy Church:*

In so far as she offers to all the means of holiness and is today more than ever distinguished by the holiness of so many of her children. There have never been so many canonizations as there are today in the Church—all of them proofs of heroic virtue in the modern world.

(c) *The Catholic Church:*

She offers her teaching through the whole known world, and that teaching is one and the same as the teaching of the apostles. It is impossible to separate catholicity from apostolicity—the two must go together.

(d) *The apostolic Church:*

She teaches the same doctrine now as that taught by the apostles of Christ, without fear or favour. She has more contact now than ever with the spirit of the apostles.

6. *Are you he who is to come?*

Evidently. As Napoleon said: It is easy to found an empire by force; but to found one on love and to give it a force which is eternal—that is the work of Christ.

K: Doing good

1. *He went around doing good:*(a) *One of the characteristics of the Messias, according to the prophets (Isaias 35. 4):*

Christ shows it to us as one of the infallible signs that the kingdom has come.

(b) *He went about doing good to bodies and to souls:*

i. the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, the dead rise again;

ii. in souls; sinners find pardon; the sad are comforted; tears are wiped away;

iii. in the whole of Palestine, Jew or Gentile, just or sinners—all receive the mercy of Christ and the proof of his omnipotence.

2. To do good—the mission of the Church:

(a) She must continue to the end of time the mission of her founder, redeeming, sanctifying, teaching:

i. From the very beginning of the Church St Paul collected money for the poor, the deacons came into being to attend to their needs, widows, orphans, the sick and aged were attended to.

ii. The early Councils speak frequently of these obligations; that of Tours, in 566, for example, orders that the poor in the cities should be looked after by the Bishop of the diocese and his priests; while that of Orleans orders special care to be taken of the lepers, who should be given clothes and food from Church funds.

iii. In England it has always been the Church who was first in hospital work, schools especially, homes for poor children, charity to the needy of all kinds. Before the Reformation the poor were the special care of the Church—and they appreciated the difference! The great monasteries were feeding grounds for the poor, and while they existed no man went hungry or unattended, no matter what his needs. On this history is clear and certain.

(b) We see it today in the numerous charitable organizations of the Church:

The poor are her constant preoccupation, as we can see by a brief message of Pope John XXIII, when he said that there are millions of people in the world today who are hungry for the bare necessities of life 'in spite of all that we can say and do'. The remark is significant.

3. The distinctive mark of the Christian—doing good:

(a) This is the mark of a true Christian:

To follow the footsteps of Christ in his one mission, to do good to others.

(b) The best criterion of the Christian life:

This is not that of individual piety, but a spirit of mercy, compassion charity and beneficence. It is sad to see so many Christians who go to communion frequently, say their prayers regularly, but who have little or no thought for the material needs of their neighbours—the poor. Can they be counted among the disciples of him who went about doing good?

i. *there must be no limit to our charity*; enemy or friend, it must be all the same. Rich or poor, wise or ignorant—it does not matter, so long as we are true sons of our Father in heaven, who makes his sun rise on good and bad alike (Matt. 5. 45).

ii. *our enemies*. These should be our special care, according to the command of our Master (Matt. 5. 44; cf. Rom. 12. 20 ff.).

iii. *the poor and the needy*; these more than anyone else. God allows some to be in need, hungry, naked, sick—so that the rest may practise charity towards them. We must ask ourselves how we fulfil this obligation; it is neither easy nor comfortable, but it is essential!

4. Application:

How interesting is this contact between ourselves and the poor. But it is even more important that it should be personal. Alms-giving is important, but its value is increased if we do it personally, seeing the poor in their homes. May they see the birth of Christ in us, at least this year!

L: The poor have the Gospel preached to them

1. On more than one occasion Christ gave as a proof of his divinity that he had come to preach the Gospel to the poor:

- (a) so, in the Gospel of today;
- (b) in the first sermon he gave at Nazareth (Luke 4. 18);
- (c) the first Beatitude is 'blessed are the poor in spirit . . .'

2. How did he preach to the poor?

- (a) He was born poor, and of poor parents;
- (b) his Gospel was first announced to poor shepherds—the outcasts of the Jewish nation;
- (c) he lived a poor life, working with his hands as the son of a carpenter;
- (d) he was surrounded by the poor; at times three whole days and nights preaching to them and healing the sick among them. He fed them, with a miracle when necessary;
- (e) he shewed special affection for the ordinary people, most of whom were poor—like sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9. 36);
- (f) he chose his disciples from among the poor;
- (g) he died in extreme poverty, not even his tomb was his own.

3. Praise of poverty:

Not by example only, but also in words. The kingdom of heaven is to be won by the poor. They will be able to help the rich to enter (Luke 16. 9).

4. The danger of riches:

He preaches the danger of riches as opposed to the advantages of poverty. For that reason he points out how difficult it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom (Matt. 19. 23-24).

5. He made his Church an association of the poor:

- (a) Almsdeeds are the key to enter into the kingdom;

(b) there is special praise for the alms of the poor themselves—the widow's mite (Mark 12. 41-44; Luke 21. 1-4).

6. *The reply of the people:*

(a) They loved him, surrounded him, accompanied him. In his disputes with the Scribes and Pharisees, the people were always on his side, rejoicing in his victories. They proclaimed him a prophet and a great one at that;

(b) they wished to make him King;

(c) they received him in triumph on Palm Sunday.

(d) The ordinary people seem to have reacted quickly against their momentary blindness on Good Friday, because even on Mt Calvary they beat their breasts in recognition of the fact that they had killed the Just One (Luke 23. 48).

7. *Let us follow the example of Christ:*

(a) in his love for the people, especially those who live in poverty;

(b) understanding their needs, applying the remedy as far as in us lies through charity and spiritual as well as material alms.

(c) There is no excuse for injustice against the poor and the worker. Charity, said Pius XII, if it is true charity, must always work to assure justice, and not be content to ameliorate the disorders and deficiencies which come from injustice.

M: The rich poor

1. *Christ loved the rich:*

He came to preach the Gospel to them no less than to the poor.

(a) At his birth three rich men came to bring him gifts, and the Church has made this one of her greatest feasts;

(b) when he chose his apostles he selected two who were rich men, Bartholomew and Matthew;

(c) he dwells in the houses of the rich;

(d) he shows particular friendship for some of them, such as Lazarus and his sisters. One of his greatest miracles was done on this rich man, four days in the tomb;

(e) he entered into their houses frequently to eat; Simon the Leper, for example;

(f) he selected one of them to carry the cross behind him and gave his dead body into the hands of two others. He was buried in the tomb of one of them;

(g) he made almsdeeds an easy way to enter heaven.

2. *The ancient patriarchs were rich men:*

Job and Tobias were rich too.

3. *The doctrine of riches:*

(a) God does not condemn them nor their possession in abundance.

(b) The rich have a providential mission, that of God's administrators in the right use of something which has been 'lent' to them by God for their use in the right way.

4. *The duties of the rich:*

(a) How often they are acquired by unlawful means, these goods of which we are inclined to be so proud!

(b) Riches are a danger, because all too often people set their heart on them.

(c) There are few rich people who understand their obligation to give freely of their riches for the benefit of others.

(d) As a result riches may easily close the way into heaven instead of being an easy means of entering into the kingdom.

5. *The rich poor:*

It is above all necessary to teach the rich that they should be poor in spirit, to consider themselves God's administrators. Here are but four of the rules which we shall consider more in detail elsewhere, a consideration of which will lead to a right use of riches.

(a) *St Ignatius:*

In his Exercises he gives seven rules for almsdeeds, one of which is taken from an old tradition about the parents of our Lady, who were said to have divided their wealth into three equal parts, one for themselves, one for the care of the liturgy and one for the poor.

(b) *St Thomas:*

He summarizes the rules for almsdeeds in these three words, prompt, cheerful, and abundant.

(c) *The rule of Leo XIII:*

The rich man, having satisfied his own needs and those of his family according to his state, should give the rest to the poor.

(d) *That of St Paul:*

He reminds the rich of this world that they should give and distribute of their riches with liberality.

6. *A difficult art, this of administering goods:*

Therefore those souls who felt drawn to sanctity embraced voluntary poverty as the easiest way of meeting this obligation.

But another way is to keep what we have in order to administer it to the greater glory of God. The 'poor rich'—or to use a phrase of Scripture, the wise rich, are those who know how to administer their goods as God's stewards; and these attain a high place in heaven. Riches can be a crown of glory for the wise man (Prov. 14. 24).

IV. SOCIAL APPLICATIONS

Character—end of education

1. *St John and Christ:*

The thought of them leads us to a consideration of the nature of character, which is the end of all education. The whole purpose of Christian education is the formation of men of character.

2. *Pius XI demands these two qualities of the man of character:*

- (a) an intellect which is formed in such a way that it thinks in the right way and according to truth;
- (b) a will which is constant and faithful in following the dictates of reason.

3. *He adds something which is essential:*

That the true intellectual light is that which comes from the doctrines and example of Christ.

4. *Tenacity of conduct is not enough:*

(a) The will of the obstinate man can also be tenacious, so can that of the man who is in error, or merely obstinate in false principles. Perfection of character demands perfection in the guiding principle of reason, which alone sustains the will. I am the truth, said Christ. When this is the guiding light of a character, that character is from the human point of view perfect.

(b) The faith is the basis of this character, not the mere light of reason, as Pius XI points out.

5. *The saints were essentially men of character:*

Their lives were an imitation of Christ.

(a) We may say without error that all the saints were men of character, because true sanctity demands this rule of life, this tenacity of conduct according to a rule, that of truth itself. In this is character detected, not elsewhere.

(b) Athanasius and Ambrose were great characters, but no less were Thérèse and Maria Goretti.

6. *The power of example:*

Christ is the supreme example of this, and it is in the power of his example that he rises above all the other saints and prophets. I have given you an example, he could say, that you may follow in my steps.

(a) He did more—he gave us the rule of truth and grace to help us:

This gives us a supernatural fortitude, which is the hall-mark of the Christian. This is no religion for the weak and feeble; it demands great strength of character. As one spiritual writer has said about

the virtue of purity; if anyone maintains that this is a virtue for the weak and feeble, then it is a sure sign that he has never tried to keep it!

(b) How many of our ordinary people are models of strength of character!

Many Catholic mothers, many priests in their small parishes, in the day-to-day administration of their flock! How many strong characters, hidden under meekness and kindness to others! Gentleness, which is rather a complex virtue, demands much fortitude, from which it stems.

7. *The example of John the Baptist:*

He, as no one else, is an example of the teaching of Pius XI, because he thinks and acts always in the light which we receive from Christ. He has filled himself with that spirit in the desert and prepares the way of the Lord perfectly. He rejoiced in Christ and in the thought of the vast mystical body of Christ; for that reason, when he was asked, Who art thou? his reply was: I am a voice! He, the voice, Christ, the light, the word of God, speaking through the mouth of John.

8. *The world today needs strong characters:*

It needs those who will not allow themselves to be influenced by propaganda, even though, like John, they may find themselves to be nothing but a voice crying in the wilderness of a world which has lost most of its inheritance of truth and virtue.

(a) There will always be this opposition between the world of the spirit and the materialistic attitude of the world of the flesh and the devil.

(b) The Catholic character, result of a true Catholic education, can alone apply the remedy. A character founded on the light of faith, the example of Christ and the help of his grace.

Third Sunday of Advent

THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN TO
THE JEWS

SECTION I. SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Epistle: Philippians 4. 4-7

Gospel: John 1. 19-28

Texts concerning humility

1. *David before the Ark:*

As it came into David's Keep, there was Michol, Saul's daughter, looking on from her window; she saw king David leaping and dancing in the Lord's presence, and her heart despised him. . . . David himself, going back to bless his own household, was met by Michol, Saul's daughter. A day of great renown, she said, for the king of Israel, that exposed his person to man and maid, his own subjects, graceless as a common mountebank! Nay, answered David, it was at the Lord's coming. He it is that has chosen me, instead of thy father or any of thy father's line, to rule the Lord's people of Israel; and before his coming play the mountebank I will; humble myself I will in my own esteem, and those maids thou speakest of will honour me yet the more. 2 Kings 6. 16-22.

2. *The book of Judith:*

Abate we our pride, and wait on him with chastened spirits; entreat him with tears to grant us relief at a time of his own choosing. Then shall we, who stand aghast now at the pride of our enemies, triumph in the reward of our humility. . . . Wait humbly until he sends us relief; he will revenge our wrongs by bringing misfortune on our enemies . . . 8. 16-20.

3. *The book of Job:*

His to exalt men of low esteem, to comfort the mourner with new hope. 5. 11.

He that was once brought low shall be high in renown; the down-cast eye shall win deliverance. 22. 29.

4. *Psalms:*

To humble folk thou wilt bring deliverance; the proud, with their haughty looks, thou wilt bring down to earth. 17. 28.

The sacrifice God loves is a broken spirit; a heart that is humble and contrite thou, O God, wilt never disdain. 50. 19.

It was in mercy thou didst chasten me, schooling me to thy obedience. . . . Lord, it was in faithfulness thou didst afflict me. 118. 71, 75.

The Lord who is high above us, yet looks upon lowly things, looks upon the proud, too, but from afar off. 137. 6.

5. *Proverbs:*

Pride is neighbour to disesteem; humility to wisdom. 11. 2.

Yet hearts are proudest when ruin is nearest; humility is the ante-chamber of renown. 18. 12.

Pride will come low; honour awaits the humble. 29. 23.

6. *The book of Ecclesiasticus:*

The greater thou art, the more in all things abase thyself; so thou shalt win favour with God. Man's esteem and favour are to be had for the asking, but it is to the humble that hidden things are revealed. 3. 20 ff.

Proud nations withered from the root, and a humble race of exiles planted anew! 10. 18.

Learn to abase thyself before God, and wait for his hand to beckon thee, instead of courting false hopes, that bring their own abasement. 13. 9-10.

Pierce those clouds if thou wouldst, thou must humble thyself, inconsolable until that prayer finds audience, unwearied till it wins redress. 35. 21.

7. *In the Gospels:*

Take my yoke upon yourselves, and learn from me; I am gentle and humble of heart. Matt. 11. 29.

He is greatest in the kingdom of heaven who will abase himself as this little child. Matt. 18. 4.

Among you, the greatest of all is to be the servant of all; the man who exalts himself will be humbled, and the man who humbles himself will be exalted. Matt. 23. 11-12.

He has put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted the lowly. Luke 1. 52.

I tell you, this man went back home higher in God's favour than the other; everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the man who humbles himself will be exalted. Luke 18. 14.

8. *Apostolic humility:*

You yourselves can testify how I have lived among you, since the first day when I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord in all humility, not without tears over the trials which beset me . . . Acts 20. 18-19.

Live in harmony of mind, falling in with the opinions of common folk, instead of following conceited thoughts; never give yourselves airs of wisdom. Rom. 12. 16.

But there is one who never fails to comfort those who are brought low . . . 2 Cor. 7. 6.

You must be always humble, always gentle; patient, too, in bearing with one another's faults, as charity bids; eager to preserve that unity the Spirit gives you, whose bond is peace. Eph. 4. 2-3.

Then he lowered his own dignity, accepted an obedience which brought him to death, death on a cross. Phil. 2. 8.

Is one of the brethren in humble circumstances? Let him be proud of it; it exalts him, whereas the rich man takes pride in what in truth abases him. James 1. 9-10.

SECTION II. GENERAL COMMENTS

I. LITURGICAL

Today's liturgy is slightly out of place in the modern celebration of Advent, at least so far as its history goes, although not in its spirit of joy. The latter is compatible with penance and natural when we think of Christmas to come.

Since the last Sunday of Advent was taken up with the ordinations which took place on that day, the preparatory festivities—something akin to our modern Novenas—were translated to the previous week. The *Gaudete* and the rose colour of the vestments are all that remains nowadays.

The theme of the Introit is inspired by the Epistle: Rejoice . . . because the Lord is at hand. This joy is a fruit of interior peace, which cannot be disturbed by adversity or persecution. The Gospel continues with the story of the Baptist, whose testimony also declared that the Lord was at hand, and that he will come to dispel the darkness of the past. The other parts of the Mass show Christ to us in his throne of glory among the angels; encourage the timid to be hopeful. The tone is of joy that the Lord's coming is at hand.

II. EXEGETIC AND MORAL NOTES

A: The Epistle: Philippians 4. 4-7

1. Argument:

Paul is in prison and he replies to those who have written to him from Philippi—Rejoice! This is the key-note of the Epistle. The section chosen for today begins his farewell to his friends among the Philippians, and there is no need for us to seek a logical relation between the verses. Joy in God is very different from the joy of this world, full as it is of worry and preoccupations. They must be moderate in their way of life, because Christ is near. The affairs of this world must be put in God's hands. Thus they will have true peace, the peace of Christ in God.

2. Commentary:

We shall limit ourselves to the ideas preached by St Robert Bellarmine on 15 December 1602.

(a) The joy of this world and that of God:

That of this world is small and imperfect, because it comes from a meagre fountain, full of anxiety. Solomon, after enjoying the pleasures of this world, concluded that his laughter was an error (Eccles. 2. 2-11). The Lord tells us: Blessed are they that mourn, and, Woe to you who now laugh (Matt. 5. 5; Luke 6. 25).

That of God is permanent and great, because it comes from the love of God and the hope of the good things to come. No one can take it from us. While spiritual joy is tasted by the intellect from a well which cannot be exhausted for all eternity, that of this world is insignificant, owing to the smallness of the cup from which it is drunk.

(b) Rejoice always . . .

Rejoice in the thought of God and the good things created by him. If our exile is like this, what will our home be like in heaven? We should rejoice, not merely in the graces of the Lord but also in his punishments, which are so often directed to our good. The source of this joy is our dominion over the whole of creation, our lack of worry about created things, which comes from our friendship and peace with God. We should seek for these if we wish to be happy for eternity.

(c) Give proof to all of your courtesy . . .

The Greek implies moderation in all actions and in all adversity. By dominion over the passions we shall be like one who has perfect control over his horse and can go at the pace he pleases. Before all men, and not like the hypocrite who acts prudently only before those he wishes to please.

(d) Nothing must make you anxious . . .

Paul, who felt anxiety for all the churches, excludes only lack of moderation in such anxiety. His idea is that of St Peter, that we should cast all our cares on the Lord, whose providence is over all.

(e) The Lord is near . . .

Do not worry, the Lord is near. Near so far as the time of our judgement is concerned. Why worry about the building of a house which we know will tumble down tomorrow? He is near in the physical sense, because his providence and omnipotence surround us. But he is far from the damned!

How can we feel ourselves near to God? By prayer, petition and thanksgiving. That is the meaning of Paul's words.

Many of our petitions are not heard, but that is because they do not have the essential conditions mentioned by Paul: prayer, thanksgiving, petition, and beseeching.

i. *Prayer*: by baptism we are all called to be saints and as such should live in a spirit of prayer.

ii. *Thanksgiving*: nothing is more powerful to obtain new benefits from the Lord. The Church begins almost all her prayers by giving thanks for benefits already received.

iii. *Petition*: our gratitude stems from our knowledge of God; our petition from our knowledge of ourselves. Many find it hard to spend even a quarter of an hour in prayer. Why? Because they do not know themselves! The sinner is like one who is wounded and robbed while he is asleep. He does not advert to his misfortune (Apoc. 3. 17-18).

iv. *Beseeching*: What else can we poor sinners do, seeing ourselves so far from God, except beseech our Mediator to help us: *Per Jesum Christum dominum nostrum*.

(f) The peace of God . . .

From this will come our peace with God and our friendship with him. If he is with us, who is against us? It alone places us so high above the rest of creation that nothing can disturb us. Just as earthly love is represented as blinded with a bandage over its eyes, so heavenly love is a strong light which illuminates our minds so that we may judge the things of this world in their right proportion. This is the short and easy way to true joy.

3. *Application*:

Rejoice because the Birth of the Lord is near—not from the carnal point of view, festivities, celebrations of all kinds. Our festivities, like our Messias, are spiritual rather than carnal. These are great Mysteries, and in their celebration no Christian should be found spiritually asleep.

B: The Gospel: John 1. 19-28

1. *Liturgical and historical background*:

John is the door through which the Messias will enter into the world, the herald of the Judge. This is the witness of John to the coming of the Messias. There are three stages in this testimony:

The first, in which God the Father intervened when John refused to baptize Christ. Later he saw the heavens opened at his baptism. The third, when Christ passed by on the other side of the Jordan after his fast of forty days and John testified that this was indeed the Lamb of God, sent for the redemption of the world. Between the two comes this present scene, in which John announces that the Messias is already among the people.

2. *The embassy*:

The preaching of John, so different from that of other political agitators, attracted a large number of Jews from all parts of Palestine. It became a religious movement, in the true sense of the word.

Priests and Levites—Pharisees almost all of them, none of whom had wished to accept the testimony of John, as we know from what Christ said about them (Luke 7. 33). Some were opposed to him because his preaching was a danger to their easy way of life; others because of their envy, since they considered themselves to be the only leaders of the people. The commission was sent by the Sanhedrin, who had authority over teaching, especially since the prophetic spirit had disappeared from Judaism many centuries before. The object of the mission was to determine the exact nature of John's mission. Was he or was he not the Messias? John answers in all sincerity, due to the authority of those who question him.

Ecclesiastical authority is true authority within its limits. It has the exclusive right to guard faith and morals. Accordingly, its subjects have the obligation to obey that authority. Christ, who was silent before Herod and at times before Pilate, answers the Sanhedrin, when they ask if he is the Son of God. But true spiritual authority must not be motivated by envy but by spiritual motives.

Who art thou? The Messias? How difficult it is to know oneself! St Bernard said of Abelard that he knew everything there was to know about heaven and earth. The only thing he did not know was himself!

3. *The reply*:

This has two parts; in the first John is clear that he is not the Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet; in the second he says that he is the herald of the Messias. In both his humility stands out clearly. True humility consists in knowing what one is not, in knowing what one is, and in the recognition that all we have comes from God.

(a) He admitted that he was not the Christ (John 1. 20):

The repetition of the words in the Greek implies that it was a firm and sustained denial. Worldly people almost always glory in what they are; John says what he is not.

(b) Art thou Elias?

Malachy announces that an angel will come to prepare the way of the Lord, but he also mentions Elias, who would appear before the great and terrible day of the Lord (4. 5). The Jews had a confused idea of the messianic coming, and thought that the Christ would judge the world during his lifetime. Even the apostles confused the destruction of Jerusalem and the judgement of the Lord. John's reply is that he is not Elias.

(c) The prophet?

Again he replies that he is not, which at first sight seems strange. However, it is not so strange if we interpret it as meaning that he is not one of the prophetic school of the old Law, since he was to announce something which was present, not future.

(d) What account dost thou give of thyself?

A direct question which demands a positive reply, since this was an official mission. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Straighten out the way of the Lord. To understand the reply we must first of all know something about Isaias, from whose prophecies it is taken.

The book of Isaias has two main parts; in the first, the prophecies about the punishments of God which are to come, and in the second the prophecy of the redemption and the return from the captivity in Babylon, which is a symbol of the redemption. The second part begins with chapter 11, from which these words of John are taken. Directly they refer to the return from captivity, when in the midst of the dusty roads through the desert there would be the voice of God ordering the ways to be paved for his people to return to their home. With the coming of the true redemption there will also be a voice crying out in its demands that all vice, pride, self-love, etc., shall give way to the Messiah and his redemption. That is the voice of John. The desert represents the difficulties in the way of the Christ.

He calls himself a voice—not the word; because the Word was Christ, and the voice transmits the thoughts of the Word of God, in which lay John's greatness and his humility. This voice preached with the whole of his being, his words, his dress, his mortification. . . . He is the very model of the preacher, because he is a voice announcing penance, an angel who preaches Christ's coming, a shining light which shows forth Christ.

(e) Then why dost thou baptize?

His questioners were Pharisees—and therefore they are more interested in matters of ritual. Ezechiel and Zacharias both announced that the Messiah would baptize; therefore, if John is not the Christ nor a prophet, why does he baptize and by what right? John's reply is that he baptized in water; Christ would baptize in the Holy Spirit.

He insists on the importance of Christ, who is eternal; therefore he says that he is not even worthy to untie his sandals—the act of the most lowly of servants.

SECTION III. THE FATHERS

I. ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

(Extracts from Hom. 16. PG. 59, 102 ff. on almsdeeds.)

1. If you are so foolish that you cannot see the little value of riches, see how you will have to leave them behind at the moment of death, and who knows if you may not die so suddenly that you will not even have time to dispose of them in your will. To ensure that this may not happen, let us send them on ahead of us to our homeland. They will only be of use to us if we store them in a safe place, where neither death, nor wills, nor law-suits can ever take them from us, because if we do take them with us in this way, then we shall enjoy them for eternity.

Is there anyone so foolish as not to wish to enjoy his riches for ever? Then let us transfer them there. We shall need neither ship nor horse to transport them, because God has solved that problem for us, by giving us the poor, the lame, the blind and the sick. He has entrusted to them the task of carrying our riches into heaven.

2. *Christ and the poor:**

I was hungry and you did not give me to eat:

Words of the deepest meaning. Is there a heart so stony that it is not moved by them? Your Lord goes hungry, and you, who live among plenty, ignore him, even though it is merely a little bread which he asks from you, to relieve his hunger. Your Lord is shivering with cold, and you, dressed in your fine clothes, will not even glance at him. . . .

What utter madness! Who will defend you? What pardon can you hope to attain, when Christ stood before your door in the garments of the poor and you had not pity on him? I gave alms, you may say to me. But did you give all that you could?

What will you say then, when you are in the midst of those terrible torments? Then you will remember my preaching, but it will be futile then. The rich man also remembered and asked for time to repent. He asked that Lazarus might be sent to him with a drop of water on his finger. But that request was not granted . . . because it is impossible to mingle a drop of alms with that stony heart.

3. *Almsdeeds—good business deals:*

Today the market of almsdeeds is open. The prisoners flock there, as do the poor, those who wander round our streets begging, those

* Short extracts taken here and there from various Homilies on this subject, which is a common one in the Fathers about this time of the year. The main theme is always the same—if almsdeeds bring about the forgiveness of sins it is simply because Christ himself receives them, through the hands of his poor (Transl.).

who mourn. . . . This is like a great fair, and as in all such gatherings, the object is to buy cheaply and to sell at a good price. . . . That is the business deal which God proposes to us, the ability to buy sanctifying grace with but a little money and then sell it at a great price. Here justification can be bought for a piece of bread, an old garment, a cup of water. Fresh water! An alms without expense! What will be the reward then of the one who hands over garments, money or other goods?

Whenever you have something of little value, therefore, hurry to buy from such a great Lord. While the fair is open buy your salvation with your almsdeeds. He who clothes a poor man clothes Christ. You know it, you say? Of course you do; but let us be careful lest, through so much repetition of it, we become careless and give any old thing to the Lord!

4. *Lending to God:*

To give alms is a loan we make to God so that he may return to us his mercy. He who gives to the poor lends to God, say the Holy Scriptures (Prov. 19. 17), because, knowing our avarice and ambition—knowing that we always seek to gain something by whatever we do—Holy Scripture does not wish to say that what we give to the poor we give to God. That might not appear a good business deal to us! Therefore it is said that what we give to the poor is a loan made to God, and he becomes our debtor.

You may choose; he can be either your judge or your debtor. A debtor is always grateful. A judge need not have any feelings of gratitude, especially when it is he who has done the lending!

5. *God guarantor of the poor:*

Let us see the real reason why God receives as a credit made to him whatever we give to the poor. He knows that our avarice never lends anything without a guarantee. All who lend demand a security or a guarantor. Knowing all this, and also knowing that the poor have no security to offer and that, on the other hand, no one is moved to lend out of pity, but at the thought of some gain; and seeing that, because of this, the poor were in danger through their very need, and the rich through their lack of mercy, he gives himself as their guarantor. You have no confidence in the poor man because of his very poverty? Then have confidence in my riches, says the Lord. You need have no fear. The one to whom you lend is myself. What profit shall I give you? Although it may appear sinful to ask God to give an account of himself, still, in order to accommodate myself to your avarice and break down your lack of mercy, let us study this business deal together. . . .

When you lend to others, what do you gain in return. One per cent? If you are honest, yes! If you allow yourself to be carried away by your avarice, perhaps you gain double or treble that. Well;

I will outdo you and vanquish your weakness. . . . You usually ask one per cent. What will you say to a hundred for one?

Very well, Lord! I will give you my loan now—alms given to the poor. But when will you pay me? I would like to see the conditions in order to sign the contract. Fix the time of payment for me. . . .

There is really no need for such a thing, because the Lord is faithful to his word (Ps. 144. 13), but since it is the custom for the debtor to indicate the time when he will pay his debt, listen and see when and where God will return the debt, no matter what you have given to his poor! When the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory.

We can only admire the kindness with which the debtor returns what is his to his creditor on that occasion. Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. Why? Because I was thirsty. . . . But, Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty, you who are the object of all expectant eyes and who gives to all their food in due time? What wonderful goodness! Your mercy makes you hide your very dignity; makes you come out in favour of your poor and say: I was hungry, and you gave me to eat. He who gives their supply of water to the seas, the rivers and the fountains of the earth says: I was thirsty and you gave me to drink! We clothe him who himself clothes the heaven and the earth and the whole Church. When you were baptized in Christ you clothed yourselves in Christ (Gal. 3. 27). You, in prison—you who redeemed the world? . . .

Explain this to us, because otherwise our faith may fail. When have we seen you in such need and have helped you? As long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it to me. Is it not true then, that he who gives to the poor lends to God?

6. *Almsdeeds—the greatest virtue at the day of judgement:*

It is to be wondered at that he does not mention any other virtue at the judgement scene. He could so easily have said: Come, ye blessed, because you have been chaste. . . . but he is silent about them, not because they are virtues which are too small to be mentioned, but simply because, compared with charity, they are secondary. . . . Just as he offers the kingdom to those on his right hand because of their generosity, so he rejects those on his left for their meanness. I was hungry and you did not give me to eat! He could have said, Because you were adulterers, robbers. . . . all that is obviously evil; but less so than inhumanity and hardness of heart. I do not judge, he says, the sin; but the lack of mercy. I do not judge sinners, save those who have despised this easy means of almsdeeds to wash away their sins. I condemn lack of mercy as the source of all sin; and I praise mercy as the root of all good.

7. *Final exhortation:*

Beautiful are your promises, O Lord! Beautiful the kingdom which you promise us and also beautiful the hell with which you threaten us. The former encourages, the latter frightens us. You threaten us with the flames so that we may deliver ourselves from them; you frighten us with your words so as not to have to condemn us with your actions.

Let us admit that the mercy of God has won the day; let us make him our debtor, not our judge. . . .

And at this moment I am reminded of another great act of generosity on the part of our Judge. If one lends to a poor man who afterwards becomes rich, he will pay the debt—but in secret, so that no one may be aware of his former poverty. God receives the loan in a hidden way, through the hands of the poor, but when he returns it he does so in the sight of all the nations of the earth. . . .

But why did not God give to the poor what he has given to me? He could have done so, obviously; but he has ordained things in such a way that neither your riches remains without fruit, nor his poverty without reward. To you he has granted this grace, that through almsdeeds you may be truly rich. Do you not see that the rich man, through his alms, builds up for himself eternal riches? On the other hand, the poor man, who has no riches with which to gain that eternal happiness, has his poverty—by means of which he too can gain heaven in his patience. We are told that the patience of the poor will not perish for ever (Ps. 9. 19).

II. ST AUGUSTINE

(Augustine sees in the person of John the type and figure of the humble man, and it is the main theme of his homilies on this Gospel. We shall give some extracts from them, especially those concerned with humility.)

The three acts of humility

1. *What are they?*

Who is the proud man? He who will not do penance, confessing his sins so as to cure them by means of his humility. Who is proud? He who attributes to himself the little good he possesses, despising divine mercy. Who is proud? The man who, while attributing to God whatever God has given him, still insults those who have not received such things and considers himself above them. . . .

First, everyone should do salutary penance, but it must be such as to correct us, not to serve as a mockery of God. Then, when each one has begun to live as he should after such a period of penance, he should think deeply, lest he attribute to his own strength the little good he may possess; and he should give thanks to God who

has given him the grace to live a holy life, who has called him and illuminated him. Is the work finished then? By no means; it still remains for him not to consider himself better than others, who do not live as he does. . . .

That is the Catholic teaching; no one does good except it be by the grace of God. The evil a man does is his own; the good is the work of God. When he begins to live aright, let him not attribute it to himself. And when he knows that it is not his own work, then let him give thanks to God, who has given it to him. When he is justified, let him not insult one who is not, or consider himself above such a one. God's grace has not been exhausted in you, and there is still some left over for that poor unfortunate.

2. *Recognize that we are all sinners:*(a) *The struggles of this life:*

Our peace consists in being with God by faith here below and face to face in heaven. However, our present peace is rather a consolation in misery than joy in happiness. Even in our true justification there is a large element of forgiveness of sins, greater even than perfection in the virtues. The proof of this is in the Lord's Prayer. Forgive us our trespasses . . . a prayer which is not merely for those who live by means of a dead faith, without good works; but also for those who live by faith and charity. The reason, enclosed in this corruptible body, does not completely dominate concupiscence, so that this prayer is necessary, even for the just. Even though they may tame their vices, they do not accomplish this without a struggle, from which it comes that in this, our land of weakness, something always escapes us, even in the case of those who fight well. . . .

Man's life on this earth is temptation, and who except the proud man dares presume that he does not need to ask God's help, saying: Forgive us our debts. . . . Such a one is not great, he is merely puffed up and foolish; and God resists him, giving his graces to the humble.

(b) *Even the saints committed sins:*

Who is the man who is not a sinner? Begin with the priests. God told them to offer sacrifice first for their own sins, and then for those of the people (Lev. 16. 6; Heb. 7. 27). But you may say that such was the law in the Old Testament. . . . Look, my brothers; because God willed it, I am a priest, and yet I recognize that I am also a sinner; with you, I beat my breast, like you I hope for forgiveness and ask God for his mercy. But perhaps the holy apostles? . . . Let us ask them. Tell us, holy apostles, after the ascension of the Lord and the coming of the Holy Spirit, did you cease to be sinners? One of them comes forward and speaks for all the rest. Who? The one most loved by the Lord, who rested on his breast. He tells us: Sin is with us; if we deny that, we are cheating ourselves; it means

that truth does not dwell in us (1 John 1. 8). It is John, the eagle who flew so high that he was able to contemplate the sublime truth and say that in the beginning was the Word; he it is who assures us, Sin is with us and if we deny that, we are cheating ourselves. He also tells us, if we confess our sins, God who is just and faithful will forgive them. . . .

(c) Conclusion:

Lord, do not turn away your face from him who is your work, but turn it away from mine! You made one thing, I another. You made my nature, I its vices. Cure them, and my nature will be whole and clean again.

Let us live good lives, never presuming that we are without sin. Thus our lives will merit praise and we shall obtain pardon. The more hardened sinners forget their own sins, the more curious they show themselves in searching out those of others. This they do, not to heal, but to wound. Having no excuse themselves, they are always ready to accuse others. That is not the way to pray and to placate the God who has taught us to say: I know my faults and my sin is always before me (Ps. 50. 5). . . . Brethren, sin cannot be allowed to escape immune from punishment. Hear, then, what God says to us: Either you punish yourselves or I will punish you. Sin will receive its just punishment, either from man, who admits it, or from God who judges it. . . .

It is better to give God thanks for small things than to be proud of ourselves in great ones. Because God will raise him up to greater things who is grateful for small ones. If he who has great things is unfortunate, they will be taken away from him. To him who has, shall be given. To him who has not, even that which he hath shall be taken from him. And how can they be taken away from one who has them not? Does he possess anything or not? He does, but it is as though he did not possess anything. Therefore God will take from him what is his (God's) and leave him alone with his own iniquity.

(d) Exhortation to sinners:

Let them come to you and hear you, those who invoke your pardon; let them learn from your humility and weakness. Let him hear who, weighed down by the burden of his sins, does not even dare to lift up his eyes to heaven, but beats his breast, from afar off. . . . Let the centurion hear it . . . Zachaeus . . . that sinful woman of the town, who kissed his feet, with tears which were more copious the farther away she had been from the following in his footsteps. Let all the sick and all sinners hear you, who were so often accused of living in their company. These will hear you, and will remember their own sins in the midst of their humility, remembering also your abundant mercy, since: Where sin abounded, grace did even more abound (Rom. 5. 20).

III. ST GREGORY THE GREAT

(Extracts from Hom. 7 on the Gospel. PL. 74, 1099-1103.)

Humility:

In this connection we should note and ponder carefully how holy men, in order to safeguard themselves in humility, when they know many things perfectly, try to keep before their minds that which they do not know. Thus they remind themselves, on the one hand, of their own limitations, and on the other, they are not raised above themselves by those things in which they are proficient. Knowledge is indeed a virtue; but humility is the guardian of them all. For the future, then, be humble in mind about whatever you may know, lest the wind of vanity may carry off those very things which the virtue of knowledge has stored up.

When, therefore, you do any good, always recall to mind the sins you may have committed, so that while you are mindful of the evil you may have done, your minds will never rejoice indiscreetly over the good you do. Let each esteem his neighbour as better than himself, even those who are strangers to you; yes, even those whom you may see do something which is wrong, because you do not know the good which may be hidden in them. Let each be zealous to be worthy of esteem; yet at the same time, let him live as if he knew not that he was so esteemed, lest by proudly claiming esteem, he may lose it. . . .

If, therefore, holy men, even when they do mighty things, consider themselves worthless, what must be said of those who, without any fruit of virtue, are yet puffed up with pride? Works, however good, are as nothing unless seasoned with humility. A great deed, done proudly, lowers a man rather than uplifts him. He who would gather virtue without humility is like one who carries dust in the face of the wind; and where he appears to possess something, he is in fact blinded from that same thing and made worse by it.

Therefore, in all that you do, hold fast to humility as the root of all virtues and good works. Pay no heed to the things in which you are better than others, but to those in which you are worse; so that, while you keep ever before you the example of those who are better than yourself, you may, through humility, be able to ascend to greater things, through the bountiful mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be honour and glory for ever and ever.

SECTION IV. THEOLOGIANS

I. ST THOMAS AQUINAS

(Extracts and summary of his teaching on vainglory and humility, 2-2. q. 132 and 161.)

1. *Vainglory:*

The desire for glory does not, of itself, imply a sin; but the desire for empty or vain glory does. . . .

Now glory may be called vain in three ways: First, on the part of the thing which is desired; as when a man seeks glory for something which is unworthy of it, for instance, when he seeks it for something which is perishable or frail; secondly, on the part of him from whom he seeks glory, for instance, a man whose judgement is uncertain; thirdly, on the part of the man who seeks glory, in that he does not refer the desire of his own glory to its due end, such as God's honour or the good of his neighbour (art. 1. c.).

It is requisite for man's perfection that he should know himself, but not that he should be known by others, wherefore it is not to be desired for itself. It may, however, be desired as being useful for something, either in order that God may be glorified in men, or that men may become better by reason of the good they know to be in another man, or in order that man, knowing by the testimony of others' praise the good which is in him, may himself strive to persevere therein and to become better (*ibid. ad 3um*).

2. *What kind of sin is it?*

A sin is mortal through being contrary to charity. Now the sin of vainglory does not seem to be contrary to charity in itself, as regards the love of our neighbour; but it may be contrary to charity as regards the love of God, and that in two ways. In one way, by reason of the matter about which one glories; for instance, when one glories in something false, that is opposed to the reverence we owe to God (Ezech. 27. 2; 1 Cor. 4. 7). Or again, when a man prefers to God the temporal good in which he glories, for this is forbidden. Or when a man prefers the testimony of men to that of God. . . .

In another way vainglory may be contrary to charity, on the part of him who glories, in that he refers his intention to glory as his last end; so that he directs even virtuous acts thereto and, in order to attain it, forbears not from doing even that which is against God. In this way it is a mortal sin (art. 3).

It is a capital vice:

Because many other vices arise from it. Among the main ones are: disobedience, boastfulness, hypocrisy, contention, obstinacy, discord and the love of novelties.

3. *Humility:*

A virtue which restrains and tempers the mind, lest it tend to high things immoderately. . . . It belongs properly to humility that a man restrain himself from being borne towards that which is above him. For this purpose he must know his disproportion to that which surpasses his capacity. Hence knowledge of one's own deficiency belongs to humility, as a rule guiding the appetite. Nevertheless, humility is essentially in the appetite itself. . . . It would seem to denote in the first place man's subjection to God; and for this reason Augustine ascribes humility, which he understands poverty of spirit, to the gift of fear.

We may consider two things in man, namely, that which is God's, and that which is man's. Whatever pertains to defect is man's; but whatever pertains to man's welfare and perfection is God's. . . . Humility properly regards the reverence whereby man is subject to God. Wherefore, every man, in respect of that which is his own, ought to subject himself to every neighbour, in respect of that which the latter has of God's; but humility does not require a man to subject what he has of God's to that which may seem to be God's in another. For those who have a share of God's gifts know that they have them. . . .

It is not the greatest of the virtues, it takes its place after the theological virtues, after the intellectual virtues which regard the reason itself, and after justice, especially legal justice.

Why Christ commended it so much:

Because it especially removes the obstacle to man's spiritual welfare, consisting in man's aiming at heavenly and spiritual things, in which he is hindered by striving to become great in earthly things. . . . Thus, humility is as it were a disposition to man's untrammelled access to spiritual and divine goods.

4. *Pride:*

Two things are to be observed in sin, conversion to a mutable good, and this is the material part of sin; and aversion from the immutable good, and this gives sin its formal aspect and complement. Now on the part of this conversion here is no need for pride to be the greatest of sins. . . . But on the part of the aversion, pride has extreme gravity, because in other sins man turns away from God, either through ignorance or through weakness, or through desire for any other good whatever; whereas pride denotes aversion from God simply through being unwilling to be subject to God and his rule. Hence Boethius says that, while all vices flee from God, pride alone withstands God. . . . Wherefore aversion from God and his commandments, which is a consequence as it were in other sins, belongs to pride by its very nature, for its act is the contempt of God.

The first to appear among the grievous sins and the last to vanish on re-conversion to God:

Among the grievous sins the first is pride as the cause whereby other sins are made more grievous. And as that which is the first in causing sins is the last in the withdrawal from sin, a gloss on Ps. 18. 13: I shall be cleansed from the greatest sin, says: Namely, from the sin of pride, which is the last in those who return to God and the first in those who withdraw from God. . . .

II. ST BONAVENTURE

(Extracts from *De Perfectione vitae ad sorores*, which is now generally numbered among his works, and which was probably written for the advice of the Abbess Isabel, sister of St Louis of France.)

1. Knowledge of oneself:

First of all, the bride of Christ who wishes to rise to the heights of perfection must begin by fixing her attention on herself; wherefore, do you enter into the secret place of your own conscience, and there, with diligent care, investigate, examine and see all those defects, all those habits, affections, works, all those sins, past and present. Should you find anything which is wrong, deplore it at once with bitter sorrow of heart. . . .

And that you may better be able to attain this knowledge, dear Mother, you should know that all our sins and evils are committed either from negligence, concupiscence or malice. Around those three points should turn the consideration of your own faults; there is no other way by which you may reach a perfect knowledge of yourself.

(a) Sins of negligence:

These usually take place in the outer bastions of our heart's defences, in not guarding the affection, in the use of our time, in a twisted end being given to our actions. . . . At the same time you must examine yourself about negligence in reading, in prayer, in your work. . . . if you wish to bring forth fruit in good season; but remember, one of these things is not enough without the others. You should also examine yourself and see how negligent you are, or at least have been, in repenting, in resisting, in making use of God's graces. . . .

(b) Sins of concupiscence:

The saint here restricts himself to those usually found in a community such as the one to which he was writing. He mentions: Pleasures of all kinds in dress, in food; curiosity, which includes idle chatter and gossip of all kinds, love of novelties; vanity in small and big things, which can take the form of seeking for praise, honours, offices in the community.

(c) Sins of malice:

Under this heading he includes such things as: anger, both in the form of its external manifestation and also inward resentment against another in the community. Envy, which delights in the evils which befall our neighbour and is sad at his or her prosperity. Laziness, under which heading he also includes the sin of tepidity.

2. Humility:

(a) Importance, and means to acquire it:

He who stores up virtues without humility, says St Gregory, is like a man who carries dust in the face of a high wind. Once you know your defects, then humility should be the first step, having for its model our Lord himself, who said: Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart. But let it be true humility, because there are those who go around bowed down and in mourning, but inwardly they are full of deceit.

This virtue is an effect of self-knowledge, because St Bernard defines it as a virtue by which a man, with a true knowledge of himself, learns to despise himself. It can be attained by three paths; the first is the consideration of God as the true author of all things—he made us and we are his. It is the Lord who has made us, not we ourselves. Therefore Lucifer, proud at the contemplation of his own beauty, was persecuted by that humiliation which always follows pride, and was condemned.

The second path is a consideration of the example of Christ, who was held as a leper for our sake (Is. 53. 4). . . . The servant is not better than his master.

The third way is through a consideration of the very condition of your being. Whence did you come and whither are you going? You came from original sin and from the dust of the earth. You may well say, with the three boys in the furnace of flames: we are humiliated today in the sight of the whole earth because of our sins.

(b) Conclusion:

Humility is a sure way to secure an increase of grace. The holy Virgin, in her *Magnificat*, said that she was chosen by God because he saw her humility. St Augustine says that the more empty we are of the ugly swellings of pride, the more full we shall be of charity. Grace is like a stream of water which ever seeks a slope by which it may run down into the valley below. The greater the slope of your humility, the greater will be the force of grace.

III. ST ROBERT BELLARMINE

(According to St Robert, the Church presents to us during these Sundays of Advent various aspects of John the Baptist; on the

second Sunday she talks to us of his person, and the third, of his office, and on the fourth of his preaching. We shall give a summary of the matter which pertains to this Sunday.)

1. The scene:

The Jews were expecting the Messiah from one day to the next; therefore, when they saw John, they thought that he might be the Christ, and with reason. They were dealing with one who was unknown, who had appeared from the desert, a great orator, learned, educated and prudent. One who might always have lived in a large town. He preaches with effect, and he gives most prudent advice to all sections of the community.

When he denies that he is the Christ they suspect that he may be Elias, because he also seemed to answer to the description they had of the great prophet. When he denies this also they suspect that he may be at least a new prophet, one who would announce the future to them. But in that sense of the word he is not a prophet.

John says exactly what he is: The voice of one crying in the wilderness; and so that they may be sure of his position in the true order of things he tells them that Christ has already come and that he is greater than John.

At this point it is well to underline the great humility of John, who need not have stooped so low. But as usual, the greater saints are those who are most humble. The greatness of Christ is also manifest, because if he is greater than the greatest of men, then he must be more than mere man.

(a) The voice:

i. *he was only a voice*—he had no other office except to speak, and that of Christ. For this he gave up a wife, family, employment—everything.

ii. *all in him was a voice*, including his very garments and food.

iii. *because he was so like Christ in many things*—the voice being the expression of an idea. In everything John represented Christ. Angels announced him, he was born of a barren mother . . . the very image of Christian preachers: free from all earthly preoccupations, they must preach, not merely by word of mouth, but also by their lives, as the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Their motto must be that of Paul: Be ye imitators of me as I am of Christ.

(b) A voice which cries out:

Because he is God's instrument—and God does not merely speak to us, he cries out in a loud voice, through creatures and their beauty, through the magnitude of the things which he has made; by means of his promises of eternal life and his threats of eternal death, which would resound like thunder in our ears if we were not deaf.

Recall that, in this world, when any honour is promised to a man, labour is also required of him. See what men are capable of in order to free themselves from death. The Law tells us of fear which excuses people who act under its impulse—and yet we do not fear the threat of eternal death! How deaf are we!

Preachers must be like trumpets, who only play the note demanded of them by the composer—the trumpets of God! When the preacher expounds his own thoughts and seeks praise for his learning and eloquence, he ceases to be the trumpet of God.

(c) In the desert:

God speaks more often in the solitude of the heart—and we live in the midst of turmoil. For that reason we do not hear him. When thou art praying, go into thy inner room and shut the door upon thyself, and so pray to thy Father in secret. . . . But you may object to this: I have no time. Yes you have, if you wish it. Let us make a very unjust division: twelve hours for the body, ten for business! There are still two left for the soul. If you will not admit even that division, how can we believe that you even have a soul?

Just because we will not, of ourselves, give a little time to the soul, so God forces us to do so by means of illness, prison and other calamities. We will not leave the things of this world, but God makes us leave them. How many people have been condemned to death who, during life, did not wish to hear a word about God, and have been converted in prison.

2. He is in the midst of you:

(a) Christ, son of a worker, in the hidden life:

He could have manifested himself, but he would not take over John's office. Instead he waited until he was presented to the people by John. A great example for our ambition to contemplate! To remove any suspicion of favouritism, John did not know the Saviour.

(b) in our superiors:

He does the same in all those who are his vicars on earth—our superiors. Not merely in the persons of the priests and apostles: He that heareth you heareth me, but also in the persons of masters who were Gentiles, as St Paul testifies: Obey your masters in the flesh as you would Christ himself (Eph. 6. 5; Col. 3. 22). What peace there would be in the world if all inferiors saw Christ in their superiors and if the latter treated their inferiors with the love of Christ! Christ is always among us like this, but we do not see him or recognize him. He is in the poor—but we do not recognize him either. We do not even see him in the Eucharist, otherwise we would go to communion more often and with greater fervour.

SECTION V. SPIRITUAL WRITERS

I. ST TERESA OF AVILA

(Extracts from her writings which deal with humility in all its aspects.)

The nature of humility

1. *It is truth:*

Let us learn from this, sisters, that if we are in any way to grow like our God and Spouse, we shall do well always to study earnestly to walk in this truth. I do not mean simply that we must not tell falsehoods, for as far as that is concerned, Glory be to God, I know that in these convents of yours you take very great care never to lie about anything for any reason whatsoever. I mean that we must walk in truth, in the presence of God and man, in every way possible to us. In particular we must not desire to be reputed better than we are, and in all that we do, we must attribute to God what is his, and to ourselves what is ours, trying to seek after truth in everything. If we do that, we shall make small account of the world, for it is all lies and falsehood and for that very reason cannot endure.

I was wondering once why our Lord so dearly loved this virtue of humility; and all of a sudden—without, I think, my having thought of it previously, the following reason came into my mind: That it is because God is the sovereign Truth and to be humble is to walk in truth, for it is absolutely true to say that we have nothing of ourselves, but only misery and nothingness; and anyone who fails to understand this is walking in falsehood. He who best understands it is most pleasing to Sovereign Truth because he is walking in truth (*Int. Castle*, VI. x).

2. *Self-knowledge essential:*

However high a state the soul may have attained, self-knowledge is incumbent upon it, and this it will never be able to neglect even should it so desire. Humility must always be doing its work, like a bee making honey in a hive; without humility all will be lost. Still we should remember that the bee is always flying about from flower to flower, and in the same way, believe me, the soul must sometimes emerge from self-knowledge and soar aloft in meditation upon the greatness and the majesty of its God. Doing this will help it to realize its own baseness better than thinking of its own nature, and it will be freer from the reptiles which enter the first rooms—that is, the rooms of self-knowledge. For although, as I say, it is through the abundant mercy of God that the soul studies to know itself, yet excess is as bad as defect, and believe me, we shall reach greater heights of virtue by thinking about the virtue of God than

if we stay in our own little plot of ground and tie ourselves down to it completely.

I do not know if I have explained this clearly; self-knowledge is so important that, even if you were raised right up to the heavens, I should like you never to relax your cultivation of it. So long as we are on this earth nothing matters so much to us as this humility. And so I repeat that it is a very good thing—excellent indeed—to enter first the room where humility is acquired, rather than begin by flying off to the other rooms. For that is the way to make progress, and if we have a safe, level road to walk along, why should we desire wings to fly? Let us rather try to get the greatest possible profit out of walking. As I see it, we shall never be able to succeed in knowing ourselves unless we seek to know God. Let us think of his greatness, and then come back to our own baseness; by looking at his purity we shall see our foulness; by meditating on his humility we shall see how far we are from being humble (*Int. Castle*, I. 2).

3. *False humility:*

Avoid being bashful with God, as some people are, in the belief that they are being humble. It would not be humility on your part if the King were to do you a favour and you refused to accept it; but you would be showing humility by taking it and being pleased with it, yet realizing how far you are from being worthy of it. A fine humility it would be if I had the Emperor of heaven and earth in my house, coming to it to do me a favour and to delight in my company, and I were so humble that I would not answer his questions nor remain with him, nor accept what he gave me, but left him alone. Or if he were to speak to me and beg me to ask for what I wanted, and I were so humble that I preferred to remain poor and even let him go away, so that he would see that I had not sufficient resolution. Have nothing to do with that kind of humility, daughters, but speak with him as with a Father, a Brother, a Lord and a Spouse—sometimes in one way and sometimes in another, he will teach you what you are to do to please him (*Way of Perfection*, ch. 28).

4. *True humility brings peace and content:*

Genuine humility does not produce inward turmoil, nor does it cause unrest in the soul, or bring it darkness or aridity; on the contrary, it cheers it and produces in it the opposite effects—quietness, sweetness and light. Though it causes us distress, we are comforted to see what a great favour God is granting us by sending us that distress, and how well the soul is occupied. Grieved as it is at having offended God, it is also encouraged by his mercy. It is sufficiently enlightened to feel ashamed, but it praises his majesty, who for so long has borne with it. In that other humility which is the work of the devil, the soul has not light enough to do anything good and thinks of God as one who is always wielding fire and sword.

It pictures God's righteousness, and although it has faith in his mercy, for the devil is not powerful enough to make it lose its faith, yet this is not such as to bring me consolation, for, when my soul considers God's mercy, this only increases its torments, since I realize that it involves me in greater obligations (*Life*, ch. 30).

5. *The practice of humility:*

I never seem unable to find a reason for thinking I am being virtuous when I make excuses for myself. There are times when this is lawful, and when not to do it would be wrong, but I have not the discretion, or better, the humility, to do it only when it is fitting. For indeed, it takes great humility to find oneself unjustly condemned and be silent; and to do this is to imitate the Lord who set us free from all our sins. . . . (*Way of Perfection*, ch. 15).

I think it is very important to accustom oneself to practise this virtue, and to endeavour to obtain from the Lord the true humility which must result from it. The truly humble person will have a genuine desire to be thought little of, and persecuted, and condemned unjustly, even in serious matters. For, if she desires to imitate the Lord, how can she do better than in this? And no bodily strength is necessary here, nor the aid of anyone save God.

I have never heard anything bad said about me which I did not clearly realize fell short of the truth. If I had not sometimes—often indeed—offended God in the ways they referred to, I had done so in many other ways, and I felt they had treated me far too indulgently in saying nothing about these. I much preferred people to say what was not true about me than to tell the truth about me. . . . So I should like you to begin to realize this at an early stage, and I want each of you to ponder how much there is to be gained in every way by this virtue, and how, so far as I can see, there is nothing to be lost by it. The chief thing we gain is being able, in some degree, to follow the Lord (*ibid.*).

6. *Accept humble offices:*

Remember that there must be someone to cook the meals and count yourselves happy in being able to serve like Martha. Reflect that true humility consists to a great extent in being ready for what the Lord desires to do with you and happy that he should do it, and in always considering yourselves unworthy to be his servants. . . . I do not mean that it is for us to say what we should do, but that we must do our best in everything, for the choice is not ours, but the Lord's. If after many years he is pleased to give each of us her office, it would be a curious kind of humility for you to want to choose; let the Lord of the house do that, for he is wise and powerful and knows what is best for you and for himself as well. . . . What better sign of friendship is there, than for him to give you what he gave himself? (*Way of Perfection*, ch. 17).

7. *Sure road to union with God:*

It is the queen which gives the King most trouble in this game and all the other pieces support her. There is no queen who can beat this King as well as humility can; for humility brought him down from heaven into the Virgin's womb, and with humility we can draw him into our souls by a single hair. Be sure that he will give most humility to him who has most already, and least to him who has least. I cannot understand how humility exists, or can exist, without love, or love without humility; and it is impossible for these two virtues to exist save where there is great detachment from all created things (*Way of Perfection*, ch. 16).

II. FRAY LUIS OF GRANADA

(A brief summary of the remedies for pride which he outlines in *The Sinner's Guide*, ch. 4).

Its punishment:

Pride, the mother of all vices, often enters into our actions in a disguised fashion, pretending good motives, such as justice, etc. This danger can be remedied only by a careful consideration of various things which will counteract our natural pride in ourselves.

(a) *The punishment of the sin of pride in the angels who fell:*

Wherefore Augustine says that humility makes men like the angels, while pride made the angels devils. St Bernard says that pride casts a man down from the highest place to the very lowest; while humility raises a man from the lowest place to that which is the highest of all.

(b) *The example of Christ, our model:*

If we will not take example from other men, at least let us take it from Christ, who became man, not merely to redeem us, but also to humble our pride.

(c) *Our own nothingness:*

Within ourselves we shall find many things which should make us humble. Think of what we were before our birth; what we have been since and are now; what we shall be after death.

(d) *What we have in the sight of God:*

How little merit we have gained; what little service we have rendered to him, when so many of our vices have been clothed in the likeness of virtues, and some of our virtues have been slain by vainglory. Even our good actions were done so many times with such imperfection that they are almost a reason for asking pardon of God than for pride in them.

St Bernard says that there are three fears which should always be in our heart; one when we are in the state of grace, one when we have

lost it and another when we have recovered it. We should be afraid, when we are in a state of grace, lest we should lose that state; when we have lost it, then we have even more cause for fear, because without it we are helpless. When we recover it again, then we must be afraid to lose it once more.

SECTION VI. PAPAL TEXTS

1. *The Lord is at hand:*

So resplendent is the light of the Catholic revelation that it spreads over all sciences the brightness of its rays! So great is the force of the evangelical teachings that they root even more deeply the precepts of the natural law. So great is the force of this truth and the morality taught by Christ that even the material standards of living of members of the family and of the whole of society have found in them effective support and encouragement. The Church, in spite of preaching Christ crucified, a scandal and a folly in the eyes of many, came to be the teacher and prime defender of civilization which she rescued from the attacks of the barbarians, and managed to bring even the very enemies into the fold. . . . The civilization of the world is essentially Christian; and it is more durable, bears greater fruit, in so far as it is more truly Christian. It declines the more readily, to the intense harm of human society, the more it departs from the Christian ideal (Pius X, *In fermo proposito*, 4).

2. *The danger of riches, badly used:*

Let the rich be duly warned, then, that their money will not free them from sorrow and that they are useless in that eternal life which is to come; rather, they may hinder us. They should be in terror at the threats uttered by Christ, since a day will come when they will be called to a strict account of the use they have made of those riches (Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*).

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. If a man considers that his greatest treasure is riches, there will be his heart, and there will be no place in that heart for the true treasures, for God and his justice (Pius XII, 20 June 1948).

3. *The need for prayer and penance:*

When the apostles asked our Lord why they could not cast out an unclean spirit, Christ replied: This kind cannot be cast out except by prayer and fasting. Nor can the present ills of society be vanquished without a universal crusade of prayer and penance (Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*).

4. *The excessive desire for material prosperity:*

The whole of the Encyclical *Caritate Christi* of Pius XI is dedicated to this idea and should be studied in detail.

5. *The voice of the Church—that of one crying in the wilderness:*
Cf. Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, n. 2; Pius XII, *Christmas Message*, 1942, 1943.

SECTION VII. HISTORICAL AND LITERARY MISCELLANY

I. SINCERITY AND TRUTH

The very nature of self-love and the human *ego* consists in not loving anything except itself. . . . Man wishes to be great, and sees that he is so small; happy, and finds that he is miserable; perfect, and sees himself full of imperfections. He wishes to stand high in the esteem of others, and sees his defects make him but the object of aversion and scorn. This embarrassing situation in which he finds himself produces in him the most unjust and cruel passion that could ever be imagined, because he conceives a mortal hatred for the truth which convinces him of his defects. He would love to destroy it utterly, but since he cannot destroy it in itself, he does so, as far as he can, in his own mind and in the minds of others. That is, he tries his best to hide his defects from himself and from others, and he cannot endure it when they are laid bare. . . .

Is it not true that we hate truth and those who tell it to us; while at the same time we are pleased when others are deceived about us and esteem us at more than our real worth? Here is a proof which fills me with horror when I think of it. The Catholic faith does not oblige us to confess our sins to the whole world. . . . There is only one man to whom she orders us to open our consciences, and she binds him to inviolable secrecy, so that what he knows is within him as if it were not known at all. . . . Can anything more charitable and more sweet be imagined! Yet such is the corruption of human nature that it finds this hard, and it is the main reason why a great part of Europe rose up against the Church. . . .

Man is nothing but a deceitful liar, to himself and to others around him. He does not wish to hear the truth about himself from others. Therefore nobody speaks about us to our face as they do behind our backs. In fact, there would be few friendships in the world were each one to know what his friend says about him when he is not there, even though he may then be speaking sincerely and telling the truth. All this, so far removed from justice and truth, has its roots in the very heart of humanity (Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*).

II. REJOICE IN THE LORD

We are told in the life of Philip Neri how he would gather together the children of Rome, teach them games, play with them, get them

to act little plays and encourage them to enjoy themselves. He made one condition only, that they should not sin. Our Lord knows well how to use this type of net to catch souls, he used to say. On another occasion, when he was asked how he could stand the noise of so many children shouting and laughing all around him, he replied: So long as they do not offend God they can chop wood on my back for all I care.

SECTION VIII. SERMON SCHEMES

I. LITURGICAL

Rejoice in the Lord

1. Joy in the liturgy:

The liturgy is full of the most varied sentiments, but the outstanding one is that of joy, a theme which has its rightful place especially in the Sundays after Easter and at Christmas. As if to anticipate both those joyful periods of the Church's year, she selects one Sunday in Advent and another in Lent.

(a) Gaudete Sunday is the name generally given to the third Sunday of Advent:

- i. the first words of the Introit and the Epistle give rise to the name;
- ii. the external elements in the representation of the liturgy of today express the same idea;
- iii. the rose colour of the vestments; the organ sounds again and the altar is adorned with flowers.

(b) We find similar conditions attached to the fourth Sunday of Lent—Laetare Sunday:

The Church wishes to give us a day of rest, so that, after it, we may return with greater fervour to our penance in preparation for Christmas (cf. General Comments, Sec. 2).

2. The Lord is near:

This is the theme. In spite of all the misery and poverty of the modern world, which can strike terror into the hearts of even the strongest, there is still a supernatural motive for joy—the fact that Christ is near. This Sunday marks a new step in the preparation for his coming.

- (a) In the liturgy of the 1st Sunday there is little open mention of it;
- (b) the second Sunday is more explicit, in the Introit, for example.
- (c) On this Sunday all that changes; now the theme is: The Lord is near at hand; come, let us adore him. From now on, in both

breviary and missal, the theme is developed more and more; e.g. the special antiphons for the *Magnificat*.

(d) In general we can say that there are two main elements in this liturgical preparation; one of hope and joy at the coming of the Messiah to redeem us; the other a warning that we must prepare our hearts to receive him.

3. Our preparation for Christmas:

In the first Sunday the liturgy indicates that the way of preparation is by that of penance. Today we must unite with that the theme of the joy that should accompany our mortification.

(a) An excellent way of doing this is by a deeper penetration into the spirit of the liturgy of Advent, especially the antiphons of the breviary, which should be better known.

(b) In general, we might say that, since the recent Popes have all insisted so much on the people taking a greater share in the liturgy, Advent is one of the periods of the year when greater emphasis might be laid on that sharing.

II. THE EPISTLE

A: Christian Joy

1. The contrast of two figures:

(a) St Paul, a prisoner in Rome, exhorts the faithful to rejoice:

- i. the whole of the passage in today's Epistle shows us a heart full of rejoicing;
- ii. it is not a natural joy, but a supernatural one; not worldly or carnal, but spiritual and divine. Chained as he was, deprived of liberty and of light even, Paul has no human motives for rejoicing.

(b) We may contrast with Paul the figure of the poet Ovid:

- i. exiled by Augustus in the year 7 A.D.;
- ii. he could not stand his exile, and wrote nine works, full of sadness and bitterness at the very thought of it. He died in despair in the year 17.

(c) Both men suffer:

But while one can write: *Nihil nisi flere libet*; the other has no hesitation in saying: *Gaudete in Domino semper*.

2. Christ, the foundation of our rejoicing:

(a) Two classes of people:

The two figures mentioned above represent two attitudes towards suffering which can be found in the human race:

- i. those who despair in sufferings, who lose hope;
- ii. those who find cause for joy, even in their sufferings.

(b) What is the cause of this double reaction?

i. The Stoic philosophers gave as a remedy for suffering, wisdom. But wisdom could not give them any consolation when they came to suffer, as we know in the case of Seneca. Suicide was their next step.

ii. Christianity brought to the world the one cause of joy: Christ. Paul can rejoice, even in prison, because he is with Christ; while Ovid dies of a broken heart in exile because he found himself alone, without Christ.

3. *Two ways of finding joy in Christ:*

These are both outlined in today's Epistle.

(a) We can easily see that his advice to rejoice in the Lord comes from his hope:

- i. Paul trusts implicitly in divine providence;
- ii. he is a man of prayer, and together with his thanksgiving, he offers to God his petitions;
- iii. therefore he feels that the peace of God fills his heart and mind.

(b) Joy is, as Chesterton said, the 'gigantic secret' of the Christian:

- i. it is always the result of a spiritual life which is making progress. Only those souls who live filled with the thought of Christ, like St Paul, in peace and interior prayer, know what this joy really is;
- ii. joy, says Bergson, always announces the fact that life has triumphed, that it has won ground, that it has gained a victory;
- iii. the joy of the Christian is also a sign of the growth of divine life within him, and that this life has triumphed over all the adverse circumstances which surround him.

4. *The Lord is near:*

St Paul gives a new motive for joy; the Lord is at hand.

(a) A strong motive:

This hope in the approaching coming was a strong motive, which led the early Christians to be happy, good, indulgent with others.

(b) Our hope in the Christ who is to come is also a motive for joy:

- i. We do not know when that day will come; we know that it will be soon, because in God's sight a thousand years are but a day. When he comes, all pain shall be turned into joy, and the joy will be greater in proportion to the pain.
- ii. By means of this hope we are already sharing to some extent in the joy of that glorious coming. That is why the Christian can still rejoice with Christ, in the midst of his pains and sufferings.

5. *Christ at Christmas, in the Tabernacle, in the person of the poor:*

This phrase of St Paul can have many applied uses in sermons.

(a) *The Lord is near—he is born again, in a mystical way, at Christmas:*

This is the reason for the joy expressed by the liturgy and in the hearts of good Christians at this time.

(b) *He is near in the Tabernacle:*

The Eucharist is always a motive for joy in the hearts of those who draw near to It.

(c) *He is near; in the poor:*

There are few things which can give such great joy as alms given to the poor.

B: Nothing must make you anxious

1. *Licit and illicit anxiety:*

(a) *Providentia cum studio*, St Thomas defines it; here the word 'studium' must be understood as a vigorous movement of soul.

(b) It pertains to prudence, indicating a rapidity of action when necessary.

(c) Exercising authority with anxious care . . . (Rom. 12. 8).

(d) Eager to preserve that unity the Spirit gives you . . . (Eph. 4. 3).

2. *A sinful anxiety:*

(a) the desire for superfluous things;

(b) the desire for necessary temporal things, but as an end in themselves.

(c) *Aegritudo animi cum cogitatione* (Cicero)—an affliction or sadness of heart: Martha, Martha; how many cares and troubles thou hast! (Luke 10. 41). The implication is clear; Martha was over-anxious, showing bitter zeal in her words.

(a) *Its effects:*

i. *the immediate ones:* it increases our fear; lessens our hope; brings into the present fears which are really of the future.

ii. *the long-term ones:* it diminishes our filial trust in God; weakens our faith (Why are you faint-hearted, men of little faith. Matt. 8. 26; Why didst thou hesitate, man of little faith? Matt. 14. 31). It weakens our charity (Luke 21, 31).

(b) *Remedies:*

i. *stir up filial sentiments:* Throw back on him the burden of all your anxiety; he is concerned for you (1 Pet. 5. 7. Cf. Ps. 4. 9; 26. 1; 33. 5).

ii. *have confidence in our heavenly Father*: Your Father who is in heaven knows that you have need of all these things . . . (Matt. 6. 32).

iii. *be constant in prayer*. Through prayer we come to know the will of God. Especially in time of retreat. The immediate effects of prayer are peace, diminishing of sinful over-anxiety, increase of love for God. The love for Christ will stimulate us to activity, but it will not be a sinful over-anxious activity.

iv. *do God's will faithfully*; seeking the kingdom of God and his justice (Matt. 6. 33); have confidence in God and in ourselves; seeking, not personal triumph, but God's victory; with no fear of failure in the eyes of the world. God's failures are happy ones!

v. *remain ever in his joy and peace*—that peace which surpasses all understanding.

C: Magnanimity

1. *The spirit of the Epistle*:

It is a call to be encouraged and to undertake great works for God (cf. Isaias 35. 3-9). It is a call to magnanimity.

2. *Magnanimity is a virtue which avoids both extremes of despair and presumption* (St. Thomas 1-2, q. 83):

(a) The presumptuous man will undertake great things, but he will never be able to finish them, because he has not measured his strength. He did not count his own soldiers and those of his enemy (Luke 14. 31), and therefore he entered into battle asking for defeat. He who, without seeking God's aid and relying on his own strength, says that he will not fall, though all others may do so, is not magnanimous.

(b) The man who despairs of his own strength will never do anything. Despair is the negation of magnanimity; presumption is its caricature.

(c) We know that great things are those which should be most desired, since the will, which should follow the intellect's lead, ought to aspire to those things which are placed before it with the highest possible motives.

(d) Knowing that the greatest of all good is honour, we should aspire to it and direct it towards God, despising earthly things as tiny compared with it. Men of great heart—those who were truly magnanimous—esteemed honour above riches and pleasures. The conqueror of Italy, through his delay for pleasure in Capua, lost Rome. The man who, on a small island in the remote Pacific, drew a line with his sword on the sand and said: on this side lies honour, on that comfort, was a man with a great heart. The saint, who measures honours by God's standards, is standing on the heights of magnanimity.

3. *Christ has come—a call to magnanimity*:

(a) *The call*:

God could not have come into this world for something small or to invite us to undertake some trifling work. The character of God is eternity and omnipotence, and therefore his call must carry that stamp.

i. *in matters of our perfection*. Christ has come to say to us: You are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matt. 5. 48). Have you strength to drink of the cup I am to drink of? (Matt. 20. 22).

ii. *in the conquest of the world*. It is fire that I have come to spread over the earth . . . (Luke 12. 49). You, therefore must go out, making disciples of all nations . . . (Matt. 28. 19). God has indicated his field of action—the whole world; his labour is that of bringing all to himself; his labourers, we ourselves.

(b) *Christ with us, until the ultimate triumph*:

i. Christ has come to lift up our nature and to triumph. That is enough to assure our victory also.

ii. he has come to give us motives for joyful struggle in his cause and confidence in him, who has promised us both help and ultimate triumph.

iii. when I fight, the whole mystical body of Christ fights with me. With Christ, we can do all things. Take courage, I have overcome the world (John 16. 33). Use all the human means at your disposal and then—hope!

iv. and if, in the fight to win souls, you may find yourself exhausted and near to losing confidence, remember that in this world some sow while others reap, but in heaven all reap their reward—and at times those have greater rewards in heaven who have not reaped a single reward here below. Remember that, if you sow for Christ, it is he who should reap the harvest; that in this army, he who dies really conquers, and that, in the end, we shall all present ourselves with Christ before the tribunal of his Father and ours!

4. *Exhortation*:

Lift up your hearts. Christ has come and has called you. Who is there among us who will not answer his call? And those who wish to distinguish themselves and receive the greatest rewards, are they not those who enlist in the front rank of his army?

III. THE GOSPEL

A: A Creature of God

John's reply:

He gives it in the supernatural order.

(a) He could have said that he was a prophet, because he was indeed—and more than a prophet.

(b) He could have said that he was a preacher—and an excellent one at that.

(c) But he gives a description of himself which indicates at one and the same time his natural limitations and his supernatural greatness. I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

Who are you?

This question, proposed in the Gospel of today, gives an opportunity of talking about what St Ignatius called the very foundation and prime principle of all things. In a few words you can describe yourself, indicating with the Baptist that of yourself you are nothing and that your real greatness come from God. I am one of God's creatures.

1. *A creature of God:*

(a) To create means to bring into being out of nothing. It is an action which is proper to God alone.

(b) You are a creature of God, and therefore you are nothing and God is all in you. You are nothing which lives in God and for God. In him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17. 28).

- i. he gave you body and soul, senses and intellectual powers;
- ii. he continues to give them to you, for if he departed from you for one moment you would fall back into that nothing from which you came. You depend on God as the voice depends on the one who pronounces the words, as a river depends on the spring from which it comes.

2. *A creature on whom God has poured out his special love:*

(a) There is something in you which does not exist in his other material creatures—an intellect and a will. Think about them, even on a natural plane. You are God's image, while other creatures possess only a vague similarity with some of God's perfection.

(b) Sanctifying grace makes you even more like that Model; it makes you his son. You are nothing—but you have a tremendous greatness about you. You are the object of his special love.

3. *For God alone. A consequence:*

(a) In human relationships there is a moral bond between father and son, superior and inferior, benefactors and those who receive help from them. More so in a mere creature, who receives all from God who created it. You are bound to your Creator.

(b) You are God's property; he is your Lord. If he commands you are bound to obey. What folly to prefer your own will to his! You must do what God wills.

i. *reverence and serve God.* St Ignatius sums up the end of man in these three actions, Praise, reverence and serve God.

ii. *the same thing could be expressed in another formula:* Do God's will. God, his will and his service should be the ruling principle of our lives. There are many ways open to us in life, many jobs, many professions; in all of them we should serve God to the best of our ability. You have a mission in life with regard to your fellow-men, but a much more important one with regard to God.

The last day

Who are you? Did you fulfil the end and purpose of your life? May you be able to say, on that day: I am your creature; I was aware of the fact that I am nothing and that you are all in me; therefore I did not seek anything for myself, but all for you, even in the ordinary daily tasks of my life.

B: Who art thou? . . . A Member of Christ

1. *John's reply. They ask him: Who art thou?*

(a) **One born without sin:**

A penitent. He who attracts the crowds after him. One who is more than a prophet. The greatest among those born of woman.

(b) **But John does not pay heed to any of these things:**

Instead he defines himself with relation to Christ: I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. This is his greatest glory, to be the one who announces the Messias.

2. *And who are you?*

Young or old, rich or poor, worker or employer, professional man, business man or intellectual. You accumulate titles, honours, riches. You talk about your culture, influence, surroundings. All this is worth very little. Who are you in relation to Jesus Christ?

(a) **A member of Christ:**

This is the true answer and the only one which makes you really great.

i. *Christ is the head of a great family*, and you, by baptism, have entered into that family.

ii. *Christ is the head of the mystical body* and you have been made a member of that body (1 Cor. 12. 13).

(b) **A living or a dead member?**

i. *not all the members of that Body receive the influence of their head in the same way.* There are some who are only united to him

by faith; they lack sanctifying grace, through living in mortal sin. They have no life; they are dead members, and useless ones at that.

ii. *you, who are you?* Are you a living or a dead member? Little avail all the worldly honours you may possess if you do not possess the life of Christ. As the farmer roots up the dry and rotten branches of the vine, so will you be rooted up by the Heavenly Father. As the surgeon cuts off the infected member of the body, so will you be cut off by Christ from his mystical body.

iii. *awaken then, you who are now asleep and unaware of your danger.* You who think only of material things. Return to Christ, let him illuminate you and produce life in you once more.

(c) **Are you an active member?**

i. *advance still more in the knowledge of your relationship to Christ.* There are many grades in the mystical body, of whom the saints form the highest grade. For them Christ is everything.

ii. *who are you?* What is your ambition? A Christian may not stand still; he must at least aim at greater perfection in his spiritual life. What are you doing to progress in that life? Do you pray for it; long for it? Do you make any sacrifices for it?

iii. *the mystical body must grow with the co-operation of all its members.* The Christian, by the very fact of being one, must be an apostle also. The field of activity is very great; the pagans, those separated from God by sin, the poor, the ignorant. . . .

3. **Enter into the joy of the Lord:**

On the last day Christ will ask you: Who are you? Your human titles will have little or no value then. Happy are you then if you can reply that you are an active member of the Body of Christ. Then you will hear him call you to himself. Enter into the joy of thy Lord.

C: The Preacher

1. **John as preacher:**

(a) To preach the Word of God was his mission in this world.

(b) He did not come to be a model of penance, even though he did penance.

(c) Nor a model for contemplatives—even though he was in fact one himself.

(d) Penance and prayer were, for John, means of preparing for his real mission—that of preaching Christ.

2. **A high mission:**

The highest in the Church; the very mission of Christ and his apostles.

(a) That of Christ—who came to teach men all things which the Father had commanded him to teach. To manifest the name of the Father to all (John 17. 6).

(b) That of the apostles, who left everything, even the giving of alms, in order to give themselves to prayer and preaching (Acts 6. 4).

(c) The mission which St Paul esteemed above all else: Christ did not send him to baptize, he says, but to preach (1 Cor. 1. 17; cf. 1 Cor. 14. 19).

(d) The mission of preaching is especially given to the Pope and the Bishops of the Church (Can. 1327).

(e) We can see the importance of this office from a phrase of Benedict XV. The main evil of our time is decadence in preaching. . . . Preachers are responsible for the present falling off of religious practice, because they do not preach the Word of God as they should (cf. *Humani Generis*, 15 June, 1917).

3. **Efficacy of preaching:**

It can do a great deal (cf. Jer. 1. 10).

4. **Themes: Only those proper to the pulpit:**

(a) **The whole of the Gospel:**

To everyone, so that vice may be overcome by the influence of Christ and that all may be saved (Mark 16. 15).

(b) **Christ. His life and his words:**

i. to make known the doctrine of Christ and the whole of revealed truth, so as to maintain supernatural life in all (Benedict XV);

ii. especially Christ crucified (1 Cor. 2. 2).

(c) **Dogma and moral:**

To establish the relationship between the two, as St Paul did. It has been well said that the Fathers sowed Christ in the hearts of their hearers to such an extent that from the dogma came good habits of life. Moral foundation is never solid unless it is based on dogma.

(d) **The eternal truths:**

How many times our Lord spoke of hell in his discourses; of the future glory to come; of sudden death and the last judgement!

(e) **Positive sanctity:**

We should preach more on grace, the mystical body, the virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit, the resurrection of the body in glory, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. . . .

5. **Qualities of a good preacher:**

(a) Courage.

(b) Clarity of exposition.

(c) Repetition of the fundamental truths.

(d) Liberty—holy and apostolic. St Teresa said: People say that they get little out of sermons. It would appear to me that those who

preach have rather too much intelligence! We are so careful not to offend kings, nobles or the common people!

6. *Sources for effective preaching:*

- (a) Especially the New Testament. The Gospel, above all.
- (b) The Fathers—especially John Chrysostom and Augustine (Leo XIII).
- (c) Theologians. The preacher should always have at hand the *Summa* of St Thomas and the best commentaries on Scripture.
- (d) The great classical writers in each language: Bede Jarrett, Marmion, Newman, etc.
- (e) The great orators, especially those of the seventeenth century in France—Bossuet is very neglected by most preachers!
- (f) The doctrine of the Popes—more use could be made of the Papal declarations in sermons, with great benefit to our people.

7. *The soul of our preaching:*

The love of God. We must preach in spirit and in truth (1 Cor. 2). For this it is necessary that the preacher should possess certain qualities:

- (a) an austere life;
- (b) the spirit of mortification;
- (c) prayer. *Contemplata aliis tradere.*

D: Knowledge of self

1. *The need for this knowledge:*

John replies exactly and sincerely. Knowledge of ourselves is necessary for the spiritual life.

(a) *In general:*

Scientific knowledge is usually limited to what is above us, below us and around us. This is not enough, unless we also know ourselves. Whatever we do will be useless unless we first of all study ourselves, our intentions, our strength, etc. (St Bernard).

(b) *For penance:*

The first step towards salvation is penance; but how can we do penance properly unless we know ourselves?

(c) *As a remedy for many sins:*

Many of them are committed because we do not know ourselves sufficiently well. Pride is a typical case. Gossip, calumnies against others, lack of appreciation of others—all these are in most cases due to a lack of realization of our own defects and sins.

(d) *For a better knowledge of God:*

God's greatness and goodness are visible more easily in the light of our own narrowness and evil dispositions. The better we know ourselves, the better we shall know God.

(e) *To avoid presumption and also despair:*

Knowledge of self is deficient if it does not include the knowledge of God and his power, which directs and guides us.

(f) *For the right use of authority:*

The one who is placed in a position of authority over others needs to know how weak he is and then only will he be able to apply all the remedies to counteract his own pride in his office and deal with others gently and with prudence.

2. *Practical means of knowing ourselves:*

(a) In order to do penance and advance in virtue, examine your sins and especially those of negligence, concupiscence and malice. These are the three roots of all falls.

(b) To stimulate humility. Know the weakness of our own nature, of our body and the soul created from nothing. Our own sins.

(c) In general, to know what we are by nature; the body, with its sufferings; the soul, made for God; the vocation given to us—to be Christians, with great rights and great obligations. What we are by reason of our particular state of life. The higher it is, the more we should be dedicated to God and to his work—also to personal sanctity.

E: Humility

1. *The example of John and the teaching of the Lord:*

(a) *John:*

He was so great that he was even suspected of being the Christ. He was so humble that he admitted he was not the Christ. He did not even consider himself worthy to untie the lace of Christ's sandals.

(b) *Christ:*

Until he came into the world humility was almost an unknown virtue. But Christ preached it, rewarding the humble; above all, he practised it to the extent of making himself a model for all in this virtue. The one way and the one door by which all might enter.

2. *Why does God praise humility so much?*

Because he is truth—and so is humility. It does not consist in ignorance of gifts received from God, but rather in the knowledge of God and the knowledge of oneself.

3. *In what does this truth consist?*

(a) *In knowing ourselves:*

Also in knowing that, in the supernatural order, we are all sinners.

- i. the very weakness of our nature and the struggle which this life implies makes us all sinners, therefore we all have to say: Forgive us our trespasses.

- ii. even the very apostles and the priests sinned;
- iii. even those of today.

(b) We have nothing of our own—except sin:

Any virtue we have, any good in nature or by grace, comes to us from God, and man must realize this unless he wishes to have taken from him even that which he thinks he has (Augustine).

(c) Summary:

Humility consists in knowing that God is the author of all things, in knowing our own natural propensity to evil, our real end and purpose in life and in the following of Christ, our Model.

4. *The good it does to us:*

It brings with it greater confidence in God and also peace of soul. It brings God to us as it brought him to Mary. It teaches us to pray, increases grace in our souls.

5. *Exhortation:*

Christ says to us now as he said to the Jews—learn of me. Let us all learn this lesson; sinners, from the example of Magdalen and Zacchaeus; the good, from the very fact that their goodness may be a cause of pride; learn from Satan, who lost all things through pride. Learn from John and the other saints, and instead of looking at our virtues, let us always remember what we lack rather than what we have.

F: Grades of Humility

1. *A strong virtue:*

Grave error indeed to consider humility as a weak virtue or as one which buries a man in the interior contemplation of his own nothingness. Because, like every other virtue, it is essentially active, tending all the time to develop the soul and its faculties, especially the grace of God—which is the most positive thing we possess.

(a) St Benedict considered humility as an habitual disposition of soul, which governs the relations of a monk with God in the truth of his double position as sinner and adopted son.

In this definition all is active; such as government, relations with God, and the two directive norms, that of our sinful nature, so hard to domesticate, and the fact that we are adopted sons of God—source of all inner activity of grace.

(b) Humility, therefore, is the practical and active result in action of:

- i. *the knowledge of self*, in so far as we are all for God and from God;
- ii. *the knowledge of the divine activity within us*. To man belongs all that is defective; to God all that is perfect and which tends to our salvation.

2. *Three grades:*

Applying these principles, we see that the three grades of humility mentioned by St Ignatius are really three grades of intensive activity, corresponding to the three grades of knowledge of the two factors already mentioned.

(a) When I arrive at the realization that it is necessary for me to humble myself in all things to obey the law of God, then I will take energetic action to make sure that, even if I were given all earthly things, nothing would lead me to commit a mortal sin. Even if, in danger of death, my life were offered me, or any reward I like to think of, I would not disobey one of God's commands to acquire it. That is the grade of humility necessary for salvation.

(b) If the knowledge of my own dependence on God and the thought of my salvation goes one step further, then I shall be so humble before God that it will be all one to me to be rich or poor, honoured or the contrary; since I can serve God equally well in any case. Thus I will be led to reject even venial sin for the love of God. I will not even choose between health and sickness, if it be for the glory of God.

(c) Until at length we reach true heroism—the humility of the saints, who saw themselves belonging to God in such a way that they chose the most perfect way to attain to him. They chose sickness rather than health, dishonour rather than honour.

3. *These are the three roads of humility:*

(a) *Difficult:*

But true, since they rest on the knowledge of the two truths already mentioned.

(b) *Active:*

With the activity of a foundation, which, according to its depth, can sustain a higher building and a stronger one.

(c) *The example of John:*

i. *he knows himself*—and says that he is not worthy to untie the lace of Christ's sandals;

ii. *he desires Christ's glory* and would prefer to see his own decrease, so that Christ's may increase.

iii. *his humility dressed him in skins in the desert*, but afterwards it also led him to the banks of the Jordan and to death itself—for Christ.

G: The Pusillanimous

1. *Isaias tried to encourage those who were timid:*

He said to them: Be of good heart, Christ is coming. Christ is the motive for our courage and hope.

(a) Aristotle says that the pusillanimous man is one who does not know himself, otherwise he would desire and strive for those things which he deserves.

(b) Such a man lacks confidence in his own strength and exaggerates the difficulties he has to face. Through his natural, pessimistic temperament, at times through laziness, any obstacle seems to him to be a mountain. Knowledge, acquired by others like himself, seems to him to be unattainable. The simplest tasks are, to his eyes, very complicated ones.

(c) Because of his lack of self-esteem and exaggeration of difficulties, he never undertakes great works, nor does he aspire to things worthy of a real man. What is more, if life became really difficult for him, he would die rather than make an effort to overcome the situation.

2. *In the supernatural order:*

Applying these principles to that order, together with the description of St Thomas (2-2 q. 137. a. 2) we can see that the pusillanimous man finds himself overcome:

(a) By the greatness of the task before him. Perfection appears to him to be a goal which he can never attain; it is for people who are above the ordinary, not for him.

(b) The obstacles to that perfection are invincible. There is need for dominion over the passions; for the practice of virtues which are difficult, etc.

(c) Face to face with the lofty ideal of the end in view and the difficulties which surround it he only knows the weakness of his own powers and his laziness, which produce in him a state of cowardice and depression which is very like laziness. Then he becomes like the man who, having received one talent, buried it, so as not to lose it.

3. *Christ has come:*

The pusillanimous need to be told this.

(a) **If perfection is a high goal, Christ has placed you on a level with it:**

It implies being like your heavenly Father; and Christ has made you his adopted son. You are a branch of the true vine and you can produce divine fruits. It is not now you who live, but Christ in you. Your nature has been lived by Christ, and now God wishes to live that nature in you.

(b) **There are no obstacles to divine power:**

The passions can be dominated by the aid of grace. The devil himself trembles at the name of Christ. If both devils and the passions submit to this gift which Christ has given you, of what are you afraid?

(c) **The example of Christ:**

If it is your own weakness and your loneliness in the struggle which make you a coward, remember that Christ has raised you to the divine level and that you are not alone. No matter which path of virtue you take, you will find Christ going ahead of you to give you an example.

(d) **Make the weak hands strong:**

The grace of Christ has strengthened them. The eyes of the blind have been opened, so that we may see the light of truth, the vanity of this world and the greatness of God. The ears of the deaf have been opened, so that we may hear the call of Christ. The dry land of our uselessness and sin has been converted into green pastures through the fountain of living water which the grace of Christ has caused to spring up within us.

H: Vocation

1. *Each one has his own:*

There is a general vocation for all men and a special one for each. Each man is called by God to exercise a certain ministry in the world.

2. *Double aspect:*

Vocation can be considered in the natural or the supernatural orders.

(a) Natural vocation is usually accompanied by certain natural aptitudes.

(b) Supernatural vocation is accompanied by grace and certain other gifts, proportioned to it.

3. *Only one vocation:*

Properly speaking, there is only one, even if it must be considered under various aspects. The natural order must be subjected to the supernatural; they are not opposed. The supernatural transforms the natural. Grace is never opposed to nature. Married people, whose inclinations, temptations, etc., have led them to that life, receive special graces from God so that they may become perfect in and through it. The religious, to be perfect in his convent or monastery; the priest, in his parish.

4. *A member of Christ:*

Considered from the supernatural point of view, our vocation is the function we have to play within the mystical body of Christ. Our whole life should be absorbed in that of Christ. We must all aspire to that position adopted by St Paul: I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.

5. *General vocation:*

When Paul, writing to the Ephesians, tells them to walk worthy of

the vocation to which they have been called, he is talking about the general vocation given to all.

(a) Vocation to grace.

(b) Vocation to glory.

6. *Individual vocation in Christ:*

But when Paul, writing to the Romans, says: I warn every man who is of your company not to think highly of himself, beyond his just estimation, but to have a sober esteem of himself, according to the measure of faith which God has apportioned to each, he is speaking of the individual vocation, of the place each one has to take within the mystical body, and therefore of the graces God has destined for each one. The spiritual gifts we have differ, according to the special grace which has been assigned to each (Rom. 12. 6).

7. *The Pauline conception:*

Each one is made to a certain measure or plan, according to the Pauline conception of this Body. We are all members, each with a special function.

8. *He continues:*

Each one of us has two unions:

(a) The first and the principal one, union with Christ, our head; the second, union with our brothers in Christ. From the first come life and grace (Eph. 4. 15).

(b) The second, our connection with our brothers. As God's instruments, to increase in them both life and grace (Eph. 4. 12).

9. *The two parts of the first commandment. A perfect formula:*

(a) To love God above all things:

The most perfect possible union with Christ by grace and charity.

(b) To love our neighbour as ourselves:

Trying to make sure that he, too, enjoys the most perfect life of grace and charity.

10. *Conclusions:*

(a) We should learn to know our own vocation:

We must make every effort to discover what God wishes from each of us. What state of life; what office, what ministry? In the course of life, what business, what occupation, what use of my time? In a word, how God inspires me by his graces and gifts.

(b) To put that vocation into the most perfect practice:

i. *in the natural order*, to the limits of our power and with our whole will;

ii. *in the supernatural order*, meriting, by a holy life, special graces and illumination from God.

(c) Fulfil it with love:

Doing God's will in all things, with great love, because that is his will and it pleases him; it is also for his greater glory. To attain such a love—prayer and the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. For a priest, his daily Mass.

11. *The example of John:*

That was a pattern of his life. Called from his mother's womb, he was faithful to his vocation. He appears, united to Christ and preaching him to his disciples. What is my vocation, Lord? Speak, for thy servant heareth.

IV. SOCIAL APPLICATIONS

A: Rejoice, because the kingdom of Christ is near

Profound sentiments of joy in the liturgy of today, inspired by the Epistle, expressed in the Introit, which is a combination of two phrases of Paul, Rejoice in the Lord . . . the Lord is near (Phil. 4. 4-5).

In the social order

1. If we refer to the social order, the liturgy has a perfect application to the times in which we live. In spite of certain elements which make us fear and tremble, there are also motives for optimism and rejoicing. If we look at peoples and nations through eyes which are illuminated by faith in Christ, we shall see that the social kingdom of Christ is at hand.

(a) The same thing is true of society as a whole which is also true of the individual Christian. God has given to society a similar end or purpose, that of increasing in Christ, according to his measure, for the perfection of the saints (Eph. 4. 12-13).

(b) Therefore the task of forming a good Christian is very like that of forming a true Christian society.

i. *educate*: i.e. draw out, bring alive, bring forth as a growing plant the seed sown in the soul at baptism, so that it may appear externally, made visible through a life of virtue.

ii. *the same object—in society*; to make it a true kingdom of Christ on earth, so that the truth of the Mystical Body of Christ shall be more plainly visible every day.

(c) it is clear that the Christian world is approaching more and more closely to the ideal model traced for it by Christ.

i. we could quote here what Macaulay said in another context.

In the history of society there are tides, and from the mere ebb and flow of the waves on the shore it would be difficult to detect whether the sea was advancing or going out. A more expert eye can detect that, in spite of appearances to the contrary, the sea is coming in.

- ii. In Christian civilization there are also tides; moments when paganism seems rife, others in which it appears to be coming nearer to Christianity. The internal history of the Church shows similar signs. But if we limit ourselves to the present day, there are signs of the advance of the faith, in spite of terrible difficulties and dangers. If we study the life of the Church this will be more evident.
 - iii. in the reigns of the recent Popes;
 - iv. in the fact of the Second Vatican Council;
 - v. in the approach of those who as yet are not members of the Church;
 - vi. in the growth of the Church in so-called pagan countries, India, Africa, etc.;
 - vii. the growth of secular institutes, adapted to modern needs;
 - viii. canonization of saints of recent times, models for all;
 - ix. renewal in the spirit of the liturgical life of the Church.
- (d) At the same time, a word of warning; it would be wrong to identify Christianity with Western civilization—there is much to admire, and much to learn, from the civilizations of the East.
2. This common patrimony of moral and social values which is making such an effort today to find recognition in all parts of the world is:
- (a) A fruit of Christianity throughout its long history—to fail to admit this is to be blind to the truth of history over the ages.
 - (b) Even the very dangers which threaten us at times today are signs of progress, of a new birth of moral ideals, even though they may be hidden under strange disguises at times! They are the birth-pains of a new era.
3. This is no new thing in the Church's history—witness St Augustine, who saw the barbarian invasion from the North, the sack of Rome, the siege of his own city—yet still preached hope and confidence in a glorious future for the Church and for civilization. He was right, where others, less hopeful than he, were wrong!

We can hasten the coming of the Kingdom of Christ on earth

- Our daily prayer, Thy kingdom come, is destined for that purpose, but it is also conditioned to a certain extent by our activity. The revolution which we seek to bring about is not one of blood, but one of charity and justice.
- (a) Let each one bring this about in his own life through justice and love.
 - (b) Each one, according to the measure of grace given to him, in the daily life of the human family.
 - (c) Civilization will reach the ideal model proposed for it by Christ—if we all work together for that end. Otherwise we shall

destroy the work of the ages, and history will not forgive us for the lost opportunity.

B: Christ, in the midst of the poor

1. Behold the Lamb of God:

(a) Two aspects of the mission of the Baptist:

- i. *to prepare the way of the Lord*, the way by means of which he will reach souls;
- ii. *to show the ordinary people where Christ is*, so that they may know and receive him.

(b) It is this latter aspect which concerns us here:

- i. Many times Christ, although he lives in our midst, passes without our knowing him.
- ii. John announces him to the people in such a moment: Behold the Lamb of God.
- iii. The testimony will be confirmed in a solemn manner by the Heavenly Father: This is my beloved Son. . . .

2. Knowledge of Christ tends to communicate itself to others:

- (a) When the fire of divine love is enkindled in a soul, that soul tends naturally to communicate that flame to others.
- (b) He came to cast fire on earth—and eternal life consists in that, the knowledge of God and of his envoy—Christ (John 17. 3).

3. For so many, Christ is still the Great Unknown:

Even in the lives of many Christians. There is need for all to give testimony to Christ. Here we must insist on a truth which is, at one and the same time, profound and a mystery—we shall proclaim Christ to others in the measure in which we ourselves learn to see Christ in others. Today, as in the time of John, it is true that he is in the midst of us and we do not know him enough.

4. Where is he?

(a) He is all around us:

- i. *for the husband, he is in his wife; for the wife, he is in her husband.* A great mystery this, in Christ and in the Church (Eph. 5. 32). The whole strength of the sacrament which both have received lies in this, that each should see in the other Christ himself, who has made them a living image of his Church.
- ii. *father and mother*—Christ is in this child which he has given you, and the greatness of your paternity lies in the living image of Father and Son which has been confided to your care in the person of your own child.
- iv. *for those who rule*; Christ is in your subjects; for the subjects, Christ is in your rulers. It is Christ whom you obey and reverence in them.

(b) This is a theme for the whole of the liturgical year, but at the moment we may limit ourselves to two considerations, two ways in which Christ shows himself to us, in the person of the poor and the workers.

i. *Christ is in the poor*—all those who live in need of material or spiritual comfort; those who lack the essentials of life; those whose labour does not give them the bare essentials.

ii. *The Popes have insisted on this many times*: The poor have the very seal of Christ on themselves; they are the image of God like ourselves. Christ died for them, wished to be poor like them, loved them with a special love. Therefore the Church has always seen him in the person of the poor.

iii. *Christ is also in the workers*. So that the worker might become another Christ, our Lord himself became a worker. When he became man he wished to sanctify labour, which at his birth became filled with the grace of Christ and sanctified by it. That is why the Popes have insisted that we should see Christ in the workers. With special reference to those who work in agriculture

(c) *Mater et Magistra*, John XXIII, nn. 123 ff.).

5. Conclusions:

To solve the social problem it is first of all necessary for each of us to see Christ in his neighbour. In a special way in the worker and in the person of the poor. From that knowledge will come the love which is needed, because no one can love Christ without knowing him, in himself and in his poor. From love will come social peace and harmony. If the poor are abandoned, it is our fault, because we do not see Christ in them as we should. Poverty is a blessing for all; for the poor, because of its value as a purification; for us, as a means of salvation. Let us not neglect it.

C: Sincerity

1. As a virtue:

(a) In the person of John:

i. *he confessed to the truth*. In other words, he gave true testimony. He confessed and did not deny: I am not the Messiah. He could have given an evasive answer. This is a basic virtue in civil life, fundamental in a Christian society.

ii. *he told the simple truth at all times*, even though it meant the loss of disciples, he says that he must decrease, while Christ increases. He is the voice crying in the wilderness, to prepare the way of the Lord.

iii. *on other occasions we find him teaching bitter truths*, which could not have pleased his hearers. John knew they would find them hard and unpleasant, but he was no reed shaken by the wind and he did his duty to the end. He tells the truth always

because he is humble; and humility, as St Teresa said, is founded on truth. He is also a man of character.

(b) In Christ:

Sincerity is essentially a Christian virtue. Christ came on earth to give testimony to the truth; he gave that truth to his Church as a most precious patrimony.

(c) In the Church:

That is why she teaches the truths of Christ without any regard for the opinions of men, even in social matters, which are founded on that Christian truth and should be ruled by it.

2. Two aspects of contrast between this action of John:

Christ and the Church and the modern world.

(a) The first:

Lack of sincerity in truth when it is a question of forming public opinion, of nations, groups, peoples. This has become the stigma of the age in which we live. It has reached diabolic proportions in many cases; wolves in sheep's clothing spreading lies among the people, thus attempting to restrain the most essential human liberties.

(b) The second:

Lack of fidelity to the pledged word, given in freely contracted agreements, thus putting in danger the peace and order of the whole world. Insincerity in treaties made with the Church, in those pacted between States, etc.

3. No one can say that the Church remains silent before such abuses:

(a) Wherever she finds it she attacks and resists error and falsehood: she knows only too well that her first duty is to the truth. She does it with great charity, because she also knows that this virtue, in union with justice and truth, is the foundation of the kingdom of Christ. But she does not hesitate to condemn those who sow lies, warning her priests also that they should be quick to detect and condemn any error which is of harm to their flocks.

(b) She does not hesitate to affirm that fidelity to the pledged word is the very foundation of the social order, if it is to be just. She also recognizes that international institutions are sometimes necessary to safeguard, even by force, the agreements between nations, especially where one is powerful and the other weak.

(c) She affirms that there can be only one really solid guarantee to assure this fidelity in pacts and contracts, namely, a right conscience, resting on sincere faith in God. When this faith exists, it illuminates our consciences concerning moral responsibility. For faith is the basis of humility and of true character—and both are guarantees of sincerity.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

THE PREACHING OF THE BAPTIST

SECTION I. SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4. 1-5 Gospel: Luke 3. 1-6. Cf. Matt. 3. 1-3; Mark 1. 1-5

Complementary texts: Luke 3. 7-17; Matt. 3. 4-12; Mark 1. 6-8

Texts concerning penance

1. *The penance of David:*

Then David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord; and Nathan answered, The Lord hath given thy sin quittance, thou shalt not die for it. But thou hast brought on the Lord the contempt of his enemies, and the son that has been born to thee is doomed to die. 2 Kings 12. 13-14.

But, now the count of Israel had been made, David's heart reproached him. And he confessed to the Lord, I have sinned greatly in what I have done, Lord, give my sin quittance; I have played a fool's part. . . . David, when he saw how the angel was smiting the people down, had said to the Lord, The sin is mine, the fault is mine; these poor sheep of mine, what wrong have they done? Nay, turn thy hand against me, and my own father's race! 2 Kings 24. 10, 17.

2. *The plea of Solomon:*

Are thy people of Israel condemned to flee before their enemies, in punishment of the sins they will surely commit? Then, if they come here repentant, and acknowledging thy power, pray to thee and plead with thee in this temple of thine, do thou, in heaven, listen to them, and forgive the sins of thy people Israel, and restore them to the land which thou gavest to their fathers. . . . But what, if they have offended thee by their faults? No man but is guilty of some fault; it may be thou wilt give them up, in thy anger, into the power of their enemies, and as prisoners they will endure exile in neighbouring countries or countries far away. But ere long, in their banishment, they will come back to thee with repentant hearts, crying out, poor exiles, We are sinners, warped natures, rebels all! . . . Then if they turn in prayer towards the land thou gavest to their fathers, the city of thy choice, and the temple I have built there in

thy honour, thou, in heaven, on thy peaceful throne, wilt once more listen to their prayer for aid, wilt maintain their cause still. Thou wilt relent towards thy people, though they have sinned against thee, wilt pardon the wrong their transgressions have done thee, wilt soften the hearts of their captors into pity. 3 Kings 8. 33-34, 46-50.

3. *Other examples of penance:*

Come back, sinners, and do his will; doubt not that he will shew you mercy. Tob. 13. 8.

4. *Job:*

Turn back to the Almighty for thy healing, and rid thy dwelling place of guilt. 22. 23.

Time for repentance God gave him, by his pride misused, but ever on his doings kept a watchful eye; now, their brief renown over, such men must pass, as all things pass, into the dust, be carried off, swept away like ears of corn. 24. 23.

Now I am all remorse, I do penance in dust and ashes. . . . For Job's sake the Lord pardoned them; and, as he prayed for these friends of his, the Lord relented at the sight of his penitence. So he gave back to Job twice over all that he had lost. 42. 6, 9-10.

5. *The Psalms:*

I am spent with sighing; every night I lie weeping on my bed, till the tears drench my pillow. . . . Ps. 6. 7.

At last I made my transgression known to thee, and hid my sin no longer; Fault of mine, said I, I here confess to the Lord; and with that, thou didst remit the guilt of my sin. Ps. 31. 5-6.

Have mercy on me, O God, as thou art ever rich in mercy; in the abundance of thy compassion, blot out the record of my misdeeds. Wash me clean, cleaner yet, from my guilt, purge me of my sin, the guilt which I freely acknowledge, the sin which is never lost to my sight. Thee only my sins have offended; it is thy will I have disobeyed; thy sentence was deserved, and still when thou givest award thou hast right on thy side. Ps. 50. 1-6.

6. *The Sapiential books:*

Never shalt thou thrive by keeping sin hidden; confess it and leave it, if thou wouldst find pardon. Blessed evermore is the timorous conscience; it is hardened hearts that fall to their ruin. Prov. 28. 13.

Only thou art all-merciful, as befits the Almighty, and dost overlook our human slips, in hope of our repentance. Wis. 11. 24.

But no, their sentence should be executed by degrees, giving them opportunity to repent. . . . Wis. 12. 10.

The Lord's mercy, that is so abundant, the pardon that is ever theirs who come back to him! Ecclus. 17. 28; cf. 20. 4; 49. 3.

7. *The Prophets:*

Then come back, says the Lord, and make trial of me. Crimson-dyed be your guilt, it shall turn snow-white; like wool new-washed yonder scarlet stain. *Isaias 1. 18; cf. 30. 18; 45. 22.*

Leave rebel his ill-doing, sinner his guilty thoughts, and come back to the Lord, sure of his mercy, our God, so rich in pardon. *Isaias 55. 7.*

Let but that nation repent of the crimes I brought against it, I too will repent of the punishment I thought to exact. *Jer. 18. 8.*

It may be the wicked man will repent of all his sinful deeds, and learn to keep my commandments, and live honestly and uprightly; if so, he shall live on; life, not death, for him. All his transgressions shall be forgotten, and his uprightness shall bring him life. What pleasure should I find in the death of a sinner, the Lord God says, when he might have turned back from his evil ways and found life instead? *Ez. 18. 21-23; cf. 33. 11, 14-16.*

It is your hearts, not the garments you wear, that must be torn asunder. Come back to the Lord God; he is ever gracious and merciful, ever patient and rich in pardon; threatens he calamity, even now he is ready to forgive. *Joel 2. 13.*

8. *Penance in the Gospels:*

Thereupon he took occasion to reproach for their impenitence the cities in which he had done most of his miracles: Woe to thee, Corozain, woe to thee, Bethsaida: Tyre and Sidon would have repented in sackcloth and ashes long ago, if the miracles done in you had been done there instead. And I say this, that it shall go less hard with Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgement than with you. *Matt. 11. 20-23.*

The men of Nineve will rise up with this generation at the day of judgement, and will leave it without excuse; for they did penance when Jonas preached to them, and behold, a greater than Jonas is here. *Matt. 12. 41.*

But there is no way of casting out such spirits as this except by prayer and fasting. *Matt. 17. 20.*

But when John had been put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of God's kingdom; The appointed time has come, he said, and the kingdom of God is near at hand; repent, and believe the gospel. *Mark 1. 14-15.*

I have not come to call the just; I have come to call sinners to repentance. *Luke 5. 32.*

Do you suppose, because this befell them, that these men are worse sinners than all else in Galilee? I tell you it is not so; you will all perish as they did, if you do not repent. *Luke 13. 2-3; cf. 15. 18; 16. 30; 18. 13; 23. 42; 24. 47.*

9. *In the Apostolic writings:*

When they heard this, their consciences were stung; and they asked Peter and his fellow apostles, Brethren, what must we do? Repent, Peter said to them, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, to have your sins forgiven; then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. *Acts 2. 37-38.*

God has shut his eyes to these passing follies of ours; now, he calls upon all men, everywhere, to repent, because he has fixed a day when he will pronounce his judgement on the whole world. *Acts 17. 30-31; cf. 26. 18, 20.*

Dost thou not know that God's kindness is inviting thee to repent? *Rom. 2. 4.*

Supernatural remorse leads to an abiding and salutary change of heart, whereas the world's remorse leads to death. See what devotion has been bred in you now by this supernatural remorse; how you disowned the guilt; the indignation you felt, the fear that overcame you, . . . how you righted the wrong done. *2 Cor. 7. 10-11.*

The Lord is not being dilatory over his promise, as some think; he is only giving you more time, because his will is that all of you should attain repentance, not that some should be lost. *2 Peter 3. 9.*

It is those I love that I correct and chasten; kindle thy generosity, and repent. *Apoc. 3. 19.*

SECTION II. GENERAL COMMENTS

I. LITURGICAL

As we said last Sunday, today has little liturgical importance, because the previous week was given up to preparation for the ordinations which took place on the Saturday. Consequently, today was a day of rest and there were no offices. Later it was decided to say one Mass in the morning for those who had not been able to assist at the night vigil and the solemnities of the ordination ceremony. It is this relatively new Mass which is read today. It is the last call to penance before Christmas.

The Epistle is dedicated to the recently ordained priests; the Gospel is a continued call to penance. The Introit begs the heavens to send forth their dew. The first coming of the Lord was like a gentle rain upon the earth, in contrast to the power and majesty of his second coming. The Collect begs the Lord to come, through the use of his divine power; and that he may use that same power to cleanse us from our sins. Theme: Penance for Christmas, penance for the judgement to come.

The twin figures of Isaias and John continue, but today our Lady appears, in the Offertory, since she brought Christ into the world. As our Mediatrix she will bring him once more into our hearts at Christmas.

II. EXEGETIC AND MORAL NOTES

A: The Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4. 1-5

The fact of the recent ordinations motivated the choice of this passage, which refers to the dignity of the sacerdotal ministry and the respect it demands from the faithful, who are so prone to judge the conduct of those who exercise it.

1. *Argument:*

The disputes in Corinth are one of the motives for this passage. There were some who declared themselves partisans of Paul, others of Apollo. To clear up this misunderstanding Paul declares, in chapters 3 and 4, that all are ministers of Christ, whose main work it is to save souls.

(a) Chapter three:

You are still of carnal mind, because there are envies and discords among you. Do you not go round saying that you are of Paul's faction, or of Apollo's? Who are Paul and Apollo? Nothing but ministers of Christ. And that, only by reason of the grace of God which has been given to them. They are simple workers in the Lord's vineyard, since he is the principal labourer, you are the field in which he works. The day will come when he examines the works of all.

(b) Chapter four:

So far as we are concerned, the important thing is that you should look on us as the ministers of Christ and administrators of the mysteries of God. It is demanded of an administrator that he should be faithful. But even in this, you should not set yourselves up as judges, not because I tell you so, for I have little faith in human judgement, so much so that I do not trust my own; but because God alone is our judge, who will reveal all the secrets of our hearts.

Even if I speak about Apollo and myself, it is only by way of example, because you must not judge anyone, nor be puffed up in your own pride. Who is there who has anything which he has not received?

The main theme is clear, then; there should be no formation of parties, grouped round one or another of Christ's ministers. Because the only true priest, in whose name all the others act, is Christ himself. Do not judge of the conduct of priests with preferences for one or another; because God is the only one who can judge that.

This defect is so universal and so deeply rooted in the human nature of man that the Epistle opens up a wide range of thoughts and applications. But there are other thoughts running through it which are also important.

i. *No one has anything of his own*; it all belongs to God and comes from God. In the apostolate it is God who gives his grace to each one and he alone is the first Cause.

ii. *No one should judge his neighbour*; God is the only judge, and he will execute that judgement at the last day.

iii. *We should despise human judgements*; mistrusting even our own.

iv. *The importance of the sacerdotal ministry.*

2. *Texts:*

(a) That is how we ought to be regarded, as Christ's servants . . .

By all men. . . . The text has a universal air about it, covering all men in their relations to the priests and bishops of the Church.

Christ's servants and stewards; neither more nor less. Administrators of goods which they have received, each according to God's plan. Instruments.

The dignity of a minister will depend on two things, on the dignity of his chief—in this case, Christ; and on the goods which he administers, in this case, the mysteries of Christ.

One who is trustworthy. That is the key quality of a steward or administrator. The same thing is required of a preacher of the Word, who should not seek his own glory, but that of Christ and the salvation of souls. Christ demands this same fidelity in the people, with regard to grace and the other divine gifts which they have received.

(b) I make little account of your scrutiny, or of any human audit-day . . .

A text much commented by the Fathers. We tend to leave the vast theatre in which God sees and judges us, to seek the ridiculous applause of men. We would be ashamed to commit certain sins before men, but we are not ashamed to commit them in the sight of God. We are like children, playing at games and crowning themselves with laurels; who do not realize that, behind their backs, people are laughing at them. We, who are destined to judge the very angels, esteem so highly the twisted and hypocritical judgements of men.

We should not judge others, because we have not been given that office, because we do not know the inner secrets of the hearts of men nor their intentions. Such judgements often come from a basic lack of charity.

Why should I take any notice of human judgement when I do not even trust my own? Even though I have nothing on my conscience. That is truth—and humility.

(c) You do ill, therefore, to pass judgement prematurely, before the Lord's coming . . .

St Paul indicates here the real reason why we must not constitute ourselves judges of our neighbour—because we do not know all the facts of the case. Many sins which may appear to be faults in the external forum are not really so in conscience, through inadvertence and other causes. In any case, Christ is the only legal judge of men.

3. Advent:

This last phrase justifies the use of this passage during Advent. Christ is a sign that shall be contradicted, one who will reveal the thoughts of many hearts. From the very first moment of his coming it is clear who they are who follow his humility, modesty, commandments; and who they are who refuse to see his light and accept his truth.

The Baptist is the model for a priest, according to the Pauline definition in this passage.

B: The Gospel: Luke 3. 1-6

The gospel of St Luke which is read today begins by putting the events into their historical setting; then it presents to us John and his preachings as the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaias.

1. The leaders of Israel:

Tiberius was in the fifteenth year of his reign. Judaea, Samaria and Idumaea were Roman provinces under Pontius Pilate. Herod and his brother, Philip, both with the title of Tetrarch, governed the other provinces. Caiphas was the actual high priest, Annas having been deposed from that office. However, the latter had considerable influence.

In spite of these details, it is difficult, if not impossible, to calculate the exact date, owing to the uncertainty about the method used by the Romans to compute the years of any given reign. It would appear to be about the year 28 or 29 by our reckoning.

All of them lived longer than John; all were, from the human point of view, more brilliant stars than he. But where are they now? What vanity, that of human glory; what glory that of the works of the just! Tiberius passed into history as a cruel tyrant; Lisanius and Philip die unknown; Herod Antipas and Pilate in exile or deposed. The head of John fell at one of Herod's banquets, at the request of a dancing girl; the life of Christ was in Pilate's hands. Both have now seen Christ, their Judge, with John near him in heaven.

2. John:

(a) Heralds of the Lord:

The Gospel—the Good News—begins with the preaching of John, who opens the way for Christ. The priest above all, but also

the layman obliged by baptism to be a man of Christ, can both be heralds of the Lord. The Popes in recent years have insisted that this office should not be neglected.

(b) In the desert:

The word of the Lord came to John in the desert, where he had lived from infancy, preparing his spirit for the task ahead of him. The life of solitude, prayer and mortification is the best preparation for the life of the active apostolate.

(c) The word of God came to John:

His vocation. The reply to such a call has to be prompt, entire, generous and persevering. We see all these qualities in John's response to his call, in spite of the difficulties he knew he would have to face.

(d) The country round Jordan:

Traditionally, near Jericho. A rough, semi-desert region, but of easy access. The double advantage of solitude in which his preaching could be easily heard and yet near to five or six relatively large towns.

3. The figure of the preacher:

The descriptions given by the Evangelists are well known. He appeared dressed in a garment of camel's skin, caught about his waist by a leather girdle. His food was locusts (still eaten by the Arabs today) and wild honey. The dress is similar to that used by all hermits of the time, according to Josephus. He came to preach penance, not merely in word, but also by his example. The greatest preachers have always been saints and penitents.

4. His preaching:

(a) Do penance, for the kingdom of God is at hand:

It is summed up thus by St Matthew, but the theme is obvious. John preached God's kingdom as near at hand. Therefore, in order to prepare oneself to receive it, some purification is necessary—that of true repentance and penance. The Sadducees and Pharisees, considering themselves sons of Abraham, did not like this idea of penance. It was surely not for them. The kingdom would qualify them as a brood of vipers.

(b) Penance:

Sin and the affection for sin are the two things which impede the reception of the kingdom of God. Sin is wiped out by penance; it is the only way. If the preacher does not teach it then God will hold him responsible for the damnation of those who should have heard it from his lips (Ez. 3. 18).

The kingdom of God is not for the rich, but for the clean of heart.

This inner cleanliness we acquire, preserve and increase by means of penance. The Greek word 'metanoia' has two implications, that of sorrow for sin and that of a change of our way of life. Both suppose motives; namely, to receive within us the kingdom of God and to share fully in it. But the kingdom is also to come at the last day, in judgement. Christ is not only a King, he is also a Judge. This judgement is near at hand and the one who is not a living branch of the vine will be cut off and cast into the fire. To receive God and to free oneself from punishment—here are the two motives.

The kind of penance is also indicated briefly in the phrase: works worthy of penance, namely the keeping of the commandments and also almsdeeds. Many classes of people came to John and all received their counsel, to suit their own case; but it always implied the same thing: Fulfil your obligations, according to your state of life.

Penance is often confused with mortification. Although they are near neighbours, and complete one another, the definition of each differs. Penance consists in a sincere detestation of the past with a real purpose of amendment. St John does not appear to have demanded more than that from his hearers. The fruits of penance are the observation of the whole law.

(c) Almsdeeds:

When the crowds asked John what they were expected to do, he replied, The man who has two coats, let him give away one; food in like manner. . . . It is the classical description of almsdeeds, which the Fathers of the Church insisted on so much.

(d) Baptism of penance:

We can leave it to the specialists to determine whether this rite of John was an innovation and how exactly it produced its effects. It is sufficient to see the general idea. Those who received it did so after a confession of their sins, probably a specific one, since the general accusation against oneself of being a sinner is easy, even for worldly people. It is not so easy to have to go into details!

5. The prophecy:

The prophecy of Isaias 40. 3-5 refers to the liberation from the captivity of Babylon and the return to the Promised Land across the desert. The prophet takes his metaphor from the usual custom of kings sending heralds to prepare the road for their passing. Both the liberation and the return have a typical sense, applied to Messianic times. It is a question of preparing the hearts of the Jewish people—and they were illiterate and stony hearts—for the coming of Christ. The means, penance, humility, faith. The Fathers have always insisted on this interpretation.

All mankind is to see the saving power of God; just as all mankind was aware of the release of the Jews from Babylon. It can also mean

that all those who prepare themselves for the coming of Christ as they should, will enjoy that salvation.

6. John's success:

It is undoubted. The crowds flocked to hear him and many did penance at his word. His popularity was so great that, even years after, the Scribes and Pharisees did not dare to speak against him when Christ asked them a question about his baptism. He died for the Messiah, since the servant is not greater than his master.

SECTION III. THE FATHERS

I. ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

(Some extracts from Hom. 10 in Matt. PG. 57, 183 ff. dealing with the more important themes of today's Gospel.)

1. The baptism of penance:

(a) Whence did it come?

Not of himself, but under the inspiration of God, did the son of Zachary come to this work, as Luke tells us, saying: The word of the Lord came upon John, i.e. a command. He himself tells us: He who sent me to baptize with water. . . . And why was he sent? This he also tells us. I knew him not, but that he may be made manifest in Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water (John 1. 31).

(b) Its power:

Nevertheless this baptism had not the power to forgive sin; this being the gift of that baptism which was given later; for it was in that later baptism that we were buried together with Christ and our old man crucified with him. Before the cross nowhere has forgiveness appeared, because that is at all times attributed to his blood. . . . Since the sacrifice was not yet offered, nor had the Spirit descended, nor the sin been wiped out, nor the enmity taken away, nor the curse removed, how could pardon for sin be accomplished?

(c) Unto the forgiveness of sins:

He so exhorted them that they might confess their sins and do penance for them, not because of the punishment, but so that they might more readily receive forgiveness later. Unless they accused themselves they could not seek pardon; and unless they do seek it they will not be forgiven. So this baptism prepares the way for the other which is to come. . . . For this purpose he tries to make those humble who had come to him, showing them that they have no cause for their self-pride; that unless they did penance they would suffer grave afflictions, and that, forgetting about their forefathers and putting on one side their boasting because of them, they should receive him who had already come. Their earlier expectations

concerning Christ had become vague, and many indeed thought they were ended altogether after the slaughter in Bethlehem. . . . Accordingly, there was need of this striking introduction and of a more exalted beginning. . . .

2. *The figure of John:*

Consider what it meant to see this man coming out of the desert after thirty years there; the son of a High Priest; one who had ever been above the needs of ordinary men; venerable, because with him was the spirit of Isaias. For Isaias was present with him, proclaiming him and saying: This is he of whom I spoke to you, one crying out in the wilderness with a mighty voice, declaring all things to you. So great was the zeal of the prophets concerning these things that, long before, they had foretold, not only the coming of the Lord, but also his coming who was to minister unto him. Not only did they foretell him, but also where he would dwell, his manner of speaking and what great good was to follow. . . .

See how the prophet has foretold everything; the gathering together of the people, the changing for the better, the simplicity of what was made known and the reason why all this was done, even though he spoke in figure. Because when he says that every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low, and the rough ways made plain, he was foretelling that the humble shall be exalted and the proud brought low; that the harshness of the law shall be changed into the mildness of the Gospel. No more, he says, the sweat and pain; but grace and forgiveness for sin, thus opening the way of salvation.

3. *Lessons for us from John's austerity of life:*

If he who was so pure, so much brighter than the heavens, above all the prophets, than whom none greater was born of woman; one who had such faith—if he lived so austere, depriving himself of all pleasures, what excuse have we, who after so many favours received, laden with so many sins, can show not the least sign of his penance, but rather give ourselves to gluttony and drunkenness, softening ourselves by every means, thus making ourselves easy prey for the devil? Putting away every excess and drinking the bitter cup of moderation in all things, let us live in a manner which is becoming and temperate, giving ourselves to prayer in earnest. And if we do not receive that for which we pray, let us persevere that we may receive it. . . . For it is not his wish to withhold the gift we ask for, but in his wisdom, to encourage us to persevere by delaying the granting of it. He delays the granting of our prayers and even allows us to fall into temptation, so that we may turn to him more readily and remain there with him. Thus do loving parents act. . . .

So, frequently, God threatens us, not that he may inflict evils upon us, but to draw us to himself. When we return to him, he

immediately banishes our fears, for were we to feel the same security in time of temptation as we do when we are at peace, then there would be no need for us to be tempted.

And if we think of the whole life of David, we shall see that, in the midst of dangers, he was always greater; and not he alone, but all like him. Job also, for this same cause, shines forth; Joseph likewise. . . . Only by trials and tribulations have they been proved and received their crowns.

Since we know all these things, let us, in the words of Wisdom, make not haste in the time of clouds (Ecclus. 2. 2) but school ourselves to one thing only, the bearing of all things with courage, not enquiring too closely nor searching too deeply into that which may befall us. For to know at what time our trials will come to an end is proper to God alone, who permits them to happen. It is for us to bear our afflictions and give thanks; that is the duty of one who has confidence. If we do this, all good things will follow. And that they may follow, so that we may become ever more trusting, with still greater glory in heaven, let us accept whatever be laid upon us. Let us give thanks always to him who knows better than we do what is good for us, and who loves us more than our own parents.

And let these thoughts be at all times like a melody in our hearts, in whatever tribulation, so that we may rise above grieving and give praise to God, who arranges all things for our benefit. Thus we shall be able to overcome all dangers and come to our imperishable crown, to which may we all attain, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. CHRYSOSTOM AND AUGUSTINE

Alms and penance

(A summary and comparison of the doctrine of these two Fathers concerning alms and penance. It will be clear that their teaching coincides on all points.)

A: Alms and penance according to John Chrysostom

1. *Five ways of doing penance:*

There are many different ways of doing penance, all of which lead to heaven. The first consists in condemning our own sin, and this is sufficient for God, because he who hates the evil he has done falls into it again with greater difficulty.

There is another way, which consists in not remembering the offences of those who hate you, tempering your anger and forgiving the sins of your fellow-servants. Your heavenly Father will forgive you your transgressions, if you forgive your fellow-men theirs; if you do not forgive them, your heavenly Father will not forgive your transgressions either (Matt. 6. 14).

The third way? By fervent and assiduous prayer. Do you not remember the importunate widow and the unjust judge? (Luke 18. 5). Well, you have a meek, just and loving judge.

If you wish to know the fourth way, it is by almsdeeds. This has a very great power. Daniel said to the king, who lived under the stain of all types of sins: Deign, my Lord King, to be advised by me; with almsgiving, with mercy to the poor, for fault and wrong-doing of thine make amends; it may be he will condone thy guilt (Dan. 4. 24). What can compare to such kindness?

Lastly, humility, like that of the publican. . . .

2. *Almsdeeds a necessary means:*

The fourth means is almsdeeds, the queen of the virtues and one which carries men rapidly to the gates of heaven; one which performs the office of our advocate. . . . Great are her wings, cutting through the air, passing the moon, flying higher than the sun and penetrating into heaven itself. Nor do those wings cease there, because they pass the angels, the choirs of the archangels and the superior orders of spirits until they reach the very throne of the King. Remember that it was said to Cornelius that his prayers and alms were remembered before God. Do not fear that presence of God, no matter how many sins you have committed, provided almsdeeds accompany you as your advocate. There is no heavenly power which can resist it. She reclaims the debt, showing the receipt for it, for which reason the Lord says: As long as you did it to one of these, my brethren, you did it to me. So, even if your sins do weigh you down, your alms weigh more than all of them (*De Poenitentia*, 3. 1. PG. 49, 293).

3. *Superior to every sin:*

There is no sin which alms cannot purge away, for it is more powerful than any sin. There is no wound which can resist it. Is there anything worse than the office of publican, so open to all kind of sin? Well, Zaccheus was made just by his almsdeeds (Luke 19. 8). Even Christ himself carried a purse in which were the alms for the poor (John 12. 6). . . . Let us make sure, then, that we give alms in the thousands of ways they can be given. Have you money? Do not be dilatory in using it to help the needy. Can you defend someone's rights? Then, do not say that you have no money. Can you help by means of your labour? Then, do it. Are you a doctor? Then, help the sick. . . . Can you help by giving your advice? Better still, because so you will redeem your brother, not from hunger merely, but from danger of death. Have you a friend who is overcome by avarice? Have pity on him and help him. You say that he will not heed your advice? Do what you can. He goes naked and as a wanderer? (For naked and a wanderer indeed is he who does not walk along the right path.) Receive him into your house, dress him

in all the virtues, take him into the great heavenly company (*In Act. Apost. Hon.* 25, 3-4. PG. 60, 196).

4. *The impetration value of alms and its satisfactory value:*

Give to the poor, and when you do not pray, your alms will pray for you, as your advocate, with lips of infinite power. The price of the salvation of your soul is almsdeeds. Just as we place basins of water at the doors of the churches so that you may wash your hands, so we put the poor at the doors of those churches, so that you may cleanse your souls. . . .

I beg of you to fulfil the commands of the Lord. Let us sow our superfluous goods in the person of the poor; let us give the alms that we can give, because by doing so we make friends of the mammon of iniquity. Let us pour out our alms on the needy so as to extinguish the flames of hell. . . . There (in the judgement) the only one to receive us will be our alms. It will not be those whom we have helped by them, because they may not reach salvation; it will be the alms themselves which will receive us. And I speak, not merely of the rich, but also of the poor, because there is no one, however poor he may be, who cannot give a little (*In Heb. c. 2*, PG. 63, 34-5).

B: Alms and penance in Augustine

1. *Fruits worthy of penance:*

Bring forth fruits worthy of penance. From which we may gather that, if anyone does not produce these fruits, in vain will he hope to merit pardon for his sins through a sterile penance. For after this the multitude says to him, What shall we do? What fruits are these which you ask us to produce? . . . You praise the merchant who changes lead for gold and you do not praise him who gives money and buys his salvation. But, you say to me, I do not give money because I am not good. Give with more reason, then, and so you will receive the gift of justification.

Christ suffers need in the person of his poor for our sake. If he could feed them, as he did Elias by means of the raven, he does not choose to do so; instead he uses us, as he did the widow woman, in the case of Elias (3 Kings 17. 10). He put heaven up for sale, setting its price at the value of a glass of fresh water. . . . Naturally, a glass of water when we have nothing better to give. If you have more, you have the obligation of giving more; because even the widow gave two farthings.

2. *The satisfaction value of alms:*

It is written: As water puts out the flames, so alms extinguish sin (Ecclus. 3. 33). And also: Bury your alms in the heart of the poor and it will cry out to God for you (*ibid.* 29. 15). . . . There are many

other texts in the sacred writings in which we can see how much alms can do to wipe away sin. For that reason the Lord takes into account almsdeeds, both in the case of those he condemns and in that of those he rewards, as if he would say to us: If I judge only your works it would be difficult for me not to condemn you, but enter into the kingdom prepared for you, because when I was hungry, you gave me to eat. You will not go into the kingdom because you have not sinned, but because you have redeemed your sins with alms. . . . To the condemned as well will be said: It is not for the reasons you imagine, but because I was hungry and you did not give me to eat. If you had only given up your evil ways and returned to me, redeeming your sins by means of alms, those alms would now free you and absolve you of all crime, because blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Now you must go into eternal fire, for there is judgement without mercy for the one who does not act mercifully (James 2. 13).

3. Venial sin and alms:

If you have given way to the pleasures of the world, practise mercy in the form of alms, of penance and prayer. By these means many of those sins which are the result of human frailty can be purged away. Do not hesitate to be afraid of them, just because they are small sins; instead, be afraid of them, because they are many in number. . . . They are not a wild beast, like the lion; but remember that even small creatures can do great harm if they are many in number. The drops of rain are small, but they can fill rivers and so destroy cities. . . .

You will ask me, then: Who can live without these faults? I will reply: No one! But God has provided us with the remedy to heal them. Alms, prayers and fasting. Three things, in truth, but so that you may pray and fast as you ought, alms are necessary (*Sermo* 9. c. 11. PL. 38. 88-89).

III. ST AUGUSTINE

Universal need for penance

(A summary of his doctrine, divided into two sections, the motives for penance and the need for it. Lastly, his exhortation to penance. Various writings of the Saint have been used for this summary, and it would be too long to enumerate them all. The main ones are given.)

Motives for penance

1. Because sin separates us from God:

In Advent penance is preached to us because sin is the real thing which separates us from God, our Father and Lord.

(a) Christ is the light and we should not separate ourselves from him if we wish to live:

John was not the light, but came to give testimony to that real, true light, which was Christ. We must see clearly who it is that lives within us; that we should not separate ourselves from him who does not depart from us. He comes to us, and so that we may receive him, he sends ahead of him a herald, he seeks testimony from a mere man, so as to help men. We are so weak that we have to seek the light of day through that other light, a mere lantern—as was John.

(b) Sin separates us from God, who dwells among us:

He is not far from us in whom we live, move and have our being. Only your own evil can separate you from God. Break down the wall of sin, and you will be once more united with him. . . . We have to confess that, although God is everywhere by his presence and his power, he is not everywhere by the indwelling of his grace. . . . Those are said to be far from him who have made themselves unlike him by their sins; while they are said to draw near to God who, through their good lives, receive his likeness. Rightly do we say that the blinder an eye is, the further it is from the light. Even when the light is near to all, is there anything further from it than a blind eye, bathed in that same light?

(c) But God continues to love us and to wait for us:

They (sinners) are ignorant of the fact that you are present to all, even those who separate themselves from you. Let them be converted and seek you, because not as they abandoned their Creator do you abandon your creature. Let them but be converted and you will be there again, in their hearts, the hearts of those who confess their sin and cast themselves on your bosom, weeping. . . .

(d) God loves you and hates your sin:

He hates your works; he loves you. He hates what you did, but he loves what God did. Your works are sinful, and you are a man made to God's image and likeness. You forget what God did for you, and love that which you yourselves have done. . . .

2. The need for penance (Taken from *Sermo* 351. PL. 39, 1535 ff.):

(a) For the good people:

There is one kind of penance which the good, from the very fact of being so, practise daily, namely, that of bearing with this life while they long for the life to come. So we should all consider what little esteem is due to this present life . . . made worse, as it is, by concupiscence, which led the Apostle to long for its end so that he might put on immortality. This penance, then, consists in living detached from the things of this world, with our gaze fixed on our heavenly home. But apart from it we need another penance, that of

pain and punishment which we ourselves voluntarily impose on ourselves. We need it:

(b) To resist temptation:

Such is the Christian rule; that this flesh and this dust should not feel sure of itself until this night has passed in which all kinds of wild beasts roam about, seeking their prey. That is why Job does not say that temptation exists in this life, but that life itself is a temptation. . . .

(c) To preserve and increase grace:

Let no one glory, even though he may have domesticated his body and crucified the world by his works; even though he may have reduced his body into subjection. All that has been given to you, and you must not be content with returning merely that which was given to you, lest it should be said to you: Base and slothful servant . . . all the more was it thy part to lodge my money with the bankers, so that I might have recovered it with interest when I came (Matt. 25. 26-27). He who wishes to increase in grace, let him do penance.

(d) To the priests:

The priest lives in the midst of human things, but not carnal ones, dedicated as he is to the ministry of the salvation of souls. He does not live full of preoccupation about temporal things, nor does his work for souls leave him with much leisure time for idleness. Let him give his alms with joy, then, either by remedying the material needs of the poor, or in his condition as dispenser of the heavenly bread, by constructing real fortresses in the hearts of men against the attacks of the devil. Let him never be overcome by weariness at the sight of those difficulties which present themselves so that a man may not forget that he is a man. Let him not be carried away by anger when someone annoys him, or with him who, urged to it by need, asks him for something at an inopportune moment. Nor again, with the one who begs him to deal with some affair, just when he is most busy; nor with him who will not listen to reason, blinded by his passions or by laziness. . . .

Yet the dust of this world can still stick to priests, and it will be held against them unless they are fully aware of this stain. Therefore, as priests, we have not merely to support this life until it passes, hoping in God and acting manfully, so as to produce fruits by means of our patience. . . . We should also do penance daily so as to shake off the dust of this world which sticks to the feet of all those who travel by this road and so as to make good the loss of energy caused by those same delicate acts of our ministry.

(e) To the laity:

If this happens in the case of the dispensers of the word of God, the ministers of his sacraments and the soldiers of Christ, what will not happen in the case of the multitude of the flock? How much

penance will they have to do . . . who are not merely sprinkled with dust, but covered in mud from head to foot. . . . How many sins are committed by unnecessary gossip about other people's affairs; in matters of buying and selling. . . . It makes us sad to think of all that we should find within ourselves if we were to examine ourselves carefully enough in the mirror of the Sacred Scriptures. It is true that none of these things wound us mortally, but they are like scabs which make us ugly, so that they separate us from the embrace of our Spouse, the most beautiful of the sons of men, unless we cure them by the daily medicine of penance.

(f) For sinners:

The third penance is that which has to be undergone for sins committed against the commandments. No one can approach Christ and begin to be what he was not, unless he first of all repents for what he was. . . . This is the penance St Peter demanded from the Jews as a necessity for pardon (Acts 2. 38) and which the Lord had already commanded when he told them to repent because the kingdom of God was at hand. . . .

In this third type of penance each must show himself severe with himself and judge himself so as not to be judged by God: If we recognized our own fault, we should not incur these judgements . . . (1 Cor. 11. 31). Once the tribunal has been set up within our hearts, let the memory act as accuser, conscience as a witness and fear as our executioner.

What is he waiting for, then, who has sinned grievously? Since God still gives him life, let him do penance. Is he such an enemy of himself that he does not do it? Let him change his attitude and chastise himself with a penance which is severe indeed, but which heals.

(g) Vain excuses:

Others do not do it. . . . The Scriptures already told us that, in the Church, there would be good and bad until the end of time, when the Lord will come, flail in hand, for the harvest.

There are many others who sin. . . . Let not those who refuse to do penance seek companions in their eternal banishment, nor rejoice in the fact that they discover many. Just because they are many, that does not mean to say that they will burn less!

Perhaps they rely on the fact that some priests and ecclesiastical dignitaries do not live in accordance with their preaching. Unhappy those who, looking at the ministers, ignore the Lord, who had already recommended that we should take heed to their words, not their works! He who put up with Judas, and even sent him out to preach. . . . They are like one on a road, who seeing that the milestones did not move, although they were covered in signs pointing the way, did not wish to move himself. If you wish to arrive at your journey's

end, why do you not look at so many other priests, who not merely point out the way to you, but who also stride along it valiantly? If you search for such as these, you will certainly find them, although one hears less about them; for men, instead of looking charitably at those who do live what they preach, prefer to discover something worthy of censure, at times because they never would find anything good in anyone—being evil themselves. At others, because they are afraid to find it, lest they be moved to give up their evil ways.

Those who are impenitent and obstinate

Those who put off the of day their repentance:

(a) Because they despair of finding pardon:

They need not be afraid; they have God's word for it that he does not seek the death of the sinner, but his conversion and his life (Ez. 18. 23).

(b) or because they hope too much—presumption:

They say: God is merciful and forgives everything; he does not return evil for evil. Let them listen to Paul (Rom. 2. 4) when he warns them that they are rejecting God's goodness, which is drawing them to repent.

(c) Others hope badly . . .

They put off until later the day of their conversion. Why, if God is ready to forgive me all, should I not increase my pleasures and live happily? But why do you say that, my brother? Because God has promised me his pardon as soon as I change, he replies.

There are two answers to this: First, do you call that living well, when all you do is sin? No one has promised that you will see tomorrow's light. If this is not so, you who know so well how to quote the Scriptures when they promise you pardon at the moment of conversion, read me one single passage in which you have been promised that you shall have tomorrow! . . . But it is written: Or wouldst thou make slow work of turning to the Lord, and put it off from day to day? Swift falls his anger and perilous, when the time for vengeance is ripe (Ecclus. 5. 8-9). Have I perchance written those words? Can I wipe them out? I can neither remove them, nor keep silent about them, because my silence would terrify me. I have the obligation of preaching, and I myself am full of fear. Do you tremble with me, and so, one day, we may triumph together. . . .

SECTION IV. THEOLOGIAN

I. ST THOMAS AQUINAS

(We give here a brief summary of the main ideas of St Thomas concerning penance, taken from 3P. q. 86.)

1. *In what does the remission of sin consist?*

In being re-united with God, from whom it has separated us. The offence against God came from our will, which turned away from him to seek some created good. This offence cannot be forgiven while a man refuses to turn back to God through repentance and the promise of a new life. To pardon is to receive once more into favour and is an act of the offended person in favour of the offender. We can pardon our enemies and restore them to favour even though their dispositions have not changed towards us; but that is simply because our grace and favour are externals, which bring about no internal change in the one who receives them. . . . The grace of God does not work like that, it gives positive goodness to one who did not possess it, bringing about a great interior change.

2. *To recover grace repentance is necessary:*

Therefore, so that God may restore his grace to us, it is first of all necessary that man should remove his evil disposition of the will, by means of which he turned to creatures, separating himself from God. While the voluntary aversion from God persists it is impossible for God to restore grace to us. (In other sections of his works he points out that this change in the will is brought about by actual grace.)

The same reason explains why it is that children can have original sin forgiven them without any previous act of repentance. It is not the personal will of the child which is involved in the disorder of this sin, but the disorder is rooted in the nature which he has inherited. Thus sanctifying grace by itself is enough to correct the disorder.

3. *Necessary for the pardon of venial sin also:*

Because, even though it does not separate us entirely from God, our affections are impeded by it, so that they do not fly to God so quickly. Therefore repentance is in some way necessary and the simple state of charity is not enough, since venial sin can exist together with charity. There must be at least some virtual displeasure at the thought of the venial sin; at least such a desire for God that the soul is ready, at that moment, to remove anything which impedes its progress towards God.

II. ST BONAVENTURE

(A summary of his teaching concerning the three grades of purification, fear, love and mercy.)

1. *The ways of penance:*

We should know that there are three kinds of purification: legal, prophetic and evangelical. The first has its origin in fear of the severity of the judgement; the second in an ardent zeal for justice; the third in the sweetness of divine mercy. The first is indicated to

us in figure in the fast of Moses; the second in that of Elias and the third in that of Christ. . . .

(a) The first—fear of the judgement:

The first purification is legal, and comes from a fear of the severe judgements of God, of which St Luke speaks: He holds his winnowing-fan ready to purge his threshing floor clean; he will gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will consume with fire that can never be quenched (3. 17). Christ, like a burning fire, will hold his winnowing-fan in his hand, that is, the balance of his justice at the last day. A consideration of the last judgement will do for us by grace what vindictive justice would do for us then. It is convenient that fear should be the beginning of your purification.

(b) The second—penitential grace:

The second purification is that of penitential grace, which has its origin in an ardent desire for justice; this is prophetic and better than the former purification.

(c) The third—mercy:

The third comes from the sweetness of the compassion from on high, and it is called evangelical, because the Gospel comes to us full of meekness. James and John asked the Lord if they should order fire from heaven to come down on the inhospitable Samaritans; but Jesus replied that he had not come for that. It is said of this purification in the Book of Tobias, that alms frees us from death and cleanses us from all sin.

2. Grades in the three:

Faith must accompany mercy; but if you wish to have true faith in God you must first have fear, because through the fear of God man is parted from sin (Prov. 16. 6).

This third purification supposes the other two, that of Moses and that of Elias. If you give alms without ceasing from sin it is as if you gave a blow together with your alms. There is a relation between these three purifications, because that of fear is, as it were, the foundation, while that which proceeds from divine compassion is the complement. The first is purgative, the second both purgative and illuminative, while the third is purgative, illuminative and perfective.

III. ST ROBERT BELLARMINE

(Extracts from his sermon on the Gospel, in which he treats of a right intention and its importance if we are to attain our last end.)

1. A right intention:

Make straight the way of the Lord. A right intention is the very foundation of the spiritual life, because the straight path really

means following the law of God, and for that we need a right intention—a knowledge of and strong desire for our last end.

He who loves some end in view chooses the means to attain it. For that reason Paul can say that he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law of God, which is the same as the words of the Lord: If thy eye is clear, the whole of the body will be lit up (Matt. 6. 22). On what we love and seek the whole of our life will depend.

(a) Our end:

What do men seek, as if it were their last end? Some riches, even at the price of deceit; others a woman, others this or that honour or dignity. None of those things is the end of man. Better than any one else, he knew it who made us, and who said, when he created us: Come, let us make man to our own image and likeness. The purpose of an image is to be like its model. Therefore our end in life is to go on growing in likeness to God until the day comes when we will be like him, because we shall see him as he is (1 John 3. 2). A very high end indeed.

(b) Our intention should direct all our actions to that end:

All our actions, not merely one or two. Those who separate themselves from this end, the more they run the farther they depart from it, like a badly aimed arrow. And how much energy men waste on passing things! . . .

Those who think of heaven as their end journey along with joy, because that brilliant goal is always before their eyes. What is more, they attain it before the others, because the latter either do not arrive at all, since they are condemned, or else they prolong their journey in purgatory, where one moment's pain is equivalent to many years of suffering in this world. The good see their end always and in all things, because their longing for it keeps it always before their eyes and their tranquil conscience gives them confidence that they will attain it. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. There is nothing which gives so much real joy as a good life.

2. A smooth path: Concerning presumption and pusillanimity or despair:

Behold, here is a path which is flat, without mountains or valleys, because the two main obstacles to salvation are presumption and despair; pride and pusillanimity.

There are some who, in their presumption, form their conscience and their way of life by justifying all their actions. I waste a lot, I know—but it is mine! I am angry, but they deserve it. I defraud when selling; but then, I also am deceived when I make purchases. They seem like the Pharisee, who could only see the sins of another.

To all such as these we may apply the words of the Lord: I have come into this world so that a sentence may fall upon it, that those

who are blind should see, and those who see should become blind (John 9. 39). That is, so as to punish those who think themselves wise. If you were blind, Jesus told them, you would not be guilty. It is because you protest, We can see clearly, that you cannot be rid of your guilt (*ibid.* 41).

Others know their sin, but remain in that state, relying on God's goodness and on the means of pardon which he has granted to us. The other extreme is the cowardice of those who wish to be good, but who think that a life of virtue is too difficult. Without God's grace we can do nothing; but with it, all is easy. Let the mountains be brought low by the fear of God; the valleys be filled, through confidence in his grace.

3. *A narrow path: each one's cross:*

There is also a narrow path, because no one can enter into heaven unless his blood be shed in martyrdom or his flesh be subjected, in a likeness of the saints. Life is a cross, a crown which has to be won by fighting, a constant struggle with God's enemies. As Paul says, all those who wish to live well, in Christ Jesus, have to suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3. 12).

This road is a necessary one for the poor, in the midst of their poverty. Their sufferings are a painful road; but to despair or steal is to depart from it. It is necessary for the rich, for whom almsdeeds are sometimes more painful than is his poverty to the poor man. For they have to overcome their avarice, their pride and their sinful prodigality. . . . Obedience is painful, to be in command difficult, youth is tempted, old age leads to sickness. . . .

And did you say that the road was a joyful one? The grace of God transforms all things, making it possible to rejoice in tribulations (2 Cor. 7. 4).

SECTION V. SPIRITUAL WRITERS

I. ST THOMAS OF VILLANOVA

(Summary of a Sermon on the phrase: A voice crying in the wilderness.)

1. *Sinners are a wilderness in which the Lord's voice cries out:*

Sinners form this desert, land which is not cultivated and where no seed produces fruit. A desert in which the voice of the Lord is heard in four different ways, by means of his favours, by preaching, by his punishments and through his interior inspirations.

(a) *The voice of his favours:*

God treats the sinner very kindly, giving him health, honour and riches at times, to win his heart. But so evil are we that, when prosperous, we tend to forget our benefactor and instead are drunk

with personal pride. We are foolish. Even the animals know their benefactor and show him gratitude; you alone, O man, are more ungrateful than the brute beasts and bite the hand that feeds you. On all sides the voice of the Lord is heard; in the heavens, the sun, the earth. O man, learn to know your benefactor and give thanks to him!

(b) *The voice of preaching:*

Since the voice of his favours is often not clear enough for many people, God brings another voice to the ears of the sinner, to force him towards a rapid conversion—preaching. This is not the voice of men, but that of God. The Lord said: He that heareth you, heareth me; for which reason St Paul writes to those of Thessalonica; This is why we give thanks to God unceasingly that, when we delivered the divine message to you, you recognized it for what it is, God's message, not man's . . . (1 Thess. 2. 13).

You all know how powerful this voice was in the days of old, so much so that it converted the whole world. But today it has lost much of its power, and it is a rare thing to be able to bring a sinner to repentance through it. Therefore, in these days, God makes heard another and a third voice—that of his punishments.

(c) *The voice of his punishments:*

In the case of such a deep sleep the shaking we receive must be a great one. Face to face with his punishments, some, like the brothers of Joseph, awaken; others open their eyes and say: We have sinned. But they go to sleep again almost at once. Others begin their conversion, but soon forget their good resolutions; while others do not even wake up at all. How sad it is to see them, like Pharaoh, receive blow after blow, without knowing the hand from which those punishments come!

Such is the case in our time. My God, how your hand lies heavy upon us! So many wars, blows of all kinds, calamities. . . . Yet few they are who repent of their ways and do penance! The more blows we receive the greater is our folly, it would seem. There is no hope for us, unless it be in the last and the most powerful of his voices—that of his interior illuminations and graces.

(d) *The voice of interior inspirations:*

A voice of thunder, which can be heard even by those who are deaf to all else. God's word to us is something alive, full of energy; it can penetrate deeper than any two-edged sword, reaching the very division between soul and spirit, between joints and marrow, quick to distinguish every thought and design in our hearts (Heb. 4. 12-13). This voice, St Bernard used to say, is not a loud voice, but it is a penetrating one; not brilliant, but very effective; not the slightest murmur of it can be heard, yet it draws souls by its gentle unction.

St Thomas goes on to describe this voice in its different manifestations; at times it gives rise to a burning fire of love, as in the case of Mary of Magdala, at others it resounds, terrible and hammer-like, as in the case of St Paul's conversion. It is worse to hear the reproaches of the voice of God than to hear the death-sentence pronounced over us in prison! May we hear it in this world rather than in the next!

2. Prepare his paths:

What do these various voices of the Lord demand of us? That we should prepare the way for him. Nothing very grand or very difficult. We are asked not to resist him. He is standing at the door and knocking; his only wish is that we should let him in.

Clear away the stone, pebbles and thorns which form an obstacle in your path; remove the sins which stain your souls, those quarrels, hatreds, enmities, envies, avarices, adulteries, pride—all those sins which separate us from God. Confess your sins, weep for them, clothe your souls in good desires; pray; expiate your sins by means of fasts and almsdeeds, then justice will prepare its dwelling-place within you.

II. ST JOHN OF THE CROSS

(Extracts from the *Ascent of Mt Carmel*, Bk. I, chaps. 4-7.)

A worldly life and its dangers:

(a) God and creatures—opposites:

The reason is that two contraries (even as philosophy teaches us) cannot coexist in one person; and that darkness, which is affection for creatures, and light, which is God, are contrary to each other and have no likeness or accord between one another, even as St Paul explained to the Corinthians, saying: *Quae conventio luci ad tenebras?* That is to say, what communion can there be between light and darkness? Hence it is that the light of divine union cannot dwell in the soul if these affections first flee not away from it (chap. 4, para. 2).

Therefore the soul that sets its affections upon the being of creation is likewise nothing in the sight of God, and less than nothing, for, as we have said, love makes for equality and similitude, and even sets the lover beneath the object of his love. And therefore such a soul will in no wise be able to attain to union with the infinite being of God; for that which is not can have no agreement with that which is. . . . For there is nought good, except God. Therefore the soul that sets its heart upon the good things of the world is supremely evil in the eyes of God (*ibid.* para. 4).

Wherefore the soul that is enamoured of prelacy, or of any other such office, and longs for liberty of desire, is considered and treated,

in the sight of God, not as a son, but as a base slave and captive, since it has not been willing to accept his holy doctrine, according to which he that would be greater must be less, and he who would be less must be greater. Therefore such a soul will be unable to attain to that true liberty of spirit which is encompassed in his divine union, for slavery can have no part with liberty; and liberty cannot dwell in a heart that is subject to desires, for this is the heart of a slave; but it dwells in the heart of a free man, because he has the heart of a son (*ibid.* 6).

(b) Examples and authorities:

This distance (between God and creatures) was clearly recognized by St Augustine, who said: Miserable man that I am, when will my littleness and imperfection agree with thy uprightness? Thou indeed art good, and I am evil; thou art merciful and I am unholy; thou art holy, I am miserable; thou art just, I am unjust; thou art light, I am blind; thou life, I death; thou medicine, I sick; thou, supreme truth, I utter vanity (chap. 5, para 1).

For this reason our Lord, when instructing us in this way, said through St Luke: *Qui non renuntiat omnibus quae possidet, non potest meus esse discipulus.* This means: He that renounces not all that he possesses with his will, cannot be my disciple. And this is evident; for the doctrine that the Son of God came to teach was contempt for all things, so that a man might receive as a reward the Spirit of God in himself. For as long as the soul rejects not all things, it has no capacity to receive the Spirit of God in pure transformation (para. 2).

Of this we have a figure in Exodus, wherein we read that God gave not the children of Israel the food from heaven, which was manna, until the flour which they had brought from Egypt failed them. . . . This can likewise be seen in this same book of Holy Scripture, wherein it is said that, not content with this simplest of foods, they desired and craved fleshly food. And that our Lord was grievously offended that they should desire to mingle a food that was so base and coarse with one that was so noble and so simple; which, though it was so, had within itself the sweetness and substance of all foods. . . . (*ibid.* para. 3).

Oh, did spiritual persons but know how much good and what great abundance of spirit they lose through not seeking to raise their desires above childish things, and how they would find in this simple spiritual food the sweetness of all things, if they desired not to taste those things! . . . It is well known by experience that, when the will of a man is affectioned to something, he prizes it more than any other; although some other thing may be better, he takes less pleasure in it. And if he wishes to take pleasure in both, he is bound to do injustice to the more important, since he makes an equality

between them. Now, inasmuch as there is naught that equals God, the soul that loves some other thing together with him, or clings to it, wrongs him greatly. And if this is so, what would it be doing if it loved anything more than God? (chap. 5, para. 4-5).

(c) Two serious evils in the soul, resulting from desires:

... The one is that they deprive it of the spirit of God, and the other is that the soul wherein they dwell is wearied, tormented, darkened, defiled and weakened, according to that which is said in Jeremias, chapter 2: *Duo mala fecit populus meus: dereliquerunt fontem aquae vivae, et foderunt sibi cisternas dissipatas, quae continere non valent aquas.* ... These two evils, namely the privative and the positive, may be caused by any disordered act of the desire. ...

It is clear that the desires weary and fatigue the soul; for they are like restless and discontented children, who are ever demanding this or that from their mother, and are never satisfied. ... The second kind of positive evil which the desires cause in the soul is their tormenting and affliction of it, after the manner of one who is in torment through being bound with cords from which he has no release until he is freed. And of these David says: *Funes peccatorum circumplexi sunt me.* ...

The third evil that the desires cause in the soul is that they blind and darken it. Even as vapours darken the air and allow not the bright sun to shine; or as a mirror that is clouded over cannot receive within itself a clear image; or as water defiled by mud reflects not the face of one who looks therein; even so the soul that is clouded by the desires is darkened in the understanding and allows neither the sun of natural reason nor that of the supernatural Wisdom of God to shine upon it and illumine it clearly. (The Saint goes on to show how these same desires stain and defile the soul, weaken it in virtue and make it lukewarm. His conclusion is that any soul wishing to attain to full divine union must be free from all desire, no matter how small. He interprets in this way 1 Cor. 7. 29-31.) (chaps. 6-7).

III. BLESSED JOHN OF AVILA

(Two letters, no. 29 and no. 45, written during Advent, speak of the manner of preparing for the Lord's coming. We give a summary of their teaching under various headings.)

1. Preparation necessary:

This first coming which we commemorate at Christmas was the greatest event in world history. Just as it had its own preparation, so we should prepare for the celebration of its anniversary. We are very careful to admit those creatures who knock at our door, sometimes to our harm; yet we are not so ready to open the doors of our

hearts to Christ, who is the desired of all nations. He comes only to those who desire him; he gives himself to those who wish him to give himself. In order to aim at a target we close one eye so as to fix the other entirely on the mark. We should do the same now, closing our eyes to creatures so as to fix them on God. To give us greater confidence, he comes to us as a little child. This is the bread which he offers and gives to all who hunger for it. All he asks is that we confess our sins and receive him. How unhappy they are who prefer to die of hunger!

2. What holds us back?

Come here, my soul, and tell me, what is it that holds you back from seeking God with all your strength? Why do you not love him much who loves you so deeply? He had no other task on earth but to love you and seek to help you, even though it cost him pain. And what business have you on earth except that of loving the King of kings? Do you not realize that all this which you see about you must have an end; all that you see, hear, touch and treat of? It is but a cobweb, which can neither dress you nor protect you from the cold. Where are you when you are not with Christ; what are you thinking of; what are you esteeming, when you seek all these things apart from the one and only good? ...

Never was there a love like his. He loved you when he made you in his own image and likeness; but he loved you still more when he made himself in the likeness of man. He comes down to us to lift us up with him. He became man that we may become gods; he came from heaven to take us there; he died that we may have life. In the midst of so many favours what am I doing, asleep and lacking in gratitude? ... Let us then lose no more time, for the sun is already high in the heavens and we have lost enough time already.

3. Exhortation: Almsdeeds:

You, who are the very author of mercy, grant us the grace to feel that same sentiment. Let me see you in the manger and learn to give freely to others as you have done. Do not permit God to weep and man to go unfeeling at the sight. ... Prepare to open to him the hands of mercy, because Christ is about to be born, and he has neither house nor bed. Keep the fires of your love kindled brightly, for the Child is cold. And should those fires be merely tepid, then the very cold of the Child will stir them up, because the more cold he suffers for us, so much the more does he teach us to love him. ... And because he has many relatives who are poor and whom he also loves, we must love them too and stretch forth our hands to them, because they are the brothers of our creator.

IV. BOSSUET

(A summary of one of his sermons dealing with austerity and the need for a change in our lives if we do real penance.)

1. *Solitude and penance:*

The figure of the Baptist reminds us of his mission; he is a voice crying in the wilderness. He was a voice exteriorly, but also in his interior recollection and in his life. This is the real mystery of penance and expiation—the way to cure our ills. Therefore let us see the desert in which that voice cries out, the preparation it demands and the rectitude it seeks from us.

(a) *Conscience needs tranquil reflection:*

The voice which calls us to penance likes to make itself heard in the desert; and so it is necessary for us to abandon the noise of the world if we would hear it. We must learn to love solitude because the noise and tumult of men drown that voice. True compunction is incompatible with a worldly life. The true penitent is always recollected.

The penance done in the old days would astonish us today. Then they used to live withdrawn even from their business activities, praying and meditating day and night. The reason is evident. We sinned because the world led us astray, not allowing us to hear the voice of conscience. It is essential that we should hear it once more. But both conscience and the intellect of which it is a part do not work in the same way as the senses. The latter attack swiftly, by means of instant impressions, while the intellect needs to gather its forces together, assemble its principles, build a firm foundation for its conclusions, guarantee its good resolutions. Therefore, if it does not give to its reflection the added weight of its continued attention, it will be carried away by the wind. There is something about the world itself which leads us to be in constant motion, the hours seem to pass all too quickly and the day comes to an end too rapidly.

St John Chrysostom said that we ought to un-learn something every day. True; because this world was our teacher from the first moment we came to the use of reason; and it taught us badly—that we should measure all things by our own personal interests; that all should be subject to our good, that patience is the virtue of the weak. . . . Therefore it is necessary for us to un-learn; but first of all we must abandon both the school and the master who taught us there.

Therefore, do not be surprised when I tell you that the first instinct of a man inspired by God is to leave the great world. The spirit of penance will substitute for that calm, worldly air a certain barbarism. Then we learn another language, because we learn to say no, it is impossible, and to give the world dry and vigorous negatives in reply. He who truly repents is forced to remember, every time

he sees the world, how often he has sinned by trying to please it. Even penitent kings seek this solitude and if they have not had time during the day to retire to their rooms, they occupy part of the night in a secret desire which makes them groan and cry out: Against thee only have I sinned.

(b) *Usefulness of this sorrow:*

This sorrow is reasonable, for if inevitable disasters cause us pain, those cause us still more sorrow which come upon us through our own fault. Besides, it is a useful sorrow, since it is the only one which can destroy the cause of it. Weep for the dead; but they will not rise again. But weep for your sins, and your tears will wipe them out.

(c) *At least, interior recollection:*

But, you may say to me, what examples you have put before us! Do you wish to leave the world empty? We must not expect such effects from the penance done nowadays. Not even John, were he to come again and preach to us, would get us to leave the world and weep for our sins in some unknown place. We do not appreciate our salvation as much as all that, nor have we such a high esteem for our souls, even though they have been bought at the same price in blood as those others I have mentioned. What is more, I would say that such austerities are not commanded us, nor are they even necessary. But the least we can do is not hand ourselves over entirely to the world or to its pleasures. A truly contrite and afflicted spirit does not feel itself attracted by the vain pleasures of the world.

Sow the good seed a little deeper, for through being too shallow up to now, it has been stepped on by the passers-by, has not been able to send down roots, has been eaten by the birds and choked by worldly affairs. . . . The heart must suffer interiorly. At least we should convince ourselves that these excessive pleasures of the senses are incompatible with true penitential sadness. We should make a desert for ourselves by means of our attention and interior recollection. Once we are in that desert, to which the voice of John the Baptist has led us, and once we have learnt to weep for our sins, is there any other preparation necessary to open the way for God and to lead him into our hearts?

2. *The change in our way of life:*

Retirement and solitude are only one part—the negative part—of the preparations demanded by penance. True repentance would be enough, but as we know full well that there is a kind of false penance, we must prove and prepare the way with exactitude.

St Augustine says that it is easier to find people who have conserved their first innocence than it is to find true penitents. . . . Yet there are many who do not think like that. They put sin and repentance on the same level. If it is easy for them to sin, it is no less

easy for them to be converted. They are as easily in a state of sin and a state of grace, as they please. But no; the vicious affections which have filled our lives are not so easily uprooted as all that. There are soporifics which do not cure, even though they deaden the pain of the illness.

3. *Love for the rules of the Christian life:*

Once the soul is thus prepared, with no illusions as to its conversion, then it prepares the straight path. But what is this righteousness of heart so often mentioned by the Scriptures? We ourselves are not right, nor are we the measure of rectitude. Our rightness of heart consists in a conformity with the divine rule or measure; not from fear only, but also from a love of its beauty. For if we act according to the law simply through fear of its threats, without loving its truth and justice, while it cannot be said that we break the law, neither can it be said that in our heart of hearts we are in agreement with it.

Certainly, fear of God is more efficacious than fear of men, for the latter do not see us; but in any case, where only fear exists, there can never be that attraction which alone will suffice to uproot and destroy completely our corrupt inclination.

St Augustine used to say: If you could only deceive the eyes of the one who sees all things, what is there you would not do? Make your paths straight, therefore, by means of a beginning of love; and thus, from this love will be born another kind of fear; not the fear of an adulteress, who dreads the return of her husband; but the fear of the chaste spouse, who dreads the thought of losing him. Let us be afraid to lose the God whom we love.

SECTION VI. PAPAL TEXTS

A: Faithful stewards

Those who have received a greater abundance of good things from God, whether they be spiritual or material, internal or external, have received them that they may attain their own perfection and also attend to the needs of others as ministers of divine providence. He who has received one talent, let him make sure that he does not hide it; while he who has received an abundance, let him make sure that he does not fail to have mercy on others (Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, n. 19).

In this great solidarity which is both personal and social, each one should be ready to work and to sacrifice himself for the good of all. The difference is not in the fact of the obligation, but in the manner of fulfilling it. Is it not true that those who have more time or the means to do so should be more attentive and assiduous in serving others? When we speak of means, we do not limit ourselves entirely

to such things as riches, but include all other gifts, such as those of intellect, culture, education, knowledge and authority; which gifts have not been granted to a few fortunate people for their personal use merely, so that they may create a lack of equality between brethren, but rather for the good of the whole social community (Pius XII, Message to the Nobility of Rome, Jan. 1949).

Divine providence has assigned to each one his place and function in human society. For that very reason he has divided his goods between them. Those goods and talents must give their fruit, as you know, and the Lord will demand a strict account of their administration and according to the fruit he will judge and separate men to the one hand or the other (*ibid.*).

B: The priest, God's ambassador and administrator

This is all the more evident from the fact that we exercise the priestly office, not in our own name, but in Christ's. Let a man so account us, says the apostle, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4. 1); on behalf of Christ, therefore, we are acting as ambassadors (2 Cor. 5. 20). It is for this reason that Christ himself has enrolled us, not among his servants, but his friends. . . . I have chosen you and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit (John 15. 15-16). Therefore we are to act the part of Christ and the ministry given by him is to be carried on in such a way that we accomplish precisely what he intends. And since durable friendship consists in having the same will in all things, we are bound as friends to feel within ourselves what Jesus Christ felt, who is holy, innocent, undefiled; as legates we must win the faith of men to his doctrine and his laws, observing them ourselves first; as the participants of his power to lighten souls weighed down by sin, we must strive with every care lest we ourselves be burdened also. . . .

St Charles Borromeo in his sermons to the clergy speaks thus:

If we should remember, dearly beloved brethren, what great and wonderful gifts the Lord God has placed in our hands, what influence this thought would exert in impelling us to lead lives worthy of ecclesiastical men! What has the Lord not placed in my hand, when he has put there his only-begotten Son, coeternal and coequal to himself? In my hand he has placed all his riches, his graces, his sacraments; he has placed there souls which he preferred in his love to himself and redeemed with his blood; he has placed heaven in my hand, which I can both open and close to others. How, then, can I be so ungrateful after such condescension and love, as to sin against him, to offend his honour? to pollute this body which is his? to defile this dignity, this life consecrated to his service (Pius X, *Haerenti Animo*, 1908).

C: The compassion of the priest

On the other hand, by sincere disinterestedness the priest can hope to win back the hearts of all. For detachment from earthly goods, if inspired by lively faith, is always accompanied by tender compassion towards the unfortunate of every kind. Thus the priest becomes a veritable father of the poor. Mindful of the touching words of his Saviour: As long as you did it to one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it to me; he sees in them, and with particular affection, venerates and loves, Jesus Christ himself.

Thus the Catholic priest is freed from the bonds of a family and of self-interest—the two chief bonds which could bind him too closely to earth. Thus freed, his heart will more readily take flame from the heavenly fire that burns in the Heart of Jesus; that fire which seeks only to inflame apostolic hearts and through them cast fire upon the earth. This is the fire of zeal. . . . It should make him forget himself and all earthly things. It should urge him powerfully to dedicate himself utterly to his sublime work, and to search out means ever more effective for an apostolate ever wider and ever better (Pius XI, *Ad Cath. Sacerdotii*).

D: Private ownership and almsdeeds

We should notice at this point that the right of private ownership is clearly sanctioned by the Gospel. Yet, at the same time, the divine Master frequently extends to the rich the insistent invitation to convert their material goods into spiritual ones by conferring them on the poor. Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth; where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven; where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break in and steal. And the Lord will look on the charity given or refused to the poor as given or refused to himself. Amen I say to you, as often as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me (John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, 1961; cf. *Quadragesimo Anno*, n. 56, *Divini Redempt.* n. 49).

SECTION VII. HISTORICAL AND LITERARY MISCELLANY

A: A sinner's expiation

Brought up on the banks of the Nile, Mary of Egypt had given herself up to a life of vice from the age of twelve. One day she felt a desire to leave Alexandria and see the great world outside that city. By chance, she took a boat which was carrying a load of pilgrims to Jerusalem. Mary joined them, but not with any pious purpose. However, once in the Holy City, she felt a deep attraction leading

her to the church on Calvary, where the pilgrims were to adore the relic of the true Cross.

As she drew near to the church she felt a great torment of soul because of her indignity. Her eyes full of tears, she fell on her face before a painting of our Lady and asked for pardon. Comforted, she rose to her feet, entered the church and adored the relic. As she did so she heard an interior voice which said to her: Go to the other side of the Jordan. There you shall find peace. She obeyed, and soon found herself at the very spot where John had baptized so many people. She entered into the church dedicated to him, and received the sacraments. From there she went into the desert near the Dead Sea and did penance for forty years, where the hermit Zozimus found her on the point of death, heard her last confession of the sins of her past, and buried her. One of many who found sanctity and salvation through penance.

B: The Miserere of Savonarola

In his prison cell, broken by tortures, without light or food to sustain him, he still had strength enough to take up his pen and write the following words, in 1498. Unhappy indeed am I, having sinned against heaven and earth. Before whom shall I plead? I do not dare to lift my eyes to heaven, because I have sinned against God. There is no refuge for me on earth, because I have given it nothing but scandal. Shall I despair, perhaps? Oh, no! There is mercy in God and compassion always in my Saviour! But what shall I say? I dare not even raise my eyes to him! I will dare to breathe the words of sorrow, implore your mercy and say to you: Have mercy on me, O my God, according to thy great mercy.

C: Another John the Baptist

John Chrysostom was Bishop of Constantinople. It was the year 404. The Emperor Arcadius had decided to erect a statue of his wife, of massive silver with a porphyry base, on the very threshold of St Sophia's itself, an inauguration accompanied by a regular popular bacchanalia. This provoked the Bishop's wrath. He preached and he inveighed against it. Did he actually refer to the unchaste Herodias? Eudoxia affected to feel personally insulted. She vowed to have her revenge on John, and this was not long in coming. An order of expulsion from the territory was made out against him, but John, humble as he was in all things, was not to be intimidated by this offence against his authority. In his reply he said: I have received my episcopal powers from the hand of God and I cannot abandon them. If the Emperor wishes to separate me from my church he may do so, but he will have to do it by force of arms. His despotism will be my justification before the eternal Judge.

The decree of exile was, in fact, imposed by force, and for three years the aged bishop was under close supervision; but all the time he remained a worry and a reproach to the Court. Did he not continue to lead an apostolic life, converting the Isaurian highlanders, and even sending missionaries to the Goths? . . . It was necessary to put an end to this. In 407 the order came from Arcadius that he was to be taken to the very limits of the Empire, to a tiny village in the Caucasus. The guards grasped what was intended. The old man was taken on foot along the most difficult mountain tracks, under the beating rain or blazing sun, and good care was taken that he did not rest in any town where he might find friends. On the 13th of September, the tragic procession arrived at Comana, a town in Pontus. John could go no farther. But he was not allowed to stay in the town. His escort made him stay in a local chapel consecrated to St Basiliscus the martyr. During the night the saint had a vision in which the martyr appeared to him. Have courage, John, he said, for tomorrow we shall be together. In the morning, when his guards wanted to start him on his journey again, the bishop collapsed. They took him hurriedly back to the little chapel. He asked for white vestments and for the Eucharist, and then he died, murmuring his last prayer: Glory be to God in all things.

SECTION VIII. SERMON SCHEMES

I. THE EPISTLE

Ministers of Christ and Stewards

Men must see in us ministers of Christ and dispensers of his mysteries. The greatness and the dignity of the priesthood (cf. Papal Texts, pp. 174-6). Close your eyes to all defects and think only of the fact that the priest should be, in the modern world, a steward, a dispenser of God's mysteries.

1. *The priest: minister of Christ:*

(a) The mission of Christ was to consecrate the world to God:

God made himself a man like us, so that men might be made gods (St Augustine).

(b) Minister of Christ means another Christ:

Christ went up into heaven and left other men to continue his mission, others who could represent him with authority, his priests. This means that they must be his ministers, who act in his place and represent him.

i. *at the altar, in the pulpit, in the confessional, the priest is another Christ.*

ii. *in the world, in his relations with men, in all his human aspects, the priest must be another Christ. The world is right when it demands much of priests.*

iii. *above all, he must be another Christ in his soul.* The soul of the priest has received a special consecration, similar to that which the humanity of Christ received when it was united to the Word of God. For that reason, rather than saying he is another Christ, it would be better to say that he is Christ himself.

2. *The priest, dispenser of the mysteries of God:*

(a) Mission of preaching:

The priest, like Paul, has received the mission of preaching to all men the great mystery of God—the Incarnation of the Word and the incorporation of all mankind into the Body of Christ. In that great mystery are included many others, which are directly intended to secure that sharing in the life of God through Christ.

(b) Of all these the priest is the minister:

i. *administrator of the word of God*; the word which is spirit and life. At times it administers a reprimand, corrects, advises, consoles; but it will always throw some light of grace on human life in all its aspects.

ii. *minister of God's food*—he distributes it and is its guardian.

iii. *distributor of God's pardon.* In the confessional he is nothing more than the representative of God's pardon and mercy. Christ sought them always; so should the priest.

iv. *administrator of the very life of God.* In his hands are the sacraments, sources of the life of God for men.

3. *Veneration and respect for priests:*

(a) St Francis of Assisi used to kiss the ground on which a priest had walked. He himself never wished to receive ordination, considering the dignity too great for him.

(b) Are there not unworthy priests? Yes, but they are few, thank God. But that is not a motive for lowering the prestige of the priesthood. They are too often spoken about critically, with no reason. Defend them always and respect them.

(c) We should commend to our people the idea of praying for all priests, especially those of the parish; that God may make them worthy of their mission, so that we may see in them the ministers of God and dispensers of his mysteries.

II. THE GOSPEL

A: Providence

What is providence?

The Gospel of today gives us an example of the providence of God in the governing of nations.

1. *The foundation of providence is creation:*

(a) God does not forget his works; much less when they have an intellect and a soul. He who imposed on all parents the obligation of looking after their children does not abandon his creatures.

(b) Creatures, in so far as they receive their being from God, need him both to exist and to act. They are like a dynamo, which needs electricity all the time if it is to function.

2. *Essence:*

(a) It both sustains and governs; in being and in action—all is from God.

(b) Directing all things, from one end to the other, mightily. From the most insignificant of human actions to the lives of the great empires. It attains its purpose in spite of the twisted wills of men; in fact, by means of them.

i. Judas was a means towards our redemption.

ii. The usurpation of the Papal States has freed the Pope from political worries, giving him great spiritual freedom.

(c) Smoothly and firmly; without loss of human liberty and so that men do not even realize that providence is guiding them.

3. *The means:*

All things are naked and open to his eyes:

(a) His infinite knowledge and power;

(b) he knows even the intimate secrets of the human will and has the means to direct it without loss of its liberty;

(c) he can govern all that he can create.

Providence in the Scriptures

1. The whole history of the Jewish people; that of Tobias.

2. The many statements of Christ in the New Testament.

3. I journey in a ship whose helmsman is God, my Father. I should have confidence in him, accept his decisions and be docile to his commands.

B: Christ, the centre of history

1. The Gospel of today begins with the historical data necessary to fix it in its place in history; we can read into it the idea that Christ

was born as the centre of the world's history, and we can see a careful preparation for that coming on the part of providence.

Providence revolves round Christ, as one would expect:

- i. because providence implies the directing of all things to their last end, and to their salvation;
- ii. since Christ is the principal source of that salvation and that glory, it is only logical that he should be the very axis of providence.

2. We have an example of this in the Roman Empire, whose rulers are mentioned in today's Gospel.

(a) **Rome is born, increases and overcomes the whole world:**

Augustus brought universal peace, means of communication, of government, and to a great extent also a universal tongue. At this moment of universal peace, Christ is born and his preachers find the road open to them, without national barriers.

(b) **Strengthened by persecution, the Empire is converted:**
But now it becomes an obstacle, because across its frontiers are the barbarians, who must also be converted.

- i. at that moment we see the great barbarian invasion; the conquest of the Empire; but the triumph of Christ.
- ii. because those same barbarians are converted in their turn.

3. *Providential interpretation of history:*

(a) Until the day of judgement shows us the whole picture, how many events will have turned round the fact of the birth of Christ?

(b) Things which seem to us at times to be disasters are the means used by divine providence to attain its ends.

C: Dignity and obligations of the priesthood

The Epistle and Gospel of today, one of which describes the mission of the priest and the other of which shows us a priestly figure in the person of John, both give us opportunities to talk about vocations to the priesthood and the dignity (and obligations) of the priestly ministry. This dignity is so great, like the dignity of Paul and John, that we must be careful to avoid pride, while trying to be ever more worthy of it.

The dignity of the priesthood

The priest is a minister; and the dignity of a minister depends:

(a) **On that of his Lord:**

The Lord in whose name he works—in this case, Christ;

(b) on the goods he administers:

- i. *the sacraments*: a baptism superior to that of John; pardon for sin—who can forgive sins but God alone? The Eucharist.
- ii. *preaching*; like John, he is a voice, bringing to men the word of God.

(c) On his greater or lesser proximity to his Lord:

The priest is so near Christ that he is an instrument of his graces.

Obligations of the priesthood

1. *Humility in the midst of such a dignity*:

It would be a grave fault in the priest should he think himself more than a minister and act in his own name. To avoid this we should remember:

(a) that we have nothing of ourselves:

In the supernatural order, and especially in the ministerial, all is from Christ.

(b) We are all sinners:

Even the holiest of priests has his feet on this earth (St Augustine).

2. *He is a means by which men reach God*:

St John is a good model for us. St Thomas says that Christ, using always sensible means to bring men to him, made use of the person of John in this way. Such should the priest be; a ladder by which men ascend to God. If he attracts others to himself it should always be with this purpose, to lead them to God, to whom they really belong. Imitate John the Baptist:

(a) in his fidelity to his vocation, never turned aside by applause or by death;

(b) in his long preparation;

(c) in his austerity;

(d) because God is going to demand a strict account of the talents he has given to all—but especially of his priests;

(e) being always the voice of God.

3. *Exhortation*:

You may be surrounded by many dangers, but if you fly high enough, as St Augustine says, you will avoid many snares. Crucify the world by means of your austerity and prayers.

D: Austerity

1. *The austerity of St John*:

The figure of John, austerity personified, contrasts with our era, but for that very reason it is necessary to think about him, because the truth and the remedy are in John, not in our customs.

2. *Lack of austerity—a mark of our era*:

(a) Luxuries superior to our state of life and very often far beyond our real economic position:

We all seek for more comfort, more pleasures and more money than we really need. Too many of our people are living beyond their income and on borrowed money, in the form of hire purchase. So many seek to go just one better than their neighbour. Social standing today is marked by status symbols rather than by merit or real worth.

(b) The love of pleasures, as the Fathers call this passion, is very dangerous:

i. *no man can put all his interest in two ideals*, and that of pleasures will soon absorb him completely;

ii. *God and affection for creatures are incompatible*—as St John of the Cross tells us.

iii. *the consequences are evil ones indeed*; they give rise to pride, to all kinds of pleasures, including sensual ones; to tepidity in religious duties.

iv. *when all these pleasures disappear*, God will demand an account of the talent we have hidden away beneath them, and then we shall realize that we have been created for something else.

3. *Remedy: Imitation of John*:

(a) Austerity and detachment from things of this world:

Do you really wish to repent and to give up sin; to advance in virtue and perfection? Then imitate John in his austerity and detachment.

(b) Let us form within us a small desert of interior recollection (Bossuet):

It is not a difficult thing which is demanded of us, since it is the one way to save our souls from the dangers of too much desire for pleasure.

(c) Give alms:

He that has two coats, let him give away one, was John's advice. May we follow it. Deprive yourselves of some small pleasure in order to give the money to the poor—to Christ in the poor!

(d) When he comes, with his winnowing-fan in hand, we shall be so glad that we have something to offer him.

4. *Christmas is coming*:

God wishes to be received into your home. Surely you will wish to adorn it to his taste, not to your own. Reduce your desire for luxuries, then, because he does not like them who was born in a stable which was not his own home and who died naked on a cross. God has made you for himself; seek him first, and these other things will fall into their rightful place and proportion in your lives.

E: Sin, evil for God and man

1. *Sin, the supreme evil:*

Man's judgement about sin is usually wrong. Take the case of the Jews. When their messianic hopes were at their height, when some were thinking of a renewal of the great ceremonies in the temple, while others were thinking about the triumph over their enemies, John appeared, preaching penance for sin. Living as we do in the midst of so much sin and so much disaster, do we really think that the supreme evil is sin? Yet it is, because it is evil for both God and man. For God, because it denies his attributes; for man, because it destroys his happiness.

2. *Sin, an evil which is against God himself:*

(a) Sin is an evil which in one way affects God himself:

- i. because it denies his attributes, especially his goodness, by not corresponding to his love;
- ii. it denies his omnipotence, since through it man despises the law of God, as if God had no right even to make laws, and repeats the *Non serviam* of Satan;
- iii. it denies his justice, as if man cared nothing for God's punishments.

(b) God's hatred for sin:

It is enough if we remember how he chastises his only Son, made responsible for the sins of men; or how he chastises men, who are the objects of his love.

3. *Sin—man's real evil:*

(a) It separates him from God:

- i. *God is light; sin is darkness.* Therefore when the light came into this world, the world could not receive it.
- ii. *God is love and we are united to him by love.* Sin breaks this bond, and so we lose our supreme good.
- iii. *it destroys the indwelling of God within us,* leaving us truly empty of all good (Augustine).

(b) It makes man a rebel—but an impotent rebel whose arms are turned against himself.

(c) From a friend of God it makes man a servant of Satan and of his own sins.

4. *Exhortation:*

Christ comes, at Christmas spiritually; and later as our Judge. The day of our death may not be far off—we may not even see this coming Christmas, because our judge will come like a thief in the night, when we least expect him. Sad will be the state of that man who has not repented and done penance.

F: The preaching of penance

1. *Prophets and preachers in the hour of tribulation:*

The history of the world is strewn with disasters which have cost the lives of millions of human beings and have sunk in the depths of misery so many others. In those moments God has sent his prophets and preachers to give a solution to the problem.

2. *The simple solution of penance:*

We might have expected heaven to send us extraordinary solutions; but they have been, in truth, very simple ones. So simple that the world may have found itself in the situation of the Syrian general to whom Eliseus gave the command to bathe himself in the Jordan! They may seem too simple. The solution given for those moments of trial was always penance.

3. *Abundant examples:*

They are so abundant that selection is difficult.

(a) There were few disasters greater than the deportation of the Jews to Babylon. Thousands dead by the road-side; a life of exile; the abandoned cities of the promised land. When Israel, caught between the might of two great empires, did not know what measures to take for her defence, God gave the answer through the prophets Isaias and Jeremias; there was only one theme in their preaching: Do penance; be converted to the Lord with your whole heart.

(b) In spite of the warning and the preaching nothing was done and the disaster came. In their captivity two more prophets were sent to them, Ezechiel and Daniel, to propose the means for ending the exile. This was not political rebellion; it was penance! The Jews took heed this time, and God, in his providence, raised up in a far-off land one Cyrus, who would overcome the power of Babylon and restore Israel to her lands.

(c) Jonas is another example.

4. *The great preachers:*(a) *The case of Vincent Ferrer:*

At the end of the thirteenth century the illnesses which were destroying so many in Europe were but a sign of the heresies which were to do even more harm. Christ appeared to one of his future preachers, cured him by a miracle and said to him: Rise; go out and preach; fight against sin and announce the day of judgement.

(b) In our own century the great preachers have always insisted on penance and on almsdeeds as a means of wiping away the stain of past sin. God's anger is always placated by penance—it was so in the past, it is so today.

(c) When politicians propose other solutions God suggests—and commands—his: Be converted to me and do penance.

(d) Day by day the present state of our world becomes more difficult; there is no need to comment on it. What is the solution? God has not chosen to send preachers (unless they be represented by the modern Popes); nor has he sent his Son, because the time is not yet ripe for the second coming in majesty and judgement. But he has sent Christ's Mother.

5. *Lourdes and Fatima—the two missions of Mary:*

(a) It is surely more than a mere coincidence that when rationalism threatened to overcome Europe Mary came to Lourdes to beg for prayers for sinners and for their conversion. It is the preventive preaching of the Mother of God.

(b) The world did not take much heed, in spite of the miracles; therefore the lash of God came once more in the form of the war of 1914, communism and class war which threatens the whole world. Mary repeats her message at Fatima. Do penance.

6. *Our present programme: Penance:*

What are we to do? Let no one feel that he has little responsibility for the whole world—the responsibility is great. We must all do penance, and if those who are God's chosen ones do not begin the task, where are we to hope for the fruits of Mary's preaching? Who knows if God will not spare mankind, should he find in the world fifty just who do penance! And why should you not be one of them?

G: Christ—and penance

1. *The penance of Christ in the preaching:*

(a) *Of the Baptist:*

i. the Gospel presents John to us as preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sin. If we examine his preaching we shall see clearly that the central point of it is: Bring forth fruits worthy of penance.

ii. but he does not merely preach penance, because together with it there is another central theme—Christ. The kingdom of God is at hand; the new alliance of God with his creatures, Christ, whose herald he was and whose kingdom he preaches.

(b) *Of the prophets:*

John follows their line and their style. They repeat frequently the two main ideas:

- i. on the one hand penance, a reform of life and austerity;
- ii. on the other hand, pardon, mercy, life.

(c) *Of the Apostles:*

i. the first discourse of Peter after Pentecost is on penance and Christ.

ii. Paul, in the course of his epistles, repeats the same ideas; the old and new leaven; the old man and the new (cf. Rom. 6. 6; Eph. 4. 22; Col. 3. 9; 1 Cor. 4. 7).

2. *Penance leads to Christ and Christ leads to penance:*

(a) In the Christian life there is but one centre—Christ; and penance leads us to him.

i. he must be the reason for all our activity and our aspirations: Christ, who is all in all. The present economy of grace converges on Christ. His mission was to give life to men: I have come that they may have life.

ii. it is impossible to be filled with this life and discover Christ without penance: If any one will come after me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me (Luke 9. 23).

iii. penance, of itself, is not attractive; it would be the act of a madman to practise it for itself alone or for the pleasure of doing penance.

iv. but it has great value for obtaining forgiveness of sins and this is impossible without it. It has its end in the love of Christ, to which it leads.

(b) The figure of our Redeemer, his mortal life in the world and his sacramental life in the Eucharist all lead to penance.

i. the secret of the great austerities of the saints lies in their love for Christ. This is evident.

ii. All those who have written on the spiritual life have done so with this idea in mind; the goal is Christ, but we must begin by repenting from the heart for our sins, purifying our affections and doing penance, so as to lead our lives towards Christ. Kempis, St Ignatius, St Francis de Sales—all stress the same idea.

iii. *experience confirms this.* Many souls who have trembled at the idea of penance when it was preached to them, have given themselves whole-heartedly to it when they heard of the love which is due to him who has loved us so much. It is a well-known fact that, when souls begin to know and love Christ, they also begin to do penance.

3. *Application to Advent and to life:*

(a) Christ is near. The liturgy of these days is full of this theme of preparation for Christmas. We must be ready to go out and meet the Lord.

(b) To meet him, to feel his presence within us and to prepare to receive his graces it is first of all necessary to do penance.

(c) Those souls who long to live in union with Christ; those who receive him every day in Communion, cannot set aside this necessary penance, unless they wish to fall into the depths of routine and tepidity. To receive Communion worthily it is enough to be in a state of

grace; but to receive its full fruits we must go to the altar in a spirit of sacrifice.

H: Corporal and exterior penance

The example of the Baptist, the dogma of the mystical body of which Christ is the head; the need to make satisfaction for our own personal sins and to overcome our own inclinations, its power to obtain divine favours—all these prove the necessity of exterior penance. The real reason for the tepidity of so many Christians can be found in the fact that they have forgotten this doctrine.

1. Penance and sanctity:

(a) The example of the Baptist. John is a man given over to exterior penances; he lives in the desert, dresses in skins; feeds on locusts and wild honey.

(b) All the saints have practised exterior penance and for some it has been the real road to sanctity; e.g. Peter the Hermit, Peter of Alcantara, etc.

2. It is necessary for all Christians (St Augustine):

(a) Here we are not advocating the extraordinary external penances of some of the saints, which may not be practised without interior divine inspiration and permission of the confessor—these can never be the theme of general preaching;

(b) but the fact that every Christian, just because he is a follower of Christ must practise some exterior mortification.

(c) It is a mistake to think that only really spiritual souls should be obliged to this practice or that it is limited to priests and religious, although it is true that such as these should be assiduous in the practice of mortification;

i. to help them to increase in perfection and flee from dangers,
ii. to obtain fruit from their apostolate.

(d) the grace of baptism is also the grace of martyrdom; the *quotidie moriar* of St Paul (1 Cor. 15. 31) should also refer to the body, and is applicable to all Christians, by the reason of their being followers of Christ.

3. Reasons which justify this doctrine:

(a) One, fundamental—the doctrine of our incorporation in Christ. By baptism we form part of the mystical body; the members must share in the lot of their head. After the passion no Christian should flee from bodily suffering; the body cannot be at ease while the head is crowned with thorns.

(b) Satisfaction for past sins.

(c) To overcome one's own baser inclinations and to bring the lower nature into subjection.

(d) To obtain some special grace from heaven.

4. This doctrine falling into oblivion: Effects and causes:

(a) Many Christians have forgotten this doctrine, and perhaps this is the main reason for so much tepidity and for the relative sterility of certain works and organizations.

(b) Perhaps we priests are to blame for not preaching it more, explaining the simple and reasonable rules which regulate it.

(c) We may have the idea that no one will listen to us; but this is not so. Souls which love Christ are drawn instinctively to penance.

Rules and guidance for exterior penances

1. How can it be done?

(a) By accepting those illnesses, sorrows, difficulties, etc. which God sends us. This is a very good mortification and a safe one, because not self-imposed.

(b) Keeping the simple fasts and abstinence days appointed by the Church.

(c) Voluntarily choosing to do something which is contrary to our inclinations, voluntary mortification of our sensible appetite in such things as sleep, food and drink. In this case the following rules must be observed.

2. Rules:

(a) Exterior penance which is self-inflicted should never be allowed to affect our health;

(b) it should never affect the duties of our state of life;

(c) better not to practise it without previous consultation with our confessor. The devil can deceive us at this point quite easily.

3. Exhortation:

Fatima: our Lady asked for penance to be done for sinners. Penance may make real the message of good-will given on the first Christmas Eve.

I: Spiritual penance

John preached interior penance: the doing of one's duty

Penance is primarily interior:

(a) It consists primarily in compunction of heart, which leads to pardon for our sins.

(b) But John adds yet another element, also interior, the doing of our duty.

(c) It is necessary to avoid wrong ideas about penance; there is an exterior penance, certainly, but it is only useful if it is a fruit of interior penance or leads us to it.

(d) The true penance is interior, consisting in the doing of our duty in all things and at all times. Sister Lucy, one of those who saw our Lady at Fatima, wrote in a letter to the Bishop of Leiria in 1942:

What our Lord asks is sacrifice; that penance which everyone must impose upon himself in order to live a life of justice in the observance of his law; and he wishes this road to be made plain to souls, for so many, judging that the word penance means austerities which are too much for their weak strength, live on in a life of tepidity and sin . . . at twelve o'clock at night the Lord told me: The sacrifice to be made by all is that of the observance of my law and the fulfilment of the duties of each one. That is the penance which I ask for and demand now.

Difficulty and importance of interior penance

1. *Always to do one's duty is difficult:*

If man had no passions or if he knew how to keep them in order, this difficulty would not exist; but together with duty, passion raises its head.

(a) Our duty speaks to us of God and his will, of his commandments. The passions speak to us of pleasure, comfort, desire. . . .

(b) The intellect enlightens the will as to our duty; the passions, working through the imagination, weaken this power of the intellect over the will.

(c) St Paul speaks of these two laws, one in the mind and the other in the body or the senses (Rom. 7. 23).

(d) Our will is like a compass, swinging towards two poles, that of duty and that of passion. So that it must remain fixed on God, faithful to his law at every moment, it must dominate the passions, acting against them always. Hence the difficulty of interior penance; it demands no small effort and is for all time—every moment of our lives until the end.

2. *There are very few who do their duty perfectly:*

(a) **A partial and conditioned fulfilment:**

i. our duty is done when it is easy and pleases us; not when it is difficult or unpleasant. This is an evil all too frequent, even among religious people. They tend to abandon their duty when it does not please them, or they create a duty which does please them. This is not what God wants from us. It is the classical case of the devout woman who prefers to go to daily Mass rather than get her husband's breakfast and do her duty as wife and mother.

ii. or it is done one day and left undone for two or three;

iii. or it is only half done, without the care and attention needed in God's tasks.

(b) **Bad faith or lack of will power?**

i. in many it is a case of bad faith—sinners for example.

ii. but in the case of the majority there is no bad faith. They are good people who simply lack self-discipline, that iron control over intellect and will which is necessary if we are not to go astray.

God's will

Ask yourselves at every moment what is God's will for you here and now; what is your obligation. The reply will be given by your profession, or by the commands of your superior. Do your duty, as though that were the only thing you had to do here and now, without argument or excuses, with all your strength. Whether you like it or not; whether it costs you an effort or not. That is true interior penance, preached by the Baptist and by the Church. This is the principal virtue of them all. There is no virtue so eminent, says Peman, as that of doing simply what we have to do.

J: Penance, necessary for the just as well as sinners

1. *The Baptist and penance:*

It would seem that, when God sends special messengers, they ought to appear with new and surprising missions which will change the face of the earth. Yet almost all of them, especially John, who came to prepare the way for the Messias, limit themselves to the preaching of penance. Yet if there is anything really transcendental in the world, it is this virtue of penance. John preached it crying out with a loud voice.

2. *Penance—a necessity for all:*

(a) **What is penance?**

A change of the way of life, ceasing to be what we were, so as to be what we were not.

(b) **Necessary for the just:**

This penance is necessary for all, and to prove it, we may well begin by considering that state in which it would appear to be least important—that of the just. They need it:

i. *because we are all sinners*; even though the sins of the just may not be an obstacle to their salvation, they do diminish their merit and put them in danger.

ii. *priests are also sinners*, because, in spite of a life dedicated to God, they have their feet on this earth (Augustine).

iii. *even the apostles* were not free from sin;

iv. *how much more the laity*, in the midst of the worries and cares of this world?

v. *because penance is necessary* in order to overcome temptation and increase in grace.

(c) **Necessary for sinners:**

They need it absolutely, because it is the only means by which they can recover grace and free themselves from sin—the greatest of all evils.

i. *the only means to escape from the bonds of sin*, because by sin

we separate ourselves from God; we have to bring the will back to him—which is the effect of penance.

ii. *sin is an evil which affects both God and man*; it denies God's attributes (cf. above); it brings man to complete ruin, being the death of the soul, the one thing which can deprive him of his eternal happiness; makes him a slave of the devil and of his own passions—in a word, it is the madness of one who rebels against God.

3. Exhortation:

Necessary for those who do not do penance because they despair of their eternal salvation, and also for those who put it off, confident that they will have time to do it one day, before it is too late.

(a) To those who lose confidence:

i. *do you not know that God is waiting for you?* He hates in you that which is purely yours—sin; but he longs to save that which is the work of his hands in you. He does not leave anyone entirely—he merely waits!

ii. *where are you to hide from God?* In God himself; flee from his justice, and hide yourselves in his mercy.

iii. *God does not wish for your condemnation*; never say: Leave me to go to hell in peace! God does not wish you to be lost to him for all eternity. He has said so.

(b) To the presumptuous:

i. *God can reign in two ways*; by his justice or by his love. You have your choice. But do not think that, just because you are asleep, he is asleep also and does not see your sins.

ii. *time is passing and death will come as a surprise to all of us*. Let no one be such an enemy unto himself as to seek his own condemnation.

K: Penance and charity

1. Penance and charity during Advent:

The Baptist preached the two things together as a preparation for the coming of Christ. The Fathers have the same system. At Christmas time there are always special appeals for charity towards the needy; the Liturgy exhorts us to penance—the two are joined once more.

2. Sanctity, charity, penance:

(a) Sanctity in charity:

i. substantially, sanctity is nothing more or less than the charity of God, poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us. The true manifestation of this love is a corresponding love for our neighbour.

ii. there are many who practise charity for other motives, but we need not bother with them now; the true Christian teaching is that no one can love God without also loving his brother in Christ (1 John 3. 17).

(b) Penance subordinated to charity:

i. Penance without charity is not pleasing to God (cf. Isaias 58. 5).

ii. In continuation, the prophet describes what God considers to be true penance.

(c) Penance which does not go hand in hand with charity is not true penance:

Because all other virtues must be subordinate to charity, the queen of them all. According to St Gregory, the principal command of Christ is founded on charity. Just as many branches come from one sole root, so many virtues are born from charity. The branch of good works is no longer green and fresh until it comes from this root, charity (Hom. 27. PL. 76, 1205).

3. Conclusion:

The ideal is penance and charity; because the value of charity is increased when it is the fruit of penance. During Advent we preach austerity, mortification in pleasure of all kinds. May the result be greater generosity with those in need; attending the sick, the poor, the orphan. . . . More still; make charity the norm for your penance. When we see so many without home or family, without food or clothing, is our heart going to be unmoved, or are we going to be prompted to give up not merely some luxury which we can well afford, but also something more to help them?

L: Almsdeeds and penance

1. A counsel of the Baptist:

Bring forth fruits worthy of penance. When asked: What shall we do? He replied: He that has two tunics, let him give away one.

2. Alms and penance in the Scriptures and Fathers of the Church:

(a) Intimately united in both.

(b) There is no doubt that without sincere repentance there can be no pardon, for which reason St Augustine argues against those who, without attempting to change their way of life, try to save themselves by giving alms. He tells them that they are trying to bribe God.

(c) Without forgetting this important point, we can still say that almsdeeds are the finest preparation for and the culminating point of penance. To obtain pardon:

i. *it begs grace from God*, is a most powerful advocate in its flight towards God (John Chrysostom). Place your alms in the heart of the poor man and he will plead for you (Ecclus. 29. 15).

ii. *the example of the centurion*, Cornelius (Acts 10. 4); Zaccheus (Luke 19. 8).

iii. *the reason is a simple one*; since Christ has taken the place of the poor, he will never be ungrateful for anything you give to him through them. You give what you most love—your money; he will return to you his grace.

iv. to satisfy God for past sins (cf. Dan. 4. 24).

v. As John Chrysostom says: So that you may purify your hearts before entering the church we put two things at the very door; the holy water and the poor.

vi. God will pardon us all things if we are charitable with him.

3. Exhortation:

Christ suffers need in the persons of the poor to give you an occasion of salvation. Give alms. You say you are a great sinner? Then give more to avoid future falls.

M: The rewards of almsdeeds

1. Purity of intention necessary in almsdeeds:

We must not give alms for the sake of any reward, nor from vanity, or to be seen by men. Nor to curry favour with others. We must do it because we see in the poor, be they agreeable or disagreeable, good or bad, God himself. They are his representatives. See nothing but God and give alms for God's sake. Thus you will be worthy of his reward.

2. The example of Tobias:

The Book of Tobias shews us how God rewards alms given to him in the person of the poor. In spite of all his trials, God rewards him for his almsdeeds by protecting his son during his journey, by curing his blindness and by granting him peace and prosperity in his last days.

3. The reward of almsdeeds:

It is expressed in one verse of this book: Almsgiving is death's avoiding, is guilt's atoning, is the winning of mercy and of life eternal (Tobias 12. 9). A triple reward then:

(a) It frees us from death:

Tabitha, raised to life by Peter because of her generosity to the poor, is a symbol of this. But the text of Tobias speaks rather of eternal death of the soul; not mortal death. Alms are the golden door through which faith enters. Through it Cornelius entered. It is a sure sign of predestination.

(b) It frees from sin:

Water does not wash away bodily stains so easily as alms wipe away sin (Chrysostom). As water puts out fire, so does almsgiving where sin is concerned (John of God).

i. it satisfies God's justice for sins; and the temporal punishment for them;

ii. it wipes away venial sins;

iii. it prepares the way for the pardon of mortal sin.

(c) It wins mercy and eternal life:

i. it brings happiness, in this life and in the next;

ii. in the next, it is our advocate before God—the most powerful of all advocates.

4. Exhortation:

(a) Tobias said to his son: Use thy wealth in giving of alms; never turn thy back on any man who is in need, and the Lord, in thy own need, will have eyes for thee. Shew to others what kindness thy means allow, giving much, if much is thine, if thou hast little, sharing cheerfully that little (4. 7-9).

(b) I beg this of you for the sake of the poor; but also for your own sake, for your own spiritual good; for your eternal happiness one day. As St. John of God says: Do good to yourselves!

N: The social value of almsgiving

1. The whole of society benefits from the generosity of the rich.

2. We must explain what we mean, because here there is a danger of grave error, both of doctrine and practice.

(a) We are not referring to that kind of almsgiving which is condemned by the Popes (*Divini Redemptoris*, 49), namely when we give as charity what we should have given in justice.

(b) Philanthropy pure and simple is not necessarily a work of charity and it is certainly no substitute for the full papal teaching that the worker should have a greater share in the profits of industry.

(c) Proper almsgiving from this social standpoint is that which is given from the heart and because we see in others our brothers in Christ. At times without anyone knowing it—so as to keep the Gospel precept. Such almsgiving is for God alone, and only God knows about it.

3. Social value of this almsgiving:

St Paul refers to it in 2 Corinthians, and if it is really generous the effects he mentions will surely follow:

(a) It tends to even out the economic situation of the faithful (2 Cor. 8. 13-15);

(b) it brings rich material benefits, because God is not outdone in generosity;

(c) it increases the spirit of faith among the faithful, since they see in practice the evangelical counsels;

(d) it increases that mutual charity which is a sign of our love of God (*ibid.* 9. 13).

(e) Many acts of gratitude go up to God from the poor because of it, and therefore many graces come down from heaven on both rich and poor alike (*ibid.* 9. 14-15).

4. It is a tremendous grace from God, both for those who practise it and for those who in all humility receive it.

5. *How much should I give?*

(a) The Church can only give us general principles to guide us, because in this matter the only guide is our own conscience—and perhaps our own need for pardon from God!

i. *an example may help us to decide this question.* When one member of a family is in dire need of the necessities of life, all the other members of that family tend to rally round and help, even though it may mean giving up quite a lot to do so. At least, they give up all that implies superfluous luxury, and quite often something necessary—at least, they reduce their needs to a minimum in order to help. That is why Leo XIII says that charity obliges us to give alms from what we have over once our own needs and those of our family have been met. Pius XI repeats this doctrine.

ii. *this is a guide to conscience,* and we cannot demand more than this from the Church. She leaves it to our individual conscience. Therefore we must consider this as a grave obligation, one on which our own salvation and that of many others may depend.

iii. *above all, remember that it is to Christ that we give our alms,* when we give to the poor; and he will one day return to us a hundred-fold all that we have given to him through them.

(b) Remember that it is easy to make excuses for not giving alms:

The needs of the family; providing for the future of our children; the fact that we have barely enough for ourselves, etc. . . . But God is not deceived, and this is an obligation in conscience. It is not a question of whether we have much to give or little; but rather that of giving what we can—and what we should. We are God's stewards, and we have no right to waste his goods when so many others are in need among us.

(c) God is never outdone in generosity:
To put him in our debt is a great thing indeed; and this is the only way in which we can do that. There is no other. Compared with this, everything else we do is nothing but a duty, and having done it we can still say with truth that we are unprofitable servants. But our alms bring into subjection the almighty power of God! That should be enough to make us more than generous with him who has given us so much.

Sunday within the Octave of Christmas

THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE

Epistle: Galatians 4. 1-7

Gospel: Luke 2. 33-40.

Cf. Luke 2. 23-32

SECTION I. SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Translator's Note: Since there are few, if any, texts of Scripture which have direct reference to the subject matter of today's Epistle and Gospel, we have decided to leave out those quoted in the original *Palabra de Cristo* concerning the trials God sends both just and sinners, and concentrate rather on a longer interpretation of the actual texts of the Epistle and Gospel.

SECTION II. GENERAL COMMENTS

I. LITURGICAL

Cardinal Schuster says that this Mass has suffered many changes, which implies that there is no dominant theme in it save that of the general one of Christmas—Christ has come among us.

The Gospel reminds us of the early days of the Church, when the mysteries of the infancy and hidden life of the Lord were not separated and celebrated on different days, but were all grouped round Christmas Day. Today's Gospel reminds us of the Presentation of Christ in the temple and of Mary's Purification, a feast which was later transferred to February 2nd, in order to counteract the pagan celebrations of the purification of Rome.

The Epistle is a very opportune one, because it sums up a thought which is common in the Fathers, namely, that Christ came on earth and died in order to obtain for us the gift of divine sonship.

The Introit reminds us of the angel who anointed the doorposts with blood, before the Exodus, thus saving the firstborn of the children of Israel. This First-born we are celebrating, and who is today presented in the Temple, frees us all by his blood, shed for us on the cross. The Gradual is a song of praise to the Christ.

There are, therefore, two main themes in today's liturgy, that of divine sonship, outlined for us in the Epistle, and that of the Presentation in the Temple, described for us in the Gospel, together with the prophecy of Simeon.

In this presentation and in the prophecy which accompanies it we see the characteristics of this Child who is born to us, Christ, the Victim for sin. The Church wishes us to have before our minds from the very first moment the reason why the Son of God came on earth.

II. EXEGETIC AND MORAL NOTES

A: The Epistle: Galatians 4. 1-7

1. General meaning:

The Epistle to the Galatians has a definite purpose. Converted by St Paul in the course of his first apostolic mission, they were afterwards visited by leaders of the Jewish faction within the Church, who tried to oblige them to keep the whole of the law of Moses. Due to this fact, the whole of the Epistle is an argument to demonstrate the superiority of the New Law over the Old, since the rites of the Old Law were but figures of the New.

In the first chapter the Apostle explains to the Galatians the authoritative nature of his mission, warning them that, even if they were to receive a visit from an angel, they were to take no notice of him if he preached to them a doctrine different from that of Paul.

In the second chapter he tells them that his teaching about the Old Law has been fully confirmed by the apostolic college, so much so that, on one occasion when Peter, so as not to give scandal, acted differently, Paul withstood him to his face.

The theme of chapter three can be summed up thus: If the Jews are the children of Abraham, so are we, without any need to submit to their law. Because of his faith, Abraham was given a divine promise. But we have that same faith, and are the heirs to that promise. Then the Law was promulgated, that law which was nothing but a slave who took his master's son to school—the school of Christ. After Christ's coming there is now no need for this slave any longer. We are united with Abraham through our faith in Christ, who has now come among us.

In the fourth chapter he expounds a metaphor which is typically Pauline. Those who lived under the Law were strictly speaking minors—they had not come of age. The reason—because their ceremonies were not channels of grace as are ours. We have reached the full majority of sons of God. And just as the child is little different from a slave, so we, who are adults, are free and not subject to the hard yoke of the Law.

2. Text:

In the text there is only one difficult verse (v. 3) in which it is said that the Jews lived in slavery, under the dominion of the world. The majority of commentators understand by these elements of the

world the Jewish rites, which were empty in comparison with the Christian sacraments. This would seem to fit in with verse 9, in which he asks the Galatians why they wish to return to those 'school-room tasks'; and we know that the Galatians were thinking of returning to the old rites once again. In this sense those old rites can be called elements of the world, in so far as they were purely material offerings.

3. Distribution of the passage:

It has three main parts. In the first it is established that the law of Moses was not yet adult, but a minor. In the second is proved the fact that we have received, through Christ, the gift of divine sonship. In the third, this sonship is attributed to the Holy Ghost within us.

(a) Childhood:

During the period of our childhood we have lived as slaves to the elements of the world, because a child is little different from a slave, since he is not free. But like other minors, this state ends when we come of age, at the moment determined by the law, in this case, by the Father.

(b) The fullness of time:

Literally, the appointed time, set down in the promise made to Abraham, but in a vague way; later determined by the prophets and by the whole history of the people of Israel. Then God sent his Son. As Bover points out, if he is sent it is because he already existed, and considers this text of supreme importance in Paul's doctrine on the Trinity. St Paul also points out that Christ was born of a woman, to indicate his human nature; also that he was born under the Law, that is, he is the unifying factor which brings into one family the whole of mankind. He joined Jew to Gentile—the whole world in fact. He came as a Jew to redeem the Jews from their law and, as man, to make us all sons of God.

(c) The mission of the Holy Spirit:

To bring about this sonship the Spirit of God was also sent to us, and it is through his action within us that we are able to call God our Father.

4. Thoughts:

The central thought is that of our divine adoption, through the incarnation of Christ. Since we reserve for the Christmas cycle the preaching of this doctrine of our sonship through Christ, we shall merely note here that we attained that dignity because Christ was born of a woman. Mary gave him his human nature, through which we are made sons of God. Therefore there is a direct relationship of motherhood between Mary and ourselves.

B: The Gospel: Luke 2. 33-40

In the Mass we read only a part of the evangelical scene, that which contains the prophecy of Simeon and the remarks made by Anna. Then the last verses are added, which give us a summary of the hidden life at Nazareth. The first of Mary's sorrows came to her at the Presentation. For this reason we shall not limit our comments merely to the gospel of the Mass, but will expound the whole passage. The fact that the liturgy makes use of a part of a gospel scene does not mean that it prescind from the rest. On the other hand, we shall leave until the following Sunday the verses concerned with the hidden life at Nazareth.

1. *The scene:*

There is a central element in it, namely the purification of Mary and the redemption of her Son. Around this arise various other elements, such as the meeting with Simeon and Anna, together with the words spoken by them both. When we explain the texts we shall indicate the existence of two laws, one relating to the purification of the mother and the other to the redemption of every first-born child. The Holy Family was not bound by either, but submitted voluntarily to them both. Forty days after the birth, Mary and Joseph made the journey to Jerusalem, taking the child with them. They took him for mere devotion, because it was not of strict necessity. No one who, from the court of the women, saw this humble family enter the Holy Place, would have any idea of the mystery which was to be accomplished there.

Centuries before, Zorobabel rebuilt the Temple, and his fellow-countrymen wept as they compared it with the magnificence of that of Solomon. It seemed so poor and lowly, compared with the former magnificent building. Then the prophet Aggaeus consoled them. The glory of the former temple might have been greater from the material point of view; but this one would have a glory all its own, because to it would come the Desired of the nations (Ag. 2. 8). Who would have thought that this prophecy would be fulfilled in such a humble fashion? Solomon inaugurated the Temple with great pomp and ceremony; but now God comes to it without any festivities or external celebrations.

It was the Holy Spirit who led Simeon to the Temple and who illuminated his mind so that he could pick out our Lady from all the other women who came to be purified. The old priest stepped forward and took the child in his arms, pronouncing the *Nunc Dimittis*. He hands him back to his Mother, while Anna speaks to the just people who were present.

There must have been quite a small group round the Holy Family, to judge from St Luke's remark that Anna spoke to all those who were waiting for the redemption of Israel. It is easy to suppose

that the whole group assisted at the purification ceremony of Mary, crossing the Court of the Women and drawing near to the place of sacrifice. Even though they were not permitted to enter, they could assist at the ceremony, separated from it only by a low railing.

At this moment the most important act of all took place, the deep significance of which would not be clear to many there. Jesus was offered to his Father! All other events of the day are reduced to insignificance, and we may say that the whole of Christ's life could be summed up in this one scene.

The facets which go to make up the Person and figure of Christ are, if not infinite, at least so numerous that it is almost impossible to count them all; but without any doubt the principal one is his rôle as Victim for sacrifice.

According to the will of the Father, according to the prophets and the history of his life, beginning with the offering made from the very womb of his Mother and ending with that of the Cross, Christ came into the world as a Victim for the sins of men. But he is also a Priest, whose offering forms a necessary part of the sacrifice.

When did Christ make this offering of his life? Certainly on the Cross; equally certainly, when he celebrated the first Mass, indivisible from the sacrifice on the Cross. The whole of his life was an offering of himself, too. Is it not perfectly logical that, here and now, when an earthly priest, perhaps rather distracted—even bored by the whole ceremony—takes him in his arms to offer him to the Father, Christ should repeat this offering of himself, the eternal sacrifice? God would no longer be satisfied with the blood of goats or of oxen. Here, lifted up between heaven and earth, is the eternal Son of God, the body of God made man, and near him, as at the foot of the Cross, Mary, who associates herself with this offering.

Christ now belongs to God, according to the Jewish ritual, and it is necessary to redeem him. Mary does so, with the offering of the doves, a sacrifice permitted only to the poor, but even so, one which represented quite a sacrifice, since it was the price of twenty days' wages for a working man.

The Gospels tell us no more; but it is clear that this scene did not have much effect on the whole of the nation. Later, the Magi would arrive and then the people—especially the Rulers—would be aware that the King had been born!

2. *Texts:*(a) *According to the Law . . .*

There were two laws which entered into this scene, one which referred to the mother and the other to the first-born son. The former is promulgated in Leviticus (chap. 12). Forty days after the birth of a son and eighty days after the birth of a daughter the mother must undergo purification, since she was considered legally

and morally unclean after giving birth. From the legal point of view it is well known that Moses adapted certain laws of hygiene to religious purposes. From the moral point of view, even though the idea of original sin was not clear to the Jews, there was a certain religious feeling of guilt, added to the joy at the birth of a child.

Applying another law of Leviticus, the mother had to offer a lamb and a dove, to purify herself; or, in the case of the poor, two doves would suffice. One stood for the legal impurity, the other was a holocaust to God.

The second law observed by the Holy Family is that of the redemption of the first-born. When the destroying angel had wiped out all the first-born in Egypt, God reserved to himself, as something sacred, all those of the Jews, whether men or animals (Ex. 13. 11-13). This would have been impossible as far as human beings were concerned, and so the legislation provided a way of redeeming them from the divine subjection. The priest offered the first-born to God but afterwards the parents could redeem him by means of an offering, fixed by the law (Ex. 34. 20). In compensation God reserved to himself all the Levites (Num. 8. 13-18).

(b) Neither of these laws bound either Jesus or Mary:

The conception and birth were not accompanied by the legal circumstances on which the law was founded, and where there is no legal stain there can be no need for purification. Christ had no need to be offered to the Father in the same sense as other Jewish male children, nor to be redeemed. In the sense of the first Pasch Christ was represented by the lamb, the people by the first-born who were saved by his blood. The Saviour has no need to be redeemed, as have the saved.

(c) Then, why did they offer themselves?

The question has motivated many answers. To give us an example of humble obedience to the divine laws. . . .

Our Lord was asked, on another occasion, to pay the Temple tribute, and he asked Peter: Simon, tell us what thou thinkest; on whom do earthly kings impose customs and taxes, on their own sons, or on strangers? . . . But we will not hurt their consciences . . . (Matt. 17. 24-26).

The obedience of Mary looks for no excuses, even though it may imply humiliation for her, immaculate as she was, to appear stained with some kind of guilt. Virgin-Mother of God, she will appear in the temple like any other Jewish mother. The first step in sanctity—and perhaps the major one—is this of obedience to the law.

(d) She offers to God the best she has and that which costs her most:

Our offering has to be one made without reserves of any kind. She gave her Son; an example to other mothers?

(e) Simeon, an upright man of careful observance . . .

Piety and religion are the jewels which adorn old age. There is nothing so base as an old age which does not admit God, forgetful of salvation and grace.

(f) Who waited patiently for comfort to be brought to Israel . . .

He had faith in God's word, and his faith brought him to Christ. True hope is founded on faith and blossoms forth in good works of charity. Christ was presented many times in the words of the prophets as the consolation of Israel, but the Jews thought of this consolation in terms of material conquest of their enemies; in terms of material rather than spiritual freedom.

(g) He was not to meet death until he had seen that Christ

From the words used it is clear that the old man had a revelation which promised him that he would not die until he had seen the promised Messiah. According to Maldonatus, these promises were made to Simeon because of his holiness of life, his burning hope and his gift of prophecy.

(h) Simeon was able to take him in his arms . . .

Demonstration of God's love; the promise was that he would see the Messiah; but God puts him in Simeon's arms. In Holy Communion we are more intimately united with Christ than Simeon was.

(i) The *Nunc Dimittis*:

There is no need to comment on it phrase by phrase. Enough to have the general idea; he who embraces Christ, the hope of eternal life, the promise of resurrection, the victim for our sins—how can such a one fear death? Happy the man who in his last illness receives *Viaticum* and can die in peace, having held the Lord in his arms!

(j) This is the light which shall give revelation to the Gentiles . . .

Here is the true prophet speaking. The Jews had never assimilated the idea of universal Christianity. Even St Peter found it difficult to accept.

(k) This is the glory of thy people Israel . . .

Christ, the one glory of Israel; but also of the whole of humanity, since he is the first-born of men.

(l) The father and mother of the child were still wondering over all that was said of him . . .

To attempt to discover exactly what was the cause of their wonder is to try to pierce that veil of mystery which God has placed round the Holy Family. Exactly how far did the parents' knowledge

of Christ extend? There is certainly nothing new in Simeon's words, and the universality of the redemption was no new idea to Mary. Perhaps a simple explanation is the best, namely, that they wondered at the fact that Simeon and Anna recognized Christ for what he really was.

(m) and said to his mother, Mary . . .

He addresses Mary because she is the one who will have to accompany Christ in his sufferings and unite her sufferings to his. Joseph will die, but Mary must continue to the very foot of the cross.

(n) destined to bring about the fall of many and the rise of many in Israel . . .

In Israel, because a Jew naturally speaks and thinks of his people; but this does not mean to say that the words have a merely limited application. All the Fathers have commented on them as universal, applying to all peoples of all time.

Nor does the use of the word *destined* imply that God sent Christ for this very purpose. The meaning is that many will fall and many will rise up, according to the way they receive or reject Christ; so much so that it will almost seem as if he had been sent for this purpose. God wishes all men to be saved, but the evil dispositions of some will frustrate their salvation. The phrase of Simeon seems to be inspired by Isaias 8. 13-15.

(o) to be a sign which men will refuse to acknowledge . . . as for thy own soul, it shall have a sword to pierce it . . .

Again the simple explanation, given by Maldonatus, is probably the best. The sword refers to the crucifixion. From the days of his public life, down through the ages, men have refused to admit the claims of Christ and have cast aside his offers of redemption. The struggle between the forces of redemption and their enemies has been so constant, in all ages, that we can only explain it by admitting the existence of another supernatural power, opposed to that of Christ.

This struggle is felt even in the soul of the good Christian, and happy is he whose will remains firm and overcomes the efforts of his passions to overthrow it.

Mary will reach the culminating point in her life at the foot of the cross; and until that moment her soul will be filled with sorrow at the anticipation of that dread hour. But she accepts the cross and repeats her *fiat*. She can truly be called a martyr, since she gave her life for and with Christ. Trials which are willingly accepted make us like Christ and Mary. We can make satisfaction for sin through them, give them the expiatory and sacrificial character which was so obvious in the sufferings of Mary and Christ; above all, we can see in them the will of the Father.

(p) they returned to Galilee:

The Evangelists are accustomed to narrate events which were very distant in time as if they happened almost together. This is an example. The Holy Family did return to Galilee, but only after the visit of the Magi and the flight into Egypt.

SECTION III. THE FATHERS

I. ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

(We have chosen extracts from a Homily attributed to John Chrysostom, rather than the passages quoted in the original *Palabra de Cristo*, which are all taken from his 21 Homilies preached in Lent of 387. This has been done in view of the fact that the extracts from St Augustine which follow cover more or less the same ground as the Lenten homilies of St John Chrysostom. *Translator's Note.*)

1. *And Simeon blessed them and said . . .*

For whose fall? Without doubt, that of those who do not believe and that of those who placed the innocent Christ on the cross. For whose resurrection? For those who give thanks and turn to him with a grateful heart. And for a sign which shall be contradicted. What sign is this? None other than the torment of the cross; the sign which the Church proclaims as the salvation of the world and which the Jews have rejected. A sign which heaven itself has also proclaimed to the world many times. It is exposed to contradiction in order that truth may triumph. Complete victory is not won by numbers alone, without a struggle. It must, therefore, meet with contradiction, so that in every age the Judge may triumph in meekness and patience.

Accordingly he says: And for a sign that shall be contradicted. . . . That is, by the unbelieving and the impious. . . . This sign shall be exposed to contradictions so that those who stand up against it, incited solely by their evil malice, shall be confounded. For if the truth were not exposed to such contradiction, virtue would receive no fitting confirmation. But the struggle which is permitted makes clear the light of the truth to the soul that perseveres.

2. *This sign is assailed:*

But not without profit; for how else were the martyrs proved in time of persecution? Was it not when they manfully withstood evil and triumphed over it through courage and patience? Not only does contradiction bring forth believers, but also the martyrs, as they went to their torments and death, openly gave testimony to the whole world of the greatness of the grace of Christ.

Therefore, when Simeon says, Behold this child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall

be contradicted, his words are not to be understood to mean that Christ was the cause of the fall of such men, or that by force he had brought about the resurrection of the others, but that he is set for the fall of all those who strike against him, as against a stone of scandal; and for the resurrection of those who believe in him of their own free will. He is set, as one would say that the sun has risen and that those who have good sight can see by it, while those whose eyes are defective may be hurt by the splendour of that light. Unless the sign be contradicted, how shall some fall, namely, those who merit condemnation, and others rise, namely, those who live in hope, through their faith?

For this purpose also Simeon says: A sign that shall be contradicted, so that the faithful may not be troubled or turned away from their faith by the persecutions to come; that they might learn that it is God himself who permits even his own divine faith to be attacked from time to time. For who would dare to contradict it unless God so permitted it?

But there shall come a time when there is no more contradiction. . . . When, I repeat, he that was presignified shall openly appear in his glory, against those who have contradicted him, then they who have embraced the Sign shall be raised to his glory, whom the sign prefigured. But they who withstood the sign shall be condemned by him for whom it stood. Then there shall be an end to contradiction, an end to doubt, to infidelity and error. But there will also be a beginning to rewards and crowns, in which may we all take part through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

3. *A summary of the reasons why God allows the just to suffer, including the suffering of persecution:*

- (a) so that they may not be proud;
- (b) so that the power of grace may be made manifest in them;
- (c) so that their patience may demonstrate that they serve God for no human rewards;
- (d) so that we may all think of the resurrection and heaven;
- (e) so that they may be a consolation to the rest of mankind;
- (f) for the imitation of the saints, who also suffered;
- (g) to make us perfect in holiness and increase our hope in God;
- (h) so that we may repent for our sins, do penance for them and obtain a greater reward.

II. ST AUGUSTINE

(Selections from his works in which he develops the theme that Christ is the Lamb who came down from heaven to wipe away sin and redeem mankind.)

Christ is born in order to die for sin

1. *Sin was the motive for his coming:*

He had to come in a mortal body, as a small child; he had to be laid in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes . . . to be handed over, finally, to death as a victim. . . . And who could humiliate him to such an extent? Only the Father. . . . Do not seek terms of comparison on earth. Lift yourselves up, beyond the stars, and when you have reached the choirs of angels they will say to you: Go higher still! Approach the Thrones and Dominations, Principalities and Powers and they also will tell you: Go higher yet; for we, too, are creatures. . . . Unfold the wings of faith and ascend even to the Creator himself, and there contemplate that saying: In the beginning was the Word. He it was who came to us, not in his divinity, because that would have dazzled our eyes and then no one could have withstood his majesty. No, he came so as not to leave us as we were, clothing himself in what we were by nature, not in what we were by sin. Even though he came to men in the nature of man, he did not come to sinners as a sinner. Of the two elements of our humanity, our nature and our guilt, he took the former and healed the latter; and thus, to our eyes a man, but the hidden God, he appeared among men (*Sermo* 293, 5. PL. 38, 1330-1331).

(a) He came from heaven that we might rise to heaven:

In his conversation with Nicodemus Christ says that he came from heaven so that we might rise to heaven. He came to die, and for that reason he came in a mortal body. The serpent of the desert is the figure of Christ, as he was on the cross. Christ, the doctor who came to cure sin. If anyone is judged by him it will be because he has rejected that medicine, since darkness rejects the light. . . . God chose to become the son of man that man might become the son of God. He came down, so that we might rise to heaven. But if he were the only one to rise, what hope would there be for us? Our hope lies in the fact that he came down so that we, united with him in one body, might rise with him, and through him.

(b) His death freed us from death:

He came down, and he died; and his death freed us from death, for dying he killed that death. . . . We were born of mortal man, and we who might have been immortal were born mortal and subject to death. But Jesus also became mortal, by whom all things were made, and dwelt among us. He took death upon himself so that he might hang it on the cross and free all men. The Jews in the desert looked on the serpent and were cured; those stings were the figure of our sins, and the serpent was the figure of Christ our Lord, who took flesh so that he might heal us.

(c) He did not come to judge, but to save:

He said so himself (John 3. 17). The doctor came to cure the sick, so far as he could; but it was the sick who did not wish to carry out the prescriptions of the doctor, and so killed themselves. The Saviour came into the world to save it. Do you not wish to take advantage of that salvation? Then you have judged yourself, because he who does not believe in him is already judged, because he did not believe in the name of the only Son of God.

No other motive urged Christ to come on this earth save that of sinners. If there are no illnesses and no wounds, there is no place for medicine either. If, then, a great doctor came down from heaven it was because there was a great illness to cure—that of the whole world.

(d) He came to save those who were lost:

The son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost, because all were dead from the time that one man sinned; until he came who was free from sin and saved all men, except those who, in their pride, thought they were healthy even while they were sick—the worst thing that could happen. They went mad in their sickness, dealing blows. But what am I saying? They did not merely strike out in their fury; they wounded; they set out to kill the very doctor who could heal them. . . . And do not say to me that, if Christ came to save, not the just, but sinners, then it is better to sin so as to enjoy his love; because then I shall answer you: If you have known the doctor, why are you not afraid of the illness? The doctor comes to the sick so that they may cease to be sick (*Sermo 175. 1-3*).

2. Christ came to die for the sin of his enemies:

How wonderful all this is, because it is divine, ineffable because it is inscrutable. Neither the lips of man can describe it nor his heart understand it. . . . A wonderful birth indeed! Think what your God did for you, the Creator for his creatures. Remember that God, while he remained God, living with his Eternal Father, the Only Son of God, did not think it an indignity to take the form of a servant for the sins of his slaves. He certainly did not do it because we were worthy of it, because our sins make us worthy of nothing but punishment. Had they been under scrutiny, who would have dared to present himself before him?

(a) He became man for sinners:

Let us say it once and for all; he became man for the impious and the sinner. If it should seem a small thing to you to see your God clothed in human flesh for the sake of men, the just for the sake of the unjust, the innocent for the guilty, the king for his captives, the master for his slaves, then remember that he became man so as to die crucified on the cross. . . . Greater love than this no man hath, that he lay down his life for his friends. Do you believe this? Of course,

since Christ said it; but at the same time listen to the Apostle when he tells you that Christ died for sinners (Rom. 5. 6) and that, when we were as yet enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son (Rom. 5. 10). Behold an even greater love than that of one who dies for his friend; the love of Christ who gave himself up for his enemies (*Sermo 215*).

(b) He took our flesh in order to offer it up for us:

St Peter, having confessed that Christ was the son of the living God, tried to dissuade him from dying, in spite of the fact that he had come on earth for no other reason. He confessed that Christ was the son of God, but he was afraid when he heard of his coming death. But if he had not come to die, how could we ever come to life? From what source has life come to us if it be not through that death? Listen: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. Look for death there and you will not find it. Should you find flesh and blood, then, perhaps, you would also be able to find death, but how can you find such things in the Word? If that is so, how shall we, who live in a mortal and corruptible world, find life? Since he could not live or die for us, he took our death upon himself, so as to give us life. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. He took what was ours in order to offer it up for us. . . . he was our life, and for him we were his death. Why did he die? Not because he was mortal, but because he deigned to die, because he wished to do so and because he had compassion on us.

3. He became man so as to have a body which he could offer in sacrifice:

He was anointed king and priest. As king he fights for us; as priest he offers himself for us. When he fought for us and appeared to be vanquished, he was in reality the conqueror, because at his crucifixion he overcame the devil and was crowned as our king.

He is a priest in so far as he offers himself for us. A priest must have something to offer; and what pure victim could man find? What clean thing could a sinner discover? Sinner that you are, all you possess is unclean, and for you something spotless must be offered. Where indeed will you find it? God will not be satisfied with goats, or sheep or bulls. Everything is his, even if you do not offer it to him. Even if you desire to offer him something spotless, you will never find it, you with your conscience stained with sin. . . . The spotless priest must offer himself in order to make you clean. That is just what Christ does; not finding anything pure in men to offer for them, he offered himself. A true, immaculate victim!

4. Our co-operation in the sacrifice of Christ:

(St Augustine develops this theme on several occasions. Since we are members of Christ's body, we can offer our sacrifices together

with him; what is more, in the Eucharist, we, too, are offered with Christ. This union with Christ gives a sacrificial value to our acts of virtue.)

(a) Offer humiliations and trials:

I live in sadness and the enemy afflicts me daily with his temptations, forcing me to love that which I should not and fear that which I ought not to fear. The soul, fighting constantly against temptation, even though it may not fall, certainly feels itself in danger and says: Why must I go in mourning under the oppression of my enemy? You have heard Isaias answer . . . for your sins! (57. 17). The cause of your sadness is your sin; would that your sanctity might be the cause of your rejoicing! . . . May your humiliations and trials be the sacrifice which you offer for your sins!

(b) Prayer:

A prayer to the God of my life. . . . To offer something to God there is no need to buy it in far-off lands, nor wander in foreign parts to seek incense and perfumes which will placate him. . . . Within me there is prayer, within me the victim which I have to offer, the incense which I have to burn, the sacrifice I have to immolate. A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit. . . .

(c) The incense of praise:

What shall we offer to God? Those animals of old? No; seek within your heart the incense of praise, and from the hidden depths of a good conscience offer the sacrifice of faith, enkindled with the fires of charity. What praise can you offer to God? Look at what he has given you, nothing less than life itself. . . . You were dead; but now you are alive. For that very reason, Lord, within me I have praises which I can offer you. God called me; no one can take it away from me or rob me of this offering which I intend to make to him, because I carry it hidden within my heart.

(d) Gratitude:

Job lost all his material riches, but no one could take from him the thanksgiving which he offered interiorly: The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away . . . blessed be the name of the Lord.

(e) Mortification:

Shut yourself up within your own conscience, demand punishments of it, mortify yourself and that will be a splendid sacrifice which you can offer to God. The sinner says: It is not sacrifice that you desire, otherwise I would offer it to you; nor do you wish for holocausts. What, then? Is there no sacrifice left for us to offer? Yes; a contrite and humble heart God will not despise. Humble and mortify your heart. . . . When you are cruel to yourself you do not hate yourself; you are

merely being just in punishing your body for your sins. Do you see how justice is done? From that very moment when you begin to hate those works in you which are not of God, beginning to be severe with yourself, he regales you with his mercy. . . . Do not think that he who punishes the body hates that body, because he who chastises a servant or even his own child, hates neither the servant nor the child (*In Ps. 50*).

III. ST GREGORY THE GREAT

(We give a summary of his ideas, taken from Hom. 32 *in loco*. PL. 76, 1232 ff.)

1. *In time of persecution we should give our lives; in time of peace, restrain our desires:*

When Christ suffers bloody persecution then there is often need to give up life itself, as the farmer buries the seed and allows it to die in the earth, so that he may obtain the fruit. But since, in the Holy Church, there are times of persecution and times of peace, our Redeemer distinguishes between one and the other in his precepts. In times of persecution we should lay down our lives; and in times of peace kill all those earthly desires, as far as we can. And what are they? How are they overcome?

2. *A contradiction between Christ and our desires:*

Perhaps it may not cost much effort to give up all we possess, but it is a very difficult thing to deny ourselves. Just as, in the games, it is necessary to be stripped of all clothing, so that the enemy has nothing to catch hold of, so we have to fight the devil, naked of heart and stripped of all earthly affections.

Let us separate ourselves from ourselves, that is, from what we made of ourselves through sin; and let us remain in the state in which grace constituted us. The lustful man, the miser and the proud, once they take upon themselves the contrary virtues, deny themselves and follow Christ. To follow him it is essential to deny oneself and take up the cross, which may consist in mortification or in charity, according as we suffer in body or in soul, when we have compassion on the evil of our neighbour as if it were our own. . . . He who practises mortification must be careful not to fall into a very dangerous vice, that of vainglory.

3. *Dangers of time of peace: love of riches:*

When there is no persecution on the part of the enemy we must be alert and careful to safeguard our affections, because, when we live at peace and there are no real trials, ambition usually attempts to take possession of us. Let each one meditate on the brevity of this life and the little we need in order to live it. It would be stupid to take much luggage with us when the journey is so short.

4. *Christ and human respect:*

There are times when we do not over-estimate the things which perish, but we do not dare to manifest clearly the interior righteousness which is ours, and especially we manifest God's justice less the more we fear men. . . . The Lord applies a powerful remedy: He who is ashamed of me before men, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him. . . .

My hearers will say to me: We are not ashamed of the faith of Christ. And I will answer them: that happens because, when you profess your faith, those who hear you are also Christians. If the name of Christ were not so glorious at the present moment, the Church would not have so many confessors.

If you wish to know whether you confess Christ or are ashamed of him, examine your consciences to see if you cease to act according to his precepts out of human respect. In times of persecution it can easily be seen that there was a possibility that Christians might defect, being ashamed of Christ, because they were stripped of all things they possessed . . . but nowadays we have other things to try us, namely, the sincere following of Christ in his precepts.

IV. THE VENERABLE BEDE

(A summary of his teaching taken from Hom. 15, *De Purificatione B.M. Virginis*, PL. 94, 79-83. Having explained the law and insisted on the humility and obedience of Mary and Christ, he encourages the Christian to offer himself as a sacrifice, consecrated in baptism, together with Christ. Then he continues:)

1. *He is set for the fall and the resurrection of many . . .*

We hear these words with joy, because they tell us of the purpose of the Lord in coming to us, to assure a universal resurrection together with him. But how terrible are those other words: He is set for the fall! Unhappy the man who, having seen the light, allows himself to be blinded by vices, because, according to the Apostle, it would have been better for him if he had never known the way of justice (2 Pet. 2. 21).

2. *That out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed . . .*

Before the Incarnation there were many such hidden thoughts, but once the King of heaven was born on this earth the world rejoiced, while Herod was troubled and with him, all Jerusalem. When Jesus preached and worked his miracles, the crowds were afraid and glorified the God of Israel; but the Scribes and Pharisees received with angry words every doctrine taught by Christ and every good work done by him. When God was hanging on the cross the impious laughed in their folly, and the just wept bitterly. But when he rose again from the dead and ascended into heaven the joy of

those evil men was turned into sadness and the sorrow of the just into joy.

For which reason, my brethren, when we see the doctrine which came down from heaven suffer from the hardness of heart of those who will not receive it, let us imitate the sorrow of those who saw the Divine Word suffer in the flesh. But if we see the word received with joy by the faithful, and their good works rise up to the Eternal Creator of all things, let us rejoice, as did those who saw the resurrection of Jesus and his ascent into heaven.

3. *Compassion and love:*

Not in vain was the command given to sacrifice two doves, one in satisfaction for sin, the other as a holocaust. There are two types of compassion which those who are faithful to Christ employ in self-sacrifice; as we read in the Fathers. The soul which longs for God is first moved by fear; to be stimulated later by love. It pours out abundant tears, because the very memory of its crimes makes it afraid to suffer eternal torments because of them. This is equivalent to the offering of one dove in satisfaction for sin; but then, when the fear gradually disappears, there is born a security and confidence in pardon, and thus the soul is full of the fire of love.

Shed abundant tears, then . . . and become a holocaust to the Lord, despising earthly things and thinking only of those that are above.

V. ST BERNARD

(We have chosen some passages from his two sermons on the Purification: PL. 183, 270 ff. and 366.)

1. *We should offer ourselves as did the Christ-child:*

A time will come when he is not offered in the temple in the arms of Simeon, but outside the city, on the arms of the cross. A time will come when he is not redeemed, but when he redeems others by his blood, since the Father has sent him to rescue his people. . . . To both sacrifices we may apply the words of the prophet: He was offered because he willed it. Even now he was offered, not of necessity nor because he was under the edict of the law, but because he willed it. The same on the cross; he was not offered because he deserved death nor because the Jews conspired against him, but because it was his will. I will make you a voluntary sacrifice, Lord, because you have been offered willingly for me, not of necessity.

But what can we offer, my brothers; or what return can we make to him for all that he has given us? He offered for us the most precious victim he had. It would be impossible for him to offer one more precious. Let us do the same, offering him the most precious thing we have—ourselves. He offered himself, and who are you to hesitate in doing the same? If I only had the happiness of seeing

such great Majesty receive my poor offering! Two small pieces of money I have, Lord, my body and my soul. May I be able to offer them to you as a sacrifice!

... God says that he does not wish the death of the wicked, but that he should be converted and should live. God does not want my death; should I not, then, offer him my life? This is an unbloody victim, one which is pleasing to God, one which is alive. There were three persons there when the child was offered; and the Lord asks three things of us when we make our offering. Joseph was there, the husband of Mary the Mother of our Lord; his foster-father. Mary was there also, together with the Child Jesus, who was the one offered. Let there be in our offering also a manly constancy and the resolve to persevere; let there be virginal purity and in our consciences the simplicity and humility of a child.

2. *Three visits of Christ to the temple:*

Three times did the Lord visit his temple in procession. The first was that humble visit of the Holy Family, at which Simeon and Anna assisted.

The second procession was a more solemn one, on Palm Sunday. The garments of the Apostles—charity, piety and good works—made a carpet for his passage. And will he not come to us? Yes; since Christ is yesterday, today, and for all eternity, God. This is the third procession, to this, his temple.

He who sees you, Lord, will be able to go in peace out of this world, because you are peace. Many there are who do not know you, for although you are the light, the revelation to the Gentiles, still darkness does not embrace the light. Water there is in plenty; but there are still people who do not drink of it. Mercy is in the temple; but there are some who do not draw near.

God has come to us. We were sons of anger, born of a woman. A woman deceived us and blinded us by her ignorance. The weakness of man, his concupiscence being the cause of his slavery, made us weak too. The malice of the evil one held us in chains. For these reasons we are born ignorant of the way of salvation, weak or feeble in our following of it once it is taught to us, and under the oppression of a cruel tyrant. But Christ became strength, wisdom and liberty for our sake, making us his temples.

SECTION IV. THEOLOGIAN

I. HUGH OF ST VICTOR

(Extracts from Serm. 41 *In purific. B.V. Mariae: de purificatione mentis*, PL. 177, 1006-1009.)

For the temple of the Lord is holy, which you are (1 Cor. 3. 17). The Lord visits this temple in many ways; he comes through the

contemplation of creatures, the reading of Holy Scriptures, miracles and preaching. He comes through his inspirations, adversities, promises. . . . He remains there by means of his grace and comes to increase it. . . .

But this temple can fall into ruins if we sin voluntarily. Then it is true what was said: *Fiat habitatio eorum deserta*. We who should have been a house of prayer have become a den of thieves, of evil thoughts and desires.

But when the time of mercy comes then God prepares his temple, so that the strong one can enter in, together with the angel we have been longing for. The strong one is he who created us; the angel, he who redeemed us. Then he commands his servant to prepare the house for him. In the considering of our guilt he allows us to see that temple profaned, the dwelling-place for wild beasts. . . . In the midst of it the Christian who is a sinner, corrupted by the suggestions of the enemy or by the counsels of the evil one, living in what was once the house of God and is now the temple of Baal.

Finding no consolation, the sinner looks up, and God sends him his second messenger, the thought of the punishment he has deserved, and between them both they produce that compunction necessary so that the door-keeper of penance may open the way into the temple, now purified, so that God may enter and dwell there. This is the solemnity of our purification.

II. ST THOMAS AQUINAS

(We quote an article of the *Summa* directly commenting on this theme of the Purification; also some remarks of St Thomas concerning other questions related to this general theme.)

1. *Christ in the temple:*

Christ wished to be made under the law, that he might redeem them who were under the law, and that the justification of the law might be spiritually fulfilled in his members. Now, the law contained a two-fold precept touching the children born. One was a general precept which affected all—namely that when the days of the mother's purification were expired, a sacrifice was to be offered, either for a son or for a daughter, as laid down (Lev. 12. 6). And this sacrifice was for the expiation of the sin in which the child was conceived and born; and also for a certain consecration of the child, because it was then presented in the temple for the first time. Wherefore one offering was made as a holocaust and another for sin.

The other was a special precept in the law concerning the first-born of both man and beast: for the Lord claimed for himself all the first-born in Israel, because in order to deliver the Israelites, he slew every first-born in the land of Egypt, both men and cattle, the

first-born of Israel being saved. . . . Here also is Christ foreshadowed, who is the first-born among many brethren (Rom. 8. 29).

Therefore, since Christ was born of a woman and was her first-born, and since he wished to be made under the law, the Evangelist Luke shows that both these precepts were fulfilled in his regard . . . (3P. q. 37. a. 3. c).

As the son of God became man and was circumcised in the flesh not for his own sake, but that he might make us to be God's through grace, and that we might be circumcised in the spirit; so again, for our sake he was presented to the Lord, that we may learn to offer ourselves to God . . . (*ad 2um*).

He points out that Mary obeyed the law to which she was not really subject, first that she might be like her son in humility, and then to show her perfect obedience (art. 4).

2. Christ and Mary accept the passion:

Causes of our salvation:

Having explained why Christ took our human defects upon himself, namely, to satisfy for our sins, of which they are the due punishment, secondly to encourage belief in the reality of his human nature; thirdly to show us an example of courage in bearing sufferings, St Thomas goes on to point out that God desired the sufferings and death of his Son, not in themselves, but in so far as they are the causes of our salvation. In the same way, in Christ, while his will as a nature and his sensitive appetite both rejected suffering with all their force, his rational will was always in perfect conformity with that of his Father—and for the same reasons (3P. q. 18. a. 5. c. *et ad 1um*).

Christ accepted suffering through both obedience and charity. Obedience to his Father made him accept the act of charity of dying for us, while his charity or love for the Father made him obey him in all things; thus he fulfilled the precept of charity through obedience and he obeyed through love (q. 47. a. 2. *ad 3ium*). But obedience does not imply any necessity in the will which accepts it freely, as the redeemer accepted it, dying because he so wished.

For this reason also he could truly say, as he was dying, *consummatum est*. He had fulfilled all the moral precepts, since these are all included in those of the love of God and the neighbour (*ad 2um*).

3. Tribulations:

(a) Their satisfactory character:

Apart from its guilt, every sin implies punishment, for since the sinner has offended God by following his own will, it is only just that he should suffer something against his own will or pleasure.

The mere fact that the guilt is forgiven implies an acceptance of this punishment, because the wiping away of the guilt implies a

drawing near to God, and when we draw near to God it means that his will is ours. Therefore all those who draw near to God to receive pardon, knowing as they must that he wishes them to suffer something, should accept it when it comes, or even seek it.

This free acceptance of suffering removes from it all character of punishment, changing it into one of satisfaction, because the specific nature of punishment is in the fact that it is coactive, just as that of satisfaction is that it should be voluntary (1-2. q. 87. a. 6. c).

Apart from this satisfactory value, tribulation also has a medicinal value, such as the subjection of our passions, the relics of sin, and also that of reparation for scandal and bad example (*ad 3ium*).

(b) Sufferings offered for others:

Punishment, as such, can only be suffered by the one who sinned; but in so far as it is satisfaction it can be suffered and applied for another, simply because of its voluntary nature. Two separate persons can be considered as united through love into one person, thus establishing that communication of goods and satisfactions, just as in human matters, one friend can pay the debts of another (art. 7. c).

(c) Their preventive character and a means of perfection:

It happens at times that we take as a punishment something which is not. Certainly, many of our sufferings are punishments for original sin, but even those are ordained by divine Providence for man's salvation, whether it be to try those who suffer, or as a warning to others who see it, or as conducing to the greater glory of God.

But there are others which are not by any means punishments. Punishment implies the privation of some good, and we esteem as punishment anything which deprives us of something temporal, when in reality it is not a punishment at all. Man enjoys both spiritual and temporal goods, both interior and exterior. When for the benefit of something of a higher order we have to be deprived of some lower good, no one can say that this is a punishment; it is not a privation of some good but the attaining of greater ones. To lessen one's store of riches in order to acquire health is not a punishment; and to lose health and riches in order to acquire the perfection of the soul is not a punishment either.

In this case the penalties we suffer are not punishments, but bitter and curative medicine; they have little relation to sin, except the very remote one that, if original sin had not existed, there would be no need for such remedies in order to advance in virtue (*ibid.*).

God sends the just an abundance of spiritual goods; and so far as temporal things are concerned, he sends them joy or pain, according to what he knows to be best for them (*ad 2*).

These penalties are not merely medicinal, in so far as they cure past sin, but also preventive of future sin and productive of greater

virtue, for which reason it may be said that God sends them without guilt, without cause or motive.

But we must keep it in mind that a medicine never deprives us of some greater good in order to obtain one of less importance; just as no doctor will blind a patient to cure some insignificant illness. Therefore God may make us suffer some temporal loss in order to provide us with spiritual goods, but he will never deprive us of spiritual goods, unless it be through some sin or fault of ours which has made us unworthy of them (2-2. q. 108. a. 4. c).

SECTION V. SPIRITUAL WRITERS

I. ST THOMAS OF VILLANOVA

(A summary of his sermon on the Purification of Mary.)

1. *Contemplation of the mystery:*

In order to celebrate better the Feasts of the Church it is essential to know their content and their object. He describes the two laws of purification and redemption, showing that they did not bind either Christ or our Lady; so that today the purest of all mansions was purified and the redeemer redeemed.

After the meeting with Simeon and Anna they form the solemn procession—solemn because of those who walked in it. The Church repeats this in the whole world. Mary takes the Child in her arms and offers him to the Almighty; then a priest takes him into his arms and Mary buys him back at the legal price. O Holy Mother! Had I been that priest, perhaps I would not have sold you such a son. . . . The virgin buys for five sicles this redeemer who, by his five wounds, was to redeem the world.

O Good Jesus! Now you are ours, and by a double right. The Father gave you to us, and your Mother bought you back for us. . . . When you come to judge the world, remember that we bought you. You are just, O Lord; so give to each what is his. Give us yourself, because you are ours by a double title. If you are ours, then what you have is also ours; because the goods of a person belong to that one to whom the person himself belongs. For that reason your merits are ours, your wounds are ours, the trials of your infancy, the labours of your preaching, the pains of your death. . . .

How rich I am with such great merits! No matter how great my crimes may be, my merits are greater! I can say that they are mine, with truth, because you have given them to me, not because I have merited them. . . . Lord, we are going to judgement, but we are going together, and even though the weight of my sins may be great, my satisfaction is even greater, weighing more than the sands of the sea.

2. *Applications: the purchase of the Lord:*

Twice was Christ sold; on one occasion as a slave, in order to redeem us who were under the law, so that we might receive the adoption of sons (Gal. 4. 5). And on another occasion by the traitor, Judas. In the Church too he is sold in two ways. One impious sale, and at a small price, is that of the sinner. We are indignant at the thought of Judas, yet we sell him, not for a throne—which would still be a small price—but for a miserable piece of money or for a moment's pleasure.

But Christ can also be bought in a holy fashion, and with piety. Hurry to this sale, O Christian! The price is five sicles! The first is faith, without which it is impossible to please God. The second, the fear of God, by which man rejects sin. But since, in spite of this fear of God, we still fall into sin, there is need of the third sicle, which is sorrow. The fourth is the most precious of all, that love which makes things perfect. We begin with fear, and we end with love, for fear is the beginning of wisdom and wisdom pours itself out in love. The fifth and last sicle, eternal in this life and in heaven, is the praise of God.

II. FRAY LUIS OF GRANADA

(Selections from the appendix to *Memorial de la vida Cristiana*.)

1. *The arrival at Jerusalem:*

O Holy Child! This is the city in which, according to the prophecies, you were to work your greatest wonders. Here you are to accomplish something which is even greater than the creation of the world, because it is greater by far to redeem the world than to create it once again. This is the battle-field, on which you are to fight and defeat the greatest of all Goliaths, with five mortal wounds in your body and with the staff of the cross, with which you will overcome him and cut off his head with his own arms. Where you will destroy death by means of your death and sin by the punishment for it.

2. *Mary gives her son to the Church:*

Christ did not merely offer himself to the Father, but by means of Mary he is handed over to the Church, who is represented by Simeon. Mary, who had already witnessed so many liberalities in her son, gives us the best thing she has. The Trinity ratifies this gift, for the Father had already decreed it, the Son had offered himself for our redemption and the Holy Ghost it was who brought Simeon to the temple.

3. *Simeon:*

What would not be his joy! Considering the world, so full of evils and men who were day by day earning for themselves condemnation,

the offences against God gave him much pain and he desired the day when they would find their remedy, as Isaias had promised (62. 7). Suddenly we see that precious jewel, set in the pure gold of his Mother's arms. What devotion, and what love must have filled his heart!

4. *Joy and sorrow of Mary:*

Joy at seeing the devotion of that holy man and the glory which began to surround her son. But, what are you about, holy man? Why do you wish to give matter for sorrow to this virgin, and a sorrow which will fill her life?

Without any doubt the reason was that you wish the Mother and the Son to be in complete conformity, and since this virgin was the most perfect of all the perfect, therefore she should not lose her share in the glory of him who was the holiest of the holy ones of God. Since the greatest glory of this Lord was to be the fact that he suffered so much in obedience to his Father, so part of that glory must be shared by his holy Mother. . . . Of what do you complain, you who are poor, sick, in tribulation? Good medicine indeed is that which a father gives to his son. . . . Who, with this example before him, will not consider tribulation to be a favour rather than a curse?

5. *Virtues of Anna—mortification and prayer:*

Mortification of the flesh by fasting, while prayer lifts up the spirit; fasting sanctifies the body, prayer purifies the soul; fasting mortifies the passions, while prayer fills the soul with good desires. . . . fasting merits consolations, prayer receives them; fasting cleanses the soul from vices, prayer makes it beautiful in virtue; by fasting man overcomes the devil, by prayer he triumphs over God.

III. ST FRANCIS DE SALES

(Summary of a sermon on the feast of the Purification of Mary, but which has an application today.)

1. *An example of profound humility:*

Christ came to the temple to be offered, just as the other sons of sinful men, and Mary to be purified like other women; but neither of them really needed it. The greater the dignity of the persons who humble themselves, so much the more estimable is their act of humility. Christ loved humility so much that he has humbled himself even unto death, the death on the Cross. . . .

What was the reason for the sin of the angels if not pride, lack of humility; and the sins of our first parents, together with those of all other sinners, are committed through pride. That is why our Lord, when he comes to free us from sin, begins by teaching us humility.

Many began well enough, but were lost through pride, such as Saul and Judas. Women especially, since they can easily be overcome by vanity, should learn from the example of Mary. Let them be humble, as she was, so that God may look upon them, as he looked upon the humility of his handmaid.

2. *Christ and Mary always unite obedience to humility:*

Christ preferred to die rather than to disobey. Mary at the foot of the cross gives her silent obedience, and only asks God to end the sufferings of her son. She will remain submissive to the divine will in spite of the sword which pierces her heart. She had also obeyed by marrying St Joseph, in spite of her love of virginity and the vow which she had made to keep it. Mary has taught us to obey Jesus—and it is the only command she ever gives in the Gospel: Do whatever he shall say to you (John 2. 5).

In the purification Mary need not fear disobedience, because she was not bound by the law; but she was afraid of even the suspicion of it. She also taught us how to avoid giving scandal to others by our conduct.

3. *An excellent method of prayer:*

Many are deceived by thinking that there is need for some method of prayer. There is only one thing necessary in order to pray—to take Jesus in our arms as did Simeon; that is to say, love him very much and demonstrate it. In this way our prayer will always be well made, whatever the method employed; but without this it will never be received by God: No one can come to the Father save by me (John 14. 6).

To obtain this grace it is necessary, like Simeon:

i. *to have Christ in our arms*, that is, as an object of our deep love.
ii. *to be just*, as Simeon was, i.e. our will must be conformed to the will of God in all things; whether he consoles us or allows us to remain in darkness.

iii. *hope*, as did Simeon, with an ardent desire for our own perfection, for which we must always labour in perseverance, because if it does not come at once, it will certainly come through constancy in virtue.

iv. *to be afraid of offending God*, full of reverence for him in prayer, aware of the fact that we are talking to one whom the very angels adore.

It is recorded that the Holy Spirit dwelt within Simeon, and this was the reason for his being able to detect our Lord and hold him in his arms. We must also have the Holy Spirit in our souls if we wish Mary and Joseph to give into our arms the divine Saviour.

But the Holy Spirit does not dwell in a lying heart. Therefore it is necessary to be simple, without artifice or deceit, if we would have him dwell within us.

IV. J.-B. MASSILLON

(We give a summary of one of his finest sermons on the feast of today, based on the text: They brought him up to Jerusalem to present him before the Lord there (Luke 2. 22). The main theme of his discourse as he presents it in the introduction is this: Christ goes to the temple to fulfil the law. He is the Victim, pre-figured in the victims of the old law. In this first manifestation of the cult he is to offer to the Father he shows us the dispositions necessary for the due consecration of our lives as Christians. He offers himself to the Father with a spirit of sacrifice which holds nothing back, while Mary offers him in a spirit of fidelity. The theme is developed thus:)

1. *Spirit of total sacrifice:*(a) **Christ offers himself in a spirit of total sacrifice:**

Before the moment of Calvary arrived Christ wished to make this preliminary offering of himself. There, in the temple, is the altar, the victim and his sorrowing Mother. Symbolic in form, but real in the offering made; he offers himself in the place of the old victims of the law; from this temple he sees the whole of his life before him and accepts the Cross, towards which he hastens from this moment onwards.

(b) **Our sacrifice—the complete offering of the senses:**

God could demand from sinners the complete offering of the whole of their existence; instead he merely asks us for a continued sacrifice of our senses, to which we have consecrated ourselves in baptism, a true martyrdom of faith, which makes us witnesses to the Lord.

It is not enough to consecrate ourselves to God by certain practices of virtue, choosing a spiritual director and not being ashamed to do works of mercy. If we are not also less ambitious, less sensual, less of this earth, then we shall be like the first-born of the Jews, who offered themselves before the priest, but at the hour of the offering all was a mere sham.

(c) **Half-measures:**

Most of those converted to God try to give him half-measures, giving up their great vices but keeping back some of the smaller ones such as envies, quarrels, dangerous conversations. The sacrifice to God must be universal. It is true that perfection is not acquired in a day, but the world and all the dangers it contains for us must be abandoned once for all. Christ offered everything, hiding his very dignity on entering into his own temple. Here is where we fail many times; we give up vice, but we do not give up vanity and ostentation. He offered himself as if he were a sinner; while you

excuse yourself from your obligation so as not to appear to be one. He offered himself voluntarily and beyond what was strictly necessary, because love drove him to it. If our conversion was a sincere one we would not be seeking always the most smooth and comfortable way towards virtue, in which the world has almost as much share as the Gospel.

2. *Fidelity:*

We have seen the reasons for lack of sincerity in our conversion to God, now see how the lack of fidelity makes our conversion last but little. Mary gives us the contrary example.

Motives for infidelity:

i. A prudence which is of the flesh, always finding motives for deviation from the plan which grace has destined for us.

ii. Pride.

iii. Cowardice, measuring obligations in terms of our own weakness.

(a) **Mary does not attempt to avoid God's purposes—but we do:**

Mary could have discovered many reasons for not submitting herself to a law which was a humiliation for her and for her son. But she knew that the darkness of faith does not allow us to penetrate into the secrets of God's providence, secrets which must be accepted in a spirit of faith. She has few imitators. We always find reasons for changing God's plans: do not appear singular in your piety, because you will only fix attention on yourself; do not correct all your faults, because the difficulties will be greater if you do. Do not hide an injury done to you, because the honour of your religion is at stake, not your own. Be quick to reply with violence—for the same reason. And so on!

Can we not leave it to God to look after his own glory and not try to cover up our own with an appearance of zeal? Do you wish to know where God wishes to find his glory? Is it in success? You are mistaken there. Perhaps he often wishes to find it in the patience of one who suffers calumny; perhaps he found more glory in the weeping of a Jew near the willows of Babylon than in the hymns of praise sung to him from the temple. The perfection of virtue does not consist in the fulfilment of sublime obligations, but in that strength of faith which should accompany even the most trivial.

(b) **The humility of Mary on receiving advice from Simeon:**

She did not need to listen, when she was so abundantly inspired by the Holy Spirit. But she listens and learns. There are few who are ready to emulate her example—and that of David—who was content to gather material for the temple, which Solomon would build.

(c) Mary, generous in her sacrifice in spite of discouragement:

She hears the prophecy of Simeon and is quick to respond to it with generosity. How few of us imitate that example! If parents see some talents in their child they immediately think of him as consecrated to the world. But God has the right to dispose of him. Those soft inspirations of grace are thought of as childish; with a pretext of trying his vocation they attempt to destroy it. They hope that it will disappear with time. You demand that priests should have eminent qualities in every order; you want us to solve your difficulties, console you in your trials. But if you offer in the temple the black sheep of the family, how can you hope for this?

There are so many consolations which a father can find in a son who is a priest: a spiritual posterity which will perpetuate his name in heaven; a new Joseph, who will help his parents in their hour of death as did Joseph in the case of Jacob.

V. DAVID GREENSTOCK

(An extract from *Lenten Meditations*, on the doing of the Divine Will.)

Mary and the divine will:

When she finally gives her answer: Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word, she gives obvious proof of her interior sanctity. Later, in his public teaching, her Son would stress this submission to the divine will as the hall-mark of all true spiritual perfection. Only too frequently, men seek to be something other than what God wishes them to be. They seek to avoid the obvious will of God, manifested to them by the ordinary circumstances of their daily lives, in order to serve him in other circumstances of their own choosing. To do God's will in all things is true sanctity. For most of us, perfection lies, not in any extraordinary things, but in the daily routine which we find so hard. As St Bernard says: My greatest penance is the daily life. To be just what God wants us to be implies, not merely great humility, but also true perfection and a high degree of sanctity.

In accepting this task of the Mother of the Redeemer, Mary also took upon herself the still more laborious task of being the Mother of men. As Mother of the Redeemer she is also the Mother of the redeemed. Her Son won for us the graces of divine sonship by his death on the Cross. We are now truly sons of God and brothers of Jesus through our union with him as members of his mystical body. We are also, therefore, truly children of Mary. When she pleads for us with her Divine Son she is really interceding with one Son for the others. We are all one united family and have a real claim on her as our Mother. She loves all of us as she loved Christ. Therefore our

devotion to her should be the simple devotion of children towards their mother.

The salvation of souls was Christ's special mission, and it is also that of Mary. We can confide in her and expect her to help us all—but especially those who have fallen into sin. Not for nothing does the Church call her the Refuge of sinners.

St Bernard sums up the sentiments which should fill our hearts when we think of Mary, our Mother: With every fibre, every feeling of our hearts, with all the affections of our minds and with all the ardour of our souls, let us honour Mary, because such is the will of God, who would have us attain everything through the hands of Mary. . . . Whatsoever thou hast a mind to offer to the Lord, be sure to entrust it to Mary, so that thy gift shall return to the giver of all grace through the same channel by which thou didst receive it.

She who did God's will so perfectly throughout the whole of her life will obtain for us that same grace. Then, indeed, we shall be truly blessed, as she was, because in doing God's will lies the safest way to our own salvation.

SECTION VI. PAPAL TEXTS

1. *The nature of Christian education:*

It is, therefore, as important to make no mistake in education as it is to make no mistake in the pursuit of the last end, with which the work of education is intimately and necessarily connected. In fact, since education consists essentially in preparing man for what he must be and for what he must do here below, in order to attain the sublime end for which he was created, it is clear that there can be no true education which is not wholly directed to man's last end. . . . There can be no really perfect education which is not Christian education (*Divini illius Magistri*).

2. *The Church's rôle in education:*

First of all education belongs pre-eminently to the Church by reason of a double title in the supernatural order, conferred exclusively upon her by God himself; absolutely superior to any title in the natural order.

The first title is founded upon the express mission and supreme authority to teach given her by her divine Founder. . . . Upon this magisterial office Christ conferred infallibility, together with the command to teach his doctrine. . . .

The second title is the supernatural motherhood, in virtue of which the Church, spotless Spouse of Christ, generates, nurtures and educates souls in the divine life of grace with her sacraments and her doctrine. With good reason does St Augustine maintain: He has not God for his Father who refuses to have the Church for his Mother (*ibid.*).

3. *All directed to a supernatural end:*

Whatever a Christian does even in the order of things of earth, he may not overlook the supernatural. Indeed, he must, according to the teaching of Christian wisdom, direct all things towards the supreme good as to his last end; all his actions besides, in so far as good or evil in the order of morality, that is, in keeping or not with the natural and divine law, fall under the judgement and jurisdiction of the Church (*Singulari quadam*, 1912).

4. *The subject of education:*

It must never be forgotten that the subject of Christian education is man whole and entire . . . therefore man, fallen from his original state, but redeemed by Christ and restored to the supernatural condition of adopted son of God. . . . There remain, therefore, in human nature the effects of original sin, the chief of which are weakness of will and disorderly inclinations. Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, and the rod of correction shall drive it away (Prov. 22. 15). Disorderly inclinations, then, must be corrected, good tendencies encouraged and regulated from tender childhood, and above all, the mind must be enlightened and the will strengthened by supernatural truth and by grace, without which it is impossible to control evil impulses, impossible to attain to the full perfection of education intended by the Church. . . .

5. *Naturalism in education false:*

Hence every form of pedagogic naturalism which in any way excludes or weakens supernatural Christian formation in the teaching of youth is false. Every method of education founded, wholly or in part, on the forgetfulness of original sin and of grace, relying on the sole powers of human nature, is unsound. Such, generally speaking, are those modern systems bearing various names which appeal to a pretended self-government and unrestrained freedom on the part of the child, and which diminish or even suppress the teacher's authority and action, attributing to the child an exclusive primacy of initiative and an activity independent of any higher law, natural or divine, in the work of his education (*Divini illius Magistri*).

6. *The Christian family:*

The first necessary element in this environment, as regards education, is the family, and this precisely because so ordained by the Creator himself. Accordingly, that education will, as a rule, be more effective and lasting which is received in a well-ordered and well-disciplined Christian family; and more efficacious in proportion to the clear and constant good example set by the parents and then by the other members of the household. . . . We wish to call your attention in a special manner to the present-day lamentable decline in family education. The offices and professions of a transitory and

earthly life, which are certainly of far less importance, are prepared for by long and careful study; whereas for the fundamental duty and obligation of educating their children many parents have little or no preparation, immersed as they are in temporal cares (*ibid.*).

7. *Christ, master and model of Christian education:*

Such, then, are the fruits of Christian education. Their price and value is derived from the supernatural virtue and life in Christ which Christian education forms and develops in man. Of this life and virtue Christ our Lord and Master is the source and dispenser. By his example he is the universal model accessible to all, especially to the young in the period of his hidden life, a life of labour and obedience, adorned with all virtues, personal, domestic and social, before God and men (*ibid.*).

8. *Mary's complete obedience:*

Never during the whole of her life—neither in the joys which gladdened her heart, nor in the distresses and atrocious sufferings which made her the Queen of martyrs—did the Blessed Virgin swerve even a hair's breadth from complete conformity to the precepts and example of her Divine Son. We seem to see her pointing to Jesus Christ and repeating to us the words she addressed to the servants at the marriage feast of Cana: Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye. She repeats them with a fuller meaning today, when, obviously, the root-cause of all the bitterness and violence which afflict individual men and whole nations and peoples is to be sought in this, that so many have forsaken him who is the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water; they have forsaken him who alone is the way, the truth and the life. To this right way the wanderer must return (*Fulgens Corona*, 1953).

SECTION VII. HISTORICAL AND
LITERARY MISCELLANY1. *St Teresa:*

One day the Lord said this to me: Thinkest thou, daughter, that merit consists in fruition? Merit consists only in working, in suffering and in loving. Thou hast never heard that St Paul had fruition of heavenly joys more than once. Yet how many times he suffered! Thou seest that my whole life was full of suffering; yet only once, on Mount Tabor, hast thou heard of my having had fruition. Think not, when thou seest my Mother holding me in her arms, that she experienced those joys without also experiencing heavy sorrows. From the moment Simeon spoke those words to her, my Father gave her clear light, so that she would see what I had to suffer. . . .

Believe me, daughter; it is to those whom my Father loves most dearly that he sends the greatest trials; for love and trials go together. How can I better show thee my love than by willing for thee what I willed for myself? (*Spiritual Relations*, 36).

2. *The feast of the Purification:*

It certainly dates from the early years of the Christian era. The Eastern Churches usually dedicated it to Christ, the Armenians giving it the name of the *Journey of Christ to the Temple*. It would appear to have been first celebrated in Jerusalem, where the feast was kept forty days after Epiphany. But from the first half of the fourth century it was celebrated on the 14th of February. The details of the primitive celebration of the feast in Jerusalem are given in a manuscript written by the nun Etheria, and discovered in the Cathedral archives at Arezzo in the last century. From Jerusalem the custom spread throughout the world. Pope Gelasius I renewed the Feast in Rome, but it was celebrated there in February to abolish the Gentile superstitions of the Lupercalia. The blessing of the candles, which dates from the eleventh century, commemorates the entrance into the world of Christ, the true light.

SECTION VIII. SERMON SCHEMES

I. THE GOSPEL

A: Jesus fulfils the law

1. *The law of Moses:*

In Exodus (13. 2-12), and Leviticus (12. 6-8), we find the description of the offering to be made of the first-born and the purification of the mother. Double significance in the case of Christ: first, gratitude to the Father for the rescue from Egypt; secondly, the offering of himself for the sins of the world.

2. *The obedience of Mary:*

(a) Mary was not bound by either precept of this law: Christ is the natural Son of God and so above all law. Mary herself was sinless and her conception was by the Holy Spirit.

(b) She fulfils the law:

- i. *in all its details*, as other good Jews did;
- ii. *in poverty*, we can judge this from the sacrifice offered;
- iii. *in spite of the trouble* it might cause her to do so.

(c) *Mary, model of obedience:*

Among the many virtues which can be the subject of preaching on this occasion obedience stands out. She obeys completely and absolutely; not merely in the family, by her obedience to Joseph, but

also she bows to the whole law, be it civil or religious. She knows that there is no authority but that which comes from God. She sees God in the law of Moses, and no less in that of Caesar, obedience to whom took her to Bethlehem.

3. *Our obedience:*

It should imitate that of Mary. Especially in those laws laid down to regulate public order. It is necessary for us to form our consciences in this matter, because all too often we find excuses for disobedience to the civil authorities and try to justify ourselves.

(a) Laws made by legitimate authority come from God as from their ultimate source.

(b) If they do not command us to do something against the law of God then they should be obeyed.

i. if the orders of the Emperor are according to the law of God, then the Emperor is to be obeyed as if his orders came from God (St Augustine);

ii. should the Emperor command things which are against the law of God then God must be obeyed, not the Emperor (*ibid.*);

iii. laws which govern public order are meant for the public good, which could never be attained unless such laws were obeyed to the letter. St Paul preaches this same doctrine.

B: The Purity of Mary

1. *The two legal ceremonies:*

One referring to the son, the other to the mother.

(a) The presentation and rescue of the first-born.

(b) The purification of Mary. We can use this latter to speak of Mary's purity before God and men.

2. *Mary's purification under the law:*

(a) The law laid down that any woman who gave birth was impure, legally unclean. There is no question here of sin or of spiritual uncleanness, but of legal uncleanness. Before an ordinary life could be taken up again there was need for purification.

(b) Mary had not contracted any legal impurity, because her conception was supernatural and she was still a virgin. But she submits to the law and gives an example, not merely of obedience, but also of humility.

3. *She is purified in the eyes of men:*

The happenings which surround the life of our Lady and her divine maternity are so great that they pass unnoticed in the eyes of the world. No one knows the secret of the Incarnation, not even Joseph, until an angel reveals it to him. It was God's secret, and Mary did not feel that she could reveal it to anyone unless God willed it.

In the eyes of the world she was the young wife of Joseph, the carpenter. She and her husband are the parents of Jesus. Had she not gone to the temple like any other woman, she would have been held to be a bad Jewess, never to be admitted into ordinary society because of her legal impurity. She was forced by circumstances to be purified in the eyes of men—and she fulfils the law.

4. *Bodily purity:*

(a) Purification in the eyes of the law and of men was only exterior and corporal:

In the Old Law purity of body and abstinence from carnal pleasures had a spiritual and social value at one and the same time. Those who were publicly impure were despised by society. Nowadays the world is less ashamed of impurity. At times men pride themselves on it.

(b) Christianity demands purity:

Man has to be pure because his very reason demands it; but the Christian has superior motives:

i. he is a member of Christ and his body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6. 15).

ii. he has been redeemed by Christ and his body has been rescued from Satan by the blood of Christ—we have been bought at a great price (1 Cor. 6. 20, cf. 1 Pet. 1. 19). We should, therefore, give glory to God in our bodies.

5. *Mary's purification in the eyes of God:*

(a) Mary's purification possesses inestimable merits in the eyes of God. By means of it the soul acquires even more holiness.

(b) Purity, in its widest sense, is an absence of complexity, of composition. God, in his simplicity and sanctity, is purity itself. Things are pure in so far as they share in this purity of God. The very word *holy* means without anything earthly.

(c) The grade in perfection of purity can be measured by the absence of imperfection and sin; but also by the degree of union with God. Mary's purification is not of the former kind, because she has no imperfection; but she could be more and more purified in the second sense, in her union with God as time went on.

(d) Purification supposes greater union with God, because it is the fulfilling of his will. The greater the union with God, the greater the purity and sanctity.

6. *Progress in holiness (Apoc. 22. 11):*

(a) While we are on this earth the soul is always capable of ever greater purity and sanctity. Faults and imperfections should be eliminated little by little. But perhaps the best method to attain progress is not a simply negative one, over-anxious and almost scrupulous.

(b) Asceticism, which is destined to attain this purification, can be less effective if we use negative methods all the time. Better to seek greater union with God in prayer, in sacrifices, in the doing of his will. This union with God will fill the soul with light, purity and holiness.

C: The Poverty of Mary

1. *The poverty of Mary:*

(a) Chosen by God, Mary presents to him the offering of the poor:

God chose Mary and wished her to be poor; this is enough, according to the writings of many of the Fathers, to show his appreciation for this virtue. But why? What advantages are there in having nothing, or at least very little? St Thomas will teach us.

(b) Voluntary poverty:

Notice that, whenever we speak of it, we refer to that poverty which is either sought after or at least accepted; because the misery against which the poor are in revolt is dangerous rather than useful. For which reason Solomon asks that he may be preserved by God from both extreme poverty and extreme riches. Mary's poverty was voluntary, in so far as she accepted the Incarnation with all its surrounding circumstances. Lord, if I cannot reach the point of desiring this virtue, which you practised, at least allow me to accept it if it should be necessary.

2. *Reasons which made it desirable:*

This poverty of Mary was desirable, for the reasons which St Thomas gives when speaking of the poverty of Christ (3P. q. 40. a. 1).

(a) To be free from worries which might interfere with her mission or with his:

Christ would need to be free from all business matters in order to dedicate himself to preaching; and Mary, free from them also, could give all her time to keeping in her heart the divine word. Free from riches which might call for her attention, she would probably have considered as an obstacle anything which might have improved her social position. How could she have accompanied her son otherwise in his mission of preaching, looking after him together with other holy women? An example to us. We must not allow worldly matters to occupy us to the detriment of the spiritual life. At least we can find some time for God every day.

(b) To secure eternal riches at the cost of temporal ones:

Christ, our Lord, dies to secure eternal riches for us and accepted poverty for that reason; it was the law of our redemption that it should be won by a series of contrasts. Mary united herself to this

sacrifice. He who offers to God that which, from the human point of view, is most appreciated, will receive from God in reward that which is most appreciated in heaven. He who gives us earthly riches will receive heavenly ones.

(c) **So that the triumph might appear greater:**

Taking into consideration the lack of power in those who attained it. The triumph of Christ could never be attributed to riches; he was a humble carpenter and his first disciples were fishermen.

(d) **As a proof of filial love and fear of God:**

A deeper and more potent reason. St Thomas points out that poverty is derived from this filial fear of God. This fear, which is really a type of filial respect for God, subjects a man entirely to God. Was there ever a soul more subject to God than Mary's? The more the soul is subject to the Creator, the less it seeks earthly things. Mary was satisfied with meditation on God's word and the care of her son.

3. **Conclusion:**

Riches can be desirable in so far as they lead us to God. The poor, looking at Mary, can see in their poverty a simple road to heaven; while the rich will be able to appreciate better the difficulties in their path. All can learn the lesson of detachment from earthly things. In a word, I may desire the goods of this world in so far as they lead me to God; but, as St Ignatius says: It is more often than not an illusion to think that they are useful for that purpose!

D: Simeon, the just one

1. **A just man:**

(a) According to the original Hebrew word it means pious, holy, religious. The word *justus*, according to modern commentators, implies rather more than ordinary justice before God. It has the sense of a keeping of God's law with the greatest reverence and respect.

(b) To appreciate better the greatness and sanctity of the soul of Simeon we can do no better than examine the meaning of the word *just* in the Scriptures.

2. **The just in the Scriptures:**

(a) His first characteristic is holiness of life, freedom from sin, occasions of sin, or anything that could separate him from God (Ps. 1. 1).

(b) He finds his pleasure in the law of God (Ps. 1. 2)—this is the positive element in his justice. He lives in union with the will of God always (Ps. 36. 5-6).

(c) He is a man of prayer (*ibid.*).

(d) A watchful man, who does not allow himself to be surprised by the attacks of his enemies (Ecclus. 39. 6).

(e) He is a man specially loved by God and under the divine government (Wis. 10. 10). The souls of the just are described as being in the hands of God (*Ibid.* 3. 1).

3. **The just in this life:**

(a) **In the eyes of the world:**

It laughs at him, despises him and takes him for a fool (Wis. 4. 18).

(b) **In the eyes of God:**

Perhaps God will send him trials and tribulations, because he proves and tests those he loves (Heb. 12. 6), but at the same time the just man is pleasing to the Lord, who will give him the fruits of his good works in due time. His eyes are always on the just and his ears attentive to their prayers (Ps. 36. 16-17). The just shall cry out and God will hear them.

4. **In the next life:**

(a) They shall enjoy the peace of God, while the sinner shall be punished (cf. Wis. 3. 1-3; 4. 7; 4. 19).

(b) Then the sinner will admit that he has been wrong in his judgement of the just, when it is too late (Wis. 5. 4-5).

5. **The song of the just man in this life:**

Summed up in Ps. 117 and Ps. 22. The figure of Job and the remarks of the Scriptures about him show even greater proof for the ideas we have already expressed.

6. **Simeon, a just man:**

Compared with the splendour of the Roman court in the time of Simeon and the power and riches of so many others, his life was a hidden one and passed unnoticed. But God's eyes were on him because he was just; he rewards him with the sight of the Messiah and his name has come down to us in history because he was just.

E: Simeon, a man who feared God

1. **The fear of God, the beginning of wisdom:**

(a) Simeon was a man who feared God.

(b) Some have tried to destroy this idea of the fear of God, even to the extent of saying that it is a sin; but the Scriptures have always considered it to be a sad thing when a man has no fear of God, while on the other hand it praises those who have it (Prov. 1. 7; 9, 10).

2. **Characteristics of the fear of God:**

(a) It is not the fear of a slave, nor of an animal faced with its master's whip; nor is it a fear which is motivated only by the thought of punishment.

- (b) It is a reasonable fear at the thought of God, the just judge.
- i. God is our judge, and has a right to this fear, which is salutary.
 - ii. he demands it (Matt. 10. 28);
 - iii. it is a healthy fear, re-enforcing the motives of love, given our weakness and inconstancy;
 - iv. it is enough, together with absolution, to obtain pardon for our sins.

(c) It should become a filial fear; that is, a respectful love of a son who fears to offend his father.

- i. *loving* in its affections and works;
- ii. *respectful*; because love does not exclude respect, as we see in the case of our parents, our priests and God himself;
- iii. *wishing to earn his love and his rewards*, not his punishments.

3. Conclusion:

(a) God the Father, Lord and Judge:

The respect due to God, the love for our Father in heaven, our obedience to our Lord, fear of the judge and of the punishment which could mean that we are cast out from that family to which we belong—all these go to make up true fear of the Lord.

(b) Our life as Christians makes us practise this fear continually, since it proposes to us the motives capable of producing in us this mixture of affections.

- i. *we call him Jesus*—but then we add that he will come to judge the living and the dead;
- ii. *we adore him in the Tabernacle*, but we remember that he is now seated at the right hand of God the Father;
- iii. *we say that he is made flesh for us*, but beforehand we remind ourselves that he is the creator of heaven and earth.

F: Seeing Christ in his Father's arms

1. *The hope of a Christian father:*

Simeon sees the hope of his life accomplished when he sees Christ in his arms. The hope of the Christian father is to see Christ reproduced in his children.

(a) God has associated him with the work of populating the world; not merely the material world, but also that of heaven.

(b) From which comes an identity of purpose; if the father is an associate of God he must have the same end in view.

- i. *children in the image of God*. This was God's purpose when he created man, to make him into his image and likeness. Therefore the end of the father should be to produce this likeness in his children. What a great dignity that of Christian parents—to produce, not merely other members of the human race, but also adopted sons of God!

ii. *the formation of Christ in the children*. Christ is the divine Idea from which and on which all creatures are modelled. It is this divine Idea which has to be reproduced in the children.

2. Its realization:

(a) The work begins at baptism:

When the father takes his child from the arms of the god-parents, he receives Christ himself. The divine life is there.

(b) It continues in education (cf. Papal Texts, pp. 224-7):

It implies a development in the child of the thoughts, desires and aspirations of Christ.

(c) The mission completed:

i. *Nunc dimittis*. If a father or mother can die with this thought, that they have always seen Christ in their children and have done the best they can to reproduce his image in them, then they have a right to sing the *Nunc dimittis* without scruple. They have fulfilled the task which the Lord confided to them.

ii. *this is their main task*—they will be judged on the way they have fulfilled it; not on how well they have looked after the mere material prosperity of their children, on how much of this world's goods they have been able to store up for them, etc. Their mission is the formation of saints—nothing less.

iii. *St Monica*. Her story can be typical. She wept at the sight of the sins and the life of her son, until finally her tears wrung from God the graces necessary for his conversion. At her death-bed she could say that she demanded nothing more than a remembrance at the altar of God. Her mission had been accomplished.

G: Hope

1. *A sad world, wrapped in the spirit of pessimism:*

(a) The Popes have stressed this several times in different words:

A black pessimism saddens the world (Leo XIII); the ashes of boredom cover the hearts of men (Leo XIII); a sickly melancholy weakens the souls of men (Pius XII).

(b) The modern world is sad because it has lost hope:

It put all its hopes in the things of this world, and two great wars, together with a series of social revolutions of one kind and another, have shown it that its hopes were in vain.

2. *Three positions face to face with modern life:*

The whole philosophy of life can be summed up in three schools of thought.

(a) Those who seek only pleasure:

Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die (Isaias 22. 13).

(b) The pessimists:

Life has been kind to us for the gift of death which it brings to us (Seneca).

(c) The Christian:

It explains, interprets, unifies and brings joy to life. Our life is one of hope now; it shall be turned into glory later (Augustine). Hope is the axis of this life, on which everything turns; the anchor of the soul, the one thing which can lift up our hearts. *Regeneravit nos in spem vivam* (1 Pet. 1. 3).

3. Hope:

(a) True hope:

It is necessary for life, the one thing which rejuvenates a man, despite his age. It must offer us something which is capable of filling our lives and aspirations. But it must be a true hope.

(b) Hope, a theological virtue:

- i. *it unites us to God* in so far as it is the beginning of our happiness here below;
- ii. *its object is our eternal happiness*, together with all those things necessary to obtain that happiness.

(c) The foundation of our hope is the omnipotent power of God:

He has made us certain promises, and he is always faithful to his promises. It does not rest on our human weakness but on the power of God, to whom nothing is impossible or difficult. It is rooted in our faith. Paul hopes to rise again because Christ rose from the dead. If it is only in this life that we hope in Christ then we are, of all men, the most miserable (1 Cor. 15. 17-19).

(d) It is a source of Christian joy:

It is the secret source from which come the waters which flooded the soul of Paul. It is incompatible with tears or with pessimism—we must not mourn like the Gentiles who have no hope, he tells us (1 Thess. 4. 12).

(e) It is the anchor of the soul, the strongest of the virtues (Heb. 6. 19):

The image is an easy one to develop. We live in a continual storm, which would lead us to shipwreck were it not for this anchor. And that anchor rests on God! No matter how great the storm may be, this anchor will never let us down—we have God's word for it; but we must put our hope in eternal things, not in temporal.

4. Ask God to increase our hope:

It is a theological virtue and so it comes to us from God and rests in God. On our part we must do all we can to apply the means he has given us to our daily lives, so that our hope may increase and we may be at peace with the world, no matter what happens.

i. *not in the things of this world, which pass*. One of the daughters of lust is this loss of hope. The man who is nothing more than an animal does not wish to hear anything about eternal joys; he is satisfied with earthly ones.

ii. *feed hope with the word of God*. Sermons, meditations, spiritual reading, especially the New Testament. Especially by prayer, which unites us to God and which can also bring us, in anticipation, some of that peace which we shall enjoy in the next life.

iii. *feed it by the sacraments of penance and of the Eucharist*—which excite in us the love of God and the desire to be united even more with him.

H: Hope and confidence

Two distinct virtues:

- (a) By hope we are united to God as the source of our eternal happiness.
- (b) By confidence we know that God has granted us the means to attain that supreme good.

Confidence

1. Its effects:

Confidence is reduced to the virtue of hope, having as its objects the means necessary to acquire eternal life; but it also has, as a mediate object, the goods of this life in so far as they are ordained to our ultimate end. Through this confidence we know that God will grant us all that we ask of him, provided that it is conducive to our spiritual welfare. Confidence produces in the soul:

- i. *peace* (Ps. 3. 6).
- ii. *stability*: those who trust in God are as firm as Mt Sion (Ps. 124. 1).
- iii. *boldness*: if God is with us, who is against us? (Rom. 8. 31).

2. Its foundations:

(a) Our weakness:

It is the virtue of humble men. We do not dare to trust in ourselves; we even seek the help of our fellow men. We trust in God alone and thus learn to glory in our infirmities (2 Cor. 12. 9).

(b) The fatherhood of God:

We have a Father who is also the almighty God and infinitely merciful. The Church puts on the lips of her priests many times a

day the prayer 'omnipotent and eternal God'. The motto of virtue is always the same: I can do nothing by myself, but I can do all things in him who strengthens me (John 15. 5; Phil. 4. 13).

3. *It is the virtue of the saints:*

(a) Children who are at the same time omnipotent:

It produces in the saints that holy abandonment to God which distinguishes their lives. Example for all time that of St Thérèse of the Child Jesus.

(b) but strong men:

It has produced some of the strongest characters in the history of the world.

i. *David*. In the whole of his life, in sin as well as in virtue, he was great and strong. We could apply to him Augustine's words: His was not the cooing of the dove but rather the roaring of the lion. Psalm 131 is a summary of his love for God, and the world has seen nothing more manly than the *Miserere*!

ii. *St Ignatius* always insisted that men of confidence in God were also those who did the greatest things for him. They undertake great works because they have confidence in his power. We should do our daily tasks with all our might, as though everything depended on us; then we should place all our confidence in God, as though the actual realization of the task was his.

iii. *The Book of Psalms* is essentially the book of confidence in God. There are more than twenty psalms dedicated to this theme alone.

iv. *Christ taught it constantly*, but especially in his last discourse to his disciples, when he told them to have confidence, because he had overcome the world (John 16. 33).

4. *Conclusion:*

Have confidence. Especially those of us who are sinners; those whose faith seems weak; those who are weighed down by the thought of their own sins and imperfections. Trust in the prayers of your brethren also; like the friends of the paralytic, they take us to Christ. Trust in the infinite mercy of God, because nothing is impossible to the omnipotence of our Father in heaven.

I: A sign that shall be contradicted

1. *Sign of contradiction:*

Prophecy confirmed in all ages, but perhaps never before so extensively as in our day. Rationalism and Communism are the two main enemies. We may well learn by following their steps, until our day dawns.

2. *Voltaire to contemporary Communism:*

(a) The eighteenth century:

Until this age heresies had denied this or that dogma; but now we are face to face with total rebellion.

i. *the whole mood is atheistic*. It may admit God's existence, but he is relegated to heaven, indifferent to the world and with no influence upon it. His revelations are not admitted. Reason alone is sufficient and absolute in human affairs.

ii. *there follows the doctrine of Kant and the other German philosophers* rejecting all that is supernatural. Do we even know that God exists?

iv. *the natural consequence is laicism in its worst form*. The State can have nothing to do with God.

(b) The twentieth century:

Total war against religion; absolute negation of divine rights.

i. *dogmatic negation*: the world is divided into two camps, that which is called Christian civilization, but which is entirely lay in its constitutions, and often with no religious instruction in its schools. We may call it indifferent. On the other side is atheistic Communism.

ii. *moral negation*: immorality is not merely practised, it is defended. It is a question of convenience; if it is convenient at any given moment to defend the family, then it will be defended; if at another moment it appears convenient to lower the population, then the family will be attacked officially and its very essence denied. Vice is exploited publicly; divorce allowed; recently child-murder justified before judge and jury; fidelity to agreements laughed at.

iii. *political negation*—which came in during the French revolution and which is still with us.

iv. *organized persecution in many places*—the Church of Silence knows all about that! We are so used to hearing about it that perhaps we are not aware of the fact that this century has seen more martyrs for the faith than during all the great persecutions of the early centuries.

3. *Conclusion:*

(a) For the apologists of the first centuries the cross of Christ was a strong motive which fortified their faith, because they saw in it the fulfilment of the prophecies which had announced it to them.

(b) And we who live for the moment in peace should think often of our suffering brethren. With our gaze on the cross we should repeat often, Thy kingdom come. Prayer is the least we can offer them to console them in their sufferings.

J: The sorrows of Mary

1. *The presentation in the temple and the problem of suffering:*
 (a) The presentation and the words of Simeon open the door to our Lady's sorrows.

(b) *Inevitable contrast:*

It is a contrast to our natural tendency to flee from pain and seek only happiness, when we see that, in our churches, there presides over the altars one who is hanging on a cross, and at his feet, his sorrowing Mother.

(c) The problem of suffering has no solution outside the Christian philosophy:

All pagan philosophers have tried to solve this problem; for some it is an evil to be avoided at all costs; for others something which must be carried with stoicism, like a garment made of thorns, which can be worn so long as one does not move around in it; but at the least movement the thorns penetrate the flesh.

2. *A natural defect of man:*

It is turned into something good by the Catholic religion. Our religion alone has known how to change into something good that which is, undoubtedly, a natural defect. To see this clearly it is enough to observe that the loving heart of God chose for his mother the way of sorrows, which began with the prophecy of Simeon and lasted until those three days of solitude after Good Friday.

(a) *Sorrow—a restorer:*

i. *man was seduced by pleasure.* Our nature, elevated to great heights by God, fell, thus wiping away from it all that it had which was divine, receiving in exchange condemnation. Why? Because pleasure seduced the heart of man, to the point of inducing him to rob that which was really God's.

ii. *sorrow as satisfaction to God.* The natural thing to do is to give back to God what has been stolen from him; to follow the opposite path and deny ourselves some satisfaction in order to return to God what is his. That is why we see our Head paying tribute to God from the cross. Mary, with no personal guilt of sin, associates herself with Christ in this offering.

iii. *sorrow and pain as a voluntary satisfaction and penance.* In these trials we can find a way of paying God back and of obtaining from him his grace and favour once again.

(b) *Pain as a purifier:*

i. *it frees us from our attachment to creatures;* not merely does it serve to free us from the penalties we have merited by our sins, but also it removes the dust from the soul which can impede the

light of God's graces and inspirations. This dust acts like a ballast, which does not allow us to rise to the heights.

ii. *Mary's sorrow and grace.* Mary was always intimately united to God; but her sorrows, bravely suffered, increased that grace in her soul, to such an extent that the angels could say, on seeing her soul: Who is this, whose coming shews like the dawn of day? No moon so fair, no sun so majestic, no embattled array so awes men's hearts (Cant. 6. 9).

iii. *one of two things,* either sadness which is useless, or acceptance of sorrow which purifies. Use sorrows in order to detach yourself from creatures. In happiness it is easy to forget God. In moments of sorrow we appreciate the fact that the things of this world are passing pleasures, and we learn to appreciate the Eternal Good.

(c) *Sorrow, the proof of love:*

i. *in so far as it implies the acceptance of the will of the person loved.* An easy way to sanctity? Two wills in love with each other tend to become almost one will; they demonstrate this so much the more when what is willed by one is difficult to accept on the part of the other. Thus, my love for God is proved by the acceptance of his will; and so much the more when his desire for me is something which I do not like at all, such as suffering.

ii. the prayer of Christ in the garden and that of Mary in the temple. That was the greatest prayer of Christ's whole life, proving his love for the Father: Thy will, not mine, be done. That of Mary was in the temple, when, after the prophecy of Simeon, she offered her son to the Father in complete acceptance of his will for them both.

3. *The way of sorrow is the way to sanctity:*

Do you wish to reach holiness quickly? Seek only God's will and you can be sure that, if your holiness is sincere, God will reward you with even more grace. How? By the road which he has always chosen for his saints—that of sorrows. And if at any time the way should seem hard to you, then you have only to carry out the orders of St Bernard: Look at the star! Look at Mary!

K: The advantages of trials

The antithesis of sorrow

1. Our religion has been called one of antitheses, and truly it abounds in them, due mainly to the fact that man himself is a mixture of clay and angel! One of them is sorrow.

2. That we dislike pain is evident and natural. But at the moment when Mary makes her offering in the temple she receives from God

through Simeon the promise of sufferings to come. When Peter tries to persuade our Lord to avoid the cross he is called Satan. The cross is inevitable for all of us.

3. Why this decided will of God face to face with something which is so repugnant to us all?

God's point of view

The perfect thing is for us to be in conformity with the divine point of view concerning all that is related to our lives. Let us see his point of view about suffering.

1. It has a good purpose:

(a) God is always holy, when he rewards and when he chastises or permits suffering. His very punishments and trials have for their purpose to convert us to him or to prevent us from sinning.

(b) God created the world for man, with all it contains—and it certainly contains sorrows. Therefore man can get some good out of them, otherwise God would not have permitted them to exist.

2. The good behind suffering:

Man is sick through sin, weak through his own tepidity and temptations. Suffering is:

(a) A medicine which cures us:

The sinner who lives in riches and abundance of apparent happiness does not usually think often about God. But when he begins to suffer St Thomas says: the chains of pleasure bound him to sin, and then, of a sudden, sorrow has broken them. Then he remembers that there is another life, where he will receive either the justice he deserves or the peace he desires; that all other things are as nothing compared to that other life; then he can offer to God true penance for his sins.

(b) Medicine which preserves:

From how many sins our sufferings have saved us; and into how many more we would have fallen if we had had nothing but an easy, soft life! How often suffering has been the only thing which has given us *time* to think about our souls! How tribulation beats down our pride and leads us to the virtue of humility, face to face with our own weakness and nothingness!

(c) Medicine which fortifies virtue:

Suffering is a tonic for every virtue, because if we accept the will of God for us, all virtues will increase within us, especially the great theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. It makes us see the futility of rebellion against God; the passing nature of things of earth; the enduring things of heaven.

(d) Medicine which comes from the hand of love:

i. *Who corrects his children if it is not the father?* So true is it that sufferings are a sign of love, that God threatened to leave his chosen people *without* them, because of their infidelity! It is a good sign when the sinner is made to suffer in this life; but a bad sign when he does not suffer. We might call suffering the *last* grace God gives the sinner.

ii. *and God himself, who sends sufferings, helps us to take this medicine*, as a mother helps her child. With his grace behind us suffering becomes, not merely possible for us, but also a glory and a very great grace.

3. Do you have to suffer?

Then accept it, because it is inevitable; offer it for your sins, in satisfaction for them. Abandon yourself to the hand of God. Your task is to sanctify yourself; that of God is to assign the hour when your sufferings shall cease. Do not despise small sufferings, slivers from the cross, which prepare us to accept the whole cross. They often pass by unnoticed if we are not careful. Perfect your charity by helping those who suffer; accept your own and you will also perfect your love of God.

L: Anna

1. The figure of Anna:

(a) Few women have been so clearly described in the Gospels as Anna was. We are told of her origin, her years of married life, her widowhood, her piety and of the reward she received from God.

(b) Simeon was a just man—we can say that Anna was a just woman. Both receive from the Lord the same reward; that of knowing and confessing Christ. In Anna we can see the figure of the holy woman in God's Church.

2. Women in the Gospel:

St Luke especially is interested in them and describes them in more detail than the other Evangelists. They are models of penance, generosity and love—also models of the apostolic spirit. Among many who appear in those pages we can cite the Samaritan woman and Magdalen.

3. Women in the history of the Church:

(a) From apostolic times we can see that there were many who helped in the work of spreading the Gospel (Phil. 4. 3).

(b) In later ages they have been God's instruments for the founding of religious orders and also for revealing to us many things we would not have known if it had not been for their sanctity. Catherine of Siena, Gertrude, Jane Frances de Chantal, Teresa and Thérèse, Margaret Mary, etc.

(c) We must never forget that they were more faithful to Christ at the moment of his death than the apostles! Just as their courage stands out among that of the early martyrs of the Church.

4. *The truly holy women in the world:*

They also stand out: Elizabeth, queen of Portugal; the mother of St Louis of France; Isabel the Catholic.

5. *Piety of women:*

(a) It is frequently discovered that many of them live a life of apparent piety, full of sentimentalism and lacking in constancy. That is not the life of Anna.

(b) But there are also many who are really pious:

- i. there are many whose whole life is divided between the temple and their home—which is also a temple.
- ii. there are many widows who, like Anna, have given their lives to prayer for their departed husband and to the education of their children.
- iii. there are many women whose lives are dedicated to the apostolate, in humble roles, passing unnoticed by men.
- iv. one day we shall know how great their effect has been on the Church and the world.

6. *Exhortation:*

- (a) The touchstone of true piety is prayer and sacrifice.
- (b) Women have a great part to play in the Church, both as wives and mothers. Their life of prayer and sacrifice is necessary for the good of the human race spiritually and temporally.
- (c) Sentiment should be avoided; piety, if sincere, has no time for sentiment.

M: Prayer, without ceasing

1. *To pray at all times and without being discouraged:*

(a) *Anna, the spirit of prayer:*
She was dedicated to it, day and night, in prayer and fasting (Luke 2. 37). But is this possible? Is it possible to pray constantly, day and night? (1 Tim. 5. 5).

(b) *Constant prayer in the Scriptures:*
There are many references to it (cf. Luke 18. 1; Col. 4. 2; Heb. 13. 15). But to interpret those texts we must remember that there are two ways in which we can pray.

2. *Methods, spirit, and time of prayer:*

(a) *Two ways of praying:*
i. there is a prayer which consists simply in union of the heart with God, without any special practices of piety or special matter for our prayer.

ii. there is another which consists in union with God by means of special practices of piety or methods of prayer.

iii. *the essence of prayer is in the union with God.* This can be attained in two ways; by special acts of piety, or by a simple act of the will which offers to God all the actions of the day. In other words, we have to distinguish between the acts of prayer and the spirit of prayer, which penetrates and sanctifies all a man's actions.

(b) *The spirit of prayer:*

The texts of the Gospels and of St Paul have to be interpreted in this way. We are not expected to give up the whole day and night to prayers (in the plural), but to the spirit of prayer. We are not expected to think of God at every moment; but at the same time our will can refer everything we do to God, and at every moment, at least habitually.

(c) *The time given to prayer:*

St Thomas says that the person who assists at Mass on Sundays, with the intention of dedicating the whole of his life to God, fulfils this precept. But no Christian should be satisfied merely with this. There are other prayers which we have learned from our infancy and which we should say from time to time. There is no need here to give formulas of prayer—each one, in his own way and at his own time, can say the prayers he chooses, thus giving to God the honour due to him, whether it be by way of vocal or by mental prayer. The important thing is to pray, without ceasing.

(d) *The morning offering:*

Recently the Pope has applied special indulgences to the act of the morning offering, which in itself implies the subjection to God of all our actions during the day. No special formula is necessary—but each one may make the offering, mentally or vocally, as he chooses. But it should be made, every day!

3. *The important thing is to stimulate our life of prayer:*

Most of us give too little time to it. Give thanks to God always for his blessings and graces; ask him for all you need, for yourselves and your families. Beg pardon for your sins and pray in order to give him satisfaction for them.

N: The contemplative life

1. *Anna is a symbol of contemplative life:*

She represents both prayer and sacrifice. She is the figure of so many women who do not leave the house of God, but give him their service day and night—the religious in the contemplative life.

2. *Enclosed orders of nuns:*

All know who they are and what they do. Their one mission in life is prayer and sacrifice. Every order or congregation in the Church

has its specific purpose in life; these are dedicated to prayer and sacrifice, day and night.

3. *The excellence of the contemplative life:*

(a) Mary has chosen the better part, which shall not be taken from her (Luke 10. 42).

(b) the contemplative religious seek the Lord directly, in prayer and the practice of the theological virtues. They see nothing but God, and that, directly.

4. *The need for contemplatives:*

(a) Many do not understand this in the twentieth century! There appears to be a lack of activity in this life. Lamentable error.

(b) The Decree *Sponsa Christi* has spoken out very clearly concerning the need for such souls in the Church of God.

i. Contemplative life and active life are as it were the heart and arms of the Church. No one would say that the heart, just because it is hidden, is therefore inactive, when on it depends the activity of the arms and of the rest of the body. Example of Thérèse, who is said to have saved as many souls from her cell as did St Francis Xavier in his missionary activities.

ii. Pius XI wanted contemplative orders in mission countries.

iii. Priests and missionaries all ask prayers of the enclosed orders.

5. *The people and the enclosed orders:*

(a) A great grace for any parish, to have such a convent in its bounds. They are like lightning-conductors, which take away God's anger from the people, and the magnet to draw upon the parish many graces.

(b) The people should consider them as something which belongs to the parish—as well as to the Church. Many live in extreme poverty. Hence the dispositions of *Sponsa Christi*, allowing them to undertake some manual work for their own good, so as to live better.

(c) They need our help but we shall receive much more than we give.

II. SOCIAL APPLICATIONS

A: Obedience, foundation of the Christian life

1. *The obedience of Jesus:*

There is a profound mystery in the constant obedience of Christ and his parents to the law.

(a) The Evangelists mention it several times.

(b) The Fathers comment on it, as an example which Christians should follow: not merely when it is a matter of ecclesiastical laws, but also in civil matters.

(c) What was the intention which animated those who were by no means subjected to such laws? It could be no other than that of giving us an example, the exercise of a virtue which is rooted in faith and of which the ripe fruit is Christian perfection.

2. *The theological content of obedience to the law:*

We may exclude the idea of obedience to church law, to consider only that of obedience to civil laws.

(a) *It guarantees the common good:*

We are, of course, speaking of those laws which are just. They reflect in some way the will of God, both those which are an expression of the natural law and others which are applications of it to particular cases.

(b) *They are promulgated by those who exercise an authority which they have received from God:*

i. to obey them, then, is to obey God's will;

ii. which does not imply that the legislator is the one who gives such laws their imperative force; his task is to declare the precept of the natural law in concrete cases.

iii. but the obligatory nature of such laws comes from something anterior to the legislator—from the divine will, the reflexion of which in the human understanding is the natural law.

(c) *A guarantee of peace and social order—since the law is directed to the common good:*

i. laws which regulate the common good are reflexions of the order which God has traced out for the social life of man;

ii. to submit oneself to these laws, at some personal sacrifice perhaps, is to work for the common good of all society;

iii. to obey the law is to work for the good of our brethren; and this is another of the ways by which we can reach perfection, not merely as individuals, but as member of society too.

(d) *To explain these principles to our people:*

There is too much laxity of conscience in this matter, even among sincere people, who in other matters show that they are seeking God earnestly. Laws are lightly broken which were laid down for the common good of all.

3. *Some consequences:*

(a) *The law is superior to and anterior to the legislator:*

i. it binds him as much as it binds the ordinary citizen;

ii. it has such force that its basis in natural law can never be abolished; if legislation were brought in against that basis the whole of social order would eventually be destroyed;

iii. not merely must the legislator take that natural law into consideration on drawing up his applications of it, but also he

must himself give positive example by obeying it, if he wishes to demonstrate to his people the value of the juridical order as a whole.

(b) The natural law is superior to positive precepts:

- i. from which it follows that, if the natural law is sufficiently known in a particular case, even though it has not been expressed in the form of positive precepts by the human legislator, it still has complete binding force in the consciences of the citizens.
- ii. the law of a just wage is an example of this; even though the State may not have laid down positive legislation concerning wages, leaving it as a matter for free contract between worker and employer, nevertheless the latter is bound in conscience to pay a just wage in accordance with the precepts of the natural law. Another example: a strike, to be just, must also conform to the natural law obligations, even though the State legislation may permit rather more freedom.
- iii. if any civil legislation disagrees with or is contrary to the natural law, it need not be obeyed; and there may be cases when positive disobedience obliges in conscience.
- iv. however, the injustice of the civil law must be obvious; if it is not, it should be obeyed.

4. *The spirit of obedience in Christ:*

When the Christian obeys the law he imitates Christ and Mary; and only then can the law obtain for society all the good that it pretends, namely, the common good in both natural and super-natural orders.

B: Hope, in parents

1. *A virtue of Christian parents:*

- (a) References to the Holy Family fill the liturgy of the days after Christmas.
- (b) Today, the consideration of the figure of Simeon gives us occasion to talk about one of the virtues which should fill the minds and hearts of a Christian family—that of hope fulfilled.

2. *Christian education:*

The hope of seeing Christ formed in our children; this is the very purpose of Christian parents. From the moment when the children have been made sons of God by baptism, then the hope of the parents should be to see the figure of Christ appear every day more clearly in their children. That is what education means for a Christian—to procure by all possible means, gently and tactfully, with perseverance and energy, the development of that Christ-like image planted in the soul of the child at baptism.

3. *Simeon's hope and that of parents:*

(a) There are similarities between the two:

Both have to feed their hope by faith.

i. *faith sustains and guides Simeon* during his many years of hopeful expectation. Even though there was nothing external to support that hope; even though the end of his life was approaching; even though there was no sign of it being fulfilled.

ii. *faith must sustain the parents* in the fulfilment of their mission, in spite of all difficulties and obstacles, even though defects and sins may at times obscure the image of Christ in their children.

(b) There are also differences:

i. Simeon's faith and hope were based on a revelation of the Holy Spirit—a special privilege. That of the parents is based on divine revelation in the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church.

ii. Simeon's hope does not demand any positive action from him over and above that of patience in waiting for God to confirm it. That of the parents does demand open and positive co-operation on their part. Natural and divine law have confided this task to them, and they can count on the help of the Church, the mother of all Christians. But the main task is theirs. The Church wishes them to be reminded of this grave obligation. She is well aware of the fact that the growth of the mystical body depends to a very great extent on the co-operation of the Christian family.

(c) An important consequence for our time:

Parents should not leave the education of their children entirely to others.

(d) God gave these children to them as a great treasure, and it will be demanded of them with interest:

i. Yet nowadays the task of education is often confided to others outside the family circle. Too many parents rely on the fact that they have sent their children to a Catholic school, and think that is sufficient. There is no need for them to do any more. This is not the mind of the Church, important as our Catholic schools may be in the general plan of child education.

ii. Not the least of the evils which follow from this neglect is a lack of family unity. How can parents feel satisfied at the end of their lives if they have done nothing whatever to develop the image of Christ in their children?

(e) This task implies sacrifice:

- i. to watch over the best interests of the children, protecting them in moments of crisis;
- ii. to correct defects and encourage virtues;
- iii. to give good example in all things, especially in religion;

iv. to accustom the child from early years to the most complete service of God;

v. perhaps in order to lead him away from the path of sin or occasions of sin.

4. *The most lofty of all missions confided to parents:*

(a) A mission which makes them like our Lady and St Joseph, into whose care was confided the education of Jesus;

(b) a mission in which they conceive their children once more, as it were, being both parents in the natural sense and in the supernatural;

(c) one of the highest motives for happiness even here on earth;

(d) like Simeon, they will one day be able to sing their *Nunc dimittis* with joy. They have fulfilled their mission of reproducing Christ in their children, and Christ will assist them, as he did St Joseph, on their death-beds. He will be there in their children, and he will come to receive their souls, crowning their parenthood for all eternity.

Sunday between the Octave Day of Christmas and Epiphany

THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

SECTION I. SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Epistle: Acts 4. 8-12

Gospel: Luke 2. 21

Texts concerning the power of the Name of Jesus

And she will bear a son, whom thou shalt call Jesus, for he is to save his people from their sins. Matt. 1. 21.

There are many who will say to me, when that day comes, Master, was it not in thy name we prophesied? Was it not in thy name that we performed many miracles? Matt. 7. 22.

You will be hated by all men because you bear my name. . . . Matt. 10. 22.

Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them. Matt. 18. 20.

Every man that has forsaken home or brothers . . . or lands for my name's sake, shall receive his reward a hundredfold, and obtain everlasting life. Matt. 19. 29.

Why, if anyone gives you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you are Christ's, I promise you, he shall not miss his reward. Mark 9. 40.

He who welcomes this child in my name, welcomes me. . . . Luke 9. 48.

Believe me, you have only to make any request of the Father in my name, and he will grant it to you. John 16. 23. Cf. Acts 2. 21, 3. 6, 4. 30, 5. 41, 9. 16; Rom. 10. 13.

That is why God has raised him to such a height, given him that name which is greater than any other name; so that everything in heaven and on earth and under the earth must bend the knee before the name of Jesus. Phil. 2. 9-10.

Have not your sins been forgiven in his name? 1 John 2. 12. Cf. Apoc. 22. 4.

SECTION II. GENERAL COMMENTS

I. LITURGICAL

This is not a very old feast, going back to the sixteenth century and owing its origin to the Order of St Francis. In 1721 Innocent

XIII made it a feast of the universal Church. Since the Jewish custom was to impose a name on the child at his circumcision, these two feasts are really one and the same, which is the reason why the same Gospel is used at both. The choice of Phil. 2. 10-11 is also an obvious one, inspired almost certainly by Isaias 45. 23-24.

II. EXEGETIC AND MORAL NOTES

The Gospel: Luke 2. 21

1. *They gave him the name . . .*

All commentators agree that this was a part of the ritual of circumcision, performed with the aid of at least ten witnesses. Once the ritual prayers had been said the name was imposed on the child; usually that of his father or inspired by some event in the family history, or referring to some spiritual or physical quality of the child.

2. *Jesus:*

The etymology is vague and very uncertain, at least in so far as the history of the name is concerned. More important from our point of view is the fact that it was given to our Lord through the intervention of Gabriel, who also gave the reason for it. Many of the Jews already used this name, but without any particular significance, but in the case of Christ this meaning is given to us by the angel: He shall save his people from their sins. Jesus means Saviour. There is no other name by which we may be saved.

SECTION III. A FATHER OF THE CHURCH

ST BERNARD

(He deals with the theme of the Name of Jesus many times, always in a profound fashion. We have chosen some of the paragraphs from the Homily on the phrase *Missus est*. PL. 183, 76-77.)

The name of Jesus:

(a) *Jesus, saviour of his people:*

Prudent Virgin, understand, by the very name imposed on your son, the special grace you have received from on high: Thou shalt call his name Jesus. The angel interprets it: For he shall save his people from their sins.

Of two others we read that they bore this name, and both of them were leaders of their people. One brought his people from Babylon and the other led his into the promised land. Undoubtedly, both of them defended their people, but did they free them from sin? But our Jesus saves his people from their sins and introduces them into the land of the living.

(b) *The name of Saviour:*

In one thing the angels and the Apostle agree when they talk about our Lord's birth, namely, that he is given the name of Saviour. Gabriel, when speaking to Mary, as to one more fully instructed in divine things, merely indicates the name: You shall call his name Jesus. The angel, on appearing to Joseph, not merely pronounces the name but also gives the cause of it and interprets it when he says: For he shall save his people from their sins. To the shepherds a great joy is announced, Today is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. Thus St Paul also: Then the kindness of God, our Saviour, dawned on us, his great love for men (Tit. 3. 4). None of them keeps secret this sweet name, because it is most necessary for me. Otherwise what would I do on hearing that the Lord was coming? Would I not flee from his presence as did Adam, even though he could not escape from it? Would I not despair on hearing that the great Lord was coming, whose commandments I had broken, whose patience I have so sorely tried and whom I have paid with ingratitude for all his benefits? In what else could I find greater consolation save in the name of my consoler? He himself says that he has not come to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by him. Now I shall go to him with confidence, implore him, full of hope. What shall I fear when the Saviour it is who comes to my house? Against him alone have I sinned. Everything will be forgiven when he pardons because truly he can do all things. If it is God who justifies, who shall dare to condemn us? For who can accuse the chosen ones of God?

(c) *The imposition of the name Jesus:*

Thus, my Jesus does not bear this name uselessly, as did so many others. There is in him no mere shadow of the greatness of his name, but the truth, since the Scriptures tell us that his name was imposed from heaven. See the depth of meaning behind this; after his birth he was called Jesus by men, and he was called by this name by an angel before he was conceived, because he is the Saviour of both angels and of men. Of men from the time of his incarnation; and of the angels from eternity. . . .

With reason, then, when this child who was born to us was circumcised, he was called Saviour; because from that moment he began the work of our salvation, shedding for us that immaculate blood. There is now no need for Christians to ask why Christ was circumcised. It was for the same reason for which he was born and for which he suffered.

SECTION IV. A THEOLOGIAN

I. ST THOMAS AQUINAS

(Summary of the doctrine in 3P. q. 37. a. 2.)

1. In general he points out that the name of anything should respond in some way to its main properties or to its definition. In the case of those names imposed by God on certain people, we notice that they always contain a reference to some gift of God which has been granted to them. Such was the case with the name Abraham, by which God implied that he would be the father of many nations. Also with Peter, the rock on whom the Church was built.

The office of Christ was that of bringing grace to all men, by which they could attain salvation; for which reason the name most proper and fitting for Christ is that of Jesus, which means Saviour.

2. All the other names of Christ given him by the prophets are, in some way or other, connected with this one. For example, Emmanuel, which means God with us, indicates the cause of our salvation in the union of the two natures in one person. When Isaias says that he shall be called Admirable, Counsellor, God the Mighty, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace, he is describing the way of salvation and its ending. By his admirable counsel and divine power we were brought to the inheritance of our Father in heaven, in which there will be perfect peace for the sons of God, under the Prince of Peace himself.

3. Others before him might have borne this name, but never with the universal significance it has in the case of Christ. It is proper to Christ and may thus be called truly a new name (Isaias 62. 2).

SECTION V. SPIRITUAL WRITERS

I. ST THOMAS OF VILLANOVA

(One passage from his sermon on the feast of the Circumcision.)

You are truth itself, Lord, and so you cannot deny your name. How can you bear the name Saviour unless you are prepared to save? How could you be called merciful if you merely pronounce judgement on those who call on you for mercy? In God there is no deceit; you are what you are called. You are called Jesus. Then you are Jesus. Let the sinner approach Jesus, because for that very reason he is called Jesus, namely because he saves his people from their sins. If you are unclean it is he who wipes away sin and purifies souls. Why are you afraid? There is nothing harsh or bitter, no terrible sound in the name of Jesus; only sweetness and gentleness. Listen to the Spouse of the Canticles: Your name is like oil poured out. . . .

Do the wounds of your sins pain you? The voice of your conscience torment you? Draw near, then. The oil has been poured out; receive it, anoint yourself with it and the plague will cease.

As St Bernard says, oil illuminates, feeds and anoints. That is just what the name of Jesus does. It illuminates when it is preached; it feeds us when we meditate on it; it anoints us when it is invoked. But how is it poured out? In the Old Law, when Moses asked God for his name, God replied: I am who am. The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. O Lord, are you by chance only God over men, and not the Lord of heaven and earth. Why do you limit your name to three men? It is too limited, Lord; too confined in the narrow limits of the Jewish people. . . . I beg of you, Lord, to pour out the oil, spreading it over all nations and peoples. But how shall it be so spread out unless the vessel be broken in which it is contained? Listen to the mystery. Those stupid ones of the temple, the Scribes and Pharisees said: We shall put poison in his bread, we shall wipe him out from the land of the living so that there may no longer be even a memory of his name. Their stupidity wished to narrow his name still further. But if that is your object, why then do you break the vessel? Do you not know that, even though he is mortal, the oil is still inclosed in an immortal vessel. But once the mortal has put on immortality, then from his five wounds the oil will be poured out on the whole earth and over all nations.

II. LUIS DE LA PUENTE, S.J.

(One section from his meditations which refers to the name of Jesus.)

I will consider how the name of Jesus is the summary of all the great qualities in Christ, reducing them to three headings; since it is the summary of all those perfections which belong to him as God; of those which he possesses as man; and also of those offices which, as God and man, he performs on our behalf.

If he is Jesus, therefore he is infinitely good, holy, wise, all-powerful, merciful, infinitely good to us, and with the goodness, wisdom, and holiness of God himself, because all these things are necessary if he is to live up to his name.

Again, if he is Jesus, then he must be most humble, meek, patient, strong, modest, obedient and charitable; because he has to pour out on others all these virtues, and from his fullness others have to receive all the graces and virtues by which they will be saved.

If he is Jesus, then he will be our Master, Doctor, Father, Shepherd, Judge, Protector and Advocate. So that in Jesus we have all things, and I can truly say to him: My Jesus and my all! If I am sick, you are my health; if hungry, you are my food; if poor, you are my riches; if weak, you are my strength.

The name of Jesus is the only means of obtaining pardon, of being heard when we pray and protected in times of danger. . . . He wishes me to hold it fast in my memory, to remind me of him; in my intellect, to think of him; in my will, to love him. Reverence this name always, because before it all things in heaven, on earth and even in hell bend the knee.

III. BOSSUET

(A scheme for one of his sermons on the feast of the Circumcision. The theme can be described briefly thus: the excellence of the Holy Name; the terrible contract Christ entered on when he took that name; the sentiments of the sinner who has been pardoned; the ingratitude of those who fall again into the same sins.)

1. *The terrible nature of the contract:*

The introduction is a hymn of praise to the Holy Name, which puts all those who have been set free at the feet of the Lord. But this name is also terrifying if we think of the obligations it laid on Christ, because the pardon for sins is not a mere abolition of them, but demanded bloody satisfaction for them. Therefore, on the very day he was called Jesus, he began to shed his blood. The circumcision is the beginning of a road which leads to Calvary. St Justin says: One only is wounded, and all are healed; the just one suffers dishonour and the sinner has his honour restored. The innocent one pays that which he does not owe, and the debtors are freed. For who is better able to cover our sins with the cloak of his justice? Can there be any better expiation for the rebellion of the slave than the obedience of the son? The iniquity of the guilty is hidden in one sole just man; and the justice of that one makes all the rest just.

2. *Sentiments of the pardoned sinner:*

One who is condemned to death, who does not now believe in his own life even, receives the royal pardon. For him the king is like a second father, who has given him his life, restoring him to the light of day. That is what happens to us when we arise from the tribunal of penance. At that moment we may well say with Isaias: The Lord has been merciful; you heavens, sing your praises; depths of the earth, rejoice; echo the song of praise, mountain and forest, and every forest tree; the Lord has ransomed Jacob, Israel shall make his boast in him (Isaias 44. 23). This pardon should be the beginning of a new life. Whom did God love most; the one to whom he forgave little or the one to whom he forgave much? (Luke 7. 42).

But what ingratitude that of him who falls back into his old crimes! The sinner sees himself separated from eternal damnation only by the span of this mortal life, which can be destroyed at a breath. The hand of God is armed against his iniquity; hell is open at his feet. Fearful spectacle! Full of terror, he runs to the sacrament

of penance and does not wait to be accused. He himself, before God, confesses his guilt. At once, at the invocation of the name of the Saviour, a name which calms winds and seas and tempests, a name which calms heaven and earth, peace descends on the trembling sinner. But on one condition; that he amends his disordered life and criminal affections. There he promises all things. Give me the law, he says to the Lord, and I will obey it.

This is your history too, my brethren, unless your confessions have been bad ones. You have promised this; you have made Christ your surety. After that what will your sin be if, after that pact which was sealed with the blood of Christ for your reconciliation, despising those former terrors you felt and the mercy which has been poured out on you, you break that promise?

3. *Exhortation:*

To prepare ourselves to enter into that abounding joy, let us accustom ourselves to receive it when it descends from heaven into our hearts. We gave ourselves up to such foolish pleasures! Let us leave aside such things now in favour of that heavenly joy which does not allow itself to be mingled with other joys. Those of the world are the more enjoyable when they possess the spice of variety. This one is sober, severe and solitary. The slightest mixture tends to corrupt it.

Do you wish to enjoy and find consolation in your riches? Hear the Lord, then: Woe to you, rich, because you have received your reward. Do you wish Jesus to find you engulfed in those pleasures which now please you so much, when he comes to you at the end of your lives? Instead, drink the cup of God's joy. One drop of it will satisfy you for the moment, but it will grow within you until it becomes that ocean of joy and eternal happiness which I desire for you all.

IV. BEDE JARRETT, O.P.

(From *Meditations for Layfolk*—on the Name of Jesus.)

1. It is astonishing to note the power that names have over us. At the time of a parliamentary election, it would seem as though the whole purpose of the rival candidates, by posting their names over all public places, was to hypnotize us into thinking all the more of them according to the frequency with which we meet their names when on our walks abroad—the more conspicuous the name the greater the success. Indeed, the very formation of the name may have its own consequences in the sense that there are certain names which by their very sound make an appeal. This is not a question of the names which are hallowed by venerable history or the exploits of past heroes, but the simple sound of the letters. Again, the modern science of advertisement which struggles to combine startling effects

with familiar phrases insists always on the importance of the name: it must be something that can easily be asked for. A novel will have its sale largely determined by the title with which it goes into life. Revolving lights are brought into requisition, brilliant colours, verses, anything that can stamp a name on the memory. Nor is this unreasonable, since to human fancy the name sums up the man. It awakens unconscious echoes; at the mention of a name our imagination goes dreaming on, of faces, words, deeds, of long ago. In an age of abridgements, a name is the shortest abridgement of human life. There is something touching in the remark of Scripture that God knows each of us by name. It seems to make him more intimate with us, more familiar.

2. The use, therefore, of names is a custom of human nature. Now it is noticeable that all human customs have received from God consecration, so it is not to be wondered at that this custom should also receive from him its hallowing. This comes through that Name which is above all other names, since at its sound every knee in heaven and earth must bow. It towers above every other because it sums up in itself the human life of one who was unique. He shall be called Jesus, said the angel, for he shall save his people from their sins. That work was possible to One only, consequently, that one name takes on an importance that is supreme. It is itself the record of a tremendous event without equal in importance since the world began. The work was unique; then the name which was given to signify the work must also be unique. Throughout the Scripture there is continuously the idea that names signify the office given by God, both in the Old and in the New Testament. Here the holy Name Jesus does itself mean Saviour. At the sound of it, therefore, we catch the echoes of power, trust and mercy. It is like some quickly-drawn sketch that, with its bold strokes, suggests rather than defines a perfect picture. It brings the haunting memories of so many scenes, the calling of Matthew, the forgiveness of the Magdalene, the repentance of Peter, the chosen friendship of the Beloved Disciple, the wonders of the Death. About it, too, is the fragrance of the parables with their repeated tale of infinite compassion, and the miracles wrought as the fruit of that compassion. The sacred Name is, indeed, an epitome of the Gospels.

3. The Holy Name, therefore, echoed in Christ, the Anointed of God, has dominated history. By its sound we find that the first miracles were worked, and its power was put forward to the first persecutors by the first apostles. For it many were willing to lay down their lives. Even the crusading wars that seemed to be so hostile in their fierceness to the meekness of Christ were defended and preached for the honour of it. The very beggar in the street begged for alms for the love of that sacred sound. To how many, too, in life, has it not come

as a spell to be repeated softly to themselves that the mere echo might ease them in the midst of their troubles, as the lover steals himself to labour in a foreign land or in some distant place by repeating the name of his beloved? And in death's approach it has brought a steadiness to the wayward fear that ebbs and flows in the souls of the dying. For so many of the martyrs it brought strength, for the confessors hope, for the virgins purity. In Catholic days in England, the prayer was familiar: Jesus, be to me a Jesus. Richard Rolle (died 1349) says of it: It shall be in thy ear joy, in thy mouth honey, in thy heart melody. Indeed, as we grow older we find that the simpler prayers are best. We get into the way of repeating prayers we have found to suit us, instead of venturing upon new fields or more complicated emotions. Thus the short ejaculation of the Holy Name supplies the place of all others; it is the shortest, the simplest, the best. In the busy hours of daylight let it be upon my lips as an unceasing prayer.

SECTION VI. SERMON SCHEMES

I. THE EPISTLE

Two roads to glory

Christ meriting glory

1. In today's Epistle Christ is presented to us as meriting to be glorified by his Father.
2. The mistake made by the world is not that of seeking glory, but rather that of seeking it where it is not really to be found, or by false means. It is the world's glory which is evil, not glory in itself.
3. Christ desired his ultimate glory; therefore it is a holy thing to desire it. Men usually run after it. The difference consists in seeing what glory it is they seek and by what means.

The glory of this world

1. Description:

(a) Origin, pride:

Putting myself above everything and everybody, to receive the applause and the obedience of all.

(b) End:

Dominion in the world's empire, riches, fame, beauty.

(c) Means:

To climb up while trampling on others. In the case of great ambitions the means may be blood, destruction and misery; in minor matters, infidelity, intrigues.

2. *What do they actually attain?*

- (a) The glory of this world is always mingled with bitterness:
- i. because it does not really satisfy the soul which is capable of infinite happiness;
 - ii. because it can never escape envy, instability, suffering, sickness.

(b) the glory of this world is brief:

- i. how many great men have known their isle of exile? Hitler, Mussolini—to give but two examples from recent times.
- ii. even though it last a lifetime, what is that? All flesh is grass and its glory like the flowers of the field (Is. 40. 6).

(c) At the end:

To have as one's judge the one who rejected all this world's glory and who pronounced his strongest threats against pride. The God of Bethlehem and the cross.

The glory of Christ

1. *Origin:*

The love of the father.

2. *Means:*

Humility which is obedient even unto the death of the cross.

3. *End:*

The Father names him Lord of all, so that before him every knee shall bow.

Our glory, according to Christ

1. *Origin:*

The love of God and the love of myself, duly ordered; God first, and myself in and for God.

2. *Means:*(a) *Humility:*

Knowing who God is and who I am; seeking the last place, not the first, in this world; refusing worldly honours.

(b) *Obedience to the will of God, indicated to me:*

- i. in the commandments;
- ii. through the Church;
- iii. through my superiors;
- iv. through the inspirations of grace.

3. *End:*

Eternal life to come. Honoured by the angels and saints; honoured by God himself.

II. THE GOSPEL

A: Jesus, Saviour

The name of Jesus

1. The Gospel is very brief, telling us all we need to know in very few words. We have it all in one word: Jesus.

2. The Messiah is called Jesus, the glorious name, brought down from heaven to earth by an angel before he was born.

3. The Church honours the name Jesus more than she does that of God; at the name Jesus the head is bowed. St Augustine, while still a heretic, always had a great veneration for the name of Jesus. Because, Lord, this name, the name of my Saviour and your Son, I had, through your mercy, drunk in with my mother's milk and preserved it in the depths of my heart. So much so that everything written without the use of this name, even though true, elegant and erudite, never succeeded in carrying me entirely away.

Jesus is the Saviour

1. *The only Saviour:*

I bring you good news of a great rejoicing for the whole people. This day, in the city of David, a Saviour has been born for you (Luke 2. 11). The one Saviour, therefore the only one who merits this name. The Saviour of all men; saviour from all evils; definitive, because his salvation will last for ever. A saviour is one who delivers us from some evil or who shelters us from some danger.

2. *Saviour of all men:*

(a) Other saviours in history have belonged to one group or nation:

At times their salvation has cost the lives of some other group or nation.

(b) *The notion of saviour among the Jews:*

i. *they hoped for a saviour of the race*, one who would free them at the expense of dominion over other nations of the earth.

ii. *they could not comprehend the idea of universal salvation*, one in which Jew and Gentile would be on equal terms; they could not follow St Paul, who saw this so clearly, as he shows in his Epistle to the Ephesians.

(c) *Jesus, universal saviour:*

We have only to follow St Paul in his writings to see how clearly he understood the ideals of Christ in this respect.

i. he outlines for the Ephesians the two camps which existed before the coming of Christ, dividing the world into Jew and Gentile.

ii. a wall divided the two, but Christ threw it down, bringing the two into one. The desire of God is the salvation of all men.

iii. Jesus is the Saviour. Paul shouts it in his typical fashion: No more Jew or Gentile, no more slave and freeman, no more male and female; you are all one person in Jesus Christ. And if you belong to Christ, then you are indeed Abraham's children; the promised inheritance is yours (Gal. 3. 28-29).

3. *He saved us from all evils:*

(a) *Death:*

All the evils of the sons of men since Adam can be reduced to one, of which they are the cause or origin—death.

i. Because all the evils which attack man are a partial death, be they in the form of ignorance, loss of liberty, sorrow of all kinds, bodily or spiritual—they are a form of death and a symbol of its coming.

ii. He alone who triumphs over death merits the name of Saviour.

(b) *The double victory:*

Jesus, our Saviour, obtains a double victory, because he overcomes sin on the cross, but he also wins the victory over death by his glorious resurrection.

i. *the victory over sin* has produced its full effects in all holy souls who have drawn near to the cross and have washed themselves in the blood of Christ.

ii. *the victory over death* has only been complete so far in Christ and his Blessed Mother.

iii. *in the case of the rest of men* death has not yet been entirely robbed of its prey. Their bodies still lie in the tomb.

4. *He saved us once and for all:*

There is no need for another Saviour; even death will be overcome—we have the pledge of that in his own glorious resurrection, as St Paul points out. That day will come, and then the victory will be complete. But there is no need for us to fear, because it has already been won. It is up to us to destroy sin in our lives—the only thing which can make that resurrection a painful one for us.

B: The name of Jesus

1. *Its beauty:*

Is there any need to mention this, seeing that Christ bore this name? Many names are loved only because of respect or affection for the persons who bear them, but this name is lovable from every

aspect, the same if we consider the one who gave it to our Lord or if we dwell on its significance.

2. *Who imposed it on Christ?*

God himself through the ministry of an angel. No wonder it is proper to Christ.

3. *The characteristics of this name:*

What motivated this name was its meaning.

(a) God was out of man's reach and his name ineffable before he decided to come among us. Then he sent an angel before him to announce to us that his name was Saviour; thus providing against any fear we might have at his coming.

(b) And God, who in former times had used many names, due to his greatness and incomprehensibility, finally chooses one name which sums up all the others. If he was omnipotent, this work of redemption is no less that of his omnipotence; the Just One, the height of whose justice was salvation; if he was the Supreme Being, he comes now to restore being and life to his creatures.

(c) **And among them all this is the name proper to God, because:**

i. all the other names given to him as man could have been used by others in some partial measure at least; but this one is proper to him, can only be applied to him, is only true in his case, because in him is all salvation;

ii. because it implies the essential element of his mission;

iii. Christ came only to save us;

iv. in his life there is nothing which does not turn on this salvation.

4. *Consequences:*

(a) *Love the name of Jesus:*

He chose it out of love for us and our salvation; there is no better coin in which we can pay our gratitude.

(b) *Draw near to him:*

Because he is the ointment for all our wounds; he is the one who knows best how to console us and have pity on us in all our sorrows.

(c) *Obey him:*

He is the Saviour because he has come to save his people; but we must make sure that we are his people.

C: Jesus, saviour of nations

1. *A total saviour:*

Not only in the supernatural order, but also the saviour of all human values in so far as they are the work of God, ruined by man

and his vices. He is, therefore, the saviour of all peoples even in the realm of their social well-being.

2. *The egoism of the world:*

(a) It is the real cause of all its ills. While the physical world is a co-ordination of ordered forces, obeying certain laws, the moral world is broken up into pieces—and by egoism. The philosopher and the artist work, not to entertain or to teach, but to shine above others and to earn money. The official works in order to live, when he does not use his position to grant favours for money or for other gains. The employer seeks his gain over and above the rights of the artisan, while the latter often works less than he should, without thought for the common good. Many strikes and other social injustices have their roots in egoism, not in desire for the common good of all.

(b) This has always been the reason for the upheavals in the world, due to a materialistic attitude which motivates everything.

3. *True salvation:*

(a) No philosophy can bring that about, because they all lack strength and the motives which will secure self-sacrifice for the common good.

(b) Only Christ, with his doctrine and example, can save the world from egoism. The knowledge of Christ brings with it a love which overcomes egoism.

- i. see the early Christians putting all their possessions into a common pool from charitable motives;
- ii. the collections made by St Paul for the poor;
- iii. see St Lawrence, presenting the innumerable poor he sustains, in the midst of a persecuted Church, without adequate means.
- iv. in all ages see those millions of souls who have left everything in order to look after the poor and the little ones, the sick and dying.

v. see a Xavier and a John of the Cross—the effects of the knowledge and love of Christ.

(c) *Love alone:*

i. because to overcome egoism something more than cold doctrine is necessary; and Christ has brought to us the warning impulse of a doctrine fired by love.

ii. man will be saved if he loves God and sees God in his brethren.

iii. man's perfection begins when he sees God only, denies himself and identifies himself with God.

(d) *Denial of self:*

i. *not something merely negative*; it implies an uprooting of every tendency which shows signs of anti-social egoism, of lack of true religious feeling, in order to unite ourselves with Christ.

ii. *union with Christ is brought about by love*; God is love and to unite oneself with him implies love in all its forms. The love of Christ led him to renounce even his life for love; our love for him should lead us to deny ourselves for the same motives, taking up our cross and following him.

4. *Kingdom of justice, peace and love:*

(a) The salvation of the nations implies learning from Christ the lesson of renunciation of self and self-interests, in favour of a common good.

(b) Then only will nations and social classes live in peace, because they will have recognized and accepted the kingdom of justice, peace and love.

(c) Peace, justice and love will bring their fruits, and God will add to them other earthly goods in addition.

D: Jesus, saviour of all races

1. *The present struggle between peoples and races:*

We live in times when social class distinction has driven some men to think themselves superior to the rest, and even to go to the extreme of trying to exterminate whole races, through this idea. We have also seen philosophical theories which imply the superiority of one race over another.

2. *This is not a new problem:*

(a) The Roman thought that he was the one chosen to rule the whole world;

(b) the Jew still feels himself to be separated from the Gentiles;

(c) in pagan countries the division of caste has been motivated by religion.

(d) Even in the Church there were moments when heresy tried to divide the Church into sects; those who were fit for salvation and those who were not; the perfect and sinners, a type of Calvinism and Jansenism.

(e) In more recent times we have seen the segregation problem arise; the black race inferior to the white, at least to the extent that the two should not mix, even in church and school.

3. *The true solution:*

(a) *Christ died for all:*

That is why the Church condemned and still condemns those who preach the false doctrines we have mentioned. Christ died for all, and before him we all have equal rights.

(b) *The problem in the time of St Paul:*

It is Paul who gives us the true doctrine, conscious as he was of this terrible division of the world into sectors.

(c) To combat this he taught the true doctrine clearly and with no hesitation (Eph. 2. 11-22):

i. there is no such thing now as guests or foreigners, we are all fellow-citizens of the kingdom of God, with Christ as the corner stone.

ii. Christ destroyed the wall which had sprung up between the Jews and the Gentiles, bringing both into the one unity of his Church, without distinction of race or class. There is now no Jew or Gentile, no slave or freeman, no male or female . . . all one in Christ.

iii. on the Cross he put an end to all enmity, all division, reconciling one with another in his death for all.

iv. we are now one body in Christ, we can all approach the Father in the same Spirit.

v. Christ has restored the true unity of man with man, and men with God.

4. *We form one people with one shepherd:*

To any nation or race which tends to think that it is superior to others we may well show the cross of Christ, pointing out that we have been bought for a great price, but a price which was paid equally for all. The small and accidental differences of race or colour can be overcome by the infinitely greater value of grace and the spirit which dwells in us all.

In all places we offer the same sacrifice, through the same mediator, Christ Jesus.

E: The new Adam—our Saviour

1. The image of the new Adam, common among the Fathers and the one which St Paul uses so many times. It is a complete image, because it sums up the dogma for us; a fertile image, because of the practical applications which come from it.

2. *Complete image:*

St Paul in Rom. 5. 12 ff. and 1 Cor. 15. 14 gives us the doctrine:

(a) The work of Adam and Christ:

i. *a sad contrast between them*, through Adam sin entered into this world and by sin, death. The work of Christ must be the contrary. By sin death came? Then by justice must come life. The justice of Christ will be that supernatural life which is followed up by the resurrection of the body.

ii. *but the comparison is not exact*, because the gift has been greater than the offence, the work of Christ greater than the sin of Adam. The grace of Christ has wiped out, not merely the sin of Adam, but also many more (personal sins); and also the graces given by Christ after the fall are more numerous than those given before.

(b) Conditions necessary for this work:

Solidarity; this is the main thing for Paul. We are one with Adam in his sin; we are one with Christ in his redemption. There is one difference, to Adam's sin we have added our own personal sins, while the redemption of Christ is his and his alone.

(c) The means:

The pride of Adam drove him to disobedience; the obedience of Christ led him to death, even to the death on the cross. Adam, by his disobedience, led us all into a state of sin; Christ, by his complete obedience, justified us.

(d) Our incorporation into Christ:

i. *it is the image of the heavenly Father in Christ* which we carry within us.

ii. *the solidarity on both sides is evident*. We are sons of Adam and we carry within us his earthly and mortal image; but we also have within us the image of that Adam who came down from heaven for us, and who united us with him in the image of his sonship. We are his sons, in so far as he is God, and his brothers as man.

iii. *Adam gave us birth*, giving us at the same time the conditions of life which were his; so did Christ. Grace is the gift of divine life, and it comes to us through Christ; he is our head, as Adam was, but his title is the greater, because of the gifts he brings with him.

iv. *The theology of the new Adam is clear*. Generation unto death that of the first Adam; unto life eternal and resurrection that of the second Adam. One earthly, the other heavenly.

3. *From the image to the reality:*

(a) If we are united to Adam by imitation of his sin, we should also be united to Christ and receive his grace.

(b) Incorporated into Christ, receive the grace of Christ, live in and for Christ.

F: The victory of love

1. *The triumph of hate:*

The supernatural history of the world is one of a struggle between hate and love, unfolded in three scenes; the first is that of Satan, hate; the second that of Christ, love; the third, our own. The triumph of hate took place in Paradise; the field was won by Satan—but was it to be so for ever?

2. *The triumph of love:*

(a) No one can triumph over omnipotent love:

The world was his enemy and yet he came, not to judge it, but to save it. That is the task of his love, and from that love he took his name.

(b) Power and remedy:

Two things were necessary for his triumph, power and a remedy given to man for his evils. So far as power was concerned, Christ could count on his divine nature, which gave him infinite efficacy. For the remedy he relied on his human nature which would suffer and die. To become a powerful remedy God became man. To save what was material he took it to himself, and so became the centre of all that was created.

3. Complete triumph:

His victory against hate was complete because he repaired all evils:

(a) Sin:

- i. *by forgiving it* and paying the debt for it;
- ii. *helping us not to sin again* by his grace;
- iii. *taking us to heaven with him*, where we shall be incapable of sin.

(b) The consequences of sin:

- i. *the subjection of Satan*, which need no longer make us afraid;
- ii. *death*—through his resurrection this has no fears for us either;
- iii. *weakness*, which he overcomes by his grace and example.

(c) But he was the salvation of all, without exception or differences.

(d) It was a complete triumph:

He won his battle on the very field where Satan had triumphed and by the same means.

(e) Because it was super-abundant; where sin abounded grace did more abound (Rom. 5. 20):

Because our redemption has been more profound and more widespread, since grace has not merely redeemed man, but dignified the whole of created nature, which bends its knee before Christ.

(f) Because it was so lovable:

- i. *the Conqueror presents himself to us in the form of a child*. Is there anyone who can be afraid of him thus?
- ii. *he did it peacefully*, bringing about the union of all men between themselves and with God, with himself as the corner stone of the building.

4. Our triumph:**(a) The third stage in the fight:**

If we associate ourselves with Christ, it will be the second stage in the victory.

i. *we must not despise mercy*. It would be extraordinary to have to begin to speak once again of God's anger, after the redemption; yet it could be so, in spite of the greatness of his mercy. We should ask ourselves why it is that we appreciate this mercy so little?

ii. *we have to help in the work of our salvation*. But it may help us to understand that our service done to God calls for new mercies on his part; what he demands from us is that we help in the task of our own salvation. He would be a fool indeed who denied that help, when God has already done so much and when it means so much to us in terms of happiness.

(b) We must unite ourselves to Christ:

i. *he is the salvation for all*; in him is salvation for all, and all is salvation. He did not come to judge, but to save. Our pride will find in him humility; our sensuality, his crown of thorns, . . . and our soul its grace.

ii. *ascetical means can unite us to him*; but they are means to this end, nothing else, and we should use them as such.

iii. *let us live crucified to the things of this world*, united to him who is still a living sacrifice for us. Christ has conquered, so that he may also win the victory in us and with us.

G: Our use of our salvation**The means of victory**

Christ, victor over sin, death and Satan. Let us see how he won this victory and how we may benefit most by it.

1. Its causes:

- (a) principal cause, the will of the Father, who loved the world so much that he gave us his only Son;
- (b) Christ, who desired to obey the Father and to save us;
- (c) God, who knows how to use to the full even the crimes of men, used the envy of the Jews as an occasional cause of salvation for all men.

2. The method:

Christ, in the act of our glorious salvation must have:

(a) Wiped away sin:

Both the guilt and the punishment of it, restoring us to the supernatural order. By his merits he satisfied the Father for our sins, returning grace to us.

(b) Freed us from the captivity of Satan and sin:

This satisfaction took on a special character.

- i. *by this he paid our debts for us*; and he who could have been a Saviour only, became also a Redeemer in every sense of the word.

ii. *I know now, Lord, not what I am worth, but what you have chosen to pay for me—I have indeed been bought with a great price (1 Cor. 6. 20); and therefore I will try hard to maintain the presence of God within me.*

iii. *I know also from what you have rescued me, from an enemy who seeks nothing but evil for me, from sin and from eternal punishment.*

3. *This payment and rescue were more than sufficient:*

Christ paid all that was owing—and more; simply because he did pay more he has won for us more grace than was lost in our sins. May I learn to appreciate his generosity.

Application of this victory

1. Christ has saved us. He has done his part. But salvation implies various elements, the first phase of which is the rescue and the payment of the debt; the second consists in our justification through grace received.

2. This second phase is conditioned on our approaching Christ and being united with him. This needs our good will. Shall we allow the passion and the salvation of the Lord to be in vain in our case?

3. Many people need someone to lead them to Christ. Is it I they are waiting for? Will I not help them, if only by prayer?

First Sunday after Epiphany

THE HOLY FAMILY

SECTION I. SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Epistle: Colossians 3. 12-17

Gospel: Luke 2. 42-52

Texts concerning the family

(These should be taken together with those given on the second Sunday after Epiphany, dealing with marriage, and also with those of the twentieth Sunday after Pentecost on the education of children.)

1. *The husband:*

A blessing on that fountain of thine! Take thy pleasure with the bride thy manhood wins for thee. Thy own bride, gentle as a hind, graceful as a doe; be it her bosom that steals away thy senses with the delight of a lover that loves still. What, my son, wouldst thou yield to the wiles of a stranger, dally with her embraces that is none of thine? Prov. 5. 18-20.

A good wife found is treasure found; the Lord is filling thy cup with happiness. Prov. 18. 22.

Live at ease with the wife that is thy heart's love, long as this uncertain life is granted thee; fugitive days here, beneath the sun. Eccles. 9. 9.

And thy own wife, if thou lovest her, never do thou forsake, nor trust thy happiness to one who is little to thy mind. Eccles. 7. 28.

Never shew thyself a jealous husband to the wife thou lovest; it may prove thou hast taught her, to thy cost, a ruinous lesson. Never give thy soul into a woman's power, and let her command the fortress of it, to thy shame. Never turn to look at the wanton, that would catch thee in her snare, nor spend thy attention upon some dancing woman, that has power to be thy undoing; nor let thy eyes linger on a maid unwed, whose very beauty may take thee unawares. And for harlots, let nothing tempt thee to give way to them, as life and patrimony thou holdest dear; look not around thee in the city streets, nor haunt the alley-ways. From a woman bravely decked out turn away; have no eyes for her beauty that is none of thine. Woman's beauty has been the ruin of many ere now, a spark to light the flame of lust. . . . Sit down never with a wedded wife, nor lean thy elbow upon table of hers, nor bandy words with her over the wine; steal she thy heart away, thy life is forfeit. Eccles. 9. 1-13.

2. *Harmony:*

Three sights warm my heart; God and man wish them well; peace in the clan, good will among neighbours, man and wife well matched. . . . Happiness it is to share thy home with a faithful wife. Ecclus. 25. 1-11. Cf. 26. 1.

And the reason of it? Because the Lord bears witness to her wrongs, that wife of thy manhood's age, whom now thou spurnest, thy partner, thy covenanted bride! Mal. 2. 14.

And you, husbands, treat your wives lovingly, do not grow harsh with them. Col. 3. 19.

3. *Husband head of the family:*

And here is something you must know. The head to which a wife is united is her husband, just as the head to which every man is united is Christ; so, too, the head to which Christ is united is God. . . . A man has no need to veil his head; he is God's image, the pride of his creation, whereas the woman is the pride of her husband. The woman takes her origin from the man, not the man from the woman; and indeed, it was not man that was created for woman's sake, but woman for man's. I Cor. 11. 3-11.

4. *Wife:*(a) *Praise of the strong woman:*

Cf. Prov. 31. 10-31.

(b) *The virtuous woman:*

Crowned is his brow, who wins a vigorous wife; sooner let thy bones rot than marry one who shames thee. Prov. 12. 4. Cf. 11. 16. Thou hast a good wife, a thrifty woman that has thrown in her lot, in the fear of the Lord, with thine; do not leave her; that modesty of hers is a grace gold cannot buy. Ecclus. 7. 21.

A wife industrious is the joy of her husband, and crowns all his years with peace. He best thrives that best wives. . . . But there is no affliction wings the heart like a woman's jealousy; once a woman grows jealous, her tongue is a scourge to all alike. Easier to guide an unsteady team of oxen than an ill woman; easier to hold a snake than to manage her. Woman that is a sot, vexation shall bring thee, and great dishonour; there is no hiding her shame. Haughty gaze and lowered eye-lid, there goes a wanton. . . . Great content an industrious wife brings to her husband; health to every bone of his body is that good sense of hers. No better gift of God to man than a prudent woman that can hold her tongue; a soul well disciplined is beyond all price. Grace so gracious is none as woman's faithfulness and woman's modesty; woman's continence there is no valuing. Sun dawning in heaven cannot match the lustre a good wife sheds on her home, and that beauty lasts into ripe age, like the glow of lights on the holy lamp-stand. Firm as golden pillar in silver socket rest the feet of steadfast woman on the ground she treads. Ecclus. 26. 2-23.

5. *Children:**Obedience and honour of parents:*

As thou wouldst have joy of thy own children, as thou wouldst be heard when thou fallest to praying, honour thy father still. A father honoured is long life won; a father well obeyed is a mother's heart comforted. None that fears the Lord but honours the parents who gave him life, slave to master owes no greater service. . . . What is the buttress of a man's house? A father's blessing. What tears up the foundation of it? A mother's curse. Ecclus. 3. 6-11. Cf. *ibid.* vv. 2-5, 13-21; I Pet. 5. 5.

SECTION II. GENERAL COMMENTS

I. LITURGICAL

The Feast of the Holy Family falls on the first Sunday after Epiphany, but because of the modern tendency to eliminate Feasts which coincide with the Sunday Masses, we shall comment on both in this section.

1. *The Feast of the Holy Family:*

Of recent origin, being instituted by Leo XIII at the end of the last century (1892), and celebrated on the third Sunday after Epiphany. It disappeared in the reforms of Pius X, and Benedict XV reinstated it on the first Sunday after Epiphany. Now the Mass of the Feast has overshadowed the Sunday completely, leaving only a commemoration. The last words of the Gospel sum up the teaching, i.e. He was subject to them. This is all we know of the infancy of Jesus and of his life up to the time of his public preaching, with the single exception of the scene in the Temple.

The Feast serves as a motive for preaching on the example of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, together with many applications to family life, as Leo XIII pointed out in the Brief *Neminem fugit*, on the occasion of its institution. Like all other liturgical feasts, it is also the occasion of many graces, so that what we commemorate may also be effective in our daily lives. The prayer of the Mass indicates this, with its pleas for grace to imitate the example of the Holy Family.

2. *The first Sunday after Epiphany:*

The Gospel is the same, but with a special aspect more closely related to the Epiphany. The scene in the Temple is a new manifestation of Christ and his mission. We should make use of this passage to teach the faithful the mission which God has entrusted to them, because all, as members of the Mystical Body, have a special mission to accomplish. To that they must dedicate themselves: Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business? Allowing nothing to distract them from it, whether it be flesh or blood. St Ignatius

has a classic meditation on this scene as a preparation for the choice of a state of life.

The Collect stresses this point: Receive with mercy, O Lord, the prayers of thy suppliant people, that they may see what they have to do and be strengthened to do that which they have seen.

The Introit of this Mass merits comment—*Quam dilecta tabernacula tua*—because it is the same as that for the Dedication of a Church. The home is a temple.

II. EXEGETIC AND MORAL NOTES

A: The Epistle: Colossians 3. 12-17

1. Occasion:

The Church, in her choice of the Epistle for the Feast of the Holy Family, has preferred these verses 12-17 rather than those which follow, in which the duties of parents and children are explained in detail. There is a reason for this, namely the fact that the principle is more important than its applications. These verses explain the virtues which should exist in those who make up the Christian family.

But if they are appropriate for the feast, they are no less useful as a commentary on the whole spirit of this liturgical season of Advent and Christmas. Advent began with the idea of putting on Christ; today we are also reminded of this: The livery you wear must be tender compassion . . . the Lord's generosity to you must be the model of yours. It is a synthesis of the virtues which should surround charity, and which make us live in union with Christ. When the liturgical year ends and we are confronted with our Judge, we must wear the livery of Christ, charity, with all its attendant virtues of zeal, patience, kindness.

2. Argument:

The general argument of the Epistle is that all should have Christ for its centre. In him we have risen again and with him we, too, must live, far from the abominations of the Gentiles, stripped of vice, putting on the new man and ever growing in perfection. Therefore, having explained the vices which must be uprooted, Paul goes on to describe the virtues which must take their place.

3. Texts:

(a) **God's chosen people, holy and well beloved:**

He who really understands this will also know how best to correspond, especially by love, kindness and mercy, putting up with one another's faults, because Christ has forgiven us all.

(b) **and to crown all this, charity . . .**

Because it is the bond of perfection, i.e. the element which alone perfects all the other virtues and in which perfection itself consists.

Where there is love, then there is no sacrifice which appears too difficult. Where there is no love, then sacrifices will be nothing more than passing acts of philanthropy or even of self-love.

The moral virtues, motivated by charity, reach their highest peak of perfection. If charity does not motivate them in some way or another, then they are not meritorious, because they are not performed in a state of grace, which co-exists with charity. Everything, in the order of perfection, depends on charity.

St Thomas gives us the reason for this, namely, because it is charity which unites our will to that of God in the most perfect fashion. From charity all the other virtues are derived and take their true strength, like conclusions which come from first principles. All other precepts and counsels tend towards charity; the precepts because they remove all that is contrary to charity; the counsels because they remove anything which could make charity difficult in certain circumstances. Charity is the end in view; all other things are means to that end. Therefore there are no limits to the extent of charity; but there are limits in the other virtues.

(c) **so may the peace of Christ . . . reign in your hearts:**

We have already dealt with this theme on other occasions; peace implies order—the right order of man to God and of man to himself and his brethren. The Greek word which is translated into English as reign, really applies to the mission of the leader of the athletic games, whose task it was to order them and to distribute the prizes to the winners. The idea is obvious, as applied to the Christian life.

(d) **Learn, too, to be grateful:**

If this refers to gratitude for benefits received, then the consequence is expressed in verse 17, receiving the word of the Lord and communicating it to others. If the meaning is that which Cornelius à Lapide gives, namely, be kind and amiable, then St Paul is continuing the list of the social virtues.

(e) **the word of Christ . . .**

This verse probably refers to the *charismata* and their uses. The derived sense is that of the use of our gifts for others. Even though the charisms have long since disappeared, the second derivative sense of the verse remains as powerful as it was in St Paul's day. The Holy Spirit still animates our spiritual lives and, through them, influences the lives of others in the social sphere. The important thing is this union of all in the mystical body of Christ, each one doing his task in that body.

(f) **Whatever you are about, in word and action alike . . .**

Everything can be put on a supernatural plane and made a source of merit provided it be done in the name of Christ. The thanks we should offer to God is merely a consequence of this, it is the dominant

thought of the Old Testament. It is also the thought of the Church, which has given the name of Eucharist to the greatest of the Sacraments.

B: The Gospel: Luke 2. 42-52

1. The celebration of the feast:

The Jews celebrated three principal feasts, that of the Pasch, the Pentecost feast and that of Tabernacles, which was also called the feast of pilgrims because of the obligation on all males over thirteen years of age to attend. Josephus calculates the numbers who assisted at this feast each year as three million; and even though we may admit that this is an exaggeration, still the numbers must have been very great, enough to flood Jerusalem with strangers.

The Paschal feast was celebrated in the month called Nisan—between the middle of March and middle of April. This feast was intimately connected with that of the unleavened bread which followed immediately after it. On the evening of the fourteenth of the Month Nisan the victims were sacrificed by the head of the family in the Temple, the blood was given to the priests, with part of the intestines, and the rest was returned to the family, roasted and eaten at the paschal banquet, which generally began at sunset and continued until early morning. No less than ten persons sat down at each table and no more than twenty (Ricciotti, *Life of Christ*).

2. The journey to and the stay in Jerusalem:

The pilgrims used to sing hymns and psalms on the way, the rather monotonous melody rising and falling as the caravan made its way along the dusty roads. It was to one of these long caravans that Jesus and his parents attached themselves, when the Child was twelve years of age. At such an age the Eastern youth is as well developed as a European of twenty—and we must not forget that Jesus was, in any case, no ordinary youth, but a religious genius, to say the least of it. He observed everything with the penetrating eye of one who looked, not merely at exteriors, but penetrated into the very heart of the mysteries of divine providence, clothed in the garb of symbolism. The Temple! What it must have meant to Christ! The court of the Gentiles was, to him, not merely the place where the victims were bought and sold, but also the symbol of the fact that all nations were called to adore the true God, creator of heaven and earth.

The altar of sacrifice and the blood which flowed from it without ceasing, day after day, served to remind him—if he needed to be reminded—of sinful nature, together with the fact that man was unable to redeem himself. Thousands of lambs were sacrificed there on the Paschal feast; time and again the space surrounding the altar would be filled with people and then emptied, to make way for more.

These sacrifices were only a symbol of that true sacrifice which was to be offered; and he would be at one and the same time priest and victim.

The light was reflected from the white walls of the Temple and from the gold which adorned it. There, in the Holy of Holies, God dwelt! God, his Father. How often he must have repeated the 'Now I come'—he who was to give his life in sacrifice, to take the place of the bloody sacrifices of the Temple. In return his Father allowed him to leave his retreat in Nazareth for three days—just as he would allow him to stay three days in the tomb after his death.

3. The journey back—and the loss of Jesus:

Even though the Law did not oblige the pilgrims to stay for the whole period of eight days in the Holy City, most of them did so, for many reasons. The journey was hard on them all, especially on the women, who needed this period of rest. Therefore, after the eight days of the feast, spent mostly in the Temple, praying and listening to the teachers of the law, the caravan made preparations for the return to Galilee. The general confusion which reigned in the whole city explains, without need of any other cause, the fact that families were often separated. The roads were blocked by the pilgrims trying to get back to their homes, and it would not be possible to obtain any order in the caravans until they had been some days on the journey home. The Easterns have their methods of dealing with this type of situation. Beforehand they would arrange a place of meeting after the first day's journey—usually a short stage in the return home, since they did not leave until midday. If anything was forgotten, or someone came late or if someone lost his group on the way out of the city, this plan provided a simple solution.

Mary and Joseph joined one of these caravans for the return to their home town. Like them, Jesus heard the proclamation of the time of departure, the place of meeting and the first stop on the road home. An adolescent of twelve years of age was allowed a certain liberty, since the following year he would come of age and have to fend for himself. It was not until the first stage of the journey, in the evening, that Mary and Joseph became aware of the fact that Jesus was not with the caravan, but this would take them some time, since they would have to go through all the various groups of pilgrims, and possibly it was not until the next morning that they were fully aware of the situation.

4. The return to Jerusalem and the finding of Jesus in the Temple:

At the very least it would have cost them half a day's journey—and it was on the third day that they found him in the Temple. Mary allows her mother's heart full rein. At first she had imagined

that Jesus had been lost; but now she is aware of the fact that he had remained of his own free will. Had he abandoned his parents? Her words are a reflection of this thought. Son, why hast thou done so to us? Our Lord's reply is rather more difficult to explain.

Some have tried to explain it by making his reply refer to the second part of Mary's reproach, giving his words this meaning: Why did you seek me elsewhere? You might have known that I would be in my Father's house. Others refer to the gestures which must have accompanied this reply, while others insist on the fact that Jesus was determined to shew that he was independent of any bonds of the flesh, family ties, which might have held him back from the task his Father had entrusted to him. Perhaps this is the real explanation. Mary speaks of human relationships, while Christ is talking of the eternal generation of Father and Son.

Notice how Mary puts St Joseph first—Your father and I have sought thee. . . . Could there be any better testimony to the holiness of St Joseph?

I must be about my Father's business. What a programme for the priestly life! No ties, except that of the Father!

He was subject to them. It is hard to determine which is most to be admired, the obedience of the Son of God or the sublime dignity of his Mother. There is a lesson here for all of us. Learn to obey, O proud dust; when you seek to command, you are trying to be more than God himself and you do not understand God! (St Thomas of Villanova).

The child grew in wisdom, age and grace. In age, yes, in experiential knowledge also, but he could not grow in grace, who was the author of grace. It is the manifestation of that grace which is mentioned here. Little by little Christ would reveal himself to men.

SECTION III. THE FATHERS

I. ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

(In his Homily 20 on the *Epistle to the Ephesians* he comments at length on the family obligations of parents and children; but since we shall deal with marriage next Sunday, we may limit our summary here to what he has to say about children. The ideas are completed with one or two passages from Hom. 21 and 22. PG. 62, 149 ff.)

1. *Obligations of children towards their parents:*

After pointing out that the command given in Ephesians 6. 1 is the only one which has assigned to it a specific reward in the Scriptures, he goes on to point out honour and reverence for parents as the simple road to virtue.

Honour and reverence given to parents constitute the very basis of the road to virtue . . . because, first of all, after God, parents are

the authors of our being. We have to honour them and reverence them above all other men and women, giving them our first care and affection. It is useless to expect him to be good and just with strangers who does not respect those who gave him his being.

2. *Obligations of parents towards their children:*

He follows this up by a commentary on v. 4. He does not insist on parental love for the children, because that is natural; but he does warn them not to anger their children by treating them as if they were servants. The most important thing is to teach them their faith, because in the light of that knowledge alone will they become truly obedient, both to their parents and to God.

Do not say to me: Am I, then, bringing up a monk? That is not necessary, although perhaps you would gain much indeed were it to be so. But monk or no, you must make him a Christian, for the teaching of our law is most necessary, especially for those who live in the world and for children. Because of their tender age they are ignorant of so many things, and yet they are liable to fill their minds with secular literature, in which they are taught to admire the vices of the ancient heroes. . . .

Educate them in the discipline and knowledge of the Lord, giving them example and teaching them the Sacred letters from their tender youth. I know that I am wasting my time repeating this so many times, but it is my obligation. You, mothers, imitate the example of that holy woman, Anna, who offered her son to God and merited a blessing on her marriage (1 Kings 1. 23-28).

Men might well be ashamed at the fact that, in this science, women have the advantage over them. The artist who paints the royal portraits usually receives a generous reward. When parents paint this image of God, which is the soul of their child, what reward will they not receive? Make sure that your children are clothed in virtue, rather than in silks. If, nowadays, we are not accustomed to receive into the order of the Episcopate one who does not know how to educate his own children, how do you expect to be admitted into heaven? What, then? you say to me. Am I to be held to account for the virtue of my wife and children? Of course you are! Your own virtue alone will not be sufficient to save you. There was a man to whom one talent was given, and because he did not trade with it he was condemned. Of much more value than that talent are your wife and children.

3. *Education of children—a religious vocation:*

Anna, Samuel's mother, took her son to the Temple to consecrate him to God, who rewarded her by making him a great prophet. Such is the reward God gives to those who first give something to him, such as their goods or their children. Our children are never more ours than when we give them to God. No one will look after

them better than he. Let us lead them, not merely to the Temple, but to heaven itself, and if they learn well this service of God, then it will be of even more profit to you than to themselves.

It is not the mere act of generation which makes a father, since you know many fathers who have had to abandon their children, casting them out of their very homes, denying paternity in shame at their vices. Generation must be completed by education.

4. *General rules for education:*

St Paul in 1 Tim. 5. 10 does not refer to secular education or the mere material care of children, since he considers that so natural and well known that there is no need for him to mention it. Instead he insists on care for their holiness and education in piety; because those parents who prescind from these virtues in the formation of their children are not so much fathers as parricides. There are many parents who spare no expense in order that their children may have good horses, estates and houses. But they are not concerned at all with the sowing of honest and good thoughts in their minds.

The state of the world gets worse day by day, and here is the cause of its evils. What does it matter if your children do inherit much wealth from you, if it only serves for their eternal damnation? It would be better if you had given their souls a good foundation; then, even though they might have little in the bank, they would enjoy those goods which are more secure. It is not money, but rather piety and temperance which will make them truly rich, enabling them to live moderately and without desire for carnal things.

Make sure you know where your children go and at what time they return home; also guard them from evil companions. Because, if you are careless about this, you will not find pardon in the sight of God. If St Paul warns us that we must keep watch over others, what will the Lord himself demand of us with regard to those whom he has placed in our homes from their very infancy, and over whom he placed us as their guardians, tutors, masters and teachers? He placed them entirely in our hands when they were very young, so that we might form them. Will he forgive us if we are careless and do not submit them to discipline when they tend to rebel?

You may say to me: My son is wayward. You should have foreseen that in his early years, when you could have tamed him and made him submit to discipline. Thorns need to be removed when they are yet tender, because if they are allowed to grow hard, who can tame them?

God punishes with the pain of death those children who curse their parents. What will he do to you if you allow them to offend the Lord? Remember that a child who has no respect for God will not have very much respect for his parents. Cultivate his spirit of piety and you will notice that he will have greater love for you.

5. *You are master and teacher in your house:*

You are master and teacher in your house. Educate your wife and children, learning a lesson from Job, who offered sacrifices for the sins of thought which his children might have committed. Learn from Abraham, who taught his children to keep the ways of the Lord. Read the advice David gave to his children on his death-bed. Your house is adorned with statues of gold—your children. Guard them, keep them clean and care for them.

Teach them the fear of the Lord, which is beyond riches. If you educate them well, they in their turn will learn to do the same with their children. Thus will be formed a series of happy saints, of which you are the root and for which you will receive your reward. I do not suggest that you should make them fear you, but that they should have due respect for you.

You spend much money on their education, and to secure a good career for them, you seek many recommendations for them. Do not be any the less careful to give them divine things. You allow them to frequent places of amusement, but you do not take them to church. Just as you send them to school, so you should send them to church, for it is more necessary. Do not allow them to go with anyone else; take them yourself and afterwards talk to them about what you have heard there, for if you comment on the holy doctrine in your homes it will take better root.

If a judge were to condemn your son you would die of shame; and do you not die at the thought that you are driving him to the divine tribunal? If anyone illtreats a child you are angry, and will you then allow the devil to illtreat your own child?

6. *Education in chastity:*

Nothing should concern us more than the purity of our children, because sensuality is the plague of our time. We should act in this matter as we do when we light candles. Then we warn our servants not to put them near any inflammable material. Let us take the same precaution with our own children, not taking them where they can see things or people who may incite them to lust. Should there be any girls of loose morals either in our house or in the neighbourhood, we should forbid our children to have anything to do with them, lest a spark from their fire should start a blaze in the souls of our children, doing them irreparable harm.

The young man who has maintained chastity of soul and body gives himself with greater love to his bride when he comes to marry, because she is the only woman he has known. Love is deeper, kindness more sincere, friendship stronger. Many marriages are nothing but business deals. What marriage is that which is celebrated for a bridegroom who has been a libertine all his youth and who, after his marriage, still runs after other women?

If he had accustomed himself to true purity he would not seek for another, apart from his wife, he would have a great love for her and would live in peace. Together with peace and harmony in the home come all the other gifts and good things. . . .

II. ST AMBROSE

(Extracts from PL. 15 *In Luke*, 63, in which Ambrose comments on the obedience of Christ—a theme which springs naturally from the final words of the Gospel.)

He came to Nazareth and was subject to them. What was the master and model of all virtue doing on this occasion but fulfilling the obligations of filial piety? Are we to be astonished that he obeys his heavenly Father who was obedient to his mother? This subjection was not of dependence, but of filial love and piety. . . . When the Son says that he is sent (John 8. 29) the heretic (Arius) immediately concludes that the Father must be the greater, so that he may prove the Son to be imperfect, since he acknowledges that there is one greater than himself, and that he may assert that the one who is sent depends on the help of another.

Did he require human help in order to obey the will of his mother? He was obedient to man, obedient to his handmaid, obedient to his reputed father, are you surprised that he should be obedient to God? Or is it a virtue to obey man, but an imperfection to obey God? Learn, even from human things, to estimate at its true value what is divine, and to acknowledge that which is due to the Father of love. The Father glorifieth the Son, and would you have the Son refuse to glorify his Father? The Father, by means of a voice from heaven, proclaims that he is well pleased by his Son; and would you not have the Son, once clothed in the garments of our humility, declare with human voice and affection, that the Father is greater than he? . . .

Why do I not accept with devout mind that the Son, in the taking of human flesh, is obedient to the will of the Father, when I accept the fact that the Father pays homage and honour to the Son? Learn the precepts which are profitable and acknowledge the true examples of filial piety. Learn what you owe to your own parents as often as you read that the Son did not depart from his Father, in will or in work or in time; for though they are two in Person, they are one in power. Yet this heavenly Father has lost nothing in the generation of his Son. To your mother you owe the invasion of her modesty, the loss of her virginity, the perils of child-bearing. For you she suffered wearisome illness, long anxiety. Her pains, in the very fruition of her marriage vows, were an even greater trial. When she had brought forth that which she so long desired, she is still not delivered of care, though she be delivered of her child. And what shall I say of the father's anxiety for the future life of his children, their number

added to for the gain of others; seed scattered, as by a farmer, for the benefit of future generations?

Ought you not to pay them back for all these things, at least with filial respect? Why should the life of a father be too prolonged in the eyes of an unfilial son, the common inheritance appear too little, when Christ himself sought co-heirs of his own inheritance?

III. ST BERNARD

(One famous passage from his writings, which outlines perfectly the relationship between Christ and his Mother. PL. 183, 55.)

For that God should obey a woman is humility without compare; and that a mere woman should have power over God, a dignity without equal. . . . Learn, O man, to obey; learn, O earth, to be subject; you, who are no more than dust, learn to submit. The Gospels, speaking of your Maker, say: He was subject to them. Learn, vain ashes that you are, to submit. God humbles himself, and do you dare to exalt yourselves? God becomes subject to men, and will you lord it over them, placing yourselves above your Maker? . . .

If you are unable to follow him in the sublime way of virginity, at least follow God by that most sure way of humility. . . . The sinner who walks after him in humility has chosen a more wholesome part than the one who is proud in his virtue; since the humble repentance of the former washes away uncleanness, but the pride of the latter contaminates his virtue.

Truly blessed was Mary, who possessed both humility and virginity. Truly wonderful was that virginity whose fruitfulness did not stain, but rather adorned; and incomparable was that fruitfulness which went hand in hand with her virginity and humility. . . .

And can we wonder that God, of whom it is written that he is wonderful in his saints, should show himself more wondrous still in his own mother? Venerate, then, you who are married, this integrity of the flesh in a flesh which is corruptible. Those who are virgins, then let them venerate her fruitfulness in virginity. Let all men imitate the humility of the Mother of God. Angels, honour the mother of your King, the healer of our race, the restorer of our fatherland, who among you was so sublime, yet among us so humble.

SECTION IV. A THEOLOGIAN

ST THOMAS AQUINAS

(St Thomas's Sermons are not quoted as often as they should be. The present summary of one of them concerned with the growth of Jesus is interesting as an example of his style. It is taken from *Opera Omnia*, ed. Vives (Paris 1879), vol. 32, in *App. Serm.* 1.)

1. *Jesus, the model of youth:*

All the works of the Lord were a salutary example to us, as he testified himself (John 13. 15). Christ, as a youth, gives that example to young people, to shew them how they should grow and learn.

2. *The four growths of Christ:*

We can observe four growths in Christ; in age, so far as his body was concerned; in knowledge, in the intellect; in grace of soul; and finally, in the sight of men. It is to be admired that the Eternal one should grow in age, the infinitely wise, in wisdom, the author of grace increase in it, and all this in the sight of men, instead of men growing in his sight.

The growth in age is easy to understand, but the others are more difficult, for if his glory was like that of the only-begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth, then he would be full all the time, since he was always the only-begotten Son of God.

But a person is said to grow in knowledge not merely when he is acquiring it, but also when he manifests it. In such a way did Christ conform to the condition of our human nature that he manifested his wisdom in accordance with natural growth. There is a natural parallel between the growth of the body and that of the soul, because if it were not so, then the growth would be abnormal, as happens when one member grows more quickly than another. When I was a child I spoke as a child . . . but now I am a man I have put away the things of a child (1 Cor. 13. 11-12). We are only bidden to keep two of our childhood qualities, its simplicity and humility.

It would also be a pernicious growth. The merchant who lets the time of the annual fair go by, or the student who does not assist at the best lectures, both feel that they have suffered a great loss. For more important things than these God has given us the gift of time. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what things God has prepared for them that love him. For which reason we are warned not to deprive ourselves of the good things of the day (Ecclus. 14. 13-14).

God has given you your strength so that you may fight against the devil and thus gain your reward. If you use that strength to serve Satan then you have handed to him that which might have been your reward and the good things which you may have done will be of profit to others, perhaps, but not to you. Then, indeed, your growth will cost you a great effort, because it will be much harder for you to correct your ways afterwards. The farm labourer ploughs easily, because he has been accustomed to it from his youth; for which reason we are told to instruct the child in his ways, and he will not depart from them in his old age (Prov. 22. 6). If, then, you live an evil life in your youth, either you will despair of salvation later or at least you will have prepared a difficult task for yourselves.

A dangerous growth, because God will demand an account of you for everything and at every step of your life. While thou art yet young, take thy fill of manhood's pride, let thy heart beat high with youth, follow where thought leads and inclination beckons, but remember that for all this God will call thee to account (Eccles. 11. 9). How then did Christ grow in age and spirit? By growing in wisdom and grace. Even though the text speaks first of growth in wisdom we shall deal first of all with the growth in grace, which is its cause.

3. *Growth in grace—peace:*

Hidden causes, such as grace, are known by their effects which are visible, and there is none so visible as that of peace. There is no peace for the wicked, says the Lord (Isaias 48. 22). Go then, youths, as Jesus did on coming to the use of reason, to Jerusalem, city of peace.

Man is at peace when he has won the victory in the struggle between the flesh and the spirit.

The conditions necessary for peace are: first of all, that it should be at a high level, because if the soul is subjected to the flesh, then it will be nothing but a low and a false peace. Peace at a high level consists in the subjection of the body to the soul by means of mortification, without consenting to the lower nature, since servants as vile as this one are never satisfied; given one scrap of liberty, they clamour for more. So far as external mortifications are concerned, those which can be seen by others, be content with those which are common among people of good conscience. God does not like singularity.

Peace must endure, be both constant and watchful against the allies of the body, such as relatives and dangerous companions. . . .

4. *Growth in wisdom through contemplation. Its conditions:*

Wisdom is acquired through contemplation, and the place for such contemplation is the temple. There Jesus was found. Let us see what he did to teach us contemplation.

(a) *Listen carefully:*

This knowledge is so profound that no one can hope to acquire it without being taught. Do not think that you are already wise, because there is no man so wise that he cannot learn by listening to another. Jesus gave us an example by listening to the doctors of the law.

(b) *with constancy:*

No one attains wisdom in one lesson. His parents found the Child after three days.

(c) *Hear many people:*

Because God has divided his graces among many. St Gregory gives lessons in morality; Augustine solves difficulties; Ambrose is a master of allegory. One who is just beginning should listen to one

master until he has attained the fundamentals of knowledge; but once he is proficient in those, then he should pluck his flowers from various gardens. Thus the Child was found in the midst of the doctors, as one who would judge them and choose the best.

(d) **Seek and enquire:**

Merchants are always active; but wisdom is worth more than all their products. Where should you seek wisdom? In three places, mainly. First, in your master, who is also your father, because he has given you birth. Then by asking questions of those who are absent, such as the ancient writers. Observe nature, in which God has written the lesson of his wisdom as creator. The third way of increasing your wisdom is by teaching others. Experience tells us that there is no one who does not learn by teaching. The very fact of having to reply to questions makes one define concepts more carefully.

But to reply to questions there is need of a three-fold prudence. First, that of accommodating the doctrine to one's own capacity; the second to reply to the question without wandering. The Child Jesus caused admiration at the wisdom of his answers. Thirdly, and this is the mother of all prudence, we must meditate carefully. Our Lady was a model of this prudence, because she kept all the words in her heart.

The Virtue of Religion

(Since the journey of the Holy Family to Jerusalem on this occasion was in order to fulfil the precepts of the Jewish religion, this Feast gives us an occasion for preaching on this virtue. We give a summary of St Thomas's teaching concerning this virtue in the *Summa*.)

1. **The concept of religion:**

Isidore defines it as a careful application to and meditation on all that concerns divine worship. In this sense the meaning of the word is a careful meditation on divine things. The word may also be derived from the concept of being bound again to something, namely, in this case, to God whom we may have lost through our negligence. Also from the idea of a choosing of God, whom we have previously lost.

Whatever may be the true derivation of the word, the concept is clear. It implies the service of God, to whom we are bound by so many ties, as our beginning and last end. Should we lose him through sin, then we have the obligation of seeking him once more by faith.

2. **It is a virtue:**

Even though by nature we are subject to God, religion can still be a virtue, in so far as we make that subjection a voluntary one (2-2. q. 81. a. 1. c).

3. **The acts of the virtue of religion:**

These are two mainly, obedience and cult. To serve God and to give him homage are one and the same thing; homage takes into consideration God's excellence as an object of our reverence. Service on the other hand considers primarily man's subjection, by which he is bound to give service and reverence to God. All other acts of religion can be reduced to these two, since by them we give testimony to God's greatness and to our obligation to serve him (q. 81. a. 3).

4. **The cult which religion offers to God is the greatest of all honours:**

Because honour is to be judged by the excellence of the person to whom it is paid; therefore, since God's excellence is higher than that of any other, we owe him an honour which is higher also.

5. **Other acts of religion:**

Apart from obedience and service religion commands many other acts of devotion, some produced immediately by virtue of religion itself and others produced by other virtues under the command of religion. Thus, to visit orphans and widows in their tribulation is an act of the virtue of mercy, under the command of the virtue of religion. To keep oneself unspotted from this world is likewise an act which is commanded by the virtue of religion, even though it be produced by the virtue of temperance or by a similar virtue. Other acts, such as that of sacrifice or adoration, are produced by means of the virtue of religion itself (q. 81. a. 1. *ad 1um*).

6. **Not a theological virtue:**

Even though not a theological virtue, it is under their command, since it is the means by which we approach nearer to God. For the same reason it is the highest of the moral virtues, since it brings us into contact with God, who is our last end, and is directly concerned with God's honour (q. 81. a. 5).

7. **The external acts of the virtue of religion:**

Honour and reverence given to God are not for his benefit but for ours, since his is the fullness of glory and no creature can add anything to that. The reverence and honour given to God imply the submission of our minds, and in them they are perfected, since the perfection of a thing lies in its submission to its superior (q. 81. a. 7).

These exterior acts are not offered to God because he needs them . . . they are offered as symbols of those interior spiritual acts which please God. That is why Augustine says that visible sacrifice is a sacrament, i.e. an external sign of invisible sacrifice. Since we are made up of a nature which is both intellectual and sensible, we offer to God an adoration which is spiritual and another which is corporal. The spiritual consists in an internal devotion of the mind, while the

corporal consists in the humiliation of our body. Since in every act of worship the exterior implies subordination to what is interior, this exterior adoration has for its end the interior. Truly, the external humiliation of our bodies excites us to submit our hearts to God, for it is natural for us to arrive at the intellectual through the senses (q. 84. a. 2. c).

Sacrifice

Everything which is done for the purpose of uniting us with God in communion, in order to obtain that end in whose possession we are blessed (3 q. 48. a. 3). Everything offered to God in order to elevate man's mind to him may truly be called sacrifice (3. q. 22. a. 2. c).

1. *The meaning of sacrifice:*

So far as they were related to the service of God there were two reasons for the sacrifices of the Old Law. The first considers sacrifices as an expression of the raising of the mind to God, a raising which the offerer made more vivid and effectual through the sacrifices. To this raising of his mind to God belongs the fact that man recognizes that all he has comes from God as from the First Principle and is ordered to him as to its last end. This fact is expressed by the offerings made to God of all that man possesses, as an admission that he has them from God (1-2. q. 102. a. 3. c).

2. *Kinds of sacrifice:*

There is a double sacrifice; one which is interior and another which is exterior. The interior sacrifice binds all, because all are obliged to offer to God a devoted spirit. The external sacrifice is divided into two kinds; there is one kind of sacrifice which takes its whole moral value from the fact that it is a bowing down before the absolute dominion of God, and with regard to this sacrifice the obligation of those who are under the Old and New Law differs from that of those who are not under any law. Those who are under the Law are bound to offer certain sacrifices commanded by the Law. Those who were not under the Law were still bound to pay external homage to God according to the custom of their time, but they were not bound to any particular sacrifice. The other kind of exterior sacrifice consists in the direction of the acts of the other virtues towards the honour of God. Some of these acts are of obligation, falling as they do under precept for all, while others are not of obligation.

3. *Triple sacrifice of man to God:*

There are three goods which man possesses; first the good of the soul, which man offers to God through devotion, prayer and other interior acts. This is the main sacrifice. The second is corporal good,

which is offered to God in martyrdom, continence and abstinence. The third, external goods, which we offer to God in two ways; either directly, offering them directly to him, or indirectly, making our offering through our neighbour (q. 85. a. 3. *ad 2um*).

4. *Need for sacrifice:*

Sacrifice is necessary for man for three reasons. First, for the remission of sins, by which he has separated himself from God. Secondly, to preserve the state of grace, uniting man always to God, in whom is peace and salvation. For this reason, even in the Old Law, the peace-offering was made. Thirdly, so as to unite the spirit of man perfectly to God, a union which is perfected in glory. For this reason in the Old Law holocausts were offered (3P. q. 22. a. 2).

5. *Works of charity as sacrifices:*

Just as the love of our neighbour comes from the love we have for God, so the services we do our neighbour are services done to God. In this sense they are called sacrifices (2-2. q. 188. a. 2. c).

SECTION V. SPIRITUAL WRITERS

I. NICOLA AVANCINI

(We give two extracts from his meditations on this scene from the Gospels, the first concerns the reply of Christ to his Mother's question and the second is based on our Lord's subjection to his parents: *The Life and Teaching of Our Lord*, Burns and Oates, 1961.)

The answer that Jesus gave to his Mother

1. *How is it that you sought me?* (Luke 2. 49):

There was no kind of reprimand in these words, such as: 'There was no need for you to have sought me, because it was with the highest purpose in view that I withdrew from you, and not by accident.' Nor did he mean that their diligence in seeking him was wasted, because there are many things done which, though not necessary, are indeed praiseworthy when done for love of God. No, our Lord uttered his words with the utmost sweetness and love, and how wonderfully he impressed his parents! It was their reward for all the devotion they had shown. So if we have lost Jesus and the sweetness of devotion, let us realize that there may be high purpose behind it on God's part. If we submit to his governance with humility, yet seeking him with all diligence, the time of consolation will come.

2. *Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?*

This question has the force of an affirmation, namely: 'You knew that I must be about my Father's business.' They did indeed know it, which is why they went straight to the Temple to look for him.

The words of our Lord show the love he had for his Father's business, and they also show that for it an earthly father and mother may have to be left, for this duty must be put above all others. Let us take our Lord's words to heart, and when our duty to God requires it make a generous resolution to cut off whatever else is dear to us.

3. *And they understood not the word that he spoke unto them* (v. 50):

The divine mysteries of Christ were not all revealed to our Blessed Lady at once, but as she continually increased in grace so also did she increase in her understanding of the mysteries of our Redemption. She did not, therefore, then understand why our Lord at the age of twelve should have revealed his wisdom among the doctors, yet she made no further enquiries; as soon as she heard that it was concerned with the Father's will she acquiesced immediately. So let us learn to subject our own judgement, for it is not necessary for us to know the reasons for all that either God or our superiors have in their minds concerning us. Let us not try to find out, or we shall incur disturbance of mind. Let it be enough for us to know that it is the will of God (No. 85).

The Holy Family returns from the Temple

1. *And he went down with them and came to Nazareth:*

Let us listen to our Lord telling his parents all that had happened to him in the last three days, and let us watch our Lady as she listened with rapt attention, keeping all his words in her heart. Finally, let us, too, learn to 'go down' to the commonplaces of life, as did the Son of God. 'Oh, inflexible pride,' says D. Anton, 'which continually strives to go up above the clouds! Go down I beseech you, because Jesus went down, not in body from the pinnacle of the Temple where he was later taken up by the devil, but from that same Temple in humbleness of mind.'

2. *And was subject to them:*

Who? And to whom? The Creator to his creatures, the Lord to his servants, God to man. What wonderful obedience! 'Blush, proud dust,' says St Bernard, 'God humbles himself and thou exaltest thyself! Oh, man, if thou wilt not deign to imitate a human being like thyself, at least thou canst deem it no dishonour to imitate thy Lord and Master.' Has one who is inferior to us been set over us, less noble in station or less learned? Surely, whoever it is is less far removed from us in birth or wisdom than is God from man. Let us follow the example God has set us.

3. *And was subject to them:*

In what way? In doing what things? In the lowliest offices of every kind, for in a carpenter's workshop there was nothing very

splendid. We can easily imagine what it was like, and our Lord performed all his duties promptly, humbly and exactly, and not for one day only, but until he was thirty years of age. Are humble jobs given to us? Lowly offices? Nothing is lowly that is done in imitation of God, who never did anything that was little in value, or did not raise its value by the doing thereof. Let us esteem it an honour to do humble things if indeed we consider it the greatest honour to be made like Christ, and let the length of such service not wear us down, rather let us make a generous resolve for life 'to be an abject in the house of God' (Ps. 83. 11). (No. 86.)

II. BOSSUET

(We give a summary of his ideas on the Gospel, which coincide with those of P. de la Puente.)

1. *Jesus leaves his parents:*

Satisfied at belonging to a pious family, though not a rich one; always submissive and obedient, still Jesus abandons his parents on this occasion, to show that his submission does not come from childish weakness, but from the deeper designs of God's providence.

Jesus can escape from us in many ways. One is by a withdrawal of his graces, which never happens without some fault on our part. Another, by withdrawing some of his special favours or sensible consolations, in order to make us seek him with greater diligence and thus increase his favours. He disappears when he chooses; his spirit is like the wind that breathes where it will. . . .

What is your will, O Lord? That we should not seek you? Why, then, do you hide from us, if it be not to make us seek you. Did your parents, or at least, St Joseph, seek you with an anxiety all too human? We are not the judges of that, but let us know that Jesus hides himself for our instruction. He wishes us to seek him out, but not with an exaggerated anxiety. When the apostles were abandoned by Christ it was clear that their love for him had not yet been completely purified. Holy and spiritual souls should learn that, when Jesus escapes from them, they should moderate their haste. Often he wishes to come alone, and we have to seek him gently, without hurried movements.

They did not understand what he said to them. What they did not know was the nature of the Father's work about which he was busy. Let us learn from Mary that it is not knowledge, but submission, which produces sanctity. Mary is ignorant of the mystery, but she keeps silent and stores up all these things in her heart. Let us give God a free hand, allowing him to work and to tell us holy things without penetrating into them. Let us watch him, as Mary did, with holy awe, meditating on his words, and he will allow us to understand them when he so chooses.

His mother kept all these things in her heart. In Nazareth our Lord's work was his daily task as a carpenter; that of Mary was constant meditation, which she continued after Christ's death.

2. *A hidden life: Mary hath chosen the better part* (Luke 10. 42):

Oh, human pride; of what do you complain in your anxiety? That you are nothing in the world? Look at Jesus and Mary. They were the wonder of the world, a glorious spectacle for God and the angels. But what did they do? Who knew them on earth? And do you wish your name and fame to shine before men? You have not known either Mary or Jesus. I wish for a task in which I can employ my talents, you say; those talents which I am not allowed to hide. I admit it, since Jesus has given you those talents, warning you that he will seek a reckoning from you for their use. But those same talents, hidden in Christ, would be even more beautiful. Do not deceive yourself; you are a man full of vanity, and what you seek in those acts of yours which you imagine to be pious and useful is only to feed your own self-love. . . .

And what does the Lord do, on the one occasion when he escapes from the hands of his parents to dedicate himself to the task of his Father? He gives himself up to the task of the salvation of men. And you say that you have nothing to do, when the salvation of your neighbour is partly at least in your hands? Have you no enemies with whom to be reconciled; no quarrels to be settled . . . ? And when there is nothing of this kind to be done, could you not occupy yourself with the work of your own salvation, which is for you the true work of God? Go to the Temple, escape from father and mother if necessary; renounce flesh and blood, and say with Jesus: Should I not be about my Father's business? Let us tremble and be humble at the thought that, in our labours, we seldom find anything worthy of being dedicated to God.

3. *Jesus grew . . .*

Thirty years growing in wisdom and age and grace . . . thirty years of silence. Let us speak, then, when God chooses, not out of impatience or vanity or to seem important in the eyes of others, since Jesus did not speak to the shepherds, or to the Kings who came from afar to see him. Human wisdom learns much if it only learns to be silent. . . .

Let us learn to live in silence while Christ is still a child among us. You know that he is not formed all at once in our souls, otherwise the Apostle would not have said: My little children, I am in travail over you afresh, until I can see Christ's image formed in you (Gal. 4. 19). Until that moment comes, let us seek our strength in Jesus; let us go to the temple and ask the doctors. . . . And to which of the doctors better than Jesus himself? In all our business, all our affairs, all our actions, let us consult the wisdom of Jesus and the light of eternal

truth, together with the doctrine of his Gospel. Do pleasures seduce you? Listen to Jesus, who will discover to you the snake in paradise, crawling beneath the flowers. Do the great ones of this world dazzle you? Look at Jesus and Mary, and you will see the former with empty hands.

Work. Jesus lowered himself to take on manual work, but at the same time he gave new nobility to men's work, turning into a remedy the ancient curse of the Garden, that man would eat bread only by the sweat of his brow. Jesus, on submitting to this law, took on himself the person of the sinner and taught sinners to sanctify themselves by their labours.

III. BOURDALOUE

(The sermon from which we take this summary is among those he preached on the first Sunday after Epiphany. The summary is taken from the Spanish translation of his works, Madrid, 1873.)

Parents and their children

1. *Introduction:*

Jesus replies to his mother, not to blame her in any way, but to show the obligation parents have in the matter of their children's choice of a state of life, the most important step in their lives. If Mary and Joseph did not understand him fully, we may be quite sure that most parents understand this obligation even less than they did. The preacher's aim is to show that parents are not the deciding factor in their children's vocation, but that they can be, in some way, responsible for the choice made.

2. *The first part:*

Any parent who does decide the vocation of his child is guilty of a grave injustice to God and his child; one which will have grave consequences for the salvation of both.

(a) *It is an injustice to God:*

God is the true Father of men; if you dispose of them as you please, God may well ask where is his absolute dominion. You will have made yourself master of a family which was only given to you as an administrator of God.

So far as the soul is concerned, God is the only one who can dispose of that. The phrase used by the mother of the Machabees is clear testimony to the truth (2 Mach. 7. 22). God reserved this right to himself because he knew that the parents would make such a choice under the influence of various personal inclinations, and not in accordance with the individual characteristics of their children.

The vocation to a particular state of life demands special graces, and it is very dangerous to make a choice without counting on those

graces. God is the only one who knows the state to which his providence has ordained us, and therefore the only one who can really make this decision. There is nothing which is so linked with our salvation as this choice of a state of life, because it is the road by which God intends to lead us to heaven. Outside it, he is no longer bound to help us in any special way. For parents to be the judges of vocation they would need to know the full designs of divine providence and the graces God has prepared for each one.

(b) Injustice to their children:

Both natural and divine law demand that the one who must fulfil the obligations of a state of life should also be the one to choose that state. To act contrary to this law would be to deprive our children of their most elementary and essential rights.

St Bernard wrote to a man of the world who had a religious vocation, to which his mother was opposed. He says: What shall I say to you? Shall I tell you to abandon your mother? That you should continue at her side? It is not right that, for love of her, you should expose yourself to the danger of losing your soul. What, then, is to be done? What your mother wishes for you is opposed to your salvation, and therefore also opposed to her salvation, too. Choose, then, between salvation for both of you or the loss of your souls. The very love you have for your mother will then make you decide to leave her.

You should help your children, correcting any errors they may make in their choice, but with great care and discretion, never obliging them to choose a state of life which is against their wills, or making them reject a choice made before God by deceiving them with false advantages. What will you reply to God when he demands an account of you, not for the life of your child, but for his very soul?

3. The second part:

It is a moral principle that we should do all things to the best of our ability, especially those which are of obligation. Therefore you should make sure, so far as you can, that your children's choice of a state of life is a good one. There are three dangers to be avoided.

The three dangers:

The choice of a state of life can be a bad one for three reasons; in itself, through the incapacity of the subject or through the means used to attain it.

The choice of a state of life is bad in itself when that state is opposed to the salvation of the person who makes the choice, or at least presents grave difficulties in the way of that salvation. A parent must do all he can to avoid such a thing, but if, dominated by personal interests of one kind or another, he is the one who guides his child to make that choice, then he makes himself responsible before God and will have to answer for the loss of his child's soul.

The choice may be a bad one because of the incapacity of the subject, i.e., when he has not the qualities necessary. A parent who knows this is culpable if he forces his child into a state of life for which he is not fitted. However, we see frequently cases in which parents have forced their children into states for which they are not fitted.

The choice can also be a bad one through the means used to attain it. There are unjust means; and it is not infrequent to come across parents who use these means to obtain a position for their children. The mere use of such means is enough to condemn both parents and children.

III. DAVID GREENSTOCK

(An extract from *Lenten Meditations*, on Luke 2. 51.)

The hidden years of our Lord's life at Nazareth have been the source of curiosity throughout the ages. Some of the false gospels rejected by the Church have given us fantastic accounts of the supposed happenings during that period of the life of Christ; but all we really know about those years is summed up in this one phrase from the Gospels: Jesus went with his parents to Nazareth and was subject to them as a dutiful son. Yet those hidden years form an important part of Christ's teaching, in spite of the mystery which surrounds them. To read their secret we must first of all understand the purpose for which Christ came on earth. He came to redeem us; but he also intended to teach us many lessons by word and by example.

We might begin with obedience to Mary and Joseph. This picture of the Son of God, obedient to his creatures, gives us a lesson in obedience and humility which can never be forgotten. It also provides us with a motive for being obedient to all lawful authority. It helps us to understand what real family life should be if it is lived for God and in God. In passing we can only admire the admirable composure of Mary, who had no hesitation in educating the Son of God made man for his future tasks. If education of one's children is a big responsibility at the best of times, how much more difficult must it have been to provide the training necessary, when the Child is also one's God!

It is not difficult to imagine what our Lord's life must have been during those years in Nazareth. The neighbours did not notice anything outstanding about him, as we can judge from later events related in the Gospels when he returned to Nazareth during his public life of preaching. They saw only an ordinary boy who later became a young man, obedient to his parents' wishes, attending the local synagogue and helping Joseph in his workshop. After his foster-father's death Jesus would no doubt have carried on the

business by himself to earn enough to keep himself and his Mother. No doubt it was hard work; and we may well meditate with profit on the Son of God holding out his hand to receive payment for his work. Of one thing we can be quite certain—it would be good work, well done and with the best materials; nor would there be any excessive charges made for it!

During those years our Lord put the whole idea of manual labour on a different plane for us. He redeemed mankind at the carpenter's bench just as much as he did on the wood of the cross. He taught us, by a living example, that sanctity is to be found in the ordinary daily tasks just as easily as it can be found in extraordinary things, to which not all of us are called.

Only three years of our Lord's life were dedicated to public preaching, healing the sick and the final scenes of the Passion. The rest of it was passed at Nazareth, working quietly without ostentation, preparing for the time when he would have to go out into the country as a missionary and Saviour. Our life will follow a similar course. It is not all passed in preaching or mortification, in prayer or religious observances. Here Jesus teaches us once again the value of ordinary tasks, provided they are done for God and in union with him. Fidelity to our morning and evening prayers, the family obligations and worries—all these things can become powerful means of sanctification. They can also be an effective example to others. We shall never be fully prepared for any extraordinary demands God may make on us unless we are first of all faithful in these ordinary things. Religion is not something which can be separated from everyday life, but rather something which is capable of lifting up that human activity to a supernatural and divine level, thus making it capable of earning heaven for us. It is often the daily cross which weighs the heaviest. St Bernard said that his greatest penance was this daily routine. For all of us it is the greatest means of attaining true sanctity.

IV. PÈRE FÉLIX, S.J.

(A summary of his ideas on Christian education and obedience, taken from his *Progress through Christianity*, an essay which forms part of the Conferences given in Notre Dame, Paris, 1862.)

1. *The essence of obedience:*

The education of the child must form his intellect by means of faith, and his heart through the attraction of Christian love. Obedience is not a type of weakness which gives way to superior force, but a homage paid to legitimate authority; and since all legitimate authority comes from God, obedience to it makes God the centre of our lives.

The Christian school is one of obedience, since Christianity consists in proclaiming Christ as the supreme authority in the Christian hierarchy and in the family. Therefore Christian education consists in forming the will in such a way that it will recognize that all morality depends on subjection to Christ. Popes, Bishops, civil authorities, parents—all these represent Christ.

Obedience is part of the natural law. Material creation obeys passively the laws laid down for it. But man must obey God freely. King of creation, he is born into a situation whose law is obey or die. He reaches adolescence, and passions awake in him the desire to run free of all restraint. This period of his life is the one which most needs the check of obedience. The weakness of childhood has disappeared, but the impotence of the adolescent to govern himself in the midst of this tempest increases; without a discipline which will protect him without putting him in chains, the forces which are now born within him will cast him into the abyss.

When he reaches maturity he will not be able to do as he pleases either. He is a member of society, ruled by obedience and with a vast network of subordination. If he wishes to free himself from them, then let him depart into the desert and live there if he can. One of two things, either he will set himself up against all mankind, as one who tries to push back a raging sea, or he will have to live in a society under law.

2. *Obedience and its excellence:*

(a) *It makes a man noble:*

The ideal of youth is to be able to say: I did it because I wished. Life, the greatness and perfection of the will, consist in a free submission, in obedience, to those in authority. Christ gives us the example: He was subject to them. And when he attains his final crown it is because he became obedient unto death. The crown of his kingdom was that of obedience. Education should give to the will freedom, rectitude and firmness. These are possible only through obedience.

(b) *Obedience is the mother of true liberty:*

The first attribute of the human will is its freedom. But freedom does not consist in a lack of submission to others, but rather in due submission according to the law. He who does not obey freely makes himself a slave to the tyrant of unlawful authority. The child who is made to obey his parents, whose task it is to guide him, is gradually educated away from his own caprices, pride, laziness, selfishness and other passions. Such a child becomes truly free. He will also be capable of ruling. Man is a ruler when he commands over nature, more so when he commands other men, and even more when he has command over himself. The child who is obedient acquires this

supreme dominion and also learns to rule others, because the best school of command is the practice of obedience.

(c) Obedience, the mother of rectitude:

The task of the will is to choose the road which leads to an end and to persevere in it. Obedience gives it this rectitude and firmness. Rectitude, because all obedience is a free equation between the will and the rule which it accepts. Obedience accustoms the child to choose the road laid down by a rule; it implies an action submitted to certain norms.

Obedience strengthens the will, because any will which is accustomed to be guided by caprice is necessarily wavering, since it has no reason to be firm in its decisions. On the other hand, the child accustomed to obey has always a constant rule to guide him—the norm of virtue. Passions and personal conveniences may change; but the law of good remains always. The moments of temptation will come, but the child should be accustomed to them, and taught to look heavenwards, in humble obedience to the law of God.

(d) Obedience, the mother of the firmness of the will:

Up to now we have been talking about objective strength in the will, namely, that which comes from the permanent motives which move it. But obedience strengthens the will itself. It gives the will necessary exercise, and by dominating it, gives it strength. The example of St Francis Xavier shows us this.

SECTION VI. PAPAL TEXTS

(We have already given some of these documents on the previous Sunday. Therefore, for the sake of brevity, we shall limit ourselves here to a brief summary of the main ideas on the subject of the Christian family and its obligations.)

1. The Christian family is an image of the Trinity:

Man, the great work of creation, is made to the image and likeness of God. In the family that image reaches, if we may say so, a special grade of likeness to God, the divine model, for just as the essential unity of the divine nature exists in three distinct Persons, consubstantial and coeternal, so the moral unity of the human family operates in the trinity of father, mother and children. Conjugal fidelity and the indissolubility of marriage may appear contrary to the lower instincts of man, but they are in perfect conformity with his spiritual nature (Pius XII, *To the recently married*, June 1940).

2. Destined to give the kingdom of God new citizens:

New families, destined to provide for a future which is hidden in the mists of God's providence; destined to provide society with new citizens . . . and to feed the Church of Christ, since it is from these

new families that she expects new sons of God, who will obey her laws. Destined, finally, to provide new citizens for the kingdom of heaven, when this mortal life is over (Pius XII, *To the recently married*, May 1942).

3. Home life and its sacrifices:

It is not surprising that the very walls of the home should hide acts of true heroism, and that the life of Christian spouses should also contain these same acts of heroism, many times hidden from the eyes of the world, but nevertheless repeated day by day, in tragic and most difficult circumstances (Pius XII, *To the recently married*, August 1941).

4. The mother is the very sun of the family life, through her generous submission, her words and her Christian simplicity:

The wife and mother is the very sun of the family; with her generosity and submission, her constant readiness, her delicate and providential attention to all that serves to bring happiness to the life of her husband and children. She spreads around her life and warmth. . . . With her clear eye and the warmth of her words, which penetrate sweetly into the soul, overcoming it and softening it, calling her husband to the joys of virtue and the family life after a hard day's work . . . (Pius XII, *To the recently married*, March 1942).

5. The example of Nazareth:

The humble home at Nazareth should be a model for the Christian home. The husband should learn from the labours of St Joseph and also from his use of his authority; while the wife should learn from Mary, perfect model of all domestic virtues. The conclusion is that every Christian family is a school of sanctity.

You must convince yourselves, beloved sons and daughters, that your new family can be and should be a school of sanctity, united to God by grace. The very sacrament itself, which demands the indissolubility of the conjugal bond, gives you a supernatural strength against which all temptations and seductions will be impotent, if you so wish it. The difficulties and the boredom of the daily round, the desire for novelty and change, the attractions of forbidden fruit, will have no power over you if you only preserve that state of grace through prayer, penance, watchings and care (Pius XII, *To the recently married*, November 1940).

6. For this it is necessary that Mary should preside over Christian families, that there should be prayer—constant prayer—and there is nothing better for this purpose than frequent communion (cf. Pius XII, *To the recently married*, June 1939; April 1940).

SECTION VII. HISTORICAL AND LITERARY MISCELLANY

1. *The heroic mother of the Machabees:*

The story is well known; how Antiochus tried to make the seven brothers eat swine flesh, against the law of Moses, and when they refused, ordered them to be tortured in various ways. Their hands were to be cut off, their scalp torn away, their tongues cut out, one by one so that the others together with the mother could witness the spectacle and perhaps be terrified by it to the point of giving way.

When six of the brothers had been executed in this way the Ruler tried to win the youngest by promises of great position, riches and authority. When this failed he tried to persuade the mother to intervene on his behalf and counsel her son for his own good. At last the mother promised to do so. Bending over the boy she spoke to him in their native tongue: Nine months in the womb I bore thee, three years at the breast fed thee, reared thee to be what thou art; and now, my son, this boon grant me. Look around at heaven and earth and all they contain; bethink thee that of all this, and of mankind, too, God is the Maker. Of this butcher have thou no fear; claim rightful share among thy brethren in yonder inheritance of death; so shall the divine mercy give me back all my sons at once (2 Mach. 7. 1-29).

Needless to say, the boy died like the rest and, last of all, the mother with them.

2. *The vocation of St Teresa of Avila:*

During this time, when I was considering these resolutions, I had persuaded one of my brothers, by talking to him about the vanity of the world, to become a friar, and we agreed to set out together, very early one morning, for that convent where lived that friend of mine of whom I was so fond. In making my final decision I had already resolved that I would go to any other convent in which I thought that I could serve God better or which my father might wish me to enter, for by now I was concerned chiefly with the good of my soul and cared nothing for my comfort. I remember—and I really believe this is true—that when I left my father's house my distress was so great that I do not think it will be greater when I die. It seemed to me as if every bone in my body was being wrenched asunder; for, as I had no love of God to subdue my love for my father and kinsfolk, everything was such a strain to me that, if the Lord had not helped me, no reflections of my own would have sufficed to keep me true to my purpose. But the Lord gave me courage to fight against myself and so I carried out my intentions.

When I took the habit the Lord at once showed me how great are his favours to those who use force with themselves in his service.

No one realized that I had gone through all this; they thought that I had acted out of desire. At the time my entrance into this new life gave me a joy so great that it has never failed me even to this day, and God converted the aridity of my soul into the deepest tenderness. Everything connected with the religious life caused me delight; and it is a fact that sometimes, when I was spending time in sweeping floors which I had previously spent on my own indulgence and adornment, and realized that I was now free from all those things, there came to me a new joy; which amazed me, for I could not imagine whence it arose. Whenever I recall this there is nothing, however hard, which I would hesitate to undertake if it were proposed to me. For I know now by experience of many kinds, that if I strengthen my purpose by resolving to do a thing for God's sake alone, it is his will that, from the very beginning, my soul shall be afraid, so that my merit may be the greater; and if I achieve my resolve, the greater my fear has been, the greater will be my reward, and the greater, too, will be my retrospective pleasure . . . if one lives a life of detachment for God's sake alone, there is no reason to be afraid that things will turn out amiss, since he is all-powerful (*Life*, Chap. 4. 1-2).

3. *The mother of St Augustine:*

St Augustine himself tells us the story of his mother's prayers and tears for his conversion in the Confessions (chaps. 3 and 4). He mentions her visit to St Ambrose, whom she asked for his help to reason with her son and try to convince him of the error of his ways. The saint replied that the moment for his intervention had not yet come and advised her to go away and pray always to God for her son. The mother was not content with this reply and appealed to him once more with tears. Ambrose replied to her: Go in peace, woman; and God give you life. It is not possible that the child of so many tears should perish!

So it happened, in fact, and Augustine tells us the story of his mother's death and of her last wishes. Bury this body where you please. One thing I ask of you, that you remember me at the altar of God, wherever you may be.

4. *The mother of John Bosco:*

The death of the mother of John Bosco is one of the wonders of our age. It provides us with a perfect picture in real life of the 'mulier fortis' of the Scriptures.

I am leaving you, she said to her son, John, and am leaving the material cares of the household in other hands. The way will be hard, but the Holy Virgin will not fail to help you all. Heed my advice! In all your undertakings seek not the brilliance of worldly honour or splendour. At the summit, the glory of God; at the foot of the mountain, true poverty. There are many who profess to love

poverty—but in others, not in themselves. Never forget that the best lesson consists in doing oneself what one asks one's neighbour to do.

As the end drew near she received *Viaticum* and Extreme Unction, saying to her son as she did so: Before it was I who helped you to receive the sacraments. Now it is you who help your old mother to receive the last sacraments of the Church. Accompany me by saying the prayers for the dying . . . but as you see, I breathe only with great difficulty, so say them aloud so that at least in my heart I may repeat them after you. . . .

Four years later, on the Feast of our Lady of the Snows, John Bosco was making his way across the square of the Consolata. As he was about to enter the church he saw, a few paces away from him, what appeared to be the figure of his mother. An hallucination, perhaps? Or a vision? To make sure he spoke to her.

'You here? Are you not dead then?'

'Yes; but in spite of that, I am alive.'

'Are you happy?'

'More than I can possibly tell you.'

There was no doubt. The face and voice, the very intonation, were those of his mother. The conversation continues:

'After death did you pass immediately into heaven?'

'No.'

'Can you reveal to me something of the joys of the after life?'

'It would be impossible.'

'At least give me some idea, however small it may be, of your happiness.'

At this the vision was transformed; the face of the humble woman took on a radiant beauty, while her garments shone with an unearthly splendour. Her whole aspect was clothed in a majesty such as he had never seen. Around her there was the sound of thousands of mighty wings, legions of heavenly spirits. Her mouth opened and from it came a heavenly melody which left him spell-bound. At last she said to him: 'I am awaiting you; for you and I are inseparable' (From A. Aufrey's *Life of Margaret Bosco*, Buenos Aires).

SECTION VIII. SERMON SCHEMES

I. LITURGICAL

A: The Family at Nazareth

1. *The failure of the family life, about which so much is said nowadays:*

(a) The family, as a divine institution, cannot fail, although it is true to say that its stability and security are both threatened.

(b) In the midst of this crisis in the modern family this Feast shines even brighter. What is happening in our day makes it more

and more obvious that, if the family life is to be happy and effective for the education of good citizens of earth and heaven, it must turn its eyes once more to the Holy Family.

2. *Evils which attack the family:*

The Popes, from Leo XIII to the present day, speak of the disintegration of the family (cf. *The collective Pastoral Letter of the English Hierarchy*, 1952). Even statesmen and politicians are worried. Outside the Church the evil is a grave menace; but even within the Church it can appear when the fundamental principles of family life are ignored. Following the Papal teaching, the evils which at present attack the family life are mainly these:

(a) Divorce:

In the course of a reunion celebrated in Westminster, the President of the Association for Mental Hygiene said: Family disintegration and disorganization is demonstrated by the increasing numbers of divorces. The legislation of many modern states favours this instead of suppressing it.

(b) Birth control:

Limitation in the numbers of children due to Neo-Malthusian doctrines and principles.

(c) Illegitimacy:

This has increased recently, as figures show, by leaps and bounds. A consequence of the ruin of family life.

(d) Purely civil legislation:

The Popes, especially Leo XIII in *Arcanum* and Pius XI in *Casti Connubii*, have insisted that the Church is the only competent authority to legislate on matrimonial matters for Christians.

3. *The causes:*

In reality there is only one: A desire to dethrone Christ; to destroy the model of a true family life which he taught us in the thirty years of his hidden life at Nazareth. We may go deeper. It is true that recent wars, with the separation of husbands and wives, the destruction of homes and the attendant insecurity have all contributed; but the evil has deeper roots yet, principally two:

(a) Religious indifference:

It rejects God and does not allow for his influence in family matters. The American Bishops recognized this fact in 1947, when they said that laicism had undermined the family as a divine institution, bringing upon their Nation the worst problem of divorce the Western world had ever seen.

(b) Materialism:

This conception of life implies comfort while it destroys the whole spirit of sacrifice, without which a solid family life is impossible. It

sows the seeds of dislike for the simple joys of family life, essential for any development of virtue.

4. *The Christian family:*

(a) It should shine like the sun in the midst of the present darkness and destruction of all that it represents.

(b) Only a family based on the divine teaching can provide the remedy for the restoring of life to the home. The cross must rule over all family life.

5. *Nazareth:*

Every year the Church presents this model to us in the Feast of the Holy Family.

(a) *It is a day of meditation and renovation:*

To this Feast are united special graces—and as Leo XIII said in the Bull of Institution, in it all have a model which they can both admire and imitate. In Nazareth there is true compenetration of hearts and perfect religious observance.

(b) *This is the model of the true Christian family:*

Nothing could be more opportune than the Epistle of the Feast, where St Paul outlines the virtues which, if they are practised, will transform family life, making it like that of Nazareth.

(c) *The hope of the Church lies in the Christian family:*

As Pius XII said, it alone can give the world and the Church new and vigorous generations, strong and full of the spirit of sacrifice.

B: How I love thy dwelling-place

1. *The home is a temple:*

(a) The words which form the title to this scheme are read in the Introit of the Mass (Ps. 83. 2). The Church also uses them in the Mass for the Dedication of a Church.

(b) The Christian home is a temple of the Lord. This religious conception of it is demanded by the very nature of the family as instituted by God.

(c) Even the pagans thought like this, for the *Lares* and *Penates* were essentially the Gods of the home and hearth, protectors of the family. To them special sacrifices were offered at every meal.

2. *For Christians the home is a temple because it is the place of prayer, preaching and sacrifice:*

(a) *The priest:*

If the home is a temple it must have a priest. This priest is the father of the family.

i. St Paul implies this in I Cor. II. 3.

ii. St John Chrysostom said it openly, when he told the men of Antioch and Constantinople: Convert your homes into churches, repeating in them what you have heard me say in church.

iii. Augustine had the same idea and goes so far as to say that the husband is more than a priest—he is a bishop, since he is the one who should teach the holy doctrine in the home.

(b) *Prayer in the home:*

i. *a true Christian family makes a practice of common prayer:* grace before meals, thanksgiving after meals, sometimes even night prayers in common. There should also be a common celebration of certain great feasts of the year such as Christmas.

ii. *there is one prayer which is highly recommended*—the Rosary in the family. There is nothing so moving—and therefore so grafted on the minds of the children—as the sight of the father of the family on his knees before them, leading the Rosary.

(c) *Preaching in the home:*

i. *it is more effective* than anything the children learn at school or in church.

ii. *the main element of it is example given by the parents.* The very nerve centre of the Church (and of the State) is the family circle; and for the children the nerve centre is the example of their parents. Nothing can stand against it, nothing can quite take its place.

(d) *The victim in the home:*

i. *if the family is a temple, a place of sacrifice, it must have a victim*—that victim is the offering of the hearts of those who make up the family (Rom. 12. 1-12).

ii. *the Epistle of today's feast gives it to us in a concentrated form:* To put on Christ, with his mercy, modesty, patience—all family virtues, and so necessary. To put up with one another for a lifetime, pardoning one another, should there be any cause for it. That Christ may reign in the hearts of all; that all should be one body and of one mind in Christ! The picture of a Christian family!

II. THE GOSPEL

A: Sacrifice

1. *Christ in the temple:*

The Feast Day mentioned in the Gospel is that of the Pasch. The Holy Family went to the temple to celebrate it and to offer the ritual sacrifices laid down by the Law. This gives us an occasion to talk about the theology of sacrifice.

2. *Sacrifice—an offering to God and only to him:*

- (a) In every society certain acts of reverence and honour are reserved to the supreme authority and given to no one else (St Thomas 2-2. q. 85. a. 2).
- (b) Religion dedicates to God one special act of reverence—that of sacrifice. We do not dedicate to the martyrs temples, sacrifices or priests, because it is not they, but their God, who is our God (St Augustine).
- (c) Man's reason, even in the natural state, admits the dominion of God over life and all that he possesses. From this comes that internal act of adoration, together with the external act of sacrifice, which is exclusive to God.
- (d) For this reason sacrifice is an act of the natural law, even though the determination of the kind of sacrifice to be offered is of positive law.

3. *The victim:*

- (a) Proper to every sacrifice is the offering of a victim, because sacrifice is the admission of the supreme dominion of God. Man should give to God his very life, since God is its author and its end. He cannot give his own life, because he is not free to dispose of it. Therefore he looks for something over which he has dominion, so as to give it to God, as a pledge of his own life. This is the victim.
- (b) It may be a living or an inanimate thing, but always it will be an exterior offering. The important thing in sacrifice is not the victim or its killing, but rather its offering to the One God, whose complete dominion is recognized by this act.
- (c) Lastly, this oblation must be made through the priest, without whom there is no true sacrifice. Therefore we have the four elements of sacrifice: The victim, the immolation, the offering and the priest.

4. *Interior sacrifice:*

- (a) The external rite of sacrifice has little value of itself—its value is in what it signifies. The value of sacrifice lies in the fact that it is an external admission of the supreme dominion of God, as the author of all things and their last end.
- (b) In sacrifice a man gives to God his very will and soul. Together with the external victim there is an internal one. External acts of religion are of value only in so far as they express a sincere internal act at the same time.

5. *An acceptable sacrifice to God:*

- (a) God has no wish for the external sacrifice without the internal. For this reason the frequent complaints about the sacrifices of the Old Law.
- (b) It is the interior sacrifice which is really pleasing to God. We see this repeated time and again in the Scriptures (Ecclus. 4. 17, 7. 35, 35. 2).

(c) Christ, at the age of twelve, offered a sacrifice in the temple. It was an external sacrifice, but much more important from the point of view of his Father was the interior sacrifice which Paul put in the mouth of Christ at the moment of the Incarnation (Heb. 10. 5-7).

6. *Our Sacrifice:*

- (a) There is only one true exterior sacrifice—that of the Mass. Hence the obligation of hearing Mass and the importance of the Church's precept about it.
- (b) Man, as a Christian, should also offer to God the sacrifice of his own will and his own heart. Offer to God what is just, says Chrysostom; and here the word 'just' does not indicate one particular virtue, but all the virtues.
- (c) It means doing what God wills. It is the phrase used by Christ: I do always the things that please him (John 8. 29). This is the true sacrifice of the Christian.

B: Above all things . . .

1. *The first recorded words of Christ:*

The gospel of today, apart from other teachings, contains something which is fundamental. The silence of Nazareth is broken, and from the lips of our Saviour come the first recorded words, dedicated to the principal virtue: charity—the love of God above all things. Love is known by deeds; and to act according to God's will is to love him in very truth.

2. *The foundation of it:*

The lesson Christ gives us is a model for us all, and in many ways, i.e. both in the difficulties overcome and also in the very words themselves.

3. *The difficulties overcome:*

- (a) He leaves his parents, whom he loves deeply and by whom he is loved; who have given him sincere religious training and example; with no thought about who is to look after him or feed him; at the age of twelve.
- (b) He leaves without any warning, even though it would cause him as much pain as it did them. This is the deepest part of the mystery, because they would not have put any opposition in his way had he consulted them first—but he kept silent about his plan.

4. *In his words:*

- (a) *I must be about my Father's business:*
In reply to Mary Christ does not give any detailed explanation; merely this very mysterious answer, which even Mary did not fully understand.
- (b) In these words is the whole of his plan of life from the moment

of the Incarnation, when he said himself that he came to do God's will; passing through the years of the public life, in which he did that will perfectly, until the moment of the Cross—the last in a long series of acts of obedience to his Father.

(c) There, in the Temple, he prays, assists at the sacrifices, listens to and explains the Scriptures; i.e. he consecrates himself to the worship of God, thus preparing the way for others.

(d) The action and teaching of Jesus in the Temple have been the cause of the most beautiful decisions in the lives of the saints and of some of their most penetrating words.

i. *Bl. John of Avila says*: If parents see that their children wish to serve God in a good way which is not to their liking, they should look to the divine will, and, even though their hearts may be torn by grief, should overcome that sorrow by the love they have for God and offer their children to him. Thus they will be like Abraham, who was prepared to sacrifice his only son in obedience to God, without thought for his own feelings. The natural sorrow which is felt on these occasions should be suffered with patience; it will not go without its reward, because it comes from God who made it, and through love for him alone is it overcome.

ii. *St Jerome speaks in stronger terms*: Even though some member of your family should hang round your neck; even though it be your very mother herself, her garments rent and showing you the breasts at which she fed you! Or even if it be your father, who lies prostrate at the threshold of your house, step over him and flee to God, embracing the teachings of the cross. It is a kind of piety to be cruel on these occasions.

C: The Temple

(This theme is obviously capable of being applied to the material side of the worship of God—collections, gifts to the Church or parish, help in building schemes and parish development. However, no attempt will be made to include such things in the scheme, because they can easily be deduced from the spiritual factors which are mentioned.)

1. *The magnificence of the Temple*:

Christ enters into it at the age of twelve and sees with his own eyes its splendour; the spacious courts, the porch of Solomon, the splendid altar of sacrifice, the gold and marble with which it was adorned.

2. *Its greatest splendour: The house of God*:

It was not the material magnificence of the building which made the temple so precious to the mind and hearts of the Jews, but the fact that it was the house of God. This is brought out abundantly in the Scriptures (cf. 2 Par. 2. 4; 3 Kings 8. 13; 2 Par. 7. 1).

3. *Spiritual characteristics of the Temple*:

See the whole of 2 Paralipomena, chapter 7.

- (a) It is God's house, where his glory and majesty dwell;
- (b) the place of sacrifice for king and subject, rich and poor;
- (c) a place where God will hear the prayers of his people.

4. *Christ and the Temple*:

(a) *He increased his glory*:

The old temple of Solomon had been destroyed and a more humble building constructed in its place after the return from Babylon. However, it was promised that greater things would happen in this humble temple, and in that built by Herod later—the Messiah would appear there!

The temple of Herod was magnificent—even more so than that of Solomon—but its greatest glory would be this, that to it would come the Prince of Peace (cf. Ag. 2. 7; *ibid.* v. 10).

(b) *Christ goes to the temple to offer the Paschal sacrifice*:

He calls it his house and the house of his Father. He says that it is a house of prayer and casts out those who bought and sold in it (cf. Luke 19. 46; John 2. 16).

5. *The Christian church*:

(a) It has the same characteristics as the ancient temple at Jerusalem. It is the house of God, of prayer and sacrifice.

(b) *But it is much greater than the temple of the old Law*:

- i. there all was symbolic; here is Christ, really and truly present;
- ii. in the early days of the Church the Christians had to use private houses for their places of worship, but once they attained freedom they built these magnificent churches as places of worship because God is there;
- iii. the great cathedrals were works of real love, destined to last for all time. The liturgy extends itself in the ceremony of the dedication of a church, for the same reason.

(c) The Church adds a new idea—the church is heaven on earth. This is the reason why we give to the church the best we have—nothing else will do for God, who dwells in it.

6. *Sanctity of the church*:

(a) It demands respect, because it is God's house.

(b) *Other themes*:

- i. frequent visits to the church;
- ii. prayer in church, because it is the house of God—who promised that he would hear the prayers offered to him there;
- iii. the true Christian must not merely love the church; he must also frequent it.

D: Man's enemies

1. *The love for one's family:*

The conduct of Christ in the temple suggests this theme, which is full of difficulties, owing to the love which we have for the members of our family.

(a) The teaching and example of the saints often appear to us inhuman and against the very laws of nature:

For example: St Ignatius says in the *Constitutions* of the Jesuits: Each one who enters the Company must know that he leaves father and mother, brother and sister and all that he has in the world. Again: Let him not say I have, but rather I had a father, a mother—even though they are not yet dead.

(b) The reply:

i. No saint ever said anything as hard as the words of Christ: Unless a man hate father and mother . . . (Luke 14. 26).

ii. No son ever gave his mother so much pain as that given to Mary by Christ on this occasion;

iii. the Gospel does not merely speak of hatred for one's parents, but also for one's very soul!

2. *The key to the interpretation:*

It is necessary to make two things very clear, the nature of the love for God and the concept of spiritual love.

(a) The love of God:

i. *Perfect love for God should have the conditions attached to it by the Gospel*; it should be a love which absorbs all the powers of mind, heart, soul and strength. Any other love which comes into the heart which is entirely consecrated to God is an idol set up in God's sanctuary; an offence against God.

ii. *But true love for God does not kill other affections*; on the contrary, it lifts them up and consecrates them. It gives them an eternal value. It kills all love for self, and therefore all purely sensual and natural love. We love others because we love God, and because God wishes us to love them. We love them for God and only for God. The love of God is the cause of other loves and also their final end.

iii. *Therefore, that which dies in spiritual souls is sensual love and that which is purely natural*, even though it be love for our parents. But the true order of charity demands that, once divine justice has been saved, we should love our parents above all others, because they are nearer to us.

(b) Spiritual love:

i. Pure spiritual love, which is demanded of those who are perfect, is very difficult to understand and to practise. St Teresa

said that there was little need to say anything about it, because so few people had it.

ii. *Spiritual children*. With this love the saints loved their spiritual children; with a love which is far superior to the natural love which parents have for their offspring. Bl. John of Avila used to say that a spiritual father needed a tender heart of flesh with which to have compassion on his spiritual sons and which is a great suffering; also a heart of steel to suffer the pain which their deaths can cause him. There is no sorrow like to this one, he used to add, and we love those whom we have given birth to spiritually, more than those born to us by flesh and blood.

(c) The example of St Paul:

Cf. Gal. 4. 19; 2 Cor. 11. 29; Rom. 9. 2.

3. *The enemies of man:*

(a) The doctrine we have explained is hard on the natural feelings when grace does not operate there. It is easy and sweet when the Holy Spirit fills the soul with charity. For that very reason it is the barometer by which we can measure the spirituality of those who aspire to perfection.

(b) Priests and religious should examine themselves on this matter with great simplicity and sincerity, striving to destroy in themselves anything that might savour of sensual love. The ideal is to love others only for and in Christ; otherwise it may be true of us that a man's enemies are those of his own house (Matt. 10. 36).

E: The Public Life

1. *The example of Christ:*

(a) Mary remarks to Christ that his father and she herself had sought him with sorrow; he replies: Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?

(b) It is almost like a clash of rights; two fathers, two sonships. There is an earthly and also a heavenly father.

(c) Christ was always subject to his earthly parents in his private life, as we know from St Luke himself. Yet, in this scene in the temple, he ceased to be subject to them. Why? Because, for the moment, he had ceased to be a private individual. The dialogue with the doctors in the temple is an anticipation of his public life.

2. *Man in private and in public:*

(a) A man who represents the common good ceases in some way to be a private individual and is changed into a public personality. The public man, as such, should prescind from family affections in order to serve the public good.

(b) We can say that Christ in the temple had begun his public mission, and Christ, as the Messiah, joins his will to that of the

Father, forgetting, if necessary, all human affections which may unite him to his earthly parents.

3. *A lesson which is repeated:*

Four times our Lord teaches us this lesson; and each time—probably so that the lesson might be the greater—there is some reference to Mary.

(a) The first is in this passage.

(b) The second, at the marriage feast in Cana, where Christ is now beginning his public life. Woman, what is that to me and to thee? My hour is not yet come! Had Mary asked him for water while he was with her in Nazareth he would have taken that as an order and gone to the public well; but now, in his public life, the reply seems almost a negative one. My hour is not yet come. The lesson is there, even though he yields to his mother's request.

(c) The third is in Capharnaum, in the house of Peter. Your mother and your brethren are without and seek to speak to thee. Who is my mother and who are my brethren? . . . Whosoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, my sister and my mother (Matt. 12. 47-50).

(d) The fourth is in the same house and the same scene. Blessed is the womb that bore thee and the breasts that gave thee suck! His reply: Yea, rather, blessed are those who hear the word and God and keep it! (Luke 11. 27-28).

4. *Honour to Mary:*

(a) It may be said, in passing, that Mary does not lose anything of her dignity in the four scenes we have mentioned above. On the contrary, she is honoured in them, but from a different point of view.

(b) In Cana, she obtained her request, even though 'his hour had not yet come'. What power of intercession is enclosed in those same words! She tells the servants to do whatever he tells them, sure of her intercession as his mother.

(c) In Capharnaum Jesus exalts the one who hears the word of God and keeps it—but no one did the will of God better or more completely than Mary. The true glory of Mary, in the eyes of her Son, lies here, rather than in the fact of the divine Maternity.

5. *Practical applications:*

(a) The man in the public eye—and much more so the priest—must never sacrifice the public good for his own private or family interests.

(b) As Benedict XII said, a Pope should be like Melchisedech, without father or mother or genealogy.

6. *Wise advice:*

It will be a great comfort to the spiritual man who has to undertake some public office if he meditates on the crucifix. Bl. John of Avila

says: The Son of God was nailed naked to the cross when he had a public office to perform, for the good of the human race. Public office is a cross, and he must be stripped naked of all affections and clothed only in love for the common good who would mount that cross in imitation of the Son of God.

F: Religion, a natural, supernatural and Christian virtue

1. *Religion—part of man's human nature:*

(a) The scene of today's Gospel shows us the Holy Family fulfilling a natural and supernatural obligation, imposed by God on the Chosen People.

(b) Religion, as a virtue, is based on man's very nature. As St Ignatius says: Man has been created to praise, reverence and serve God.

2. *Man has been created . . .*

In that concept lies all the truth of the doctrine, almost without need for commentary. Dependence on God, absolute and for all time. From this comes the obligation of the virtue of religion.

(a) All creation is for the glory of God. All creation comes out from his hands and must return to them.

(b) Material creatures give him this glory merely by being what he intended them to be. They are mirrors in which the glory, omnipotence and majesty of God are made manifest.

(c) But rational creatures have, over and above this, the obligation—and the glory—of being able to know God and love him of their own free will, as part of their obligation as creatures.

3. *Praise, reverence and serve God:*

(a) Man is a creature and all he has is a share in the being of God, who made him to his image and likeness.

(b) From that moment he will be bound to God by special obligations, that of knowing God by his intellect and loving him through his will. Other creatures will serve man in this purpose, because through them he can know God better and love him more completely. In this sense man is the centre of creation.

(c) Religion is not a weak sentiment, the product of a narrow mind, but one which comes from the very heart of man and is enforced by reason itself. It follows naturally on our complete and absolute dependence on God.

4. *Supernatural virtue:*

(a) Aided by grace, man can elevate this natural virtue to the supernatural plane, from the very moment when Adam was raised to the supernatural level, fell from it, and a Redeemer was promised to us, foretold to us in the Old Testament, given to us in the New.

(b) There are differences between the natural and the supernatural virtue.

5. Religion as a Christian virtue:

(a) It comes from another source:

In Christ we have been made partakers in the divine nature, admitted into a supernatural order and made sons of God by adoption. There is a vast difference between this order of things and the natural order of which we have already spoken.

(b) This order demands a superior knowledge of God through faith.

(c) There is a new hope—that of supernatural happiness and glory.

(d) It breeds a new love—supernatural, like that love with which God loves himself.

(e) It puts on our lips a new prayer—that of the Our Father, taught to us by Christ himself:

i. contains all the petitions we have to make to God both in the natural and supernatural orders, but it is the prayer of all of us, for all.

ii. it contains the doctrine of the communion of saints. The whole Church is united in this prayer.

(f) There is a new sacrifice. The Mass is the centre of our cult and of our religion.

i. All other sacrifices are united in this one; and at the same time it is a sacrament in which we receive Christ, the author of Grace;

ii. with a due share in the Mass, the virtue of religion can now sanctify all the actions of our day. Everything we do is in union with our Redeemer, our Head, our Priest, our Teacher.

G: The Holy Family, model of a religious family

They appear in Jerusalem and offer homage to God:

(a) They go to Jerusalem and offer homage to God as a family group.

(b) Sunday should be a similar day of homage on the part of the Christian family in which reverence is paid to God by all of them, as a family.

Lessons taught us by the Holy Family

I. Religious duties done as a family:

There are many reasons why this is such an excellent practice; here are some:

(a) It is a great example:

i. first for the members of the family, who should give one another mutual help, especially in religious matters;

ii. especially valuable for the children to see their father and mother

perform their religious duties; often the religious training given in youth falls to nothing during adolescence, because the children see one or both of their parents negligent in the performance of their religious duties;

iii. it is good example from the social point of view, when others see the Catholic family go to the house of God as a unity and a unit, to pay him their homage.

(b) It is an obligation:

The family—like society itself—is a moral person, constituted by God, to whom it must render homage as part of its social obligation.

(c) It is both convenient and necessary:

The family is a source of sorrows and joys, of labours, crosses and worries—as also of new joys. Each one of these happenings should cause the Christian family to turn its eyes towards God in thanksgiving, in prayer for help, in solidarity as a unit.

2. Religious spirit:

Intimate family life should be anointed with a religious spirit, like that of the Holy Family in Nazareth. Yet at certain times that family went to the Temple to pray there. There were many advantages in this, all of which can be applied to our own churches.

(a) The church is the best place to pray to God:

It is his house. Liturgical prayer joins us all together.

(b) It is the place of sacrifice, of the Mass:

The really Christian family will do its best to assist at Mass on Sundays as a unity, whenever possible; and not merely on Sundays, but on other days as well. Such families are marked with a special note of joy, well-being and religious favours.

(c) In the church we hear the word of God:

Christ left us the deposit of faith in Scripture and tradition, but not as dead instruments. He gave us the living magisterium of the Church, as a vital method of transmitting his doctrine to us. This living voice comes down to us through the Pope, the Bishops and the priests.

H: Obedience

(We do not intend to treat here of the virtue of obedience in general. That is reserved for the fourth Sunday after Pentecost. The theme of this sermon is limited to the obedience of children to their parents.)

I. Obedience Sunday:

This could well be the name given to this day, because the whole theme is concerned with that subject.

(a) The Gospel:

He was subject to them, from which St Augustine and many of the fathers draw the lesson that children should learn to be obedient to their parents.

(b) The Breviary lesson and hymns speak to us of the same theme.

2. An apparent contradiction?

(a) At first sight there would seem to be a contradiction here, because Christ remains in Jerusalem unknown to his parents, in apparent disobedience to their wishes. But this is not so. Our Lord, who is now going to write one of the finest, if the most silent, treatises on obedience, will also show us first that we have to obey God even before we obey our parents.

(b) This is not the occasion for many details. Two applications will be sufficient:

- i. we are not bound to obey our parents when they command us to do something which is contrary to the laws of God or the Church;
- ii. nor are children bound to obey their parents when it is a question of the choice of a state of life.

3. Subject to his parents:

(a) If parents command anything which is not contrary to the law of God, then they must be obeyed as if they were God himself, says St Augustine. There is the example of Christ to prove this. Why did he obey Joseph and Mary? Was he not greater than they? But Mary and Joseph represent God, and therefore the Son of God obeys them.

(b) This is the supreme reason for obedience. In every society authority is necessary. In the family that authority is in the parents. Children must obey it, because it comes from God.

(c) St Paul teaches the same doctrine, telling children to obey their parents 'in Domino' (Eph. 6. 1). It is not a counsel, but an obligation. The ends of family life cannot be attained without obedience.

(d) To make this doctrine clearer so far as its moral obligations are concerned it is necessary to state that:

- i. children must obey as long as they are under the legal control of their parents;
- ii. in all things which pertain to the government of the home and education of the children;
- iii. parents must be obeyed even though they may be less cultured than their children, or even when they are not good or when it is the children who sustain by their work the domestic economy of the house. Parents represent God.

4. Obedience and education:

(a) This point merits special attention. The consciences of the children are not as yet fully formed. The parents lay down certain

commands with regard to the company their children keep, reading, amusements, etc. They may and should lay down these commands, since it is an important part of the education given to their children and preserves them from many dangers.

(b) Children break these laws with the greatest of ease, without understanding that their obligation is a grave one, not merely because of the evil consequences which may follow from their disobedience, but also because of their strict duty to obey.

(c) The parents send their children to school, at times with great effort and financial sacrifices. The children may waste their time, fail to study as they should, without realizing that they are wasting their parents' money.

(d) The practical value of obedience is principally in the training given to the will, the formation of character and of the complete man. It is difficult to produce parents who know how to command if they have themselves been children who did not know how to obey.

5. Lack of obedience:

(a) Parents frequently complain nowadays that they fail to obtain the obedience of their children. Colleges and schools are built everywhere . . . and yet modern youth is independent, disobedient, without discipline or reins of any kind. It is frequent to hear parents complain that they cannot control their children. This is a grave modern symptom, undoubtedly. A sign that the very basis of all education is missing, namely, obedience.

(b) The causes?

We may cite the following:

- i. modern society and the atmosphere in which our children have to live;
- ii. their age—youth is always tending towards self and towards independence;
- iii. parents who do not know how to discipline their children from an early age;
- iv. perhaps the modern methods of education, which tend to allow too much freedom to youth, are in part to blame;
- v. may we dare to say it! Lack of punishment when it is due! There is a tendency to be too soft with youth, to allow it too much independence, without effective methods of control.

6. Rules for parents:

Pius XII, in the course of his many Allocutions to the recently married, has given many rules which can be a sure guide to parents. Here are some of the main ones:

- (a) Exercise control over them from a tender age;
- (b) Command with love;
- (c) Do not demand too much or concede too easily to them;

- (d) Let example be your main teacher and method;
- (e) Exercise a moral pre-eminence over your children.

III. SOCIAL APPLICATIONS

A: The parents as educators of their children

1. *Joseph and Mary as models:*

- (a) The feast of the Holy Family gives us opportunities to speak of this to parents and to children.
- (b) Under the care of his parents Jesus 'grew up'. Interiorly he had the fullness of grace and knowledge; but from the exterior point of view he grew in both, and Mary and Joseph were the instruments of this growth. That is why we may say that the Gospel presents them as models for parents.
- (c) The ideal for all parents is that their children should 'grow', become men and women, excellent Christians.
- (d) Pius XII in his Allocutions to those recently married gave excellent advice on this point, which refers mainly to fathers of families, but which also has a general application.

2. *The father's responsibility:*

- (a) There are some fathers who are not very concerned about the general education of their children. Their idea seems to be that their wives can see to all that.
- (b) The Christian teaching is clear on the point; the one who is mainly responsible for the education of the children is the father, because he is the head of the family and the one with authority. He it is who has to see to it that the family accomplishes the end laid down for it, the main factor of which is education of the children.

3. *Example and love in education:*

- (a) **Example:**
Pius XII has expressed in various ways the importance of this example, and the very fact that he repeated it so many times is a proof of its importance:
 - i. you must educate them and instruct them in religious charity by word and by example (8 January 1942);
 - ii. be their models in the teaching of good, and live in such a way that your children need do no more than be like you (18 March 1941);
 - iii. be sure that good example is the best of all patrimonies which you can leave to your children (24 Sept. 1941);
 - iv. you must cultivate the virtues. Your mission and dignity demand it. The more holy and perfect the souls of the parents, so much the more delicate and rich will be the education they give to their children (24 April 1943).

(b) **Love:**

- i. *it is love which gives life and warmth to a father's words* when he speaks to his children about religion, God, the soul, duties, good and evil. In this also Pius XII insisted.
- ii. *be the first to educate your children and be their best friends.* If your commands are inspired by love, then they will leave their mark on your children, who will accept them without the need for many words, since the accents of love are louder in the silence of action than they are in words (24 September 1941).
- iii. *this love is fully compatible with correction and even with punishment.* Parents who, out of a false idea of their duties or of fear to offend their children, neither correct nor punish them, do not really love them as they should.

4. *Ten rules for education, taken from the speeches and writings of Pius XII:*

- (a) Education should commence at an early age.
- (b) Parents must join authority with tenderness.
- (c) They must choose with great care the school and teachers who are to be their helpers in this task.
- (d) They should educate them in the precepts of the Lord, in his fear and love.
- (e) They should watch over their companions, reading, amusements, etc.
- (f) Not provoke their children to anger (Eph. 6. 4).
- (g) Do not deceive them, especially in essentials such as sex instruction, which is a parental obligation, according to age, time and place.
- (h) Do not punish them in anger.
- (i) Make them lovers of the Eucharist and of Mary, the Mother of God.
- (j) Educate them with the help of the priests.

B: Education of children

1. *The formation of the children:*

- (a) The Gospel of today tells us that Jesus grew in wisdom, age and grace before God and men.
- (b) The mission of the parents is not finished at the birth of their children; then a new phase begins, that of their education.
- (c) To educate is to develop someone's being until he becomes perfect, with that perfection proper to the supernatural man, namely perfection in virtue.
- (d) The final words of today's Gospel lay down for us the extent of this education: age (physical development), wisdom (intellectual development), grace (spiritual and moral education).

2. *The purpose of all education: To form Christ in their children:*

(a) The end of education is the formation of citizens of the kingdom of heaven; and since the one means of attaining heaven is through Christ, who is the way, truth and life, education implies the formation of Christ in our children.

(b) Pius XI, in *Divini illius Magistri*, lays down in clear terms the extent of this Christian education. It implies co-operation with divine grace in the formation of a true and a perfect Christian, i.e. the formation of Christ in those who have been re-born to him by baptism. . . . For that very reason it covers the whole ambit of life, sensible and spiritual, intellectual and moral, individual and social. . . . The fruit of it is the production of a man whose character is like that of Christ, a truly supernatural man.

(c) Pius XII said to parents: Make your children into living stones of God's temple.

3. *The duty of parents:*

(a) St Thomas says that it is to bring into the world and educate children.

(b) In another place he says that marriage makes the spouses both propagators and conservers of the spiritual life according to a ministry which is at one and the same time corporal and spiritual, consisting in the generation of children and their education for divine worship.

(c) It is clear, then, that education is one of the primary duties of parents; and this is also the teaching of the Popes.

(d) The attitude of those parents who rely entirely on others to educate their children is, therefore, to be condemned. They are failing in their principal mission in life.

(e) Equally reprehensible is the attitude of those who look only to the material side of the children's education, forgetting or neglecting the spiritual.

(f) The dignity of parents is a very great one, but so, too, is their obligation. God will demand an account of it at the day of judgement.

4. *Dignity of parents as educators:*

(a) Through the sacrament of matrimony they receive the graces necessary to perform this task, and no one else receives these graces with regard to their own children. Pius XII said that, by marriage, they had received a special share in the priesthood of Christ. In the Christian formation of those souls entrusted to your care, he went on, you have a share reserved especially for you.

(b) Parents are the instruments, before God, of the interior Master of souls, the Holy Spirit. They are co-operators in the truth, that living Truth who is Christ. As a consequence of this, parents should spare no efforts or expense to assure a solid religious and intellectual formation in their children.

C: Children and a religious vocation

1. *The example of Christ:*

(a) In the Gospel of today Christ demonstrates that the rights of God must prevail over those of the parents. He puts his religious vocation before ties of blood. To follow that vocation he remains in the temple and tells his parents that they should put no obstacle in his way. Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?

(b) This reply is not meant for Mary and Joseph so much as for those parents whose children have been chosen by God for a religious vocation. What is the duty of such parents and what should be the conduct of their children?

2. *The family, seed-bed of vocations:*

(a) Pius XI affirms that a Christian family which is truly religious is the natural breeding place for vocations. The majority of holy priests and bishops owe their vocation to a father who is a model of Christian virtue and to a pious and chaste mother of a family in which the love of God and the neighbour reigned supreme. The exceptions to this rule, he says, are rare and only serve to prove its force (*Ad catholici sacerdotii*).

(b) But though the exceptions to this rule are rare, still they do happen, and there are many cases in which God has cast his eyes on homes which are indifferent from the religious point of view, in order to choose from them someone who will serve him with entire and unconditioned generosity.

3. *The procedure of many parents:*

(a) It is true that there are not a few parents who do see in the religious vocation of their sons and daughters a sign of divine predilection. There are some who even pray for such a vocation for their children.

(b) But there are many who are opposed to it. Pius XI said that it was to be lamented that there were not a few parents, especially in the upper classes, who did not look with favour on such a vocation for their children. At times they would even take steps to destroy the seeds of it in them, to the extent of putting their children's salvation in danger.

(c) This is not always due to bad faith on the part of the parents, even though that can exist in some cases.

i. *at times it is a lack of true religious education* which causes them to put opposition in the way;

ii. *at times it is excessive love for their children*, which cannot bear the separation which a religious vocation inevitably brings with it;

iii. *at times it is an exaggerated fear* that their children will not be happy (as though happiness were identified with life in the world) or even material considerations, family, money, etc.

4. *The duties of parents with regard to a religious vocation:*

- (a) They may not oppose such a vocation. Their children belong to God rather than to them.
- (b) They should not put a vocation into danger by any artifice, much less by introducing their children into a way of life which could endanger, not merely their vocation, but also their salvation.
- (c) They may and should make sure, so far as they can, that it is a case of a true vocation, not a mere illusion on the part of their children. In this matter much will depend on the careful and pondered judgement of a good spiritual director, whose advice should be sought on every occasion.

5. *The conduct of the children, face to face with parental opposition:*

- (a) The moral obligation is plain: given a true religious vocation, the children are not bound to obey their parents in such a case. God is to be obeyed first.
- (b) St Thomas makes the truth plain: Children are not bound to obey their parents when it is a case of contracting marriage or of keeping virginity (2-2. q. 104. a. 5).
- (c) This supposes, on the part of the children, a real conviction that they have a true vocation. Such was the case of Christ.
- (d) However, there is need for great prudence and each particular case must be studied on its merits:
- i. in the majority of cases it is very dangerous to leave home against the will of the parents because of the difficulty of being certain that this is a case of a true religious vocation;
 - ii. the parents are the normal channels of God's will for the children, and when they are opposed to a vocation it is wise to act slowly and with great care;
 - iii. if there should exist a clear conviction that it is a case of a real vocation, then the children may leave home to follow it, in imitation of Christ; but it is difficult for such a real conviction to exist.
- (e) What should their conduct be?
- i. *Know how to wait patiently* and see in their parents' opposition a true trial of their vocation;
 - ii. *pray and do penance*, so that God may convince their parents. They can have complete confidence that, if this is truly the will of God for them, then no human opposition can ever triumph against that will.

6. *Advice to the parents:*

They should keep the following points in mind, some of which have been taken from the writings of the Popes and others from experience:

- (a) Any opposition to God's plans may bring on itself the punishment of heaven.
- (b) A vocation is one of the greatest gifts God can give any family.
- (c) Children who leave their parents for God do not love them any the less.
- (d) A vocation is a guarantee of salvation for the parents.
- i. it is almost impossible that the parents of a priest or religious should be condemned. St James says that anyone who saves the soul of another will also save his own; and how much more so in the case of parents who have given to God one who will save many souls.
 - ii. experience tells us that parents who give their children to God receive abundant consolations, even in this life. How many have been comforted in their last illness by the presence and assistance of a son who was a priest!
 - iii. as Pius XI says: Happy the Christian family so blessed . . . who see in such a vocation a great honour, a grace of special predilection and election on the part of the Lord in favour of their family (*Ad catholici sacerdotii*).

D: Religious life in the family

The Holy Family of Nazareth

A true shrine of piety and prayer. An offering to God of the daily events in that family's life.

1. *Family homage paid to God:*

There is a public and private homage paid to God. The family also is a society, and therefore has an obligation of giving God homage as a unit. In what does this homage consist? It may be reduced to two heads: Sanctification of Feast days and also community prayer.

2. *To make the Sunday holy:*

(a) It is well known that all Catholics have an obligation of keeping the Sundays and Feast days holy by hearing Mass and resting from servile works. For the family as such, those days are 'days of the Lord'—days when they go to the parish church to hear Mass and listen to the word of the Lord.

(b) Holy days should also be family days—life in the home, in peace and harmony. A day of rest in every sense of the word.

3. *Prayer in common:*

Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 18. 20). Much more so when it is a question of family prayer in common!

(a) Pius XII has much to say on this subject, but perhaps the most eloquent of all his appeals for family prayer is that contained in his Allocution of 12 February 1941 to those recently married: What a great and fruitful union is this, which puts both of you on your knees before God, who has given you one to the other, to ask him to preserve, increase and bless the union of your lives! Through it the grace of God will descend to harmonize your desires and your longings.

(b) It has been well said that a family that prays together stays together.

(c) Pius XII, in the Allocution we have already mentioned, indicates the acts of prayer which can bind a family together:

- i. *Morning prayer*, however short, even one Our Father or Hail Mary can serve as a bond of union during the day;
- ii. *night prayers in common*, especially the Family Rosary;
- iii. *the Gospel in the Christian life*. A few minutes spent in the reading of a passage from the Gospels every day would be well spent in every sense.

4. *A vast programme:*

But let each family take from it what is useful and necessary for each. Let all be concerned to do something in order to foment religious life within the family. It is a necessary condition for a good education of the children and for family happiness. Thus this small temple on earth, where Christ is adored and worshipped, will be changed into the glorious temple of heaven, for all eternity.

Second Sunday after Epiphany

THE MIRACLE OF CANA

SECTION I. SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Epistle: Romans 12. 6-16

Gospel: John 2. 1-11

Other texts concerning marriage, one of the principal homiletic themes for this Sunday

1. *In the new Law of Christ:*

It was said, too, Whoever will put away his wife must first give her a writ of separation. But I tell you that the man who puts away his wife (setting aside the matter of unfaithfulness) makes an adulteress of her, and whoever marries her after she has been put away, commits adultery. Matt. 5. 31-32.

Then the Pharisees came to him and put him to the test by asking, Is it right for a man to put away his wife, for whatever cause? He answered, Have you never read, how he who created them, when they first came to be, created them male and female; and how he said, A man, therefore, will leave his father and mother and will cling to his wife, and the two will become one flesh? And so they are no longer two, they are one flesh; what God, then, has joined, let no man put asunder. Why then, they said, did Moses enjoin that a man might give his wife a writ of separation, and then he might put her away? He told them, It was to suit your hard hearts that Moses allowed you to put your wives away; it was not so at the beginning of things. And I tell you that he who puts away his wife, not for any unfaithfulness of hers, and so marries another, commits adultery; and he too commits adultery, who marries her after she has been put away. At this his disciples said to him, If the case stands so between man and wife, it is better not to marry at all. That conclusion, he said, cannot be taken in by everybody, but only by those who have the gift. Matt. 19. 3-11.

God, from the first days of creation, made them man and woman. A man, therefore, will leave his father and mother and will cling to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. Why then, since they are no longer two, but one flesh, what God has joined, let not man put asunder. Mark 10. 6-10. Cf. *ibid.* 11-12; Luke 16. 18.

2. *The teaching of St Paul:*

To the unmarried and to the widows I would say that they will do well to remain in the same state as myself, but if they have not the

gift of continence, let them marry; better to marry than to feel the heat of passion. For those who have married already, the precept holds which is the Lord's precept, not mine; the wife is not to leave the husband (if she has left him, she must either remain unmarried, or go back to her own husband again), and the husband is not to put away his wife. 1 Cor. 7. 8-12.

A married woman, for instance, is bound by law to her husband while he lives; if she is widowed, she is quit of her husband's claim on her; she will be held an adulteress if she gives herself to another man during her husband's lifetime, but once he is dead she is quit of his claim, and can give herself to another man without adultery. Rom. 7. 2-3.

A man does well to abstain from all commerce with women. But to avoid the danger of fornication, let every man keep his own wife, and every woman her own husband. Let every man give his wife what is her due, and every woman do the same by her husband; he, not she, claims the right over her body, as she, not he, claims the right over his. Do not starve one another, unless perhaps you do so for a time, by mutual consent, to have more freedom for prayer; come together again, or Satan will tempt you, weak as you are. 1 Cor. 7. 1-5. (For his praise of virginity, cf. *ibid.* 7. 25-39.)

Wives must obey their husbands as they would obey the Lord. The man is the head to which the woman's body is united, just as Christ is the head of the Church, he the Saviour on whom the safety of his body depends; and women must owe obedience at all points to their husbands, as the Church does to Christ. You who are husbands must shew love to your wives, as Christ shewed love to the Church when he gave himself up on its behalf. He would hallow it, purify it by bathing it in the water to which his word gave life; he would summon it into his own presence, the Church in all its beauty, no stain, no wrinkle, no such disfigurement; it was to be holy, it was to be spotless. And that is how husband ought to love wife, as if she were his own body; in loving his wife, a man is but loving himself. It is unheard of, that a man should bear ill-will to his own flesh and blood; no, he keeps it fed and warmed; and so it is with Christ and his Church; we are limbs of his body; flesh and bone, we belong to him. That is why a man will leave his father and mother and will cling to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. Yes, those words are a high mystery, and I am applying them here to Christ and his Church. Meanwhile, each of you is to love his wife as he would love himself, and the wife is to pay reverence to her husband. Eph. 5. 22-33. Cf. 1 Pet. 3. 1-7.

SECTION II. GENERAL COMMENTS

I. LITURGICAL

1. *Meaning of the Epiphany:*

The echoes of the Feast of the Epiphany can still be heard in the liturgy of this Sunday. In the Eastern liturgies the Epiphany commemorated three things in which the majesty, divinity and power of the Child Jesus were manifested, namely, the adoration of the Magi, the baptism of Christ and the miracle at Cana. There are still some traces of this in the liturgy of the West, in the antiphons for the *Benedictus* and *Magnificat*.

2. *The symbolism of the miracle of Cana:*

It represents the manifestation of the power of Christ, being the first of Christ's miracles, manifesting his glory, as St John tells us.

(a) *The new economy of grace:*

We can see in this miracle a symbol of the new economy of grace, as one of the antiphons for the Feast of the Epiphany says: Today the Church is joined to her Spouse, since in Cana the water was turned into wine. And what union is this, save that of love and charity? It is the wine of charity which is symbolized by that into which the water was converted.

The Jewish people did not know this wine of love. The synagogue had only managed to produce acid grapes, but Christ, the true Vine, has given us the good wine of love, which was missing in the Old Law.

So that the symbolism may be complete, the liturgy presents Mary to us, since, in this new economy of love, together with Christ as his helper and co-mediatrix, by the Cross and in heaven, stands Mary.

(b) *The Eucharist:*

Another symbol, also liturgical, is that of the Eucharist, as the Church shows us by choosing as the Communion antiphon the words of the chief steward of the feast at Cana. The good wine is that of the chalice of the sacrifice, the body and blood of Christ as food and drink, of which we partake at Communion. Here the Christian may well find a reason for giving thanks to Christ for his mercy, manifested in Cana by the changing of the water into wine, and in the Church, by the change of wine into his body and blood.

(c) *The dignity of marriage:*

Commentators have always seen in the fact of our Lord's presence at this marriage feast the enhanced dignity of marriage in his new Law. This union would now be a sacrament, with a special symbolism all its own, that of the union between Christ and his Church, as we shall see later.

II. EXEGETIC AND MORAL NOTES

A: The Epistle: Romans 12. 6-16

1. *Argument:*

To understand the verses chosen for today's Epistle we must also read those which go before. The Apostle begins the chapter with an exhortation to a sacrifice of self by means of a perfect fulfilling of the divine will. This demands that no one should think too much of himself, nor seek to dominate others. Then appears the Paul we know, the man of high principles. He will expound one of these in verse 8, which explains what he says in verse 7, and on which the whole of his discourse depends. We are one body in Christ, in which each member has its proper function, all of them necessary, but all subordinated to the common good; in humility, with the sole idea of forming one body (cf. 1 Cor. 12. 12 ff.).

Among these members of Christ's body, some have special gifts, called the charismata, which they must administer according to the graces given to them; others form the general body of the faithful. The former possess the charismata; the latter, charity. Or perhaps it would be better to say that the former practise charity through the administration of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; the latter through the ordinary Christian virtues.

2. *Texts:*(a) **The use of the charismata:**

They have disappeared long ago, but the principles laid down for their use also have a general application for all those who exercise the apostolate in the Church. The general principle is that each one should use the gifts which God has given him for the whole body, not for his own profit or glory. There is particular emphasis on alms-deeds and the way they should be done.

(b) **Charity:**

The fundamental law, before which all other graces must bow down in humility. One day the latter will disappear, but charity will live on and grow in the eternal vision of God.

The Apostle's teaching on this supreme virtue is:

- i. that it should be sincere;
- ii. loving the neighbour in such a way that we may reprove his vices while imitating his virtues;
- iii. it should be fraternal, in Christ;
- iv. free from pride and with no intention of lording it over our neighbour;
- v. it should be lively and awake, not lazy;
- vi. fervent;
- vii. disposed always to serve Christ.

(c) **Sincere:**

The Greek word gives the idea of one who loves without hypocrisy, without a mask or deception—one who loves in deed and in truth (1 John 3. 18).

Hold what is evil in abomination, fix all your desire on what is good. We must not hate the person of the sinner, only his evil deeds. We may have a right to judge the action—in theory; but we have no right to judge the person.

As the love of brothers demands. . . . This implies a love which is more effective and deeper than ordinary love. Such love is the sign of a true Christian.

Eager to give one another precedence . . . an effect of true love and Christian humility. Seeking after personal honour is always prejudicial to Christian charity and to individual perfection.

(d) **Aglow with the spirit:**

Fervour, a fruit of charity which gives force to the actions of other virtues; St Basil defines it in general terms:

- i. it is the desire to do good;
- ii. putting all our strength into the action concerned;
- iii. with a constancy which obliges us to refuse nothing and to spare no effort;
- iv. like slaves upon the Lord.

In other words, loving God in our neighbour—the test of true charity.

(e) **Buoyed up by hope:**

It comes naturally from any service of the Lord, which assures eternal life for us. It alone can give us joy in the midst of tribulation. In daily life there are more reasons for sadness than there are for joy; but hope can provide the latter for us. It is an eminently practical virtue, whose symbol in Christian art is the anchor! Persevering in prayer, says the Apostle; a condition of hope, whose help is in the Lord.

(f) **Finally, humility:**

St Paul tells us of nine acts of this virtue in today's Epistle, and all merit consideration. Live in harmony of mind, falling in with the opinions of common folk; instead of following conceited thoughts; never give yourselves airs of wisdom. Do not repay injury with injury; study your behaviour in the world's sight as well as in God's. Keep peace with all men, where it is possible, for your part. Do not avenge yourselves, beloved; allow retribution to run its course. . . . Rather feed thy enemy, if he is hungry, give him drink if he is thirsty. . . . Do not be disarmed by malice; disarm malice with kindness.

B: The Gospel: John 2. 1-11

1. *Marriage:*

The Gospels speak many times of marriage ceremonies, and therefore it may be as well for us to give a general description of them here, for reference purposes later.

In a country which was awaiting the coming of the Messiah and which respected as a divine command the order to increase the human race, marriage was invested with special ceremonies in which everyone took part.

There were two Jewish ceremonies, separated by a year's interval in the case of an unmarried girl and a month if it was a widow. The first was celebrated with less solemnity, although it was preceded by much bargaining and economic contracts. The true ceremony was the espousals, which in those days had the force of a marriage contract.

The public feast would take place a year later, generally on a Wednesday, the middle day between two Sabbaths. In the evening the friends of the bride would go to her house, provided with oil lamps, both to light their way and also to provide an illuminated *cortège* for her later, when her bridegroom arrived.

The bridegroom, accompanied by his friends, went to the house of the bride, from which a procession would be formed of the whole village, the doctors and Rabbi among them, to take the couple to their new house, where the feast would be celebrated. The usual Palestinian austerity and poverty were forgotten on such occasions; the young men sat down to eat and drink, while the women attended to the service and to other domestic details. In charge of all this was the chief steward, someone chosen by the bridegroom for this purpose, who was afterwards toasted and congratulated by the guests. In a word, a typical village scene.

What would happen at such a feast if the wine ran short? We can imagine it; laughter, comments, indignation! The newly-married couple would never be allowed to forget it all their lives!

2. *The wedding at Cana:*

We can distinguish three or even four elements in this scene from the Gospel: the wedding; the petition of Mary; the miracle; its effects.

(a) *Cana of Galilee:*

A town rather larger than Nazareth. Mary was obviously known there. Christ may even have done some work for the people of Cana, since in small villages near one another such a thing is frequent.

(b) *Jesus was also invited—and his disciples:*

The disciples are more important than might appear at first sight. They would talk about Christ, about John the Baptist who had proclaimed him to be the Lamb of God!

(c) *Mary knows it—the hour has come:*

Jesus had been absent for a longer time than usual, and Mary accepts the fact that the time for his public life has come. She knows that the sword of Simeon is being sharpened. Therefore she begins to exchange her rôle as mother for that of helper and mediatrix. Meanwhile the disciples join in the general conversation, listening to Jesus and waiting for what is to come.

(d) Cana represents the Christian home, blessed by God, where there may be many difficulties and sorrows, but they can all be dealt with by Jesus through the intercession of Mary.

Jesus and Mary assist at this wedding feast; a sure sign that God has blessed, not merely man's labour, but also his periods of rest and enjoyment.

3. *Mary's petition:*

Like the other women, Mary would be helping with the serving of the meal, and she noticed, even before the steward of the feast, that there would soon be a shortage of wine. Very simply she indicates the need to Jesus: Son, they have no wine left.

There has been much written about the reply given her by Jesus, which has also been variously translated. Perhaps the simple translation is the best, as usual: What has that to do with us? My hour has not yet come. This would fit in with the fact that both Jesus and Mary were only invited guests, after all, and as such were not responsible for the organization of the feast. The word *woman* is certainly not a term of disrespect, as we can gather from other places where it is used almost as a term of honour or praise.

The phrase, My hour is not yet come, implies that, but for Mary's intercession, Christ would not have begun his public miracles at the marriage feast.

4. *The miracle:*

We may begin by noting Mary's absolute confidence in her son, by the fact that she told the servants: Do whatever he tells you. Absolute obedience to God's will, which was also the key-note of her own life.

There were six waterpots standing there, made of stone because that material did not contain any legal impurity, as did earthenware. Each held three firkins. Their purpose was to hold the water necessary for the ritual purifications of the Jews.

Jesus begins to act, and with authority. He tells the servants to fill these waterpots with water from the well. They had taken Mary's advice to heart, because they obeyed without any complaint, although the task would not have been an easy one, especially if it turned out to be a joke in rather bad taste. When they had finished their task he told them: Draw out now, and give a draught to the master of the feast. It is generally supposed that Christ turned the

contents of the six waterpots into wine, but the verb used here for 'draw' implies the act of drawing water from a well, and so it may be that the wine appeared from the well itself rather than from the pots.

The description of the scene is so graphic that we can almost see the steward tasting the wine and his surprise at its quality. Why had the bridegroom not informed him beforehand that he had such a good wine to offer his guests? He approaches him and mentions the fact. Notice the delicate gesture on the part of Christ, who not merely gave them the wine they needed, but made sure that it was a good wine.

The purpose of the miracle is also described to us by St John, who was an eye-witness of it. He is really telling us of his own emotions when he says that his disciples believed in him. The news was spread abroad; the public life of Jesus had begun in earnest.

SECTION III. THE FATHERS

I. ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

(Since the main theme for preaching on this Sunday is that of Christian marriage we have included here some extracts from Hom. 20 in *Epist. ad Ephes.* PG. 62, 135-150.)

After pointing out the beauty of married love, which comes mainly from the fact that, from the very beginning, it was under the special protection of God, St John goes on to deal with various themes which derive from this love.

1. *The wife is subject to her husband:*

From this love are born both great evils and great advantages for the human race and for society, since nothing has such a great influence on our lives as the love of man for woman . . . for which some take up arms and others lose their very lives. That is why St Paul, in treating of this point, says: Women, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord. Why? Because if both live in harmony then the children will be well educated, the servants will obey, neighbours will be edified, and so also will friends and relations. But if the opposite happens, then everything will fall into ruin. When generals are in agreement the whole army fights well; but if there is a lack of unity in the higher commands, then everything is upside down. . . .

In continuation the Apostle indicates the reasons why the husband is the head of the wife; it is because Christ is the head of his Church and the saviour of his body. . . . It is the head which gives health to the whole body. In accordance with this principle St Paul states the appointed place of each one in the bosom of the family. To the husband belongs the power of government; to the woman the duty of obedience; while the mission of both must be founded on love.

2. *The husband must love and sacrifice himself for his wife:*

Listen to what Paul demands of you: Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church. . . . Have you seen the measure of her obedience? Then realize that your love must be equally great. Do you wish your wife to obey you as the Church obeys Christ? Then love your wife as Christ loves the Church. Even though you may have to give your life for that love, even though you have to undergo a thousand sufferings, you will never be able to equal the sacrifice of Christ. For you suffer these things for a wife who is united to you, while he suffered for a spouse who hated him. Just as the Lord knew well how to bring to his feet, through his great love, the one who fled from him, who hated, despised and spat upon him, insulted him without shame. And on his part, no threats, no insults, no fear. So must you act towards your wife. Even though you see that she despises you or insults you, on your part you must bring her into subjection with love and friendship. There is no bond so strong as that of love to reconcile husband and wife. Perhaps you may be able to dominate a slave through fear, although I doubt it, because he would probably escape; but where the companion of your life is concerned, she who is the mother of your children, the cause and occasion of your joys, you must learn to subject her by love alone.

What kind of life awaits the husband whose wife hates him because she feels herself to be a mere slave? If you have suffered anything through her fault, do not throw it in her face. Christ did not act like that; instead he gave himself for his Church, to save her and sanctify her.

3. *A woman's true beauty:*

Do not look for that in a woman which she herself cannot attain. Seek, instead, that beauty which you can give her—beauty of soul. And thus you imitate Christ. External beauty, nearly always accompanied by pride, is the mother of jealousy and will cause you to live always in the midst of suspicions and doubts. . . . Is there anything more beautiful than the stars? When they were first created even the angels marvelled at them. Yet you, being so accustomed to seeing them, now hardly give them a glance. How much more true is this of the beauty of a woman! One illness can remove it all. Therefore, seek a wife who is modest, kind, moderate and calm. These are definite signs of beauty. . . .

Do not seek riches or position in this world, but rather riches of soul. No one should marry a woman just because she is rich. Why do you worry so much about money, which is the least valuable of all things, and do not worry at all about the main thing? When you think of marrying off a son your first thought is not to find him a good wife, but one who is rich and of good position.

4. *Let the husband love his wife as his own body:*

Do not tell me: My wife has this or that defect. Do you not see that your own body is full of imperfections? One is lame, another has twisted feet, another is an invalid, yet they do not cut off those injured members but, on the contrary, prefer them to others, because they are theirs. St Paul wishes us to have the same love for our wives, not because we have the same human nature, but because we are one flesh, the husband as the head and the wife the members.

5. *Respect and love in marriage:*

The fear of which Paul speaks is a reverential fear, which should go hand in hand with love. From the harmony of this reverential fear on the part of the wife and love on the part of her husband is born the perfect harmony and peace of a true marriage. This love must be greater than that which a man has for his parents, because he abandons them to be joined to his wife. We should not think that a woman must take a lower place just because it is demanded of her that she should have reverential fear of her husband; because he is bound by something greater, namely, by love, from which nothing can excuse him. . . .

When you hear the word *fear*, remember that you may only exact a fear which is worthy of one who is free, not that of a slave, since your wife is your own body, and if you treat her as a slave then you ill-treat your own body. Of what fear are we speaking, then? Of one which does not contradict, rebel or seek to command. That is the fear we are talking about and which alone is demanded of her. If you love her as you have been told to do, then you will attain more things through that love than by fear, because your affection will cause her to respect you. Remember that she is of the weaker sex and for that reason must be indulged a little.

The woman is second only to her husband in the running of the house and almost equal to him in dignity. . . . But the husband has greater obligations, such as that of representing Christ and of instructing and correcting his wife so that she shall be holy and without stain. If you can only achieve this, then together with it you will also attain all other good things. Seek the things of God; the way will be shown to you clearly enough. . . . If you know how to administer your own house then you will also be able to administer the society of the Church, because the home is a replica of that society, in miniature.

II. ST AUGUSTINE

(We give here some brief extracts from PL. 42, 684, where he mentions this miracle of the water made into wine as a symbol of the two natures in Christ and the union between him and his mystical body.)

1. *Christ's humility a remedy for man's pride:*

You know, for as believers in Christ you have already learned it and we, in our preaching to you, have constantly repeated it, that the remedy for man's pride lies in Christ's humility. Man would not have fallen had it not been for pride, for pride is the beginning of all sin. To undo the beginning of sin there had to be a beginning of grace. So, if pride is the beginning of sin, by what could that puffed up pride be healed unless God had become lowly and humble? Let man be ashamed to be proud, since God himself has become humble.

For when a man is commanded to be humble, he becomes scornful; when he is injured, he is urged by his pride to take revenge, as if another's hurt could bring profit to any man! Being offended, he seeks to be revenged for the injury he has suffered, seeking ease in another's pain and achieving only more suffering. Therefore the Lord has deigned to become lowly, thus teaching us the way, if we would but walk in it.

See how, among other things, the Son of God came to a wedding; he who, together with the Father, made marriage. As the first woman, through whom sin came, was made from man without woman, so the man by whom sin was to be destroyed, was made without man from a woman. We fell because of the first; we rise again through the latter. . . .

2. *Christ, in his humility, is the way to heaven:*

He who could do such great things was hungry, he thirsted and was weary, he slept. He was seized, beaten and put to death. That is his way. Walk by humility, that you may come to eternal life. Christ as God is the land towards which we are travelling; Christ as man is the way by which we go. We go to him and by him. Should we be afraid lest we go astray? He departed not from the Father, yet he came to us. Nursed at the breast, he holds the world in his hand. He lay in a manger, yet he had care for his angels. . . . And so, having suffered in his lowliness, having died and been buried, he rose again and ascended into heaven, where he abides at the right hand of the Father. But here, on earth, he is destitute in his poor. . . .

3. *Every man a beggar in God's sight:*

And what are you? Rich or poor? Many say to me: I am poor; and they speak the truth. But I distinguish a poverty that has something and one that has nothing. Someone has much, both of gold and silver. Would that he might believe himself to be poor! He proclaims that he is poor if he acknowledges the poor around him. Why? Because however much you possess, you are a beggar where God is concerned, and I shall prove it to you, from your very prayers.

You pray for something; and how are you not poor when you have to beg? What is more, you ask for bread, for do you not say: Give us

this day our daily bread? You who beg for bread, are you rich or poor? Yet Christ says to you: Give me of that which I gave to you. For when you came into this world, what did you bring with you? You brought nothing and you cannot take anything away. Why, then, do you not give me of what is mine? for you have an abundance while the poor man is in need.

Recall your birth. You were born naked. Here you have found many things, but you did not bring anything with you. I ask for what is mine; give it to me and I will repay you. I have been bountiful to you; now make me your debtor. I say more; be you my moneylender. Give me only a little, and I will return much. Give me earthly things and I will make my return in heavenly goods. Give me things of the present, and I will repay with those that are eternal. I shall return thee to thyself when I shall return thee to me.

III. ST CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

(Extracts from his commentary on the Gospel of the day. PG. 73, 223 ff.)

Christ came to the wedding:

He came, not so much to partake of the wedding feast, as to work his great miracle and, furthermore, so that he might sanctify the beginning of human generation according to the flesh. It was but fitting that he who was about to restore the very nature of man and bring it to a better state should give his blessing, not only to those already born, but also to those who were afterwards to be born, sanctifying their coming into this world. . . . By his presence he sanctified marriage, and he who is the joy and delight of all mankind has taken away the ancient sadness of child-birth. . . .

Many things, also wondrous, are prefigured at the same time by this, the earliest of all his signs. For honest nuptials are sanctified and the curse that was once laid on womankind is taken away. No more shall she bring forth children in sorrow, since Christ has given his blessing on the beginning of human generation. . . . The word of God has come down from heaven, as he has said elsewhere (John 6. 29), so that, as a spouse, he might persuade the nature which has been joined to himself to be filled with the seed of wisdom. Humanity, as is fitting, is called a bride; the Saviour, the bridegroom. . . .

The nuptials are celebrated on the third day, that is, in the last age of the world, for the three numbers signify for us a beginning, a middle period and an end. So do we divide any period of time. . . . For he struck us down because of Adam's sin and on the third day he healed those who were stricken with corruption and death. . . . in these last times, when he restored all human nature, by becoming man and by raising it up from the dead with himself.

Moreover, the place of the event is told to us, in the village of Cana of Galilee, says the Evangelist. The celebration was not held in Jerusalem, nor in Judea, but in a country of the Gentiles, for Galilee is of the Gentiles, as the prophet says (Matt. 4. 15). For it is plain that the synagogue of the Jews had rejected the heavenly bridegroom; but by the Church of the Gentiles he was received with a joyful heart.

And the Saviour came to the wedding, not as one uninvited, but as one sought for by the multitude of the voices of the saints. Then, as the Evangelist says, the guests ran short of wine; for the law brought nothing to perfection. The code of Moses did not suffice for perfect happiness. Neither was that inward guide to natural sobriety equal to the task of leading us to salvation. So of us also it could be said: They have no wine. But the bountiful God does not despise us who are striving in hunger for the good things. He offers us a wine which is far better than the one we had. For the letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth.

Further, the Law had no completeness of good things, but the teaching of the Gospel has in it the fullness of every blessing.

IV. ST BERNARD

(St Bernard has a sermon on our Lady, PL. 183, 438-448, which is worthy of note for the ideas it contains about Mary's power as mediatrix. We give here a very brief scheme of the main ideas, together with the final passage from the famous Hom. 2. in 'Missus est', PL. 183, 70-71.)

1. *Mary, mediatrix:*

Christ is the source of our divine life; while Mary is the aqueduct or channel by which that life is brought to us. Thus the shame of Eve was redeemed in her illustrious daughter, while man's complaint that he was led into sin by the woman God had given him was silenced for ever. Instead he would now be able to say: The woman whom you gave me has, in her turn, given me the blessed fruit. If there is any hope for us, any health or any grace, it comes to us from her to whom the Lord himself gave the fullness of grace.

It was Mary who brought Christ to us from heaven, because without her *fiat* he would never have been born. When the Virgin asked the angel: How can this thing be, because I know not man? his reply gives us to understand that it was something beyond even his understanding. It was the Holy Spirit, not that of any angel, who would come upon her; the power of the most High One which would overshadow her, not that of any angel.

This Word must not go back to God from us empty, as it were. To be sure of this we should give all our gifts into the hands of Mary, so that she may carry them to God for us. Our hands may

still be stained with many impurities, but her hands at least are clean.

2. *Mary, Star of the Sea:*

Whoever you are who find yourself tossed by the tempestuous waves of the sea of this age, rather than walking on dry land, do not take your eyes off the brightness of that star if you do not wish to be drowned in the tempest. If the winds of temptation rise, if you strike the rocks of tribulation, look at the star, call on Mary. If you are lashed by the waves of pride, detraction, ambition or emulation, look on Mary, call on that star. If anger, avarice or carnal pleasures drive towards destruction the little boat of your soul, look on Mary. If, confused at the thought of the enormity of your sins, disturbed at the sight of your stained conscience and terrified by the idea of the judgement, you begin to be submerged in the abyss of sadness or despair, think of Mary and call on her. Let her name be ever on your lips and in your heart, and in order to obtain the power of her intercession, depart not from the example of her virtues. You will never go astray if you follow her, never despair if you call on her or be lost if you think of her. If she has you by the hand you will never fall; if she protects you, there is nothing you need fear. You will not falter if she leads you. You will reach port safely if she protects you. Thus, in your very self you will experience the truth of those words: The name of the Virgin was Mary.

SECTION IV. THEOLOGIANS

I. ST THOMAS AQUINAS

(We give a summary of his ideas on marriage which are most useful for preaching.)

1. *Marriage, a union:*

Marriage is an invisible union of souls by which each of the contracting parties binds himself to indivisible fidelity to the other (3. q. 29. a. 2. c).

Marriage implies a certain type of association . . . in which two people come together for one and the same end, namely, the generation and education of children and a common domestic life (Suppl. q. 44. a. 1. c).

2. *It is an institution of the natural law:*

Because nature inclines us towards it, not merely for the generation of children, but also for the purpose of their formation and education. It would be impossible to attain this end unless there was a certain stability in this state of marriage, together with an obligation on the part of the husband towards one particular woman. There is also the question of mutual help in the domestic society, in which both man and woman have to pay their respective parts (q. 41. a. 1. c).

However it is not of obligation for all, since nature does not direct us towards it as towards something necessary for individual perfection, but rather for the perfection of human society as a whole. Just as we are not all bound to be farmers, or builders. Such inclinations are satisfied provided some dedicate themselves to one task, others to another (q. 41. a. 2. c).

It is a sacrament because it has all the conditions laid down for one; and also because it produces its effect through the passion of Christ, which is a symbol of the union between the two contracting parties. . . . The words which manifest consent have as their effect a union which is a sacrament; and this same union, by virtue of a divine institution, is a disposition for the reception of grace (q. 42. a. 3 *ad 2um*).

3. *It is indissoluble:*

Marriage, according to the intention of nature, is destined for the education of children, not for a while only, but all their lives. For this reason it is part of the same natural law that parents should save their goods in order to be able to leave something to their children. Since the children are a good which is common to both male and female, it is indispensable that the conjugal society should be a permanent thing; for which reason the indissolubility of marriage is part of the natural law (q. 67. a. 1. c).

Marriage is ordained for the common good, by reason of its principal end, which is the good of the offspring, even though it is also intended for the good of the contracting parties, so far as its secondary end is concerned, namely, in so far as it is a remedy against concupiscence. That is why marriage laws attend more to the common good than to what may happen to one or other individual.

Thus, even though indissolubility may, on occasions, not be for the good of some particular child, it is convenient for the common good of all children in general.

Indissolubility would appear to be among the secondary principles of the natural law. . . . Consequently the repudiation of the woman does not seem to go against a primary law of nature, and therefore not against a primary precept, but against the secondary precepts (q. 67. a. 2. c).

II. G. ALASTRUEY

(We give a summary of the ideas expressed by G. Alastruey in his *Tratado de la Virgen Santisima* on the question of Mary, distributor and mediatrix of all graces. Cf. B.A.C. part 3, ch. 3 and 4.)

1. *Subjective redemption or distribution of graces:*

Redemption may be considered either objectively or subjectively. Objective redemption is that by which graces are acquired; subjective redemption distributes and applies the fruits of the former to

all men as individuals. Objective redemption can be likened to a medicine which is prepared for all; but even though it has power to cure all, it is of no use unless it is applied. Therefore the co-operation of Mary in subjective redemption is her personal intervention in the application and distribution of these redeeming graces.

This co-operation can be mediate or radical—which consists in the fact that she brought Christ into the world; or it can be immediate and formal, inasmuch as she intervenes in the actual distribution of grace. Christ, our Redeemer and the one Mediator between God and man, always making intercession for us, is by right the dispenser of all grace. The task has been confided to Mary, not by right, but by a free and positive decree of God.

2. *The doctrine of the Church:*

From the beginning of the nineteenth century almost all theologians affirm this truth which, taking into consideration the teaching of the Popes and also that of tradition, can be said to be *proxima fide*. Of the thirteen Papal documents quoted by the author we shall mention one, the Encyclical of Pius X, *Ad diem illam*, 2 February 1904. He says: Through this communion of sorrows and wills between Mary and Christ, Mary merited to be the most worthy restorer of a fallen world and therefore dispenser of all the gifts which Christ won for us by his blood and by his death.

Obviously, Christ possesses the sole and exclusive right to be the distributor of his gifts, since he alone has won them for us, as our mediator. However, due to this communion of wills and sufferings which united the Mother and the Son, it was granted to Mary to be the mediatrix and most powerful advocate of the human race with her Son. Christ is the fountain of whose fullness we have all received; Mary is, as St Bernard says, the aqueduct, the neck which joins the head to the body.

Leaving aside the proofs which the author brings forward from Scripture, we give a summary of the tradition of the Church in this matter.

(a) *Up to the seventh century:*

The doctrine is contained implicitly in the teaching that Mary is the second Eve, in the general affirmation of her universal mediation with her Son, in the truth of her universal motherhood. There are some texts which are even more explicit.

(b) *From the eighth to the fifteenth centuries:*

Explicit teaching that all graces come to us from Mary. From the twelfth century the doctrine is clear. Cf. St Bernard and St John Damascene, PG. 496, 702 ff. You also, O Mary, are a source of the true light, inexhaustible treasury of life itself, fertile spring of all blessings, reconciling us and bringing to us all good things. . . . You have reached the royal throne of your Son . . . and you are, for the

whole world, through your eminent virtues, a most sweet source of joy, beyond compare; for the patriarchs, their eternal delight, exultation of the prophets, the blessing of the whole world, holiness itself, rest for those who labour, consolation of the afflicted, medicine for the sick, haven for those who are buffeted by storms, pardon for sinners, encouragement in sadness, the helper of those who pray.

(c) *Up to the definition of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception:*

It is the constant teaching of great theologians, such as SS. Peter Canisius, Robert Bellarmine, Louis Grignon, Alphonsus Liguori, etc.

(d) *After the definition until our own time:*

In the great Encyclicals of the Popes and in the writings of theologians, almost without any exception, the doctrine is clearly taught and the feeling in the Church is general.

3. *Theological reasons for it:*

(a) *Her divine motherhood:*

Through it she enters, in some way, into the very hypostatic union itself and attains the fullness of grace. Therefore she is a most fitting subject for this concession, which, although it is separable from her universal motherhood, is yet linked with it in some ways.

(b) *Her co-operation with Christ in the redemption:*

It is logical, says St Thomas, that one who acquires good things for others should also have a hand in their distribution. If Mary was united with Christ in the objective redemption, why should she not also be united with him in its subjective application?

(c) *Through her spiritual motherhood:*

This, it should be remembered, has an objective basis. Mary is the spiritual mother of all men, and that office, of itself, demands the right to grant those graces by which we are re-born spiritually.

(d) *Through her office as queen of the kingdom in which Christ is king:*

Through that office she has the function of directing her subjects towards the ends for which that kingdom was founded, i.e. towards eternal life.

4. *Causality and method in this distribution:*

Mary contributes as a moral cause through her intercession.

She is not a mere instrumental or ministerial cause, as are the sacraments or the Christian priesthood, because she was not chosen to be an instrument but a consort of the King. Constituted, under Christ, the treasurer and distributor of all graces, she can, under Christ, administer those goods of grace as she pleases.

This ministration is effected by means of her intercession, which is defined as the expression of one's own will, directed to God so that God may fulfil the petition. In this matter it is the expression of her will that God should grant grace to those for whom she asks it. She has not merely this power to intercede, but also the power to dispense grace, which has been granted to her by God. She is never refused when she intercedes for men, for two reasons principally:

(a) Because of her divine maternity:

This gives her a special relationship to the Persons of the Trinity.

(b) Because of her co-operation with Christ in the work of redemption:

Together with Christ, she is the co-mediatrix, which implies that:

(c) She intervenes in both objective and subjective redemption:

She gave Christ his body, not merely physically, but also voluntarily. Through that body he redeemed mankind. She also co-operated in that redemption by her own personal acts of will, in full conformity with the will of God. Together with Christ, she satisfied for the sins of men and also merited, in her own way and always under Christ, the graces of redemption through the cross.

Under Christ, she has the power of distributing the graces merited by them both, each in their own way. By the double title to the honour, she is called Mediatrix of all Graces, although the title is generally understood of her second function as distributor of God's gifts to men.

SECTION V. SPIRITUAL WRITERS

I. ST CHARLES BORROMEIO

(Summary of his sermon on the dignity of marriage, based on the scene of the marriage feast of Cana.)

1. *The first miracle:*

If Christ in the temple at the age of twelve astonished the doctors of the law, what must his first appearance have been when he began his public life? What means would he use to announce himself to the world? He had already been announced in many ways, by means of the angels at his birth, the shepherds, the star which led the Magi, John the Baptist, and his own Father, who has given testimony to him on the day of his baptism. But how will he himself announce himself to us? Through his miracles, which he gives us as a proof of his teaching.

2. *Cana—humility:*

He chose, for his first miracle, a humble village, miles from the capital, and among simple folk. How happy are the poor and how

much Christ loves them! He does not exclude anyone from his graces, but he does unite himself in a very special way with the poor, whom he always preferred to the rich, to whom he always united himself and gave them his special signs of love. We may despise them; but he chose them as his friends.

3. *Cana and Christian marriage:*

Who would have thought that Christ would begin his public life by assisting at a marriage feast? But Eternal Wisdom knew well how men would corrupt the whole idea of marriage and wished to demonstrate the holiness of that divine institution.

4. *The noble origin of marriage and its symbolism:*

Marriage is noble by its very origin; created at the same time as man himself; in paradise; in innocence, by God himself.

But how much greater is its dignity if we see it flowing, like the other sacraments, from the wounded side of Christ, hanging on the cross? Added to its natural dignity is this, its sacramental character.

But even this is overshadowed by its symbolism. God's love for the human, for the individual soul and for his Church, was immense. And do you remember the symbol he used to illustrate this love? Marriage. For this reason shall a man leave father and mother and cleave to his wife. . . . A great mystery, in Christ and his Church. Would that men could understand these mysteries! Then they would not celebrate their marriages as they do today, without knowing what they are doing and with an end in view which is far from that of God. To marry with a view to money or to the mere satisfaction of desire—that is far from the plan God had in mind. That is to do injury to God and the sacrament, an insult to the union of Christ and his Church, which is signified by marriage.

5. *The ends of marriage:*

Apart from this end of marriage as a sacramental symbol, there are others, of which the first is the propagation of the human race. But remember one thing; this end of marriage is not that of simple increase in the population, but rather that of an increase in the number of the servants of God and his true adorers (Tob. 6. 17-22).

Therefore the end of matrimony is not simply that of breeding children; but rather that of giving being to new citizens of heaven, and those parents attain this end who, after bringing children into this world, then teach them that they have been born for God rather than for the world. This was the end primarily assigned to marriage when man was first created; but then sin entered into the picture and other ends were added to it. Man became weak and needed help. The desire for company is a natural one and our very weakness makes it difficult for us to live alone. Here is an evil which finds its remedy in marriage, through the mutual help given to each other by those who contract it.

Some men are strong and others weak; but most men fall into the second class, for whom it was written that it is better to marry than to burn (1 Cor. 7. 9). Christ, who came not merely to forgive sin but also to provide us with means to prevent us falling into it, gave us the sacrament of matrimony, to remedy this defect.

6. *Preparation for marriage:*

Men of our day do not dwell on any of these considerations, nor do they even think, when they marry, about the fact that they are taking on something which will last a lifetime. Evil causes have evil effects, and from this cause we see arise that multitude of sick or ailing children, and broken marriages, where children are badly educated and youth become a slave to the devil.

When you lament the present condition of the conjugal state you must not blame marriage itself, because it is not evil; rather you must blame the violation of the sacrament by those who do not marry as they should.

To the young I would say: Before you marry, think well on what you are about to undertake. Enter into that state in the name of the Lord, and then he who has begun the good work in you will surely finish it. Above all, before marrying, pray hard that God may illuminate and guide you; and once you are married, then continue to pray, as St Paul tells you (1 Cor. 7. 5).

What a pity it is that Tobias, advised by a young man whose angelic nature was hidden from him, appreciated the dignity of marriage; yet we, who are taught by Christ and aware of the dignity of this sacrament, forget that we are the children of Christians and marry those who know not God, in the midst of great pomp and luxury sometimes, certainly with too much expenditure on things which are not essential.

II. ST ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

(We give here the main lines of the argument of his sermon for this Sunday.)

1. *The power of Mary:*

St Antoninus says that the prayers of the saints are those of subjects; those of Mary are the prayers of a mother, and for that reason carry with them the note of commands. Richard of St Lawrence says that it is only right and just that the Son should communicate his power to his Mother. St Brigid tells us how she heard our Lord in a vision say to his Mother: Ask me what you will, because on earth you did not deny me anything and I cannot refuse you anything in heaven. St Gregory, Archbishop of Nicomedia, says that Christ in heaven continues to fulfil his obligations as a Son. St Gertrude says that Mary has a special ear for the pleas of sinners who desire to repent.

2. *Her mercy:*

St Bernardine affirms that, if Mary at Cana interceded without anyone asking her to do so, how much more will she listen to the prayers of those who beg for her intercession. St Brigid says that Mary has never failed to listen to sinners, while Richard of St Lawrence affirms that if the eyes of the Lord are on the just (Ps. 33. 16) those of Mary are ever fixed on sinners. In the Old Law there were five cities in which sinners found refuge, but as St John Damascene says, we have enough with one—Mary.

St Bonaventure confesses that, when he looked on Mary, he saw in her nothing but mercy. The devil goes about us like a lion seeking to devour us, but Mary surrounds sinners with her mercy in order to procure their salvation. Even before the sinner asks her help, Mary is there, inciting him to ask for it.

The saint ends his sermon by commending to us certain devotions, such as the Rosary, the Litany of our Lady and the Three Hail Marys, said frequently and with devotion.

III. ST LOUIS GRIGNION DE MONTFORT

1. *Fundamental rules for the true devotion to Mary:*

(a) **Christ, the end of all true devotion to Mary:**

The end of all true devotion to Mary is none other than Christ our Saviour, true God and true man; otherwise those devotions will be false and a mere illusion. Christ is the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the beginning and end of all things. . . . God has given us no other foundation for our salvation, for our perfection and our glory. A building raised on any other foundation except this one is built on shifting sand. If the devotion to our Lady separated us in the slightest from Christ, then it would be necessary to reject it as an illusion and a deceit of Satan. If this devotion is necessary for us, it is because, through it, we attain union with Christ more easily, in order to love him and serve him with fidelity.

(b) **We belong to Mary and to Jesus as their slaves:**

If we become loving slaves of Mary it is in order that we may become loving slaves of Christ. For this it is necessary to empty ourselves of all the evil which alone is ours. We must die to ourselves, and so we should choose, each one of us, that devotion to Mary which enables us more easily to attain this end.

(c) **We need a mediator between ourselves and the one Mediator—Christ:**

It is more perfect, since it is more humble, to approach God only through a mediator. For this reason God has granted us such a Mediator. Christ is our advocate with the Father. . . . But have we not a need of another mediator between ourselves and the one

Mediator, Christ? Is our purity so great that we can unite ourselves directly to him? . . . We may well say, with St Bernard, that we do need such a mediator between us and the one Mediator, Christ, and that Mary is the one who can best fill that office. Through her Christ came into the world; and through her we should go to him.

Thus, there are three steps by which we go to God; the first, and the one nearest to us, is Mary; the second is Christ and the third is the Father himself. To go to Jesus it is necessary to go to Mary, who is our Mediatrix by her intercession; to go to the Father it is necessary to approach through Christ, who is our mediator by redemption.

2. Choice of the true devotion to the Virgin Mary:

(a) False devotion:

There are seven kinds of false devotion to Mary. . . .

i. *those who are critical.* They have some kind of devotion to Mary, but in their pride they are critical of the simple practices of piety by which the faithful usually honour Mary.

ii. *scrupulous people.* They are afraid to dishonour the Son by devotion to his Mother. They are annoyed because there are more people on their knees before the altar of the Virgin than there are before the Blessed Sacrament. Just as if one was opposed to the other.

iii. *those whose devotion is exterior.* They lack any interior spirit of devotion; if sensible satisfaction is lacking they abandon the practice of piety very easily. The externals are more important to them than the interior spirit of prayer.

iv. *those who are presumptuous.* Sinners who will not give up their evil way of life, but who presume that they will have time to repent because they are members of this or that Confraternity, or wear this or that Scapular.

v. *the inconstant.* Their devotion goes in waves—at one moment they are full of it, and the next minute they have forgotten all about it. They are fervent one minute; tepid the next.

vi. *the hypocrites.* These cover their sins by apparent devotion to Mary—there is no need to say any more about them.

vii. *the ones who practise this devotion out of personal interest—* to gain some favour, to avoid some evil, cure some illness. Once the need has passed they are indifferent.

(b) True devotion:

i. *it is interior—*i.e. it comes from the spirit and the heart, from the love we have for Mary;

ii. *it is tender;* full of confidence, as a child would have confidence in his mother;

iii. *it is holy;* i.e. leads the soul by the path of virtue, to avoid sin and imitate the virtues of Mary;

iv. *it is constant,* making the soul avoid sin and insist on the practice of virtue.

v. *Finally, it is disinterested,* i.e. inspires the soul to seek God, not itself, and that through his Mother.

SECTION VI. PAPAL TEXTS

(There is one outstanding document on Christian Marriage which every preacher should study before entering on this delicate but necessary matter, i.e. the Encyclical *Casti Connubii* of Pius XI. Since it would be too long to quote here, we shall limit ourselves to some passages from the Allocutions of Pius XII to the recently married, delivered in April, 1942).

1. *The free will of men can tie the marriage knot, but is incapable of untying it:*

This is a bond to which nature herself inclines men, but which is not caused by the principles of nature, being brought about by the free-will act of man. But if the will of the contracting parties can bring it about, that same will is incapable of loosening it. This is true of all valid marriage contracted by a free-will act of the two parties. The 'yes' which springs from your lips under the impulse of love ties the marriage bond around you, and at the same time it binds your wills for ever. Its effect is irrevocable. The audible sound of that expression of your consent passes away; but the consent itself remains fixed for ever, it does not pass away, it is perpetual, because it is consent given to a bond which of its nature is permanent. Any consent which did not make this life-long contract would not be valid.

2. *Human malice has tried to break the firmness of the marriage bond:*

Face to face with this law of indissolubility, human passion has always tried to shake off the yoke, feeling itself tied down and a curb put on its evil desires by means of this bond. It would see in it a tyranny which weighs down consciences with an arbitrary burden, too great for them to bear; a slavery which is an offence against the dignity of the human person. It is true that a bond of this kind can be a real burden, a slavery compared to that of the prisoner's chains. But it can also be a valuable aid and a secure guarantee, rather like the rope which binds climbers together, or the ligaments which unite the parts of the human body and aid their free movement. This is the case in the indissoluble bond of marriage.

3. *It is necessary for the well-being of the husband and especially of the wife:*

Take a look at modern society in those countries where the law of divorce rules and then ask yourselves: Has the world any clear

knowledge of how many times the true dignity of woman has been insulted, trodden under foot and reduced to a vile condition of complete abandonment? How many secret tears have been shed in certain homes and families! How many sighs and pleas have been uttered in vain, in the course of interviews, in the street or in some quiet corner! No; the personal dignity of the husband, and especially that of the wife, have no greater defence or protection than this one of the indissolubility of marriage. Those people commit a grave and serious error who think that they can maintain, protect and increase the cultural level of woman and her whole feminine dignity without the solid foundation of the indissolubility of marriage.

4. *For the future of the children:*

When the will is not firm in its purpose to maintain indissoluble the bond of marriage, then, in both parents and children, there is lacking that tranquil and secure sense of the future, that feeling of absolute confidence, that interior and exterior bond of fidelity, in which domestic happiness finds its deepest root.

Why, you may ask, do we extend such consequences to the children? Because they receive three things from their parents; their being, their nutrition and their education, and for the satisfactory development of all three they need a happy atmosphere. Such a harmonious formation and steady growth is impossible without complete faith in their parents. Any breach of this bond of marriage is, for the children, an act of cruelty, a humiliation and shame, a division of loyalties, separation from those they love, bitterness and—what is more serious still—a grave scandal to them.

SECTION VII. HISTORICAL AND LITERARY MISCELLANY

I. ADVICE OF ST TERESA

If I had to advise parents, I would tell them to take great care about the people with whom their children associate at such an age. Much harm may result from bad company and we are inclined by nature to follow what is worse instead of what is better. This was the case with me. I had a sister much older than myself, from whom, though she was very good and chaste, I learned nothing, whereas from a relative whom we often had in the house I learned every kind of evil. This person was so frivolous in her conversation that my mother had tried very hard to prevent her from coming to the house, realizing what harm she might do me, but there were so many reasons for her coming that she was powerless. I became very fond of meeting this woman. I talked and gossiped with her frequently; she joined me in all my favourite pastimes, and she also introduced

me to other pastimes and talked to me about her conversations and her vanities.

Until I knew her (this was when I was fourteen or perhaps more; by knowing her I mean becoming friendly with her and receiving her confidences) I do not think that I had ever forsaken God by committing any mortal sin, or lost my fear of God, though I was much more concerned about my honour. This last fear was strong enough to prevent me from forfeiting my honour altogether, and I cannot think that I would have acted differently about this for anything in the world; nor was there anyone in the world whom I loved enough to forfeit my honour for. So I might have had the strength not to sin against the honour of God, as my natural inclination led me not to go astray in anything which I thought concerned worldly honour, and I did not realize that I was forfeiting my honour in many other ways. . . .

My father and sister were very concerned about this friendship of mine and often reproved me for it. But since they could not prevent her from coming to the house, their efforts were of no avail, for when it came to doing anything wrong I was very clever. I am sometimes astonished at the harm which can be caused by bad company. If I had not experienced it, I would not have believed it. This is especially so when one is young, for it is then that the harm done is greatest. I wish parents would be warned by me and consider this very carefully. The result of my intercourse with this woman was to change me so much that I lost nearly all my soul's natural inclination to virtue, and was greatly influenced by her and by another person who indulged in the same kind of pastimes.

II. INCIDENT IN THE LIFE OF ST GEMMA GALGANI

Her zeal for souls, especially for the souls of sinners, was tremendous, and on one occasion her confessor heard the dialogue between herself and Christ about the soul of a sinner, to whom Gemma had already written to warn him that he should repent while there was still time and not rely on the good name he had in the town in which he lived.

She began by asking our Lord for the grace of salvation for this sinner, whom she mentioned by name. Our Lord, in the rôle of Supreme Judge, shewed himself reluctant to grant her request. The Saint replied to him:

Why will you not listen to me today? You have done so much for one soul! Then save this one, I beg you. Do not answer me like that, because the word 'abandoned' does not ring true on the lips of one who is mercy itself. You shed your blood for sinners without measure, and will you now begin to measure the quantity of our

sins? You will not listen to me? Then to whom shall I go? You gave your blood for me and not for him? Then I will not rise from this place until you hear me! I offer myself as a victim for him. Will that satisfy you? It is a soul; think of it, my Jesus! A soul for whom you gave your life. One which has cost you so much.

In reply our Lord insisted on the word justice. But the saint would have none of it.

I want nothing to do with your justice, but only with your mercy. Quickly, Lord, seek him out and touch his heart and you will see how soon he is converted to you. At least, try it. My Jesus; you say that you have tried many times to overcome his resistance, but that you have never called him your son. Try again; tell him that you are his father and that he is your child. You will soon see how the sweet name of son and that of father softens his heart.

Our Lord, in order to prove to Gemma that he had good motives for not granting her request, manifested to her one by one the sins the man had committed and with full details. The saint was terrified and remained for a time without saying a word. Then she returned to the struggle.

I know, my Jesus; his sins are many! But I have committed still more and you have pardoned me. Besides, you know that this is not the time to think of his sins, but of the blood you have shed. Save him, O Lord! Please.

When the Lord still remained inflexible Gemma appeared to be on the point of giving up the struggle. Suddenly she thought of yet one more argument, and one which appeared to her irresistible. She returned to the attack.

I know that I am a sinner, she said to Christ; I have heard you say so many times. Therefore I do not merit your attention and favours. But I am going to present before you another who also pleads for my sinner. It is your own mother who asks this favour of you. Will you say no to your own mother? You cannot refuse her; now you can only say that you will forgive my sinner!

At this our Lord granted her the favour she asked. The sinner she had mentioned was in fact converted, made his confession and gave the confessor full permission to reveal all that had happened to him. (From the *Life of Gemma Galgani*, by her spiritual director, P. German.)

SECTION VIII. SERMON SCHEMES

I. LITURGICAL

The Marriage Ceremony

1. *Christ at a wedding:*

From that day in Cana he is the companion of every Christian marriage.

(a) Not merely because it has been elevated to the dignity of a sacrament;

(b) but also because the Church makes sure of his presence by the Mass and the other ceremonies with which she surrounds a wedding.

(c) The marriage ceremony is as beautiful as it is unknown to the majority of the faithful.

2. *The marriage ceremony in the course of history:*

(a) The early centuries:

i. Tertullian refers to a ceremony of marriage in which there is a Mass and a special blessing. He also mentions two other details of the ceremony, namely the hand-clasp of the spouses and the kiss of peace.

ii. Augustine, in the third century, mentions the person who was to present the couple to the priest; while Ambrose also makes mention of the Mass and the blessing given by the priest.

iii. The Leonine sacramentary indicates that the actual wedding took place just outside the door of the church, after which the couple entered into the church for the Mass which followed.

(b) The Middle Ages:

The principal document is a letter from Pope Nicholas I in which, writing to the Bulgarian bishops, he explains the various ceremonies which surrounded marriage:

i. *the espousals*—a solemn promise to contract marriage, given by both parties before witnesses;

ii. *the handing over of the ring* to the bride;

iii. *the marriage ceremony itself*, which took place at the door of the church;

iv. *the special Mass* at which the parties were expected to receive communion;

v. *the crowning*. Nicholas tells us that the spouses left the church wearing crowns, which they usually returned to the church after thirty days, when there was another Mass celebrated for them.

(c) The modern ceremony:

It is a very short one, so far as the actual marriage is concerned, consisting as it does in the mutual consent of the two parties given before the priest, who represents the Church and Christ.

i. immediately afterwards the priest blesses the ring and the gold and silver, which the bridegroom hands to his bride;

ii. this is followed, in the case of a Catholic wedding, by the Nuptial Mass, during which the special nuptial blessing is given and at which the spouses usually receive communion.

3. *Towards a renewal of the true Christian spirit in marriage:*

(a) The Church is not opposed to the joyful celebration of weddings, provided always that Christ is present at them as he was

in Cana. At the same time she is not in favour of excessive spending of money on the mere externals.

(b) Catholics should be specially careful to insist on the complete marriage ceremony, especially the Nuptial Mass with its special blessing.

- i. even from the human point of view the ceremony is more beautiful;
- ii. it brings down special graces on the newly-married couple.

II. THE GOSPEL

A: The Marriage at Cana

1. *Today's Gospel and Christian joy:*

(a) Rejoicing in Christ:

i. *the Gospel*, in spite of the fact that it reminds us constantly of the future joys of heaven, does not remove all joy from the present life.

ii. *the Gospel is human*. Those who live by it in sanctity are the first to seek legitimate worldly pleasures for others, even though they may live in austerity themselves.

(b) Various Christian interpretations of this miracle:

- i. honour done to the state of matrimony; some even say that on this occasion Christ raised it to the dignity of a sacrament;
- ii. consecration of the ordinary pleasures of home life;
- iii. the supreme power of Mary to intercede with her Son;
- iv. excellence of public duties, which on occasions can prevail over private duties;
- v. consecration of all human pleasure and joys—a happy life, even in this world.

(c) Christianity is not a sad religion:

i. the Church has always fought against such an interpretation of religion, and, what is more, there has never yet been a sad saint!

ii. her feasts are always joyous occasions—even more so in the Middle Ages, when there was only one religion.

iii. it is visible in her architecture, as compared with some modern buildings; visible too, in her poetry, her art, her life. In spite of her sufferings, her joy rings out everywhere.

iv. we might compare this with the religion of Calvin. Here it is worthy of note that Calvin's interpretation of Mary's words to Jesus: They have no wine, is that she called his attention to the fact that all the guests had drunk too much, and that at last the wine was finished!

(d) Opposed to this is the Christian spirit of joy:

It is visible in Cana, in the prompt service of the servants, in the slightly ironic remarks of the chief steward, in the thanksgiving to God of the disciples.

Christ and his mother between them assure the joy of the newly-married couple and their guests.

2. *Joy in the Christian home:*

(a) Through the ordinary necessities of life and certain luxuries:

i. *to maintain joy and happiness in the home* is the duty of all Christians, in order to make family life the best thing of all.

ii. *to maintain better social conditions for all*—an aristocracy of work, of virtue, of Christian charity, which will serve later as a basis for a social aristocracy. We must never forget the importance of building up a Catholic social life which will enable us to prepare our best people for public office. We are too often negligent on this point.

(b) The home must be attractive:

A comfortable home, attractive to husband and children—a home to live in! Friends, companionship, cheerful atmosphere—all these are of great importance in a Christian life.

3. *Mary, 'Cause of our Joy':*

(a) There should be a Mary in each home.

(b) A strong woman—in the scriptural sense:

- i. one who works for her servants and children.
- ii. who thinks of them above all other things.

B: Mary in Cana, mirror of virtues

1. *The first miracle of Jesus and the virtues of Mary:*

The action of Jesus makes us turn our eyes on Mary, our mother, to contemplate some of the many virtues which are revealed in this scene from her life.

2. *Perfect charity:*

(a) It is enough to indicate some of the circumstances to show how this virtue stood out above all others in Cana. It is easy to see that her heart is that of a mother; all that she has is at the service of charity.

(b) She sees the need, without being told—a charity which anticipates necessity. Like Christ in the case of the multitude. He saw, without being told and almost before they were aware of it, the need they had of food. Mary sees our needs.

(c) She takes a share in them, as if they were her own. Mary's heart shares our unhappiness and our necessities. Charity is both

human and comprehensive, extending even to things which are not of strict necessity, such as the wine at this feast.

(d) She expresses her feelings with simplicity and takes that need to Jesus through her prayer, so that he may remedy it. It is a discreet and provident charity, which is born of true love, effective in its means to relieve necessity.

3. *Confidence in Christ:*

Her confidence was perfect, as we can see from the way it manifested itself.

(a) She knows the power of her Son and has faith in him, since she asks him for his first miracle. She has confidence in his liberality, since she asks for a miracle to remedy a purely temporal need.

(b) She knows that the way to assure that our confidence receives a reply from God is through prayer. There is our power.

(c) Her confidence extends further than her hope, since at first sight her petition seems to be rejected by her Son.

4. *Modesty and discretion:*

(a) In the method of presenting the petition to her Son:
They have no wine:

i. *St John of the Cross gives us abundant material on this point:* He who loves with discretion does not ask for what he needs or desires, but merely presents his needs, so that the Beloved may do as he pleases. Just as the Blessed Virgin did not ask for wine at Cana, but merely stated the facts: They have no wine; and the sisters of Lazarus likewise: Master, he whom thou lovest is sick.

ii. *there are three reasons for this;* first because the Lord knows better than we do what is convenient for us; secondly, the Beloved is more moved at the sight of the need of the loved one and his resignation; because the soul acts with greater security and with less danger of self-love in representing the need than in asking for it to be remedied.

(b) In her silence once she has received a reply from her Son:

She asks for no explanation; Jesus has his reasons, and she respects them.

(c) In her remarks to the servants:

She gives her orders quietly; they must obey, not her, but her Son.

5. *She teaches us how to have complete confidence in her:*

(a) She brings her powers of intercession to bear, even before we have asked her to use them. What will be her action, then, when we do ask her help!

(b) She asks even for temporal favours; how much more, then, for spiritual gifts!

(c) She asks even though Jesus' hour has not yet come. This implies that the mother's hour is always there. Much more will she pour out the treasure of her intercession after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

C: Mary's power of intercession (1)

Pray for us . . .

At the very beginning of Christ's public life Mary appears as Mediatrix. That is her office in heaven in favour of men.

Mary prays for us

It is affirmed by the magisterium of the Church.

(a) The Council of Trent assures us of this fact (DB. 984).

(b) The Roman Catechism repeats this:

We, who as banished children of Eve live in this vale of tears, should constantly invoke the Mother of mercies and the advocate of the faithful, and ask her to pray for us sinners. With this invocation we ask her help, since no one can doubt that her merits before God are immense and her will to help us exceeding great.

1. *The Fathers of the Church:*

(a) Their reasoning rests on the same arguments:

- i. Mary is our mother and knows our need of help;
- ii. she is the Mother of Christ, and thus lives in closer union with the Trinity than any of the saints;
- iii. she applies Christ's mercy to our need in order to remedy it.

(b) As a summary of their thoughts and expressions:

We may quote St Germanus of Constantinople: Who is like to you in their care of the human race? Who defends us in our misery as you do? Who makes such efforts in an attempt to plead for sinners? . . . You who rejoice in the confidence and power of a Mother with her Son, guard and defend by your intercession and petitions those who are already condemned by their many sins, those who do not even dare to look up to heaven, thus freeing them from eternal damnation.

2. *Theology, which tells us that Mary is the distributor of God's graces:*

(a) She presents her prayers to Christ, and with Christ, to the Father. Her permanent office in heaven is that of prayer for us and for our needs, like the: They have no wine, of Cana.

(b) Her intercession does not interfere with that of Christ, who is the main intercessor, and under him Mary.

Two ways in which our Lady prays for us

1. *Interpretative prayer:*

(a) What is it?

Subjective merits already existing in the presence of God, or the presentation or representation of other merits which move God to grant favours without the need for any actual petition on the part of the one who has such merits. Thus, Christ in his Sacred Humanity, presenting before God his five wounds, is a permanent source of graces and favours.

(b) Mary prays for us with this interpretative intercession, as St Ephraim says.

2. *Explicit and formal prayer:*

(a) What is it?

The act of intercession by which certain favours are deliberately laid before God.

(b) Mary pleads for us in this way:

i. *the Fathers are unanimous in this.* St Ambrose says: She pleads with one Son for the others; with the Only-begotten for those who have been adopted, with the Lord for his servants.

ii. *the liturgy constantly reminds us of this fact;* sums it all up in the Hail Mary: Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

iii. *theology:* teaches us that Mary is our advocate in heaven, constantly making petition for us (St Alphonsus).

(c) It is a great consolation to know that, at every moment, Mary's lips are praying with ours, her merits joined to ours.

D: Mary's power of intercession (2)

1. *The excellence of her prayer:*

In Cana we see the power of Mary's intercession. She continues this intercession in heaven, and it is so powerful that the Fathers have given it the name of Suppliant Omnipotence.

2. *It is more excellent than that of the saints:*

(a) The greater the union with God the greater the power of intercession:

Mary, through her office as Mother of the Redeemer, is incomparably nearer to God than any of the saints.

(b) As Mother of men her intercession is constant:

That is why Leo XIII says: Who among the blessed would dare to compete with the august Mother of God in meriting grace? To whom was given greater power to move God? Who can equal her in the sentiments of maternal piety! . . . That is why our method of

praying to the Virgin has something in common with the method we use in our prayers to God himself (*Augustissimae Virginis*, 12 September, 1897).

(c) More than all the saints together:

St Anselm says: The world has many good advocates, patriarchs, prophets, martyrs, confessors and virgins, to whom I address my suppliant prayers. But you, O Virgin Mary, are better and more excellent than all of these . . . and what all can do together with you, you can do alone, without them.

3. *With reason Mary is called Suppliant Omnipotence:*

(a) Here there is no question of physical omnipotence:

That is proper to God alone. We are talking of moral omnipotence, of impetration. She does not command God to do things, but her wishes have a force which is like that of a command.

(b) The divine maternity, title to her suppliant omnipotence:

This title of Mary is the source of all her power and of all her graces—including that of her power of intercession. This extraordinary privilege has placed her in a special relationship with the Trinity, thus giving her intercession special authority.

i. *so far as the Father is concerned*, by reason of the fact that she also conceived the Son of God, sharing in the Father's power of generation;

ii. *with regard to the Holy Spirit*, through whose action she conceived the Saviour, she has special relations as his purest temple and his spouse;

iii. *with the Son*; she is his Mother, with all a mother's rights over him, and his obligations to her as her Son. No one has such a title to his respect and his love as she. Thus Theophilus of Alexandria can say: The Son may well rejoice in the prayers of his mother, because all that he grants to us through her prayers is but granted to her; and thus he rewards her for that human nature which, without a father, he received from her.

iv. *God always yields to charity*, and Mary is the greatest lover of God in heaven, since her grace is greater than that of any of the saints.

(c) Her title of co-redeemer, source of the power of her prayer:

i. her union with Christ in his act of redemption makes her merit, in some way, together with him, that redemption. Therefore, just as Christ, because of his merits, can demand that his prayers be heard, so can Mary.

ii. thus she obtains all that she asks, but always in conformity with the will of God.

iii. Raymond Jordan says: Omnipotent Virgin, your word is full of piety, because what you wish to do you can do; your counsel is always effective, your will is done. You have supreme power over life and death. . . . You can do all things, by the gift your Son has granted to you, that Son who, being himself omnipotent, made you omnipotent also.

E: Mary's power of intercession (3)

1. *Those for whom she prays:*

In Cana she interceded for certain individuals; but that petition gives us an excuse to penetrate into her maternal heart and see the extent of her prayer now that she is in heaven. Her prayers extend in four directions.

2. *The prayer of Mary for the saints in heaven:*

So far as those are concerned who already enjoy the vision of God in heaven we may say:

(a) They attained salvation through the intercession and help of Mary:

i. all graces given to man flow through Mary; and since heaven itself is the greatest of all graces, it comes through the intercession of Mary.

ii. thus the Church, in the hymn for Lauds on the Feast of the Seven Sorrows of Mary, prays to Christ: When I have to leave this world, grant that I may attain the palm of victory, through your Mother.

(b) At present she does not ask for anything on their behalf: Because they are in full possession of happiness and there is no need to ask for anything.

3. *Her prayers for the souls in purgatory: her intercession for them:*

(a) It is undoubted:

Owing to the doctrine of the communion of saints, by which we know that there is mutual communication between the three great branches of the Church.

(b) Her double maternity demands it:

She is Mother of Christ and mother of men. From this comes her solicitude for the full application of the redemption of her Son; for the full triumph of his mystical body in heaven; that her children should pass from the prison of purgatory to their full glory in heaven.

(c) Four ways in which she intercedes for them:

i. by asking Christ to apply to those souls, from the treasures of his merits, all that is required to liberate them;

ii. applying with the same intention her own merits to them;

iii. asking her Son to inspire those on earth to offer their satisfactions and suffrages for the souls in purgatory;

iv. by asking that other suffrages should be applied to them, those, namely, which are no longer needed, either because the person for whom they are offered is in heaven or condemned in hell.

(d) Our suffrages in the hands of Mary:

It is an act which is most pleasing to her and beneficial to ourselves and to the souls in purgatory. She knows the secrets of purgatory, she knows our interest in certain souls and what gives most glory to God. Therefore our suffrages are better in her hands than in our own. She will see to it that they have greater efficacy.

4. *Her prayer for those on earth:*

(a) She prays for all:

In this field her prayer knows no limits. All are given sufficient grace to be saved, and that grace comes to them through Mary's intercession.

i. *she prays for the just*, in whom she sees reflected something of her own purity and holiness;

ii. *for sinners*. By making her mother of the Redeemer, God also gave her a special interest in sinners, of whom she is the refuge.

iii. *for infidels*, inspiring missionaries to greater zeal on their behalf;

iv. *for heretics and others separated from the true Church*, that they may return to the one fold of Christ. Especially for those heretics who love and honour her.

(b) She prays especially for certain souls:

Namely, those who are apostles, those especially devoted to her, for priests—who are doing the work of her Son.

F: True devotion to Mary

In the marriage feast of Cana we are taught to go to Christ through Mary.

(a) In this scene Christ and Mary are united in teaching us true devotion to the Mother of God and Mother of men.

i. the fact that he grants the miracle in spite of the phrase: My hour is not yet come, shows us what Mary means in the economy of the redemption.

ii. she, on her part, through her words to the servants, shows us the way to Christ. We must keep his commandments so as to receive from him the reward we seek.

(b) Our devotion to Mary can be false or true. In this we follow the lines traced by St Louis Grignon de Montfort.

Devotion to our Lady

1. *The importance of knowing what is true devotion to Mary and what is false:*

The devil loves to deceive us by coining false money. For that reason alone we have to be careful.

2. *False devotion to Mary can present itself under many different disguises:*(a) *those who are critical; intellectual people who are also proud:*

They criticize the practices of simple people, doubt miracles, condemn all exterior devotion to our Lady, think that the phrases used by the Fathers are exaggerated. Such people can do much harm to true devotion to Mary.

(b) *Those who are scrupulous:*

i. *they hate to see people kneeling before the altar of Mary, instead of before the Blessed Sacrament; as if devotion to Mary took something from Christ. They maintain that Christ is their one and only mediator.*

ii. *this is a dangerous line of thought, because it appears to be a true one. Such people do not wish to admit that, if we go to Mary, it is only to find Christ.*

(c) *Those whose devotion is merely exterior:*

Confraternities, scapulars, processions—but no attempt to imitate Mary in her interior life. Their devotion is reduced to sentiment and routine.

(d) *Those whose are presumptuous:*

i. *sinners, who make no attempt to change their way of life. They are devoted to our Lady, through such things as scapulars, medals, confraternities—they presume on the mercy of God, through a pretended devotion to his Mother.*

ii. *this is to make Mary an accomplice in their sins.*

iii. *so that our devotion may not be presumptuous we must at least live with a sincere resolution to avoid mortal sin, do violence to ourselves if necessary in order to avoid it, and also practise some external devotion to our Lady.*

(e) *Those who are inconstant in devotion:*

They are devout at intervals only; join confraternities, wear scapulars, but do not keep up the practice of devotion. It is better to do a little well than promise much and not accomplish it.

(f) *hypocrites:*

Those who cover their sins with a cloak of devotion to our Lady and pass in the eyes of the world for religious persons when they are nothing of the kind.

(g) *Those who are full of self-interest:*

They rush to Mary when they have something to gain by it, some difficulty, danger to avoid, favour to ask. Beyond that they forget her. They are not interested in any spiritual good she may be able to do them.

3. *True devotion to Mary:*

After a description of the false devotion it is necessary to indicate, at least, the main lines of true devotion to the Mother of God.

(a) *Interior devotion:*

Which comes from the heart, recognizing the greatness of Mary and the love we ought to have for her.

(b) *Full devotion:*

Full of confidence like that of a child for his mother; turning to her at all times and on all occasions, in sickness of body or soul, worries, troubles of all kinds. She should be our refuge at all times, without fear of troubling her too much or taking something from what we owe to her Son.

(c) *Holy devotion:*

Which makes the soul avoid sin and imitate the virtues of Mary, especially her loving-kindness, her faith, her hope, her charity, her patience, purity, love and sweetness.

(d) *Constant devotion:*

In the practices of devotion, without wavering when things do not go the way we want them to go, when temptations assail us; without sadness, timidity or scruples. Constant in rising again after any fall.

(e) *Disinterested devotion:*

Which does not seek oneself, but rather God and Mary. Such devotion does not serve her through desire for gain, but because she is our Mother and merits our love and affection. God wills to be loved in and through Mary.

G: *Marriage, a natural law institution*1. *The dignity of the married state:*

Christ and Mary assisted at a marriage, when it was not as yet a sacrament. This is sufficient proof that marriage is in itself good and has a certain dignity.

(a) *All peoples and nations have seen something sacred in marriage even in pagan lands. By its nature and essence it is something sacred (Leo XIII).*

(b) *Christ lifted this state to the dignity of a sacrament, but he did not transform it substantially.*

2. *It has God for its author:*

This is enough to make us assured of its essential dignity and goodness.

(a) It has its origin in God, who instituted it as the crowning of his work of creation. Nature herself inclines us to this state.

(b) It is prior to sin, so far as its primary end is concerned, posterior to it so far as the secondary end is concerned, i.e. relief of concupiscence (cf. St Thomas, Suppl. q. 42. a. 2. c).

(c) From all of which we see that it is a state of perfection, to use that term in its widest sense, not something which is imperfect, much less an evil, as some heretics thought. Pagans and infidels do not sin if they marry according to the natural law.

3. *Its end and qualities have been established by the same natural law, i.e. by nature itself:*(a) *The ends of marriage:*

- i. *the principal one*—generation and education of children;
- ii. *secondary*—mutual help of the spouses; remedy for concupiscence (it must be remembered that concupiscence is not an evil in itself).

(b) *Its properties or qualities:*

Unity and indissolubility, both part of the natural law and necessary for the purpose of the law. However, they pertain to the list of secondary principles, i.e. they are not part of the very nature of marriage, but necessary for the obtaining of the principal end of marriage in the way God planned it.

- i. for that reason God could dispense from them (as some people maintain that he did in the Old Testament, in the matter of polygamy and the bill of divorce).
- ii. both of them, that is both unity and indissolubility, are of divine law in the sacrament of marriage.

4. *The Church has no power to alter the nature of marriage:*(a) *The Church cannot:*

- i. agree to the principles of 'free love' or extra-marital experiences;
- ii. dissolve a marriage which has been freely contracted and consummated (with the one exception of the Pauline Privilege);
- iii. give her authority to a new marriage while one of the previous parties still lives;
- iv. sanctify with her blessing illicit unions because of the harm that might be done to any children born from them.

(b) *She is prevented from this by:*

- i. *the divine law*, by which she is bound;
- ii. *the natural law itself*. We must learn to distinguish between those natural tendencies which come from nature itself and those

which come to us after original sin, which did such damage to the natural impulses which God gave us.

(c) She can, however, give dispensations from those impediments which she herself has instituted as safeguards for the sanctity of marriage. By doing this she does not touch the commands given her by Christ, her founder.

H: Marriage and grace

Marriage as an instrument of supernatural life

1. It is a sacrament, and a very great one through its symbolism, which pictures for us the union of Christ with his Church.

2. It should never be forgotten that, in the state of original justice in which Adam and Eve were created, before sin took a hand, marriage would have been the perfect and universal state for all mankind (St Thomas).

3. It is a religious ceremony to which grace is attached, and an instrument for this divine life in the soul. This is its true greatness here and now. It should be the first thought in the mind of those who are going to marry.

The double grace of this sacrament

1. *When it is contracted:*

At that moment it gives both sanctifying and sacramental grace (Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*).

2. *Afterwards:*

It is a permanent sacrament which produces what it signifies. It signifies a permanent consecration to a state of life, and, as such, those who have been united by this bond will never be deprived of the graces necessary to fulfil the obligations of their state of life (*Casti Connubii*).

It represents something divine

1. We know from St Paul, that marriage is the image of the union between Christ and the individual soul and Christ and the Church.

2. Pius XII said that the union of marriage had something divine about it, something eternal in its consequences (3 April 1940).

3. The seal of God is set on this union in such a way that it makes it something divine.

4. We must not interpret this in terms of a sacramental character, but we can say, with Pius XII, that God himself has entered into this union in such a way that he himself is the bond between the two contracting parties.

Marriage and grace

1. In the present economy of divine grace, human co-operation is demanded, and grace will not produce its effects without this. Married life is difficult, certainly, because of the obligations it takes with it and the temptations which surround it in our present civilization. Face to face with the ideal of marriage as presented to us in the Gospels we have the marriage ideal of the cinema, the novel, the stage!

2. But in Christian marriage it should be possible to overcome those ideas through the grace of God; which demands the co-operation of the two parties:

(a) In the reception of the sacrament:

There should be a certain preparation for it—a good confession, realization of the obligations involved, some pre-marriage instruction even. In some countries it is a custom to make a retreat before marriage. The better the preparation the more grace will be given at the actual moment of the reception of this sacrament.

(b) In the course of married life:

Doing all that is possible to fulfil the obligations of one's state.

(c) Pius XII gives some indications of the way in which married people can correspond with these graces:

- i. daily prayer;
- ii. union with Christ;
- iii. the Eucharist;
- iv. dominion over their inclinations and passions.

I: Marriage: Its mystical significance

1. Sacrament and marriage contract:

Christ raised to a sacrament the contract of marriage. In the case of a Christian marriage it is impossible to separate the contract and the sacrament.

2. Consequences:

(a) In the matter of marriage any legislation concerning it belongs to the Church, not the State: For a Christian, as Leo XIII says, there can be no true marriage contract which is not, at the same time, a sacrament.

(b) Therefore anyone who, by Church law, cannot contract a valid marriage, can never do so outside the Church by civil means.

The meaning of marriage

1. It signifies the grace which it contains, like any other sacrament.
2. But St Paul has also seen in it a symbolism which is even more sublime, and which gives to marriage a very great supernatural

dignity. This applies to marriage, not only at the moment when it is celebrated, but also to the married state as such.

(a) Just as Melchisedech was a figure of Christ, the High Priest, and the lamb a figure of Christ, the Victim, so the union of man and woman is a figure of the union between Christ and the Church.

(b) It is a mysterious symbolism, as Paul says himself, that this natural union between man and woman should signify something exclusively supernatural.

(c) A symbolism which adds to the character of marriage, which was sacred from its very origin, another quality, even more sacred and supernatural. From this significance we may draw these conclusions:

i. *the marriage union must be a very strong bond*, more interior than exterior, if it is to signify the union of Christ with his Church, which is founded on divine law itself.

ii. *married love must be essentially spiritual*, a love of sacrifice, just as Christ gave himself up for his Church.

iii. *it must be mutual*, for if Christ gave himself for his Church, so she has given herself to the work of Christ throughout the ages, offering him as fruit of her labours the millions of her saints in heaven.

iv. *it must be a permanent union*, one which is indissoluble; just as is the union between Christ and the Church which began at the Incarnation and never ends.

The symbolism of marriage and married happiness

1. It has been said that there is no happiness on earth so tranquil, serene and sweet as that of husband and wife.

2. In contrast to this we must note the number of married people who are unhappy in their married lives.

(a) Human passions are capable of destroying that happiness; nor is it sufficient, at times, to oppose to them the purely natural-law elements in marriage. Christ provided a new remedy when he instituted the sacraments, symbols of his union with his Church.

(b) Those who enter the married state convinced of the fact that they must realize in it the ideal of the union between Christ and the Church will have power to overcome all difficulties they may meet with.

(c) As a check on passion, marriage is, from the natural point of view, a hard yoke for fallen nature. But the yoke of Christ is sweet. If marriage is considered in this new light which Christ has shed on it, then it will always be a help, not a difficulty, in the midst of all kinds of trials, no matter what their nature may be. It will always be a symbol of the cross, reflected in married life, since the union of Christ and his Church was one of blood, and of the cross.

J: Marriage and sanctity

Marriage and the religious state

1. *All men have a divine vocation to sanctity:*

Grace is a seed which tends to develop into a perfect state.

2. *Two roads:*

There are two roads by which sanctity can be obtained; marriage and the religious life. Both are good and honourable. By both the same end can be attained, because the Church has raised to her altars those who have belonged to both states of life.

(a) The religious state is, in itself, more perfect as a means to this end.

(b) But that does not mean to say that sanctity cannot be attained in and through marriage. God, who has called us all to be saints, has also placed in all of us a natural inclination to the married state.

(c) Therefore sanctity can be attained in and through marriage and we may also deduce that marriage is the ordinary way through which sanctity can be attained. The other road is extraordinary and reserved for a few whom God has chosen specially and inspired to follow it.

Marriage, a road to sanctity

1. Unfortunately, there have been times when Christian literature has presented marriage to us as an obstacle to sanctity. They seem to imply that, if it does not close the road altogether, at least it makes it much more difficult.

2. This is a ridiculous principle and should be avoided altogether by preachers and writers.

3. *Marriage, road to sanctity:*

It is a complete school of Christian virtues.

(a) *Christ in Cana:*

Living proof of the fact that he can and does live among those who are married, and that his presence can be assured by a life lived together in conformity with his laws. A life lived in conformity with the teachings of Christ is a life of sanctity.

(b) *Marriage, as a sacrament, is a source of graces:*

Wherever grace is, there, too, is the possibility of sanctity. The persons who contract marriage also contract for mutual sanctification. This is a most important point, and should be developed more often. Marriage, as a sacrament, is meant for rather more than mutual natural help during life; it is intended by Christ to be a school for saints.

(c) *Marriage and sanctity:*

It is a school of saints because in it people learn by actual practice many Christian virtues. We may mention some of them:

i. *faith is necessary:* in order to see in marriage the union between Christ and his Church; to make married love a supernatural love, like that of Christ; to see in the hard trials of married life the hand of God's providence (cf. Pius XII, *Allocution*, 7 May 1941).

ii. *Marriage and sacrifice.* There can be no sanctification without the cross—and married people have many crosses to bear. We need not go into too many details, because experience teaches us the truth of this statement. Those crosses are means of great, even heroic, sanctity.

iii. *Marriage and chastity.* Married people may give up their virginity, from the physical point of view, but they do not give up the obligation of chastity according to their state of life. Pius XII said that the demands of chastity in marriage could reach heroic standards, and demand a filial confidence in God's providence (*Allocution*, 29 October 1951).

4. *Marriage and the means of sanctification:*

The partners should be united in their interior life. If they have always before them the ideal of sanctity they will find many occasions for its practice.

(a) Common eucharistic life and devotion to Mary.

(b) Spiritual direction, retreats, etc.

(c) The power of prayer—especially prayer in common. Remember the scene from the book of Tobias (8. 4-10).

(d) It is a true and sure road to sanctity if the parties do their duty with generosity, i.e. if they make up their minds that they are determined to sanctify each other and produce children who will also be citizens of heaven.

K: *Mixed marriages*

In view of what has already been said it is easy to see why the Church does not like mixed marriages.

1. In preaching on this theme it is important to be positive, rather than negative. The following points may be of help:

(a) In her legislation about mixed marriages the Church often appears strict and uncompromising to the eyes of non-Catholics. There are reasons for this.

(b) On the one hand, she has nothing against the non-Catholic party as such; but she is so well aware of the difficulties of this state of life that she desires to protect her own as much as possible—especially the children.

(c) From this point of view, her legislation is for the protection and help of the non-Catholic party as much as the Catholic. This should not be forgotten.

- (d) Marriage is difficult enough even when the two parties are of one faith and can share in a common religious life. What will it be like when, in one of the most important departments of life, the two parties are of different religious beliefs?
2. Given her basic theological position, as the one true Church, she can do no less than insist on certain essential conditions before she allows one of her own to contract marriage with a non-Catholic.
- (a) If she insists on pre-marriage instruction for the non-Catholic it is with the idea of bridging this gap between the two; not with the idea of making easy converts!
- (b) The pre-marriage instructions are destined to help the non-Catholic party to smooth over some of the difficulties which may appear later; help him or her to know the Catholic mind on certain essentials of marriage, of which he or she may have no knowledge beforehand.
- (c) To see this more clearly it must be recognized that most non-Catholics are not aware of the true sanctity of the marriage contract, of the fact that it is a sacrament or of the mutual sanctification which goes with it.
- (d) In so many things the Catholic and non-Catholic views on marriage are poles apart; the Church tries, by her legislation, to bring those poles together as far as she can.
3. *The marriage promises:*
She insists on these, not in any prejudice against the non-Catholic party's religion, but to protect her own.
She would welcome a similar point of view in other religions, because it would be a greater protection for Catholics and would save her much time and trouble. It would also separate the sheep from the goats, on many occasions!
4. *From the Catholic's point of view:*
- (a) A mixed marriage should be regarded as something to be entered on with great reluctance and caution.
- (b) There have been many—thanks to the Church's precautions—which have given splendid results; but there have also been many which have been, if not fatal, at least very difficult for the Catholic party.
- (c) Catholics who enter upon a mixed marriage are deprived of the nuptial Mass and the blessings it takes with it.
- (d) They must expect to meet opposition, or at least lack of full understanding where their Catholic duties are concerned.
- (e) There will be one section of their life together which will be a closed book—namely, their religious life. It is difficult for a non-Catholic to understand or consent to Catholic practices, even though, in the first flush of love, he or she may promise anything!

5. The path is a thorny one indeed, and the Church does not like it. Can anyone blame her, in the light of what has been said about the essential sanctity of marriage and its difficulties?

L: Courtship

A difficult theme, but a necessary one. There is, obviously, need for some preparation before two people enter into the married state, in which the human and divine elements are so mixed together.

If religious profession demands such a time of trial and preparation, how much more this difficult state of matrimony?

(a) It has been said, not without reason, that more preparation is needed for the married state than for a religious vocation.

(b) There is not a question of the destiny of two people merely, but of many others also.

Remote preparation

1. *Napoleon is credited with this saying:*

The education of the child begins twenty years before the marriage of his parents. So that marriage may attain its ends there is need for a long preparation for it.

2. *Pius XI says the same in Casti Connubii:*

It cannot be denied that both the firm foundation of the happy marriage as well as the ruin of the unhappy one is laid in early infancy. . . .

The proximate preparation, courtship

1. *Mutual self-knowledge important:*

Mutual love ready for self-sacrifice needs mutual knowledge. This is acquired during courtship.

2. *Love must be cultivated:*

Because in marriage there is need of a double love, one which is sensual and the other which is spiritual. All writers on the subject admit this.

(a) Sensual and material love is based on a bodily attraction which is itself destined to the ends of marriage. It springs from external and sensible qualities, such as mutual interests, beauty, attraction, etc., which can pass with time.

(b) Spiritual love is born of the compenetration of heart and soul; identity of ideas and feelings; it comes from the mutual knowledge of interior qualities and perfections. It is more important than merely physical love, because on it is based all true happiness.

3. *Courtship, a time for holiness:*

Much is said about its dangers, less about its spiritual possibilities; we hear more about its difficulties than about its holiness. Yet it is a time to acquire sanctity.

(a) Because it is a preparation for marriage, which is a holy state:

It is rather like a novitiate.

(b) Because it is a time for cultivating spiritual love:

Granted that most people think of it as a time of sensual love, that is not its true purpose. If, during it, sensual love predominates, then it can be the cause of trouble later, in married life. A love which grows in chastity will be stable and will make the two happy later.

(c) Holy by reason of the virtues which should be cultivated during it:

Namely, patience, mutual understanding, kindness, and as queen of them all—charity.

4. *A determined effort should be made to sanctify the time of courtship:*

Too often it is thought of as a pleasant game, an amorous adventure or a way of giving free rein to sensual love.

(a) Young people during their courtship tend to think too much of making themselves mutually attractive and little or nothing is thought of sacrifice. In a word, there is emphasis on sensual love and little on spiritual love.

(b) Christian youth should look on the time of courtship as one in which they can merit special graces from God with an eye on the future. It can be decisive for their future happiness and for that of their children.

(c) To assist them there are special pre-marriage courses and retreats. It is a pity that these are not better known and used.

(d) Above all, learn now the truth of the axiom: A family that prays together stays together, and approach God more closely. Many difficulties which occur during the time of courtship, especially if it be a long one, can only be overcome by this close contact with God.

(e) The sacraments are now more important than ever.

(f) Avoid sentimentality and concentrate on reality. Invite Christ to your future marriage now!

M: Purity in time of courtship

1. Again, a difficult theme, but one which has to be handled at times, if not in sermons, at least in the confessional.

(a) **Sensual love tends rapidly to intimacy and marriage:**

It is easy at times to confuse this with passion; so much so that there is a stage at which it is impossible—or at least very difficult—for the human mind to know when sentimental or sensual love ends and passion begins.

(b) This is a greater difficulty for the boy than for the girl: He tends very quickly to passionate reactions, while hers are mainly sentimental.

2. *The general principle the same for all—all must cultivate chastity:*

(a) **Its importance in the time of courtship:**

i. *for the future*—marriage is for a lifetime, and there must be a more solid basis for it than mere passion or sentimental love, if it is to survive the test of time.

ii. *there must be mutual respect for the person.* This cannot exist without chastity.

iii. *such chastity is the basis of the check on the lower nature later in marriage.* Thus marital fidelity is assured with greater ease. It is important to notice that the girl is the one who holds the reins at this stage, and much will depend on her strength of character and moral force.

(b) **Chastity and modesty:**

The latter is the safeguard of the former. Demonstrations of affection, inevitable in any courtship, must be limited and ruled by this essential rule.

i. to help in this, it is well to remember that long courtship is not a good thing. When love reaches maturity the next step should be marriage.

ii. on the other hand, marriage which is entered into without a period of courtship is also dangerous. There must be time for mutual knowledge, discussion about many aspects of married life, etc.

3. *Advice to young men:*

(a) **Your future wife is a treasure which God has given you:**

Look on her as you would your own mother; or as you will wish others to look at your daughters later. Guard her and reverence her. Reverence is a great virtue during courtship.

(b) **Cultivate in her chastity and modesty:**

These are qualities which you will look for in her after your marriage. Remember the words of Sister Juana de la Cruz: After making them bad, you wish to see good in them. Rather love them as you have made them or make them what you would wish to find in them.

4. *To young girls:*

You have the reins in your own hands and can prevent evil while fomenting good. You can do much to make your young man draw nearer to Christ. If you wish for a really happy married life there is

no better way to assure it than to safeguard your chastity during courtship and make him realize that he must respect you, now—and later! You are not to be a slave, but a companion.

5. *Devotion to our Lady:*

(a) Obviously, Mary, both Virgin and Mother, is the exemplar of those who are contemplating marriage. She can teach them, better than anyone else, if they are devoted to her.

(b) Happy the couple who take Mary as their guide and protectress during this difficult time of their lives.

N: Choice of a partner

1. *The importance of this choice:*

On it depends, to a great extent, the happiness of the future marriage.

2. *It is something very personal:*

The days have passed and gone when parents more or less 'arranged' marriages for their children. Even though that system had some advantages, it also had many things to be said against it. Today the choice is personal. This is natural and the Church approves of it.

3. *General rules:*

(a) *Negative ones:*

It should not be made in a hurry. It is a decision which must last for life.

(b) *Three positive rules of St Ignatius:*

i. *knowledge of the end in view:* an indissoluble marriage, education of children, mutual sanctification. These demand mature reflexion.

ii. *knowledge of the person chosen;* it is impossible to attain the ends of marriage unless the partner has the necessary qualities.

iii. *prayer for God's help.* This is a supernatural choice, and God's gifts enter into it (Prov. 19. 14).

(c) *Counsel:*

It is a part of the virtue of prudence; if the choice must be a prudent one then there must also be counsel.

i. *of parents.* To enter into marriage against the reasonable advice of the parents would be rash, to say the least of it, and liable to failure. They have longer experience and love for their children. It is true that at times they are influenced by prejudice or egoism, but it is not the usual thing.

ii. *the priest or spiritual director*—always useful, especially on the spiritual elements of sanctification through marriage.

4. *Qualities of the future spouses:*

(a) *The woman:*

St John Chrysostom sums up these qualities in one phrase: A girl who is wise, innocent and pious is worth the whole world. This could be completed by the following list of qualities:

i. *deeply and sincerely religious*—otherwise the education of future children could be impaired.

ii. *good moral habits* and moral culture.

iii. *truly feminine*, i.e., accustomed to home tasks and with some experience of them; not given to too much vanity or luxury.

iv. *good health*—here we may note the danger of hereditary illness and also the supreme importance of the medical examination before marriage, which is becoming more and more important. Unfortunately, our people do not realize just how important this is for future happiness in marriage, and it is often neglected. It is a theme which can obviously only be preached in general terms, but it is important to mention it at least. Pre-marriage guidance courses are invaluable as a source of information on this point. It should never be neglected.

v. *physically attractive.* It is no use trying to get away from this point or trying to gloss over it. It is important. However, one should remember that physical attraction ought to go hand in hand with spiritual beauty, otherwise it can lead to trouble later in marriage. If physical beauty is a reflexion of the spiritual beauty of the soul then indeed John Chrysostom's phrase is complete!

(b) *The man:*

i. *religious sense, piety deeply formed, together with moral stability.* The ingenuous idea that a woman will be able to change a man's habits and way of life after marriage has been disproved time and again. The mother-instinct in the woman, together with the element of risk, are inclined to lead her into such unions. Here we must be careful to get away from the worldly atmosphere of the modern novel and cinema completely.

ii. *hard-working*, and if possible, a secure future.

iii. *good health*—according to the ideas we have outlined above.

O: Fidelity in marriage

A theme which is not usually a subject for preaching; yet it should be, because this is one of the qualities of marriage in the eyes of the Church. As preachers of her doctrine we might remember that at times a stitch in time saves nine!

Enemies of fidelity and the harm they can cause

1. Causes of it:

(a) Intrinsic:

- i. the imperfections of the parties; differences of temperament, jealousy, infidelity of one party, etc.
- ii. the search for what the cinema world would call 'understanding'.

(b) Exterior agents:

- i. long periods of separation (this was a frequent cause of difficulty in the last war).
- ii. wrong ideas, produced by a general relaxation in the moral law, the cinema, theatre, television, etc. The 'eternal triangle' presented in such a way that it seems inevitable to seek some solution outside marriage and its demands for fidelity.

2. Its effects:

Infidelity brings with it sadness and the ruin of home life. The children are the first to suffer.

Sacramental grace and fidelity

1. There is one means of preserving this quality of a real marriage—i.e. to make it a supernatural act, dedicated to God and for God.

2. There are certain precautions which the spouses can take and which are effective if applied in time:

(a) The fact that infidelity is not something which attacks a marriage all at once; there must be a moment when it is obvious that there is danger—that is the moment of resistance.

(b) Pius XII was right when he warned married people about the danger of so-called platonic friendships.

(c) The old principle of 'Principiis obsta' must come in here.

(d) At the same time both husband and wife must avoid excessive jealousy, which can easily turn a simple friendship into a danger to the fidelity of marriage.

3. Prayer and sacrifice:

(a) The sacrament gives graces sufficient to preserve fidelity in marriage; but the two spouses must co-operate with those graces. The best means is by prayer and a spirit of humility, together with some sacrifice of self.

(b) They should always have in their minds the thought that fidelity to their marriage vows is the one thing which can bring them to the happiness of heaven, where they will continue to be united for all eternity, with a special glory attached to those who have been bound by the indissoluble bonds of marriage.

P: The ends of marriage

1. A dangerous tendency:

(a) Marriage supposes love:

It is a holy bond uniting the partners for life. It is the symbol of Christ's love for the Church and is raised to a supernatural level by the graces of the sacrament.

(b) But love is not the primary end of marriage:

i. Cardinal Griffin protested against a statement made in the House of Lords to the effect that the primary end of marriage, rather than the procreation of children, is the mutual companionship for life.

ii. There are other phrases and concepts used in this way which need to be explained and clarified—some of them from Catholic writers. There is one which is heard or read quite frequently, namely, that marriage has two or more principal purposes, one of which is the procreation of children, and another, equally important, is the complete fulfilment of the partners. If these phrases imply, as they seem to do, that procreation is subordinated in some way to the temporal and spiritual association of the spouses, then they cannot be admitted for one moment.

2. The doctrine of the Church on this point is clear and unchanged:

(a) The principal end of marriage is the procreation of children:

We need only cite St Augustine; St Thomas; Leo XIII (*Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae*), Pius XI (*Casti Connubii*), Pius XII (*Allocution*, 29 September 1951).

(b) The Catholic interpretation of the phrase 'Community of love':

i. if it intends to signify that the essence of marriage is love, mutual consent and the education of children, then it can be understood in a correct way;

ii. but if it implies an operation in which one of the partners is consecrated to the happiness of the other, by which the spouses procure their mutual fulfilment and perfection, then it does not fit in with the doctrine of the Church.

iii. the community of love is certainly one of the ends of marriage but not by any means the principal end. It is a secondary one.

(c) The ideal marriage:

There is no doubt about its constitution; it is one in which the two partners are united, both interiorly and exteriorly; two hearts

and minds in union and compenetration, to realize the task of generation and education of children; with identity of wills, minds and interests.

(d) **Children as a means to perfection:**

Parents see in their children a continuation of themselves and their own personalities. They are willing to sacrifice themselves for them. Their mutual love and help are greater through them.

3. **Conclusion:**

(a) Marriage is a mutual and complete giving of self on the part of the man and woman.

(b) The first fruit of this is the generation and education of children. Children are a blessing and a treasure which God gives to a marriage, a new seal of love, producing greater compenetration and mutual loving union of minds and hearts.

(c) To try to assign other primary ends to marriage is an illusion and an error which can have fatal consequences.

Q: Neo-Malthusianism

The system or doctrine behind it

1. A great evil, which in our time is a real problem in many countries. Our people need instruction against it, together with a clear explanation of the Catholic principles. It comprises all those theories and practices which are usually called under the general heading of 'birth-control'.

2. It began with the social principles of Thomas Robert Malthus, a Protestant pastor, who wrote his *Essays on the principles of population* in 1789.

(a) His main thesis is that the population of the world increases in geometric progression, while the world's food supplies increase only in arithmetical progression.

(b) Therefore the remedy is to limit births by celibacy, later marriages, abstinence in use of marriage.

(c) His disciples go further, and advocate principles of birth control.

3. Such principles destroy the end of marriage, the stability of the family, and are a great danger to society as a whole.

The teaching of the Church

1. The use of birth-control methods in the Neo-Malthusian sense of the word is a grave sin.

2. There is no cause which can ever justify the use of such methods, which are intrinsically evil.

3. Confessors must instruct penitents, even those who are in good faith. The Sacred Penitentiary reply of 13 November 1901 says that a penitent who accuses himself of onanism in marriage cannot receive absolution unless he is prepared to give up such practices.

4. The use of the so-called 'safe period' is not included under this general condemnation, and may be used in certain circumstances, for grave reasons.

Individual and social consequences of Neo-Malthusianism

Apart from being against the natural law, the divine law and the law of the Church, it produces disastrous consequences for those who practise it and also for society as a whole.

1. **Dangers to the mother:**

(a) Nature has made woman for maternity, and if this is frustrated her whole physical being suffers.

(b) There is also mental danger of many kinds.

(c) It seems proved medically that maternity, far from being a danger to the mother, is a great benefit to her general state of health.

2. **Decrease in population:**

(a) The general principle of Malthus has now been disproved, together with the Boyd-Orr law, which scientists now admit to have been made on false premises.

(b) Countries which have admitted and permitted the use of birth-control methods have lived to regret it in many ways.

i. in many of them the index of births has fallen to such an extent that it constitutes a social, as well as a moral problem;

ii. France is a glaring example;

iii. Russia should make us think; having adopted the principles of Malthus with enthusiasm, she now rejects them as anti-social; there is a premium on maternity, condemnation of abortion as illegal, etc.

The children God chooses to send us

1. **This is perhaps the best of all remedies:**

Think in terms of God and the world in general, rather than in terms of material prosperity.

(a) Neo-Malthusianism is based on a completely materialistic concept of life; this, in itself, is anti-Christian.

(b) God can be trusted not to leave a large family without the means of support; and if he is trusted in this way, many blessings follow even in the material order.

(c) There is no family so happy as the large one. The children grow up in an atmosphere of mutual help and sacrifice—and no sacrifice for God is made in vain.

(d) Many of the Church's saints have been the last child of a large family! The world would have been deprived of many of its greatest glories had it not been for self-sacrifice on the part of some parents.

2. *The programme of the Catholic family:*

To do God's will, and trust in him completely.

(a) Married people are co-operators with God in the process of creation of new life. If they fail to do their duty then they and the world will suffer.

(b) The more generous they are with God, the more generous he will be with them. His providence is never at a loss. Its ways may be secret, but it is sure and infallible.

3. *Advantages and obligations:*

Perhaps it is a good thing to remind married people that they have entered on a state which gives them some advantages and also obligations. They have entered on that state freely, of their own will; and they must abide by the laws God has made for it. At their marriage they promised to take each other 'for better or for worse; for richer or for poorer; in sickness and in health—until death'. The laws of God are not set aside with impunity. On the other hand, when they are kept, especially at some personal cost, they bring great—and unexpected—blessings.

R: Artificial insemination

(Perhaps not the theme for preaching; but necessary at times in conferences. For that reason some notes on it are included here.)

1. *A modern problem:*

An Italian naturalist, Pazo Spallanzini, Professor in the University of Pavia, taught a theory of artificial insemination in the case of animals, in the eighteenth century. This has been developed and improved by modern research, and has now been extended to human beings.

2. *Two kinds of artificial insemination:*

(a) By donor other than the husband:

This is completely condemned by the Church and also rejected, to date, by most Governments, for legal and other reasons.

(b) Artificial insemination by the husband:

This again can be of two kinds, either (1) by the use of means which are against the natural and divine laws; or (2) by means which are licit in certain circumstances.

3. *The Catholic doctrine on the point:*

(a) Before Pius XII:

i. Limited to a reply of the Holy Office, 24 March 1897; asked if it was permitted to practise artificial fecundation of the woman,

it replied in the negative. This reply was afterwards understood as referring to the artificial insemination mentioned above in 2 (a) and (b) 1.

ii. the reason is obvious, because at the time it implied the use of means which are against the natural law.

(b) From the time of Pius XII:

i. General principles: What is usually understood by artificial insemination (2 (a) and b (1)) cannot be permitted by the Catholic Church;

ii. as a help to generation of children, when the donor is the husband and the act has the conditions mentioned in (b) 2, it is licit in certain circumstances (*Allocution*, 29 September 1949).

S: Use of the safe period

The general principles

(This is a theme which is not suitable for normal preaching, but the principles are important for conferences or individual consultation. For that reason it is included here.)

1. It is a scientific fact that there are days in the woman's monthly cycle when she is incapable of conception, from natural reasons connected with her time of ovulation.

2. This implies that nature herself has provided us with a method of control of birth which is in conformity with the law of God, given certain circumstances.

3. Although the fact is a matter for science to determine, it belongs to the Church to decide if its use is licit or not.

Development of the doctrine

1. *It is permitted in certain cases:*

(a) Reply of the Sacred Penitentiary of 17 June 1880:

Penitents who use this method are not to be worried and the confessor may, in certain circumstances, insinuate that they could use it, when other means to avoid the crime of onanism have failed. The mind of the Church is clear. It may be licit to use such a means to control birth, but there is need for caution.

(b) Casti Connubii:

The Pope limits himself to saying that it is not against nature to use this method.

2. *Pius XII:*

His *Allocution* to midwives of 29 September 1951 gives a summary of the doctrine:

- (a) Any marriage contract which limits the use of marriage to the safe period is wrong and could be invalid.
- (b) The use of marriage on the days when there is no danger of conception, but without excluding its use on other days, is licit.
- (c) The exclusive use of marriage on days when there is no possibility of conception is licit only when there is a grave reason for it. The Pope excludes from the list of grave reasons such things as material comfort, sensuality, avarice, materialistic motives in general, or egoism. He admits as grave causes:
- i. *medical reasons*; when conception would be a real danger to the mother;
 - ii. *economic and social reasons*, with a grave cause;
 - iii. *eugenic reasons*, well founded;
 - iv. *moral reasons*; when there may be no other means of avoiding onanism.

4. The confessor usually has to deal with such cases, and he should work in conjunction with a Catholic doctor. It is not his place to give medical advice in the confessional, although he may be the one who has to decide whether, in any particular case, such methods may be used to limit the family.

Third Sunday after Epiphany

CURE OF THE LEPER AND FAITH OF THE CENTURION

SECTION I. SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Epistle: Romans 12. 16-21

Gospel: Matthew 8. 1-13.

Cf. Mark 1. 40-45; Luke 5. 12-16; 7. 1-10

Other texts concerning faith

1. *It is a gift of God:*

Nobody can come to me without being attracted towards me by the Father who sent me, so that I can raise him up at the last day. It is written in the book of the prophets, And they shall all have the Lord for their teacher; everyone who listens to the Father and learns, comes to me. . . . Believe me when I tell you this; the man who has faith in me enjoys eternal life. John 6. 44-47. Cf. Eph. 1. 17; 2. 8.

2. *It is a firm conviction of the power and goodness of God:*

What is faith? It is that which gives substance to our hopes, which convinces us of things we cannot see. It was this that brought credit to the men who went before us. It is faith that lets us understand how the worlds were fashioned by God's word; how it was from things unseen that the things we see took their origin. Heb. 11. 1-3. Cf. Matt. 9. 20-22; 15. 28.

3. *Dead faith, i.e. without works, does not justify a man:*

I may have powers of prophecy, no secret hidden from me, no knowledge too deep for me; I may have utter faith, so that I can move mountains; yet if I lack charity, I count for nothing. 1 Cor. 13. 2.

Of what use is it, my brethren, if a man claims to have faith, and has no deeds to shew for it? Can faith save him then? Here is a brother, here is a sister, going naked, left without the means to secure their daily food; if one of you says to them, Go in peace, warm yourselves and take your fill, without providing for their bodily needs, of what use is it? Thus faith, if it has no deeds to shew for itself, has lost its own principle of life. We shall be inclined to say to him, Thou hast faith, but I have deeds to shew. Shew me this faith of thine without any deeds to prove it, and I am prepared, by my deeds, to prove my own faith. Thou believest that there is only one God; that is well enough, but then, so do the devils, and the

devils shrink from him in terror. . . . Body separated from spirit is a dead body, and faith separated from good deeds is a dead faith. James 2. 14-26.

4. *It is living and operative faith which attains salvation:*

He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who refuses belief will be condemned. Mark 16. 16.

But all those who did welcome him he empowered to become the children of God, all those who believe in his name. John 1. 12. Cf. Luke 8. 48; 18. 42.

God so loved the world that he gave up his only-begotten Son, so that those who believe in him may not perish, but have eternal life. . . . And he who believes in the Son possesses eternal life, whereas he who refuses to believe in the Son will never see life; God's displeasure hangs over him continually. John 3. 16, 36.

Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and life; he who believes in me, though he is dead, will live on, and whoever has life, and has faith in me, to all eternity cannot die. John 11. 25-26.

Once we are in Christ, circumcision means nothing, and the want of it means nothing; the faith that finds its expression in love is all that matters. Gal. 5. 6.

5. *It is a sure defence against temptations:*

With all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the fire-tipped arrows of your wicked enemy. . . . Eph. 6. 16.

But you, grounded in the faith, must face him boldly. . . . 1 Pet. 5. 9.

Whatever takes its origin from God must needs triumph over the world; our faith, that is the triumphant principle which triumphs over the world. 1 John 5. 4.

6. To complete the theology of faith in the New Testament we should read and digest St Paul's famous hymn to faith in Hebrews 11. 1-40; 12. 1-2.

SECTION II. GENERAL COMMENTS

I. LITURGICAL

These Sundays after Epiphany have no fixed place in the liturgical scheme. The Gospel shows us Christ curing the leper and the servant of the centurion. Such miracles are a sign of his power and his mercy, attributes which are manifested nowadays in spiritual cures, just as much as they were then in material ones.

The Epistle, a continuation of Romans 12, contains some practical advice about charity. There is no objective relation between the two, but there is a subjective one, because the centurion demonstrates

his charity by looking after the health of his servant. He is a model for all those who have servants under their care.

The prayers, especially the Collect, refer to the Gospel. They remind us that spiritually we are sick and must go to our Lord for our cure. We ask him to forgive our sins and prepare us for the celebration of the Mass. Fruitful theme for preaching.

II. EXEGETIC AND MORAL NOTES

A: The Epistle: Romans 12. 16-21

That of the previous Sunday finished at verse 16; that of this Sunday continues from that point.

1. *The general argument:*

As Chrysostom says, the first instinct of man is to return evil for evil. There is nothing so sweet as revenge!

The Christian can see this instinct for revenge fulfilled in another way, by heaping coals of fire on his adversary's head. Instead of returning evil for evil, he pours out all manner of good things on his enemy. It is a new form of revenge. This is the new *lex talionis* of the Christian. The motives which move us to it are:

- (a) the fact that we are supposed to do good before God and men;
- (b) justice and revenge are things which belong exclusively to God;
- (c) so we shall overcome evil by good.

2. *Texts:*

(a) *Never give yourselves airs of wisdom . . .*

This is mentioned several times in the course of the Epistle; in this world we cannot prescind from the experience and advice of others. What is more, if we put on airs of wisdom and despise others we shall lose that humility which alone will enable us to follow out the advice Paul is about to give.

(b) *study your behaviour . . .*

A general principle applied to a particular case, and which avoids vanity and hypocrisy. Hypocrisy consists in doing good in the sight of men, but not in that of God; while vanity inclines us to do good before God and then to parade that good in the sight of men, to seek their praises. True virtue consists in doing good in the sight of God and giving consequent good example to our fellow men.

In the early days of the history of the Church, when she needed to expand and fill the whole world with her teaching, this example was of prime necessity. So let your light shine among men . . . (Matt. 5. 16). It was the constancy of the martyrs and the virtues of the early Christians which really converted the world to Christianity, not so much the actual preaching of the missionaries. When times are difficult this example is more necessary.

(c) Do not avenge yourselves . . .

As Tertullian says: Revenge only makes the crime worse, implying as it does two evils instead of one. By taking revenge we rob God of the right of defending us, of the right to judge and to take vengeance. Allow tribulation to run its course; in this way, once the first flush of anger has died down, we shall see things in their right proportions and it will then be possible for us to apply the laws of charity, as we should. This is the full meaning of the quotation from Deut. 32. 35; Vengeance is for me, I will repay, says the Lord. In Heb. 10. 31 Paul adds the comment that it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of God.

(d) feed thy enemy if he is hungry . . .

Do you really wish for revenge? Then here is what you must do to achieve it. You must return good for evil. Thus you will heap coals of fire on his head, because he will be ashamed when he sees how well you are treating him.

(e) disarm malice with kindness . . .

This is once again a general rule. Vices do not die; they are overcome by the contrary virtues. In the whole of the spiritual life, says Boyer, we must learn to overcome evil by the contrary good. Moral defects and sins are more easily overcome by good. Negative acts of destruction are far less effective than positive acts of construction. Love is the source of all spiritual energy and of Christian perfection. There is nothing more powerful, nothing more holy. Penance is never more sincere than when it is founded on love. There is no quicker way to perfection than that of love. Union with God is attained by no other way than that of love.

B: The Gospel: Matthew 8. 1-13

There are two scenes in the Gospel read today; and they have something in common, namely, the faith, confidence and humility of the centurion and the leper.

The leper

1. Chronological situation:

This is uncertain, owing to the fact that St Matthew places it immediately after the Sermon on the Mount, while Luke places it a few days after the calling of the first apostles, in the course of a short journey among the towns at the side of the lake of Genesareth. The latter is probably more exact. In any case, it was one of the great miracles of our Lord's life, preached very frequently by his disciples, as can be seen from the fact that it is included by all three Synoptics.

2. The disease:

There is no need to add much to what we already know of this terrible illness or the severe laws laid down by the Jewish code

concerning it (Lev. 14. 1-57). It may be as well to point out that leprosy in the days of Christ included certain other illnesses which were not then accurately diagnosed, such as syphilis.

3. Leprosy and sin:

Most commentators see in leprosy a symbol of sin because of the horror of this disease and the repugnance it caused. However, of the two, sin is worse, because it attacks the soul, an image of the Trinity and redeemed by the grace of Christ. The leper was separated from his family; the sinner is isolated from spiritual goods.

4. The prayer of the leper:

On the way down from the mountain (Matthew) or near one of the cities of Genesareth (Luke) a leper approached and prostrated himself before the Lord. What did this man believe of Christ? That he was God as well as the Messiah? It is hard to say, from the brief narrative of the Gospels, but his faith made him see in Christ someone sent by God.

His prayer was very simple; If it be thy will, thou hast power to make me clean. He did not say, If you ask God he will make me clean. Instead he manifests his faith in the power of Christ himself, as sent by God.

His confidence is absolute. He does not plead, but merely expounds the facts: If it is your will. . . . The motives for confidence are the same as those of hope: the goodness of God, his fidelity to his promises and his power to accomplish his will. Confidence should be humble, living and persevering. Faith includes confidence and the confession of our need. Chrysostom says that prayer is perfect when it has two conditions, faith and this confession of need. The leper demonstrates his faith by his very reverence and prostration; his confidence by his words. It is as if he said: Lord, all things have been made by you; therefore you can cleanse me. Your will is power, and your power is ever subject to your will.

Thirdly, his resignation—not expressed in so many words, but implied all the time behind them. If it is your will . . . but I am resigned to that will. It is a mixture of desire and resignation, the two qualities of a prayer for temporal needs.

5. The cure:

(a) Jesus held out his hand and touched him:

The touch implies that Christ, as Master of the Law, prescind from the legal impurity involved in this touch. From now on nothing will be impure save only sin.

(b) It is my will; be thou made clean:

An immediate reply to such a meritorious prayer. To the prayer: If it be thy will . . . he replies: It is my will. To that of: Thou hast power . . . he says: Be thou made clean. It is the divine reply to

human prayer. We might learn from the leper to go to God at once; from our Lord we learn to help others in their need. The curing of the soul is not simply a getting rid of the impurity of sin, but also the gaining of supernatural life. The fact of the miracle is stressed by the way the Gospels tell us that *immediately* his leprosy was healed. No illness of this kind can be cured at once by human means.

6. *After the miracle:*

The Gospel tells us of two commands given by our Lord to the former leper, that he should not make publicity out of the miracle and that he should show himself to the priests. The first was not possible; too many people would know about it. The second? We can presume that it was obeyed, because the man himself would be interested in his own complete rehabilitation from the social point of view and would, therefore, submit himself to the ceremony described in Leviticus (14, 2 ff.). It is not the only occasion on which Christ imposes this silence, possibly to avoid violent manifestations in his favour, which would not further his real purpose. We may learn the lesson, not to sing our own praises!

The Centurion

1. *Historical situation:*

This event took place after the Sermon on the Mount, which was preached near the town of Capharnaum. This city, the scene of much of Christ's preaching and many of his miracles, came to be called *his city*. Situated on the banks of the Lake, a few miles from Nazareth and very near the frontier, it was the seat of pharisaism, untouched by many of the Greco-Roman customs which had invaded Palestine. In spite of the fact that Christ spent so much time in it, the inhabitants never came over entirely to the side of Christ, and Christ had to reprove them several times. It was the site of the general defection after the preaching of the Eucharist; but it was not so rebellious as Jerusalem for all that.

As a frontier town, it had its garrisons, many of the troops in which would be mercenaries, although it is not clear whether they were in the pay of Rome or of Herod. One of them has come down to us: this centurion, a rich man, who had even built the Jews a synagogue. The mountain of the famous sermon is not far from the city, and the hearers on that day would be mainly inhabitants of Capharnaum. Thus it would not be difficult for the soldier to know where to find Jesus.

2. *A centurion came to him . . .*

The only exegetical difficulty in this passage. St Matthew seems to imply that the centurion came in person, while according to St Luke he sends first an embassy of the most influential Jews and then his own friends.

The easiest solution to this difficulty is that given by Riciotti, namely, the principle that whatever one does by means of an embassy is as it were done by oneself. However, the extent of the conversations and the general situation seem to demand both the embassies and also the personal appearance of the centurion—all of which are compatible. This man, who did not deem himself worthy to receive Christ into his house, first sends as ambassadors the more notable men among the Jewish congregation.

3. *A centurion:*

A centuria was composed of a hundred men; a cohort, of six centurias; a legion, of ten cohorts—six thousand soldiers in all. The Roman policy was to garrison countries with foreign troops, and Herod Antipas, in this particular, had adopted the Roman ideas. Therefore this man was not a Jew, but a Gentile who had many Jewish sympathies. This was no small thing in those days, when the Romans despised the Jews, who would not allow the introduction of Hellenic culture, the games or the more classical forms of religion. Typical example of this attitude was Pilate.

4. *My servant . . .*

The faith and humility of the centurion are only equalled by his charity. The illness itself is not clearly defined—a type of paralysis, accompanied by pain and, apparently, fever. It could have been many things, including a stroke or even tetanus. The point is that there is no doubt about the seriousness of the illness, because the servant was near death.

The embassy gives the reasons why they think that Jesus should attend to the pleas of this man, namely, his sympathy for their religion and the fact that he had built them a synagogue. Christ, who possessed all virtue, also had that of patriotism, which, if it is not taken to excess, forms part of the virtue of piety. That is why he wept over Jerusalem.

5. *I will come and heal him:*

The promise is clear and so, too, is the speed with which Christ goes to the servant's assistance.

6. *The humility of the centurion:*

He does not consider himself worthy to receive Christ in his house, rich as he was. His words are also an example of prayer. He begins with adoration, homage . . . Lord! He continues by saying that he does not wish to put Jesus to any trouble (Luke 7, 6), adding his act of humility . . . I am not worthy. Then he follows it up with an act of sublime confidence and faith. He knows what military discipline means . . . and to this man all the elements of nature are subject. There is no need for anything more than a word of command on the part of Christ and his servant will be healed. Of that he has no doubt.

7. *Christ's reply:*

I have not found faith like this in Israel. Living, firm and practical faith is necessary for salvation. This faith is a gift of God which demands our co-operation; it is the beginning of all justification. In prayer, it is a mixture of faith and confidence. Israel as a whole refused to co-operate with the call of God, and for that reason they shall come from the East and the West to take their places in the kingdom, while many of that kingdom's own sons will be cast into exterior darkness.

SECTION III. THE FATHERS

I. ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

(We shall include in this section extracts or summaries from two of the works of St John Chrysostom, the first from the *Opus Imperfectum*, PG. 56, 747, commonly attributed to him but probably not his work. However, it is quoted frequently by St Thomas in the *Catena*, which gives it great authority. The second is from Hom. 25 in *Matt.* PG. 331-334, concerning thanksgiving.)

A: The Cure

1. Behold a leper, as though prepared beforehand, meets him as he comes down from the mountain. Perhaps it was for this cause that he came down, so that he might heal the leper; for sin is the leprosy of the soul. So the Lord descends from a high mountain apart, to cure the leprosy of our sins. Why think you that this man did not go up into the mountain to hear our Lord preach? Because he was burdened with leprosy, bearing the weight of his sins and so unable to go up there. Or have you not heard the prophet saying that they must be unstained who ascend the holy mountain? . . . So whatever walks in evil cannot ascend into the Church, which is here denoted by the mountain of the Lord, nor can he listen to her spiritual instruction. Should such a one come, he does so only in his body, not in his soul. He who comes not in a pure heart gains nothing, for he comes only in his body. Should he hear spiritual things, he will not understand, because his mind is corrupted by the leprosy of sin. No one can savour spiritual things while revelling in evil; for as long as evil delights him, good cannot give him pleasure. Then only will he delight in good when evil ceases to please him. . . .

2. . . . *came and adored him:*

Conditions for a perfect prayer, faith and confession, as the Apostle says (Rom. 10. 10). For as the leper, by his adoration, fulfilled the duty of faith, so, by his words, he fulfilled that of confession, when he said: Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean. . . .

Lord, if thou wilt. . . . He does not doubt that the will of God is disposed to every good action, saying: If thou wilt. This does not imply doubt on the part of the leper, but rather the expression of his mind concerning Christ's judgement. For since Christ is good, he does not will to grant that which is harmful, even though we may ask him for it. Neither is bodily health a good thing for everyone. Since, therefore, he did not know whether this healing was for his own good or not, he was unsure as to the divine will, even though he was aware of the fact that it is always disposed to good. To believe good of divine mercy is the sign of a man who believes; but to know the designs of divine mercy is beyond faith, since it is plain that the Apostle did not know this when he three times besought God to remove from him the sting of the flesh. That is why he was told: My grace is sufficient for thee. . . . The words of the leper therefore shew him to be uncertain, not of God's mercy, but of the judgements of that mercy.

3. *and Jesus, stretching out his hand, touched him . . .*

It was laid down in the law that he who touched a leper was unclean until sundown. Therefore he touched the leper, not as a servant of the law, but as its Master. For the law is under the lawgiver; not the lawgiver under the law. What then? Did he do away with the law? No; he broke the letter of the law that its spirit might remain, to which he gave added dignity and force. . . . One who, in touching the leper, was not soiled by his leprosy, did not act contrary to the law, but even goes beyond that which the law requires, because he heals the leper by his touch. . . .

We must have compassion on infirmities of the body, not despise them. However, the infirmity of soul must be despised. The infirmity of our bodies does not depend on ourselves whether it comes or not; but the infirmity of the soul is dependent on our own will, and whether it comes or not depends only upon ourselves.

The infirmity of our bodies holds us fast; we do not cling to it. The infirmity which is within the soul does not hold us fast; we cling to it. For which reason, while we have compassion on the former infirmity, we should despise the latter.

4. *I will, be thou made clean . . .*

So that all those present might know that the man was made clean by the power of him who had laid down the laws of health. The words I will are a reply to the leper's first statement, If thou wilt; while the words Be thou made clean are a command in reply to the leper's implied request: Thou canst make me clean.

5. *Jesus said to him: See thou tell no man, but go . . .*

All the works of healing wrought by Christ contain within them mysteries of God's hidden purposes. At the time when they were

done the bodily benefits he granted belonged to those alone to whom he gave them; but now they are ours, and perhaps the spiritual benefits are ours alone. This leper, therefore, who immediately after the Sermon of Enlightenment comes forward as one who is prepared, was a figure of the Jewish people. . . . For the Word of God has touched his soul who adores that Word, believing it to be divine and embracing it with his whole heart. For it is not possible that a soul which embraces the Word should be untouched by it. . . .

And if you have embraced the word of God with your whole heart, then that word will touch your soul also, for it is said that: He loves them who love him (Prov. 8. 17). It will cleanse you of all unbelief. Once he has made you clean, then he will command you also to show yourself to the priests, as one made clean. You must show yourself as refraining from every contamination of evil-doing, demonstrating in good works your charity to all men, so that through these good works, you may learn from the priests that you are made clean, since they see that you do not to another that which you are not willing to endure yourself. Rather you do to all men that which you wish them to do to you. If you will not offer these sacrifices to God, then it is plain to the sight of all men that you are not yet clean. Rather you are still a leper in your old unbelief.

B: Thanksgiving

1. *Necessity and utility of thanksgiving:*

We should give continuous thanks to God, because in the first place it is absurd to think that we should enjoy his benefits every day and yet not express our gratitude, at least in words. Again, this act of thanksgiving is most beneficial to us, because it makes us more familiar with him and love him more. Also one of the best ways to preserve the good will of one who gives us good things is to thank him for them constantly. That is why the great mysteries we celebrate are called the Eucharist, because they remind us of the principal elements in our redemption and make us grateful for them.

Let us give thanks then to God always, not merely for our own blessings, but also for those granted to others, first because this destroys envy and increases our charity; secondly because in this way we shall become like the angels, who love us so much that they consider our good as being theirs also.

2. *Nothing is little that comes from God:*

Even though the gift may seem small, it will always be a great thing, because it comes from God; or perhaps it would be better to say that there is nothing which comes from God that is small. [After listing the great gifts of the incarnation and redemption, he continues:] No one has done more to make us grateful to him than God himself. For that reason, at times even against our will, he heaps

benefits upon us. Thus we see him providing graces for St Paul, even before the latter was aware of it, since he said to him that his grace was enough to overcome temptations, and that virtue was made perfect in infirmity. That is why the Apostle tells us that we should give thanks always.

3. *Gratitude, a fruit of humility:*

Nothing contributed so much to the condemnation of the Jews as their pride and ingratitude. Nothing dulls the perception of the soul so much as this. Man who recognizes himself to be a sinner is grateful for everything, even punishments. In this lies the true art of Christian living, in knowing what we are really worth. He knows himself who is ready to confess that he is nothing. Abraham and David both cultivated this virtue when they were at the height of their power. All the saints have considered themselves to be the most worthless of men, while on the contrary, the proud man is the one who has least knowledge of himself. For this reason we are accustomed to say of the proud man: Little does he know himself! How different was the attitude of St Paul, who said that he did not merit the name of an apostle, even after so many deeds done for Christ.

4. *Humility and detachment from worldly things:*

Two virtues which are connected. Let us, then, emulate and imitate their virtues. We shall do this if we become detached from the things of this world. There is nothing which prevents self-knowledge so much as this attachment to earthly things; and there is nothing which makes us attached to the world so much as lack of the knowledge of self. The two things go hand in hand. One who loves the glory of this world and esteems it highly will never be able to despise himself; while one who thinks little of such things will soon know himself, and this self-knowledge will lead him along the path of virtue.

C: The centurion: Watchfulness

(The theme is suggested by the fact that the infidelity of the Jews led to their rejection in favour of the Gentiles. The idea is that even the just may fall; hence they should be ever watchful.)

We who think that we stand, should be careful lest we fall. Nor should we despise those who fall; rather we should ask ourselves why they do nothing to rise again.

Because we are all capable of falling we should walk by the narrow way, but with confidence mixed with fear. Confidence, because Jesus is our guide; fear, because of the possibilities of falling that exist on all sides. We should travel that way in watchfulness and awake to our dangers. He who is drowsy is very near a fall.

1. *The example of David:*

In continuation he comments on the grave sin committed by David, pointing out that it is not the same thing to fall into such sins when one is especially favoured by God as when one is not so favoured. But if David was an example of a great sinner, he was also an example of great repentance, because there are occasions when the rising from sin implies greater effort than the falling into it. If the warrior, after being severely wounded and blood-stained, arises to slay the one who wounded him, he would be very like the man who, overcome by the devil and fallen into sin, arises to overcome his enemy.

The example of a really generous and active soul is not necessarily the man who walks steadily along the path of virtue, without any falls. Such a one is helped by his hope in his own merits, which encourages him and drives him on. More generous and active is the one who, having accumulated merits, finds himself completely vanquished, and then rises again to overcome his enemy, and to begin the struggle once more.

There is no one who has such a fear of the sea as the pilot who has been shipwrecked in the very entrance to the harbour, after having travelled the seven seas and seen so many storms and perils. David, in his courage, rises from his sin and does not even fear to confess it.

2. *Watchfulness:*

In the light of such examples, let us be ever on guard and make a great effort not to fall; and if we do fall, let us not be content to lie there, helpless. God has not put the example of David before us so that we may be discouraged or careless; but so that we might be more careful and fearful. If that holy man, because he allowed himself to be overcome by carelessness, received such wounds, what will our case be? Therefore, do not merely consider the one who falls, but think also of the great efforts he made both before and after his fall; how much he wept for it, the penance he did for it, day and night in his tears, in sack-cloth and ashes. . . .

So that we may not suffer a similar misfortune, let us be armed with good works, and if we have sinned, let us wash that away by our penance, so that, once the present life has passed away, we may enjoy that which is eternal.

II. ST BERNARD

Conditions for prayer

(A summary of the doctrine contained in PL. 83, 176-178 and 178-181 concerning prayer and its conditions.)

1. *Confidence, humility and sincere desire:*

Since it is such an effective means of obtaining God's help, the devil will be equally interested in rendering it useless. At times the

fruit of prayer is lost because we are discouraged and afraid. Man thinks so much about his own unworthiness that he fails to remember the mercy of God, thinking only of his justice. We should have more confidence in God, who wills our good at all times.

Just as there is danger in timid prayer, so there is danger, too, in prayer which is presumptuous. . . . I do not say this so as to rob sinners of their confidence, but to make them pray as they ought, as people who have sinned against justice. Let them pray for pardon of their sins, with a contrite and humble heart, as the publican did when he said: Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner. . . .

The third danger is that of tepid prayer, which does not come from the depths of a fervent soul. Timid prayer does not penetrate the heavens because it is held back by fear; tepid prayer, on the other hand, fails on its way to heaven, because it has neither warmth nor vigour. Faithful, humble and fervent prayer does reach heaven, from which it will never return empty.

2. *Why does God refuse to hear me?*

Every time I talk about prayer I think that I can hear that very human complaint which I have heard so many times from others and which I have, at times, felt within myself. What is the use of prayer if, even though we pray without ceasing, so few of us experience any results from that prayer? It would seem that we finish our prayer as we began; no one says a word to us, no one grants us anything; rather it would seem that we have laboured in vain. But, what does the Lord say? Judge not according to appearances, but according to justice. And what is the just estimate of prayer? Nothing else but faith by which the just man lives. Therefore follow the judgement of faith and not that of appearances, because faith always tells the truth, while experiences sometimes lie.

Let none of us hold prayer in small esteem, my brethren, because the Lord to whom it is directed esteems it highly. Before it has left our mouth it is written down in his book; and we can expect one of two things in return, either he will grant us what we ask or he will give us that which is of most use to us. We do not know how to pray properly, but the Lord has mercy on our ignorance. He receives our prayer with kindness, but he will not grant us things which are not for our good or things which we do not need immediately. But our prayer will not be in vain.

3. *What we should ask for:*

The real petitions of the heart consist in three things, and I do not see that there is any other. The first two are of this world, that is to say, favours for the body or the soul; the third is for the next world, happiness in heaven. Do not be surprised if I say that bodily favours should be sought from the Lord, because all good things come from him, be they of the body or of the soul. We should

expect from him, and therefore ask him for, the things which enable us to remain in his service. However, we should pray more frequently and with greater fervour for things of the spirit; also for eternal life, in which the true happiness of both body and soul consists.

In these three petitions, so that our requests may be said to come from the heart, three more things are necessary, because in the first one at times enters what we may call superfluity, in the second lack of purity of intention and in the third pride. Temporal things are sometimes sought from the motive of pleasure, virtues for ostentation, and even eternal life is sought by some, not with the due humility, but as if it were the result of their own merits. I say this, not because grace does not give us confidence in our petitions, but because it is not right that man should rely on that grace to obtain everything. The gifts of grace which we have received should merely serve as a stimulus to our hope that, through the mercy of him who gave them to us, we may receive still more.

Therefore, prayer for temporal things should be limited to necessities; that which concerns the spiritual life of virtue, free from all impurity and directed solely to the good pleasure of God; that which concerns eternal happiness in heaven should be founded on humility and should depend only on the divine mercy.

SECTION IV. THEOLOGIAN

I. P. ROYO, O.P.

(Selections from his *Teologia de la perfeccion cristiana*, concerning the growth of faith at each stage of the spiritual life. B.A.C., Madrid.)

1. *Beginners:*

The principal care of beginners with relation to their faith should be to nourish it and increase it, so that it will not be lost or corrupted. To this end, having been convinced that faith is a gift of God which cannot be merited, they should ask the Lord in fervent prayer to preserve always in their souls this divine light, which alone in the midst of darkness shows us the way to heaven. Their favourite prayer should be that of the Gospel: I do believe, Lord; help thou my unbelief.

They should reject, by divine grace, everything which might be an obstacle to their faith, such as temptations, doubts, scruples, which they should combat indirectly rather than directly, that is, by distracting themselves, thinking of other things, etc. Never directly, by argument with the temptation, seeking reasons or proofs—this would only increase the violence of the temptation and the disturbance in the soul.

They should avoid reading anything which attacks faith or undermines it by its un-Christian or worldly approach. Above all, they

should avoid intellectual pride, which is the worst obstacle to God's mercy where this gift of faith is concerned and the easiest way to eternal damnation for those who already possess it.

They should extend and increase their knowledge of the truths of faith by study and by reading. At the same time they should multiply their acts of faith, learning by this to think as the Church does, repeating with fervour the Gospel prayer: Lord, increase our faith.

2. *Those who are more advanced:*

They should increase in this virtue to such an extent that the whole of their lives should be filled with the true spirit of faith, from which point of view they should judge everything: The just man lives by faith.

(a) We must see God through the prism of faith, without paying any attention to the fluctuating moods of our feelings or whims. God is ever the same, infinitely good and merciful, and no consolations or dryness we may suffer, praise or persecution of those around us, success or failure, can ever change his nature.

(b) We must make sure that our ideas concerning the true values of things coincide entirely with those of faith, despite what the world may think or feel. Thus we must be intimately convinced that, in the light of eternity, poverty, meekness, tears of repentance, hunger and thirst after justice, mercy, purity of heart, peace and the suffering of persecution are better than riches, violence, revenge, the pleasures of the flesh and dominion over the whole world. We have to see in Christian suffering a true blessing of God, even though the world cannot understand such a thing. We must be convinced that it is a greater evil to commit one deliberate venial sin than to suffer the loss of health or even of life itself. That the least grain of sanctifying grace, the good of soul of one individual, is worth more than the natural good of the whole universe. That a long life is less important than a holy life; and therefore we must not neglect our life of mortification and penance, even though these austerities may shorten somewhat our exile in this valley of tears and miseries.

In a word, we must see all things from God's point of view and through the prism of faith, renouncing all worldly standards and purely human points of view. By faith alone can we overcome the world (1 John 5. 4).

(c) This spirit of faith, once it is lived intensely, will be a source of consolation to us in sorrow and bodily trials, in the midst of bitterness and spiritual tribulations, ingratitude and ill-will on the part of men, in times of the loss of relatives and friends. It makes us see that suffering will pass, but the reward for having suffered well will never pass away; that things are as God sees them, not as men think of them, with their worldly and fanciful ideas; that those who have gone before us in the sign of faith await us in a better life and

that, after this night spent in a very poor inn (the apt phrase of St Teresa for this life), the eternal splendours of the city of the blessed await us. . . .

What fortitude of soul results from this light of faith, together with the strength to put up with and even embrace sorrow, sure in the knowledge that the momentary and light tribulations of this life prepare for us an incomparable weight of eternal glory. It is not to be wondered at that the Apostles, and after them the great army of the Church's martyrs, went joyfully to prison, sufferings and death, glorying in the fact that they were counted worthy to suffer something for the name of Christ (Acts 5. 41).

3. *Those who are perfect:*

In these, faith, illuminated by the gifts of understanding and knowledge, reaches its maximum intensity, sending forth rays of splendour which are the prelude to and pledge of eternal glory in the beatific vision.

II. DAVID GREENSTOCK

(A summary of the ideas contained in the first chapters of *Armatura de Dios*, concerning the virtue of faith and what it means to us in terms of real life.)

God, in his divine wisdom, did not think it convenient to make all things plain to us in this life. Instead he demands that we believe in his word and live in accordance with that faith. At the same time he promised that he would give us a great and a lasting reward for our faith. He demands our belief and confidence in him, and with reason, because he is our God, infinitely wise, powerful and loving.

This road of faith is both simple and great at one and the same time. Faith guarantees our complete security without feeding our pride. Since it makes us admit our own weakness and need, it is our greatest source of strength, because we no longer trust in ourselves, weak and limited creatures as we are. Instead we trust in God himself. Thus, in spite of the darkness which surrounds us, we are bathed in a resplendent light. Faith demands from us the simplicity and confidence of a child, while at the same time it offers us the security and peace of a loving father. We can never be sufficiently grateful to God for having chosen to direct our way himself, by means of faith, instead of leaving us to the resources of our own reason, so inclined to evil and error through its prejudices. If we are really sincere with ourselves we shall be fully convinced of this truth and we shall give God thanks all the days of our life for the gift of faith.

There is another point we must mention before meditating on the effect faith has on our ordinary Christian conduct. Faith is the one

gift of God which will never abandon us, unless we, of our own free will, cast it from us through the sin of infidelity. Mortal sin strips the soul of many of the gifts which it possesses. We lose grace, that divine life which springs up in us; charity is lost, too—the one gift which enables us to love God as he is in himself. But faith remains, together with hope; the last link, we may say, which joins us to God. . . . It continues to shine in the darkness. . . . The sinner may lose everything and find himself in the deepest abyss of misery. But one thing remains to him, that light of faith, which still shines in the darkness. Perhaps no one except the sinner who has voluntarily cut himself off from God can really understand what it means to retain that glimmer of light in the midst of the darkness of sin. That light assures him that God still exists and that he awaits the sinner's return as did the father in the story of the prodigal son. While there is faith there is hope. At least, all is not lost, and God has one point of contact left through which he can act on the soul.

At times even the soul in a state of grace finds itself enveloped in a terrible darkness. It would seem that God has left the soul to its own devices. In such circumstances faith is the one thing which can come to our rescue. Jesus can hide himself from every other light, except that of faith. In such moments of apparent abandonment we must learn to live only by the light of faith, which teaches us that God never abandons us. His solicitude and paternal care will raise us up finally, provided we are faithful and trust in him. We must learn to walk by the light of faith . . . even in the midst of darkness!

For our faith to be perfect it must be something more to us than a mere belief in the divine word or a simple assent to the truths of revelation. It must become an active principle in our lives. . . . To live in accordance with one's convictions is to act as a rational being; the contrary we call hypocrisy. Think how many times St Paul insists that the just man must live his faith. It is true that Christ demanded faith in his words; but it is no less true that he also demanded that his hearers should act according to their beliefs. He who hears my words and keeps them, he it is that loves me, is his constant injunction. For all of us faith in Christ's teaching could be an instrument of death rather than a means of life, unless we translate it into terms of effective action in our lives.

And what does this living of our faith imply?

Perhaps the most important element of it is our complete abandonment to the service of God. Such ought to be the logical consequence of our belief in Christ's divinity and in his mission. You are my friends if you do the things that I have commanded you. This should be the touchstone of our faith, the proof that it is a true faith and not mere words.

One thing should be made quite clear; this handing over of ourselves to Christ in voluntary obedience to his commands is something

essentially positive. Surely it is high time we saw the commandments in this light! Only too often we think of them as mere prohibitions, and there are times when we ask ourselves why God should have taken it into his head to forbid so many things. We do not appear to understand that, although the commandments are negative in form, they demand the constant exercise of positive truths. It should be evident that the command, Thou shalt not steal, really demands a very positive application of the virtue of justice to all our relationships with our fellow-men; just as obedience to the command not to adore false gods demands that we should adore the one true and living God. Apart from being more attractive, this view of religion is the only true one and will bring us a great deal of real happiness. . . . Yet how few people really understand that, when they keep the divine commandments, they are not frustrating their human activities, but directing them into their true channels! . . .

The handing of ourselves over to Christ implies nothing more or less than a conversion of ourselves into really useful members of his Body. We are not dead branches, withering on the vine, but living branches which bear fruit.

Faith in Christ implies activity, which will grow in accordance with the richness of that faith. Our soul is very like the blind man who was cured by Christ and then received the grace to believe fully in him, for which reason he fell down and adored him (John 9. 11-38). Faith implies a firm belief in the love of God for each one of us individually. Only the saints knew how important this is in the ruling of our lives. . . . It is a personal love which takes into consideration all the circumstances of my life, my birth, education, parents, formation, inclinations—in a word, everything that is mine. There are times when we find it hard to admit that our God is not a God of abstractions, but that he is essentially personal in his relationships with men. Yet it is clear in the Gospels, where we see him employ different methods in order to deal with different people. His treatment of the Samaritan woman is not the same as that used in handling Nicodemus. . . . This doctrine is of great practical importance.

For example, faith teaches us that divine providence is concerned with every detail of my life, even the smallest. So much so that Christ could say that not even a hair from my head could fall without the permission of God. Do I really believe this in a practical way in my daily life? When I awake in the morning I find myself face to face with a new day which God has given me to love and serve him. Do I realize that this new day is a gift of God? Do I see God in all my joys and sufferings, in my friends, relatives, the circumstances of my life, in this or that illness, sorrow or privation? If I were really sure that God was in fact behind all these things that happen in my daily life and that all worked into a divine plan for me, something which would draw me nearer and nearer to Him, then there is no

doubt that I would be better able to support the trials and difficulties which come to me, and that everything would take on a new meaning. Yet that is the simple truth. That is the teaching of theology; I receive everything, good or bad, from the hands of a God who loves me. . . . Nothing can happen to me unless it passes first of all through God's hands, and he will never abandon me. On the contrary, I must abandon myself into the hands of that divine will for me, on the understanding that, behind it all, there is infinite love for me. . . .

This complete abandonment will never be easy, because man is suspicious by nature. He usually relies on no one except himself and imagines that he is going to be imposed on if he submits his will to that of another. In the case of God that suspicion is unfounded. There is no father like him, because from him all paternity in heaven or on earth takes its name.

SECTION V. SPIRITUAL WRITERS

I. FRAY LUIS OF GRANADA

(Some selected sections from his *Libro de la Oración y Meditación* concerning sin, the leprosy of the soul.)

1. *The gravity of sin:*

(a) Against whom do we sin, why and how?

We should consider three things with regard to our past sins; against whom we sinned, why and how.

Against whom? God, whose goodness and majesty are infinite and whose benefits in favour of men are greater than the number of the grains of sand on the sea-shore. To whom we owe all that we have, as creatures, because he has given us everything we have.

Why? For some point of honour, some earthly pleasure—for things which belong to the past and which now have no importance. In a word, for a mere nothing.

How did you sin? So easily and so boldly, without scruple or fear, at times as though you were sinning against a God of straw! One who neither sees nor heeds what goes on in his world! Is that the honour due to his great majesty? Is that the gratitude you give him for so many benefits? Is that the payment for the precious blood he shed on the cross, the price you pay for the blows of the scourging he received?

(b) *The ingratitude of the sinner:*

If it is a great evil not to have compassion for Christ, what will it be not to hesitate to increase his sufferings and to add sorrow to sorrow? Does not Paul say that he who sins crucifies again to himself the Son of God? You should remember that his judge presented him

to the people, a figure of sorrow and scorn, thinking that there was no other way to obtain their sympathy for him. So his Father in heaven shows him to all sinners, knowing that there is no other means so effective as this to stop them sinning. Look at him, then, and remember that he is your God, and that you see him thus for no other reason except that of sin. See how sins affected God himself and what was necessary on God's part to forgive the sins of the world! . . . He stands before you and you can hear those words once again: Behold the man! As if God said to you: See this man and remember that he is God and that he is as you see him for no other reason except for the sins of the world. See how God hates sin, since the flesh of his Son was left in this state in order to destroy it. . . .

And what will be the thoughts of the sinner when God enters into judgement with him and says to him: Come; what is it that you saw in me, why did you despise me and pass over to the ranks of my enemies? I raised you up from the dust of the earth, made you into my image and likeness, gave you virtue and power to achieve my glory. But you, casting aside the benefits and the commands of life which I gave you, preferred to follow lies rather than the wise counsel of your Lord. To free you from that fall I came down from heaven to earth, where I suffered the greatest torments ever to be endured. For you I fasted, tramped the roads, laboured and sweated blood. . . . For you I was born in poverty, laboured all my life and died on the cross. The witnesses are this cross and these nails; these wounds which remain even now in my hands and feet. Witnesses, too, are the heavens and the earth, in whose sight I suffered; the sun and the moon, which were in eclipse at that hour. What did you do with that soul of yours, which I made my own? In whose service did you employ that which cost me so dear? O foolish and adulterous generation! Why did you rather choose to serve that enemy of yours with such labour, rather than serve me with joy? Well may the heavens be terrified at such a case and their very portals shake, because my people have done two evils; they have left me, the source of living water, and they have done so for another Barabbas.

(c) **God's punishment:**

See what revenge God will take for your sins, since he punished his Son in such a way for the sins of others. See the malice of sin and the rigours of divine justice as they can be seen in the bruised face of Christ. What more could he have done to make men fear God and hate sin?

2. **The healing power of Christ:**

Thinking on these things, besides the hatred for sin we may also acquire a great confidence in God through the contemplation of that same image of Christ. If it has such power to move men, it is no less powerful before God. You should remember that this same body

which the Saviour then showed to the furious mob is now presented to the gaze of the Heavenly Father, with its wounds as fresh as they were on that day. What image could be more effective to placate the anger of the Father than this one of the wounded flesh of his Son? . . . By it his honour was satisfied, his anger appeased, the price of his justice paid. By it the service due to his greatness was rendered to him.

Tell me, then, weak and doubting man, if the figure of Christ was then such as to soften the anger even of his very enemies, how much more power will it have in the eyes of his loving Father, especially since he suffered for his honour and obeyed him in all that he suffered. Make the comparison yourself and see that you can be more certain of the Father's mercy by presenting this figure to him than was Pilate when he showed it to the Jews. In all your prayers and temptations this figure is your sure shield; place it between you and God and say to him: Behold the man!

Here, my God, is the man you sought so many years ago in order to place him between you and sinners. Here is the man as just as your honour demanded, and sentenced according to the demands of our sins. Look on us, O Lord, and so that we may be sure of that, look first on the face of your Christ! And you, our Saviour and our Mediator, never cease to show yourself to the eyes of the Father for us. Since your love was so great that it did not hesitate to offer your members to your executioners, offer them now to the Eternal Father, so that for your sake he may pardon us.

II. BOSSUET

(Only two brief schemes for sermons to be given on this Sunday have come down to us. The preacher sees in the two miracles of today's Gospel the image of two sacraments. The cure of the leper reminds us of the sacrament of penance, while that of the centurion's servant is an image of our preparation for the Eucharist.)

A: Expiation through penance and preparation for the Eucharist

1. *Leprosy and sin:*

On coming down from the mountain, where he explained the precepts of the new Law of the Gospel, Christ teaches us the doctrine of the remission of sins. We do not think often enough on the good deeds we should do and the sins for which we should make expiation; nevertheless, we should try, each day, to do something to attain the remission of those sins which we continually commit. If we are not careful the whole of our lives can be passed in idleness, for we are laziness itself.

Leprosy is an impurity, the very image of sin, because there is no greater uncleanness. But all lepers do not receive the same treatment,

because there are some who have only recently contracted the illness, while others are by this time almost incurable. It is the same with sinners. Do not seek doctors who know not how to distinguish between the two. The Church has the keys which can either open or shut the doors to heaven.

Lepers lived apart from the world, for fear of contagion. The same is true of the sinner. Christ died without the gates, because he was the victim for sin. The leper had to offer two doves for his cure, one of which was slain in sacrifice and the other, after being bathed in the blood, was set free. To be free, our nature must be bathed in the blood of Christ, by means of mortification.

The leper was obliged to shave off his hair and his beard, because according to medical thought of that time the disease lay principally there. The leprosy of the soul is usually rooted in what is superfluous and vain and we must be ruthless in the destruction of such things. Do not ask me where you must make a beginning. Wait a little and you will soon receive light to continue. Begin with almsgiving. No one has more obligation to give alms than the sinner who is healed.

2. *Reasons why almsdeeds heal sin:*

(a) **Sin demands as a punishment the deprivation of all good:**

The guilty person has abused the good he has received. The least he can do then is share his goods with those who suffer real privation.

(b) **Almsdeeds avoid sin in others, especially in the poor:**

There are many sins which have their roots in poverty. No better way of expiating our own sins than by preventing sin in others. Charity covers a multitude of sins.

(c) **It is an excellent preparation for Communion:**

To give something to Christ is the best way of disposing ourselves to receive the gift of himself.

B: Christian life and mortal sin

1. *Dead to sin by baptism:*

(a) **God, life of the soul:**

These thoughts are taken from St Augustine (PL. 38, 128 and 35, 1543 ff.). God is the life of the soul as the soul is the life of the body. For one thing to give life to another it is necessary:

i. *that it must be more noble, since it is more noble to give than to receive;*

ii. *that they should be united;*

iii. *that it should communicate to the receiver certain operations which it would not be able to effect by itself.*

In the case of soul and body these conditions are obvious. With reference to God, so is the first one. So far as the second is concerned,

God's union with the soul is clear in the Scriptures—we call it the indwelling. The whole treatise of grace speaks to us of the operations which God communicates to the soul through his presence in it. The whole soul is enriched, just as an ordinary creature, no matter how humble, is brilliant when it receives the rays of the sun. Its power is fortified by the power of the almighty God, to such an extent that it has a share in some way in the divine operations. The strings of a violin are dumb, but when the hand of a master plays on them they are capable of wonderful melodies.

The soul which attains the height of that justice, wisdom, and infinite holiness which is God, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, becomes herself just, wise and holy . . . and acts in a holy fashion, as God is holy. She believes, hopes and loves God, but when she does so it is God who does these things in her (Phil. 2. 13).

(b) **Sin, incompatible with this life of the soul:**

This is the new life of which the Apostle speaks (Rom. 6. 4); and for this reason it is absolutely necessary to destroy in us everything sinful, because not only does sin keep us away from God, but it also makes us live like beasts, deprived even of reason. If we live by the spirit we should walk in the same spirit, that is, we should act like those who really live a divine life.

(c) **Death to sin, according to Christ, in baptism:**

We should often contemplate Christ, risen from the dead and the source of our life. Christ took on himself the weight of our sins; that is why he lived in the weakness of our flesh and suffered on the cross. But Christ died and rose again, and now lives in eternal glory. He died to sin once and for all time, as the Apostle tells us, that is, he threw off all the ills which he had assumed as punishment for sin. That is why the Apostle continues by saying that we should be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6. 11).

That is the significance of the ancient ceremony of baptism in which the catechumen was totally submerged in the water to signify the burial of Christ, in order to emerge from it with Christ. He was clothed in the white garment, which was a symbol of the new life of the Spirit. Nowadays the ceremonies may have changed, but the power of the sacrament remains the same. In baptism we are consecrated to the august Trinity through a death to sin and the resurrection to a new life. . . . Which is why it is called the sacrament of regeneration and renovation through the Holy Spirit.

2. *Continuous fight against sin:*

(a) **Concupiscence remains in the just:**

Why, then, this constant struggle, you may ask? Because although we are dead to mortal sin, we still have to struggle against the roots of sin which remain within us; a struggle which often leads us to the

point of failure and from which we can only be rescued by the grace of Christ. When I speak of concupiscence I am not talking about any one passion in particular, but of them all . . . that attraction we have within us to creatures, which separates us from our Creator and drives us towards material things as against those which are eternal.

(b) Grace gives us the victory:

God has permitted this tendency to evil, even in the just, so that we may all realize that what we have of good comes to us from God and, having witnessed our own impotence, attribute our victory, not to our own power, but to that of God. It is grace which confronts the evil tendency with the joy of heavenly things. It is charity which moves us to obey the law, not fear. Love is the motive which overcomes evil. When charity reigns supreme over passion, then we enjoy true liberty.

However, this liberty will never be complete here on earth, because neither will the reign of charity be complete. Here below the peace which charity brings with it is in constant conflict with the army of desire; thus, while we are in this life, charity will never be the bringer of complete peace in our tribulations, but rather the consolation in our miseries.

(c) The just, in spite of his sins, does not serve sin:

Have we not said that God destroyed sin? Yet our present argument seems to prove the contrary. I confess that even the greatest saints have been sinners, and if they did not admit it they would not be saints. They are sinners, but they do not serve sin; they are not completely free from it, but they are not slaves to its yoke. . . . They have to fight, as do we all; but they learn to overcome and do not lose grace. However, in such a hard struggle, if they give good blows themselves it is not surprising that they also receive them.

(d) Our programme:

What then should be our programme? To fight against concupiscence and never to give in to it. Do you need more? Make sin serve justice. Why and how? Because, in the present divine economy, if the sins of our weakness can diminish grace on the one hand, our sanctity can increase it on the other. It does this by kindling in us holy desires. Thus the saints sought to draw nearer to God and so free themselves from their own weaknesses. Through our petitions grace will be given us, especially if we ask with that humility which makes us like Christ.

Expiate your sins with penances, almsdeeds and deeds of love towards your neighbour. In this way not only do you destroy the kingdom of sin, but you will also destroy sin itself. As St Augustine says: If in our lives there is no lack of sin, so, too, there is no lack of remedies for it. He goes on to add: He who lives thus, even

though his life may not have been free from faults, has certainly merited to die without them.

III. TILMANN PESCH, S.J.

(A summary of his ideas on sin and redemption from it, contained in his work *La Filosofia Cristiana de la Vida*, Barcelona, 1913.)

1. The evil of sin:

(a) By its very nature it implies a separation from God, our last end:

This is the worst disaster that can happen to man, because nothing is so necessary to his happiness as to attain that end for which he was created and to which his whole life is directed.

(b) This separation from God also implies a terrible insult to God:

It means that the sinner chooses some creature in preference to God and his possession.

(c) It also implies an abuse of some created gift:

Something which God has given us for his greater glory and service; thus the sinner returns evil for good.

(d) God has a right to expect from all his creatures honour and service:

The sinner robs God of his due; he strikes at God through the most fundamental of all relationships, that between creature and Creator.

(e) The Christian has a special motive for hating sin above all other evils:

God resolved to communicate himself to men in the highest possible way, thus he gave man grace, the virtues and a multitude of other spiritual gifts which lift man up to the dignity of a son of God. . . . To do this God showed his love for us in a very special way by taking our flesh, suffering bitterly and continuing his work of charity on our altars.

Therefore lack of gratitude, insult and slight which form part of every sin have a special malice in a Christian, because they do not come from any type of creature, but from one who has been the object of very special favours, one whom God has taken as his son.

2. The mercy of Christ:

The mercy of God is his goodness in so far as it is directed towards the remedy for our ills. . . . The greatest of all evils is sin; which is thus the primary object of mercy. God does not hate the sinner, but only his sin. He tries to win over the sinner by his love.

Just as all the other perfections of God are infinite, so is his mercy.

God has decided to manifest the immense goodness of his heart in a very special manner.

Because human nature is so weak and miserable God chose it so as to manifest in it the greatness of his mercy. The other attributes of God, such as his omnipotence and his wisdom, are equally at the service of his mercy. The centre of Christianity is not hell, but the love of God, whose mercy stamps on it its proper character. When God decided not to impede sin he did so in order that his goodness could be manifested once again, under the form of mercy.

God compares himself to a man who had a hundred sheep . . . to a poor woman who left no stone unturned to find the coin she had lost; and with what wonderful strokes of the brush he paints the picture of divine mercy in the story of the prodigal son!

The clearest proof of divine mercy is in the cross of Christ.

3. *The Church and the means for applying God's mercy:*

With all the sacramental means at her disposal the Church shows herself to be the incarnation of divine mercy. In the sacrament of penance she pardons sin and removes the guilt of eternal punishment it implies. God's wisdom demands that in the remission of the temporal punishment man should have a share. But that same mercy offers him abundant means for doing this in the doctrine of indulgences. Even on the other side of the tomb God's mercy still shines forth in the fact that souls which suffer in purgatory can be helped by those on earth.

As we think of the divine mercy we should have great confidence about our past lives. If we have been great sinners we also belong to that class of person whom Christ came especially to save and whom he is for ever seeking out, to re-make them, as it were.

So far as the future is concerned, we must also have confidence, but with a certain element of fear. God has had compassion on me up to now, not to condemn me, but to save me; he will give me all the graces I need for my salvation.

I must also beware lest my confidence should become presumptuous. No one makes a fool of God! God wishes to save us, but not without our co-operation.

4. *Christ made satisfaction for us, but asks for our co-operation:*

Christ redeemed the human race from its errors, showing himself to be a doctor in both divine and human law; but he did it by his bloody sufferings on the cross. By his merits he did not merely cover the filth of our sins, he wiped it clean.

However, he did it in such a way that the grace he merited for us demands a condition on our part. . . . No adult capable of acting freely will enjoy eternal happiness in heaven as a fruit of the redemption if he does not take the trouble to make use of the grace of Christ, through virtuous actions.

SECTION VI. SERMON SCHEMES

I. LITURGICAL

1. *The spiritual value of miracles:*

(a) Miracles always have some apologetic value; and the list of those worked by Christ is a complete proof of his divinity.

(b) They also have an important spiritual value and it is necessary for us to use them for this purpose. Basing ourselves on the fact of the miracle and its circumstances, we can apply them to our spiritual lives. This is the purpose the liturgy has in mind.

(c) Liturgical readings, both in the Mass and Office, are intended to instruct and form us, but in such a way that this formation may contribute something to the progress of love in the soul. *Veritatem facientes in charitate.*

2. *Christ, the divine healer:*

We see in today's miracles this spiritual application and use these scenes for that purpose, basing ourselves on the liturgy. Christ is before us, in his omnipotence and love, as he was when he came down from the mountain.

(a) **Adoration:** This should be our first act (Introit).

(b) **Confidence:** Christ extends his hand and heals the leper. With the liturgy we may well exclaim: The right hand of the Lord has shown its power (Offertory).

3. *Spiritual leprosy:*

(a) **If thou wilt . . .**

With these words the leper approached Christ. We also draw near to him in Holy Communion; why not with the same words?

(b) **If we say we have no sin then we deceive ourselves** (1 John 1. 8):

Venial sins, tepidity, imperfections. This is our spiritual leprosy. In the spiritual life there is no room for discouragement at imperfections. On the contrary, they should serve to make us have more confidence in God. What would have happened to the leper if he had allowed himself to be discouraged?

(c) **Optimism in the liturgy:**

There are few enemies so dangerous to our spiritual life as pessimism. It is unknown in the liturgy, which is always optimistic, and which today takes us to the feet of Christ. He does not extend his hand now as he did over the leper; instead he gives himself in communion, with love and mercy, as our food and medicine.

4. *Spiritual paralysis of many people:*

(a) The Church lives by the doctrine of the Mystical Body: This is entirely opposed to any type of spiritual egoism which could taint the purity of our spiritual lives. As we think of the centurion who pleads for his servant, we also remember those Christians who are 'lying sick and grievously tormented by the palsy'.

(b) Prayer for those in mortal sin:
Even more so if there are any such among the members of our own family. Proper to this Sunday is the prayer for those who are in sin and for infidels.

(c) Sense of the universality of the Collect and Secret prayers:

- i. *in the former* we pray that God may have mercy on our weakness and to protect us extend over us the right hand of his power;
- ii. *in the latter*, that this victim may wipe away all our sins and make us more worthy of offering the Holy Sacrifice.

II. THE EPISTLE

True knowledge

1. *The nobility and necessity of knowledge:*
Intellect is a natural faculty which makes us like God.

(a) The conquests of science:

- i. *necessary in the natural order*; the present level of human civilization is due, not merely to business capacity, but also to science, which has provided us with the means to attain it.
- ii. *in the supernatural order*; the more ardent our zeal and charity the more precise is our knowledge, without which the former could be even harmful. St Teresa sought out learned confessors.

(b) God wills our scientific progress:

- He obviously wills the development of the faculties he has given us, especially the more noble ones.
- i. he demands it of kings and priests;
 - ii. approves the petition of Solomon;
 - iii. the Book of Wisdom sings its praises;
 - iv. Proverbs continues this praise of wisdom and honesty.

2. *Its dangers:*

Because it is the most noble of all the faculties, the intellect can lead us into pride very easily.

(a) Badly understood, scientific knowledge in any line can separate man from God, because he feels himself independent, able to fend for himself in all things. It was the cause of man's first fall.

(b) It can also separate a man from his fellow-men; he feels himself superior to them, offends them by his superior attitude and ends by separating himself from them. They are beneath him!

(c) It ends by being a punishment instead of a glory:

- i. *in the religious field*. We need only think of the history of ancient and modern philosophers to see the truth of this. How many have ended their lives in despair, sometimes even in suicide.
- ii. *modern science*, having put God on one side, often produces means of destruction instead of relief for man.
- iii. *in the history of Israel*, relying on itself instead of God and ending by being rejected by him.
- iv. *in that of modern times*, which insists in finding a solution to several problems apart from that provided by God and his Church. Over-population solved by birth-control methods; deformed babies, by abortion or murder!

3. *True wisdom:*

(a) Comes from God:

Because it is a breath of his own knowledge given to men, a reflexion of his eternal wisdom and goodness.

- i. *St Bernard*, on his death-bed, said: There is, here below, no true knowledge; it all comes from above.
- ii. *and St Augustine*: Nothing is better than the knowledge of God, since there is nothing which can bring greater happiness, because in his knowledge is the root of all happiness.

(b) It is destined for the good of all mankind:

Instead of being a motive for pride—stupid in any case, because acumen of intellect is a gift of God—the scientist, no matter what his line may be, should see it as a gift granted to the whole of the human race through him. He must be aware of this social aspect of his knowledge. He is the administrator of it.

(c) It is humble:

It recognizes how much there is still to learn and how much the individual can be and is helped by his fellow-men in his search for knowledge.

- i. *a phrase of St Augustine*, writing to St Jerome; though an old man by this time, he does not hesitate to consult others, because: One is never too old to learn, for even if it is more fitting that the old should teach rather than learn, it is also necessary that those who teach should learn.
- ii. *a commentary of John Chrysostom*: No matter how learned you may be, you still have need of others, and if you hold the contrary opinion, then you yourself are making yourself more foolish and weak than all the rest, because one who acts thus deprives himself of all help.

4. *Conclusion:*

No better conclusion than man's prayer as outlined in Wisdom 9. 1-6 and God's reply, in Prov. 2. 1-10.

III. THE GOSPEL

A: As he came down from the mountain . . .

1. *Christ comes down . . .*

The phrase gives us an opportunity to consider the various comings of Christ—a point not neglected by the Fathers in this connection.

2. *The descent from the Mount of the Sermon, or the Mountain of the Beatitudes:*

- (a) The sermon itself.
- (b) The great crowd at the foot of the mountain, avid for teaching and for miracles; sick in so many ways, bodily and spiritually.
- (c) All human miseries come to meet Christ, lepers, sin, ignorance, rebellion; also there is the faith of the centurion, humility, charity; good dispositions of the crowd that follows him.
- (d) Christ makes use of these miseries to teach in actual practice the doctrine of the Sermon on the Mount. The confidence of the leper leads to his cure; the faith of the centurion to the granting of his request; the multitude is confirmed in its faith in Christ, the Jews reproved for their spiritual blindness.

3. *Propter nostram salutem descendit de caelis: The first coming of Christ:*

- (a) In heaven with his Father all is glory and adoration; when he comes down to earth he finds human misery awaiting him, the result of sin. The leprosy of its moral misery; blindness and ignorance wide-spread; hardness of heart in his own people, which will not see the clear light of revelation; hardness of heart with others, too, lack of brotherly love.
- (b) Christ becomes the teacher of the human race, a remedy for ignorance, bringing to man the perfection of the law of love, the cure for sin.
 - i. to do this he had to come into such close contact with sin that he has been called the divine leper. In the Garden he nearly died in agony through this contact.
 - ii. but when he reached the lowest depths, that of the cross, then we see the source of all spiritual life, of all cures, spiritual mainly, but also physical. The first-fruits—the thief on the cross by his side, the centurion. . . .

4. *This is the bread which comes down from heaven . . .*

- (a) The descent of Christ every day from heaven to the Host, repeating in a mystical manner the descent from heaven to the cross.

There, on the altar, he finds our miseries once again and takes them upon himself as true priest and victim, to present them all to the Father and to heal them.

(b) What is more, so as to be with us more permanently, he has chosen to remain in the Tabernacle, where we can always find him, as the leper did.

5. *He comes down to his Mystical Body, the Church:*

(a) He lives in the Church; she is not a dead institution, but a live one and her life is that of Christ. When she speaks or communicates grace to us, it is Christ who speaks and acts through her.

(b) In his Church Christ is in contact with all our miseries and provides us with a solution for them, together with an effective remedy for such as are spiritual.

6. *He comes down to each and every Christian:*(a) *Each Christian is a Christ:*

i. *each one should consider himself to be another Christ in the world* and act in conformity with that state. He is Christ in the factory, workshop, office. . . . Christ wishes to come to each and every department of our lives, but he can only do that with our help.

ii. *by his special vocation this mission is proper to the priest*, in his own sphere, but also to others who take part in any form of Catholic Action.

(b) *For this it is necessary to ascend:*

i. *the mountain of prayer*. Christ did this frequently, especially when he had something of special importance in hand; example for all time, the preparation in the garden for his passion and death.

ii. *the mountain of the cross*; where we die in order to live to Christ.

iii. *the mountain of the altar*, the centre of our spiritual life, where we receive the Bread of the Eucharist to nourish our works in the apostolate.

B: *The leprosy of sin*1. *Leprosy—image of sin:*

(a) The common interpretation of the Fathers. The soul in sin is a spiritual leper;

(b) If we remind ourselves of the circumstances which surrounded this illness in the time of Christ we can see that the image is a good one.

2. *Leprosy:*

(a) Without going into too many medical details, we do know that it was the most serious and dangerous illness of those times,

incurable then, regarded almost as a curse, contagious, with social consequences as well as material ones.

(b) People were so frightened at the thought of it that laws were drawn up to prevent their contact with lepers—they were cut off from their own family circle, at times killed, to avoid contagion.

(c) The physical aspect of the illness, especially in its last stages, was horrible. Bodily corruption, loss of members, ending as a mere caricature of a human being, with no social life, family contacts, etc. A social outcast!

3. *The illness of sin:*

(a) We can apply all this to sin, especially mortal sin, although we may also say with truth that venial sin prepares the soul for the fatal illness of mortal sin.

(b) Sin is, for the soul:

i. *a cruel illness*. It kills the life of grace and virtue, together with all merits. One in mortal sin carries death within himself, for soul and body.

ii. *difficult to cure*; there is nothing in the natural order which can merit grace for us; all that we have comes to us from God.

iii. *horrible*. It destroys even human values, health at times, good name, the light of reason, the freedom of the will. It enslaves the whole of man.

iv. *contagious*. More in the case of some sins than in others, e.g. impurity and heresy.

v. *the death of the soul* together with destruction of its beauty.

vi. *cuts off communication between the soul and God* and carries within it the decree of eternal separation from the society of the saints.

4. *The attitude of the leper an example for the sinner:*

(a) He draws near to Christ:

i. *the only one who could cure him*; all the rest can do nothing; indeed, they may be contaminated by contact with him and at least would be legally impure.

ii. *there is no other to whom he can go*. The sinner receives grace from Christ either through an act of perfect contrition or through the reception of the sacraments—there is no other way.

(b) With the necessary conditions to receive his help:

i. *profound faith*. Faith in Christ, in his teaching and in the means he has left for our sanctification, is necessary in any sinner who has reached the age of reason.

ii. *entire confidence*. Even though he knows that all the rest would reject him, the leper has no diffidence or lack of confidence in his approach to Christ. What most moves Christ to grant us

his grace is our confidence in him. The son in the story of the prodigal has confidence in the pardon of his father; the good thief on the cross had confidence in Christ.

iii. *great humility*. He begins by recognizing his own illness and misery. This is the path by which Christ enters our soul; he has even demanded that we should accuse ourselves in the tribunal of penance.

iv. *deep piety*. His is a perfect prayer and reconciled to God's will for him. It is that piety which is described in the story of the prodigal, that of a son who is no longer worthy of the name.

C: The leprosy of mortal sin

1. *The leper in today's Gospel is an image of the sinner.*

2. *Sin does no evil to God personally:*

It does not take from him anything of his divine nature, because he is infinite and cannot change; it is against his infinite perfection to be subject to the whims and failings of creatures.

3. *But it is an evil in God's sight and done against him:*

(a) *Considered in itself:*

Because the sinner attempts to substitute for God, his last end, some creature.

(b) *Considered in the sight of God:*

i. *he cannot renounce the glory owed to him* by the honour and service of his creatures, and in consequence he cannot fail to see the gravity of sin, the action of a creature who despises him.

ii. *this despising of God which is explicit or implicit in every mortal sin is the very height of evil*. That is why the Scriptures, in their description of sin, always insist on this point.

4. *It implies a despising of God:*

(a) *Who is present everywhere:*

The sinner rejects him in his very presence (Ps. 139 describes this presence against which the sinner hurls his defiance);

(b) *as a legislator who is not obeyed* (Lev. 26. 15 ff. and 1 Kings 2. 30);

(c) *as our last end*: to which a creature has been preferred and which is therefore rejected, at least implicitly;

(d) *as our creator*, against whom we commit the sin of ingratitude. This is taught many times in the Scriptures (cf. Deut. 32. 6; Isaias 1; 5. 1-7);

(e) *as our Lord*, against whom the creature rebels (Jer. 2. 20);

- (f) as our redeemer, whose work we render useless in our own case (Heb. 10, 28-32);
- (g) as the one who paid our debts and whom we kill once again by sin (Heb. 6. 6);
- (h) as our judge, whom we do not fear (Matt. 10. 28);
- (i) as a friend whom we despise and reject (Ps. 55, 13-14);
- (j) as goodness and kindness itself, whom we reject (Rom. 2. 4-8).

5. *God's mercy:*

All these aspects of sin in relation to God show us how horrible it is; but they also show us how great is God's loving mercy, which opens its arms to the sinner and, receiving him once again, wipes away the stains. The flesh of the leper is restored to its former beauty once he draws near to Christ and prays to him in all humility to be healed.

D: The leprosy of ignorance and heresy

1. *A leper draws near to Christ:*

- (a) Jesus comes down from the mountain after preaching the summary of the most perfect doctrine ever given to mankind. In the plains he is met by a leper.
- (b) Illness of body and mind; ignorance and heresy.

2. *The leprosy of heresy:*

St Thomas tells us why heresy can be compared to leprosy (1-2. q. 102, a. 5 *ad 4um*).

(a) Like leprosy, heresy mixes health and sickness, truth with falsehood:

There are parts of the leper's body which appear to be quite healthy, while other parts corrupt and die. Heresy is never entirely false, it always contains some elements of truth, skilfully mixed with error. That is why it is able to deceive the ignorant so easily and lead them away from their real inheritance—the truth. We might take as two typical examples the so-called 'New Theology' and Biblical rationalism.

- i. the latter would like us to believe in an entirely internal religion, basing its error on the fact that Christ said we should adore the Father in Spirit and in truth; and that the kingdom of God was within us.
- ii. but at the same time it closes its eyes to the obvious fact that Christ went about preaching and acting in such a way as to construct a visible society, which is his Church, with teaching authority and a hierarchy.

(b) It is contagious in the extreme:

History goes to show this clearly, e.g. in the Lutheran heresy, where a spark started a great fire which has yet to be extinguished.

This is easy to explain, because all heresies make things easier for man on paper, removing apparent difficulties, opening heaven to man with less effort on his part.

(c) Heretics are expelled from the Mystical body, because the bond of faith is destroyed, together with obedience to authority.

3. *The leprosy of ignorance:*

The Encyclical *Acerbo Nimis* of Pius X.

(a) Religious ignorance, the principal cause of the evils in the Church:

Osee 4. 1-3 gives a good summary of this evil, and should be consulted.

(b) It extends to all social classes:

i. *tranquillity and ignorance.* As the Pope says: The sad thing about it is that they remain in this state with absolute tranquillity, indifferent to all that is supernatural, during life and at the hour of death.

ii. *those who do not hear the word of God*—a thing possible for all our Catholic congregations of all social classes, many of whom avoid listening to sermons.

(c) Fruits of knowledge and of religious ignorance:

i. *knowledge fortifies our faith, hope and charity;* not for nothing does the catechism say that we were created to know, love and serve God, in that order. Knowledge breeds love and love breeds service, if it is true love. The more we know of God and his ways, the greater will be our faith in him, our hope and our love. It is a natural progress.

ii. *ignorance has the contrary effects.* It is true that evil can exist with knowledge of God; but even so, that knowledge may lead to conversion. Ignorance can never do that.

4. *Christ, the remedy:*

As he was the remedy for the leper. The words of Leo XIII in *Tametsi futura*: We exhort all Christians, in every place, of every condition and hierarchy, that they should do all they can by every means and according to their power, to make Christ known as he really is. If each one considers the person of Christ he will see that there is nothing more salutary in the world than his teaching, nothing so lovable and divine.

E: Visiting the sick

1. *I will come and heal him:*

The leper and the centurion of today's Gospel. There are a host of imitators of Christ who seek out the sick, in mercy.

2. *The fruits of this act of charity:*

(a) For the sick person:

- i. *consolation.* We know this by experience; when the one who visits us is understanding, encourages us by his words, etc., the illness is easier to bear. The sick person finds someone to whom he can confide his personal and family worries.
- ii. *medicines, food, etc.,* if necessary.
- iii. *instruction,* especially in the spiritual value of sickness.

(b) For the Church:

- i. *those who visit the sick can preach the value of suffering in terms of expiation,* as a spiritual alms given to Christ in his Church; the sick can be helped to see the immense value of their sufferings if they are united to those of Christ. The apostolate of the sick-bed is not to be despised.
- ii. *joy in suffering*—to fulfil the words of Paul (Col. 1. 24). It may be the last thing the sick can do for Christ in this life, but it is something very great indeed.
- iii. *souls for God.* Those who visit the sick can be sure that they receive the sacraments—than which there is no greater work of mercy for their souls.

(c) For those who visit the sick:

For these it is a specially valuable work of mercy:

- i. *because it is so easy.* Suffering softens hard hearts more than anything else; the sick are open to our suggestions more than they were when healthy.
- ii. *because it is a hidden and humble apostolate,* less liable to the assaults of pride than some other forms.
- iii. *it implies self-sacrifice,* especially in certain kinds of illness and in the case of the very poor.
- iv. *it is effective.* We often see the spiritual fruits of this apostolate very quickly, in the happy death of the sick person.
- v. *it is a school of virtues.* We can learn a great deal from the sick; especially it is brought home to us that we, too, will have to pass through this valley of shadows one day; it teaches us the vanity of worldly things in a practical example.
- vi. *it is a work of mercy* to which Christ promised the reward of heaven.
- vii. *it is often the source of a vocation* to the priesthood or the religious life.

3. *Conclusion:*

I will come and heal him.

- (a) These words are the secret which has moved countless souls to give themselves to the care of the sick and dying.
- (b) They should move us all to a similar act of mercy when possible.

F: The faith of the centurion

1. Believe me, I have not found faith like this, even in Israel (Matt. 8. 10).

2. *What is faith?*

(a) It is that which gives substance to our hopes, which convinces us of things we cannot see (Heb. 11. 1).

(b) According to the First Vatican Council it is an assent to truths which cannot be proved by human reason, but which rests on the authority of God who has revealed certain things to us, and who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

(c) Belief in things we do not see. The centurion believed that Christ was omnipotent, that he can cure even at a distance. We have not seen Christ, but we believe. We have the testimony of the Gospels, the miracles, the prophets. We believe because God has revealed it to us in the inspired books or the authentic magisterium of the Church.

(d) But it is not a blind knowledge. It is based on evidence, and is the firmest of all knowledge (2 Pet. 1. 19).

3. *Grades of faith:*

(a) Three examples and three explanations:

- i. *the ruler:* Come down, before that my son die (John 4. 49).
- ii. *the centurion:* Lord, I am not worthy . . . say but the word . . . (Matt. 8. 8).
- iii. *the woman with the issue of blood.* If I can only touch the hem of his garment. . . .

(d) The reasons St Thomas gives for a greater or lesser faith:

- i. greater or lesser knowledge of the truths of faith;
- ii. greater or lesser degree of certainty with which the intellect adheres to those truths;
- iii. greater or lesser devotion and confidence in those who believe.

4. *Faith indispensable in the Christian life:*

(a) in the Old Testament God rewarded the patriarchs who had distinguished themselves because of their faith (Heb. 11. 7 ff.);

(b) in the Gospels Jesus exacts it many times from his disciples, from the Jews and even from the Samaritans. The Jewish people

were cast off because of their unbelief. He lays it down explicitly at times as a condition for both miracles and salvation: Believe and you will be saved (Luke 8. 50).

(c) The Council of Trent declares it to be the principal root of justification and the Church demands it.

(d) It is necessary for any progress in the spiritual life, in times of difficulty and in temptation.

5. Weakening of the faith:

(a) A sad fact, lamented by Pius XI in *Summi Pontificatus*: He speaks of a profound crisis which the world is passing through and which consists in this weakening of faith in Christ and in God.

(b) Its causes:

- i. *ignorance of religious truths*, the result of the time in which we live; religious indifference, which is nowadays more obvious than ever.
- ii. *materialistic concept of life* in all its aspects.
- iii. *separation between faith and real life*; between what is believed and what is in fact done. Faith cannot be reduced to a mere intellectual act alone; it must make itself known in actual practice.

G: Soldiers who come to Christ

I. Centurions in the New Testament:

(a) Soldiers are mentioned many times in the New Testament, not always to their advantage, it must be admitted.

- i. *they appear at the Jordan when John is baptizing*, asking what they should do (Luke 3. 14).
- ii. *there are three great figures among them*; the centurion of Capharnaum, the one at the foot of the Cross and the one in Caesarea.
- iii. *they were among the first to confess Christ as God*, e.g. the centurion at the foot of the Cross (Matt. 27. 54).

(b) The centurion of Capharnaum and of Caesarea:

- i. both are profoundly religious, generous with their almsdeeds, charitable.
- ii. fearing God rather than men.

(c) Military virtues:

- The modern world needs this example in many ways:
- i. *the professional soldier gives himself to an ideal*, not so much for gain, but from a true spirit of loyalty and sacrifice;
 - ii. *in the service of the common good*, even at the risk of his life;
 - iii. *in a spirit of discipline*—the first of the military virtues and one which civilians often lack;

iv. *a spirit of endurance*, both in time of peace and most especially in time of war.

2. The salt of the earth:

Not for nothing did St Paul use many military metaphors in his attempts to explain Christianity to his converts. A good soldier who is also a good Catholic is the salt of the earth.

(a) His virtues stand out—obedience without servility, loyalty, self-sacrifice when necessary, punctuality, reverence for authority, and a host of others which might well be the envy of civilians.

(b) The centurion in today's Gospel gives us a perfect example of the military attitude fitting in with the very basis of Christianity.

H: The sanctity of the centurion

1. The centurion:

(a) He commanded a unit of from fifty to a hundred men, so that, from the purely human point of view, he was not of a high social standing.

(b) But he does show a high degree of spirituality.

(c) It does not matter if he was a pagan; he still shows a higher standard than many Jews.

2. Humility:

(a) A fundamental virtue:

It is called the foundation of sanctity, the first virtue of any Christian, the foundation and guardian of the virtues.

(b) Sanctity is greater according to the degree of humility:

If you wish to be great, says St Augustine, then dig your ditches deep. When someone wishes to raise a building higher, then he must dig ever deeper foundations, because there is no height without depth. Thus according to the measure in which you dig the foundations of humility, so you may raise this tower of evangelical perfection which you have begun to build.

(c) The centurion is a saint by reason of his humility:

- i. Lord, I am not worthy. . . .
- ii. according to St Luke, he did not even think himself worthy to go to meet Christ and present his petition personally; he sent an envoy.

3. Faith:

(a) Theological virtue which unites us directly to God;

(b) the foundation of all graces;

(c) given the centurion in its highest form, to the extent that our Lord could say that he had not found its like, even in Israel.

(d) the just man lives by faith (Rom. 1. 17).

4. *Charity:*

- (a) The noblest of all the virtues (1 Cor. 13);
 (b) love of God and the neighbour, compendium of the law of Christ.

(c) The centurion is concerned about his servant:

- i. *he is interested* and helps by providing means for his cure; he asks nothing for himself but for his servant.
 ii. *he is good, kind and ever ready to do good to others* (Luke 7. 1-10). He is generous—even the Jews admit it. Even they say that the centurion has merited the attentions of Christ.

5. *We should imitate the centurion:*

The seal of all true piety and sanctity is charity towards our neighbours.

- (a) Housewives; delicacy and charity towards servants.
 (b) All of us, in love for others, even our enemies.
 (c) Do not return evil for evil . . . (Rom. 12. 17-21).

I: Prayer for pagans

1. *Many shall come from the East and the West . . .*
 All have seen in these words a clear promise of the universality of the Church.

Missionary prayer

1. *Its characteristics:*

- (a) It is necessary:
 Our very position as members of Christ's mystical body should teach us this. We cannot be disinterested in his universal mission if we belong to that Body.

(b) *Supernatural:*

- i. *because it seeks God's grace* for the conversion of others, as Pius XI says in *Rerum Ecclesiae*.
 ii. *because it is persevering*, as was the prayer of Moses when he raised his hands during the battle and persevered in his prayer until the hour of victory. While missionaries labour in the field, all Christians have a duty to pray for them (Benedict XV, *Maximum illud*).

2. *Who must pray:*

- (a) The prayer of the missionaries:
 They are fully aware of its importance and make it the first means to secure converts, following the example of Francis Xavier, who prayed without ceasing. Benedict XV says that the missionary must be first of all a man of prayer. The measure of the help he will receive in his work will be that of his union with God through prayer (*Maximum illud*).

(b) *Of all Catholics:*

i. *all have the obligation of being missionaries in some way or other*; otherwise they would not live their faith. Like the centurion they must be concerned about the welfare of others, their brothers in Christ, with special care for the pagans because they are in greater need. Some people may be excused from giving alms to help the missions, but there is no one who can be excused from giving his prayers.

ii. *it is a prayer which cannot go unanswered*; it is a mission dear to the heart of Christ himself. Benedict XV says: It is impossible that the effect of this prayer should be frustrated, since there is no petition so excellent or so dear to the heart of our Lord.

iii. *the prayer of children and religious*. This is especially dear to Christ and most effective. Teachers and preachers should be zealous in inculcating this type of prayer by all the means at their disposal.

3. *Its object:*

(a) Before everything else, the increase of missionary vocations:

i. *Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest*, that he send forth labourers into his harvest (Luke 10. 2).

ii. *all priests should dedicate part of their prayers to this intention* and it should be the special intention of the contemplative Orders, in imitation of St Thérèse. The faithful, especially during the recitation of the Rosary, should invoke our Lady's help in favour of missionary vocations.

iii. *those who can should give alms in support of the Missions*, with generosity, as befits such a worthy object. In all parishes one Sunday is usually given over to this pious work; but it is not enough to limit our activities to this one day in the year. We must all be missionary minded.

iv. *generosity in this matter will have a great reward* even in our own country.

(b) The holiness of missionaries should also be an object of prayer:

There is no doubt that the efficacy of their work depends on their own personal sanctity even more than it does on their numbers. Remember what the devil said about the Curé of Ars—four more like him and France would have been entirely converted!

(c) The conversion of the pagans.

4. *Its formula:*

It is hard to give an exact one, but the general lines are:

- (a) thy kingdom come . . . never forget pagans in the Our Father.

(b) The whole of the Mass, pregnant with missionary ideals and universality, is the most effective form of missionary prayer. Could not all make a special effort to go to Mass one day during the week for missionary intentions? What a difference that would make, not merely on the missions but also in our own parish life!

(c) Lord, there is still a great multitude lying in a spiritual palsy. Say but the word and they will be converted to you, their Redeemer and their Light.

(d) We must all be missionary minded—and yet we are not! What are we going to do about it?

J: Christian paternity

The supernatural paternal attitude:

(a) A fruit of divine paternity:

From which all human paternity, no matter what it may be, takes its origin (Eph. 3. 15).

i. *it implies perfection of others through our attitude towards them.* Thus the higher creatures perfect the lower orders, both in heaven and on earth.

ii. *the superior angels perfect the inferior*; and the same should be true of men too. Those who are superior in knowledge, authority and social position should exercise their paternity in favour of the lesser orders.

(b) The centurion of Capharnaum is an example of this paternal attitude:

He is full of it and rich in social as well as individual virtues.

i. *charity*: he loves his fellow-men; he built a synagogue for the Jews, people of another race and religion; he obeyed his superiors and the soldiers under him gave him their obedience.

ii. *he loved his servant*—this is obvious from the whole episode; there was real affection and esteem behind his action, which was not usual in a man of his race and education. The general picture is that of a man who loved those under him and was at the same time loved and obeyed by them. It is the perfect picture of a good master.

The true aristocracy and the dignity of the common people

i. *An example in literature—Don Quijote and Sancho Panza:*
The love of the master elevates the servant to a dignity which transforms him and perfects him. It is a law of history that a simple man, of humble origin, can be transformed and perfected by his contacts with a master who is loving and kind. He discovers new depths of material and spiritual wealth of which he was not aware.

(a) There is a soft and gentle discipline:

As Marañon says: All the low and base appetites in Sancho, all that is brutal, of prosaic and utilitarian trend, lose ground every day under the gentle and kind discipline of Don Quijote.

(b) A soul redeemed from its materialism:

This is the great triumph of Don Quijote. As Marañon says: Sancho is a soul redeemed from materialism and purified by Don Quijote; it is the first and greatest triumph of the gentle knight.

(c) Common sense made more noble by an ideal:

That is the whole idea of Quijote.

(d) The good servant and the good master:

To this type of servant we can apply the phrase of the *Poem of the Cid*: What a good servant he would be if he had a good master!

2. According to nature:

(a) Master and servant need each other:

The union between the two is a natural one because of their mutual need. The servant is an instrument of his master; while at the same time the master has need of his servant. Aristotle says that there is no greater good fortune than for a master to find the servant he can rely on and the servant to find a master in whom he can have complete confidence; they are made one for the other.

(b) The great crime of capitalism was the apostasy of the worker to which it led:

The worker finds himself without any other bond uniting him to his master except that of his labour contract, and thus he feels that he is not really a part of the business in which he works.

(c) There is need for a re-education of both employer and employee:

The employer of labour must be made to realize that he is first of all a Christian, and that his primary obligation is to apply Christian principles to his workers.

(d) The best way of welding the two together:

This is to give the workers some effective share in the business. More than once the Popes have suggested action on these lines, and where it has been put into practice there are far fewer labour disputes.

(e) Today:

Now that the trade union movement finds itself increasingly powerless to prevent such disputes, there is even more room for such a solution as this.

3. *Love them more:*

(a) Pius XI recommended this task to all his priests:

He insisted that they should dedicate the greater part of their time and efforts in winning over once again the working-class members of their parishes. He promised them that they would find their efforts rewarded beyond measure with an unexpected degree of co-operation on the part of the workers; a true miracle of conversion.

(b) So that they may improve in all ways:

There are many workers who are sunk in religious indifference and negligence because they do not feel that they are sufficiently loved by their priests. The worker is very sensitive to justice and charity; once applied to him, he will be only too willing to respond.

(c) This love can be shown in many ways:

Here we must not forget the importance of the work done by the Catholic Social Guild and study circles on social problems.

4. *Effective action:*

(a) Recently a Catholic country in South America has said that it cannot legislate on Catholic social lines because that is not its province. The reply is that, not merely is it its province, but also its obligation!

(b) Once the worker realizes that the Church is behind him, that she is in fact leading him for his own benefit, through the medium of her social teaching, then not only will he respond in kind, but also the danger of the infiltration of communist ideas into the working classes will cease to a great extent.

(c) The working class is not communist-minded by nature. It is made communist by two things, the feeling that communism is the only solution to the working-class problems; the only party that 'gets things done'; and secondly, ignorance of the Church's social teachings and the great Social Encyclicals. For the latter we have only ourselves to blame, because—let us confess it humbly—there has been little or no attempt on the part of most priests to explain the Church's social doctrine to the people. We cannot expect the worker to take an interest in that teaching if we ourselves show indifference to it.

(d) There is room here for much effort on our part, together with a great confidence that the effort will not be wasted. On the one hand, we must train our good Catholic workers to take part in the debates and discussions of their unions—not to be mere sheep. For this we must:

- i. *provide them with the instruction necessary and the ammunition for such discussion;*

ii. *teach them not to be indifferent to the meetings of their union.* The communists have made great use of this indifference in order to get their candidates elected to posts in the unions.

iii. *teach them to take an active part in public life*—an objective of the Guild of Catholic Trade Unionists, and one which is of great importance. If we do not do this we shall have no defence against the infiltration of anti-Catholic principles into the trade unions, and no excuse for it once it has happened.

iv. *be socially minded ourselves.* If we are indifferent we cannot expect our people to take an interest in such things without our leadership.

v. *in a word, we must be true fathers to our people, especially the working classes.*

Redemption through love

1. This is what is meant by the title of this scheme—true paternalism in the really Christian sense of the word.

2. We must always remember the saying of St John of the Cross: Where there is no love, give love and you will receive it. This is certainly true of the worker. There is no social class which responds better to affection and attention than the worker, provided we avoid mere philanthropy and show him that we really love him and are interested in all his problems. We shall have more to say about this in the next scheme.

K: Social paternalism

1. *A protective paternalism:*

(a) We may give the name of paternalism to any kind of protection which a superior gives to his inferior, either by the use of his talents, social position, money or authority.

(b) One example of this is the action of the centurion in today's Gospel.

(c) A true aristocracy has always shown this paternal attitude towards the ordinary people under it. For example, every truly Christian master shows it towards his servants, who are more or less adopted into his family, as Pius XII put it.

2. *Paternalism and social justice:*

(a) There is a kind of social paternalism which cannot be admitted by the Church because:

- i. it offers on terms of charity what is really due in terms of social justice (cf. *Divini Redemptoris*);
- ii. it puts the employer of labour in a position of protector of the workers which is an insult to the dignity of the latter;
- iii. it often prevents long over-due social reforms.

- (b) Such social paternalism can be tolerated only for a time and due to certain circumstances, as a lesser of two evils:
- i. it does indicate a certain progress in the education of the conscience of employers. It is certainly an advance on the truly liberal times when the employer limited his care for the worker to the payment of his salary, and after that washed his hands of him.
 - ii. it brings some immediate relief to social necessity, especially in such things as cultural and beneficent works of all kinds.

(c) But there are certain harms which come from it, and they must never be forgotten:

- i. the conscience of the employer may easily be misled by such things into thinking that he has done all he needs to do for his workers, since he has provided certain benefits for them, almost as an act of great benevolence and charity, when, in fact, he has only half-fulfilled his obligations in justice. The true phrase for this is a 'sop to Cerberus'!
- ii. the workers, who are not fools by any means, are fully aware of this and their consciences protest at being given something as charity which is due to them in justice.
- iii. the result is social unrest, because the mutual relations between worker and employer suffer, naturally, from the fact that the worker dislikes being given certain advantages out of charity which really belong to him in justice. He can hardly be blamed if he describes his employer as a hypocrite.
- iv. this kind of paternalism is a social enemy instead of being a friend, because it can easily deaden the social conscience by mitigating some of the evil effects of the bad distribution of wealth, thus creating an atmosphere which is against radical social reform—which is the real solution to so many of the present problems which affect society.
- v. this can affect public relations as well, because it is very easy for the politician to rest on his oars and allow charity to fill gaps which should really be filled by proper social legislation. We have a glaring instance of this in the case of our Catholic schools in England, for which we are paying twice, once in public taxation and again in voluntary contributions.

3. Justice and charity: Christian paternalism:

- (a) Even when social justice has been done completely, there will still be room for a real Christian paternalism which must be both fomented and preached. The practice of it will be the best guarantee and the ultimate perfection of social peace. The employer who is full of Christian charity will always be paternal in his attitude towards his workers; especially in his direct dealings with them he will let them see that he loves them all in Christ.

(b) The ordinary people—like children—know perfectly well who they are who really have affection for them. The worker is grateful and knows how to correspond with this affection with his fidelity to his master, which is at times heroic.

(c) True paternalism comes down from heaven, having its origin in the God of mercy and the Father of all consolation, from whom is all paternity in heaven and on earth.

L: Dignity of the human person

1. A fundamental issue:

The Gospel of today, like that of Septuagesima, lends itself to sermons on social themes.

2. The general principles:

(a) The dignity of being:

i. *the more perfect the being the greater its dignity.* That of the living being consists in acting and living in accordance with its nature; its ultimate perfection is the attaining of its ultimate end.

ii. *the perfection of any being lies in its operation.* A being realizes its end more perfectly according to its development and the application of its potentiality.

iii. *act is more perfect than potency*—God, who is all-perfect, is pure act.

(b) The natural dignity of man:

i. generally speaking we can say that man's perfection lies in the realization of the demands of his higher powers, the intellect and the will.

ii. the more perfectly a man lives his intellectual and volitional life, so much the more perfect will he be.

iii. which is the reason why the contemplative life is, in itself, more perfect than the active.

iv. life of a slave—unworthy of man.

(c) Supernatural dignity:

This is an even more perfect life for man. God can raise him up to a supernatural life in this world, by grace, the virtues and the gifts. He can grant to our intellect and will the power to produce acts in accordance with this higher form of life.

(d) Social dignity:

i. *a man who is isolated from others and living like a savage cannot develop his full dignity.* Man is essentially a social animal and it is his life in society which enables him to develop to the full his natural potentialities. In this lies the so-called common good.

ii. *a worthy social life.* A man can only live a social life in accordance with his dignity when society as a whole provides for all the

means necessary for a full development of his capacities. If the indispensable means for such a life are lacking then the social position of a man is not worthy of his real dignity.

(e) Political dignity:

i. *human dignity and political liberty*. The dignity of the human person and his right to act freely are the two foundations of political liberty. However, public authority can limit the use of this liberty for the common good. A just law, which is accepted and obeyed, does not limit, but perfects human liberty, because the intellect of the subject is perfected in and through its obedience to the superior legislator.

ii. *individual rights and the common good*. But when the law is arbitrary or despotic it can be the cause of a limitation of the individual liberty which is contrary to human dignity. For this reason cultured nations do the best they can to avoid putting limitations on this human liberty beyond the strictly necessary for the common good.

3. *Three fundamental aspects of human dignity, based on these general principles:*

(a) That of the blessed in heaven:

The highest of all and the most perfect from the point of view of man's intellectual faculties.

(b) That of grace:

Greater than any natural perfection, sharing in the life of God and of Christ, in his Mystical Body. Higher perfection in the function of the intellect and will under the influence of the virtues and the gifts. The seed of glory in heaven.

(c) Natural dignity:

Consisting in the free and full development of natural powers, both in the social and individual orders.

(d) Social dignity:

Given the means necessary for full development of his potentialities. This does not happen when the necessary means are lacking, i.e. when man finds himself starved, even relatively speaking, in the midst of plenty.

(e) Political dignity:

- i. he possesses this dignity who can freely exercise his individual rights in society; freedom of speech, association, etc.
- ii. this liberty can be curtailed by legitimate authority for the common good; in which case man's political dignity is increased by his obedience to the just laws, not diminished.

4. *Conclusion:*

(a) The problem of the dignity of the human person is at the very basis of sociology and ethics, as it is also of politics. It is the element of human life which puts a right order into political and social life.

(b) But it must be understood in a Christian spirit, i.e. the realization that the full perfecting of human dignity does not take place in this world, but in the next; that the ultimate perfection of man in heaven is the end which dominates all others, and that State and society are creations of man, destined to provide him with the necessary means of life in the Christian sense of the word.

M: Political rights

1. *Redemption and slavery:*

(a) These are correlative ideas:

All redemption supposes a slavery and is, at the same time, linked with the idea of liberation.

(b) Christ, the supreme redeemer:

Because he freed us from the double slavery of sin and death; because he is truth itself, and the truth it is that shall make us free (John 8. 32).

2. *Modern slavery:*

(a) Capitalist economy created a proletariat which was almost deprived of all liberty. The Popes denounced this time and again (cf. *Rerum Novarum* and *Quad. Anno*).

(b) But the evil does persist, especially in some countries where civilization is relatively new. This is even more true since the last war.

(c) This lack of liberty and human dignity, where it exists today, is not due to lack of Christian employers so much as to the general condition of life in those countries:

i. *the lack of freedom to make an advantageous labour contract*—the day's wage is so necessary for his very life that the worker is obliged to sell himself cheaply.

ii. *there is not even the minimum of reasonable living conditions*. He who lives in real need has not the necessary conditions for a full development of his human life and dignity.

3. *The redemption of the workers:*

(a) A double title which demands it:

i. *they are citizens*; the fact of belonging to a society means that all have the right to the minimum necessary for a full development of their lives as human beings. This is the purpose of society and the real reason why it was created. This is what is known as the common good. From the very fact of being a member of society man is subject to certain obligations, for example, that

of military service. Therefore, on the same title he has the right to demand from society the necessities of life.

ii. *they are producers.* Man brings to society his personal values, he produces for society as a whole. Distributive justice demands that to such a one be given at least the necessities of life.

(b) The solution of the Popes:

Recent Popes have defined what is meant by the necessities of life and the minimum necessary for well-being.

i. *a roof over his head, clothes and food.*

ii. *access to some cultural life*—the goods of the soul as well as those of the body.

iii. *intervention in public life*—to defend his liberties, to claim the goods which he needs. He who produces for the whole society has a right to be heard when the time comes for the distribution of those goods and social benefits.

iv. prudent application of these principles.

v. the Church lays down general principles—she does not try to solve particular cases, but leaves that to others.

vi. the application of these general principles to a particular country or situation is not her business; it belongs to political prudence, which must weigh all the circumstances.

vii. those are wrong who turn to the Church (and more those who blame her) in an attempt to get her to decide particular issues which are not her concern. The influence of the Church in the lives of nations is both definite and deep, but it is not her task to descend to particular cases—that is reserved for the politicians.

(c) The Church has given her directives:

She inclines her policy towards the general idea of the corporate state instead of the present horizontal structure, which does not work in practice. The union of all classes, not their horizontal division, is the ideal proposed by the Church:

i. this would bring all classes together in the effort for the common good;

ii. would avoid centralization, defend the interests of all—as opposed to those of a small group or trade union as against others;

iii. safeguard the unity of a particular firm or business;

iv. means true representation in the political sense of each guild inside the general structure of national economy.

4. *The social position of the redeemed worker in the Christian ideal:*

(a) sufficient income to sustain his family, made up of salary, social benefits, insurances, etc.;

(b) integration into a Christian ideal of the business or firm for which he works;

(c) free participation in the election of the body which governs the firm or business from the workers' point of view;

(d) intervention in the national and social life of the country through his elected representatives;

(e) possession of a sufficient patrimony for his family and freedom of activity in the social sense within the framework of his firm or business.

(f) All this in such a way that there is co-operation between employees and managers for the good of the whole within the social structure.

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

CHRIST CALMS THE TEMPEST

SECTION I. SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Epistle: Romans 13. 8-10

Gospel: Matthew 8. 23-27.

Cf. Mark 4. 35-40; Luke 8. 22-25.

Texts on themes which can be the subjects of sermons today

1. The majesty of God's anger. Cf. Ps. 17. 8-16.

2. Praise of his majesty. Cf. Ps. 32. 6-7.

3. *Invocation of God's power against enemies:*

Wantonly they have laid their deadly snares for me, wantonly they have laughed at my misfortune; now let the net overtake them unawares, now let the snare they laid close round them; their own net, see how they fall into it! Mine to triumph in the Lord, to take delight in his saving power; this be the cry of my whole being, There is none like thee, Lord; who else rescues the afflicted from the hand of tyranny, the poor, the destitute, from his oppressors? Ps. 34. 7-10.

4. *God, our protector in time of danger:*

God is our refuge and stronghold; bitter the trial that has overtaken us, but he can save. Not for us to be afraid, though earth should tumble about us, and the hills be carried away into the depths of the sea. See how the waters rage and roar, how hills tremble before his might! . . . Wait quietly, and you shall have proof that I am God, claiming empire among the nations, claiming empire over the world. The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. Ps. 45. 2-12.

5. *A plea for help in time of danger:*

O God, save me; see how the waters close about me, threatening my very life! I am like one who sticks fast in deep mire, with no ground under his feet, one who has ventured out into mid-ocean, to be drowned by the storm. Hoarse my throat with crying wearily for help; my eyes ache with looking up for mercy to my God. Countless as the hairs on my head are my wanton enemies, powerful the oppressors that wrong me. I have made amends to them, I that never robbed them. . . . Who is it they persecute? A man already afflicted by thee; hard was my hurt to bear, and these have added to it. Do thou add guilt to guilt in their reckoning; let them never find

their way back to thy favour; let their names be blotted out from the record of the living, and never be written among the just. . . . The Lord listens to the prayer of the destitute; he does not forget his servants in their chains. Ps. 68. 2-34.

6. God has dominion over the waters and the sea. Cf. Ps. 73. 13-17; 88. 9-15; 106. 21-30.

SECTION II. GENERAL COMMENTS

I. LITURGICAL

The Sundays after the Epiphany have the same chants and the same general theme, namely, the divinity of Christ. It is a suitable time for teaching to our faithful the power of the prayer of adoration, about which they know very little, by basing our teaching on the liturgy, in which this theme is a common one. *Adorate eum omnes angeli eius*. . . . This has special force if we take the time and care to link up the Gospel with the rest of the Mass in this connection. In the prayers and secret of today's Mass we can see this clearly. The former mention perils of this life and appeal to Christ for help, as did the Apostles. The secret opposes to our frailty the power of Christ, in order to ask him to purify us and help us.

II. EXEGETIC AND MORAL NOTES

A: The Epistle: Romans 13. 8-10

1. *Argument:*

The Epistle to the Romans is built up around one theme: love. Today's Epistle continues along the lines of those of the preceding Sundays, with the moral part of the theme. Chapter 13 deals in general with obedience to all authority as coming from God, not from fear. The Apostle ends the first part of this chapter with the exhortation not to be in debt to any man, and then he goes on, in verse 8: Do not let anybody have a claim upon you, except the claim which binds us to love one another. This at once brings to his mind the central idea of the whole epistle and he follows it up in the passage which forms today's Epistle.

It is as if he were to say: I have been speaking to you about the Law, which imposes many obligations on us all, some of them heavy burdens. (He was a student under Gamaliel and he knew this only too well.) The law by itself is useless, being rather an occasion for rebellion than a help. But do you wish to know how you can fulfil the whole law, and easily? Love! He who loves does no harm to any man; love seeks only the good of the beloved.

But of which law and which love is he speaking? He has not really broken the thread of his discourse, which is still that of our obligations towards our fellow men, to which he continues to refer and

some of which he now quotes. To fulfil them all it is sufficient to love others. The love of charity has God for its principal object and our neighbour as its secondary purpose, since we love God in and through him. Love for our neighbour which is not that of charity can hardly be expected to attain a full and perfect fulfilment of all our obligations. It may reach the stage of a more or less universal philanthropy, but it will fail in those concrete cases in which self-love and self-interest conflict with the rights of others. On the other hand, the love of charity will make the law easy, because its motives are so much stronger. The highest degree of this love is reached when we see in others the divine image, the sonship of God and the blood of Christ.

2. Texts:

(a) Do not let anybody have a claim upon you, except the claim which binds us to love one another:

The more you love, the greater should be your desire to love more. You will never be able to pay this debt fully. As Augustine says: The more I am loved, the more love I seek. And the more I love the more do I feel myself to be still in debt to love. The natural effect of love is to increase its acts.

(b) The man who loves his neighbour has done all that the law demands:

The Greek word which is here translated as neighbour means 'another'—which indicates the universality of this love, extending as it does to enemy and friend alike, to neighbour and stranger. All the commandments are summed up in this one—love.

Some writers continue to insist that the love of our enemies was not taught openly until the Law of Christ. This is not strictly true, because there are certain precepts of Exodus which have special reference to our enemies, e.g. 23. 4. The sanctity of the Old Law was true sanctity and as such must include this precept. However, in the New Law we have greater helps to keep it, in the sacraments, and a wider distribution of graces. We also have the advantage of the example of Christ. It is not the same to teach love of the neighbour because of the love of a God who is invisible, as to teach the same theme based on the example of a God who became man for love of us all. In one case enemies were the object of love because of a Messiah who was still to come; in our case we have heard his words of pardon from the Cross.

(c) as thyself . . .

The love of likeness rather than of absolute identity. St Matthew puts it this way: Do to other men all that you would have them do to you (7. 12), and Tobias has the same idea in a negative form (4. 15-17).

(d) Love . . . fulfils all the demands of the law:

Let St Augustine speak for us: One single and brief precept is imposed upon you: Love, and then do what you will. If you are silent, be silent from love, if you shout, do so from love. If you correct others or pardon them, do it all from love. Let love be the very root of all you do, because from such a root nothing evil can ever come. . . . Charity which begins is the beginning of justice; as it increases, so does justice; and when it is perfect, then justice is perfect.

B: The Gospel: Matthew 8. 23-27

1. Historical background:

After the episode of the centurion Jesus begins his tour of Galilee, about which we know little except for the scene of the raising of the widow's son at Naim. This tour, which began and ended at Capharnaum, is enclosed between the two great sermons of Christ, that on the Mount and that of the kingdom, in parables. Shortly after his return our Lord left Capharnaum for one of the little bays which pitted the coast line and formed natural harbours for the small boats used on the lake. Sitting in one of them he taught the large multitude which had followed him from the city. By the evening he was tired and so ordered his disciples to set out in the boat for the other side of the lake to seek a little peace and quiet.

The Lake of Tiberias, of Genesar, or Genesareth, also called the Sea of Galilee, is situated at the North-East of Palestine, forming the eastern border of the province of Galilee. It is some fourteen miles long by seven miles wide, with a depth of between thirty-six and fifty-four feet.

Its geographical position is interesting, since it is some six hundred feet below sea-level and surrounded by high hills. For this reason sudden storms are quite usual, caused by the high winds sweeping down from Mt Hermon to the north of the lake. The chief industry is fishing, but many beautiful towns grew up on the banks of the Sea of Gaililee, many of which are mentioned in the life of Christ, the main one being Capharnaum, his second home. Also worthy of mention are Tiberias and Magdala, the latter connected with the famous conversion of the woman who was a public sinner.

2. The scene:

Our Lord was tired; his sermon must have been a long one. Therefore, in search of rest, he told his disciples to sail over to the other side of the lake, some seven miles journey. He took advantage of the calm to sleep in the boat, his head on a cushion. However, his disciples were soon alarmed by their knowledge of the lake and the signs of an approaching storm, which soon fell upon them in all its force. At first they respected our Lord's rest from care and did what

they could to protect themselves, reefing in the sails and using the oars. But soon it was clear that the danger was very great; the sea rose higher and higher and the waves were on the point of wrecking the little boat. Then they called the Master: Lord, save us, we are sinking! It was obvious that they had lost their confidence in him to some extent, because, if they had real faith in him, they might have remembered the words of Jeremias (5. 22). However, in their danger it is easy to forgive them, as Christ did. He merely says to them: Why are you faint-hearted, men of little faith? Then he spoke to the wind and the sea: Peace, be still! And the wind dropped, and there was a great calm. Who is this, they said to one another, who is obeyed even by the winds and the sea?

3. Texts:

(a) The boat has always been a symbol of both the Church and the individual soul. The storm of persecutions is frequent in the history of the Church; that of temptations is equally frequent in the individual. Both lead to Christ. Christ permits the storm, says Fr La Puente, to prove our faith and increase our confidence; to increase our humility, purify us of vices and lead us to greater prayer and virtue.

(b) Christ slept:

It was a deep sleep, because not even the storm awoke him. The sign of a great man, full of activities, yet able to snatch moments for deep sleep which will restore his faculties for even greater efforts.

Christ sleeps when we are negligent and therefore the storms of temptation arise. He also appears to sleep sometimes when we are going through a period of great trial, so as to awake in us sentiments of confidence and trust in him. Christ does not withdraw himself from us; it is we who withdraw ourselves from him. Just as the sun warms all, but mostly those who place themselves within reach of its rays.

(c) Lord, save us:

They thought it necessary to wake him up in order to be safe. Was it not enough that he was in the boat with them? At his word the creatures he has made obey him . . . but man? The astonishment of the disciples can be clearly understood if we remember that they were simple fishermen who knew this lake intimately and realized what a wonderful thing our Lord had done in bringing about this sudden calm in the midst of the storm. From their point of view it was a greater miracle than that of Naim.

SECTION III. THE FATHERS

I. ST CYPRIAN

(This important letter, No. 11 in his works, indicates the result of two visions he had from the Lord, and the causes of the persecutions suffered by the Christians—avarice and lack of fraternal charity. The remedies will be found in a firm resolution of amendment and also in prayer.)

Cyprian, to his brother priests and deacons, health and blessing in the Lord. . . . We have to confess that the force of the present storm of persecution which has decimated the flock and is even now still pouring out its fury upon it is to a great extent our fault, because we have not followed the commands of God which were given us for our salvation. Christ did the will of his Father, but we do not do his, living in luxury as we do and in pride and rivalries, despising simplicity and faith, renouncing in words only, not in deeds, the world in which we live. We please ourselves and do harm to others. . . .

We suffer all these things through our own fault, as the Lord warned us (Ps. 88. 32-33). For this reason we feel the Lord's hand upon us and we are not grateful, nor do we pay him back with works of satisfaction or good actions.

Let us plead for the divine mercy from the depths of our hearts, insisting and persevering, so that the prayer may come from us all. You should know that the real reason for my writing this to you is the vision I have received in which I heard again and again the words: Ask and you shall receive. . . . If all of us had been of one mind, then days ago we would have received what we asked for, and we would not be torn one way and another, in the present storm which militates against both our faith and our safety. . . .

We must pray always and persevere in prayer; for you must know, dear brethren, that I have also received a vision in which it was told to me that we do not persevere enough in our prayers. . . . For us, this persecution is an examination of conscience. God has decreed that we should be proved and chastised—as he does so many times with his own. However, he never fails us in times of trial. He has told me, the least of his servants, to give you this message: Tell them, he said to me, that they are safe, because peace will come. The delay is due to the fact that there are still some to be tried by the fire.

II. ORIGEN

(Extracts from Hom. 6 in *Matthaeum*.)

Our Lord went into the boat and his disciples followed him . . . not merely in his footsteps, but also by walking with him in holiness

of life and seeking after justice. And a great tempest arose on the sea, for since the Lord had already done many great wonders on land, he now crosses over the sea so that here, too, he may do great wonders, making plain to all that he is the Master of both land and sea. Entering, therefore, into the little boat, he caused the winds to blow and the waves to rise. Why did he do this? So that he might awaken fear in the disciples, that they might plead in deadly earnest for his help and also to make manifest his power to those who sought it. . . .

By his command therefore the storm has risen—a great tempest, not a little one, so that he might put forth a great wonder, not a small one. The greater the beating of the waves against the little boat the more the fear of the disciples arose and the more they desired to be delivered by him and through his wonders.

But the Lord was asleep. O great and wonderful thing! Does he who never sleeps slumber now? Does he who rules heaven and earth now sleep? Yes, in his human body he sleeps, but keeps watch in his divinity. He sleeps in this body of flesh, yet he causes the storm to rise on the sea and the waves to pile up and fear to come upon his disciples, so that he may reveal to them his power. He sleeps in this body as he did at the well by the wayside, when he sat there, tired and weary; showing that he had a body which was truly human, that he had clothed himself with that which can perish.

In this body he slept; in his divinity he troubled the sea and calmed it again. . . . We likewise, so that we may not sleep in our souls, nor in our understanding or wisdom, but that at all times we may keep watch and give praise to the Lord, seeking eagerly from him our salvation. . . .

And they come to him and say: Lord, save us, we perish. So fearful were they and almost out of their minds that they rushed to him and aroused him, not modestly and gently, but violently. O blessed and yet truthful disciples of the Lord! You have him with you and you are afraid of the danger? With you is life itself, and are you afraid of death? In fear of the tumult of the sea, will you awaken him who is its creator, who is beside you; almost as if while asleep he could not control the waves?

But what answer do they give, these beloved disciples? We are, they will say, but weak children as yet; we have not seen the Cross, nor has the Passion of Christ strengthened us, nor his resurrection or ascension into heaven, the coming of the Holy Ghost as the Comforter. For this reason we waver in our very weakness and for this same reason we have often heard our Lord chiding us for our lack of faith, but we bear up, endure and look ahead with courage. . . .

We must cling steadfastly to courage of soul in face of all difficulties, dangers or sufferings, even to the giving up of life itself; also in the face of earthly delights, riches or honours, so that man may not

be puffed up with pride. Also so that he may not despise his enemy, look down upon the lowly or be unmindful of the Lord, forgetting his creator and becoming an unfaithful servant. If, then, fortitude is necessary in time of trial, how much more is it needed against the allurements and luxuries of this world, that we may not fall into the devil's trap? . . .

By means of all these happenings the Lord gave us a figure and image of his teaching, so that we might be patient in the face of every storm and persecution; that we might be steadfast and not betray our faith. If all the world should boil up like an angry sea and rise in fury against us; though on every side the winds should rage and the whirlpools of Satan; though every principality and power of this world be ranged against us, foaming in the swell of their wrath, so as to torment the sanctified; and even though, like the angry sea, they whip up against you wickedness and treachery to the very heavens themselves by stirring up the evil minded, yet, be not afraid. Be not troubled nor tremble and, above all, do not yield.

For as many as are in the little ship of faith are in the companionship of the Lord. As many as are in the bark of the Church will voyage with the Lord across the troubled seas of this life. Though the Lord himself may sleep in holy peace, he is but observing your patience and endurance, while he looks forward to the repentance and conversion of those who have sinned. . . .

He commands the sea and it dare not disobey; he speaks to the winds and to the storm, and behold, they are still! He commands every creature, and not one moves beyond what he commands. Only the race of men, alone honoured in being made to his image and likeness, to whom speech and understanding have been given—only men resist! They alone do not obey him; they alone despise him. And for this cause, they alone will be condemned at the judgement and be punished by his justice. In this they will be lower than the brute beasts or than the other creatures of this world which are without sense or feeling.

III. ST AUGUSTINE

(PL. 38, 424-425)

I shall, with God's help, talk to you about the section of the Gospel which has just been read and through it exhort you not to sleep in your hearts, amid the storms and tempests of this world. Had not the Lord, who had death itself in his power, also command over sleep? Did sleep overpower the Almighty as he sailed upon the waters? If you have so thought, then he sleeps in you. If Christ keeps watch in you, then your faith also keeps watch.

The sleep of Christ is also a sign of a mystery. Those in the boat are those crossing the seas of this world in union with the Cross.

The very ship is a figure of the Church. Each soul is a world by itself, a world of God. Each one journeys within his own heart, nor is he shipwrecked so long as he dwells on the things which are worthy of him.

Have you received an insult? It is the wind provoked to anger. It is the buffeting of the waves. As the wind rises and the waves mount up, your ship is in peril, your heart is threatened by the waves and your soul is in danger. Swift on the insult you are eager for revenge; you are revenged, and behold, you are in new danger and are shipwrecked. And why? Because in you Christ is asleep. What does this mean? That you have forgotten Christ. Then do you awaken Christ; bring him to mind and let him keep watch in you. Look upon him.

What was it you desired? To be revenged. Has it gone from your mind that he said, while they crucified him: Father, forgive them. . . . He who was sleeping in your hearts sought not to be revenged. Remember him and awaken him, then. Remembrance of him is also to remember his words and to obey him. Should Christ awaken in you then you will say: What kind of man am I, that I should seek revenge? Who am I, that I should utter threats against another?

It may be that I shall die before I can be revenged and then, when breathing my last and leaving this body, I shall go to meet him who is my judge, he will not receive me who desired no revenge himself and who says: Father, forgive them. . . . Forgive, and it shall be forgiven unto you. . . . Give and it shall be given unto you! Therefore should I put a bridle on my anger and return to my peace of heart. Christ commanded the sea and there came a great calm.

What I have said to you about anger observe in every commandment and in every temptation. If a temptation arises, it is the wind of the sea! Awaken Christ, let him speak to you. Who is this, that the winds and the sea obey him? The sea is his, and he made it. All things were made by him. Be, then, as the winds and the sea, and obey your creator. When Christ spoke the sea gave ear and will you still be deaf to his voice? The sea hears and obeys, and will you still be angry and reluctant? . . .

Let not the sea master you in this tempest of the heart. Yet, since we are but human after all, should the wind beat hard against you and should it awaken passions in your soul, do not lose hope. Awaken Christ, that you may sail in peace and come safely home. Turning, then, to the Father of hope, the almighty, in pureness of heart, let us do the best we can, giving thanks with all our hearts and beseeching him that, in his goodness, he may graciously grant to hear our prayers, driving evil thoughts from us by his power, increasing our faith, guiding our minds and granting us his holy inspirations.

IV. ST PETER CHRYSOLOGUS

(PL. 52, 257)

Let us explain the hidden meaning of this mystery. When Christ entered into the boat of his Church, in order to navigate through the seas of this world, the lightning of the Gentiles, the tempests of the Jews and of the persecutors, changed the whole world into a torment against him. . . . But the disciples woke Christ up, and he bids the sea be still, that is, the whole world. He appeases princes, calms the anger of those who wield power, brings order into the world and converts the Romans to Christianity. What is more, he makes those who were formerly persecutors of his Church her greatest defenders. . . .

The torment is very great. Wherefore we should cry out the more: Lord, save us, we perish. Truly, my brethren, if we really felt as one human body, if we truly appreciated those who are a part of us, then we would cry out again and again: Save us, we perish, with fasts and groanings and tears. We would make sure that we helped ourselves by helping our brethren, and then we would not have to contemplate the sad sight of our own blood shed by a cruel sword, nor deplore such shipwreck of lives. But, unfortunately, neither love, nor shame and compassion move us to repent.

Therefore the evils which surround us come from God. From God are the blows we receive, the power of our enemies, the hail which falls, the rust that corrodes, illness and death, the earthquakes which make the very ground tremble under our feet. Yet we do not fear; we neither tremble nor remove evil far from ourselves. We do not desire the good. Avarice increases, virginity is mocked, luxury sought after, what belongs to another is desired while that which is truly ours perishes. God's chastisements pour down upon us, but it is our sins that call them down on our heads. However, if God is just, he is also merciful. Turn once more to the Lord.

If Christ sleeps in our boat, through our laziness, then the storm arises, with a fierce wind, the waves menace us and while they rise and fall in their fury, those who are in the boat think in terms of shipwreck.

Then those who are awake hurry to him who sleeps. . . . That majesty, which knows nothing of tiredness or rest, does not sleep. All that he does is done for me; and when the appearance of his actions and of his countenance change, it is but a reflexion of the changes in us and of our sins. See how his eyes are shut, so as not to observe and punish the sinner (Ps. 50. 11). And then see how they are opened again to encourage him who is trying hard, to lift up the sinner who has fallen and then fix themselves on him who makes his petitions.

On this occasion the Lord's sleep has for its purpose to try his apostles' faith, to uncover their secret doubts and to confirm that faith in them. When Christ sleeps in our boat let us draw near to him, not bodily, but by faith and by the works of mercy, calling him by means of them rather than by desperate knockings. With our prayers let us give the Lord some time from our lives, instead of dedicating every moment to this world's vanities and cares. Let us say with the disciples: Master; Master in truth, because you are not merely the author of this world but also its ruler. A Master who, if you hear us and deign to awaken, will still the storm and bring about a great calm.

SECTION IV. A THEOLOGIAN

ST THOMAS AQUINAS

(A summary of his ideas concerning the power and omnipotence of God and of Christ.)

1. *God's power is infinite:*

Simply because the divine essence, by which God acts, is also infinite. In God this power is also identified with his knowledge and his will. We say that God is omnipotent because he can do all those things which do not imply a contradiction by their very nature. Thus, God cannot make a thing to be and not to be at the same time, because the two concepts are contradictory. This has important applications when we come to consider such things as sin and the freedom of the will, or the release of souls from hell.

2. *The power and the mercy of God:*

The omnipotence of God is manifested above all by the fact of his pardon of sinners and by the use of his mercy; because the best way to prove that God has supreme power is by the free pardon of those who offend against his law. One who is subject to the law of a superior is not able freely to pardon those who offend against that law. We can also say that by pardoning men and by having compassion on them, they are drawn to a share in infinite good, which is the ultimate effect of divine power. It should also be mentioned that the effects of God's mercy are the foundations of all his works, since nothing is due to any creature in justice, except in so far as God decides to grant it freely (1 P. q. 25. c).

3. *The power of Christ:*

As the Son of God he is omnipotent, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost. As man, the fact of the one Person in two natures means that Christ is omnipotent, as the person to whom those two natures belong (3 P. q. 13. a. 1).

4. *His miracles:*

St Thomas points out that the human nature of Christ, as intimately united to his divine nature, is the instrument of this divine power. This grace was given to the soul of Christ in a most excellent manner, so that not merely could he work miracles himself, but also so that he could transmit this grace to others (*ibid.* a. 2. c).

5. *Their purpose:*

God gives man the power to work miracles for two main reasons, first and foremost, to confirm the truth of what is said or taught; because those things which are beyond the power of man's human reason cannot be proved save by arguments which stem from the divine power. Those who see a man do those things which only God can do tend to believe that what he says comes also from God. It is like a letter sealed with the king's seal.

The second reason is to show the power of God and his presence in a man, because the fact that such a one does those things which only God can do serves to prove that God dwells in him. For both reasons it was convenient that Christ should both possess and demonstrate this power, i.e., that man might believe that God was within him and also that his teaching came from God, as he claimed (3 P. q. 43. a. 1).

5. *The probative force of Christ's miracles:*

The miracles of Christ were sufficient to manifest his divinity under three aspects: First by the very nature of the works he did, which were above the power of any creature and which could, therefore, only be the work of God (John 9. 32-33).

Secondly, by the fact that he obviously acted by his own power. As St Cyril says: He did not act by reason of any power which was lent to him, but by his own power over the sick as one who is God by his very nature. Power went out from him as from one who possessed it by right, by which he showed that he possessed the very power of the Father (John 5. 19).

Thirdly, from the very fact that he proclaimed himself to be God. If this were not true, it could never have been confirmed by miracles done by the divine power. God does not set his seal upon a lie (3 P. q. 43. a. 4. c).

6. *Greater miracles than the saints':*

The objection brought against the miracles of Christ, namely that others had done like wonders, is exploded by St Augustine when he says: We also confess that the prophets did similar things, but they also prophesied greater things of Christ, the Messiah. . . . He did something proper to himself alone; he was born of a Virgin, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. He who thinks that this is a small thing for God to do, then let him tell us what more he could

demand! Perhaps, after taking human flesh, he should have created new worlds, so that we might believe that he was the creator of the present world? But in our present world it would be impossible to produce a better one or one equal to this; and were he to produce something inferior to this, then those same people would say that it was a very little thing for the power of God.

But, says the same Augustine, Christ did something which no other person has ever done, he healed everyone who came to him, even those on whom his shadow fell or who touched the hem of his garment (Mark 6. 56). What is more, he did it by his own power, not by the power of another (3 P. q. 43. a. 4).

SECTION V. SPIRITUAL WRITERS

I. BLESSED JOHN OF AVILA

(Due to the rather florid style of this writer we prefer to give his ideas in summary form rather than the exact words. The theme is an important one, the temptations against purity and falls into sin, the causes and remedies.)

1. *Causes of temptation and falls:*

There are occasions when God allows people to fall into the sin of impurity as a punishment for the even greater sin of pride; a sin which they may not even notice or to which they pay little or no importance. Nabuchodonosor, through the sin of pride, was reduced to the level of the brute beasts (Dan. 4. 22). He remained in that state until he was willing to admit that his kingdom was from God.

There are some who are proud of their very purity, thinking that it comes from their own powers instead of from God. These, too, God sometimes casts out from the company of the angels and allows them to fall lower than the beasts of the field. Others are proud of their own virtue and condemn others, very like the story of the Pharisee and the Publican in the Gospels. Many of these have been allowed to fall into grievous sins of impurity because of their pride. We are all men, made of the same basic substance and all capable of the same sins into which our brethren have fallen. We should not condemn, that we may not be condemned; not judge, that we may not be judged.

Dissipation and lack of obedience are also causes of our falls. Remember that David sent his generals and troops into battle, while he himself remained at home. It was then that he fell into temptation and into sin. He who flees from work and from his obligations is the one who is in most danger. Finally, he who rebels against God and his superiors is the one who will most feel the sting of the flesh, because it is the old disobedience of Adam once again. If the superior powers disobey God then the inferior powers will be allowed free play.

2. *The remedy: Faith and hope in Christ:*

Help which has been received on previous occasions engenders hope that we shall receive it once again now, on this occasion. He who has received help twenty times already from his friend may also hope that he will now receive the same help once more. St Paul says that hope is like a sure and firm anchor for the soul. Even though we have the devil for our enemy, we have a more powerful friend in Christ and one who is more wise. The devil may hate us, but Christ loves us much more. If the devil does not sleep, seeking how he may lead us to damnation, the eyes of God watch over us all the time, to help us in the task of salvation, as if they were the eyes of a good shepherd looking after his sheep, whom he has saved through his precious blood. If we have the powerful arm of the Almighty with us, why should we be afraid of the power of the evil one, whose strength is weakness compared with that of God?

St Paul tells us to take up the arms which God has given us, among them the shield of faith, which can extinguish all the fiery darts of the enemy. Let us have recourse to faith, then; because if the enemy may appear strong, God still knows how to appear, as did David, to vanquish the enemy, even though it be with a small stone!

II. ST ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

(We give a summary of his ninth Sermon for this Sunday.)

1. *The storm:*

The boat represents man in his journey through this world. His dangers are:

(a) *The devil:*

He who is more terrible because of his strength, and who goes about like a raging lion, seeking his prey. Against him we must be watchful and strong in faith, armed to the teeth (Eph. 6. 11).

(b) *Men:*

By their bad example, advice and human respect they can lead us into danger.

(c) *Human passions:*

They are represented by the storm on the sea, and are our greatest enemy (James 1. 14). If a city were to be surrounded by enemies outside the walls and also had a fifth column within then we would surely give it up for lost.

2. *Means of salvation in time of storm:*

Lord, save us, we perish! When the storm is at its height the pilot does not take his eyes off the compass, which in our case is Christ. Then I raise my eyes to the hills, from which comes my salvation—and this is one of the benefits of temptation which, if we make good

use of it, brings us nearer to God, making us see the perils of this world and the lure of worldly pleasures.

In fear and trembling work out your salvation, we are told. A certain captain of a ship was asked, in the midst of a storm, why he was afraid. In reply he pointed to an animal and said: If I were like that brute beast I would not be afraid; but I see the danger. Man, with his intelligence, should see the danger of being condemned; for which reason he cleanses his soul of sin and flees from everything which could be an occasion of sin. Instead, only too often man's folly leads him to offend God even more, instead of hurrying to take advantage of divine mercy.

Some begin by having a certain affection for money, and end up in avarice and ambition; other do not control the first movements of sensual pleasure and end up by doing what is forbidden. Those who do not choke their anger soon see it converted into a spirit of revenge.

How can men attain salvation in the midst of the tempests of this world? Origen replies that it is difficult if we live amidst the darkness of this world and its cares. Therefore we must leave the world behind, at least in so far as our affections are concerned and do more penance the more we are obliged to live in contact with it. In time of storm the pilot reefs his sails and casts out the sheet-anchor. We should reef in the sails of the passions and anchor ourselves firmly to Christ.

III. BOSSUET

(His audience on this occasion was made up of two different kinds of people; those converts who had been cast out of their homes and persecuted for their faith, and the rich, who had gathered to collect alms to sustain these converts. His sermon is directed towards both.)

In his introduction he points out that there are two ways in which we can follow Christ, by patience in times of suffering and by compassionate aid to others in their time of need. Christ wished to have only the poor in his company, but if none but poor existed, then who would remedy their miseries? For which reason he left us another road to salvation for the rich, namely, that of true charity towards the poor. His sermon would be an exhortation to the former to practise charity towards the poor and to the latter that they should bear their trials patiently.

1. *Faith in time of persecution or trial:*

Faith consists in belief in the eternal truth in spite of adverse testimony of the senses or the passions; for which reason it spreads in spite of any human arguments to the contrary. God's proofs for the truth of his words are miracles and the sufferings of men. God and men have been forced to unite their forces in proof of Christianity. God has done his part in the miracles he has wrought; men have

done their part by humble submission in times of trial and persecution. . . . As Tertullian says: Faith is bound to martyrdom, of its very nature. Testimony by word alone is not enough to prove my subjection to God. Rather let men cast me into prison, chain my hands and make me suffer; then will I look on my captivity as a precious symbol of those interior chains which bind me, in mind and will, to obedience to Christ and his teaching (2 Cor. 10. 5).

2. *The Church's sufferings in the light of her history:*

Whenever you suffer, think of the Church. St Augustine asks why it is that God allows such storms to beat upon his Church; and he replies: From my youth they have caused me much suffering . . . but they shall not prevail against me (Ps. 128. 1-2). This is the story of the persecuted Church, at times represented by Enoch, at others by Noe, Abraham, Moses and the prophets; by Christ and his apostles.

3. *The duties of the rich:*

God has given you riches, not that you should enjoy luxury, but in order to prove your charity. Riches constitute a test, because prosperity usually hardens men's hearts. The joy of good living dries them up, tearing from them the memory of the miseries of others, instead of turning them into fruitful rivers which divide their saving waters among the sad and the poor. That is why Paul has such harsh things to say about the rich, calling them egoists, avaricious, inhuman and lovers of pleasures (2 Tim. 3. 2-4).

O most clement and just God! . . . You have made them great so that they might be the servants of your poor and their fathers in God. Your providence has kept from them great miseries so that they might be more conscious of the sufferings of their neighbours. You freed them from care so that they might have a care for your sons and console them. This was their test. . . . There is an avarice which hoards up money in order to rejoice in its contemplation; and another which pours out that wealth in pleasures of all kinds. . . . Instead of building larger barns to store up your riches, put them in a safe place and send them to heaven before you, where they will have an eternal value. If you act in any other way then you will not be saved, because for salvation it is necessary to bear the mark of Christ, and since you cannot carry the cross in the usual way by suffering, at least bear it on your shoulders through acts of that infinite charity and generosity which it represents. Christ gave his body and his life on the cross; you can be like him by giving your riches.

IV. BOURDALOUE

(A summary of his sermon for this Sunday, in which he attempts to answer the question: Why does God allow the storm to beat upon his Church?)

1. *Introduction:*

We can see in this scene from the Gospels an image of something which happens every day before our own eyes. While sinners seem to live in the midst of prosperity the just are usually attacked by all kinds of miseries and afflictions. It is necessary to encourage them and reassure them.

2. *Sufferings of the just—God's reasons for them:*

In the afflictions of the just and the apparent prosperity of sinners there is nothing that need bring about a weakness in our faith, because it is enough for us to know that God has disposed things in that way. We have a thousand proofs which demonstrate that nothing happens without his providence behind it.

The prophet David saw the problem clearly and asks God to reveal to him the reasons behind his divine dispositions. Why is it that he allows the just to be oppressed, while the wicked enjoy apparent triumphs? Why is it that this pious woman spends her days in misery and tears, while this other, given over to loose living, is free of care and apparently happy? However, God's conduct is not so obscure that there is no ray of light to guide us as to his reasons for such action.

3. *God wishes to purify his elect and give them occasions to manifest their fidelity:*

God proves us all and examines the heart of man. How? By means of trials. If God does not submit the wicked to such trials it is only because they are not worthy of it. God does not lack means to help us and remedy our evils. At the same time his tests are all of the same kind; he deprives us of the things of this world and makes us suffer adversities. It is as if God were to say to the just man: Uncover yourself before me and let me see what you really are! During the time you have been happy in this world in peace and tranquillity, it is true that you have often told me that you wish to be mine alone; but then there was nothing to prove your statement. In that state of prosperity you did not really know your own mind, neither did you have the power to judge for certain if your heart was mine or given over to earthly things. But now, when some misfortune has disturbed the normal happy run of your life, now when you are ill or unhappy, full of afflictions and miseries; now, when it would seem that all the world's evils have fallen upon you—now you will be able to tell me, in actions not in words, that your faith is secure. In this situation I can believe your words, because if you now persevere in my service and if, at the foot of my altar, you still protest that you are inevitably linked to my law, I will hear you and will believe you. There is now no reason to suspect a love which can undergo such trials.

4. *God wishes to purify his elect from all affection to things of this earth:*

If worldly prosperity were linked with virtue we would only serve God with that prosperity in mind and would not love him for himself alone. . . . When you see God's enemies and those of loose character enjoy a life of riches you are annoyed. . . . Do you wish, then, to please God so that you may enjoy such things? Simply so that you may be in good health, have the pleasures of this life and worldly honours? For that very reason it is a good thing that he should deprive you of them, so that you may learn to love him, not from the world's point of view, but for himself alone. Remember that if you are just, then you live in a state of grace, and that state is freely given—for which reason it demands that you should love him with a love which is disinterested, not one which is selfish.

5. *What is more, God wishes:*(a) *to assure the salvation of the just:*

Nothing militates against that salvation so much as the prosperity of this world, because nothing is so contagious—for that reason God takes it from us.

(b) *to oblige the just to remain in union with him:*

All the rest is bitterness for them. If the world had implied for them what it implies for so many others, they would not even have given God a thought.

(c) *to give his elect occasions of fighting in his name:*

There is no victory without a struggle and without victory there is no crown.

(d) *to punish his own in this life so that he will not be forced to punish them in the next:*

There is no man, however just, who is not guilty of some sin, for which he is responsible before the tribunal of God's justice. God punishes him now so that he may not have to punish him in the life to come, as a severe Judge. Thus providence is justified in the distribution of good and evil things in this life; because just as God is considerate with the just in the adversities he allows to fall on them, so he is considerate with the wicked, who can enjoy now that which they will not enjoy for all eternity. One might almost say that the very fact of the prosperity of sinners is a sign of God's anger.

6. *The afflictions of the just confirm our faith in another life after this one:*

If such were not the case, where would be God's justice and wisdom in his choice of his elect? Without a future life there would be none so foolish as the just, while the wicked would be judged as very wise in their choice. On the contrary; now the wicked have a short time

in which to rejoice; but we have an eternity—a thought which was of consolation to Job (19. 25).

Christ is faithful to his promises, and he told his disciples that they would have to suffer sadness here below, but that their sadness would be turned into joy (John 16. 20-24).

V. P. G. HOORNAERT

(A summary of his ideas contained in the Spanish version of his work entitled *A proposito del Evangelio*, Santander, 1946, in which he examines certain facets of the humanity and divinity of Christ.)

We can adapt this scheme to the Sunday by asking the Gospel question: What kind of man is this, who is obeyed even by the winds and the sea? The man-God! As man, he sleeps; as God, he is the Lord of the Universe. Our faith demands that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is both God and man, born of the Father from all eternity and also born of the Virgin Mary; perfect God and perfect man, made up of body and soul.

1. *A perfect man:*

With a real body—he lay in a manger, hung on a cross in the pale shadow of death, rose again and made his disciples touch his wounds in hands and side. He lived as one of us, in a house, called a woman his mother, had near relatives . . . (Matt. 13. 55).

His language was that of his people, with a peculiar accent of the region from which he came. He was one of us and was called Jesus, as others were called Andrew or Pilate. . . .

His eyes held a special expression: full of tenderness when they fell upon the young man who had always kept the commandments; of pity for the lost sheep, of light when they are raised to his Father in the Cenacle. . . .

His hands brought a cure to many, blessed the crowds, embraced the children. . . . They were extended to save Peter from the waters, to hold the chalice, to accept the nails.

His imagination is visible in the parables and in his preaching; his affections are manifest, his human heart knows compassion to the full, there is both sadness and tenderness at the sufferings of his friends. His soul reveals both divine and human understanding, the gift of prophecy. . . . More than a thousand years ago I was known and loved by Christ!

He shows our human weaknesses; in his hunger and thirst, his tiredness, his need of sleep and rest; his passion and death. He showed sadness of soul, tears, temptations—even though he triumphed over them.

2. *Perfect God:*

His power over the angels, he is their Lord. Lord over nature itself, a fact which even his enemies recognized (John 11. 47).

Blindness yields to him, and so does death itself. He has power over the demons and gives this power to his disciples.

He penetrates the secrets of hearts, forgives sins by his own power; states that our salvation lies in him and in his name; raises men to life again, judges the whole human race.

Is there any Lord like unto our Lord or anyone who can compare with him in this?

Our salvation lies in him. Salvation is not to be found elsewhere; this alone of all the names under heaven has been appointed to men as the one by which we must be saved (Acts 4. 12). He it is who will raise all men from the dead and who will judge the whole human race.

SECTION VI. PAPAL TEXTS

(We give a summary of the Popes' ideas on certain points concerned with the storm which rises in every age against the Church.)

1. The Church has been persecuted from her very beginning—and always with the same general tactics.

Thus Pius XII says: There is one characteristic note of all persecutions, in all ages of the Church's history—namely that her persecutors wish, not merely to kill individuals, but also to make them out as enemies of the nation and State. Who can forget the first martyrs in Rome, of whom Tacitus speaks? Killed by Nero, they were also made out to be incendiaries, evil-doers and enemies of the human race. Modern persecutors show themselves to be docile disciples of that same school. They copy their masters faithfully, if they do not surpass them, in their use of modern scientific methods, with the idea of dominating and submitting to their ends the whole of a nation and people in a way which would not have been thought possible in ancient times (*On the condemnation of Cardinal Mindszenty*, 1940).

2. In recent years there has been a determined effort to root out all faith in God from the hearts of men; while at the same time the teachings of the Catholic religion have been attacked from all sides (*Radio Message for Christmas*, 1941). Pius IX expresses the same idea in his Encyclical *Qui Pluribus*.

3. The affirmation is that the great mysteries of our faith are the inventions of men, merely; that the doctrines of the Church militate against the social good of mankind (*ibid.*). The men who are responsible for this take to themselves the name of philosophers, exalt human reason as though it were opposed to true faith. They oppose the advances of modern science to the Catholic religion and seek to alienate Christian youth from any of its influence (*ibid.*).

Leo XIII repeats this doctrine, but adds that, in his day, the attacks of her enemies were also directed mainly against the Holy

See. He also says that he could see great evils coming in France especially, because the rulers there were antagonistic to religion. They sought to use economic penury as an attack against the doctrines of the Church (*Sapientiae Christianae* and *Inter Gravissimas*).

4. Pius XI, faced with the grave persecutions of the Church in Mexico and in Spain, insists that the answer to all this is prayer, because the Church is indefectible (*Acerbo Animi* and *Dilectissima Nobis*).

5. But the Church will go on, in spite of her persecutors, and she has no need to fear them. This is the constant theme of Pius XII, expressed in his Radio Message for Christmas, 1951 and also to the Bishops of Poland in 1953.

The Pope's statement, however it may annoy the enemies of the Church, is both simple and theological. The Church need not fear, because she is built upon the rock which is Christ; waves may break against her, she may be threatened with what appears to be complete destruction—but she cannot be destroyed, because she has the promise of her Founder to that effect. Even though they may make their nests as high as those of the eagle, says Pius XII, God will bring them down (9 December 1944). The Church will suffer, it is true, in terms of human life and even in terms of buildings of stone, but her spirit with all that it implies will remain intact. She has nothing to fear; because the promise was made to her until the end of time (*ibid.*).

6. The barque of the Church is shaken by tempests and in some mysterious fashion Christ sleeps in her.

We navigate on this lake, in the midst of an ocean that is risen in fury against the barque of the Church, who was born for the salvation of human beings and will end with humanity itself. She will have with her always her divine Founder, as he has promised, until the end of the world. With her doctrine, her sacraments, her attempts to find peace, she continues to cross those seas, while Christ, her founder, sleeps mysteriously in her. Like the apostles, she cries out to her Master, Lord, save us, we perish—and in that is her salvation (Pius XII, 13 March 1943).

7. Recently we have the great Encyclical of John XXIII on peace—a call to the whole world to seek the peace of Christ in the midst of the torment which surrounds us all.

SECTION VII. HISTORICAL AND LITERARY NOTE

The most dramatic incident of shipwreck in the early Church is certainly that of St Paul, on his way to Rome as prisoner of the Roman authorities. The journey was made from Alexandria by way

of Gnidus, to the lee of Crete, through a place called Fair Haven, near Thalassa. Leaving the anchorage at Asson, they sailed on until a strong wind called the Euraquilo struck them and drove them off their course. For fear of being driven on the sands of Syrtis they had to put out the sea-anchor and let the ship drift. Paul's statement to them was this: You should have taken my advice; if you had not put out from Crete, you would have saved all this injury and damage. But I would not have you lose courage, even now; there is to be no loss of life among you, only of the ship. An angel stood before me last night, sent by the God to whom I belong, the God whom I serve, and said, Have no fear, Paul, thou art to stand in Caesar's presence: and behold, God has granted you the safety of your fellow-voyagers. Have courage, then, sirs; I trust in God, believing that all will fall out as he has told me.

So it happened as Paul had said. The island was reached in time and the crew were saved, although the ship itself was lost in the storm (cf. Riciotti, *Pablo el Apostol*, tr. of Xavier Zubiri, Conmar, Madrid, 1950).

SECTION VIII. SERMON SCHEMES

I. THE EPISTLE

A: Active love

1. *The church teaches us an active love:*

(a) *The love of unity:*

The natural tendency of love is to unite the beloved with the lover; this is its purpose, of which the embrace is an external symbol.

(b) *This should be very easy for the Christian:*

He should be aware of the unity in the mystical Body, which makes him one with both Christ and his brethren. The peace of Christ reigns in our hearts, because we are one body in Christ (Col. 3. 15). We have to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace—one body and one spirit (Eph. 4. 3-4).

(c) *To conserve and maintain it we have negative obligations:*

Not to break the peace, to be patient with one another. There are also mutual joys and sufferings; but above all it is necessary to feel that sense of unity in one body of Christ (Eph. 2. 13-14).

2. *The love of benevolence—which wishes good to others:*

St Thomas says that he who loves truly, desires good for those he loves; which includes also the idea of procuring that good when possible and when it is within his power. This is the love of beneficence. Because we love ourselves, we try to avoid anything that may

harm us and procure for ourselves anything that may be for our benefit. When we learn to love others as ourselves we do the same things for them.

(a) To love our neighbour as we would love ourselves:

By avoiding doing anything that may harm him in any way, even by example (Rom. 13. 9-10).

(b) By our positive action in protection of our brother:

The works of mercy are examples of this positive action in favour of our neighbour.

i. *one who does not help his brother lacks true love for God* (1 John 3. 17).

ii. *to visit the widows and orphans*—i.e. positive acts of charity—is a sign of true religion.

iii. *Thus Paul rejoiced in his sufferings for the love of God*, and he offered them for the Church (Col. 1. 24; 1 Thess. 2. 8).

3. *The love of harmony and concord:*

(a) To have one mind, feeling and thought:

Peace and true harmony are the result of what has gone before (Phil. 2. 1-2).

(b) For this certain things are necessary:

St Paul explains these in verses 3-7.

i. *humility*; which puts others before ourselves;

ii. *to attend to the interests of others*;

iii. *to have those sentiments which were in Christ Jesus*, who did not fear to become man for our sake (Phil. 2. 3-7).

4. Love gives more than it receives and therefore demands sacrifice and effort.

B: A new commandment

Love one another (Rom. 13. 8)

1. There is an apparent contradiction here between what we have just said and what St John says: Beloved, I am not sending you a new commandment; it is an old commandment which you were given from the very first; what was the message to which you listened long ago but this same commandment, now grown old? And yet it is a new commandment I am sending you, now that it is verified in him and you; the darkness has passed away now and true light shines instead (1 John 2. 7-8).

2. *The law of love is as old as man himself:*

He has always been bound to love his brothers according to the flesh and the Sacred Books are full of this idea. It is a command of the natural law, even though man may have forgotten that fact.

3. *And as new as the Gospel:*

(a) It is the very centre of all the Gospel legislation:

There is no need to quote everything Paul has to say, or the other apostles; it is enough to remind ourselves of the last discourse of Christ to his apostles (John 15. 12).

(b) Because of the new motives for it which he gives us:

i. *the love of God for men*, manifested in the Incarnation. He who does not love men cannot love God, who has loved man so much (1 John 4. 8-11).

ii. *we are all sons of God* (1 John 3. 1), brothers in Christ.

iii. *because God has united the two loves in one*, the love for our neighbour is one with our love of God and part of the same precept. When I love man I love God who dwells in him. As Augustine says: He who loves man should do so either because God dwells in him or that he may do so. Always in God and for God.

iv. *this explains both the works of the active life and those of the contemplative life*—both must be destined for the same purpose.

v. *the motive given to us is the highest possible*—because Christ has first loved us and given himself for us (John 15. 12-13).

vi. *by the new graces of the Holy Spirit* and the new people of God created after the Incarnation.

4. This is no new doctrine, because it was taught throughout the Old Law; but it is new in the sense that it has been renewed in Christ, who has given us new and greater motives for putting it into practice. Mankind, once cast out of paradise, has now entered into it once more.

C: Love—the fulfilment of the law

1. The Epistle to the Romans and the precept of charity.

2. *It is a permanent obligation:*

(a) We must fulfil our obligations completely, both towards the public authority and also towards our neighbour.

(b) There is one which is most important, that of mutual charity.

(c) **St Augustine:**

I am always bound to charity, because it is the one virtue in the exercise of which, even though I may be satisfied, I am still a debtor. . . . That mutual charity, which, when I receive it, I still demand, and when I give it, still obliges me.

(d) **St Thomas:**

The reasons which he gives to explain the Pauline texts:

i. *the excellence of the good we have received*—we owe charity to others because we have received so much.

- ii. *the title of the debt*. The same nature and the same grace has been given to all.
- iii. *love which is loved* only increases in love.

3. *Its universality:*

Charity is the whole of the law.

(a) *This is the teaching of Christ:*

Against the doctors of the law who had multiplied out of all proportion the minute details of the law, he exclaimed: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . and thy neighbour as thyself. The whole law and the prophets were included in those commandments.

(b) *It is the preaching of the apostles:*

- i. Paul insists on it, as we see in today's Epistle;
- ii. it is the constant theme of St John's letters (cf. 1 John 3. 23).
- iii. The Fathers—especially St Augustine—dwell on it frequently.

4. *Its life-giving efficacy:*(a) *According to St Paul:*

- i. in today's epistle;
- ii. in the letter to the Colossians (3. 14);
- iii. to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 13. 1 ff.).

(b) *Catholic theology:*

It gives us a summary of this teaching when it says that charity is the virtue which gives form and life to all the rest.

(c) *St Thomas teaches it constantly:*

- i. charity gives form to all the virtues in so far as it is the one virtue which directs all the actions of the other virtues to their final end;
- ii. it is the foundation and root of all the rest, from which they take their nourishment;
- iii. it is the mother of them all, commanding their actions and guiding them to their end (2-2. q. 23. a. 8).

II. THE GOSPEL

A: Storms in the soul

I. *The theme:*

(a) The symbolism of the Gospel story and of other passages in the Gospels.

(b) *In that of today:*

- i. the Church and her persecutors;
- ii. the desolation in the soul of the just who seeks perfection.

2. *The state of desolation:*(a) *What is it?*

i. *a type of storm at sea*. Temptations, aridity, lack of consolations, a feeling of tiredness when confronted with the obligations of religion, etc.

ii. *apparent absence of Christ*—he seems to be asleep in our souls. God is ever-present to the soul of the just man, but he is not felt.

iii. *the soul is in apparent darkness*; there is a storm of temptation, difficulties, motions of the flesh; there seems to be no love, no feeling—instead a sea of dryness, difficulty in prayer, lack of consolation, sadness, etc. . . .

(b) *The meaning of this in the spiritual life:*

- i. all the saints have passed through this dark night of desolation;
- ii. almost all the souls who really desire perfection have to go through it;
- iii. the dark night of the soul of John of the Cross is a proof that this is part of the normal way of sanctification.

3. *Its causes:*(a) *Man's neglect:*

- i. those who are tepid in prayer, negligent in their spiritual duties, can expect such an experience, obviously;
- ii. we should begin by examining our conscience about this first of all.

(b) *The enemy:*

- i. with divine permission he sometimes causes this desolation of soul in order to put us off divine things and lead us little by little into sin;
- ii. for this reason it is a good rule not to change in our good resolutions just because we may have this experience.

(c) *God directly:*

- i. in punishment for our sins;
- ii. to prove us;
- iii. to make us more aware of something.

4. *The soul in time of desolation:*

(a) It may be considered as a special providence of God in our case:

- i. Jesus submitted his disciples to this proof, just as he proves other spiritual souls by means of it;
- ii. they exclaimed: Lord, save us, we perish.

(b) There are souls who do not know exactly how to bear this trial of desolation:

To them it appears to be the beginning of misfortunes and great unhappiness. This is normally due to the fact that they are not

properly trained to carry this cross. To them, fervour consists in feelings and consolations; they make these the be-all and end-all of their spiritual lives; which is a great mistake. They think of such things as ends in themselves, instead of as means to an end. They fail to realize that desolation may also be a means to an end.

(c) Advice to those who are thus tried:

i. *it is impossible not to feel it—Christ himself felt it in the agony.* We need only remember the complaints of St Teresa and other saints.

ii. *conformity with the will of God is the real answer.* We are here to do God's will, not our own. Patience and humility. Confidence in God. Hope in him! Thank God every day for the virtue of hope!

5. *Spiritual optimism:*

This is the most important thing for those under this trial.

B: The interior storm

1. *The storms of the soul:*

(a) Christ slept on a cushion:

Spiritual writers insist that the man who is undergoing such trials as these should do so restfully—a good conscience, resignation to the will of God and unlimited confidence in the divine providence which guides our lives.

(b) An interior storm:

There are occasions when such storms arise in our interior lives. Even good people, the saints themselves, had to put up with them.

(c) The causes:

There may be exterior reasons for them, but the interior ones can be reduced to two:

- i. inordinate movements of anger;
- ii. the influence of the devil.

2. *Anger—as a cause of storms in the soul:*
It is the passion for revenge.

(a) The three actions of anger—or moments, if you like:

- i. an evil which is present to us;
- ii. sadness of soul by reason of it;
- iii. impulsive movement towards revenge.

(b) Sources of revenge and their effects:

- i. *the movement towards revenge can come from the reason and can be a good thing; or it can be antecedent to reason, when it is sinful anger, and affects our peace of soul.*
- ii. *the former, if it is rational, revenges the dishonour done to God, while the latter revenges insults against ourselves.*

iii. *love of God*, in the first instance, impels us to restore the right order of things; in the second case it is self-love which is the true motive.

iv. *the daughters of this second type of anger or revenge are:* indignation, confusion of mind, which deprives us even of reason; contumely, blasphemy, quarrels and war.

(c) St Augustine says:

Have you become mindful of the insult? It is a wind which has arisen. Are you annoyed? It is the sea which rises up in your heart. The wind blows, the sea increases in fury, the boat of your soul is in danger. Your heart desires revenge. Did you take that revenge? Then you are ship-wrecked. Did you harm your neighbour? You are sunk, in that case. And what is the reason for this ship-wreck? It is because Christ sleeps. But when does he sleep in you? When you are not mindful of him. Awaken him; that is, be mindful of him. What did you wish to do? Revenge yourself? Not with Christ present, because when they crucified him he said: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Revenge is only possible if Christ sleeps in our soul. Awaken him, and the only possibility is pardon for the insult received.

3. *The influence of the devil:*

(a) Some interior temptations and trials come to us from the devil himself, at times with very great force, so as to appear irresistible.

(b) St Teresa has described them in her *Life*, chapter 25, saying that she was unable to read or pray, and seemed like one stunned by all this tribulation.

4. *The remedy—to awaken Christ in our hearts:*

(a) Patience:

Above all, in time of trial—it is the virtue which gives us the strength to resist.

- i. but we cannot have patience without grace and charity.
- ii. and charity, together with grace, demands the presence of Christ.

(b) The song of triumph:

Christ awakens in the heart of Teresa.

i. The Lord permitted my fears of a thousand perils to cause me great suffering. O my Lord, how true a friend thou art, and how powerful! For thou canst do all thou wilt and never doest thou cease to will if we love thee. . . . Lord, thou seemest to give severe tests to those who love thee, but only that in the extremity of their trials they may learn the greater extremity of thy love.

ii. Fail me not, O Lord, for I have already experience of the benefits which come to him who trusts only in thee and whom thou deliverest. When I was in this terrible state of exhaustion—

for at that time I had not yet had a single vision—these words were sufficient to remove it: Be not afraid, daughter, for it is I and I will not forsake thee: fear not.

iii. This is very true, and I would often recall how, when a storm arose, the Lord used to command the winds that blew over the sea to be still, and I would say to myself: Who is this, that all my faculties thus obey him—who in a moment sheds light upon such thick darkness, softens a heart that seemed to be made of stone, and sends water in the shape of gentle tears where for so long there seemed to be aridity? Who gives these desires? Who gives this courage? What have I been thinking of? What was I afraid of? What is this? I desire to serve the Lord; I aim at nothing else than pleasing him. I seek no contentment, no rest, no other blessing but to do his will. I felt I was quite sure about this and so could affirm it (*Life*, chap. 25. 11).

C: The theology of trials

The ship is the soul

1. *Today's miracle is a parable in action:*
Spiritual writers have seen in the symbol of the boat both the Church and also the individual soul.
2. The tempest at times represents the persecutions against the Church and at others the trials of the soul in this life.
3. Among these trials we find temptations, of which we shall speak on the first Sunday of Lent.

Trials

1. *What are they?*
By these trials we understand the labours, fatigues, pain, sufferings, illnesses, adverse fortune, persecutions—everything that makes this life difficult for us.
2. *Who afflicts us? It is God:*
 - (a) God who is the Father of all consolation can also be called the Father of all tribulation.
 - (b) Creatures, our neighbour, the devils, these are all instruments of God.
3. *Whom does God chastise? Those whom he loves:*
 - (a) He is a wise doctor, and punishment is his medicine, not meant to condemn, but to heal (St Augustine).
 - (b) There are many verses of the Scriptures which state this fact (cf. Prov. 3. 11; Apoc. 3. 19).
 - (c) **He chastises us as a Father:**
 - i. *Again Augustine says:* Are you not among the number of the punished? Then you are not among the number of his sons.

ii. *Fr Ribadeneira says:* When we see a group of children playing and doing something they should not, and a man passes by who notices this, calls one of them, takes hold of him, reproves and corrects him and then takes him off by the hand, we say: It must be his father. So it is with God and ourselves.

iii. *St Paul affirms this truth in Hebrews 12. 5-7.*

(d) **When God is really out of patience with us he does not punish us:**

i. This should frighten sinners, when they see themselves enjoying this life without any punishment from God. He frequently leaves alone to their pleasures those who, by their sins, have already merited the pains of hell.

ii. Far better to feel the heavy hand of God in this life than in the next.

4. *Why does he send us these trials?*

(a) **To bring sinners to repentance:**

When God punishes sinners in this life it is always with a view to their repentance. He chastises the just for other reasons of which we shall speak later.

(b) **To compel them to come in:**

Through trials he introduces souls to the life and health of grace and heaven—almost as it were by force. Trials are the fulfilment of that 'force them to come in' of the Gospel scene of the banquet (Luke 14. 23).

(c) Chapter 2 of the prophet Osee gives us the picture of the Lord punishing a sinner with severity, to oblige him to leave his old ways and turn to God once more.

5. *Exhortation to sinners:*

The man who is undergoing trials and tribulations, and who is conscious of sin, should receive his punishment with patience, meekness and gratitude—even with a certain joy. Let him lift his eyes up to heaven, amend his ways and cast himself into the arms of the Father of mercy.

D: The causes and fruits of tribulation

1. *Sin is the original cause:*

(a) Before everything else, original sin, by which death first entered into the world, and with it all other trials and sufferings (Rom. 5. 12).

(b) Then actual sin. Our own and those of others.

(c) The sins of others were the cause of the sufferings of Christ and of our Lady. Christ, who was the innocent victim for the guilty, who bore our sins and suffered for them (Isaias 53. 4).

2. *The fruits of tribulation:*

By means of it God:

(a) *Corrects:*

He punishes sinners that they may amend their lives, as we have already indicated. He does not wish the death of the sinner, but that he should be converted and live (Ez. 33. 11).

(b) *Proves:*

The Book of Job is all about this theme. So is part of Tobias.

(c) *Enlightens:*

In the soul of one who is well disposed, tribulation produces this threefold knowledge:

i. *of men:* in trials we discover the true and the false in human friendships. The fidelity of a friend is proved in time of trouble.

ii. *of ourselves:* our littleness and our weakness.

iii. *of God:* it turns many souls to God; they invoke him, rely on him, feel his grace around them, together with the consolation of his infinite mercy.

(d) *Purifies:*

i. *those who are especially dear to him,* great souls, generous—these he purifies by special sufferings, so that they may bring forth even more fruit.

ii. *because they are his disciples* he will prune them, like the vine branches of which he speaks (John 15. 1-2).

(e) *Glorifies:*

i. trials lead to greater glory (Acts 14. 21-22);

ii. cf. 2 Cor. 4. 17; Ps. 90. 15.

3. *The different effects of tribulation:*

(a) In the good: patience, humility and confidence.

(b) in the wicked: indignation, pride and despair.

(c) *St Augustine:*

In Chapter 8 of Book I of the *City of God* he points this out in the example of the fire which purifies the gold, while it burns up the straw; the same is true of men, and the different effects are not due to different sufferings, but rather to the kind of people who suffer. Stirred up in the same way, mud will give forth a terrible odour, while a precious ointment will fill a room with its fragrance.

E: God, the author of tribulations

1. *The theme of suffering:*

The ship in which Christ travels is surrounded by the storm. Man, while on this earth, even though he may live as a good Christian, is still liable to the storms of tribulation.

2. *This is a universal patrimony:*

A passage of Ecclesiasticus: Great is the anxiety all men are doomed to, heavy the yoke each son of Adam must bear, from the day when he leaves his mother's womb to the day when he is buried in the earth, that is mother of all. What solicitude is his, what fears catch at his heart; how quick his mind runs out to meet coming events! And the term of it all is death. What matter, whether a man sits on a throne, or grovels in dust and ashes; whether he goes clad in purple and wears a crown, or has but coarse linen to wear? Anger he shall know, and jealousy, and concern, and bewilderment, and the fear of death, and the grudge that rankles, and rivalry (40. 1-4).

3. *God is the ultimate author of all our trials:*

We cannot look on trials and sufferings with pessimism; it is necessary to see their origin and reasons, so that our Christian sentiments may spring forth naturally. The first light which illuminates this theme is the fact that God is the author of all trials and tribulations.

(a) On God depend the being and actions of all creatures; because they depend on him as on their first cause and they need him, both to remain in being, and also for action. They are in God's hands all the time.

(b) He makes use of them in order to chastise us; they are his instruments and his loyal soldiers.

(c) He does not need them to fight against us, it would be enough for him to turn his back on us and we would cease to exist. He uses them, however, to show his complete dominion over things created.

4. *The two ways in which God uses them against us:*

God acts differently when there is sin in the one who chastises us and when there is not:

i. God can be author of penalties, but not of sin as such; sin is exclusively the effect of the secondary cause.

ii. However, the reason why God can have his share in an action which causes us suffering and which also contains sin is because, when he created creatures, he decided to allow them to act according to the nature of each one. For example, he has made man free and therefore he will concur with man in his free actions; what is sinful in those actions is from man, what is good is from God.

5. *The reaction of the Christian in the face of tribulation:*

(a) The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1. 21).

(b) Tribulation which comes to us from the hands of a Father who loves us can always become a source of blessings for us.

F: The reason why God chastises us

1. *Two truths in apparent contradiction:*
 - (a) God, a loving Father, who has died for us on the cross.
 - (b) God, the author of our punishments and trials.
2. *Why does God afflict us?*
 - (a) Because of original sin:
 - i. *our imperfect and limited nature is a natural source of tribulations*; in the beginning it was protected against these by special and free graces of God.
 - ii. *sin loosed the bonds of tribulation*, and it came upon us in its full force. It is both a punishment and a medicine, to heal, not to condemn us. All those who have had to suffer in this world (except Christ, who had no sin) were all guilty beforehand, at least of original sin; they were at one time God's enemies, sons of a traitor and therefore he could afflict them justly.
 - (b) Because of actual sins:
We are directly responsible for these and God cures them with the medicine of punishment.
 - (c) Because he loves us:
 - i. *tribulation is a messenger of God's love to us*. St Paul is quite clear about this, in one of the most beautiful passages of the Epistle to the Hebrews (12. 9-11; cf. Prov. 3. 11-12; Apoc. 3. 19).
 - ii. *on the other hand, the lack of any punishment is a sign of his anger*. Just as the lack of punishment by a father is a sign of indifference towards his child, or lack of care. There could be no worse punishment for a blind man than that of removing obstacles from his path on the way to destruction (cf. 2 Mach. 6. 13-16).
 - (d) Because he is a wise doctor, who at times cures and at others prevents:
Sufferings of all kinds can have this double effect, as Paul notes with regard to the 'sting of the flesh' which was allowed to torment him because of the greatness of the revelations which had been given to him (2 Cor. 12. 7-10).
 - (e) To increase our merits:
Our actions are purified by suffering as gold is purified in the fire (Mal. 3. 2).
 - (f) As a manifestation of his mercy and goodness:
When the disciples asked Christ who had sinned, the blind man or his parents, Christ replied that neither had been responsible; the fact had been allowed, he continued, so that the goodness and mercy of God might be demonstrated in him.
3. May we always receive sorrow and suffering as a gift of God.

G: The effects of tribulation in the just

It is an evil—not a good in itself, because it is essentially a result of sin. However, by the grace of God it is also a source of much merit and, even in this life, it produces many fruits in those who receive it as a proof of God's mercy.

1. *It purifies:*(a) *It awakens the sinner:*

It makes him think of the state of his soul, disposes him to penance and to apply the means to receive the grace of God.

i. *as it returned the prodigal to his home*; there are many who have only returned to God under the blows of his punishments. They had forgotten him while their hearts and minds were on creatures.

ii. *a big suffering*, received and borne with love for God, can not only restore the sinner to his Father's house, but also purify him and free him from many of the punishments due to his sins in the next life.

(b) *Not merely does it cure us from sin but also it preserves us from it:*

There are three great enemies of man, the devil, the world and the flesh. Suffering keeps them under control.

i. *it weakens the flesh* in its attacks on us;

ii. *weakens our affection* for the things of this world, our pride, our avarice. . . .

iii. *controls the devil* in his fury because of the graces it brings with it.

2. *It illuminates us:*(a) *Teaches us that happiness does not consist in the things of this life:*

That creatures pass away, and that only God remains. The rich man in the Gospel story promised himself greater riches—but that very night his soul was to be demanded of him (Luke 12. 20);

(b) *gives us a glimpse of the terrible sufferings of hell:*

If God so afflicts us here below, what will his punishment be in hell?

(c) *reminds us of heaven:*

Where all tears will be wiped away and there will be no more suffering—for eternity!

(d) *teaches us, in our own flesh, the needs of our neighbour:*

The school of suffering is a hard one, but very effective;

(e) cuts us down to size:

Without it we would be proud, inconsiderate, impossible to live with;

(f) teaches us what we really are:

How weak, and how miserable if left to ourselves without God's help.

3. *It perfects us:*

In so far as it helps us directly towards a better and deeper love for God. It is also undergone involuntarily—just because it is God's will for us. There can be some pride in voluntary mortifications, but God knows well how to remove that in the ones he sends to us.

It is the source of so many great virtues, which would not be practised unless in the school of suffering (Rom. 5. 3-4).

4. *Conclusion:*

It is a winnowing of the grain from the chaff, a fire which softens the iron of our souls, purifies the gold in them from all dross; a salt which preserves while it stings, a hammer which forges, water which tempers the steel, puts out the fire of concupiscence, a soft rain which waters the fertile earth of the soul, bringing great crops of virtue after it; a wind which kindles the fire of love, a wine-press in which the fruit of the true vine is harvested.

H: The just and tribulation

1. *Two possible attitudes of man face to face with tribulation:*

(a) To forget it, neutralize it, distract one's attention from it.

(b) Receive it as a punishment due to us for past sin, a trial which God sends us and a seed of many blessings.

2. *Fundamental truths which should be remembered by the one who suffers:*

(a) We are men living in exile:

Suffering is a natural consequence of our present state; it is easier to support if we are ready for it and accept it.

(b) We are sinners:

i. *if we think of suffering as a due reward for our sins* we shall receive it with greater resignation.

ii. *if we remember that God is merciful as well as just* and that he does not punish us as much as we have deserved, we shall then be able to appreciate his blessings, disguised as sufferings in this life. There is no proportion between the punishment due to us and the sufferings we actually receive from his hands.

(c) Our one remedy is to unite ourselves to God through prayer and the sacraments.

(d) All comes to us from the hands of God:

i. *the punishments of Job came to him from God*; the devil could not even go into the swine without God's permission; not one hair falls from our head without God, our Father.

ii. *the bitter chalice of the Passion was prepared for Christ by sinners*—but he does not look at it in that way, it is the chalice prepared for him by his Heavenly Father (John 18. 11).

(e) God is nearer to us in time of tribulation than in time of peace:

This is a motive for fortitude. He is with us—who is, therefore, against us?

(f) Behind the suffering is the hidden consolation:

A general law of God's providence. This gives us a strong hope in him.

(g) Adversity is better than prosperity:

We know that the former comes from God, we do not know the causes of the latter! Also prosperity leads to pride; adversity humiliates us and draws us nearer to God.

(h) There is one great remedy against all tribulation:

A consideration of the passion and death of Christ.

i. the body ought not to be at peace when the head is crowned with thorns.

ii. St Paul is a help to us here (cf. Heb. 12. 1-3).

(i) The sufferings of this life are not to be compared with the glory which is ours if we suffer as we should:

This has been promised to us, and God would be a liar if he did not fulfil his promises (cf. Rom. 8. 18; 2 Cor. 4. 17-18).

I: Contemplative souls

1. *The sufferings of contemplative souls:*

St Teresa and St John of the Cross:

The sufferings of contemplatives are much greater than those in the active life. This is a vast theme, which we cannot even begin to cover effectively, but we may try to give some idea of it here. To understand it fully it would be necessary to read the great contemplatives, such as Teresa and John of the Cross.

i. to begin with, their cross is not always so obvious as is that of others, but it is far heavier. St Teresa calls the contemplative crosses intolerable (*Sixth Castle*, c. 1);

ii. to such an extent that in one day, she says, such souls may gain more from their trials than others in ten years of hard labour under the cross.

2. *All kinds of suffering:*

(a) Interior and exterior at one and the same time:

The saint begins with the apparently simple trial of criticism—they are wasting their time in contemplation; others can be better Christians than they are without all these ceremonies, rules, silence, etc. . . .

(b) She speaks of the difficulty such souls find in their confessors, in their sickness, in times of dryness of soul—which to them is a great trial; in interior temptations of all kinds; in the feeling of solitude—they are alone, and not even God seems to be with them.

(c) It is almost impossible to read these passages of St Teresa without shudders of horror at the thought of the trials and temptations of those who follow the contemplative life. Their only consolation consists in being nailed to the cross together with Christ.

(d) They may appear to the world to be pure contemplatives—but God demands works of them, works of sufferings. Everything they have must be given up to that end.

3. There may be great consolations at times—but the main theme of their lives is suffering, voluntarily accepted in union with Christ.

Far from being useless, their lives are the power-houses of God's grace to the world. Without them it would be lost.

J: The sleep of Christ in the soul

1. *Christ sleeps in the boat:*

(a) On the sea a tempest, which teaches the apostles their own weakness and makes them have confidence in Christ.

(b) The tempest of soul, when Christ appears to be asleep in the soul.

2. *Christ appears to absent himself from the soul:*

(a) In mortal sin:

i. *then he sleeps*—and it is the most terrible sleep of all. Grace leaves the soul; the passions are given free rein. The light of living faith is extinguished, and that of dead faith alone remains. It is the shipwreck of the soul.

ii. *if death comes to us at that moment* God will sleep definitely in us for all eternity, in a definite condemnation.

(b) When the divine precepts are forgotten:
The fall of Adam and that of Peter.

(c) When the divine example of Christ is forgotten:

(d) When God's gifts and graces are forgotten:

i. God punishes ingratitude by separating himself from those who are ungrateful.

ii. the threat of God in Deut. 8. 11-20 applies to us too.

(e) When our faith is not strong enough and there is no real confidence in God:

Christ's sleep is the more profound according to the lack of confidence and faith in him which is in our souls.

i. he often said to those who asked him for miracles: Be it done to thee according to thy faith.

ii. there are three degrees of faith and three effects of it.

iii. *Jairus*. He asks for the actual presence of Christ, that he may lay his hand on his daughter.

iv. *the woman with the issue of blood*. This is one step further, she attains her wish by touching merely the hem of his garment.

v. *The centurion of Capharnaum*. This is faith itself, in the very word of Jesus, without presence or physical contact.

vi. *men of little faith*. In today's Gospel Christ reproves the apostles for their lack of faith and confidence, almost as if it were not his sleep but rather their deficiency which retarded the miracle. This is a lesson for us all.

K: Christ sleeps in the soul

1. *The real and apparent sleep of Christ in our souls:*

(a) There is a sleep which can be imputed to our sins and neglect;

(b) another which is even useful for the soul.

2. *Why does Christ sleep in the soul?*

(a) To excite in us a holy fear:

Like that of the disciples in the boat. This fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and a great instrument for our sanctification.

(b) To cure our presumption:

Without God we are incapable of travelling the road of sanctification. When God appears to withdraw from us this helps to kill our presumption and avoid serious falls.

(c) To increase our merit:

This apparent abandonment is the desert through which God leads us to the promised land; a trial which purifies us and disposes for immediate entry into heaven.

(d) To give us an occasion of proving our love for him:

The bride's love is tested most during the absence of her spouse.

(e) To cleanse us of affection for consolations:

Also other things like that which are only accidental in the spiritual life.

3. *What should be our attitude when Christ sleeps?*

(a) Remember that God never abandons us entirely; this is only an apparent withdrawal.

(b) Sentiments of humility should be stirred up—because God always comes to the humble.

(c) Persevere in prayer: The prayer of the apostles in the boat; of Christ in the garden; cf. Ps. 43. 24-27.

(d) Seek always the advice of our confessor; follow that advice faithfully, because then we can be sure that we are not deceiving ourselves.

(e) Throw ourselves with confidence into the arms of God: Not our will, but his be done!

(f) Hope that God will not prolong the trial too long, making our own the sentiments of Ecclus. 2. 7-13.

L: God's omnipotence

The theme

1. *God's omnipotence, the foundation of goodness and all virtue:*

(a) Christ, the man, may sleep in the boat; but Christ, as God, calms the winds and the sea by a mere word.

(b) Our faith and our virtuous acts depend on God's omnipotence.

2. *What is omnipotence?*

(a) He is omnipotent who can do all things;

(b) there is a double measure for every power, its internal capacity (or strength) and the external—the number of actions it can perform;

(c) omnipotence implies, first of all, an infinite interior capacity, or power; in this case the power is measured by the being of the agent, which is infinite;

(d) secondly, by its range—it extends to everything which is not a contradiction in terms, everything which is possible.

3. *God is omnipotent:*

(a) This is a name proper to him (Gen. 17. 1).

(b) His very word is omnipotent (Gen. 1-2), producing all creatures, healing sickness (Matt. 8. 8).

(c) At times this is expressed under the figure of his breath or his hand (Ps. 43. 2-4).

(d) Fruits of this omnipotence:

i. the creation, the flood, the plagues of Egypt—a dominion over all created things.

ii. there are two very good descriptions of this omnipotence, in Job 9. 4-12 and Esther 13. 9-11.

I believe in God the Father almighty . . .

1. *Faith in God's omnipotence enlightens all the other truths which follow it:*

Once this is admitted, then all the rest, little or great, is easy to believe.

2. *Especially those things which are above the natural order:*

It is fitting that an omnipotent God should perform acts which are outside the scope of human reason or experience.

3. *The mystery of the Incarnation:*

Nothing is impossible to God—he that is mighty has done great things to me! (Luke 1. 25 and 37).

4. *Faith in divine omnipotence, the foundation of the moral virtues:*

(a) Humility and subjection to God: Behold, the handmaid of the Lord. . . .

(b) The fear of God (Jer. 10. 6-7).

(c) Confidence in him:

i. *God is merciful because he is omnipotent.* Only thou art all-merciful, as befits the Almighty, and dost overlook our human slips, in hope of our repentance (Wis. 11. 24).

ii. *he judges gently because he is the Lord of all power.* To condemn the innocent were unworthy of such majesty as thine; of all justice, thy power is the true source, universal lordship the ground of universal love! Only when thy omnipotence is doubted wilt thou assert thy mastery, their rashness making manifest who will not acknowledge thee; elsewhere, with such power at thy disposal, a lenient judge thou provest thyself, riding us with a light rein, and keeping thy terrors in reserve (Wis. 12. 15-18).

iii. *our hope is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

M: The omnipotence of Christ

Who is this?

(a) He has done well, they said, in all his doings . . . (Mark 7. 37).

(b) So that all asked in amazement, What kind of man is this, who is obeyed even by the wind and the sea? (Matt. 8. 27).

The Lord's miracles

1. *They were of all kinds:*

(a) So as to manifest to all the power of his divinity:

Since it is proper to God that all creatures should be subject to him.

(b) For this reason he works miracles:

- i. on spiritual and heavenly beings;
- ii. on men and animals;
- iii. by contact and by his presence;
- iv. at his command and without a word;
- v. by the change of one substance into another (water made wine) or by multiplication (the bread);
- vi. his cures were so numerous that not all have been recorded for us, but among them we find all kinds of illness—and death itself.
- vii. over the devils and the elements.

2. *The omnipotence of Christ:*

(a) As God he is omnipotent, with the same power as the Father and the Holy Ghost.

(b) As man he is not omnipotent, because this power belongs exclusively to the divine nature.

(c) But if we consider the power of the soul of Christ as an Instrument of the Word we find that it can do all things which Christ wills and which fit in with the requirements of the Incarnation.

3. *The works of Christ, a testimony to his divinity:*

(a) The conversions mentioned in the Gospels are very frequently the results of his miracles.

- i. the first disciples believed in him after the miracle at Cana;
- ii. after the resurrection of Lazarus many believed in him.

(b) We see this same phenomenon throughout the history of the Church, right down to our own day.

(c) The Gospels are so full of the miraculous that it would be impossible to cut out the miracles without destroying the whole of the Gospel story.

(d) Christ himself quotes his works as proofs of his divinity and of his mission:

- i. Go and tell John what your own ears and eyes have witnessed; how the blind see, and the lame walk, how the lepers are made clean, and the deaf hear, how the dead are raised to life, and the poor have the gospel preached to them (Matt. II. 4-5).
- ii. But the testimony I have is greater than John's; the actions which my Father has enabled me to achieve, those very actions which I perform, bear me witness that it is the Father who has sent me (John 5. 36).
- iii. All that I do in my Father's name bears me testimony, and still you will not believe me; that is because you are no sheep of mine. . . . Will you call me a blasphemer, because I have told you that I am the Son of God? If you find that I do not act like the son of my Father, then put no trust in me; but if I do, then let my actions convince you where I cannot; so you will recognize

and learn to believe that the Father is in me, and I in him (John 10. 25-26, 36-38).

(e) *Christ is God:*

Those who followed him believed this, but we have an even stronger testimony than what they saw with their own eyes, namely, the full force of divine revelation.

4. *Omnipotence and mercy:*

The latter is the manifestation of the former; there are few virtues which stand out in the life of Christ so clearly and so constantly as his mercy.

(a) Almost all the miracles are manifestations of mercy as much as of omnipotence.

- i. at times they are concerned with material needs, at times with spiritual ones;
- ii. mercy which turns to omnipotence for aid; in the very Gospel of today we see that compassion for these poor fishermen in distress and the calming of the tempest for that reason.

(b) Omnipotence produces in us a sense of admiration for our Lord's greatness; from his mercy is born the sentiment of confidence in him.

(c) Mercy and omnipotence are the two foundations of our secure filial trust in Christ. Christ is near us; he sleeps in the little boat of the Church. For that reason we have no need to be afraid or to feel lack of confidence.

i. *the world may suffer in many ways*, from disease, from the threat of war, from social upheavals—but Christ is in the boat with us.

ii. *we have our personal troubles and sorrows*. We would not be good Christians if our faith and confidence in Christ were to fail us.

III. SOCIAL APPLICATIONS

A: The boat is the Church

I. *Persecutions:*

(a) Many of the Fathers see in the symbolism of the boat the Church, and in that of the storm, the persecutions she has to suffer.

(b) There is no need for us to be dismayed; persecution is the inheritance left to his Church by Christ—we could multiply texts to prove this, but one will do: John 16. 1-4. It is taken from the last discourse of Christ to his apostles, and therefore has the added value of being part of his last will and testament.

(c) Until the end of time—until the coming of the Antichrist; when that will be we do not know.

2. *Modern persecutions:*(a) *International free-masonry and communism:*

These are the two most terrible enemies the Church has so far had to face in her long history. At times this persecution has been a bloody one and at times it has gone underground, to destroy and undermine all that the Church of God stands for in terms of faith or morals.

(b) *There are also interior enemies:*

- i. *bad Catholics;*
- ii. *defenders of erroneous or rash doctrines within her ranks.* Not for nothing have there been at least two great Encyclicals against such errors within the Church, *Pascendi*, of Pius X, and *Humani Generis*, of Pius XII. The former was a complete success; the latter still lacks something in actual practice.

3. *The fruits which the Church obtains from persecutions:*(a) *St Thomas:*

He outlines them in his introduction to the Epistles to the Thessalonians:

- i. *the raising of the mind and heart to God;* in time of distress we turn more readily and more fervently to God;
- ii. *spiritual consolation;* this comes from the fact that, when she is deprived of material goods or prosperity, the Church is always stronger in her desire for heavenly things;
- iii. *conversion*—the blood of the martyrs is a seed which does not fail.

(b) *According to St Augustine:*

- i. *she exercises her patience* in suffering;
- ii. *her wisdom*, teaching those who have fallen into error.
- iii. *her charity*, loving and praying for those who persecute her.
- iv. *her benevolence and beneficence*, even when she punishes and reproves. (It is interesting to note that Augustine, who witnessed the fall of Rome itself, always preached this confidence—he was almost the only writer to do so. He saw ahead, through the Dark Ages, to the conversion and assimilation of her persecutors by the Church suffering.)

4. *Duties of Catholics, according to Leo XIII, in their efforts to defend the Church:*(a) *Not worldly prudence:*

The prudence of those who pretend that victory can be obtained by making the way easy, without the obligation of being a soldier of Christ and of fighting for him unto death if need be; that of those who are not prepared to risk their lives in battle.

(b) *No fear, but at the same time no temerity:*
Rashness is as bad a fault as cowardice.

(c) *But all the time true spiritual prudence:*

Willing to risk everything if necessary, but always under orders, in obedience to the Church's authority; strong in prayer.

5. *Persecutions and consolations:*

(a) Here history may almost be left to speak for itself. The Church has never been so spiritually strong as in times of persecution. But there is more to it than that; she has won her personal triumph *always* over those who persecute her. The barbarians, Rome, the Goths—all fell into her net sooner or later.

(b) Persecution has weeded out her own ranks, separating the good from the bad. It has been to her advantage!

(c) She has seen great enemies—but where are they now? She still stands, and the blood of her martyrs has been for her the seed from which her present harvest comes.

(d) On the one hand she suffers in each of her children; and on the other she has the consolation of God, visible for all the world to see. Her enemies should know by this time that, while she may lose an individual battle or two, from the world's point of view, the final victory in every case is hers—and the whole of history is there to prove it!

B: *The Church of silence*

It is with deep reverence that we approach this theme, taking as our basis for this scheme the radio message of Pius XII, Christmas, 1951.

1. *Persecution in our day:*

We know well, the Pope said, that our message of peace only reaches as an echo into vast regions of the world, where the Church is in silence.

2. *It is the old story of persecutions:*

The Church of silence always existed—and it is a good thing that it should exist. Persecution is an inheritance we have received from Christ. He promised it.

(a) Men will give you up to persecution, and will put you to death; all the world will be hating you because you bear my name; whereupon many will lose heart, will betray and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise, and many will be deceived by them . . . (Matt. 24. 9-11).

(b) Simon, Simon, behold Satan has claimed power over you all, so that he can sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for thee . . . (Luke 22. 31-32; cf. John 16. 2 ff.).

(c) It is natural that her enemies should hate the Church, because she exposes errors and their moral faults.

(d) The testimony of history. Peter and Paul in prison were the first members of the Church of silence. Later came the history of the Roman persecutions and the catacombs—and so down the ages.

3. *But the whole earth heard his voice:*

Ps. 18. 5 and Rom. 10. 18.

(a) There is no testimony so effective as that of blood.

(b) **The sufferings of a witness to the truth are:**

i. *a perfect example of faith.* No one dies for something in which he does not really believe.

ii. *a profound and sure hope and confidence.* The martyr despises his sufferings—we may even say that he embraces them and rejoices in them, because he knows that they are a sure road to heaven for him and much greater glory.

iii. *a sure proof of the love of God,* which is at the same time a proof of fidelity to him and also of true love for our neighbour.

4. *The benefits of persecution:*

(a) The Church of silence is the chosen part of the Church at the moment, the field to which the Divine Sower gives his special attention.

(b) **It is the richest in its fruits:**

i. *for those who suffer;* in this life their virtue is perfected by suffering and in the next they will have an ample reward. For many martyrdom will be their way to the altars of the Church.

ii. *for the whole Church.* They are filling up in their bodies what is wanting to the passion of Christ—in that mysterious phrases of St Paul (Col. 1. 24). The Church which lives in peace may well owe her peace to the Church of silence.

5. *Our obligations . . .*

(a) The doctrine of the communion of saints should be always in our minds.

(b) There are certain definite obligations which are laid on us by the very fact that part of the Church is suffering persecution.

i. *we must know it—and the truth about the facts of its persecution.* We should be well informed ourselves and so able to inform others about it. The fact that one part of the Church is in silence should not mean that the rest is silent too!

ii. *we should feel their sufferings* as something which affects us deeply;

iii. *go to their help when we can and how we can.* In the spiritual order always; because there is no one who cannot pray for that Church in her persecutions;

iv. *in the temporal order,* it may be possible for some, according to the circumstances.

v. *imitate their example.* A good Christian life, a firm front against the attacks of our enemies—who are also their enemies. Sufferings borne for them.

vi. *we can use their merits before God,* because they are part of the same body as we.

vii. *we can and should be grateful to them for the great graces* they are bringing down upon the Church of God, of which we are a part. Their sufferings may mean our individual salvation.

viii. *never forget them, in our thoughts and especially in our prayers*—let each one of us make a resolution never to go to bed at night without one prayer for the Church of silence; no day should go by without some sacrifice in their name and for their intention. If we made such an effort, who knows the magnificence of the results which may follow? Christ is everywhere in his Church, but there is a special presence of his, in which he appears to sleep so that we may work in his name.

6. *Conclusions:*

(a) We will do what we can—now and always, in every way, both spiritually and when we can from the temporal point of view too.

(b) We will be an active—and audible—part of this Church of silence.

(c) On this may depend our peace and our security. If our brothers suffer for us, at least we can accompany them in their sufferings as we ought.

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

THE TARES AMONG THE WHEAT

SECTION I. SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Epistle: Colossians 3. 12-17

Gospel: Matthew 13. 24-30;
cf. *ibid.* 37-431. *Concerning scandal:*

The man who took in the seed in rocky ground is the man who hears the word and at once entertains it gladly; but there is no root in him, and he does not last long; no sooner does tribulation or persecution arise over the word, than his faith is shaken. Matt. 13. 20-21.

And if anyone hurts the conscience of one of these little ones, that believe in me, he had better have been drowned in the depths of the sea, with a millstone hung about his neck. Matt. 18. 6.

Woe to the world, for the hurt done to consciences! It must needs be that such hurt should come, but woe to the man through whom it comes! If thy hand or thy foot is an occasion of falling to thee, cut it off and cast it away from thee; better for thee to enter into life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet when thou art cast into eternal fire. *Ibid.* verse 7.

Let us cease, then, to lay down rules for one another, and make this rule for ourselves instead, not to trip up or entangle a brother's conscience. Rom. 14. 13.

We are careful not to give offence to anybody, lest we should bring discredit on our ministry; as God's ministers, we must do everything to make ourselves acceptable. 2 Cor. 6. 3-4.

Does anyone feel a scruple? I share it; is anyone's conscience hurt? I am ablaze with indignation. *Ibid.* 11. 29.

It is the man who loves his brother that lives in light; no fear of stumbling haunts him. 1 John 2. 10.

Brethren, I entreat you to keep a watch on those who are causing dissension and doing hurt to consciences, without regard to the teaching which has been given to you; avoid their company. Such men are no servants of Christ our Lord . . . but guileless hearts are deceived by their flattering talk and their pious greetings. Rom. 16. 17-18.

2. *Evil tongues:*

We are betrayed, all of us, into many faults; and a man who is not betrayed into faults of the tongue must be a man perfect at every

point, who knows how to curb his whole body. Just so we can make horses obey us, and turn their whole bodies this way and that, by putting a curb in their mouths. Or look at ships; how huge they are, how boisterous are the winds that drive them along! And yet a tiny rudder will turn them this way and that, as the captain's purpose will have it. Just so, the tongue is a tiny part of our body, and yet what power it can boast! How small a spark it takes to set fire to a vast forest! And that is what the tongue is, a fire. Among the organs of our nature, the tongue has its place as the proper element in which all that is harmful lives. It infects the whole body, and sets fire to this mortal sphere of ours, catching fire itself from hell. Mankind can tame, and has long since learned to tame, every kind of beast and bird, of creeping things and all else; but no human being has ever found out how to tame the tongue; a pest that is never allayed, all deadly poison. We use it to bless God who is our Father; we use it to curse our fellow men, that were made in God's image; blessing and cursing come from the same mouth. My brethren, there is no reason in this. Does the fountain gush out fresh and salt water from the same outlet? What, my brethren, can a fig-tree yield olives, or a vine figs? No more easily will brackish water yield fresh. James 3. 2-12.

Such men go about whispering and complaining, and live by the rule of their own appetites; meanwhile, their mouths are ready with fine phrases, to flatter the great when it serves their ends. Jude v. 16.

SECTION II. GENERAL COMMENTS

I. LITURGICAL

The liturgy, as we say frequently in these volumes, reproduces for us the great mysteries of the life of Christ, for our contemplation—and action. The Sundays after the feast of the Epiphany deal with various scenes from the public life of our Lord and in them we see the events and teachings which were most characteristic of that ministry, miracles, parables, his teaching and his power, together with his love for us.

The Epistle is the same as that read on the feast of the Holy Family, an unusual case of liturgical repetition. There is no obvious relation between it and the Gospel; however, by an applied sense of Scripture it is easy to see in the list of virtues which St Paul sets before us the results of the good seed in good ground of which the Gospel speaks.

The prayers have a relation to the Gospel, since they show us Christ, not merely as our merciful saviour, but also as our guardian. The secret asks him to remove the tares of our sins, so that we may easily attain salvation.

II. EXEGETIC AND MORAL NOTES

The Epistle is that of the feast of the Holy Family—for which reason there is no need for us to repeat what has already been said about it.

The Gospel: Matthew 13. 24-30

1. *Occasion and purpose of the parable:*

Seated in the boat on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, the Saviour delivered a sermon which contains seven parables, each of which explains something about the kingdom he is to found. Two of them, that of the net and that in today's Gospel, are destined to clarify the Jewish ideas about the messianic kingdom. Their idea was that he would come with his fan in his hand to destroy sinners, and once that had been accomplished, found his kingdom. Thus there would be no evil left in Israel. The main idea of the parable is to correct the false idea of the absolute purity of the kingdom, insisting on the fact that in it there will be both good and bad.

2. *The parable:*

Seated in the boat, with his eyes fixed on the hills before him, which served as inspiration for the former parable, our Lord continues his train of thought, still dwelling on agriculture.

(a) *An image of the kingdom . . .*

There is no need to point out that this kingdom is the Church on earth; the field is the whole world—the catholicity of his Church.

(b) *A man sowed his field with clean seed . . .*

The act of sowing the seed is the least important in the parable, although for us it has many applications. For Christ the important element is the action of the enemy. Obviously, the seed is good and the field is the whole world, which the Father has given him (Heb. 1. 2).

(c) *The action of the enemy:*

The circumstances are interesting; he did it at night, while everyone was asleep. It is not usual to place guards round the fields until the time of the harvest, when the grain is ripe and there is danger of robbers. This was a common practice in the time of our Lord—as it is today in Spain, for example, to guard the melon crop and the grapes on the vines. In spite of the fact that neither the master nor his workmen were guilty of any negligence, spiritual writers have insisted on the idea that continual vigilance is necessary in matters which affect the soul. The attacks of the enemy can come when we least expect them!

In this connection a quotation from Maldonado is not out of place: All the old commentators insist that those who slept represent

the bishops of the Church and also all those who have the care of souls. I am aware that many of them do not like this spiritual application, and God grant that it may not be the true one! I am also aware of the fact that Christ merely wished to indicate, by this, that the enemy sows his evil seed in a clandestine fashion.

(d) *The servants:*

The whole point of this part of the parable is the contrast between the impatience of the workmen and the patience of the Master. The latter had good motives (founded on agricultural facts) for not uprooting the tares while their crops were mixed with the corn.

(e) *The separation:*

Once the time of the harvest comes it is relatively easy to separate the good from the bad, tying the latter in bundles, so that no seed falls in with the grain, and burning them.

3. *The explanation:*

Christ gives it to us, in the main at least.

(a) *The seed is good, the Sower is the Son of man:*

The Church is the field in which Christ sows his seed. We may remind ourselves that any good we find in the Church and in our own souls is the work of the Sower; the evil is ours, or of the devil.

(b) *The field is the world . . .*

The field is not limited to Palestine or to the Jews. All of us are involved in this.

(c) *The seed—the children of the kingdom:*

We are not told in this parable that the seed is the word of God; in this parable the ground which has been sown is the principal thing, and that ground is the soul of the individual within the Church. P. La Puente says: The just who are the heirs of the kingdom are called the good seed, because they are the sons of God, born by grace in virtue of divine inspiration which sowed that grace in their hearts. In other words, grace and the gentle rain which it produces in the soul are the causes of growth; the just are the fruit of that sowing.

(d) *The tares—children of the devil:*

Again we repeat that it is the fruit of the sowing which is represented here rather than the seed itself. The tares and the wheat are not easily distinguished at first (the plants are very similar); but later it is possible both to distinguish them and to separate them. The evils in the Church are very like the good in some things—their nature, their faith and exterior ceremonies; but interiorly they are evil through sin. Their sight is dimmed by error and ignorance; they produce scandals and quarrels, provoking the anger of God, who ends by vomiting them out of his mouth.

(e) Sir, was it not clean seed thou didst sow in thy field? How is it that, having chosen your twelve apostles, one of them should be a traitor? How is it that in the garden of your Church, among so many lilies, there should also be thorns? If I enter into my own heart I may well ask: How is it that, among the many virtues you have sown there, I should still find so many evil desires?

(f) The enemy—the devil:

A real person, our enemy and God's; one who hates God. The sinner is near to that state of hatred of God when he begins to hate God's law. It is but one step further. Both the devil and sinners are sowers of evil in the world. It is our task to know both these enemies and to attack them whenever possible.

(g) Wouldst thou, then, have us go and gather them up? . . .

Zeal indeed, but indiscreet; not the true spirit of meekness of the Gospel, which prefers not to extinguish the still smoking flax or break the bruised reed. This statement of the workmen is very like that of the two disciples, who asked permission to call fire down from heaven on the poor Samaritans (Luke 9. 54).

(h) No! . . .

This is the central point of the story; for which reason both the Fathers and the commentators mention it extensively. Why did the master forbid the men to tear out the tares? So as not to harm the wheat. Sinners exist for only two purposes, either to be converted into wheat or else to benefit the good.

P. La Puente makes certain observations taken from Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas: Their zeal, he says, was excessive, because it is impossible to root up all the vices and passions; because if we suffer the evildoer in patience and meekness, it is usually easier to convert him. The same is true of our own souls; if we are over-anxious about the advance in virtue we can easily do more harm than good—too much penance, for instance, can damage health and lose ground which had previously been gained. Also imprudent punishment of wrongdoers can bring such scandals and even wars with it that it harms the good at the same time. Lastly, we must never forget that such zeal is often motivated by anger, jealousy or thoughts of mere revenge. It springs from indignation rather than from compassion.

(i) The harvest is the end of the world:

There are many occasions in life in which the tares are separated from the wheat; for example, in time of persecution. However, the decisive moment is that of the last judgement. It is *the* moment of separation, of punishment for the wicked and reward for the good; the final cleansing of the Church! We may notice, in passing, the intervention of the angels; also the inclusion among the tares of such

things as scandal—all that gives offence to others. This is not only a weed, it also does much harm.

SECTION III. THE FATHERS

I. ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

(There is no need to give any excuse for presenting here long extracts from this beautiful Homily—a classic of its kind for the simplicity of its style and the profound thoughts it contains. Cf. PG. 58, 475.)

1. *What is the difference between this and the former parable?*

In the first the Lord speaks of those who would not listen to him; those who turned aside and rejected the good seed. In this he speaks of heretics. He wished to mention this also, lest later on his disciples might be worried about it. The parable that precedes this speaks of those who did not receive his word; this one speaks of those who did receive the words of his enemy. It is the guile of the spirit of evil so to mingle his own errors with the truth, that they have a semblance of truth in them. Thus he deceives the trusting ones, who listen to him. That is why Christ speaks here only of tares, which look like wheat.

He also mentions the method by which this deceit is practised—while men are asleep. Here lies no small danger for the rulers of the Church, to whom the care of the field has been entrusted—but it does not apply merely to the rulers. The subjects are warned as well. He shows here very clearly that, where the seed of truth has been sown, error soon follows after, as events in history have proved. After the true prophets come the pseudo-prophets; after the apostles, their imitators; after Christ, Antichrist! Unless the devil sees something which he can imitate, he does not know what to do. Now he has learned that, of the seed which was sown by Christ, some produces a hundredfold, some sixty and some thirty. Therefore he tries another stratagem. Not being able to root up that which has taken firm hold, nor choke it or wither it, he now decides to sow his own seed together with it.

But, you may ask, what is the difference between those who sleep and those who come under the symbol of the 'wayside'? Just this, that in the case of the latter the devil snatched away the seed before it had a chance to take root; in this case he has need of greater cunning. Christ tells us this so as to teach us the need of constant vigilance. It is as if he were to say to us: You may have escaped these snares, but you are not yet secure; others remain to plague you. As in the former parable some came to grief by the wayside, others because of the stony nature of the ground, others through the thorns; so here, it comes because of sleep. There is need for a continual

watch; for which reason he also said: he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved.

Something like this happened in the beginnings of the Church, when the bishops, through not being watchful enough, received into it men who were evil and unworthy, secret heretics; to these they gave authority and opportunity to sow their tares. But, you may ask again, how is it possible for us not to sleep? As to natural sleep, it is of course, impossible, but not impossible to the will. Watch ye, and pray!

Christ shows that this snare of the devil is not merely evil but also wanton. When the tilling of the field is completed and the good seed sown, it is then that he sows his evil seed—which is what all heretics do. For no other reason than their own vain glory they scatter abroad their seed of poison. His words prove this: When the blade was sprung up and had brought forth fruit, then it was that the cockle appeared among it. Undoubtedly this is the method of the heretics. At first they conceal their true selves; then, having acquired boldness and having been entrusted with the teaching of others, they pour out their poison.

But why does he introduce the servants at this point to tell the master what has happened? So that thus he may have an opportunity of teaching us that such heretics are not to be killed. He calls the devil an enemy because of the many injuries he tries to inflict upon men; but the energy of the devil was not first directed against us, but against the majesty of God. Hence it is obvious that we are more loved by God than we love ourselves. See the cunning of the devil. He did not sow his seed before, when there was nothing he could destroy; he waits till now, when the work of sowing is completed, so that he may more easily destroy the work of the farmer. With such evil intent and purpose has he always worked against Christ.

We can also see in this parable the zeal and affection of the workmen. They are eager to root up the tares, although in that they were not wise. However, they have an interest in the good seed and think only of this, that the seed sown should not be lost. So they hasten to ask how the evil may be undone. They do not decide for themselves what is to be done; they consult and look to the word of the Lord: Wilt thou that we go and gather it up? But the Lord forbids them, lest the wheat also be rooted up together with the weeds. This he said in order to prevent many wars and slaughters, because if all heretics were to be killed it would lead to interminable wars throughout the world.

2. *The tares among the wheat:*

The Lord forbade the men to root up the tares; first, lest the wheat should be injured; secondly, because whoever has an illness which will not be cured does not escape punishment. If, then, you

desire to see them punished you must wait until the harvest, when the proper time comes; then there will be no chance of injury to the wheat. What else does he mean when he says: Lest you root up the wheat also together with it, except that, to take up arms and kill heretics implies that many of the good will perish with them? Many of those who are now among the tares will be converted into wheat. If you root them up now, then you will destroy the wheat they would have become, should they be converted. He did not, however, forbid us to reprove heretics, to silence their mouths, to restrict their liberty of speech, to scatter their assemblies. He merely forbade them to be killed.

Observe well his gentleness and patience. He does not merely forbid something, he also gives his reasons. What does it matter if the tares continue to the end of time? Then, he says, I will say to the reapers, gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn. He recalls to their minds the words of John, speaking of him as the judge of all mankind, and says: We must spare the tares as long as they stand together with the wheat in the field, for it is possible that they, too, may become wheat. But once they have been cut down and have not profited from the Lord's patience, then they must receive their due punishment. And why does he order the tares to be gathered up first? Lest the good become anxious for fear that the wheat will be carried off with the tares. For that reason he says: Let the tares be burnt first, and then carry the wheat into my barns.

II. ST AUGUSTINE (I)

(Extracts from his sermon on the Gospel for this Sunday, taken from PL. 38, Serm. 73.)

Today the Lord tells us another parable about the sower, who sowed good seed in his field. While men slept an enemy came and over-sowed it with tares. While the tares were still green it was impossible to distinguish them from the wheat, but when the grain began to appear then the tares could be distinguished. The master's servants were angry when they saw the weeds standing thick among the good grain; they wished to uproot it at once, but he would not allow them to do so. Instead he told them to allow both to grow side by side until the time of the harvest. Our Lord also explained the meaning of this parable to us; saying that he was the sower, the field was the world, the devil was the enemy, who sowed tares in that field, the harvest was the end of the world.

Hear what he says to you. Leave them to grow side by side until harvest, and when harvest time comes I will give the word to the reapers, Gather up the tares first, and tie them in bundles to be burned, and store the wheat in my barns. Why hasten then, zealous

servants? Do you not see that the tares stand in the midst of the good wheat, and you would uproot the bad? Remain patient, it is not yet time for the harvest. Let that time come and reveal to you the true wheat. Why do you have to be angry? Why so impatient, that the bad should now be mixed with the good? They may be among you in the field, but they will not be with you in my barns. . . .

But the sheep of the flock are sometimes also the tares. Unworthy Christians! you will fill the Church and also torment it by your wicked lives. Correct your ways before the time of the harvest. Be not like those who said: I have sinned, and what harm has befallen me? (Ecclus. 5. 4). God has not lost his power; he merely asks for your repentance. This is said to the evil ones who are also Christians; to those who are nothing but tares. They are yet standing in the field; and it may yet be that those who are now tares may still become good wheat. Now I address myself to the wheat.

You Christians, whose lives are worthy. You weep, and you are few among the multitude; you mourn, few among the many. But the winter will pass and the summer will come, and then it will be time for the harvest. The angels will appear who can divide one from the other, and they will not make any mistakes. At this present time we are like the servants who asked whether their master wanted them to go and gather up the tares, for we are anxious that nothing evil should exist among the good. But it was said to us, No; or perhaps while you are gathering the tares you will root up the wheat with them. What good can you do? Rather will you not ruin my crop through your rashness? The reapers will come—the angels. We are but men, the reapers are angels. . . . Though we are angry with the wicked, we are still but men ourselves and we should remember this: He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed, lest he fall. . . .

Turning, then, with contrite hearts to the Lord, our God, the Father Almighty, let us ask him, having given thanks to him with all our hearts, that he may graciously hear our prayers, and by his power drive evil thoughts from our hearts and minds and actions, increase our faith, guide us through his holy inspirations and bring us to that joy which is without end, through his Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

ST AUGUSTINE (2)

(In PL. 38, 1092-1093 Augustine preaches on the same theme to the newly baptized, again with the idea in his mind of explaining the co-existence in the Church of good and evil.)

Do not be surprised at the great multitude of evil Christians who fill our churches, receive communion at our altars and praise the explanations given by bishops and priests of good morals and

doctrine. . . . They may be allowed to live with us in the Church on this earth, but not in that other and larger assembly, which after the resurrection will be the Church of the saints. The Church of our time is a threshing-floor, in which grain and straw are mixed, where the good and the bad live together. But after the last judgement the Church will only shelter the good. Hear me, you who are faithful! Those who are good grain, let them rejoice with due fear and persevere. . . . Let no one attempt to winnow the chaff of his own accord, because if he wishes to separate himself from it, then he cannot remain in the threshing-floor. . . . Let the good have patience and support the wicked, and let the evil imitate the good, because on this threshing-floor the grain can still be changed into straw and the straw into good grain. Every day we see these changes take place, my brethren, and it fills our hearts with sorrow and also with consolations. Even those who seemed to be good fail and perish; while at the same time those who seemed to be evil repent and live. . . . May the patience of God be of value to you all, so that contact with the good grain and with our preaching may change you into true wheat. The waters of God's word are not wanting; therefore let not the labour of the divine farmer be in vain through any lack of effort on your part. Grow green under his hand, grain well and produce much fruit, for the divine Sower wishes to find grain, not thorns, at the time of the harvest.

ST AUGUSTINE (3)

(Against the Donatist heresy, which tended to reserve the membership of the Church to those who are perfect, Augustine argued time and again. The ideas are the same as those formerly expressed, but we shall quote some extracts here because of their value as proofs of the visibility of the Church on earth. Most of these are taken from PL. 47, 741-742, but some are to be found in PL. 38, 51 and 39, 1545-1547.)

1. *The Church is made up of good and bad:*

You, Donatists, have produced no reason at all for the separation you wish to make between the good and the bad in the Church, that true Church, the one authentic catholic and universal Church of the Lord Christ, which alone sheds light on the world and spreads her fertile branches throughout the whole earth. Do you not say that necessity demands that the good should be separated from the evil? Not at all; the only mission of the good in this life is to have patience with and tolerate the wicked, those whom they can neither convert nor condemn. It is not allowed that they should go into the fields of the Lord to root up the tares before the time of the harvest, nor to the threshing-floor, to separate the straw, nor to the net, to cast out the evil fish. . . .

If you wish to twist the sense of these words of the Gospel then you are also twisting those of Cyprian, whom you quote, who says, in his letter to Maximus: Even though I am well aware of the fact that many in the Church are nothing but tares, that should not be an impediment to either faith or charity. The way to combat the tares which exist in the Church is not by separation from them. Our role is that of being good grain, and when the harvest-time comes we shall receive our reward. For the rest, to break the fragile vessel is the Lord's business, to whom the rod of rule was given.

2. *The reason why good and evil are to be found in the Church on earth:*

The peace of the Church demands this. At times we may know that they are evil; we can neither make them confess their sin nor amend their ways in view of the punishment which could be inflicted on them. There are times when the only thing we can do is admit them to our communion in the hope that they will slowly amend their ways.

SECTION IV. THEOLOGAINS

I. ST THOMAS AQUINAS

(This parable gives us occasion to talk about evil as such. We shall limit ourselves to the doctrine of Aquinas in a summary form, under two headings, that of evil in general and also that of God's permission of evil in his general providence. The ideas are taken from the *Summa*.)

1. *Evil:*

(a) *It exists:*

And it exists because all created things have, by their very nature as creatures, this possibility of failure to attain their full end and perfection. A creature is naturally limited in its scope and thus, through circumstances, it may defect. In this we see the origin of evil from our point of view.

(b) *But it is not something positive:*

It is a lack of something which is good. Everything that really exists is good. Evil is a deviation, a lack of something; and for that reason alone it is neither a positive entity nor something positive created by God—for all that he creates is good.

(c) *But it is not something purely negative either:*

If that were the case, then everything which did not exist at all would be evil. Rather it should be said that evil is a lack of some good which ought to exist in this particular creature (I P. q. 43. a. 3. c).

2. *In rational creatures:*

Now we come to a special kind of evil. These creatures have both intellect and will. Every evil which results from a lack of co-operation on the part of a creature which is free, implies both evil in itself and also voluntary evil, which means that there is a penalty attached to the action and also a certain guilt.

Of these two the guilt is the more important, because it is an act of the free will of the creature, who turns away from the plan drawn out for him by his creator. The evil of guilt is, for this reason, more important than any punishment of deprivation which may result from it (I P. q. 48. a. 6. *ad 1um*).

3. *The cause of evil:*

(a) *God, the cause of merely physical evil:*

There has to be a balance in physical nature—if there were no fire there would be no combustion of air into its different components; if there were no divine protection over the life of a lion, for example, there would be no death among its victims.

(b) *God, the cause of the punishment for evil:*

The order of the universe also demands an order of justice, which in its turn demands that the evil should be punished. For this reason alone God is the cause of punishment.

(c) *Only the created will is the cause of moral evil:*

In considering any human action we must distinguish between the action as such, which is something positive, and any defects it may have. God can and does co-operate with the creature fully in the physical part of the action, so that any entity it may have (and therefore any goodness) comes from God as the first cause and from the creature as a secondary cause. However, any defect in that action is not the work of God, but of the defective secondary cause.

Only the divine will is exempt from the possibility even of sinning, for the simple reason that God's will is the rule of his actions, as well as of those of the creature. In the case of the latter, the will is not its own rule of conduct; it must conform to the divine will if it is to avoid moral guilt. The will of the inferior must be ruled by that of the superior. Any turning aside of the creature's will from that of God constitutes moral evil (cf. I P. q. 49, a. 2 *ad 2um* and q. 63, a. 1. c).

(d) *Both good and evil fall under the providence of God:*

We must distinguish between someone who is placed in charge over one particular thing and someone who is a universal provider. The former will inevitably try to avoid anything which may harm the one object of his care; but the latter, if he is wise, will permit certain defects in some of the things under his charge when that is for the good of the collectivity. Even though the defects of individuals

do constitute something opposed to their individual natures, still those defects do enter into a general plan for the universe. Thus, the destruction of one thing leads to the preservation of others and, therefore, to that of the species as a whole.

God, as universal provider, permits certain defects in individuals so that good may come to the whole of the universe. If all evils were abolished much greater good would be lost. Just as the lion could not live unless other animals perished, so the faith and courage of the martyrs would never exist but for the persecutions to which they are subject (1 P. q. 22. a. 2. *ad 2um*).

(e) God permits sinners to exist for the sake of the good:

The Lord commanded that the tares should not be uprooted, lest the wheat should perish together with them. The same thing happens in case of wars against heresy, when the good suffer with the evil. Thus the Lord teaches us that it is better to allow wicked men to live and reserve revenge until the final hour of judgement than to destroy the good together with them. But when the death of evil-doers does not contain any threat to the lives of the good, then it is lawful to take the life of the former (2-2, q. 64. a. 2. *ad 1um*). . . . However, the wicked are not usually destroyed in this life, so as not to lose those who at the right moment will become good and also so as not to deprive the good of the benefits which the wicked, without meaning to do so, provide for them.

II. J. B. FRANZELIN

(In his Treatise *De Ecclesia*, chap. 25, he deals with the question of sinners in the Church. We give a brief summary of his teaching.)

1. Reasons why sinners are not excluded from the Church, based on the life of the Church herself:

The purpose of the Church in all that she does is to lead her members to sanctity and union with God; but until the last day comes she is on the road to that goal. Now she is like a soldier who is still fighting for the victory, a kingdom which has been founded, but which is not yet finished; faith which longs for vision, hope which desires possession and a love which is mingled with sorrow because it is not yet sinless nor does it enjoy beatitude.

Just as this negative imperfection does not prevent her from being the Bride of Christ, nor does the private imperfection of sin kill all those who commit it. They still remain in the body of the Church, which is ever striving for their sanctification. This is proved by the way the Church acts.

Her prayers in the liturgies of both East and West presume that the members of the Church can live in sin and ask pardon for them. The Lenten prayers are a good example of this.

In the Our Father we all ask for pardon for our sins, remembering the servant who, having been forgiven himself, refused to forgive his fellow-servant.

The so-called sacraments of the dead suppose the existence of sin in the bosom of the Church—that same Church of which St Paul speaks to the Corinthians, whom he suspected of not having done real penance for their sins (2 Cor. 12. 20-21).

The theological reasons tell us the same story: The Fathers, especially St Augustine, have seen this doctrine in all the parables in which the Church is compared to a field in which there is good and bad mixed. Until the day of judgement comes there will, unfortunately, be scandals and sinners (Matt. 13. 24, 37-41).

After the Donatist controversy this doctrine was so clear that St Fulgentius could write: Believe it firmly and never doubt; the Church is the threshing-floor, and in her, until the end of the world, there will be the good grain mixed with the straw . . . and that the wicked are prudently tolerated in the Church provided they live in such a way that, by the sight and hearing of good examples, they may amend their ways and abandon their evil.

2. How do sinners belong to the Church?

In spite of what we have just said we cannot deny the great difference between the way sinners belong to the Church and the way the just pertain to her fold. We may reduce the bonds which link her to her children to these:

i. *Some are purely external, visible of themselves*; even though they are linked also with her motives of sanctification and salvation, still, by the institution of her Founder, they are the essential elements which make her formally visible in the world.

ii. *There are other interior links, which are entirely spiritual* and do not appear exteriorly; even though they are more noble and in themselves constitute the proximate purpose of a Church which is both holy and also which sanctifies others; still, by the very fact that they are not manifested except through the former, they themselves are not the reasons why the Church is a visible society.

The visible elements, essential by reason of Christ's institution, are: the sacrament of baptism, profession of one faith under the authority of the legitimate magisterium, social charity and obedience to the same authority under the command of the hierarchy, communion of rites and ceremonies under a legitimate priesthood, together with the reception of the sacraments. If one of these elements should be missing in any individual, then he does not belong properly speaking to the Church on earth, even though the links which still bind him to her mean that he is still in contact with her in a secondary fashion. It may even happen in some cases that the

interior dispositions of a person may take the place of the exterior signs of unity in the sight of God.

The opposite happens in the case of sinners. Although these preserve all the exterior signs of unity with the Church and therefore remain members of her body so far as she is visible, yet they lack the interior elements which are more noble, and therefore they are deformed, so far as the proximate purpose of the Church is concerned, which is sanctification. We may even say that they do not belong to the Church from the point of view of present sanctity; which explains some of the apparent contradictions in the writings of the Fathers.

SECTION V. SPIRITUAL WRITERS

I. ALONSO RODRIGUEZ

(A summary of his teaching concerning the custody of the senses, taken from *Ejercicios de Perfección y virtudes cristianas*, Madrid, 1950.)

The enemy penetrates into a city through any chinks he may discover in her defences; so the devil lies in wait for the soul at her weakest point. We shall see what the remedies are against this attack.

1. *Know ourselves:*

The devil studies our natural dispositions and our condition of soul so as to attack us where we are weakest. Those who are soft he attacks through temptations to impurity; those who are hard and unrelenting, through temptations to pride and anger. He knows how to use the right bait for every victim. He tempted Adam through his love for Eve; Samson, through Delila. The prevention and remedy lie in knowing our own weakness and guarding against it with care. When we find ourselves tempted we must take refuge in the opposite virtue, according to the old saying that contraries cure!

2. *Watch and resist the beginning of temptation:*

So far as small temptations are concerned, and also the beginnings of large ones, we must remember two things. The first is that, since they can pass almost unnoticed, they are dangerous, as are small sparks which can start a great fire. In the same way one look or thought can lead to the death of the soul. The second thing is that, at the beginning, they are easier to overcome and with great profit to the soul.

We should be on the watch for these beginnings of temptation and, as St Jerome says: When they are yet small, when our rash judgements, thoughts of pride and sensuality . . . are still in their beginnings, crush them under the millstone who is Christ, by means of his example and the thought of him, so that they may not grow

and lead to the destruction of the vineyard of the soul. One who is sick can avoid greater evils by taking a little care in small things, such as his meals, etc.

3. *Never remain idle:*

It was a saying of the fathers of the desert: Let the devil always find you busy. They tell the story of St Anthony, who complained that he could not always be at prayer. He received the reply from our Lord, If you cannot pray, then work!

4. *Custody of the senses:*

These are the doors by which the death of the soul enters into it. They merit the name of 'dark', as St Jerome says, because they open the way to the entrance of the darkness of eternal death. Nothing can enter into the mind without first passing through one of them. Therefore, if the door of the house is guarded, the whole house is much safer. This is especially true of speech. Those who talk a great deal soon find themselves with few serious thoughts. That which cost a long time to obtain can be lost very quickly.

But how are we to live in the world without listening to others? By imitating school children, who repeat aloud the lesson they are studying without paying any attention to their companions. . . . You will never acquire perfection unless you take care to guard your senses. Nature is very wise, and she does not produce a fruit without surrounding it with a protection of some kind, a shell or skin which guards it. Our protection lies in the guarding of the senses, and we can say of him who gives his senses free rein what we say of someone whom we notice to have a bad colour—he is not healthy within.

II. BOSSUET

(A sermon preached on today's parable, the ideas of which are almost entirely taken from St Augustine.)

The Good Shepherd goes in search of the lost sheep; but you must not think that the latter no longer belonged to the flock. In this parable he is not talking about heretics, but of sinners. But, you may ask, how can such as these belong to the Church? Hear St Augustine's reply: There are some who are in the house of the Lord and who belong to it; and there are others who are within that house without belonging to it. The just are the house of God, who dwells in them. The wicked, even though they dwell in the shelter of that house, do not belong to it. God cannot live in their hearts and they are not living stones of that wonderful building. They are like the straw on the threshing-floor, and though joined to her by the sacraments, they are separated from the society of charity.

See, then, how in the Church there exists a double unity; one which consists in the bond of the sacraments, common to all, even

though they only serve for the condemnation of the wicked. The other is the bond of charity, the element which alone gives life to that other, and invisible, unity. That is why the Lord represents to us the lost sheep as having strayed from the flock, not because it does not belong to it any longer, but because it has ceased to enjoy the rich pastures and the life of the flock.

1. *The innocence of the just in the midst of sinners—a miracle of divine omnipotence:*

Here is a miracle of grace indeed! To live a pure life, free from all corruption, is the effect of no ordinary power. To abandon the just to a life in the midst of sinners and to strengthen their virtue by means of that evil companionship; to oblige them to breathe the same air and yet to preserve them from infection; to allow them to live in the midst of iniquity and yet to preserve their justice; this is the work of the divine power, of the God who delights in making the light shine, brilliant and clean, amidst the dark clouds. Of that God who preserved the three children in the fiery furnace and Noe from the waters of the flood. . . .

Truly, if the wicked did not exist how many virtues would have perished also! Where would be the zeal for their conversion? Where the patience of those who suffer? Where the triumph of the martyrs? What disorder also, unless in the midst of the wicked there were groups of the good, to whom we can say: You, with your advice, corrections and example are the salt of the earth! Salt, without which the world would long since have been corrupted. Light, which must not mingle with the darkness, but illuminate it.

2. *God's patience:*

The preacher describes the last judgement and then says: Draw near, you who complain at the prosperity of sinners and who say, Let the earth open and swallow them up and the heavens discharge their lightning against them. Do you not see God's secret? If, here below, he were to punish the condemned, that would serve to distinguish them from other sinners . . . and that is reserved for the day of judgement. Do you not see, says Augustine, that, in winter, living and dead trees look alike? They have neither fruit nor leaves. Who can tell them apart? Only the spring! The tares grow together with the wheat. Be patient, and await the harvest.

The fact that God allows sinners to live in peace is one of the visible effects of his providence; because true wisdom does not consist in doing things in a hurry, but at the right time. The wisdom of God does not allow itself to be guided by the prejudices and fantasies of such children as we are; instead it follows that unchangeable course which was laid down from eternity. It has laid down the last day for the separation of good and bad, and it will not anticipate that day. Notice the word: Do not act in haste, because that is proper to those

who are weak, who do not like to see opportunities pass them by, because their actions depend on them. Haste is ever a sign of weakness.

III. BOURDALOUE

(This is regarded as being one of his best-prepared sermons, with an abundance of ideas.)

1. *Rules for the treatment of sinners:*

The mixture of wheat and tares obliges us to study our conduct towards sinners. To understand fully the reasons why God permits them to exist is beyond our capacity, but we can study and imitate the divine way of dealing with sinners.

God lives with them only because their very being needs that presence, and we should have contact with them only in so far as our state requires it. From his contacts with them God draws two benefits, his own glory and the conversion of the sinner, which he always seeks. We must also try to obtain, from our contacts with them, some spiritual profit and also some help for them also.

2. *God present to sinners only from necessity:*

In the Sacred Scriptures God is presented to us as being at times in the company of the sinner who tries to hide himself from God; at others it is God who appears ashamed of having created the sinner and who seems to depart from him. How can we reconcile the two truths?

The problem is a simple one. The demands of God's very nature oblige him to be in contact with sinners because, given the facts of creation and providence, God cannot cease to fulfil certain obligations which he has imposed on himself. His wisdom, for example, demands that he govern the world he has created, including sinners. But together with this is the very heart of God, and if we could enter into it we would see how it loathes sin.

Immediately man fell God broke all his pacts with him and man became an object of God's hatred. Theologians, on studying this fact, say that if God were able to prescind from his attribute of immensity, he would still be present to some men, namely the just only. From this John Chrysostom deduces that the attribute of immensity, although a most noble thing and proper to God alone, does not cease to be a burden on him at times! At least, that is the example he gives us.

We must tolerate the wicked, because both God and the just tolerated us when we, too, were sinners. However, we may underline the word *tolerate*, because we are not supposed to do any more than this—endure them, in charity.

We must also remember that God does not merely permit us to live with sinners; he demands it, because he has placed us in

conditions which require it. To avoid it we would have to leave this world (1 Cor. 5. 10). A father would have to separate from his wicked children and a wife leave her unfaithful husband—which is impossible. That is what we call necessity imposed on us by our state of life.

3. *Motives for avoiding any further contacts:*

(a) The divine command:

Only brethren, we charge you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to have nothing to do with any brother who lives a vagabond life . . . (2 Thess. 3. 6; cf. Ps. 25. 4-5; Tit. 3. 10; 1 Cor. 5. 11). William of Paris says that, in this avoiding of unnecessary contacts with the wicked, God wishes us to anticipate his judgement at the last day, when he will separate them from the just.

(b) This is convenient for the sanctification of the individual and society:

It would almost seem as if the separation from the wicked were a type of community expiation (cf. Jos. 7. 13). And so it is, in many cases, because an atheist in high places can do more harm than the devil himself, and a woman of evil life can corrupt more individuals than a philosophy of loose living. This is the explanation St Thomas gives for excommunication, through which the Church seeks two advantages, the correction of the evil-doer and the protection of the innocent.

(c) God's honour:

The insult done to God by constant contact with those who openly despise him is yet another reason for this prohibition. What would we think of a son who kept open company with those who insulted his father? Read 2 Par. 19. 2 and then remember that Josaphat was excused through his good works and piety. But what excuse can we offer?

(d) The danger of corruption:

Is it possible for you to keep your hearts pure in the midst of so much evil? If such were in fact the case, then the prophets and the saints would not have spoken out against such contact with sinners. Far better prepared for it than you, they fled from such contagion, as did Ezechiel. What rashness is yours, then, in risking more than those who were stronger than you are! Why did God do all he could to keep the Jews from contact with those pagans around them? So that they would not be contaminated by evil customs. . . . If you ask me for the real reason why there is so much crime among our youth, so many broken marriages, such lack of piety and even so many sins in the ministers of the altar, I would reply that it is due to the bad example of evil, which is not merely tolerated, but smiled upon.

4. *The reasons why God tolerates sinners:*

(a) His own glory:

Just as the sinner knows well how to use creatures for his own purposes, so God knows how to use sinners for his own glory. We should learn from this to use sinners to increase our patience, our charity, mortification and humility. There is so much good to be obtained from our contact with sinners, and how little use we make of it! . . .

You may say to me: How better I would be in another state of life, or in other circumstances . . . ! Then I would indeed be a saint! How wrong that is! God has placed you in these circumstances and in this state of life. There you will find your sanctification and salvation. Such a state would be impossible had you flung yourself into it of your own free will; but if God has placed you in it then you can be sure of his help.

(b) The conversion of the sinner:

By this time you have thought that the sinner serves only for your sanctification. That is not so; you are also there for his sanctification! God, by his presence, seeks always one thing—the conversion of sinners, and we should act as he does. It is an obligation in charity which God has imposed on all of us. If we have a duty to look after his material prosperity, how much more so his soul! These are souls who have been redeemed by Christ!

Among those who at present are sinners, there are many who will be saved, and we do not know who they are. Therefore we dare not make any distinction; our duty is simply to pray, give good example to all equally. Do not make the excuse that you must care for your own souls, because that is merely to repeat the words of Cain: Am I my brother's keeper? Be prudent, and above all, do not allow yourselves to be led into imprudent zeal, as were those who wished to root up the tares before the time appointed.

Priests, wives, husbands, masters—what an obligation they have, from a new title—their state! How much good they can do by work and by prayer! But there is still another state which demands great sacrifices; that of the converted sinner! Gratitude to God, the knowledge of the miserable state in which he lived before his conversion—all this obliges him to say with David: So will I teach the wicked to follow thy paths; sinners shall come back to thy obedience (Ps. 50. 15.)

SECTION VI. PAPAL TEXTS

1. It is a constant theme in the speeches and writings of recent Popes that the enemy of mankind is attacking us now through a new medium, that of the press and the cinema. Thus Pius XII says:

The enemy of God is corrupting the world by means of a press and spectacles which kill all modesty in our youth, destroy true married love and incite to a nationalism which leads to war (*To Italian Catholic Action*, October 1952). This merely repeats what Leo XIII had already said years before: We may add to these seductions of vices other dangerous invitations to sin; we refer to those plays in which impiety and licence are praised, to those books and newspapers written for the purpose of ridiculing virtue and glorifying infamy, to all those arts which, invented to fill a necessity in life and for the expansion of man's spirit, have been put to the service of the passions so as to seduce souls (*Exeunte Anno*, 25 December 1888).

2. There are three very powerful modern weapons by means of which tares are sown among the wheat, namely, the cinema, literature of all kinds, and radio, together with television.

Speaking of the cinema, Pius XI says that there is nothing in modern life which has such an influence on the masses. This is partly due to the fact that to enjoy it demands so little effort on the part of the spectators, owing to its use of images. For this same reason its influence is greatest on young people. It is a weapon which, rightly used, could be a power for good in the modern world; at the same time it would be difficult to exaggerate the harm done by bad films, both to individuals and to nations (*Vigilanti cura*, 1936).

Speaking to the recently married about books and reading, Pius XII says that there cannot be liberty to read everything or anything just as there is not freedom in matters of food and drink. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon to come across cases of parents who have done all they can to guard their children against bad companions, have given them a careful religious education, and yet are careless in the matter of what their children read. The harm is done before we know anything about it.

Even in the case of adults, bad books can have a very dangerous effect, although it may not show itself at once. At times bad books have a worse effect than bad companions, because they are more insidious and more difficult to guard against. There is no need to stress the immense power of the press, together with the care parents should take to see to it that no newspaper should enter their home which could do harm to their children (*To the recently married*, August 1940).

Speaking to American journalists in 1950 the same Pope says: Truth needs a voice through which it can be heard, and the most powerful voice is still that of the press. Who is ignorant of the fact that a journalist can falsify facts deliberately, or change their true meaning by separating them from their context, thus drowning the truth which should in justice have a hearing? The result is that the masses are deceived, the human tragedy becomes worse, social

strife is incited and may even lead to open war, simply because one unworthy member of your profession, for one reason or another, has been a traitor to his responsibility to the truth (23 January 1950).

Pius XII also had much to say about the power of radio and television. His words have come true in our day. Radio, he said, can do practically anything. It can be compared to fire, which is a heavenly gift indeed in the hands of a man who knows how to use it properly and to dominate it; but it can also be the cause of devastation of plains and cities, if it is allowed to break free from its chains (3 December 1944).

3. The Popes have not been slow to point out that these means of communication should be used to sow the good seed, not for evil purposes. All art should not merely tend to the perfection of man but also, because of this fact, be submitted to the normal rules of morality (Pius XI, *Vigilanti cura*). The Pope gives the example of the cinema, which should not be simply a means for filling in an idle hour or two, but used to form men's minds and direct them towards good. He goes on to point out that it is the strict duty of the bishops of the world to keep a watch on the cinema and forbid bad films. He later extends this duty to all the faithful, especially to parents. Above all, we must take care of our youth, the main point of the attacks of our enemy (*ibid.*).

SECTION VII. HISTORICAL AND LITERARY MISCELLANY

1. *Tares:*

This plant, the scientific name of which is *lolium temulentum*, is very difficult to distinguish from wheat—except in its effects, which are deadly. It is a type of narcotic, which gives a bitter taste to bread which is made from it by mistake for corn. It is curious that it is not mentioned elsewhere in the Gospels, even though it was common in Palestine and there are references to it in classical writers, for example, Virgil in the *Georgics*: *Infelix lolium et steriles dominantur avenae*.

In the East, when a farmer wished to have revenge on another, he would wait until the latter had sown his fields and would then oversow them with tares. This usually implied, not merely loss of the harvest, but also damage to the ground, which remained useless for some years. This evil custom must have been common, since the Romans mentioned it specially in their penal legislation.

2. *The tares of gossip:*

In the first book of *Persiles y Sigismunda*, Cervantes has a passage on the evils of gossip which is both beautiful from the literary point of view and also very true. He says:

The evil tongue is like a two-edged sword, which cuts to the bone; like a lightning flash, which does not touch the scabbard, but which dissolves into pieces the sword beneath it. Even though conversations usually take their flavour from the salt of such gossip, still they leave a nasty taste in the mouth afterwards. The tongue is usually as light as our thoughts; and if the evils to which thoughts give birth are bad enough, far worse are those born of the evil tongue. Words are like stones, flung by hand, which cannot be called back to the hand which launched them forth until they have worked their evil. For this reason remorse for having spoken them is seldom sufficient excuse for the guilt of him who sends them forth. This I say, in spite of the fact that sincere repentance is the best medicine for all ailments of the soul.

3. *St Philip Neri:*

A story is told of him that on hearing the confession of a woman who had let her tongue run away with her, he gave her as a penance the task of taking round the city a basket full of feathers. These she was to distribute throughout the town one by one. Having finished the unpleasant task she returned to Philip and told him that she had done as he had ordered. Now, go and pick them all up again, was the reply. But that is impossible, exclaimed the woman. Now you will realize, said the saint, how impossible it is for you to undo the evil you have done by your careless speech.

4. *St Teresa:*

She tells us, in her *Life*, that she had a revelation from God telling her that she would have been condemned had she not given up her youthful habit of reading certain kinds of romantic novels. She considered this one of the greatest gifts she had received from divine grace.

5. *A doctor's opinion:*

We may say, from the purely medical point of view—especially from the point of view of mental hygiene—that in regard to sexual impulses the cinema can produce grave disturbances which militate against the normal and harmonious development of puberty through the excitement of subconscious and normal instincts (Benigno Zaccagnani, *Il Volto del cinema*, Rome, 1941).

SECTION VIII. SERMON SCHEMES

I. LITURGICAL

Christ, the sower

Liturgy and parables

1. For the first time in the Liturgical Year we have a parable in the Gospel.

2. We have to make these parables live, which means that they must have some relation to our lives as Christians, without prejudice to their literal meaning.

(a) In these parables of the kingdom the literal meaning is that of an external and visible Church, founded by Christ.

(b) But there is also an accommodated sense, which refers to the interior kingdom, that of sanctifying grace, by means of which God reigns effectively in souls. Understood in this way, every parable has an immediate application.

(c) We have to seek for this in relation to the spirit of the liturgy, the sacrifice of the Mass and the sacraments.

Christ, both sower and seed

1. *The texts show us Christ, the sower and the seed:*

Cf. Matt. 13. 24 and John 12. 24.

2. *During the liturgical year Christ is also the sower and the seed:*

(a) *He sows:*

Because he is the centre of the liturgy both in the sacrifice and the sacraments. In both Christ acts, he is the sower.

i. *the sacraments*; it is his humanity united to the Word which acts through them.

ii. *in the Mass it is he who offers the sacrifice*, who reproduces his merits and power on the altar, to continue and reproduce his redemption.

(b) *He is the seed:*

The purpose of the liturgical year is to make Christ grow within us, so that, having been clothed in him, we may grow in virtue, be transformed into him, live his life.

i. *the sacrifice and sacraments are the means* by which he is reproduced in us, by which he communicates himself to us and works in our souls. He is both the sower and the seed; he gives and is given.

ii. *he gives life and he is life itself*. I have come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly (John 10. 10); We who eat

his flesh will live by him (John 6. 57); I am the way, the truth and the life (John 14. 6).

The good grain of Christ

I. *St Ignatius:*

In his letter to the faithful of Rome he insisted that he was nothing but the good grain of Christ and desired nothing but to be milled by the teeth of the beasts. It is also a liturgical expression, which the Church has adopted.

2. *How we become good grain:*

(a) By acquiring the virtues mentioned in today's Epistle: mercy, humility, patience, etc.

(b) By walking according to the Spirit (Gal. 5. 6) in a heavenly and divine manner (Col. 1. 10, Phil. 3. 20).

The enemy sows the tares

1. The Lord, who desires our progress, allows certain faults to creep into our spiritual lives. It is difficult to avoid them, in spite of all our efforts.

2. No one, no matter how holy, can avoid them altogether, but we must make the effort and correct them. Use them to acquire humility and confidence in God.

Our prayer for today

1. *The one the Church places on our lips in the three prayers of the Mass:*

(a) Watch over thy people, Lord, and protect them with thy defence.

(b) Free us from the chains of this body and direct our wavering hearts.

(c) May we receive the salutary fruit of this sacrifice, a pledge of life eternal.

2. *May the wheat grow among us and the tares disappear:*

Not merely by our petition, but also through our efforts. The liturgy, if it is to be lived, must take with it the efforts of our will.

II. THE EPISTLE

Gossip

1. *The sin itself:*

(a) *Its concept:*

There is nothing so opposed to the spirit of today's Epistle than gossip, which consists in doing harm to our neighbour, not in his material goods or in his physical person, but in his good name. The gossip, by means of his crafty conversations, tries, so far as he can,

to create in his hearers a bad opinion of the one against whom he talks, making sure at the same time that his words are believed (St Thomas, 2-2, q. 73, a. 1. c).

(b) *Its malice:*

It is a sin which has a special malice all its own when secret faults are revealed, even though they may be true; also when those who talk limit themselves to a secret rejoicing at the known sins of others.

(c) *Its universality:*

It is a vice so extended among the Christian body that it would be extremely difficult to find anyone not contaminated by it. You will come across people consecrated to the service of God, whose hearts are free from all impurity, from the love of riches, mortified by fastings and the hair-shirt; but it will be difficult for you to find people who do not gossip. It will be difficult to find them, I say, because this is the last snare the devil uses and from which it is hard to escape (St Jerome).

(d) *The harm it does:*

Gossip is the viper's tongue, which with one blow can wound many; the one against whom the conversation is addressed, the hearer and the gossip himself. God loathes this sin (St Bernard).

i. *the one against whom the conversation is directed.* The Sacred Scriptures frequently speak of gossip as a type of murder—which it is.

ii. *sins against our neighbour* are to be judged according to the harm they cause him. . . . Man is possessed of a triple good, namely, that of soul, that of body, and external goods. . . . Among these latter his good name is worth more than riches, because it is something very like spiritual goods; for which reason the Book of Proverbs tells us that a good name is worth more than riches (22. 1). That is why gossip, though a lesser crime than murder or adultery, is still more grave than the sin of theft (St Thomas, *ibid.* a. 2. c).

iii. *it is a grave thing to take away a man's good name*, because the loss of it also prevents him from doing such good as he is capable of (St Thomas, *in loco*).

iv. *a wise man considers no effort too great to restore his good name*, and therefore anyone who deprives him of it does him a greater harm than any thief. Yet we tend to think less of gossip than we do of robbery.

(e) *The hearer of gossip:*

i. *it incites him to sin:* If there were no ready listeners, there would be few gossips! If they became aware of the fact that we fled from their conversation they would soon lose their evil habit of gossip (John Chrysostom).

ii. *it increases our guilt*, more than we would like to think. John Chrysostom says that he who censures his neighbour deprives himself of all right to pardon by God. The Almighty will pronounce sentence on us, not merely according to our crimes, but also according to the measure in which we have judged others. Our sin will then appear in its full light, not merely as it was when we committed it, but also with the added guilt of our rash judgements.

iii. *it prevents our perfection*. Because the first step towards perfection is to refuse to listen to gossip. There is nothing which distracts the soul more easily or which does more harm (St Jerome).

(f) **The gossip himself:**

His sin is very great, for three reasons:

- i. *lack of true charity;*
- ii. *it reveals an evil background to his character;* one which delights in the ruin of a reputation;
- iii. *it is also nearly always a sign of hypocrisy*—a desire to justify one's own faults.

(g) **Mortal or venial sin?**

- i. it can be venial through light matter;
- ii. but often things which gossips think to be light matters are not so at all; it is not enough to excuse these things by saying that it was only a word or two, carried away by the wind, because gossip flies, it is true, but hurts most cruelly; it passes quickly, but it burns fiercely (St Bernard).

2. **The Sacred Scriptures and gossip:**

We have seen some of the texts (Section I). We may cite as example the leprosy which attacked the sister of Moses for the complaints she made against Moses. Even though Moses himself pleaded with the Lord for her, God refused to hear the plea of his faithful servant (Num. 12. 10-15). This should teach us all a great lesson.

3. **The example of the saints:**

There is not one who has not been very careful to suppress this vice and cultivate the contrary virtue of charity in speech.

(a) **St Thomas Aquinas:**

It has been well said of him that his writings generated light, not heat! Not by word, written or spoken, did he speak any evil even of his worst enemies in the controversial field.

(b) **The same is true of St Ignatius:**

He is said never to have mentioned a fault of one of his brethren except to the one who had committed it—so that it might be corrected.

(c) **St Teresa:**

She says of herself that, when her nuns saw her in any group they were quite happy, because they know that, while she was there, no gossip of any kind would take place.

4. **Remedies and counsels against gossip:**

(a) **Do not frequent the company of those who spread gossip:**

In the trenchant phrase of John Chrysostom, Would you not flee from one who was turning over dung?

(b) **Reprove them:**

i. *the words of the psalmist give us the true method of conduct:* Of whispered calumny, death shall be the reward; on scornful looks and proud thoughts I will have no mercy. To plain, honest folk in the land I will look for my company; my servants shall be such as follow the path of innocence. No welcome here for schemers, no standing in my presence for men who talk deceitfully (Ps. 100. 5-7).

ii. *St John Chrysostom says:* Have you anything of praise to say about anyone? Then I will hear you. But if you have nothing but criticism or evil speech, then I will stop up my ears, because they are not accustomed to being filled with filth and mud. Thus speak to the gossip!

III. THE GOSPEL

A: From the boat

This parable is one of the series our Lord preached from the boat.

1. **He explained it himself to his disciples:**

(a) The field is the world; the wheat, the sons of the kingdom; the tares, the sons of the devil; the sower is the Father; the enemy, the devil; the harvest-time, the end of the world. The reapers are the angels.

(b) The wicked shall go into hell, the just shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father.

2. **The field is the world:**

(a) The world . . . and the soul; because the world is not distinct from men who go to make it up.

(b) However, it is not exact to say that God puts good men into the world and the enemy wicked men.

(c) All are created by God and placed in the world by him; his intention is that they should all be good grain. He wishes all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2. 4). They are all destined for his heavenly barns.

- i. God sows heavenly inspirations in the soul of every man, while the devil sows evil inclinations and ideas;
- ii. according as we listen to the voice of God or ignore it, we shall be good grain or tares.

3. *Let no one presume:*

(a) This is the first conclusion—let no one presume to place himself among the elect. No one knows if he is a son of love or of hatred, without a special revelation from God; or if today he is grain or tares, much less what he will be tomorrow.

(b) While this life lasts the grain can become tares and the tares true wheat. The just man can fall (1 Cor. 10. 12); while the sinner can repent.

4. *Should sinners be exterminated?*

(a) The Fathers and doctors of the Church are unanimous in saying no!

(b) The Scriptures tell us that there must be heresies (1 Cor. 11. 19) and scandals (Matt. 18. 7):

- i. *for the punishment, virtue and purification of the just;*
- ii. *as a reward for the just;* because the wicked are instruments of providence;
- iii. *as a stimulus and goad for the zeal of the just.* Would Augustine have written many of his works had it not been for the heretics?
- iv. *as a purification of the Church.* It has been well said that when God wishes to sweep clean his Church he entrusts the task to the devil!
- v. *for the glory of the Church.*

5. *The wheat may be rooted up:*

(a) It is not the task of the servants to reap: That mission is entrusted to God's special agents, who at the last day are the angels, and at the moment, the hierarchy of the Church.

(b) Others may err:

- i. *through error,* taking for evil what is not;
- ii. *through haste;* punishing before it is time; not giving time for repentance. Even though now they are tares, you would have rooted up the grain . . . of the future.
- iii. *by giving scandal,* because we can give it by undue haste in punishing others, showing sternness instead of meekness, lack of patience, tolerance and kindness. You may thus change the grain into tares.

6. *Who are you?*

(a) Are you to judge your brother, when all judgement is in the hands of Christ? (John 5. 22).

(b) The Gospels tell us that Christ condemned on many occasions this fault of hasty judgement:

- i. *on the part of the people,* who were scandalized by the fact that he went into the house of the publican to eat (Luke 19. 7). To Christ he was just another sinner.
- ii. *in the case of Pharisees* who condemned Magdalen, who had been evil up to the moment of her conversion, but was now good grain.
- iii. *the apostles themselves,* who wanted to call down fire upon the city of Samaria for not receiving the Lord (Luke 9. 53-55).

(c) *Are you judge or guilty?*

- i. the passage concerning the woman taken in adultery (John 8. 3-11).
- ii. will you dare to cast the first stone?

(d) *Caution and preservation:*

i. it is one thing to uproot the tares and exterminate sinners and quite another to take due precautions to preserve the flock of Christ, and thus avoid the harm that the former can easily do to the Church.

ii. evil company has to be avoided; if there is open scandal, then it must be punished. He who publicly breaks the moral law has already condemned himself, as St Augustine says.

iii. but even in these cases, to give a definitive judgement against the individual is still to uproot the tares! It would be a premature judgement, and one which is not in our power to make as individuals, but in the hands of the Church (cf. 1 Cor. 4. 5).

7. *General conclusion:*

(a) We should all do our best to be good grain, even though we do not know our state of soul without a special revelation from God.

(b) We should avoid unnecessary contact with people of evil life and above all we should do our best to safeguard the weak and the simple.

(c) All scandal is to be condemned.

(d) But we should avoid any definitive judgement about it, cultivate the mercy of Christ himself, by which he judged sinners. We should attempt to win them over to Christ and so convert the tares into grain.

B: *The root of the tares*

1. *Passions out of control—the cause of discord:*

(a) *The interior sowing:*

- i. the enemy sows the tares in the interior of hearts;
- ii. it is from the heart that the weed grows (Matt. 15. 19);
- iii. and this produces external strife.

(b) The carnal man:

- i. St James confirms this in several passages of his epistle (cf. 4. 1).
- ii. St Paul also (1 Cor. 3. 3).

(c) Flesh and spirit:

i. *men of discord and men of peace*. According as we obey the dictates of the flesh or those of the spirit we shall be men of the flesh or spirit.

ii. *the principal text* in this matter is that of Gal. 5. 17 ff.

(d) The terminology of St Paul:

i. *flesh and spirit*. We must keep in mind that here the word *flesh* is not the same as impurity—it implies any movement of fallen nature as against redeemed nature. It is the old Adam, which has not been renewed in Christ, with all its vices and tendencies.

ii. *there is also the spirit of Cain* in all those who live by this spirit of the old Adam; they are tares, an element of discord.

iii. *the word 'spirit' in Pauline literature has a double meaning*; either it is the Spirit of God, or it means the soul in so far as it is given new life and is obedient to the spirit of God (Rom. 8. 14).

iv. *the sons of God*, led by God's spirit, are the elements of union and peace. These are the true grain in the harvest of the Almighty.

2. *The two kinds of wisdom:*

The Epistle of James deals with these two clearly:

(a) There are two kinds of wisdom:

i. *one which is of this earth*, something animal and from the devil; a fruit of those passions which fight in us (James 3. 15).

ii. *there is another which is from above*, pure, modest, indulgent and full of mercy (*ibid.* 3. 17). It is born of the Spirit which dwells in us (*ibid.* 4. 5).

(b) The reason for this division:

i. *the movement of the spirit is towards God*. It comes out from him and returns to him and for this reason it has a uniting effect.

ii. *that of the flesh is an inward tendency*; it begins with man and ends with him. Each one wishes to be the be-all and end-all of his own life. Each one wishes to be the centre of attraction for others, the recipient of their adulation. On the other hand, the Spirit desires everything for God.

iii. *the flesh uses creatures for its own ends*, not as means to attain God or as things to be offered to God through sacrifice.

iv. *from this are born wars and disputes among men*, because there are not enough creatures to satisfy man's avarice.

v. *This war between spirit and flesh* is well described in the *Imitation of Christ*, in the chapter dedicated to the movements of nature and those of grace (cf. 1. 3. ch. 54).

(c) *Vainglory and pride*, the passions which most easily give rise to discords.

(d) Different opinions and concord:

i. differences of opinion need not necessarily lead to discords. It is possible for differences of opinion to co-exist with perfect charity.

ii. however, the ancient writers thought that intellectual consent and agreement were essential elements in friendship. Thus Cicero says, in *De Amicitia*: Friendship implies agreement in all things, divine and human, with benevolence and charity. I know of nothing, save it be wisdom itself, which is a greater gift of the immortal gods.

iii. that is why such intellectual disagreement is frowned on by the Scriptures where we are told not to enter into disputes about opinions (cf. Rom. 12. 6; 14. 1).

3. *According to the direction of our love so we shall be elements of discord or of harmony:*

Two loves founded two cities:

Self-love is responsible for the city of the world and the love of God for the city of God.

i. *self-love* is the origin of all discord and division;

ii. *the love of God* implies charity towards our brethren, and thus unites;

iii. *charity* is the bond of perfection, in the triple sense in which it puts into order all men's appetites. It puts order into a man interiorly; it unites a man with his fellows. It unites all to God.

C: Watchfulness

1. *While they slept . . .*

(a) For lack of watchfulness:

i. the enemy sowed the tares while men were sleeping;

ii. many souls have discovered that the good grain has become tares within them and they have fallen into grave sin. They have lost their fervour and have fallen into tepidity.

(b) Watch, so that you do not fall into temptation:

i. there are some who only appear to believe in virtue when it takes an active and exterior form; thus they destroy the soul's defences.

ii. the flesh is weak (Matt. 26. 41).

2. *The enemy lies in wait for souls:*

(a) The devils:

Evil does not come from God, who made all things perfect; it had its beginnings in the devils, who sowed the seeds of it in the garden of Eden and continue to sow them in individual souls. St Bernard

says that the one desire of the spiritual hosts raised up against us is to lead us into their paths, so that we may follow them and they can induce us to seek the same disastrous end which is their lot.

(b) **Three enemies:**

The devil makes use of two allies—the world and the flesh. These are the three enemies which lie in wait for the soul, seeking the moment to sow tares in it.

(c) **Watchfulness:**

- i. *God keeps watch over us.* He has set his angels over us to guard all our paths (Ps. 90. 11).
- ii. *for this reason we should be most careful to guard ourselves too,* since there would not be such a strict watch kept over us on earth and from heaven were the danger not very great.
- iii. *vigilance is part of prudence* (St Thomas, 2-2. q. 47. a. 9).
- iv. *St Augustine says:* Prudence does not hide herself, instead she watches with great diligence, so afraid is she of being surprised by the secret snares of the wicked.
- v. *our Lord warns us to be watchful* (Matt. 26. 41) and St Peter repeats this warning (1 Pet. 5. 8-9).

The castle of the soul

1. We have to protect it by our guards:

(a) **St Teresa:**

She compares the soul to a castle of which we are the guardians.

(b) **St Thérèse used to say to her novices:**

I read some time ago that the people of Israel built Jerusalem labouring with one hand while in the other they held a sword. That is the image of what we have to do; work with one hand only, while we use the other to protect our soul from those dangers which could prevent its union with God.

2. **A double vigilance:**

(a) **Interior:**

So as to know ourselves. Even the pagans had this idea and held such self-knowledge in very high esteem. Juvenal says that the precept, Know thyself, has come down to us from on high; it is necessary to keep it in mind and meditate on it in our hearts:

- i. to know our inclinations and temperament;
- ii. to know our dominant fault; that source from which sin flows as from a constant stream, without our even being too worried about it; that which is so adjusted to our character by this time that it even seems an essential part of us; that which we seek to hide from those around us; that which leads us little by little into a state of dislike of heavenly things. This is the enemy (Monsabré).

(b) **Exterior:**

So as to recognize an occasion of sin when it presents itself to us or other dangers from the world. What is it that can lead you into sin? Is it books, pleasures, company you keep, the cinema? Is it a man or woman, your work, your surroundings? Where is the danger and the occasion?

2. **Exhortation to watchfulness:**

We should be most on our guard at the moment when temptation first presents itself, because it is then that it is most easily defeated, when we do not allow our enemy to cross the threshold of our house, but resist him at its very gates. Try always to attack evil at the very beginning, because once it has sent out its roots it is more difficult to cure (Ovid).

D: Why we should be on the watch

Blessed is he that keeps watch (Apoc. 16. 15)

We should be on our guard at all times:

1. **Because the enemy knows how to appear under the guise of an angel of light:**

(a) Be sober, and watch well; the devil, who is your enemy, goes about roaring like a lion to find his prey, but you, grounded in the faith, must face him boldly . . . (1 Pet. 5. 7-9).

(b) And no wonder; Satan himself can pass for an angel of light, and his servants have no difficulty in passing for servants of holiness; but their end will be what their life has deserved . . . (2 Cor. 11. 14-15)

(c) I know well that ravening wolves will come among you when I am gone, and will not spare the flock; there will be men among your own number who will come forward with a false message, and find disciples to follow them. Be on the watch, then; do not forget the three years I spent, instructing every one of you continually, and with tears . . . (Acts 20. 29-31).

2. **Because the day of death will come:**

It will come together with the judgement, before we expect it, like a thief in the night (Matt. 24. 42-44).

3. **Because we carry round with us a treasure in earthen vessels:**

(a) The grace of God, shut up inside our nature which is weak through the effects of the fall, demands great strength in us.

(b) For that reason we have quoted St Paul: we carry this treasure in earthen vessels . . . (2 Cor. 4. 7-10).

4. **Because the victory is promised to those who keep watch:**

(a) The foolish virgins, who did not keep watch with their lamps bright in their hands, will not enter into the supper of the bridegroom (Matt. 25. 1-13).

(b) Do not consider it useless to rise early in the morning, because the Lord has promised the crown of victory to those who keep watch (Office for Lent).

5. *This is the command of Christ:*

Watch and pray, he said to his apostles in the Garden.

6. *Because we are all exposed to temptation and to falls:*

He who thinks himself to stand, let him take heed, lest he fall (1 Cor. 10. 12).

(a) He who is innocent, because he is the special prey of the devil. The ship loaded down with gold is the object of special attacks by pirates.

(b) The repentant sinner, because the state of one who falls again into sin after sincere repentance is very dangerous (Luke 11. 24-26).

7. *Because it is better to prevent illness than to cure it:*

(a) *Supernaturally:*

He who is in a state of grace has strength and helps to prevent his fall; while he who is in sin is incapable of meriting the grace of pardon.

(b) *Naturally:*

He who has not fallen keeps his strength intact to avoid a fall; while a fall wounds a man and weakens him for the future.

(c) *Let us make our own the call of the Apostle:*

Now is the time for us to rise from sleep (Rom. 13. 11).

E: The tares of concupiscence

1. *The tares of original sin:*

(a) God has sown the good seed of grace and his gifts which together made up the state of justice in Adam.

(b) The enemy—Adam and the devil—sows the tares among the wheat, the tares of sin, which God in his mercy allows us to root up in this life by grace.

(c) But there were other weeds, not tares, which God has allowed to grow together with the grain until the harvest. We are talking about concupiscence.

(d) We all carry this seed within us, which can incline us to evil, but which can also be at the service of good.

2. *The theological concept of concupiscence:*

(a) *What it is:*

A natural inclination of the human creature's appetites towards material goods. It is designed for the protection of the individual and as such it is good in itself and, from the moral point of view, indifferent.

(b) *What it is not:*

- i. *it is not evil in itself*, nor an effect of the devil's activity;
- ii. *it is not original sin*, since that is destroyed by baptism, while concupiscence remains.

3. *A natural inclination of man:*

(a) Appetite follows on knowledge; and in the case of man, the senses come into play before reason. Therefore it is natural that the sensitive appetite should have an inclination towards sensible things before the reason can decide if they are licit or not. What is more, since it is strongly impressed by this attraction towards things of sense, it can also continue to act against reason even after the latter has dictated its judgement.

(b) That is why God had to give Adam a preternatural gift in order to put this appetite in chains.

4. *Not a sin in itself:*

Without being a sin in itself, it is often given the name because it comes from sin, and also because it inclines us to sin (James 1. 14-15).

5. *The works of concupiscence when the will is weak:*

Some of these, not all, are mentioned in the long list given by St Paul (Gal. 5. 19-21).

6. *Why does this weed of concupiscence remain in us?*

(a) *For our humiliation and to make us keep watch:*

The sting of concupiscence makes us realize that we carry within us an incentive to sin, something which is always with us and which requires that we ask for help from God.

(b) *For our exercise in virtue; for our merit and our crown* (2 Tim. 2. 5).

(c) *So that the power of the grace of Christ may shine more strongly within us:*

i. My grace is enough for thee; my strength finds its full scope in thy weakness. More than ever, then, I delight to boast of the weaknesses that humiliate me, so that the strength of Christ may enshrine itself in me (2 Cor. 12. 9).

ii. Pitiably creature that I am, who is to set me free from a nature thus doomed to death? Nothing else than the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord (Rom. 7. 24-25).

iii. If, through the dispositions of Providence, the tares are still within us, we must make the effort, confident in our triumph, so that they may not grow up to choke the grain. The passions, once they are at the service of grace, will lead us to a higher place in heaven.

F: Remedies against concupiscence**1. The fight against concupiscence:**

(a) God has decided to leave in us the tares of concupiscence so that we may fight against it.

(b) You must not, then, allow sin to tyrannize over your perishable bodies, to make you subject to its appetites. You must not make your bodily powers over to sin, to be the instruments of harm; make yourselves over to God, as men who have been dead and come to life again; make your bodily powers over to God, to be the instruments of right-doing (Rom. 6. 12-13).

(c) The Christian vocation does not consist in working miracles, predicting the future, speaking with eloquence or knowing the Scriptures to the full. It consists in fighting against and repressing concupiscence (St Lawrence Justinian).

(d) The means to overcome it.

2. The fear of God:

Proverbs 3. 7-8.

3. Obedience to the law of the spirit, and not to that of the flesh:

(a) Let me say this; learn to live and move in the spirit; then there is no danger of your giving way to the impulses of corrupt nature. The impulses of nature and the impulses of the spirit are at war with one another; either is clean contrary to the other, and that is why you cannot do all that your will approves. . . . Those who belong to Christ have crucified nature with all its passions, all its impulses (Gal. 5. 16-24).

(b) We must know from the very beginning that, within ourselves, there is a difficult fight, and for that reason we must deny obedience to the urges of the flesh, which can only separate us from God.

(c) We must see, by the fruits we produce, whether that which prevails in us is of the flesh or of the spirit; grace or concupiscence.

4. Put down the occasions of sin:**(a) St Peter:**

Through him [Christ] God has bestowed on us high and treasured promises; you are to share the divine nature, with the world's corruption, the world's passions, left behind (2 Pet. 1. 4).

(b) St John:

Do not bestow your love on the world, and what the world has to offer; the lover of this world has no love of the Father in him (1 John 2. 15).

5. Prayer:

(a) Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing enough but the flesh is weak (Matt. 26. 41).

(b) Christ has overcome all man's enemies by his redemption and is only waiting for our humble prayer to come to our aid in the fight.

6. Mortification:

(a) Those who belong to Christ have crucified nature, with all its passions, all its impulses (Gal. 5. 24).

(b) To crucify nature means to bind, strangle and drown all those impure desires and tendencies which we find in it (M. Olier).

(c) Mortification of the external senses, which put us into contact with the exterior world and arouse in us dangerous desires.

7. Confidence in our final victory:

(a) This confidence weakens the power of the devil, through the help of grace.

(b) Christ is more willing to help us when we put all our confidence in him.

i. . . . nothing is beyond my powers, thanks to the strength God gives me (Phil. 4. 13).

ii. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? . . . Of this I am fully persuaded; neither death nor life, no angels or principalities or powers, neither what is present nor what is to come, no force whatever, neither the height above us nor the depth beneath us, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which comes to us in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8. 35-39).

G: Tares in the education of our children**1. Accommodated sense of the parable:**

The duties of parents in the matter of the education of their children.

(a) The kingdom of heaven is the soul of the children.

(b) Those who sow in it are the parents; God, the Church—who use the parents as instruments.

(c) The good seed—everything which contributes to make the child a son of God.

(d) The tares; anything that may separate him from the divine model.

2. The parents as sowers of the seed:

(a) When they teach their children to pray;

(b) when they train their wills in the fulfilment of their duties;

(c) when they send them to a good Catholic school;

(d) when they lead them to the sources of grace.

3. The tares in education:

(a) Dangers and occasions of sin, bad example;

(b) bad books, cinema and television, bad company;

(c) at times it is the parents themselves who are responsible, quarrels, bad example, not living up to their religion, etc.

4. Watchfulness:

(a) First impressions of children:

i. *the importance of first impressions in childhood* is recognized nowadays by all psychologists. The intellect and will of the child are formed more by these than by any other factor; they are easily retained and profoundly engraven on the memory. They can be an important factor in later life.

ii. *St Jerome and St Augustine*, once they were converted to God, had to fight hard against the impressions left over from their childhood.

iii. *St Paul provides us with an outstanding example*. As Saul, he hated the infant Church as a result of his early error and education. This he had received from his parents and from his teacher, Gamaliel.

(b) Need for vigilance on the part of parents:

i. Pius XII warned parents that they should be fully aware of their duties and obligations in this matter. He pointed out that a simple glance around us at the world of today shows the deplorable spectacle of so many children who are on the way to being ruined by faulty education; either they are allowed to do as they like, read what they choose; or they are spoilt and trained to an inordinate love for riches and the pleasures of this world. Their duty to pray is neglected, and so, too, is training in moral virtues, obedience, justice and charity towards others (*To the recently married*, 24 January 1940).

ii. The Pope warned parents to be on their guard against evil companions, lack of discipline in their training of their children, too much concern for the things of this world and not enough for the things of heaven.

(c) Above all, we must be careful what we allow our children to read:

In this it is better to be positive than negative, i.e., provide them with good, interesting literature, for then they will develop a taste for such.

i. on the negative side, never have any literature or newspapers in the home which you would not like to fall into the hands of your children.

ii. be careful about their visits to the cinema, dances, etc. The damage can be done very easily.

iii. in general, the modern tendencies of our life do create a personality which is lazy, from the literary point of view. Television, cinema, comic strips, etc., tend to produce a mind which

is fed solely on images, not on words or ideas. This can be a bad thing, even from the human point of view.

H: Indiscreet zeal

1. An example of it:

(a) The servants who wished to root out the tares before the time of the harvest. The plant was an enemy; they acted from love for their master.

(b) A burning desire to work for the glory of God can give rise to indiscreet zeal, either in works of the active apostolate or also when it is a desire to wipe all evil from the face of the earth.

(c) Zeal must always be modified by prudence.

2. What men want:

Immediate punishment of sinners.

(a) Thus James and John, according to St Luke, wanted to ask fire from heaven on the Samaritan town that refused to receive our Lord.

(b) The ordinary people in time of persecution: God should prevent such great evils and punish the persecutors.

3. What God does:

(a) The Book of Jonas gives us a good example of the actions of God and man:

When the prophet saw that the repentance of the inhabitants of Nineveh had freed them from God's wrath he dared to be annoyed with God. To convince him of his error God gives him the favour of the shade of a tree which dies shortly afterwards, leaving him in the blazing sun. Then he tells Jonas that it is unreasonable of him to be annoyed with a tree, which he did not create in any case; but that he, God, would have pity on this city and all the people within it (John 4. 5-11).

(b) The Lord, Saviour and Judge:

i. he delights in the former title and only makes use of his powers under the second when men refuse to repent.

ii. he weeps over Jerusalem, for the punishment which will come upon the city only after it has refused the repeated offer of him who would have gathered its inhabitants under his care as the hen does with her chicks.

iii. he does not wish to extinguish the smoking flax nor break the bruised reed; nor that the fig tree should be cut down while it may still give fruit if it is properly cared for (Luke 13. 8).

(c) What would have happened were it not so?

The good thief might have been condemned for his first blasphemy; Magdalen, removed from this life because of her early life; the

apostles, rejected for their hardness of heart and their love for earthly things; St Paul, condemned for his persecution of the Christians.

4. *The conduct of the good Christian:*

(a) Leave revenge to God and work with him at the task of saving souls. To the zeal for God's glory he should unite the zeal for souls.

(b) Not to judge anyone, but merely persevere in the apostolate.

(c) If he be a priest, reprove vice when necessary, but always with extreme charity and without looking for immediate results.

(d) Learn to judge the poor with extreme benevolence and remember that we must not look for heights of virtue where the circumstances of life do not permit it.

I: Heresy and schism

1. *Pride:*

(a) *St Paul:*

He mentions this when he is speaking of sins against faith (1 Tim. 1. 6-7).

(b) *St Augustine:*

He confirms it when he says: We can find many different heresies in many places, but they have only one mother—pride.

(c) *Reason confirms this also:*

i. the proud man wants to understand everything about matters which are above his natural powers of reason; he also longs to discover novelties, with which he seeks to destroy the revealed truths and put new ones in their place.

ii. the desire to achieve fame among other men leads him to break the bonds of revealed truth.

iii. this same pride leads him to rebel against the divine authority of the teaching Church.

2. *Daring and contumacy:*

(a) St Peter has already described them (cf. 2 Pet. 2. 10).

(b) Their boldness makes them speak out without consideration, a rashness which is the fruit of ignorance (not knowledge, as so many would think); at the same time they refuse to receive correction or listen to sound arguments against their teaching.

(c) Driven underground, they appeal from Bishop to Pope, from Pope to Councils, until at last they are driven back on themselves and remain obstinate in their disobedience. This has been the history of every heresy within the Church.

3. *A spirit of vain curiosity and a search for novelties:*

(a) How well Pius XII described this as the origin of so many false opinions in the Church! (*Humani Generis*). It can do more harm than anything else, and is more difficult to root out.

(b) But before Pius XII it has already been described in Sacred Scripture (cf. Isaias 30. 9-11).

(c) The longing for novelty—how easily it can deceive the faithful and even priests! It can lead them to admit any new theory which seems to give greater freedom to human reason, to the will; one which does not attack the apparently good desires of human nature.

(d) It is so easy to make out a case for greater freedom of thought, for the introduction of novelties in liturgy, theology, social science: while on the other hand, it is easy to refuse to listen to the arguments on the other side. Tares can easily be sown among the wheat, difficult to distinguish from the good grain, but capable of doing much harm until the time of the harvest.

4. *From the moral angle:*

It is obvious that relaxation in morals, destruction of moral values, etc., lead naturally to heresy and are its principal source.

(a) St Peter warned the faithful of this, and his warning is as valid today as it was when he gave it (cf. 2 Pet. 2. 13-19).

(b) God's punishment is to give them up to the impure desires of their hearts and allow them to fall into heresy (cf. Rom. 1. 22-25).

(c) *Reason teaches us that this is a natural consequence of error in faith:*

i. it is so easy to pull the wool over our eyes and ignore the divine warnings about such things as hell, the evil of sin, the last judgement, salvation, etc.

ii. left to itself, evil from the moral point of view must justify itself from the point of view of the intellect. Man is still a rational animal!

5. *Remedies:*

(a) Humility, especially in theologians—the only remedy against pride.

(b) Prudence, and always submission to the judgements of the Church.

(c) Against natural curiosity and a love of novelty, a sincere study of the doctrine which the Church herself puts before us.

(d) Learn to judge things by the criterion of the mind of the Church.

J: Why does God permit heresy and schism?

1. *Why?*

(a) There have always been heresies and schisms in the Church; and at the same time we know that nothing happens without the permission, at least, of divine providence.

(b) But why does God permit something which is the worst of all evils?

2. *To prove the virtue of true Christians* (1 Cor. 11. 19):
Not all those within the Church are true believers; there are those who accept some of the dogmas of the faith while they reject others; some believe in times of prosperity, but fall away in time of adversity; some pretend to believe for other motives rather than that of faith. . . .

3. *For the purification of the Church:*

(a) Of Christians who are not consistent in their faith; they are so given over to pleasures that they long to hear someone teaching that there is no need for mortification, that hell does not exist, that there is no point in going to confession, that all religions are equal in God's sight, that religion is an interior thing, etc.

(b) From scandals from without—how easily these can do much harm by false teachings, seducing those who live in the true faith!

4. *For the progress of dogma within the Church:*

This is one of the greatest benefits the Church has received from heresy.

(a) Faced with Arianism, she studied more closely the dogma of the Trinity;

(b) against the Novatians, the doctrine of the sacrament of penance;

(c) against Luther, the dogma of justification.

5. *To purify the lives of the just:*

(a) The branch that yields no fruit in me, he cuts away; the branch that does yield fruit, he trims clean, so that it may yield more fruit (John 15. 2).

(b) Heresy provides occasion for the greater fruitfulness of the just:

i. *councils*. Heresy provides occasion for them, and they do not merely study theoretical questions, but also disciplinary measures to renew the daily life of the Church;

ii. *vigilance*. The danger of heresy increases the watchfulness and zeal of the just, in defence of the truth, which they see to be threatened.

iii. *increase in the life of virtue of the just*, since they react against the attacks made on them by error, especially when it casts in their faces the faults it observes in their actions.

iv. *the force of example*; the mutual help given in time of error and persecution; the warning of falls, even in those whom they did not expect to fail.

6. *For the punishment of the wicked:*

(a) God commands that the barren fig tree should be cut down (Luke 13. 6-9).

(b) In the Apocalypse we are told that he will take the light of faith from him who does not practise charity (Apoc. 2. 4-5).

K: The providence of God permits evil

The meaning of the parable

1. *The kingdom of God:*

(a) *According to the prophets:*

In the Old Testament they spoke of a perfect kingdom which God would establish and from which all the wicked would be excluded (cf. Esd. 6. 17-18). John the Baptist also preached this idea (Matt. 3. 10-12).

(b) The Jews thought that this would be effected by the coming of the Messias, who would found the true kingdom.

(c) The disciples of Christ had the same idea.

(d) The teaching of Christ puts before us the true idea in this parable;

i. *good and evil together*;

ii. *two stages in the kingdom of God*, one on this earth and the other in heaven. The full perfection of the kingdom will be effected in heaven. To this the old prophets refer, and also John the Baptist. On the other hand, the earthly stage of that kingdom implies that good and bad should exist together.

2. *Three fundamental truths:*

(a) The origin of evil is not in God, the sower of the good seed, but in the enemy. Through the latter sin, death, pain and sickness entered into the world. This is the origin of moral and physical evil and also of sinners.

(b) In the next life good and evil will be separated.

(c) The mixture of good and evil in this world;

i. let them live together until the time of the harvest; the Father makes his sun shine on good and wicked alike . . . (Matt. 5. 45).

ii. it is a great mistake to think that the Church consists only of the good and the perfect—in fact, it is heresy! Today's parable proves our point.

The problem of the good and evil

1. *Why does God permit sinners to exist?*

Why does he not wipe them out? Why, at times, does he seem to favour and help them?

2. *Four reasons, according to St Thomas:*

(a) The wicked oblige the good to practise virtues which, otherwise, they might neglect. Humility, patience, charity; many prayers

and sacrifices are occasioned by the wicked. Remove sinners, says Augustine, and you also remove the martyrs.

(b) He who is today among the wicked may easily be among the good tomorrow; as in the case of St Paul.

(c) Many appear to be evil and are not. No one can know the inner secrets of the heart except God. Simon, the Pharisee, took Magdalen for a sinner, and yet in the eyes of Christ, Simon was worse than she.

(d) There are times when God preserves the lives of the wicked simply because many good people might perish together with them, if they were removed.

3. *The very wisdom and mercy of God:*

Thus he gives sinners time to repent—and a proof of his love.

The Christian and sinners

1. *The severity of the spirit of this world:*

The world judges harshly and does not know how to have true compassion for sinners.

(a) The case of the disciples (Luke 9. 54). You know not of what spirit you are, Christ told them.

(b) Simon's judgement of Magdalen;

(c) the Pharisees who were scandalized because Christ enjoyed the company of sinners (Matt. 11. 19);

(d) the servants in this parable, who wished to uproot the tares.

2. *Christian mercy.*

3. *A word to sinners; of encouragement and consolation:*

(a) The providence of God keeps them in life and his mercy calls them all the time. The terrible hour of the harvest awaits them and the day of judgement.

(b) Meanwhile, there is time. . . . Let them go to the throne of mercy, where Christ himself will take away the tares from their heart and leave the good grain.

(c) What a great gift of God is this one of time . . . time to repent!

IV. SOCIAL APPLICATIONS

A: Civil tolerance

1. *The State and religion:*

(This is a very delicate subject, and we can expect some advice with regard to it from the debates of the Second Vatican Council; but until then we can advance some general principles.—Tr.)

(a) An inevitable problem and one which it is not easy to solve, at least in practice. In theory, it is a simple matter to lay down principles; in actual practice the application of them is a delicate and a grave matter.

(b) It is important to notice that there can easily be a distinction between the attitudes adopted by the State and Christ according as the State is a Catholic one or not.

2. *A Christian State:*

From the ideal and doctrinal point of view it is easy to set out the principles which should govern the attitude of a Christian State towards religion:

(a) The State as such should pay honour and religious observance to God, because the State represents a people, a society which has a religion, accepted by it, together with its consequences. Society as a whole has an obligation to worship God which is no less pressing than that of the individual member of society.

(b) The end of society is temporal common good, which is subordinated to the eternal good of the members of society. Therefore the Christian State should be so organized that it promotes the religious good of the community, no less than the temporal good. At least, it should not put obstacles in the way, but favour it indirectly.

(c) The State should recognize, respect and protect the religious society founded to promote that religious good—in the case of a Catholic State, this is the Catholic Church.

3. *Hypothesis:*

(a) In actual fact it is difficult to find any State in which the previous principles can be applied universally, because the State is usually made up of individuals who belong to different religious bodies.

(b) *Three fundamental rules:*

i. *truth and error must not be placed on the same level*, not merely in theory (which would be heresy) but also in practice. Truth has rights which are founded on the eternal law of God and on his very nature, which is truth itself. Error has no rights—but it can be permitted when the common good demands it.

ii. *therefore we must not condemn the action of a State which tolerates various religions within itself*, for the common good and to avoid greater evils. Instead we should praise such an action, because it is the right attitude for the State to take, since it is not the ultimate judge of religious matters, but merely of the civil consequences which follow from religion.

iii. *we must be careful to avoid, by all means in our power, any obligation to embrace the Catholic faith against the will of the individual*, because man cannot believe, as Augustine so wisely says, unless it be freely and voluntarily.

4. *Who is the judge?*

(a) In the matter of the common good, the State, represented by its highest authority.

(b) Individuals must be careful to observe the law of the State in these matters.

5. *Circumstances to be taken into consideration:*

(a) The numbers of those who, within the State, adhere to different religious bodies. This can have its importance.

(b) *Other factors:*

Psychology, habits and customs, character, temperament, religious and political tradition. It can happen that one particular religious denomination can be opposed to the whole vocation of a nation in such a way that toleration of it would do more harm than good. This may not be a decisive factor in the State's decision, but it has its influence.

6. *Cult and propaganda:*

(a) These are two very different things—it is one thing to tolerate a religious cult and quite another to permit its propaganda, which can be harmful to the majority of the citizens of a State, especially when they are not very well educated in such matters.

(b) In this matter the letter written by Pius XI to Cardinal Gasparri on the occasion of the Lateran Treaty should be carefully studied (30 May 1929).

7. *Two new aspects of this question:*

(a) Religious activities which are anything but religious. . . . There have been many cases of supposed religious activities which are nothing more than disguised political revolt against the organized State and its official religion. We have also seen cases of the opposite—when the State has opposed religion on the grounds of the common good, against the will of the majority of its people, such as the recent religious moves in the Sudan. Both should be condemned, and not supported by international organizations.

(b) There is also an international aspect to this problem, which means that each State, in trying to reach a solution to the problem, must also take into consideration the laws and criteria of other States.

(c) Above all, we must make it clear that political religious tolerance is not, by any means, a sign of religious indifference—or at least it should not be a sign of it. In some cases tolerance can be a sign of weakness and lack of conviction, or even of a false concept of religious truth. There are times when religious intolerance really signifies true authority, interior conviction and moral education of the masses; while religious tolerance can mean complete indifference.

8. *Tolerance and mercy:*

(a) *The example of the Church:*

Those who are in charge of consciences in this matter should think well about the attitude of the Catholic Church, both in her teaching

and her practice. She will not give way at all in matters of doctrine (because she dare not, owing to her mission), but she will be extremely careful not to offend others and to deal with them in all charity.

(b) *For this reason she is both intransigent and merciful:*

She knows that, in other matters such as social reforms, political systems, etc., there may be room for opinions; but in religious matters, it is God who has spoken and it is the divine revelation of God which has the last word. She both teaches the truth and defends it tooth and nail. But she also teaches men that they must be merciful, as their heavenly Father is merciful.

(c) *She knows that there is a danger that certain individuals may be over-zealous:*

By this pretended zeal they may do harm to the truth which they try to defend. There can easily be a lack of prudence in this, and also a lack of mercy.

(d) Therefore the rule should be that citizens obey the laws of the State in this matter, and that Catholics should obey the laws of the Church.

B: Tolerance in our relations with individuals

1. *The spirit of the Church:*

It is important that the faithful should be full of this spirit in their dealings with those who may have fallen into error or sin.

2. *The authority of the Church:*

The Scripture texts can be found principally in Matt. 18. 15-18 and 1 Cor. 5. 4-5.

3. *The norms given by the Council of Trent:*

These would be difficult to better, if they were only put into practice.

(a) Bishops are told that they must remember that they are first of all pastors and not persecutors; they should conduct themselves in such a way towards their inferiors that their authority should not be a domination.

(b) Rather their inferiors should be given the impression of the love of a father for his children, and that all reproof or exhortation is meant for only one purpose, that of calling them back to the right road, so that there may be no need to impose on them even graver sanctions.

(c) If, in spite of this, they persist in their evil ways, through frailty, then the bishop will have to follow the counsel of the Apostle and reprove them, admonish and correct them—but always with charity and patience. Signs of affection are always more effective for the correction of a sinner than rigour; exhortation is more effective than threats; charity better than the use of force.

(d) If the fault is grave and there is need to apply the whip, then they will temper their austerity with sweetness, their justice with mercy, severity with kindness.

(e) A watchful and kind shepherd should apply these remedies to cure the ills of his flock: first, kind methods; later, if the evil continues and is sufficiently grave to demand it, stronger and more violent methods; lastly, once these have failed, he should prevent the evil sheep from contaminating the whole flock by separating him from it for a time.

4. Application to pagans:

(a) The Church has no direct power over them and therefore has never used any force to make them enter the Church.

(b) This is the constant teaching of theologians and Councils.

5. What is lawful and what is not:

(a) It would be an evil act to attempt to bring pagans into the Church by force.

(b) However, the Church can use the civil arm to prevent them from doing harm to her own faithful or from impeding the preaching of the Gospel.

C: Truth, liberty and toleration

A necessary distinction

1. The Church as teacher and judge:

(a) The Church is represented in the parable by the master, rather than by the servants; as such, she can distinguish between the tares and the wheat.

(b) As judge she has the right to condemn and punish, when necessary with excommunication from the flock.

(c) In matters affecting toleration we must distinguish between doctrines and persons.

2. Doctrinal intolerance:

(a) Liberty is the faculty of choosing means to a determined end in conformity with reason.

(b) Man has the power of choosing something which is evil, but this, although a proof of freedom, is not a good thing, but rather a defect in man's freedom.

(c) Leo XIII quotes two remarks of St Augustine:

i. if the power to fall away from good were of the nature of liberty and part of its perfection, then God, Christ, the angels and the blessed would either not be free at all, or their freedom would be less perfect than that of men on this earth.

ii. the first freedom we were given granted us the power not to sin; the second, that of heaven, will give us that of not being able to sin.

3. The slavery of sin:

(a) He who commits sin is a slave to sin (John 8. 34).

(b) He who sins is moved by agents alien to his nature, and this is not reasonable (St Thomas).

(c) Even the ancient philosophies recognized this fact, saying that only the wise man is really free, that is, the man who lives in honesty and virtue.

4. Law and liberty:

To safeguard our paths God has made the law our first helper in matters of freedom.

(a) This teaching is the foundation of good citizenship; a spirit of submission, discipline and order.

(b) God has given us the natural law, which is a reflection in rational creatures of the eternal law.

(c) On this basis men make human laws. But the Church insists that this human law must be derived from and in accordance with the natural and eternal law.

Destruction of these rules by modern liberalism

1. Its grades:

(a) Radical liberalism:

i. denies the divine law and makes reason the only source and judge of truth;

ii. creates an independent morality.

(b) Mitigated form:

i. is not openly atheistic, like the former, although it comes to the same thing in fact.

ii. it does not admit any other God except one known to the natural law.

(c) A more moderate form:

Admits divine laws in the lives and customs of individuals, but not in public life—which implies the separation of Church and State.

2. Freedoms which cannot be admitted:

In theory we cannot admit the liberties claimed by liberalism in all its forms, for example, freedom of speech, writing, cult, conscience and teaching, etc.

3. Toleration of liberalism:

(a) On many occasions the Church tolerates these freedoms.

(b) Leo XIII says (*Libertas*) that the Church takes into consideration the great weight of human weakness and is fully aware of the course of events in our day; for which reasons, without granting the least right to anything which is not true and honest . . . she tolerates some things which are alien to truth and justice.

4. *The theological reason for this:*

- (a) To obtain greater good and avoid greater evils (2-2. q. 10. a. 11).
- (b) St Augustine says the same thing in other words: To free the world from prostitutes and human passions would produce even greater scandals and social unrest (PL. 22, 1000).

5. *Application of the parable:*

This theological thesis can be given a basis in the parable of today's Gospel.

(a) The tares are not to be rooted up so as to avoid even greater evils. According to the interpretation of the Fathers, although the tares are an evil, they can produce good effects, for which reason the wisdom of God tells the servants to leave them alone.

(b) God does not wish evil, nor does he wish that it should not exist; he merely permits it—which is a good thing (I. q. 19, a. 9. *ad 3ium*).

(c) Comment of Leo XIII: In this phrase of Aquinas is enclosed, briefly, the whole doctrine of toleration of evil.

D: Toleration of evil and Community of States

1. *Pius XII and the community of nations:*

(a) In his discourse of 6 December 1953, to Catholic jurists of Italy, he defines the position of Catholics face to face with the growing community of nations.

(b) He points out the need to bring some juridical order into this new international relationship.

i. this affects both private and public relationships.

ii. there is no comparison between this unity and those which have gone before it in history; we are now faced with a new thing, in which States, while remaining independent, still join freely in a common unity from a juridical point of view.

(c) *The reasons for this:*

i. *to prevent threats*; to promote commerce and technical progress.

ii. *but there is a higher motive*, latent in the spirit and heart of each individual. This community of all men is part of the design of the Creator and has its roots in the common origin, nature and end of all men. For which reason the ultimate norm of this community cannot be the will of the individual States, but that which has been drawn up by nature, i.e. by the Creator.

(d) *Juridical norms:*

Pius XII was a great believer in the community of nations, and for that reason he laid down certain rules which should govern the Church's attitude to this movement, in spite of the difficulties which he could see ahead of her.

- i. within the limits of what is licit and possible, we should do everything we can to promote this unity;
- ii. control anything that may impede it;
- iii. tolerate at times things which cannot be prevented, because of the greater good which can come from such a unity.

2. *The religious problem:*

(a) In any community of Nations, Catholic communities will have to live side by side with those which are not Catholic.

(b) *What is not licit:*

- i. no State or community of States can give a positive mandate or allow anything which is contrary to religious truth or good morals.
- ii. not even God himself could allow this, since it would be a contradiction to his supreme truth and holiness.

(c) *The question of religious tolerance:*

i. in certain circumstances it is licit not to impede error and morals which are against the law of God. Sin and error are in the world, and God allows them to exist.

ii. the statement that moral and religious error must be impeded always, because the permission of it would be a sin in itself is not always true in every circumstance.

iii. the common opinion of mankind and the Christian conscience itself do not admit this precept, nor do the sources of revelation or the actual practice of the Church.

iv. in the field of the world we must allow the tares to grow side by side with the wheat.

v. the duty of repressing moral and religious error cannot be the ultimate rule of action; it must be subordinated to higher rules, which in some circumstances permit errors in order to produce greater good.

(d) *A question of fact:*

i. the judgement in each case corresponds to the Catholic statesman, who should weigh in the balance the evils which follow from toleration against the good which can come from it.

ii. he should also seek advice from the Church.

(e) *The policy of the Church:*

The Church, out of consideration for those who, in good faith, are in error, has always acted with tolerance since the days of Constantine the Great. She acts today on the same lines and will so act in the future.

3. *A twofold common good:*

It is important to understand this doctrine of the Church.

(a) When we talk about the common good it is usually the common good of a State or that of the Church within the State.

(b) But the Catholic statesman should remember that there is a double aspect of this common good; Pius XII makes this clear. The attitude of the Church is determined by the common good of the Church and State in each nation on the one hand and also the common good of the universal Church throughout the world on the other.

4. *Fruits of this international community of States:*

(a) Peace throughout the world.

(b) The possibility for the Church of founding in the hearts of men, in their thoughts and acts, the kingdom of him who is the Redeemer, Law-giver, Judge and Lord of the world—Christ.

5. This important papal discourse should inspire Catholics the world over, making them anxious to re-double their efforts and adapt them to present circumstances.

(a) Above all they should follow the papal instructions, which are up-to-date in every line. The Church at the present moment of world history is ahead of many contemporary minds. For that reason alone her pronouncements are studied by statesmen the world over.

(b) They should try to form their minds on international lines, forming themselves for world politics rather than on a purely national basis.

(c) In each State, the sane policy of government should be followed, with the realization that, in each nation, this international policy may mean effort and collaboration on the part of every citizen.

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED AND
THE LEAVEN

SECTION I. SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Epistle: I Thessalonians I. 2-10

Gospel: Matthew 13. 31-35.

Cf. Mark 4. 30-34; Luke

13. 18-21

Texts concerning preaching

1. *The grain of mustard seed:*

And he said to them, Go out all over the world, and preach the gospel to the whole of creation. . . . Mark 16. 15.

By now the word of God was gaining influence, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem was greatly increasing; many of the priests had given their allegiance to the faith. Acts 6. 7.

And the word of the Lord spread far and wide all through the country. Acts 13. 49.

2. *Its efficacy:*

I care nothing for all that; I do not count my life precious compared with my work, which is to finish the course I run, the task of preaching which the Lord Jesus has given me, in proclaiming the good news of God's grace. Acts 20. 24.

True, there are some who have not obeyed the call of the gospel; so Isaias says, Lord, who has given us a faithful hearing? (See how faith comes from hearing; and hearing through Christ's word.) But, tell me, did the news never come to them? Why, yes; the utterance fills every land, the message reaches the ends of the world. Rom. 10. 16-18. Cf. Jeremiah 1. 10; Ps. 118, *passim*.

Make the helmet of salvation your own, and the sword of the spirit, God's word. Eph. 6. 17.

Presbyters who have acquitted themselves well of their charge should be awarded double consideration; those especially who bestow their pains on preaching and instruction. . . . I Tim. 5. 17.

3. *Its excellence:*

And he answered, Shall we not say, Blessed are those who hear the word of God, and keep it? Luke 11. 28.

Only the spirit gives life; the flesh is of no avail; and the words I have been speaking to you are spirit and life. John 6. 64.

Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom should we go? Thy words are the words of eternal life. . . . John 6. 69.

Believe me when I tell you this; if a man is true to my word, to all eternity he will never see death. John 8. 51.

My preaching, my message, depended on no persuasive language, devised by human wisdom, but rather on the proof I gave you of spiritual power; God's power, not man's wisdom, was to be the foundation of your faith. 1 Cor. 2. 4-5.

God's word to us is something alive, full of energy; it can penetrate deeper than any two-edged sword, reaching the very division between soul and spirit, between joints and marrow, quick to distinguish every thought and design in our hearts. Heb. 4. 12.

4. *The duty of preaching:*

He answered, It is written, Man cannot live by bread alone; there is life for him in all the words which proceed from the mouth of God. Matt. 4. 4. Cf. Isaias 58. 1; Ez. 3. 18.

Only, how are they to call upon him until they have learned to believe in him? And how are they to believe in him, until they listen to him? And how can they listen, without a preacher to listen to? And how can there be preachers, unless preachers are sent on their errand? So we read in scripture, How welcome is the coming of those who tell of peace, who tell of good news. Rom. 10. 14-15. Cf. 1 Cor. 9. 16.

Preach the word, dwelling upon it continually, welcome or unwelcome; bring home wrong-doing, comfort the waverer, rebuke the sinner, with all the patience of a teacher. 2 Tim. 4. 2. Cf. Tit. 1. 9.

5. *The duty of hearing the word:*

Believe me when I tell you this, the man who listens to my words, and puts his trust in him who sent me, enjoys eternal life. . . . John 5. 24. Cf. Prov. 15. 31; Ecclus. 24. 30.

The man who belongs to God listens to God's words; it is because you do not belong to God that you will not listen to me. John 8. 47. Cf. James 1. 21-22.

SECTION II. GENERAL COMMENTS

I. LITURGICAL

There is little or nothing to add to what has already been said on former Sundays after Epiphany, since they all have the same general characteristics.

One of the subjects which the liturgy tries to introduce into the minds of the people is that of the Church as the kingdom of God. It may seem absurd, but it is true, that many people are ignorant

of the grandeur of the kingdom into which God has placed them. Without knowledge there can be no love. The person who knows his Church will love it, and the liturgy is nothing but the life of that Church. It is impossible to live the liturgy without knowing and loving the Church herself.

Last Sunday's liturgy included one of the so-called Parables of the Kingdom. On this Sunday we are presented with two more of the same series which show us Mother Church as the Spouse of Christ, with the power of Christ within her which gives her a wonderful ability to expand and to transform the world. This began on the first Pentecost and has continued until our own day. Preachers are advised to link up the Gospel with tender love and service of a Mother so wonderful and so tender towards her children, to whom we owe the transformation of the world.

The prayers of this Sunday ask God to transform our souls so that we may do nothing except what is his will and that he may renew in us heavenly thoughts and desires.

II. EXEGETIC AND MORAL NOTES

A: The Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 1. 2-10

1. *Occasion and argument:*

St Paul writes in a spirit of reminiscence, recalling his first journey into Europe and the Churches which he had brought forth there for Christ. In the year 51 a small boat drew near to the coast of northern Greece, but no one who saw it would have dreamt that the small, rather insignificant man on board was one who would change the face of a whole continent. He really was like a grain of mustard seed! When he reached Philippi he founded there the first Church in Europe and one which was very dear to him. From thence he went to Thessalonica, a rich port with a large Jewish colony, but unfortunately as corrupt in its morals as was Corinth.

His stay there was not a very long one, but it was very fruitful. As was his custom, he preached first of all in the local synagogues, teaching his hearers the life of Jesus, with the usual results—few converts among the Jews, but many among the Gentiles. As always, the Jews paid agitators to accuse him of speaking against Caesar—this was during the third week of his stay there—and he was forced to flee. The journey continued to Berea and Athens, where results of his preaching were poor. From there he went to Corinth; but before leaving Athens, Paul, who was already fearful for the faith of the converts in Thessalonica, sent them his disciple, Timothy, who on his return found the Apostle at Corinth and gave him good news of the converts in Thessalonica. For that reason his first letter to them begins by a singing of their praises.

2. *Texts:*(a) *We gave thanks . . .*

The plural is used because the letter is written in the name of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy.

(b) *such memories we have of your continued faith . . .*

It is important to notice the emphasis on the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity in many of the Pauline epistles. Paul often stresses this, but we must remember that, to his mind, faith implies not merely a mode of belief, but also a method of action—it is an active faith. He praises the Thessalonians because they live by their beliefs. Faith is a light shining in the darkness, but it is also a way of life; he who does not walk according to his faith either does not possess it, or at least it is a dead faith which he has. There are many who have faith and who do not live by it; those who admit the Gospel, but not as a rule of life.

(c) *Charity:*

Again this is not a vague philanthropy. Its first manifestation is that of help given to the poor. What is more, he teaches them that they should work with their hands if necessary in order to be able to apply this relief to their brethren in need.

(d) *Enduring hope:*

The idea of endurance is intimately connected with hope, because it is the anchor of the soul. If we can persevere in works of love it is because we are held down by the anchor of hope; I love God because I hope one day to be united with him; I persevere in works of charity because I hope that he will not leave me without his saving grace.

(e) *in our Lord Jesus Christ . . . in the sight of him who is God, our Father:*

The motives for our love and also the means by which we know if our works come from faith and love.

(f) *Our preaching to you did not depend upon mere argument . . .*

The first criterion by which they can be sure that they have been chosen by God is that of having received a special preacher sent to them by God. How can they know that the Apostle has been sent to them? By the manner of his preaching! Not in human words only, but with the power of God and the Spirit. The second proof lies in the fact that they imitated his works. If the sower is good and the soil prepared, then the results will speak for themselves. This would not be possible without the grace of God. Not only did they hear the word of God from Paul's lips, but also they preached it in the whole of Macedonia and Achaia.

(g) The last verses give us the essential elements of the Creed—belief in the one true God and in his Son, Jesus Christ, whom he has sent.

B: *The Gospel: Matthew 13. 31-35*1. *General remarks:*

Matthew and Mark include the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven among the others, which are called the parables of the kingdom. St Luke, on the other hand, puts them much later in the life of Christ—in the last year of his preaching. According to him, our Lord preached them in a synagogue to refute the Jews, who had been scandalized by the cure effected on a woman on the sabbath day. His argument was that, in spite of their opposition, the kingdom would be extended to the whole world. Fonk is of the opinion that our Lord repeated these parables twice; while other authors are of the opinion that the union of them all here is due to the systematic grouping of St Matthew. From the preacher's viewpoint there is no difficulty.

St Thomas, following John Chrysostom, unites these parables with the others, as if the Lord had wished to reply to a hypothetical question: if such a quantity of seed is lost through the defects in the ground and if the rest is mixed with tares, what will happen to the kingdom of God and what will be the real fruit of its preaching? The reply is a song in praise of the fertility of the seed, in spite of every obstacle.

2. *The symbols used:*(a) *The mustard seed:*

A very small seed. The phrase used in the Gospel is indicative of this, although it is not meant to be taken literally. The image was a common one in Palestine, as we can see from our Lord's remarks about faith. . . . If you had faith the size of a grain of mustard seed . . . (Matt. 17. 19). The remarkable thing is that a seed which is so small can produce such a large plant. Ricciotti says that it can attain a height of six feet or more. Our Lord indicates this when he mentions the birds that settle in its branches; a sign of their affection for the seeds themselves.

(b) *The leaven:*

One of the images taken from our Lord's home life at Nazareth. Jewish women made their own bread, preparing the dough the evening before and then baking it the following morning, either at home or in a common oven on the outskirts of the village where the remains of the straw and weeds were burnt.

The leaven, mixed with the dough, cannot be distinguished from it, but produces a fermentation by means of bacteria and carbonic

acid which tends to make the bread more easily digestible. It also causes the dough to rise. Even in the time of our Lord the proportion between the quantity of flour used and the quantity of leaven was very small. Owing to the first effect of it, which was a type of corruption, the word is also used with the meaning of something impure or evil (cf. 1 Cor. 5. 6-7; Matt. 16. 6-12). But on this occasion the symbolism is the one we have already indicated, namely, the efficacy of a small quantity of leaven, capable of fermenting three measures of flour.

3. *The meaning of the symbols:*

(a) The mustard seed indicates something tiny:

The sower is Christ or any other who preaches his doctrine to the people. The plant which develops from the seed has several meanings:

(b) It can signify the Church:

Her very development from such small beginnings is a sign of the divine power within her.

(c) The doctrine of Christ:

Taught by one who died on a cross, propagated by simple men, with little or no worldly learning, it has grown and spread more widely than any human philosophy or teaching.

(d) It can also mean the apostles:

Among them there were few with any worldly wisdom or training, as Paul points out (1 Cor. 1. 26-27).

(e) Christ himself, unknown member of a small nation:

Who would have imagined that, from the tree of the cross, he would draw all hearts to himself? He has given the world shade from the tree of his doctrine, the perfection of his counsels, sacraments, sacrifice, example and miracles.

(f) Sanctity and grace:

The kingdom of God, apart from its external organization, has another which is internal, consisting of grace and the sanctity which it produces in the soul of the individual. The seed of grace produces this great tree of divine life, virtues and gifts within us.

(g) The just:

Small in the eyes of men, but of great power before God because of their apostolic charity.

(h) The leaven:

The Church reformed the customs of the whole world. The leaven signifies the preaching of the faith which, according to many of the Fathers, does not merely penetrate, but also gives life and grows constantly in a mutual inter-relation of knowledge and love.

Without saying any more—because all we have said about the mustard seed can also be applied to the leaven—it will be enough to mention the fact that some Fathers such as St Gregory of Nyssa, have applied this image of the leaven to the Eucharist. Just as a small quantity of leaven serves to purify the whole mass of the dough, so the life-giving Body of Christ, entering into our body, gives it life, changes everything within it and makes it immortal.

SECTION III. THE FATHERS

I. ST IRENAEUS

(The central thought of the *Adversus Haereses* is that the whole Church believes the one Creed. If you wish to know whether your faith is that of Christ, says the Apologist, you must see if the bishops who teach you go back to an Apostle. But since that road may be a long one, it is enough to find out if you are united to Rome. In that case believe firmly in your Creed and reject any heresy. P.G.7.)

1. *Unity and universality of the Church:*

Once the Church had received the preaching of Christ, she guarded it diligently and spread it over the whole world as if every nation were her own house. Everywhere she believes the same thing, as if she had but one heart and soul; she preaches, teaches and transmits that faith in perfect harmony, as if she had but one mouth. Even though there are many languages in the world, the force of the tradition remains one, so that the churches founded in Germany do not believe or transmit any other, nor those founded among the Celts or Iberians, in the East, Egypt or Libya. . . . Just as the sun, a creature of God, gives the same light to all, being but one, so the light of the preaching of one and the same truth shines everywhere and enlightens every man who knows it. The most eloquent preacher in the Church does not teach anything different, because the disciple is not above the Master, nor does he who is the dullest do any harm to the tradition. Since the faith is one and the same in all, neither he who can speak eloquently about it increases it, nor he who can say but little diminishes it (PG. 7. 552).

2. *Union with Rome:*

Anyone who sincerely wishes to arrive at the truth can see the apostolic tradition extended throughout the whole world. We ourselves can draw a line which extends from those who were named bishops by the Apostles to our own day . . . (PG. 7. 448). . . . But since it would be a heavy task to include in this book the succession of all the churches, we shall limit ourselves to a refutation of those who, from motives of vainglory, blindness or error, teach that which they should not, demonstrating to them that tradition and faith

received from the Apostles and preached to all men until it reached us through the succession of bishops to our own day, from the Church which is the most ancient of all, known to all and founded in Rome by the two most glorious of all the Apostles, Peter and Paul. It is essential that all the faithful, wherever they may be, should be united to that Church, because of its superiority, since in it the apostolic tradition has always been preserved through those who rule it (PG. 7. 848).

3. *The Church, the one deposit of faith:*

After so many proofs it is not necessary to look for the truth anywhere else, when it can be found so easily in the Church, since the Apostles, like rich men who use a bank, deposited in her the whole truth, so that he who wishes to do so may drink of the waters of life. . . . This is the gateway to life and all the rest are robbers and bandits. We must be careful to avoid them, while on the other hand we have a fervent love for everything that pertains to the Church and accept the true tradition. . . . If the Apostles had not left anything in writing, would it not have been absolutely necessary to follow this tradition handed on to us by the leaders of the Church, who received it from those Apostles?

II. ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

(Chrysostom has several sermons on these parables, and from them we shall take those extracts which appear more important for preaching on this theme. His main idea is that the Apostles did not convert the world through their miracles, but because of the holiness of their lives. In this we can all imitate them and so obtain like results for our Master. PG. 57, 578-582 and PG. 58, 479.)

The reason for the parables:

Since he has said that of the seed three parts would be lost and one saved, and also that of the part which was left, some would be choked by the tares that were sown among it, lest anyone should ask: Who, then, and how many will be saved? he now takes away their anxiety by giving them confidence through the parable of the mustard seed. By this image he foretold that the preaching of the Gospel would spread through the whole world. For which reason he uses the image of this plant as being the most suitable for his purpose . . . for he wished to give an idea of greatness. Thus, he seems to say, shall it be in the preaching of the Gospel; for though his disciples were more timid and ignorant than others, yet, since there was in them great power, the Gospel was preached throughout the whole world.

He then goes on to include the image of the leaven in this story of what is to happen in the future. . . . For as the leaven gives its own

strength to the mass of the dough, so shall you change the whole world. See the Lord's wisdom and how he speaks of simple things that have their place in his creation; showing us by this that what he tells us of the future will surely come to pass. It is as if he were to say to these apostles, Do not ask me, What can we do, being but twelve men against such a multitude? For it is this that constitutes your power and makes it so striking, that amidst the multitudes of the world your power is not lost. For once the leaven is put into the dough and thoroughly kneaded into it, the whole mass is fermented by it; for which reason he did not merely say *put into the dough* but *hidden* in it. So likewise, when you are one with and mingle with your persecutors, then shall you overcome them. And as the leaven hidden in the dough becomes one with it by changing it into itself, so shall you do also in the preaching of the Gospel. . . .

Do not be afraid, therefore, if I have foretold persecutions to you, because no man will extinguish your light; rather, you will overcome all men by it. . . . For it is Christ who has given such power to the leaven; he it is who has mingled those who believe in him with the multitude, so that they might share their knowledge of him. Let none of you be troubled therefore, he says, at the fewness of your numbers, for great is the power of the Gospel and that which is once leavened becomes leaven in its turn. Just as the glowing ashes burst into flame again when dry wood is cast upon them, and then are able to kindle even green wood, so shall it be with you and your preaching. . . .

And if twelve men could leaven the world, how unprofitable are we, that being such a great number, we cannot convert those who remain; we who should be sufficient to leaven a hundred worlds! But, you may say, they were apostles. And what of that? Were they not also men, as you are? Did they not dwell among men, having the same interests as you and doing the same things? Perhaps you have the idea that they were angels, come down from heaven. But they were not. Or you may say, But they worked miracles. It was not because of their miracles that they were remarkable. How long must we continue to speak of miracles to cover our own laziness? Look upon the saints. They shone forth, but not because of their miracles . . . it was their rejection of wealth and vainglory, their turning away from the things of this world that made them great. For had they been wanting in this then they would not be merely worthless, but held up as deceivers and frauds, even though they had raised thousands from the dead. It is their life, then, that shines forth on every side and which draws down on them the graces of heaven. . . .

Christ himself, when he was giving his commands to his disciples, did not command them to work miracles, but rather that their light should so shine among men they that may see the good works and so be converted to the Father. To Peter also he did not say, Work

miracles; but, Feed my sheep. . . . What is it that gives glory to our own life? Is it miracles, or is it not rather a life lived scrupulously and righteously? It is from this that miracles arise and to this they all tend. . . . Do you not see how the beauty of a good life can help others more than miracles? I mean by a good life not simply fasting, or being covered with sackcloth and ashes; but a despising of riches, charity towards our neighbour, a giving of our bread to the hungry, control of anger, a turning away from pride and envy. This he taught us who said to us: Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart. . . . I say this, not because I deprecate fasting; on the contrary, I praise it greatly. But it sorrows me to see you neglecting other good works, thinking that to be the way of salvation which holds the least place among the virtues. The supreme virtues are these: charity, tolerance and almsdeeds, which is greater even than virginity.

If you desire to imitate the virtues of the apostles, there is nothing to prevent you. All that is required is your own good will, together with a great love of virtue itself. Do not hold back because you are waiting for miracles. The devil is indeed angry when he is cast out of a human body; but much more if he sees a soul freed from sin. That is his greatest power, the spreading of sin. For this Christ died that he might break the power of the devil to cause sin in us. Sin brought death, and because of death the whole world is turned upside-down. Once you destroy sin then you have broken the nerve of the devil and have bruised his head; you have destroyed his power and slaughtered his armies, thus bringing to the world a sign which is greater than any miracle. This is not my word, but that of Paul, who tells us all to be zealous for the better gifts, the more excellent way (1 Cor. 12. 31). He then goes on to speak, not of miracles, but of charity, the root of every good work and its foundation. If we observe this, and the wisdom that flows from it, then we have no need of miracles; but if we neglect it, then even miracles will be of no avail.

As we meditate on these things, let us strive after that by means of which the apostles themselves became great, as Peter says: By having left all things to follow Christ. . . . For which cause, let us give ourselves to Christ when we withdraw ourselves from all other things, so that we may receive, as they did, the promise of eternal life.

III. ST AUGUSTINE

(We have selected certain passages from his works which refer to the expansion of the Church in the early years of her history.)

1. *The Church is universal:*

This is the peace which no heretic can have. What can peace do in this land of uncertainty, when nothing is clear and where we

cannot judge the heart of another? Simply this: Not judge of anything which is uncertain or dictate on the unknown; instead think kindly of other men and not have suspicions about them. If I do not know what so-and-so is like, then what do I lose by thinking him to be good? If you are in doubt, then do not judge anyone or condemn. That is what peace teaches us.

If you will not listen to the testimony of Moses, then at least listen to that of the prophets. Think of the bargain that was made; see the price and then you will know something of the goods which were its object. Christ hangs on the cross; he is going to buy something, and even though you may not know yet what it is, at least you can see the price he has to pay. He pours out his blood and with it he buys something—with the blood of the innocent lamb of God, the Son of God. What is it that he buys? Think only of the price he pays! They have pierced my hands and my feet; they have numbered all my bones! But what did you buy, Lord? The furthest dwellers on earth will bethink themselves of the Lord, and come back to him; all the races of the heathen will worship before him; to the Lord royalty belongs, the whole world's homage is his due. . . . The Lord will claim for his own a generation still to come; heaven itself will make known his faithfulness to a people yet to be born, a people of the Lord's own founding (Ps. 21. 28-32).

A text of Moses and others from the prophets, and yet there are many more! Who can count these texts written about the Church which is to be extended over the whole world? Who can count them? There are not as many heresies against her as the texts in her favour. Which page of the Scriptures does not announce it and which verse does not contain it? Everything we read shouts in a loud voice this unity in the Lord who gave to the whole boundaries of Jerusalem the true peace.

2. *The Church, Spouse of Christ:*

Such is the Spouse of the Church! But you may say to me: We believe in him, but we do not believe that the Church is his Spouse. In that case, where is his Bride? Is it, perhaps, Donatus, whose church is confined to certain limits? . . . Hear the voice of the Spouse: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations (Luke 24. 47). But where? Because some say here and others there. Where shall it be preached, but in all nations! I have shown him to you; him and his members, the Spouse and his Bride. Either you believe in them both or you admit your own damnation (PL. 37. 1924-1928).

3. *The flock of Christ is universal:*

To prove it let us listen to the voice of the shepherd, which is well known to the sheep. Read the law, the prophets, the Gospel and the letters of Paul. Listen to the voice of the shepherd himself

telling them to preach the Gospel of penance in every nation, beginning at Jerusalem. What objection have you? That in time of persecution such-and-such a shepherd gave up the sacred books, or that another offered to idols? Leave them aside. It is sign enough that they are not true shepherds. Let us listen to the one who is a true shepherd, leaving aside those acts which are merely human and looking at those which are divine.

We can begin with the Old Law, where we are told that all nations will glory in the fact that they are descended from Abraham; that God will give to his Messias all the nations of the earth for his inheritance; that they will all be converted to him and bow down before him, including kings as well as their people (cf. Gen. 22. 18; Ps. 2. 8; 21. 28; 71. 11). After the prophets the Word himself who, admiring the faith of the centurion, says that people shall come from the East and the West. Such is the Church of Christ, his flock.

A flock which is so extensive cannot pass without your noticing it. Nor can you take objection to a judge whom you would not have for your shepherd. You cannot say to him: I did not know, I did not hear or see. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God (Ps. 97. 3) and the whole world has heard the sound of his voice (Ps. 18. 5).

Sad it is, indeed, that we who are brothers according to the flesh are not united in the one body of Christ. More so since it is so easy for you to look around you and see the city built on a hill, which our Lord told us could not be hidden. This is the Catholic Church, called catholic in the Greek because it is spread over the whole world. No one can ignore her presence and for that reason she cannot hide herself (PL. 33. 194).

4. *The authority of the Church:*

Even leaving aside that most sincere wisdom which is to be found in the Catholic Church, a wisdom which some spiritual men do attain in this life . . . while the rest of the people, who are without such keen intellects, live in and enjoy the security of the faith; leaving aside, I say, that wisdom, which you will not admit exists in the Church, I still have many reasons which oblige me to remain in her. There is the common consent of peoples and nations; the authority founded on miracles, fed by hope, growing in charity and strengthened by her antiquity. I am upheld by the succession of pastors in the See of Peter, to which our Lord after his resurrection confided the care of his sheep and which has endured from the time of that Bishop (Peter) until now. I am upheld by her very name of Catholic, which is hers exclusively among so many heretics, all of whom would give anything to possess it. Yet if any traveller were to ask them where there was a Catholic church they would not dare to point to their own basilicas or their houses of worship. . . .

All these great, numerous and powerful motives keep the faithful in the Catholic Church, even though the slowness of our intellects or even our way of life may not make the truth shine forth openly before all men. . . . For myself, I would not even believe in the Gospel itself unless it were taught me by the authority of the Catholic Church! (PL. 42. 175).

IV. ST MAXIMUS OF TURIN

(PL. 57, Hom. 111, extracts from this sermon on Christ, our leaven.)

Rightly, then, is Christ called our leaven, who since he appeared in the likeness of man, is become lowly and insignificant in his mortal weakness, and yet within himself possesses such power of wisdom that the whole world itself would not be large enough to contain all that he taught. Also, from the moment when he began to diffuse himself throughout the world by the power of his divinity, he at once drew unto himself men of every race, that he might lay on all the sweet yoke of his Spirit, namely, that all men should become even as Christ himself. For the Lord as man and he alone in this world, like leaven hidden in the dough, makes all men like himself. He, therefore, who will but adhere to this leaven which is Christ, becomes himself a leaven, as profitable unto himself as he is to others; without fear for his own salvation and yet a means to gain the salvation of others.

Just as the leaven, to be mixed with the dough, must itself be broken into small pieces and sprinkled throughout the mass until it is mingled with all, so that it may bind the scattered grains of flour by its power, reducing to one whole that which was before inert and powerless, making a powerful whole of what was before scattered impotence, so Christ our Lord. He who is the leaven of the whole world was broken by torments, wounded and pierced, his precious blood poured out for our salvation, so that, by mingling with him, all mankind might become one body made up of all those who, before his death, were prostrate and divided.

So we, who before were but Gentile dust, cling to him who is our leaven. We, who before lay scattered and broken into pieces, have by the power of his passion been united into the one body of Christ, as the Apostle says, being made members of his body, of his flesh and his bones (Eph. 5. 30). . . .

And who is the woman who is said to have hidden the leaven in the three measures of meal but the Church, which each day tries to hide the doctrine of Christ in our hearts? . . .

SECTION IV. THEOLOGIANS

I. ST THOMAS AQUINAS

(In the *Catena Aurea* St Thomas points to his interpretation of the leaven and the mustard seed—both signify the doctrine of Christ, while the woman who placed the leaven in the dough is the Church. Based on this double interpretation, we shall give a summary of his teaching in the *Summa* concerning the doctrine of Christ and the perfection of charity.)

1. *The doctrine of Christ:*

(a) Christ is first and before all else a teacher and Doctor of the new law (Heb. 2. 3):

The salvation of many must be considered before the peace of mind of the few; for which reason he who teaches others must not be afraid of giving offence to a few if the salvation of many is at stake. That was why our Lord took no notice of the scandal his words caused in the Pharisees (Matt. 15. 12) (3. q. 42. a. 2. c).

(b) He used parables:

Christ, as the perfect model for all teachers, used parables because he had to adapt his doctrine to the capacity of his hearers. The Jews were not ready for any other kind of direct speech, as yet; on the other hand, this does not mean that he only taught in parables, but merely that he used them as the best method of preaching his spiritual doctrine. He did explain those parables to his disciples, because through them the truth would have to come later, to those who were now ready for it (3 q. 42. a. 3. c).

(c) The excellence of his teaching:

He was the light of the world through his disciples, whom he sent to preach to the whole world. It is an indication of great power to do something through others, rather than personally. For this reason the divine power in Christ is manifested principally in the fact that he gave such power of teaching to his disciples that they could convert nations who had never heard of Christ to his teaching. His own power is sufficiently proved by the miracles which accompany his teaching, by the authority of his word and by his life, which was a perfect example of all virtue (3. q. 42. a. 1. *ad 2um*).

(d) His doctrine:

It is a small seed indeed if we compare it with the writings of other philosophers; but if we think of the contents and the results, we soon see that it is the most excellent of all. Any science is to be judged first of all from the point of view of its certainty and the dignity of its object. From this double point of view the science of theology is superior to all others. Its certainty is based, not on human

reason, but on divine revelation. Its object is God and the things of God. From the practical point of view, it directs us to our last and final end, to which all others are subordinated. There is no science more important than this from the speculative and the practical point of view (1. q. 1. a. 5. c).

2. *Spiritual perfection:*

(The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven lead us inevitably to the practical application of them, which is the development of the life of the seed of grace and virtue in the soul, of which they are the image. For this reason we shall give here a summary of St Thomas's doctrine on this point taken in part from the *De perfectione vitae spiritualis* and partly from the *Summa*.)

(a) This perfection lies in charity:

Because charity unites us with God, who is our ultimate end. For this very reason we have to distinguish between what we may call essential perfection and accidental perfection. He who possesses charity is essentially perfect, although he may be deficient in some accidentals. He who does not possess charity—i.e. one who is not in a state of grace—is spiritually dead.

(b) This perfection is a double one:

There are two precepts of charity, one which applies to our love for God and the other which is directed towards our love for our neighbour. They are connected because we cannot love God without loving those whom God loves and who are united with us in his love. What we must love in our neighbour is that mutual end which has been granted to us all, namely heaven.

Thus there is a certain perfection which is of precept and another which is of counsel. We must love God above all things, which means that we must love him with our whole soul, mind and heart, and that there must be nothing in us which is not directed towards God, either actually or habitually. We must submit our minds to him in belief when he has revealed something to us. What we love we must love for God and in God. Our external works must be done for him and with him (1 Cor. 16. 14).

The counsels are intended to withdraw our affections from the things of this world, which can and do impede our spiritual progress. We must be ready to obey them in spirit at least, if not in fact. That is, should God demand this of us, we must be ready to obey him.

(c) There are also two degrees in our love for our neighbour:

There is one which is necessary for salvation and one which is of counsel. That which is necessary for salvation demands that we have nothing in our heart against our neighbour and his love. That which is of counsel is concerned with the extent, intensity and effect of our love for our neighbour.

i. *extent*. Our charity towards our neighbour is more perfect according as it is extended to a greater number of persons. There are three grades: there are those who love others because of some benefit they have received from them or from ties of blood or civil relationships. This is the lowest grade and is reduced to civil friendship merely. The second grade extends its affection to strangers, provided they do not offend us in any way; and this does not exceed the natural love of all men which comes from our common nature. It does not include in its concept the love of our enemies. The third grade does extend to our enemies and was taught by Christ (Matt. 5. 44). This is the perfection of charity.

ii. *intensity*. Again there are three grades; that of those who use their external goods for the benefit of others—and against this those offend who do not help their neighbours when in need. The second grade is that of those who give their own bodily labours for the help of others—and against this those sin who do not sacrifice any personal comforts for their neighbours or who do not work for them when it is necessary. The third grade is of those who give their lives for their neighbour, especially for his spiritual profit. This is the highest grade of all.

iii. *its effects*. The effects of charity can again be measured in three ways; there are those who help their neighbours with material goods; those who do so by means of spiritual goods, but in the natural order, by teaching the ignorant, for example. Thirdly, there are those who help their neighbours by giving them spiritual and divine gifts, such as the faith, the sacraments, etc. This is the highest grade of all, because it draws our neighbour nearer to his ultimate end (*Opusc.* 2. c. 16).

II. VARIOUS WRITERS

The fact of the moral miracle of the expansion of the Church

(This is a very brief summary of the ideas contained in a number of works on this subject, especially those of Wilmers, Garrigou-Lagrange and Daniel-Rops.)

The miraculous expansion of the grain of mustard seed can be considered in three ways: as a fulfilment of the prophecies, as a general proof of the convictions of the multitude, who could not have been won over so quickly save by the truth—and obvious truth at that; lastly as a moral miracle. In this brief summary we shall limit ourselves to the third approach to this fact, although some of the things said can also be applied to the other two.

1. *The fact of the expansion:*

In the first century, beginning of the second. The facts of history show us clearly that this expansion was no ordinary thing, reaching as

it did beyond the bounds of the Roman Empire. We have only to read the Acts of the Apostles and the introduction to Paul's letters to see how far flung was the seed and how numerous the faithful. The great names of those days ring in our ears: Ephesus, Salonica, Corinth, Rome, Asia Minor, Persia and Edessa, Greece and the Aegean regions, Asia itself, Ethiopia, Egypt—more than we can even mention. Hermas, the author of the *Pastor*, was right when, about 120, he wrote that Christianity could now be compared to a tree which had already covered with its branches the whole of the civilized world. Pliny himself was to write to Trajan in no uncertain terms: A great multitude of people of all ages, categories and sex . . . not merely in the cities but also in the villages and country areas, have been invaded by this infectious superstition.

Seventy years after the first Christian community was founded in Antioch it has extended itself to such an extent that it was a menace to other sects in the whole of that region. The Emperor Decius is able to say that he would prefer a rival to his crown rather than one Christian bishop in the city! In such far flung parts of the Empire as Gaul and Britain the cross challenged the Roman eagles. Constantine did nothing but admit something which already existed—the triumph of the cross once and for all.

2. *The explanation of the facts:*

The summary we have just given implies an historical fact. Now we have to explain it, in such a way that it will be clear that it could not have taken place by natural means, owing to the obstacles it had to face and the natural incapacity of the means employed for sowing the seed.

(a) *Intrinsic obstacles to the doctrine and its preachers:*

The doctrine is opposed to all that was commonly admitted at that time—to nature cults it opposed belief in supernatural revelation, the son of a virgin mother, eternal like his Father, who teaches them to wash themselves clean of a sin which they were not conscious of, by means of water.

This religion teaches them dogmas which are beyond the powers of reason, based only on authority and faith. It implies a reform of customs and morals, against all that they have learned to date; pardon of their enemies, universal love, frugality, mortification, penance. Above all, a doctrine which is opposed to all sexual immorality, so widespread in the Empire. When Felix heard Paul preach on this subject he cut short the discussion! (Acts 24. 25). This morality forced the Christians to live apart from their fellow men. It imposed a great sacrifice from the social point of view.

The preachers of this new religion were Jews, Christ, its founder, was crucified, the apostles were ignorant men with no attraction for Greece or Rome.

(b) Extrinsic obstacles:

Corruption of morals and attraction for pagan rites and gods. Family and social atmosphere; the Roman idea of admitting all gods and taking them over as part of the Empire. The attitude of the common people, who were soon turned against the Christians, accusing them of the most terrible crimes, including child-murder and cannibalism! The philosophers, who were the great enemies of Christianity, in teaching and writing! The Jews, enemies of our Lord from the beginning, and who continued to do all they could to prevent the spread of Christianity. Finally, bloody persecution, when other means failed.

In opposition to this was the word of God, preached by simple men, with little or no humanist education. This, and the grace of God, was the leaven in the dough! However, they could count on divine aid, and God gave it in abundance, in the form of miracles, through the heroic virtue and martyrdom of so many thousands of the early Christians which, by God's grace, attracted rather than repelled. Lastly, in the form of a torrent of grace which moved hearts and overcame every kind of obstacle to conversion.

SECTION V. SPIRITUAL WRITERS

I. FRAY LUIS DE LEON

(Christ is the right arm of the Father because he executes the decrees of his omnipotence and defeats the devil. He did this in his own person by freeing the world of sin, and in that of his followers, in the miraculous extension of the Church throughout the world. Cf. *Obras Completas*, BAC, 1951, pp. 519-546.)

1. *The prophecies of a spiritual triumph:*(a) *The Jewish interpretation of the triumph of the Messias:*

The Jews thought that the power given to the Messias as the right arm of God (Isaias 53. 1; 52. 10) was a temporal and warlike power, since it was to bring them victory over the whole world. It is true that many prophecies do describe the messianic kingdom under the symbol of military victories; yet it is easy to see that God had reserved for his chosen ones something much more worthy, since he gave the other kind of victory to others, without any previous announcement. For example, to Alexander, who in such a short time, sword in hand, swept across the world, leaving it frightened and vanquished.

Who can imagine that what God gave almost carelessly, as though he were giving nothing, to those who did not adore him, would be the same as that which he had reserved for his chosen people and which he had announced at least once every century by the mouths

of the prophets? It is pitiful blindness to think that God's loving care can only end in arms of war, banners, the sound of drums and in walled castles.

It is stupid to think that the Messias would be just another Cyrus or Nabuchodonosor. If that were the case, what was wanting to Alexander, that he should not be the Messias? Is it such a great thing to kill or to pull down castles, which will fall by themselves in any case, that it is convenient for God to make for himself an Arm so strong that he is called his Strength? How true is that word of Isaias, spoken about God: Not mine, the Lord says, to think as you think, deal as you deal; by the full height of heaven above earth, my dealings are higher than your dealings, my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaias 55. 9). Those words always come before me when I think of this subject.

The Jews might have been satisfied with a Messias, son of David, who would return to them their land and bring their enemies into subjection; but God, who is more liberal, does not merely wish for a son of David, but one who is his own Son also, who will free us all from the power of the devil and from death, who will set at our feet all that harms us and bring us safely to that land of life and peace which is without end. These are goods which are worthy of God and which are fitting matter for his prophecies. God's heart is too big to be filled with such miserable and passing things as worldly glory and honour, which not merely do not make a man good, but on many occasions make him evil.

In any case, the Scriptures themselves describe Christ to us in a very different way, and not in the terms of military glory. He will proclaim right order among the Gentiles. He will not be contentious or a lover of faction; none shall hear his voice in the streets. He will not snap the staff that is already crushed, or put out the wick that still smoulders. . . . Not with sternness, not with violence; to set up right order on earth, that is his mission (Isaias 42. 1-3). And then those stupid ones think that he has come in plan of war! His arms are the word, the spirit—not the sword (Isaias 11. 4).

(b) *The two triumphs of Christ:*

To overcome Satan and fill the world with a kingdom made up of those who have been redeemed—these are the two great victories of God's Right Arm. For God to become man, that is something which flesh and blood cannot comprehend; that God should die in human form is beyond our senses . . . to make citizens of heaven out of those who served hell. . . . Whose imagination could think of something like that, no matter how much he might have desired it? Yet the first of these Christ did personally, while on earth; the second by means of his apostles, to whom he sent his Spirit after his resurrection.

None of God's works would be counted as very great if he did them by the use of his absolute power, so infinite is that power; but what really proves his greatness and wisdom is when he does things without appearing to do them; when he brings everything into his purpose without doing violence to any law; when he makes use even of the very actions of his enemies—in short, when he does great things by the use of simple means, which is the real object of the virtue of prudence.

In nothing is he like our rulers, who use disproportionate means to attain a small end and who, while intent on some particular purpose, attain it only by violating the principles of good government in a hundred others. To show how true this is we may look at the great difficulties which Christ had to overcome to achieve both his tasks and the apparently simple means he used in order to accomplish them.

2. *The miracle of the extension of the Church:*

(After speaking of the first victory of Christ when he overcame the kingdom of sin and death by using Satan's own weapons, namely death and the hatred of the Jews, he continues:)

(a) *Few against many:*

Let us set on the one side twelve men, without any of those qualities which the world values, low in their social status, of humble condition, simple in their speech, without learning, friends or supporters. On the other side we have the great States of the world and the great religions, founded many centuries before, with their priests and temples, together with the devils who were worshipped there. There were the laws of the republics, the edicts of rulers—which is the same as putting these twelve men on the one hand and the whole power of the world, of men and of devils on the other. . . .

Another wonderful thing is the fact that, on seeing the fire of deadly opposition which was enkindled against them in the hearts of men, the power, ferocity and threats, still they did not cease from their purpose. A wonderful thing indeed, that a poor stranger should enter the gates of Rome, shall we say, which held the sceptre of the world in her hands, the seat and heart of the empire, and there cry out in her market places that the idols worshipped in the city were but devils, her religion and way of life an evil sham!

(b) *Against passions:*

If the people had been bound to difficult laws by their religion, and if the apostles had convinced them by inviting them to luxury and relaxation of morals, then it might have been different. Even though it would be hard for all the people to cast aside that which had been theirs for so long, by tradition and inheritance, which had been taught them by men of letters and authority, and also by the common consent of the human race, which had held those beliefs

for so long—even though it would be hard, I say, yet it would not be incredible, since it was liberty that was offered to them. But the opposite was the case. They lived in a religious atmosphere which was nothing but licence and freedom, giving free rein to their desires, and now they were summoned to give up all that freedom and were called to a life of austerity and fasting, poverty and rejection of all that the world stood for and which appealed to the senses. So far as the mind was concerned, things were preached to them which were beyond human intelligence; that they should reject as idols things which before they had been taught were gods. Now their only God would be an invisible one and his Son, who had died on a cross. Yet the one who had died on the cross gave incredible force to this word.

(c) *In death they vanquished:*

Wonderful indeed, no matter how we look at it, was the fact of the great spread of this doctrine, from small beginnings. From the human point of view it would have been easier to understand had it happened in a human way, for example, the apostles convinced a few men of good will, and these, sword in hand, overcame a city, then a country, then a kingdom—and from thence, as did Rome, to the conquest of the whole world. But it was not done like that, since God's ways are not those of men. The apostles and their followers never banded together to attack, but to be attacked and to suffer and die. Their weapons were not those of steel, but that patience the like of which has never been seen. They died, and by dying, they conquered. When our teachers fell to the earth beheaded, new disciples sprang up and the very earth itself, taking new life from their blood, produced new fruits of the faith. Fear and death, which from the natural point of view frighten and make people flee, now attracted people to the faith of the Church. Just as Christ triumphed by his death, so as to show himself the right Arm of God, he allowed his own to suffer the same things. He permitted the devils to arm themselves with all manner of cruel weapons, instead of rendering them useless or striking them from their hands, as he could have done. Nor did he give to his own followers bodies which could not be torn or wounded, as was said to be the case of Achilles. Instead he put them in the very jaws of their enemies and allowed the latter to tear and rend them as they pleased, with all manner of cruelty and ferocity. Against all human reason, as the enemies killed them and the faithful died; as the former shouted 'Let us kill them'; and the latter 'Let us die'—so the faith was born in the hearts of men and infidelity it was that perished.

3. *Argument for the divinity of the Church:*

What victory or triumphant car is anything like that of Christ? This very fact of the conversion of the world is proof enough of the

divinity of the Church. To sum it all up we can propose this argument: That it is a miracle cannot be denied. If it is a miracle, it must come from God or from the devil. It cannot be the devil, because the Church fights against him, preaches against him and in every part of the world overcomes him, as we see at the moment in the preaching of the Gospel in America. If, then, it is not the work of the devil, it is the work of God.

II. ST FRANCIS DE SALES

(The kingdom of God in souls is built up on the grace which God sows in them from the first moment of their calling. To make it grow until it becomes a large tree is also the work of God and of the Spirit, with our co-operation. St Francis limits himself to the theme of charity and its growth, (cf. *Treatise on the Love of God*, t. 2, pp. 150 ff.)

1. *Obligation of growing in perfection:*

(a) Who does not increase in perfection goes backwards:

Truly, to remain in one state for a long time is impossible; he who does not gain ground must of necessity lose it. He who does not rise higher, must sink lower. He who does not come out of the struggle the winner, must of necessity lose the battle. We live in the midst of risks from the attacks of our enemies and if we do not resist we shall perish. We cannot resist without imposing our will on them. As St Bernard says, he who does not go forward must, of necessity, retreat. The prize is Christ; and how shall we gain that prize unless we follow him? If we do follow him then we shall advance, because he never held back, but continued his race through love and obedience until death itself.

Continue along the road then, says St Bernard, continue and put no other end before you except that of your life. While that life lasts, go on in the footsteps of your Saviour, but go quickly and with fervour, because of what use is it to follow him if you do not catch him up?

(b) True virtue has no limits:

It always reaches out to higher levels; and above all, this is true of charity, the queen of the virtues, since it has an infinite object and is, therefore, capable of reaching to infinite limits if it finds a heart which is capable of that. Nothing can stand in the way of this virtue except the condition of the will which receives it and which should work through it. Just as no one can comprehend God, so no one can love him as much as he deserves to be loved. The heart which could love God with a love which is equal to his goodness is a heart that is infinitely good—and that cannot be found except in God himself. . . . It is a great favour granted to us, that we should be able to increase ever more and more in the love of God while we are in this mortal life, going from virtue to virtue unto life eternal.

2. *Every act which comes from charity increases that love:*

(a) The increase of virtues is something which God gives us:

Do you see this small glass of water or piece of bread which a holy soul gives to the poor for the love of God? It is a small thing, it is true, almost unworthy of the consideration of men; but God rewards it and immediately grants an increase of charity because of it. . . . Small works which are done from charity are pleasing to God and a source of merits. . . .

And I say that it is God who does this, because charity does not produce its growth like a tree, which sends out its branches and makes them burst into leaf by its own power; charity, like faith and hope, have their origin in the divine goodness and obtain from it their increase and their perfection. They are like the bees, who are born of the honey and also take their food from it.

(b) But always according to the use we make of grace:

It is God, then, who produces this increase, according to the use we make of his grace, according to the Scriptures which tell us that to him who has, more shall be given and in abundance (Matt. 13. 12). In this way we fulfil the command of the Lord to lay up to ourselves treasures in heaven. It is as if he were to say: Add to your good works other works, because this is the money from which your treasure has to be built up; fasts, alms and prayer. Just as the two pieces of money which the poor woman cast into the temple treasury were of great value, and just as, by the accumulation of these small sums the treasury is built up and increases in value, so the smallest of our good works, even though they may suffer something from our human weakness, are still pleasing to God and have their value before him. . . .

Bees make delicious honey, which is their most precious and valuable labour. But they also make the humble wax, which is also a valuable product of their labour. Thus our hearts must try to produce works of great fervour and value, so as to increase charity greatly; but if the works it produces are inferior, still they will not lose their reward, because God looks on them with favour and will love us a little more because of them.

(c) Justification increases together with our good works:

You see how justification, which is obtained together with charity, is increased by good works, and that without exception. . . . Such is the love of God for us and such the desire we should have to grow in his love. His divine gentleness makes all things useful for us, ordains all things for our advantage and gives value to all our works, no matter how small and humble. . . . In the practice of the virtues which come to us from the divine mercy, above all that of charity, all our works produce an increase of growth. It is not to be wondered at that sacred love, as the queen of the virtues, has nothing which is

not lovable, be it small or great, just as balsam, the king of aromatic trees, has no piece of bark or leaf which is not sweet smelling. What could love produce which was not worthy of love and tending to it?

III. BOSSUET

(Good example is a leaven which is within the possibilities of all. We quote some passages of Bossuet which illustrate this point, taken from *Pensamientos Cristianos y morales*, 25.)

See, O Christians, the power which God has given to us, and when we see it in our hands like a talent for which we shall have to render an account, let us make a resolution to use it for his glory, that is, for the good of his sons.

But when we make this decision let us be careful not to fall into the false desires prompted by ambition. It always inclines us to extraordinary works, for which we need both much credit and position. This is the usual excuse of one who is ambitious who, when he aspires to great dignity, says that he does so in order to undertake great works. . . . What magnificent proposals for the good of the State; what beautiful thoughts about the Church! In the midst of these proposals and desires the love of this world infiltrates and we, allowing ourselves to be led away by the spirit of this world, become ourselves worldly and ambitious. Once we have reached the heights, then it is necessary to wait for the right occasion, which comes to us with leaden feet, if it ever arrives at all. . . .

Never allow the desire to do good lead you to long for positions of greater dignity or advantage. Do the good which you have already at hand and which God has made possible for you. Never fear to be idle and useless if you do not go beyond your limits and attain positions of higher dignity. A river, in order to be useful, does not have to break its banks or flood the fields by its side, because merely by running quietly along its course it turns the banks green, waters the fields and offers its riches to the towns along its banks. . . .

Let each one of us increase his charity within the limits of his proper position. Our office may be a limited one, but there are no limits to charity. All things to all men, it offers itself for all those tasks which may be necessary. . . . Never fears to lack work at hand, and instead of aspiring to greater power, it always increases in the soul of the one who possesses it the desire to be able to render an exact account to God of that office which he already holds.

SECTION VI. PAPAL TEXTS

(The fundamental theme of application of the two parables is that of the fruit which can be produced by the work of select minorities, and it is this theme that we shall develop here.)

A sad reality which has to be fought:

(a) Pius XII insists on many occasions that among Catholics there are many who are not constant and who are only Christians from time to time; while in the midst of the modern world what is needed is personality strong enough to overcome the modern tendency to complacent conformity (cf. To Catholic journalists, 17 February 1950, and to Lenten preachers, 13 March 1943).

(b) In her fight against evil the Church cannot count on those who are only Christians in name; therefore it is necessary to create a select nucleus, a chosen minority. Thus Pius XII: We advise you to group together and form groups of men and youths who will approach the eucharistic table at least monthly, taking with them as many as they can of their friends and acquaintances. You may say that the mission of conversion is more important, that namely, of gaining the souls of those who live far from religion and changing the course of their lives to at least a minimum of prayer and the sacraments. But even for that, would it not be best to approach them through these select groups of secular apostles, who are both brave and prudent? May not these be the only way of return to the Church for those who are far from her? (*ibid.*).

(c) Even in Catholic institutions there must be a selection which is the beginning of every renovation. Again Pius XII, in his letter to the President of the Marian Congregations, 2 July 1953: Greater selection of candidates is the source of all renovation, and therefore it should be done with great care, especially in those cases where the genuine spirit has declined. Only those who are prepared to keep the common rule and live an authentic Catholic life of greater fervour, apostolicity and militant activity should be admitted as members.

(d) In the Church's battles it is not numbers that count, but rather the fire of charity. In the admirable harmony of the Catholic forces even a few members of a small parish will bring valuable aid, especially when this is the fruit of enlightened and fervent preparation, of filial discipline to the orders of the Church, of generous and interior piety and the authentic spirit of sacrifice (Pius XII, to the Bishops of Italy concerning Catholic Action, 25 January 1950).

(e) The same Pope calls on these minorities to form an army in battle array. Be strong against the enemy, he tells them. It is not a question of your own spiritual advantage, but of your co-operation for the good of souls. Let the whole body of Catholic Action, which in each of its members should be beautiful as the moon and brilliant as the sun, know how to be as strong as an army in battle array face to face with the enemy (8 December 1953).

(f) The choice of the select minority falls on the bishops and priests (Pius XI, *Quad. Anno*, 1931).

(g) The first select minority must be that of the priests, who must be properly prepared in the social doctrines of the Church, which

they must then expound in their instructions to those who are less well informed (cf. Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, and Pius XII, *Menti Nostrae*).

(h) Since the priest cannot reach all men, he must have help in the form of a lay apostolate, men of action, who can transform their own social and working environment, penetrating the whole and bringing to it Catholic principles. Pope John XXIII has a special word to say about the role of the lay apostolate: The Lay Apostolate, therefore, has an important role to play in social education—especially those Associations and Organizations which have as their specific objective the Christianization of contemporary society. The members of these Associations, besides profiting personally from their own day to day experience in this field, can also help in the social education of the rising generation by giving it the benefit of the experience they have gained.

But we must remind you here of an important truth: the Christian conception of life demands of all, whether high-born or lowly, a spirit of moderation and sacrifice. That is what God calls us to by his grace.

There is, alas, a spirit of hedonism abroad today which beguiles men into thinking that life is nothing more than the quest for pleasure and the satisfaction of human passions. This attitude is disastrous. Its evil effects on soul and body are undeniable. Even on the natural level temperance and simplicity of life are the dictates of sound policy. On the supernatural level the Gospels and the whole ascetical tradition of the Church requires a sense of mortification and penance which assures the rule of the spirit over the flesh, and offers an efficacious means of expiating the punishment due to sin, from which no one, except Jesus Christ and his Immaculate Mother, is exempt.

There are three stages which should normally be followed in the reduction into practice of social principles. First, one reviews the concrete situation; secondly, one forms a judgement on it in the light of those same principles; thirdly, one decides what in the circumstances should be done to implement those principles. These are the three stages that are usually expressed in the three terms: look, judge, act (*Mater et Magistra*).

SECTION VII. LITERARY NOTE

LORD MACAULAY

In October of 1840 Lord Macaulay wrote in the *Edinburgh Review*, on occasion of the translation into English of Von Ranke's *History of the Popes of Rome*, a short summary of the work of the Catholic Church in the world which might have come from the pen of a Catholic author rather than from a Protestant. He says:

There is not, and there never was on this earth, a work of human policy so well deserving of examination as the Roman Catholic Church. The history of that Church joins together the two great ages of human civilization. No other institution is left standing which carries the mind back to the times when the smoke of sacrifice rose from the Pantheon and when camelopards and tigers bounded in the Flavian amphitheatre. The proudest royal houses are but of yesterday, when compared with the line of the Supreme Pontiffs. That line we trace back in an unbroken series, from the Pope who crowned Napoleon in the nineteenth century to the Pope who crowned Pepin in the eighth; and far beyond the time of Pepin the august dynasty extends, till it is lost in the twilight of fable. The republic of Venice came next in antiquity. But the republic of Venice was modern when compared with the Papacy: and the republic of Venice is gone, and the Papacy remains. The Papacy remains, not in decay, not a mere antique, but full of life and youthful vigour. The Catholic Church is still sending forth to the farthest ends of the world missionaries as zealous as those who landed in Kent with Augustine, and still confronting hostile kings with the same spirit with which she confronted Attila. The number of her children is greater than in any former age. Her acquisitions in the New World have more than compensated for what she has lost in the Old. Her spiritual ascendancy extends over the vast countries which lie between the plains of the Missouri and Cape Horn, countries which, a century hence, may not improbably contain a population as large as that which now inhabits Europe. The members of her communion are certainly not fewer than a hundred and fifty millions; and it will be difficult to show that all other Christian sects united amount to a hundred and twenty millions. Nor do we see any sign which indicates that the term of her long dominion is approaching. She saw the commencement of all the governments and of all the ecclesiastical establishments that now exist in the world; and we feel no assurance that she is not destined to see the end of them all. She was great and respected before the Saxon had set foot on Britain, before the Frank had passed the Rhine, when Grecian eloquence still flourished in Antioch, when idols were still worshipped in the temple of Mecca. And she may still exist in undiminished vigour when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St Paul's. (*Critical and Historical Essays contributed to the Edinburgh Review by Lord Macaulay*, Vol. III, 10th edn., 1860, pp. 100-1.)

SECTION VIII. SERMON SCHEMES

I. LITURGICAL

The parables

1. *The liturgical aspect:*

The Gospel of today presents two parables to us, both of them concerned with the kingdom of God which is the Church.

(a) *The aim of the liturgy:*

To continue with and in Christ the adoration of the Father which he rendered to him on earth.

This is the high mission of the Church herself and also that of her members. For this reason each one of us has a share in the priesthood of Christ, by means of the sacramental character (St Thomas, 3. q. 63. a. 3).

(b) *Another purpose of the Church:*

To communicate the life of Christ to her members, so that it may be manifested in their lives—the liturgy echoes this.

(c) *The centre of the liturgical life is Christ:*

- i. *as high Priest* of the New Law;
- ii. *as the principal agent* in the sanctification of souls;
- iii. *he is the life given to souls* so that they may adore God and also increase in perfection.

2. *Christ, the grain of mustard seed:*

(a) The Lord has compared himself to a grain of mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds, whose power and virtue are inflamed by tribulation and sufferings (St Hilary).

(b) The Lord himself is the grain of mustard seed (St Ambrose).

(c) The kingdom of heaven is Christ who, like a grain of mustard seed, was sown in the garden of a virginal body, grew on the tree of the cross for the whole world, whose fruit was so wonderful once it grew to maturity in the passion that everything that is alive in us is due to his power and contact (St Peter Chrysologus).

(d) The seed is sown at baptism so that it may grow and flourish. This is the meaning of one of the baptismal prayers. Omnipotent God, cure the blindness of his heart so that, once it has been signed with the mark of your wisdom, it may grow every day in virtue.

3. *Christ, the leaven:*

(a) The Fathers have also seen Christ in this symbol:

The Holy Church, which is the woman in this parable, whose flour we are, hides Christ in our minds, until the heat of divine wisdom penetrates the most hidden secrets of our hearts (St Ambrose).

(b) At our baptism the Church places the leaven in the dough:

That which was a servant of the devil becomes a son of God. The darkness is changed into light (Eph. 5. 8).

(c) *The Apostle mentions this frequently:*

In our baptism we have been buried with him, died like him, that so, just as Christ was raised up by his Father's power from the dead, we too might live and move in a new kind of existence (Rom. 6. 4).

He also speaks of the transformation of the old man into a new creature, through the action of Christ within us (Phil. 3. 21).

(d) *Stages of growth:*

Before reaching this definitive transformation the Christian has to pass through various stages of his growth. Just so, when I was a child, I talked like a child, I had the intelligence, the thoughts of a child; since I became a man, I have outgrown childish ways (1 Cor. 13. 11).

4. *Liturgical life:*(a) *Christ, seed and leaven:*

His office, to grow and transform.

(b) *The liturgy is life:*

It presents us with the atmosphere necessary for growth and transformation.

(c) *It is not merely a code of rules and ceremonies:*

It is the double aspect of the life of Christ, that of glorifying the Father and sanctifying souls.

(d) *The means it uses:*

i. *words.* Especially the word of God, which is the true leaven.
ii. *the Eucharist;* here Christ himself is the leaven that transforms souls. Active sharing in the sacrifice and in the Body of Christ, indispensable in the liturgical life, are also most effective means of transforming souls.

iii. *prayer.* To a more intensive life of prayer corresponds greater growth and transformation into Christ. The liturgy sanctifies our day with a magnificent prayer, in which we all have our share.

II. THE EPISTLE

A: A programme of Christian life

Motives for man's gratitude to God

The Epistle to the Thessalonians presents us with a reasoned programme for Christian living (1 Thess. 1. 2-10).

1. *The inhabitants of Thessalonica knew:*
- (a) That in the midst of an infidel world, without any prior merits on their part, the Father chose them (v. 1) to hear the word and gave them his free gift of the faith;
 - (b) that God lifted them up to the dignity of sons of God and friends;
 - (c) that they have received the Gospel 'in power' that is, with all the motives for credibility which, at that time, were mainly miracles and the persuasive power of the word.

2. *We also know this:*
- (a) We have been chosen by God out of millions of others, who might have been selected in our place;
 - (b) we are his adopted sons;
 - (c) we have proved the sanctifying power of the word in those around us and in ourselves;
 - (d) even miracles are not wanting.

Duties which derive from this

1. *Imitators of the Lord:*

The Thessalonians became imitators of the Lord (v. 6), that is, they became one with him in his mystical body.

2. *We should act in the same way. This demands:*

(a) *Active and apostolic faith:*

If we firmly believe that we have been incorporated into a Christ-Saviour who is also our Master, then we are obliged to co-operate in his mission. Baptism and Confirmation are sacraments which are destined for all the faithful and which consecrate them in the army of Christ. A Christian without this apostolic zeal is one whose faith is dead or at least very weak.

(b) *Operative charity:*

Of this Christ is the model, since he gave his own life. The Christian who feels himself to be incorporated into Christ will give more of himself to the life of active charity according as he is aware of this union. Charity which does not break into activity is mere sentiment.

(c) *Hope in Christ:*

i. *we believe that Christ will save us* and also grant to us good works which will be for our own merit; that he will give us his grace to do the works of faith and charity; also the perseverance in them and the grace to execute them. Above all, we hope in him because we believe that he has joined us to himself and that we share in his spiritual life.

ii. *through this confidence we do not fear the enemy* or even personal failure, because we can do all things in him who

strengthens us. God the Father has chosen us as his sons and we have understood the power of our baptism; we are ready to live the faith and preach it, each in his own way; to do works of charity and to hope in God.

B: Good example

The command to give good example

1. *St Paul:*

(a) And on your side, you followed our example, the Lord's example . . . and now you have become a model to all the believers throughout Macedonia and Achaia. Yes, the Lord's message has echoed out from you (1 Thess. 1. 6-8).

(b) You live in an age that is twisted out of its true pattern, and among such people you shine out, beacons to the world . . . (Phil. 2. 15).

(c) . . . make thyself a model of speech and behaviour for the faithful, all love, all faith, all purity (1 Tim. 4. 12).

2. *St Peter:*

Abstain from carnal desires and be examples for those who calumniate you so that, considering your good works, they may glorify God (1 Pet. 2. 11-12).

3. *The Lord:*

(a) salt of the earth, light of the world, a city which cannot be hidden. . . .

(b) not only by preaching, but also by example; so that their light may shine before men . . . (Matt. 5 13-16).

4. *The saints:*

To choose only one, St Bernard says: To give light is not enough, nor is to burn, by itself, enough. To burn and to illuminate, that is perfection.

5. *The pagans:*

Seneca: The way of teaching is a long one, that of example is short.

6. *Priests and apostles:*

(a) St Paul to Timothy, also at the election of the seven deacons it was asked that they should have the esteem of all men (Acts 6. 3).

(b) The words of the Lord have a special value when they are directed to those who work in the apostolate, as perhaps they were (cf. Matt. 5. 13-16).

The reasons for this command

1. *The divine plan of example:*

(a) Speaking of God's plan for the world, we may say that he has directed it through a series of people who would act as exemplar

causes, for others to imitate. Leaving aside the fact that God used his own exemplar ideas in the world's creation, the perfection to which he raised men is based on that of the Father (cf. Matt. 5. 8).

(b) Grades in this imitation:

- i. *the Father is copied perfectly in his only-begotten Son*, identical in all things with the Father;
- ii. *this Son became man and presents himself to us as our model*, making himself visible for us. It is a normal teaching of the Fathers that the Christian is 'another Christ'.
- iii. *Christ called himself the way, truth and life*; he told us to learn of him because he was meek and humble of heart. What Jesus did and taught does not merely refer to his doctrine, but also to his life and example.
- iv. *St Paul*, who confesses that he imitated Christ, urges this same imitation on us several times (cf. Phil. 2. 5; Heb. 12. 1-2).
- v. *The saints are the great imitators of Christ*, given as our models also—Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ, St Paul said. The whole of the Christian preaching on the saints has for its object to present them to us as our models.
- vi. *the faithful themselves must be models for the rest*. St Augustine said: Show the faithful models which will not serve to condemn them, but to save them.

2. *Efficacy of example:*

- (a) It serves to demonstrate that virtue is possible, even under very difficult circumstances.
- (b) It captures the hearts of others and attracts them.
 - i. no matter how badly we may judge human nature, still good puts evil to shame and attracts men to itself, if it will only lift up its banners with courage.
 - ii. the first Christians were a compendium of the Gospel, and all authors recognize the force of the example which vanquished the horror of persecution by the attraction of virtue.
- (c) It counts on the grace of God, since he has demanded it as a source of conversion and equals its power to that of preaching.

3. *How to give good example:*

- (a) Arm yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 13. 14). To follow our model is the first stage in the imitation of Christ; we must produce him in ourselves so that others may copy him.
- (b) Make thyself a model of speech and behaviour for the faithful, all love, all faith, all purity (1 Tim. 4. 12).

C: Sorrow and joy

1. *Two states of soul which are compatible:*

- (a) In today's epistle we read: Receiving the word in much tribulation, with joy of the Holy Ghost (1 Thess. 1. 6).
- (b) There is no antithesis between tribulation and joy, so far as the word of the Spirit is concerned, because although both may exist in one and the same person, the motives are different.

2. *Persecution and suffering, companions of the message of Christ:*

(a) *Christian preaching does not deceive:*

- i. *St Augustine* reprovved those preachers who only announced joys to their hearers; just because we are Christians we shall have to suffer more.
- ii. *St Ignatius* presents to us a Christ who suffered all the rigours of the campaign we shall have to go through and to which he invites us. In the meditation on the two standards he points out that ease and pleasure exist only under the banner of Satan.

3. *Causes of suffering:*

- (a) Ancient philosophies tried to solve this problem of evil by the creation of two principles, one of the good in the world and the other of the evil in it.
- (b) Christian philosophy presents us with a very different division—that between the spirit and the flesh, with the world as an added element to support the flesh.
 - i. *our desires*, our own good as human beings, the inclinations in our bodies, which are animal in origin and without due subjection except by great effort. On the other hand we have our soul, which must overcome its own difficulties and also direct the body.
 - ii. *the spirit of evil*. An angel, who fell and who has raised his standard against God and who does the best he can to bring us to ruin.
 - iii. *the circumstances of temptation* and its effects on those around us.

4. *The consequences of resistance against evil are painful:*

- (a) I have not come to bring peace but war. To follow the inclinations of the flesh is pleasant; to overcome this implies a struggle, sorrow and a certain contradiction in our own selves.
- (b) Those who give themselves up to temptation form an atmosphere around us which can lead us also into evil.
- (c) There is also exterior persecution, incited by the world and the devil. This is natural to the Christian and a proof that the Lord is still fighting against those two enemies.

(d) Christianity without the cross is impossible. When we ask for a quiet life without interior or exterior suffering we forget that Christ, our model, had to suffer. The body cannot lie at ease when the head is crowned with thorns!

5. *But, together with the sufferings there is always the joy in the Holy Spirit:*

(a) **A joy which is unknown to the world:**

God knows our weakness and he realizes that we cannot digest only bitter foods. He helps us. The world does not understand these joys, because to understand them we have to experience them. Just as one who is ignorant will never be able to understand the pleasures of knowledge, so one who has only lived the life of the senses is incapable of a taste for the true joys of the spirit.

(b) **The peace of Christ:**

We know perfectly well that between the tranquillity of a good conscience and the suffering of the saints there is a large range of joys which the Spirit gives to us and which the world neither knows nor can give. It is the peace of Christ.

III. THE GOSPEL

A: The Master and his parables

No one spoke as he did:

(a) **Christ, the teacher:**

He taught the truth and also he did it through the medium of teaching methods adapted to the needs of his hearers. They had to admit that no man had spoken to them as he did.

(b) **He taught them in parables:**

They were simple, without oratory, eternal because of their doctrine, based on reality. The theme is the kingdom of God—the most important of all; with the idea of forming Christians and the constitution of his Church.

General classification of the parables

1. It would be impossible to classify them all, but here is a general index of them taken from Vosté and Fonk.

2. *On the idea of the foundation of a kingdom:*

(a) **Christ:**

- i. the light of the world (John 1. 5; 3. 19; 8. 12; 9. 5; 12. 35).
- ii. the doctor of the world (Luke 4. 18-23).
- iii. the bridegroom (Matt. 9. 15).

(b) **The apostles:**

- i. salt of the earth, light of the world, city on the heights, etc. (Matt. 5. 13-16).
- ii. a house built on rock (Matt. 7. 24-27).

3. *Its qualities:*

- (a) A seed which needs the co-operation of its hearers (Matt. 13. 3-33);
- (b) mixed with the tares (Matt. 13. 24-30);
- (c) grows wonderfully, like the mustard seed and the leaven . . . (Matt. 13. 31-33);
- (d) abundant in spiritual goods, like a treasure which is hidden in a field; a pearl; a banquet after a wedding (cf. Matt. 13. 44, 45; 22. 1-4).
- (e) A kingdom of mercy in which there is a good shepherd (John 10. 1-18), lost sheep (Matt. 18. 12; Luke 15. 3-4), a lost coin (Luke 15. 8-10) and prodigal sons (Luke 15. 11-32).

(f) **One which imposes obligations on its subjects:**

- i. *on the apostles:* The harvest is great (Matt. 9. 37); their prudence (Matt. 13. 15); to suffer persecutions as did Christ (John 13. 16; 15. 20).
- ii. *on the faithful:* with regard to charity, the Good Samaritan (Luke 10. 30-37); the rich man (Luke 16. 19-31). With regard to pardon of others (Matt. 18. 21-22); faithful to one master, not attempting to serve two or more (Luke 16. 13); faithful, too, in their co-operation with grace (Matt. 25. 14-39; Luke 17. 7-10; 13. 6-9). Humble and prayerful (Luke 18. 9-14; 11. 5-13; 18. 1-8).

(g) **which will reach its final consummation:**

Cf. the parables on the last judgement, Luke 12. 35-42; Matt. 25. 1-13.

4. *Conclusions:*

(a) **Preachers:**

- i. these are the themes which the Lord desires should be preached.
- ii. the way they should be preached: simply, adapted to the intelligence of our hearers. Preparation—parables such as that of the harsh servant and the prodigal son are not an improvisation!

(b) **The faithful:**

The virtues on which our Lord insists especially.

B: The grain of mustard seed

1. *The word of God:*

(a) **The meaning of the grain of mustard seed:**

- i. *it is the Gospel, the word of God.* This was the interpretation of Ambrose, Chrysostom, Jerome and Augustine, among others;

ii. *St Hilary*, for example, applies it to Christ, others to the Church.

(b) These three opinions are in harmony:

- i. every word of God is a sharing in the Son of God, and therefore is, in some sense, Christ;
- ii. the Church is Christ's mystical Body;
- iii. Paul gave birth to souls by word and example, so that Christ might be formed in their souls (Gal. 4. 19).

2. *The word is like the grain of seed:*

(a) By reason of its founder:

The humble son of a carpenter, unread; which was the reason for the astonishment of the inhabitants of Nazareth when they heard him preach in the synagogue. . . . Is not this the son of Joseph? (Luke 4. 28-29).

(b) By reason of its form:

i. *it has no real literary form*; for which reason Augustine tells us that he did not like to read the Gospels at the beginning, because he found them so different from the literature to which he was accustomed.

ii. *Julian the Apostate* despised it as a 'religion for rustics'.

(c) Because of the first apostles, who were men of little or no culture, simple folk with little or no real spirit. At the time of the Resurrection of Christ they were in the Upper Room, weeping and mourning (Mark 16. 10).

(d) Because of the first converts, who were not the great ones of the earth, but rather the poor and the despised.

i. Consider, brethren, the circumstances of your own calling; not many of you are wise, in the world's fashion, not many powerful, not many well born.

ii. No, God has chosen what the world holds foolish, so as to abash the wise . . . no human creature was to have any grounds for boasting, in the presence of God (1 Cor. 1. 26-29).

3. *Its wonderful expansion:*

(a) In the place where it was originally preached, Jerusalem, where Christ had died on a cross.

(b) By the first propagandists, who were simple, uncultured men, preaching in the most sacred places of Jerusalem, to those same people who had condemned our Lord, setting themselves up against the power of the synagogue, i.e. against the State of Israel as it was then, which was organized and concentrated in the person of the Sanhedrin.

(c) They had to die:

i. it was logical enough that they should die at the hands of the people and the priests, who were gravely offended at their

preaching. There is nothing so logical, from the human point of view, as the death of Stephen.

ii. after all, they accused these same people of having put to death the Just One of God—the Messiah of Israel (Acts 7).

iii. and so it was with them all—they had to die, logically.

(d) Among such hearers:

i. the fundamental dogmas of the Gospel must have produced in all cultured Gentiles the same effect as did Paul's preaching in Athens—the pagan philosophers listened to him with derision, as to a mad preacher of strange gods.

ii. when they heard him talk of the resurrection of the body some laughed openly, while others said they would listen to that kind of talk another day (Acts 17).

iii. the word should, in all logic, have been choked at the very beginning by this indifference on the part of the learned of the pagan world.

(e) The triumph of the seed:

i. Mommsen, in his *History of Rome*, does not know how to explain the wonderful spread of Christianity throughout the Roman empire.

ii. we are from yesterday . . . yet we fill everything, said Tertullian. Entering by way of the lower classes, Christianity penetrated every sphere of society. The triumph of the faith in the time of Constantine was a logical consequence of its expansion up to that point.

(f) The stone mentioned by Daniel:

i. this parable reminds us of the prophecy of Daniel, who speaks of a small stone which damaged the feet of the great statue and turned it into dust. And that stone grew into a great mountain (Dan. 2. 31-35).

ii. the statue is the world and the great ones of the world;

iii. Christ did not fall upon the world like a great mountain, but as a small stone. He did not vanquish the mighty power of Satan by the right arm of his divine power, but wounded him by all that was small and insignificant in the God made man—by his sacred flesh, his blood poured out, his passion and death on a cross.

iv. the stone did not wound the forehead of that great statue, but only the feet, where a wound is not usually fatal. But once the feet of clay were damaged, then the breast, shoulders, neck and head of gold were as nothing and brought to the dust.

v. thus Christ wounded the devil in the person of the poor and lowly, and once these had been wounded by the truth, then the wise and powerful fell with them, some to submit to the stone, others to be crushed by it (Fray Luis de Leon).

C: The spontaneous growth of the seed

A mysterious growth

1. *The word of God grows by itself, automatically:*

(a) St Mark tells us of this parable which has a special meaning here:

The kingdom of heaven is like this; it is as if a man should sow a crop in his land, and then go to sleep and wake again, night after night, day after day, while the crop sprouts and grows, without any knowledge of his. So, of its own accord, the ground yields increase, first the blade, then the ear, then the perfect grain in the ear; and when the fruit appears, then it is time for him to put in the sickle, because now the harvest is ripe (4. 26-29).

(b) *The efficacy of the word:*

Here St Mark merely develops in the form of a parable what we already know about the word of God from other texts, namely that the word of God is a living, effective thing, strong as a sword (cf. Heb. 4. 12).

(c) *When is a thing effective?*

When it produces fruits according to its nature; thus fire is effective because it burns and spreads; but it will not do this unless it finds the material in condition to be burnt. Thus the word of God is spread in souls which are well disposed to receive it. This is the simple teaching of John of the Cross, who reminds preachers that their task is more spiritual than vocal, since the efficacy of their words will come, not from the mere words themselves, but from their interior spirit (*Ascent of Mt Carmel*, 1. 3. c. 45).

2. *An intellectual habit:*

Faith, as a habit, resides in the intellect.

(a) The word of God perfects the intellect; but the intellect penetrates into this word of God better when there are more interior dispositions to receive it; and as those dispositions grow, so does the effect of the word of God. These conditions grow together with charity, and charity increases according to the measure in which we kill our love of self and are inflamed with the love of God. Our self-love is like water on straw—it prevents the straw from burning as it should.

(b) St Teresa says that it is not in our power to place God in the soul or remove him from it; but that it is in our power to remove ourselves, and when we do that, we put God in our place. This explains how it is that some simple and uncultured souls can see more in the word of God than the greatest of theologians (St Teresa, *Fifth Castle*, ch. 2).

(c) Belloc used to say that he longed for the faith of a Breton peasant—and, better still, that of a Breton peasant's wife!

The theological explanation

1. *Charity increases the efficacy of the word:*

(a) Grace is like a new nature, imposed on the old one; the virtues are its faculties, by which it works. Of these, charity perfects the will, faith the intellect.

(b) The gifts of the Holy Spirit perfect the work of the virtues, and of these, the intellectual gifts perfect our understanding of divine things. By the gift of understanding we penetrate into the inner meaning of revealed truth, without the need for any reasoning process. These gifts of the Holy Spirit increase in us together with charity and grace.

(c) In this way, without any intellectual effort on our part, the interior life increases within us of itself, without our knowing it, and with it the word of God.

2. *St Thomas and St John of the Cross. . . .*

This is the doctrine of St Thomas (2-2, q. 180, a. 1) and of St John of the Cross (*Dark Night*, 1. 2. ch. 17).

(a) It is an obvious development of the efficacy of the word of God in simple souls of great faith and love; and also of the presence in the soul of the Blessed Trinity.

(b) It is a logical consequence of the teaching of the great doctors of the Church on charity and on the gift of wisdom (cf. St Thomas, 2-2. q. 45).

3. *The texts of St Paul:*

(a) *Ephesians:*

May he, out of the rich treasury of his glory, strengthen you through his Spirit with a power that reaches your innermost being. May Christ find a dwelling-place, through faith, in your hearts; may your lives be rooted in love, founded on love. May you and all the saints be enabled to measure, in all its breadth and length and height and depth, the love of Christ, to know what passes knowledge. May you be filled with all the completion God has to give (3. 16-19).

(b) *Colossians:*

And, to crown all this, charity; that is the bond which makes us perfect. . . . May all the wealth of Christ's inspiration have its shrine among you . . . (3. 14-16).

D: Horizontal and vertical growth

1. *Horizontal growth:*

(a) The area in which the word of God is sown grows year by year:

i. St Paul, from his prison cell in Rome, contemplated the area where he had preached the Gospel, from Illyria to Jerusalem; but that is a very small zone compared to those where the Gospel is preached today.

ii. today the Church can count on more than five hundred and fifty million souls and there are now signs that native clergy and bishops will be the usual thing all over the world. The modern figures speak for themselves.

(b) There are very great hopes all over the world, especially with the growth of the faith in the United States and the new missionary movements in South America.

(c) Even so, the enemies of the Church are more powerful now than they were, especially in some countries, Sudan, China, etc.

2. *Vertical growth:*

It penetrates ever more into the heart of society; thus the old Catholic nations are day by day more conscious of their Catholic inheritance, while even in other organizations the spirit of the Gospel is growing. The four marks of the Church are every day more brilliant and more evident.

(a) We need give but the one example of social justice, which has never been practised before as it is today—even though there are still defects, due to old political systems.

(b) The Encyclical *Mater et Magistra* of John XXIII demonstrates the flexibility of the Church within the framework of the faith.

(c) Vatican II, the greatest Council of all time, is a proof of the same desire for vertical growth and application of the means to attain it.

(d) There are those who judge our century only by its great sins, forgetting its great virtues. There are signs of a new dawn for Christianity, especially in the light of the decisions of the Council (Vatican II).

E: The miracle of the Church

The grain of mustard seed—an image of the Church

1. *The kingdom of Christ:*

The insignificant grain of mustard seed, sown in the furrows and growing into a great tree, is an image of the Church. She is the kingdom founded by Christ on earth, so that all souls may take refuge in her branches.

2. *An argument for her truth:*

This fact of her continued growth is a permanent argument in favour of the truth of her doctrine. The contemplation of the ever-spreading fertility of the Church is an encouragement for our faith and a joy to the heart of any Catholic.

Three Roads

Three roads by which Catholic theology can prove that our Church is the true Church of Christ.

1. *The historical road—her connection with Rome:*

It is a long but a solid road. It goes by steps, proving each one of these affirmations:

(a) Christ founded a Church, a religious society, with a hierarchy of the apostles with St Peter at their head. He had the full powers of jurisdiction over the Church.

(b) It was perpetual—this Church was instituted by Christ for all time, until the end of the world.

(c) The apostolic College is perpetuated in the Bishops and the primacy of Peter in that of the Bishop of Rome.

(d) Thus the only Church which can by right call herself the Church of Christ is that Church which is founded on Rome.

2. *The road of the marks of the Church:*

(a) In the Gospels we find the essential qualities of the Church of Christ:

These she must demonstrate until the end of the world, since anything else would prove that she is not the Church of Christ.

i. *liturgical*, dogmatic and authoritative unity;

ii. *sanctity in various grades*, especially heroic sanctity, i.e. that which is morally impossible without the direct intervention of God.

iii. *Catholicity*. Of right and of fact, in so far as she alone will have the right to penetrate the whole world and that, wherever she is, there will be one and the same faith, authority and hierarchy united with Rome.

iv. *Apostolicity*. Succession of her bishops from the apostles with the same doctrine as they held, and with the jurisdiction which Christ gave them.

(b) *The one authentic Church:*

By exclusion of all others and by her positive marks of authenticity.

3. *The Church—a moral miracle:*

(a) *The argument:*

i. it is also derived from the four marks of perpetuity, unity, sanctity and apostolicity, but from another point of view, which comes to the same conclusion. The Church is a living miracle.

ii. since God only works miracles in confirmation of the truth, the very life of the Church confirms her claims to be the one instituted by Christ.

iii. the Vatican Council pointed this out in no uncertain terms, when it said that the Church could be recognized by all through these four marks of unity, apostolicity, sanctity and catholicity (Sess. 3. c. 3).

4. Those of us who have the joy of belonging to this Church should have always before our minds the conclusion of the Vatican Council: The miracle of the Church is always present to us, as an extrinsic help to those who are still outside that fold and as an intrinsic aid to those who are within the fold and who should continually invoke the power from on high.

F: The moral miracle of the expansion of the Church

1. Physical and moral miracles:

Miracles are not limited to those facts which cannot be explained by the physical laws which govern the universe; such as the sudden cure of some illness or the raising of someone from the dead.

There are also moral miracles, actions which are superior to the normal powers of the human will.

2. Expansion:

The rapid expansion of the Church throughout the world during the first three centuries is a fact which is not explained by anything human—it is beyond the powers of the human will.

(a) We may prescind from the fact of the stability of the Church throughout the ages, which is also a moral miracle, and consider only the rapid spread of a religion which gave no chance of intellectual, dogmatic or moral freedom, with no promise of relaxation of morals—quite the opposite; and which, as it spread, brought about a complete reformation in the moral customs of the time.

(b) A fact which cannot be denied—when Constantine became emperor the major part of the empire was already Christian. The conversion of the emperor was an admission of an already accomplished fact.

The obstacles and the means which Christianity used to overcome them

1. Factors against its spread:

(a) It was a foreign religion, and Jewish at that:

i. in an era of religious nationalism. As Origen notes, no legislator, whether Roman or Greek, tried to legislate for foreigners, even though he may have wished to do so, because they thought it impossible to overcome the prejudice which would arise. The

unity imposed by Rome was very superficial and always respected local cults. This was an essential element in the Roman conquest of the world.

ii. *the Jews were a despised people as a whole*; Christ and his apostles were presented to the world as traitors, even by their own race.

(b) A universal religion:

i. *Christianity tried to be a universal religion*, unifying Greeks, Romans and Jews—which would be repugnant to them all.

ii. *Celsus thought it impossible* that all peoples, especially those of Asia, Europe and Libya, Greeks and barbarians, should be united under one rule of law; to which Origen replied that it could be done only by the power of Christ, which was superior to all vices.

(c) The only religion:

i. the gods which already existed and which Christianity attempted to overthrow were a symbol of imperial unity against the barbarian, while at the same time the common people held them in esteem. To the latter they formed part of their tradition and inheritance.

ii. this explains the ferocity of the later persecutions, which were an attempt to destroy Christianity so as to cement the unity of the empire against the barbarians. The accusation that Christianity had destroyed this unity was so serious that Augustine was forced to write *De Civitate Dei* to refute it.

(d) A religion of dogmas:

i. which were repugnant to the sceptical or rationalist philosophers of the time, because they could not explain them;

ii. and to the people, such as that of a God who was crucified.

(e) Religion of austere morality:

i. it is enough to read the Epistles to the Corinthians to see how opposed Christianity was to the morals of the time;

ii. it is enough to see how the doctrine of the resurrection scandalized the Athenians and how worried Felix was at the doctrine of married chastity.

iii. infanticide, immorality of all kinds, degeneration, divorce. . . . The Christian had to avoid the diversions of his age and was classified as an enemy of the human race.

(f) Against this religion were unloosed physical persecution, calumny, hatred of all kinds:

i. the accusation of cannibalism;

ii. adoration of animals;

iii. *accused of every public calamity*. If the Tiber rises up to the

very walls, if the Nile does not rise to flood the fields . . . if there is pestilence. . . . The Christians to the lions! (Tertullian).

2. There is an apparent disproportion between these things and the means used to overcome them: apostles who were illiterate and without arms; they neither praise the passions nor try to stir up revolution; promise eternal life and pardon for sin, but at the price of a great effort here below, which other religions did not exact.

3. *The triumph of Christianity is a moral miracle:*

(a) *It is not logical:*

It is no good pretending that truth can overcome by itself, because history proves the contrary. In the very heart of Christianity itself, and from the very first, there were heresies and schisms.

(b) *The finger of God was there:*

The difficulties are terrifying; the human means futile. It was a task performed by children, virgins and poor people without any power or influence. There is nothing for it but to confess that the hand of God was there.

G: Grace and holiness

A fundamental law of the kingdom of God

1. This kingdom grows and transforms at the same time.
2. The law of the Church is one of growth and slow transformation; poor and humble in its beginnings, it extends throughout the whole world, changing evil customs as it goes.
3. The same is true of the works of the saints, and that of sanctifying grace.

The law of growth in grace

1. *A new nature:*

In the life received at baptism there is a new nature, sanctifying grace, together with its powers, which are the virtues and the gifts. It is holiness in the form of a seed.

2. *Sanctity:*

The development of grace and the virtues and gifts, their full and perfect exercise, join the soul intimately with God, make her docile to his inspirations, identify her with his will. This is sanctity.

3. *Such a growth is slow, like that of a seed:*

(a) Saints are not usually made in a day—it is a slow growth.

(b) Discouragement is frequent in the spiritual life, because there seems to be no progress. The farmer does not notice the steady growth of the corn if he watches it every day. Therefore it is not

wise for souls to try to measure their progress day by day, because it may lead to vanity and is, in any case, useless.

(c) The growth does not depend on the soul, but on grace. Faithful souls who pray and sacrifice themselves with a true spirit can be sure that the growth of the kingdom is slow but sure.

The law of transformation

1. Grace does not destroy nature—it perfects it. This perfection is the slow transformation of all that was vitiated by original sin.

2. The saints are not abnormal people, or afflicted with a kind of madness; on the contrary, they are perfect men and women.

3. Each one is an individual, with his or her own characteristics. One is meek, another energetic; one attractive, the other almost ice-cold. In one the heart predominates; in another the intellect.

4. *Grace, as it grows, transforms a man:*

(a) *The three measures of flour of which the Gospel speaks:*

For St Ambrose and St Jerome this represents the flesh, the soul and the spirit.

(b) *How does grace transform a man?*

By healing his natural powers, which are inclined to evil; by fortifying his good qualities and natural dispositions; by lifting up the soul through its union with God.

i. *it lifts up his natural powers* by means of the supernatural infused virtues, especially the theological virtues.

ii. *faith allows the intellect to share in God's secrets;* and so we are able to see and judge things through God's eyes.

iii. *hope makes it possible for us to trust completely* in God's power and omnipotence; lifts up our eyes to our eternal salvation, which is possible to us through God's help. Thus we are able to overcome obstacles and aspire to eternal things;

iv. *charity lifts up our hearts* to love God and our neighbour above all earthly goods.

(c) *Grace gives to man's works a new, eternal and divine value:*

Makes them earn eternal glory, so much so that even the smallest of them has an eternal value.

Sanctity and nature

1. The greater the natural disposition of a man, so much the greater the transformation which grace can produce in him.

2. Sanctity is not incompatible with human values; knowledge, sport, social events—all these are not opposed to sanctity nor do they diminish it.
3. But nature must be educated so as not to put obstacles in the way of grace. So that the leaven may act in us it is necessary for us to allow ourselves to be penetrated by it, purified and lifted up by it.

H: Means to progress in grace

1. *The seed of grace:*

Baptism grants to us the seed of grace, a re-birth of man to a spiritual life. This is granted to all alike; but its effects are not the same in all. The reason is that there is not the same co-operation in all.

(a) **Man cannot produce grace, nor can he merit it:**
It belongs to the supernatural order and is a free gift of God.

(b) **But he can facilitate its growth:**
Granted that the growth of grace is the work of God rather than man, still, man can do something, in so far as he co-operates with grace, just as the skilful farmer can help nature do her work.

2. *Means to increase grace:*

(a) **The sacraments:**
They are the channels of grace. Received with devotion, and frequently, they increase grace.

(b) **Good works:**
They are not merely the fruits of grace but also titles through which we receive greater graces.

3. *The saints:*

(a) They have understood the enormous importance of grace and its value. They have made every effort to co-operate with it, have put it before all earthly goods—even their own lives. Through it, little by little, they have reached the heights of union with God, which is the complete development of grace.

(b) Sanctity is a road open to all, each in his own degree.

(c) It does not require heroic acts, unless grace itself demands them. The ordinary daily practice of supernatural virtue, especially charity, which is the queen of them all, is enough; in fact, it is the normal way to acquire sanctity.

(d) He who really desires to reach sanctity should make his own the ideas contained in Col. 1. 9-12.

I: The apostle

1. *Christ, the leaven of the world:*

(a) He has transformed the world with his doctrine; but also by means of his life and his example.

(b) He does not merely teach us a road to heaven, but also that he is the way, the truth and the life. He does not merely communicate life to us—he is that life. He is the living Gospel.

2. *The apostles: leaven, as was Christ:*

(a) **The twelve continued the work of Christ:**

Humble and meek, as he was, they are also leaven in the dough.

i. *at Pentecost they are transformed*, filled with the Holy Spirit and the grace of God; only then do they begin their work of preaching throughout the world.

ii. they also are living gospels.

(b) **One example: St Paul:**

i. the divine light penetrates and transforms him into a vessel of election, to carry the name of Christ among the nations;

ii. he is the servant of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1. 1);

iii. chosen by God (Acts 13. 2);

iv. whose mission is to preach—an ambassador of the Gospel of Christ (Eph. 6. 19);

v. conscious of this mission, he is also aware of the fact that he must be filled with the thought of God if he is to succeed; that is why he begs the Ephesians to pray for him, that words may be given to him that he may explain the Gospel to others (*ibid.*);

vi. he is filled with Christ, transformed into Christ, so much so that it is Christ now who dwells in Paul (Gal. 2. 20);

vii. that is why he can present himself as an example to others (Phil. 3. 17).

3. *Every apostle must be so in his own life:*

(a) **The example of Christ and Paul:**

i. an apostle is one who spreads the word of God by his preaching; and there are special graces attached to this preaching which are independent of the one who preaches;

ii. but the word has even greater effect when it is linked up with the life of the apostle, who thus demonstrates in his own person that he also has been filled with it and transformed by it.

(b) The inhabitants of Thessalonica are praised for this by Paul (1 Thess. 1. 5).

4. *The apostle of Catholic Action:*

(a) The faithful at the orders of the bishops form the army of Catholic Action.

(b) A truly militant member of Catholic Action must be a living gospel, faithful in his imitation of Christ and Paul;

(c) one who seeks the kingdom of God in society through prayer, example, propaganda and action, especially through works of charity (Pius XI, *Ubi arcano Dei*).

i. *prayer* (2 Cor. 3. 18);

ii. *an example*: Thérèse of Lisieux;

iii. *the ideal*: that this apostolate of prayer and action should be attained by all those who have been baptized.

J: The virtues of the Master

1. *A profound contrast*:

One of the outstanding elements in the Gospel story is undoubtedly the contrast between the wisdom and charity of Christ and the spiritual poverty of the disciples. Christ chose men of low condition, without spiritual culture or formed virtue; towards them he practised the most exemplary charity, patience and long-suffering.

(a) The defects of the apostles:

i. *inconstancy and indiscretion* (cf. John 14. 8-9);

ii. *inability to understand our Lord* (cf. Luke 18. 34; Matt. 16. 9-11);

iii. *weak in the faith* (cf. Matt. 8. 26; Mark 8. 4; John 15);

iv. *weakness*; they slept on Thabor and also in the Garden;

v. *pride*; the case of Peter and the rest at the Last Supper;

vi. *stubborn and hard of heart*; the case of Thomas as an example;

vii. *ambitious*—they wanted the first places in the kingdom;

viii. *cowards*, they flee from the Garden and leave Christ alone;

ix. *egoists* (cf. Luke 9. 12; John 6. 7).

(b) The admirable conduct of Christ:

His patience and long-suffering with them, in spite of all their weaknesses. He who chooses disciples needs the heart of a true father and mother.

2. *Christ, an example to those who have to form minority groups*:

(a) The case of Judas:

i. *Christ gives a great example of patience* to the very end in the case of Judas;

ii. *he knows every move Judas makes and puts up with it*: he washes his feet; gives him a mark of special favour at the table of the Last Supper; makes his last appeal to him as he receives the traitor's kiss in the Garden.

(b) *Reproof and encouragement*:

i. *he reproves his disciples*, and with severity at times (cf. Matt. 16. 23);

ii. then a few days later gives them the encouragement of the transfiguration.

(c) *Paternal tenderness*:

i. his goodbye to them at the Last Supper (John 13. 33);

ii. the rest of his last discourse to them on that occasion is full of tenderness and love for them;

iii. after his resurrection he prepares a meal for them on the shore (John 21. 9).

(d) *Magnanimity*:

He who forms men must be magnanimous; prepared to forgive faults when there is sincere repentance.

i. *Christ pardons Peter*—by a look, which brings tears to Peter's eyes and sorrow to his heart;

ii. *with Thomas, satisfying his demands*, excessive as they were (John 20. 27).

(e) *The rough and uncultured, the ignorant*:

i. *by human standards* we would choose men who are well prepared for great tasks; that is what Dominic, Ignatius and other religious founders did; such was the action of Paul, as we can judge from his disciples, Timothy, Titus, Luke. . . .

ii. *Christ, on the other hand*, chose poor and lowly people, with little or no education as the world knows it, so as to confute the strong by bringing the weak against them, so that it might be evident that the whole power lies in the word of God. This is a lesson we should learn; only too often simple folk with great power of virtue are more useful to God in apostolic work than those who are wise by the world's standards.

K: The technique of the word

1. *The technique of the word and of organization*:

The secret of the rapid growth of the seed lies in the effective action of the Holy Spirit; but Christ also gives us valuable human lessons to teach us how we should act.

2. *Apostolate of the word*:

(a) *The Gospel is a message*:

i. *it is the 'good news'* which comes to us from heaven.

ii. *its statements are categorical and with authority*; its power lies in this.

iii. *from the preaching of the Baptist onwards* it is announced in this way, Behold the Lamb of God . . . I say to you! (Matt. 5. 20).

iv. *there is authority in it*—Go, teach all nations . . . he that shall believe will be saved, and he that does not believe shall be condemned . . . (Mark 16. 16).

(b) He who refuses to hear the preaching of the Gospel:

- i. *polemic is of little use*; often a book is needed to reply to a few lines of an adversary—he is not willing to be convinced in any case;
- ii. *occasionally it may be necessary for the good of the Church*, but from the point of view of the individual it is usually a waste of time;
- iii. *it is a defensive action*, in any case;
- iv. *of more use* is the positive statement of the truth.

(c) For the people and the learned:

- i. the preacher should give them all the word of God, simply, as it is in the Scriptures, with applications which will suit them all;
- ii. remembering that he has in his audience people of different levels of culture, in different circumstances;
- iii. the learned can still learn from a popular exposition of the Gospel teaching;
- iv. the people can still learn from theological explanations, even though they may not understand every word of them;
- v. in general, our people need and welcome instruction, especially on the great dogmas of the faith, such as grace, the virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the resurrection, etc.
- vi. how seldom one hears a sermon on grace!
- vii. speculative questions should not be ventilated in the pulpit, example, the reconciliation of human liberty with the will of God, etc.

(d) A few ideas, but essential ones:

- i. *a text of Menendez Pelayo*: What appears to be a limitation is, in truth, the root of its power, a few ideas, but clear and dominant; simple exposition and great effects attained by simple means;
- ii. *the gospels*, the writings of Paul and the other apostles . . .
- iii. *repetition*—the art of great teachers;
- iv. *avoid the mistake of looking always for novelty*; so many preachers think that they must say something new.

(e) Without leaving aside anything that is proper to men: The Gospel deals with the whole man.

- i. it is narrative, poetic, philosophical; it is not a mere logical exposition of facts, but something human;
- ii. preaching should never be reduced to a dogmatic thesis.

3. *The great models*:

- (a) First of all, the gospels, then St Paul's writings and after that the books of the Old Testament. St Augustine, among the Fathers.

(b) The wisdom of the Church, especially in the catechism:

- i. it contains the 'true form of words', which the children learn by heart, and never forget.
- ii. preaching of homilies—in the style used by Christ himself, even though adapted to meet the needs of the times.
- iii. both are necessary, above all, instruction in the faith, by word and example.

(c) Practical rules:

How can we achieve the technique of the divine word? Certainly not by rhetorical means.

- i. the best way is to learn from the means used by Christ and taught us in the gospels; read them frequently and soak oneself in their teaching and style; meditate on them. Do the same with the writings of Paul. Greater attention to the study of the Fathers.
- ii. the preacher who adopts this method of preparation will find himself, almost unconsciously, using words and phrases from the Scriptures; when such phrases come from the heart rather than from the memory, they will have still more effect.
- iii. meditation on them is necessary—then they will have a deep effect on our hearers.

L: The whole mass of the dough

1. *This does not mean that all will be saved*:

This we know from other parables in the Gospel, such as that of the net, in which there are both good and bad fish; that of the tares; of the seed which is sown in different types of ground; that of the supper, to which many were invited; the wedding feast; the story of the last judgement, etc., etc.

2. *Two ways in which we can understand this parable*:

(a) The leaven has the power within it sufficient to ferment the whole mass of the human race, of all ages, conditions and circumstances.

(b) In each individual it has the power to transform the whole man, body and soul. It can give him new life.

(c) This is the will of God, who wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2. 4).

3. *The moral sense*:

(a) The Gospel is for all men:

- i. *of all nations*; it is adapted to the Jewish mentality, to the Greek, to the Latin temperament; it flourishes among the German-speaking nations, the Anglo-Saxons, the Negroes of Africa, India, etc.
- ii. *of all times*, from the first to the twentieth centuries;
- iii. *of all conditions*, rich or poor, young or old, male or female . . .

iv. *men of every type of culture*, being suited to the mentality of the scientist, the man of little or no education, the theologian . . .

(b) St John's vision of the Church confirms this (cf. Apoc. 7. 9).

(c) No philosophy has ever achieved so much:

St Thomas, on making this remark, quotes Platonism as an example, since, even when it was most popular, it never ceased to be the philosophy of a small minority group, incomparable with the Gospel in its solidity, universality and usefulness.

4. *The whole man:*

(a) The word of God is not merely made for all men, but also designed to captivate the whole of man.

(b) Any philosophical doctrine will present us with certain principles; will form a basis for our scientific studies, be they moral or juridical; it can orientate us towards certain practical applications and have a limited use in a man's life.

(c) But the word of the Gospel can transform the whole man, change the course of his whole life, re-orientate all his activities. It can infuse into him a new principle which will rule his whole life, give him a new faith, a new life:

- i. *the example of Paul*, at his conversion; of St Anthony the Hermit, Francis Borgia, Xavier and many others;
- ii. *the same is true of so many individuals in our day*. The Gospel is still the leaven in the dough.

M: Leaven and dough

Minorities

1. *Concepts* (cf. Section VII):

In the social sense the leaven means minorities, the dough, the mass of the faithful and others in the world. We hear a lot about the formation of minority groups, but often this is not understood in the right way.

2. *A reality of modern times:*

Education in groups, and the love for statistics. If we are not careful, numbers can become more important than quality. This is true of Catholic youth organizations, Institutes and Congregations, etc. This education in groups may be necessary, but it is not the true formation of minorities.

The example of Christ

Even in the human and technical orders Christ gives us valuable example. In his life we must study and understand the difference between the mass and the minority; the cultivation of the mass and the education of the minority.

1. *Model for propagandists:*

In the way he presents his doctrine we can see certain characteristics;

(a) He does not lose direct contact with the ordinary people. Preaching to large crowds.

(b) He also undertook preaching to small concentric groups or circles; the five hundred disciples, the seventy-two, the twelve.

(c) His formation is more intense as the group is reduced, until we see that the true minority is the twelve, and even among them he chose three for some of his very special teaching.

2. *Here is the leaven:*

This the principal minority. Let us study the procedure he followed in the formation of those who were to be the foundation of his Church. He chose them one by one and their formation is a slow process.

(a) An individual call. The case of Peter:

i. *first of all a disciple in the wide sense of the word*, together with some of the others he followed our Lord, and then, like them, returned for a time to his ordinary occupation;

ii. *the next stage* was when he left all things to follow Jesus (Luke 5. 11);

iii. *the Lord names him an apostle* after a night spent in prayer (Luke 6. 12-13).

(b) A common life together:

The twelve were chosen for this common life, they accompany the Lord everywhere, with community of goods and means of life; they are present at his public preaching and receive private lessons from him in which he gives them the inner meaning of the parables he used in his teaching to the people.

(c) Lessons of life:

They are allowed to see him in all the varied circumstances of his apostolate; in relation with men of all different social classes and of education; they see and hear his disputes with the Scribes and Pharisees; he anticipates for them the story of his passion and death and reveals to them the fact of his coming resurrection.

(d) Example—the main source of formation of the disciples:

The best school is that of the family circle, and the apostolic college was a true family, in which the example comes from Jesus.

(e) The supreme lesson:

The summary at the highest level of all his teaching to them is his last discourse before and during the Supper in the Upper Room. He washes their feet—an act of humility, but also an example, as he says himself: I have given you an example, that as I have done, you

should do also. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you . . . remain in my love . . . (John 13-16).

Conclusion

1. Not everyone can apply these high principles to the formation of minorities, but there is the ideal, from which we can all learn something.

2. Even from the human point of view, all those who have taken upon themselves the formation of minority groups to begin some great work have always acted as Jesus did.

(a) Compare the actions of the great founders of religious orders and congregations.

(b) The group which accompanied the founder is very like the apostolic college.

(c) The founder, in his methods of training, election, etc., followed closely the example of our Lord.

3. Those who are destined to form minority groups have to possess certain fundamental virtues—in imitation of Christ; and this should be their first aim, to be like Christ in everything, and to demonstrate that example to all their followers.

Septuagesima Sunday

THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD

SECTION I. SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9. 24-10. 5 Gospel: Matthew 20. 1-16

Texts concerning work and idleness

1. *Work is the common lot of all men and is blessed by God:*

Still thou shalt earn thy bread with the sweat of thy brow, until thou goest back into the ground from which thou wast taken; dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. Gen. 3. 19.

Six days for drudgery, for doing all the work thou hast to do; when the seventh day comes, it is a day of rest, consecrated to the Lord thy God. Ex. 20. 8-9. Cf. *ibid.* 34. 21.

Full belly or empty, sound is the cottar's sleep; sleep, to the pampered body of the rich still denied. Eccles. 5. 11.

Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary . . . ? Mark 6. 3.

He paid them a visit: then, since they were brothers of the same craft (both were tent-makers) he stayed and worked with them. Acts 18. 2-3.

I have never asked for silver or gold or clothing from any man; you will bear me out, that these hands of mine have sufficed for all that I and my companions needed. Always I have tried to shew you that it is our duty so to work, and be the support of the weak, remembering the words spoken by the Lord Jesus himself, It is more blessed to give than to receive. Acts 20. 33-35. Cf. 1 Cor. 4. 12; 2 Thess. 3. 8-10.

2. *The just retribution for work:*

Do not withhold the wages of thy hired servants till morning comes. Lev. 19. 13.

And if thou hast a hired servant that lives from hand to mouth, be he thy fellow-Israelite, or some alien that shares thy land and city, do not withhold his wages; pay him his day's wages before set of sun. It is all he has, in his poverty, to support life with; cries he to the Lord, thou art a sinner manifest. Deut. 24. 14-16. Cf. Tob. 4. 15.

Poor man's bread is poor man's life; cheat him of it, and thou hast slain him; sweat of his brow, or his life's blood, what matters? Disappoint the hireling, and thou art own brother to a murderer. Eccles. 34. 25-27.

Remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they have to give you; the labourer has a right to his maintenance; do not move from one house to another. Luke 10. 7.

And here the proverb fits, which is true enough, One man sows, and another reaps. The harvest I have sent you out to reap is one on which you bestowed no labour; others have laboured, and it is their labours you have inherited. John 4. 37-38.

This man plants, that man waters; it is all one. And yet either will receive his own wages, in proportion to his own work. 1 Cor. 3. 8. Cf. 1 Tim. 5. 18.

You have kept back the pay of the workmen who reaped your lands, and it is there to cry out against you; the Lord of hosts has listened to their complaint. James 5. 4.

At toil repine not; the farmer's trade is of divine appointment. Ecclus. 7. 16.

The first share in the harvest goes to the labourer who has toiled for it. 2 Tim. 2. 6.

Idleness is a great teacher of ill habit. Ecclus. 33. 29. Cf. Prov. 6. 6, 9-11; 2 Thess. 3. 11-12; 1 Tim. 5. 13.

SECTION II. GENERAL COMMENTS

I. LITURGICAL

This Sunday begins what we may call the pre-Lent period of the Church's liturgy, and therefore we include some notes on the origin and history of it.

1. Origin:

It was established as something definite in the time of St Gregory the Great (590-604), and is made up of three Sundays. The idea was to avoid an abrupt transition from Epiphany to Lent and also to prepare better for the entrance into Lent. The Church, as a wise Mother and Teacher, knows that the passing from the joys of Christmas time to the rigours of Lent would be a difficult one; therefore she has instituted this period of transition, to prepare the faithful, both in spirit and in body, for the Lenten fast.

2. Characteristics:

The main one, even if somewhat attenuated, is penance. This appears in the outward signs, the purple vestments, no *Gloria* at Mass, etc. We can deduce the importance given to this period by the Basilicas which were the Stational Churches of these three Sundays, namely, St Lawrence's, St Paul's and St Peter's. St John Lateran is reserved for the 1st Sunday of Lent.

3. Efficacy and Spirit:

In order to obtain the purpose she has in mind the Church, through the appropriate liturgical texts, tries to make Christians

realize the misery of their state as sinners and their own weakness, in order to prepare them for the need of penance and unite them to the one sacrifice of Christ, which is commemorated in the Lenten cycle.

This period of Septuagesima has been likened to the seventy years of the Babylonian captivity. There the Jews were convinced of their fault, wept for their sins and longed for the return to Jerusalem. So, during this period, the Church calls our attention to the exile of those who live far from Christ and invites us to weep for our sins, so that later we may taste the joys of the resurrection. St Gregory composed the liturgical texts at a time when the Lombards were laying Italy to waste and threatened to conquer the Holy City itself. Hunger and pestilence were the order of the day. Therefore the texts of these three Sundays reflect the misery and weeping of a people who suffer deeply and paint in vivid colours the consequences of sin.

The spirit in which we ought to celebrate this pre-lenten period:

- i. *humility*, recognizing our guilt;
- ii. *petition*, asking God to give us the grace to enter into Lent, which is approaching, in such a way as to get the most profit from it;
- iii. *some penance*, however slight.

II. EXEGETIC AND MORAL NOTES

A: The Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9. 24-10. 5

1. Occasion and argument:

The passage read today is partly from chapter 9 and partly from chapter 10 (1 Cor. 9. 24-10. 5). This need not surprise us, because the divisions of the Scriptures into chapters is often artificial and mainly to facilitate reading and quotations. From the 8th chapter the Apostle has been treating of the necessity of depriving oneself even of certain things which are lawful, in order to protect the weak. For this reason the Corinthians ought to avoid certain kinds of food, indifferent in themselves. He points out that even he did not demand his maintenance from the faithful, as was his right.

Weak with those who are weak, all things to all men so as to gain them for Christ; such is the Apostle who puts down for us in writing his motives: All that I do, I do for the sake of the gospel promises, to win myself a share in them (v. 23). Having said this, he follows it up with the two arguments which are the themes of this passage in today's Epistle.

(a) The struggle is worthwhile because of the reward which is promised;

(b) it is not enough to belong to the chosen people or to possess faith; there is also need of effort.

2. Texts:

(a) The race is for all, but the prize for one . . .

At the very beginning of the pre-Lent period, and in view of the Gospel, which reminds us that we must bear the burdens of the day and the heat, the Church puts before us this Epistle, full of meaning for us.

St Paul develops his argument with two examples, that of a race and that of a fight. Both sports were celebrated in the famous stadium of Corinth, where the victor was given a symbolic crown of laurel or flowers.

The comparison is not meant to reduce the limits of salvation to only one person, obviously. Paul's intention is to fill his readers with the same spirit of competition which exists among runners, one only of whom will receive the coveted prize. This image of the race is common in the writings of Paul (cf. Gal. 2. 2; Phil. 2. 16; 2 Thess. 3. 1). As St Thomas says: Even in the spiritual race, one only receives the prize—he who perseveres to the end (*in loco*). Run, then, for victory: indicates first the effort, then the purpose, lastly the prize.

(b) Every athlete must keep all his appetites under control . . .

Here is the very centre of the example. If, in former chapters, Paul has demanded certain sacrifices from his readers, putting himself up as an example to them, he now proposes another example—that of sportsmen, who deprive themselves of anything which may lower their physical condition, thinking only of the race or the struggle ahead. The object is to make their bodies a mechanism destined for one sole purpose—the fight which is in front of them. They do all this for a crown that fades. The public will soon have a new idol. Our crown is one which cannot perish. It is the crown of life (James 1. 12).

(c) So I do not run my course like a man in doubt of his goal . . .

We know where we are going. The athlete does not run a zig-zag course; he goes straight for the tape. Our eyes should be fixed on heaven. I do not fight my battle like a man who wastes his blows on the air. . . . The boxer who is not an expert sees his blows miss his adversary time and again; not so Paul, who knows very well where to direct his punches! I buffet my own body. . . . The words are technical ones, implying a blow to the face. I make it my slave. . . . Again a technical expression, the pinning down of the shoulders of the adversary to the ground.

The adversary: the passions and even at times things which are lawful. Blow after blow is necessary when the right moment comes,

until we have our enemy on the ground, with his shoulders pressed firmly to it.

(d) or I, who have preached to others, may myself be rejected as worthless:

A reflection directed to the preacher himself. He also has to run his race and fight. What shame it would be if he were himself defeated!

(e) It is not enough to belong to the chosen race:

Apparently some of the Corinthians thought that they were saved by the mere fact of having the true faith and the sacraments. At least, Paul wishes to warn them against this illusion. Therefore he brings forth the example of the ancient fathers of the people. Christians are now the Israel of God! They should remember the lessons taught by their predecessors, who were brought out of Egypt, symbol of human corruption, and who were led through the Red Sea protected by the cloud and under the guidance of Moses. Yet they sinned and God abandoned them in the desert. There they died.

The world is a symbol of the Spirit of God; the sea, a symbol of baptism. Freed from the power of Pharaoh, they were subjected to the law of Moses, just as we are submitted to that of Christ by baptism. The manna and the water from the rock are types of the Eucharist. The words prove that the author of all revelation, old and new, is the Word of God, the *Logos*; and he alone has been able to say: If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink (John 7. 37).

3. The lesson:

It could not be more opportune. We must fight! The Christian is an athlete; and it is not enough for him to cry: Lord, Lord, from the gallery. He must be in the arena, fighting for his life!

B: The Gospel: Matthew 20. 1-16

1. Occasion:

The last journey of our Lord, after the resurrection of Lazarus, when he thought it best to leave Jerusalem and journey through Galilee, returning to the holy city in time for Palm Sunday. However, it is even more important to think of the context of the present passage, because it will be of help to understand the inner meaning of this parable. A young man could not bring himself to renounce his great riches to follow our Lord, who looked sadly at him and spoke of the difficulty in the way of the salvation of the rich.

In that case, what is left for us, who have left all things to follow you? asks St Peter. In his reply our Lord promises that the apostles shall sit on thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel; and also that anyone who leaves family, lands or wealth for his sake will

receive a hundredfold in return and the gift of everlasting life (Matt. 19. 30). Having said this our Lord adds a phrase which we shall study later; he says that many will be first that were last, and last that were first. And with this phrase the chapter comes to an end, the text having been artificially divided at this point, because the first verse of the next chapter begins the explanation, in form of a parable of this remark.

2. *The image:*

In itself, the parable is easy to understand. The real difficulty lies in determining the exact meaning of the phrases with which it begins and ends.

(a) *Vines in Palestine:*

In early times they abounded, in spite of the dry climate. They were destroyed later under the Muslim domination, together with so many other riches of that kind. The Bible is full of allusions to the vines and workers in the vineyards, from that first moment when the scouts returned from the Promised Land loaded down with bunches of grapes (Num. 13. 24). Two thousand years before Christ, the Egyptian Sinuhe stresses the abundance of vine, oil and honey in that region.

For a better understanding of the mystic considerations concerning the vineyard of the soul we should keep in mind that the Israelites surround their vineyards with a hedge of thorn or similar plants, placing stakes up which the vines could climb, or using trees, especially the fig tree, for this same purpose. There was usually a tower to protect the vineyard against thieves (Cant. 8. 10) and from animals; also a house where the wine was pressed from the grapes.

(b) *Labour in the vineyard:*

There are two main ones; in the spring, when the vines are pruned and the ground worked over, cleaned and prepared for the summer. Another—a festive occasion indeed—when the grapes are gathered, amidst songs and gaiety, and pressed. Many of the psalms seem to have been written for occasions such as this. In the Old Testament the vine is used as a symbol for the Jewish nation, while the collection and pressing of the grapes is a symbol of some calamity or even of death itself (Jer. 49. 9; Apoc. 14. 20).

(c) *The workers:*

Both tasks mentioned usually require more than the number of fixed labourers, and therefore the custom is to contract casual labour for these purposes. In Palestine at the time of our Lord—and still in many countries—it was the custom for those who wished to be employed as casual labour to gather at one central point in the nearby village. The owners of the local vineyards would then select

those they wanted. This is what the owner in the parable did. He went round several times contracting fresh labour, either because the work required it or else because he wished to provide them with work.

(d) *The hours of labour:*

The Jews divided the night into four vigils and the day into four hours, the length of which depended on the light of the sun. Whether the scene of this parable is the spring or the end of summer, the day would consist of twelve of our hours, divided into four by Jewish calculation, each one being of three hours duration. They would be counted from sunrise to sunset, i.e. from about six in the morning until six in the evening. Thus the last hired would have worked from about three in the afternoon.

(e) *The salary:*

It was the usual one of a denarius, the recognized daily wage of a labourer. It was usually paid out at the end of each day's work (Lev. 19. 13; Tob. 4. 15). The master ordered the money to be paid first of all to those who had been hired last. Had he begun with the first hired they would have gone away once they had received their money and the dramatic final scenes of the parable would not have developed. They all received the same, both those who had been hired early in the morning and those who were merely promised that they would be given what was just. This would normally have been in proportion to their hours of work.

3. *The explanation of the parable:*

What was our Lord's intention in proposing it as an explanation of the last phrase of the former chapter, in which he says that many will be first that were last, and last that were first? Leaving on one side the unorthodox solutions, we shall limit ourselves to those put forward by Catholic writers.

(a) The reward is not due to man's efforts only, but mainly to the grace of God. According to this, the first will be those who laboured with less grace, while the last represent those who were given grace in abundance and so became perfect in a short time. The explanation appears a little forced and nothing in the parable seems to justify it.

(b) Maldonatus thinks that the meaning is to show us that the reward is not due to the length of time we have laboured, but to the efforts we have put into our work. Again, the parable does not imply that some worked harder than others, a thing which should have been made quite clear were this the true meaning of the parable.

(c) The more usual explanation is that our Lord refers, in this parable, to the right which all possess to belong to the kingdom of God once they have been called by God, no matter at what hour the call may have come, and provided they accept it with good will.

We must not forget that our Lord used this phrase on a former occasion, when he told the Jews that they would be excluded from the kingdom enjoyed by their fathers, while others would come from the East and the West to take their places at the table (Luke 13. 30). In this case the meaning is plain: In spite of your vocation of old, you will be excluded.

The Lord, in this parable, promises an abundant reward to those who follow him. But he does not wish them to be proud or to presume on the fact that they were the first to know him. He has, at the same time, very much before his mind the Jewish mentality, according to which they considered themselves the rightful heirs to the vineyard, excluded from it, or at least gave only a very secondary place to, those who were converts from the Gentiles. Sinners were rejected entirely. Therefore Jesus lays down the contrary principles, which coincide, at least so far as the universality of the call is concerned, with the teaching of the parable of the banquet.

They are first who knew God beforehand. Both the first and the last will receive the same essential reward, heaven and the kingdom of God which leads to it.

But many of the first will receive less consideration than those who came last. We may ask why and in what this consists? The parable does not tell us the answer, but the Lord mentions it in other places. Many of them will not even be chosen, because although they were Jews, they have not chosen to go to the banquet and have given up their seats to others, the new sons of the faith. The centurion, called at the last hour, will be preferred to many Jews.

4. Texts:

Maldonatus, commenting on this passage, has written one of his best expositions on the parables. Referring to the elements of adornment which are not necessary for an understanding of the text, he tells us that those who wish to spend their time discussing them are really wasting it. For example, why are there five hours mentioned? Why was the wage a denarius? Why did they murmur indignantly, when such a thing is impossible in heaven? He considers as important parts of this parable the following:

(a) The owner:

This is God, the Father, or Christ himself who so often goes out to hire labourers.

(b) The day:

Some take it to mean the dawn of creation until the sunset of the judgement day, when the reward will be given. For others it means a man's life-span.

(c) Hours:

The meaning of this phrase will depend on the meaning we give to the whole day. It can imply either the different stages in revelation or the various ages of man.

(d) The market-place is the world:

(e) The denarius represents eternal life:

Some of the Fathers draw attention to the fact that this coin bore the image of the Emperor. Those who will be saved must bear that of the Son of God, according to St Paul (Phil. 3. 21). Our Lord chose this coin because it was the ordinary daily wage of a labourer.

(f) It was evening:

The hour of judgement, either particular or universal.

5. Other questions:

(a) Merit:

Our Lord did not intend to explain this, but without doubt the day's wage supposes a reward given in justice, and therefore on account of previous work done. If some have argued that greater labour demands greater recompense we may well reply that merit does not depend on time. We have already pointed out that the parable only refers to the essential reward.

(b) Predestination:

In the parable the master calls all those whom he finds in the market-place, and this theme is not the essential element of the parable. However, the phrase 'many are called, but few are chosen', does imply this question of predestination. It is possible that, in this parable, the phrase which is found in other places in the gospels may have been introduced by a copyist, since it is missing in some of the best Codices and does not seem to fit in with the true sense of the parable, which should be that the first will not always be first, but often last; nor will all those who have been called be saved, the word *many*, as we know, means all, while the word *few* is merely a Jewish contra-position, which would be better translated by the word *fewer*.

The fact that predestination is a free gift of God is met with in this and in other parables, in so far as the Lord has no obligation to invite anyone. However, those who are invited condemn themselves if they do not accept the invitation or if they appear at the feast without the wedding garment. The present parable is not concerned with this theme.

SECTION III. THE FATHERS

I. ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

(We have chosen certain extracts from his writings concerning divine vocation, which is free, both from the point of him who calls and from him who receives the call.)

1. *Christ calls how and when he pleases:*

We are reunited today to celebrate the Feast of St Paul, whom God blinded, and through whose blindness we see the light. He saw badly when in the midst of his errors, and Christ had to blind him in order to lead him to the true light. Of angry and indomitable character, he applied himself and all his energy to persecution until God, depriving him of sight, gave him the knowledge of his own divine and interior wisdom. But why did he not do this before? Do not ask that question or insist on vain curiosities. Leave it to the incomprehensible providence of God to direct the salvation of men according to his own prudent judgement as to time and moment. How many miracles he had seen before his call, since he was so zealous in his observation of the Apostles, and yet did not turn to God. Why? Because he had not yet been called by Christ (PG. 27, 487).

2. *It is Christ who calls:*

Thus Paul, who beforehand had more than sufficient motives to be converted, only changed his mind 'when it pleased him who had set me aside from my mother's womb' (Gal. 1. 15). . . . Let us learn this also, that no one before St Paul, nor Paul himself, has ever found Christ by his own powers. It is always Christ who has manifested himself. For that reason he could say: I have chosen you—you have not previously chosen me (John 15. 16).

3. *God has chosen us as he did Paul:*

But why does not God call me from heaven, as he did Paul? Why does he not convert me? He has called you. Do you know and believe that he called Paul? Then that miracle should be enough for you. If you are obedient to the voice of God you know that he is calling you from heaven; if you are not obedient, or if your will is corrupted, then it would not be enough for you, even though you heard him with your own ears. How many times did the Jews fail to hear him? The Ninevites were satisfied with the voice of a prophet, but the Jews remained obdurate in the midst of prophecies and continued miracles. On the cross itself a thief was converted merely by seeing Christ; but by his side those who had seen Christ raise the dead to life insulted him (*ibid.*).

4. *Call and co-operation:*

The king invited the Jews to the feast, but they did not wish to attend. He then called the poor and the needy, one of whom did not wish to wear the usual wedding garment. When he calls he does not merely raise up hopes; he also puts before our eyes the judgement and the punishment; he commands that this should be preached and this call proclaimed, so that those who do not yet believe may attain to faith and those who do believe may adopt the perfect life. The wedding garment means life itself and good works. . . .

If the call is the work of God, then why so much insistence on preaching and exhortation? Because, although the call and the purification of the soul come from grace, once we have been called there is need of our own vigilance and effort to conserve our vocation and our wedding garment. We are called by grace, not through any merit of our own before God. Therefore we must be thankful for the call in a spirit of true obedience, and not pay in evil coin for such an honour. . . . Remember that you were called from the cross-roads; and what were you before that? Blind and lame of soul, which is much worse than any bodily affliction. Reverence, then, the kindness of him who called you and keep that garment unstained (PG. 57, 650).

5. *Why does he choose and call?*

(Chrysostom explains in this homily the celebrated phrase of St Paul: Why does he hate one and love another? God knows. The main theme is that of the gratuitous nature of God's call.)

What St Paul wishes to teach us is that only God knows who are worthy. He cast into the darkness many who, in the opinion of men, were worthy people, while he crowned others who were considered evil—thus demonstrating the faults in all human judgement. He does not need the opinion of his servants, nor does he have to await events in order to see who is good and who is evil; instead he delivers his judgement by means of his own sane and mature deliberation.

Before Esau and Jacob were born he knew them both. Leave, therefore, the right of choice in the hands of the Incomprehensible One, since he is the only one with the right to give the reward. He who knows what is in man and who alone searches the depths of hearts, knows what a pearl lies there below the mud and in his admiration of it he chooses it and, through his grace, declares it to be good.

In every branch of life the expert does not listen to others when it is a case of some choice which interests him. A jeweller examines precious stones and a horse-dealer his horses. With even more reason, then, we must allow God, who is infinitely wise and prudent, to choose his own, without heeding our opinions. That is why he chose a publican, a thief, a woman of the streets, rejecting the priests

and ancients of the people. If he had asked our opinion would our choice have coincided with his? We know that he acts justly when the final judgement comes, but he knows it all so clearly beforehand.

When we judge men we do so only on their external actions, but God looks at the nobility of their sentiments and purposes. He saw the sins of David; but he also saw his tears and repentance. On the other hand, faced with the ordered life of the Pharisee, he saw the pride which lay behind his prayer. The actions were good and the interior sentiments bad. Is this injustice? No; because, as he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. As if he were to say to him, It is nothing to do with you. Nor is it yours to discover who are worthy of mercy and who are not. Leave that to me. God acts like an expert teacher, who takes no notice of the questions put to him by his pupils, but who grades his teaching according to his own will (PG. 32, 556).

II. ST BASIL

(Extracts from Hom. 11 on Envy—a theme intimately connected with the ideas of today's Gospel. He takes this opportunity to explain certain ideas concerning the use of riches. Cf. *Opera Omnia, Nutium Ant.* 1567, p. 171.)

1. Description:

Envy implies sorrow at the happiness and prosperity of our neighbour. For which reason the envious man is never without sadness or trouble. Are his neighbour's fields green and fertile? His house a happy one? Is he not lacking interior and spiritual happiness? All these signs of prosperity increase the illness and do hurt to the mind of the envious man, who differs little from one who is unarmed and is therefore wounded by everything. Is this one strong, healthy and in good health? If so, then it is enough to make the envious man unhappy.

The envious man is hurt by the good fortune of a friend; the joy of his brothers causes him pain; he cannot look with favour on the riches of another and considers the prosperity of his neighbour as a misfortune for himself. If he wished to tell the truth he would be forced to confess this; but since he does not wish to make it manifest, he keeps this hatred in his heart, where it gnaws away at his entrails.

He finds no doctor for his sickness and no medicine which will cure him, even though the Scriptures show us abundant remedies for it. The only remedy he seeks is that one of those whom he envies may fall. The goal of hatred is the misfortune of those who cause it and that he may be unhappy who was thought to be happy. . . . He praises a son who is dead, to whom he would not address a kind word while he was alive; but should he see that there are many who praise him, then he changes his mind and envies him, even though

he be dead. He admires those riches which have been lost; he praises and exalts the beauty and health of the body when illness falls upon his enemy. In a word, the envious man is an enemy of present things and a friend of those that have perished.

2. Examples:

Satan hated God for his munificence to the first man, and so directs his anger against the human race, since he cannot do anything against God. The same was true of Cain. If anyone had asked Saul why he persecuted David he would have been forced to confess: Because of the favours and mercy which I have received from him. Joseph's brethren hated him. What foolishness! If the dreams were true what could they hope to do by selling him?

Now consider that much greater envy which sprung up against Christ from the folly of the Jews. Why did they envy him? Because of his miracles. And what miracles did he work? The health of those in need; the feeding of the hungry! And because he fed them they persecuted him. He raised the dead to life, and they envied those to whom he had given life once more. He cast out devils, and they set traps for the one who had cast them out. The lepers were cleansed, the lame walked, the deaf heard once again, the blind saw; and they cast out him who had done all these things. Finally, they put to death the author of life; they flogged the one who freed men and condemned the judge of the world. Thus were all the evils of envy extended throughout the world.

3. Its evil:

Is there anything more evil? It implies the corruption of life, the ruin of nature, hatred for the good things which God has given us. . . . It is the mother of murder, ruin and chaos in nature, a forgetting of the ties of family which bind us all, and the most absurd of all evils. If nothing serious has happened to you, why are you so hurt? Why do you make war against one who enjoys certain goods and in doing so, does not harm you in the slightest? . . . Benefits make those meek whom we have offended; but when they are given to the envious man they make him hate still more. The greater the benefit, the greater his indignation and his hurt. The sadness which the power of his benefactor causes him is deeper than his gratitude for benefits received. What brute beast can equal him in cruelty? Is not his ferocity worse than anything they can do? Dogs become docile with those who feed them and lions are meek with those who heal them; but the envious become insufferable and savage when they are given gifts and presents. . . . Wise man indeed was he who refused even to take a meal with them! (Prov. 23. 6).

4. The envious man delights in his evil:

Let us flee from this execrable vice! It is the doctrine of serpents, invention of the devil, seed of the enemy, obstacle to piety, the road

to hell and the privation of glory. . . . Envious men do not look at the splendour of life or at the greatness of good works; their attention is fixed on what is corrupt and decayed. If they see a fault in anyone (a common thing in every human being) they bring it to light, since they wish that men should be known by their faults. . . . Thus they consider the strong man to be too bold and daring; he who is modest and temperate they consider stupid; he who is just, cruel; the prudent man is a hypocrite. He who undertakes great works they criticize as a waster of money; he who administers his house well they call a miser; in a word, every virtue is classified by the envious man as its opposite vice.

5. Remedies:

Must I limit my discourse to an accusation against this vice? That would be a half-cure only. . . . What can we do to make sure that this evil does not attack us, and if we have fallen into it, what can we do to cure ourselves of it? We shall attain this once we can convince ourselves of the fact that there is nothing really great in anything that is human; not in riches, earthly glory, beauty of body. We have been called to higher things than these . . . these good things are instruments of virtue for those who use them well; but in themselves they are not supreme happiness. For this reason we should not think the rich man happy just because he possesses riches, nor he who is in power happy because of his authority, nor the strong man because of his bodily strength, nor the wise for his eloquence. These good things are instruments of virtue for those who use them well; but they are not happiness. He who makes bad use of them is miserable, just as one who has received a sword and uses it to kill himself. He who uses the gifts he possesses according to the dictates of reason and distributes wisely those things which God has given him, instead of hoarding them up for his own pleasure, is to be praised indeed for his love for his brethren and for his liberality. . . . If the rich man uses his wealth for good purposes, then he is not to be envied for his riches, since these redound to the good of all men.

III. ST AUGUSTINE

Despair and presumption

It is quite clear, my brethren, that our Lord Jesus Christ pardons all our old faults and, tearing up the old account, opens a new one at the very moment when a man is converted to the faith and abandons his old ways, which were so useless or perverse. Everything is forgiven, and no one should worry about the possibility that something of the past may still remain. But nor should anyone presume; because there are two things that can kill the soul, despair and a hope which is unfounded. Hear me on both, because, just as justified hope can save us, so that which is perverse deceives us.

Listen first to the deceit of despair. There are people who, on thinking over their past sins, judge them impossible to forgive, give themselves over to despair and die like that, saying within themselves: If there is no hope for us and if our many sins cannot be forgiven, then why not satisfy our desires? Let us fill this present life with pleasures, since we cannot hope for any reward in the future life. Let us satisfy our appetites, even though it may not be lawful, and so enjoy some temporal pleasure, even though we cannot hope for that which is eternal. . . . The Lord of the vineyard draws near to them, calls them and speaks to them through the prophet Ezechiel: It may be the wicked man will repent of all his sinful deeds . . . all his transgressions shall be forgotten, and his uprightness shall bring him life (Ez. 18. 22). Then, on hearing and believing this word, they rise from their despair, from that deep pit into which they had fallen, and begin to live once more.

But at that moment another danger appears, that of the opposite error, namely a hope which is not justified. They may say: If, at any time when I depart from my evil ways, that God of mercy forgets my sins as he has promised through his prophet, then why should I be converted today and not tomorrow? Continue, then, today as you did yesterday, in the midst of evil pleasures, wallow in sin and in death-dealing delights. Tomorrow I will be converted and that will be the end of them all. The answer is: The end of what? Take pleasure in the fact that God has promised to pardon your evil, if you are converted, but understand well that no one has ever promised you that you will see tomorrow's dawn.

The Master also draws near to those whose confidence is excessive, just as he drew near to those in despair. To them he says: Wouldst thou make slow work of turning to the Lord, and put it off from day to day? Swift falls his anger and perilous, when the time for vengeance is ripe (Ecclus. 5. 9).

Do not delay; do not insist on shutting the door which is opened for you, which the hand of your loving Father has thrown wide. What are you waiting for? You should be delighted if he opened when you knocked; but he has opened it without that, and will you still remain without? You do not know what may happen tomorrow. You have heard the command that you should not delay in your mercy towards others, and will you be cruel to yourself? You should not delay in giving bread to the needy, and will you delay in receiving your own pardon? Give your soul this alms; in fact, I will go further and will not ask you to give it, simply that you should not reject the hand that gives it to you (PL. 38, 530-539).

IV. ST GREGORY THE GREAT

(Extracts from one of his finest homilies on the parable of the vineyard. PL. 76, 1153-1159.)

Who more truly resembles the master of the vineyard than our Creator, who rules this world which he has made, like a Father who governs and cares for the members of his household? His vineyard is the universal Church, which from the time of Abel until the end of the world brings forth as many saints as it sends forth branches.

This kind Master hires labourers to till his vineyard from early morning, at the third, sixth, ninth and eleventh hour; because from the beginning of the world until its end he gathers together preachers who will instruct the faithful. The morning of the world was from Adam to Noe; the third hour from Noe to Abraham; the sixth from Abraham to Moses; the ninth from Moses to Christ. The eleventh is that of Christ to the end of the world. In that last hour of Christ the Apostles were sent forth to preach, and although they came late, they received the full wage. . . . What excuse shall we give for not doing good, who have come to the light of faith from our mother's womb, who have heard the words of life from the cradle and who, together with our mother's milk, have drawn in heavenly teaching from the breasts of the Church?

We may also see, in these different hours, the years in the life of every man. The morning is the childhood; the third hour, adolescence, because during it the sun mounts higher in the day; the sixth hour is young manhood, in which the sun is now at its height; mature age is implied by the ninth hour, while the eleventh hour is that of old age. . . . Therefore, dearly beloved brethren, look to your way of living and see if you are God's labourers. For those who, in this life, seek that which is their own, have not yet entered into the vineyard of the Lord. They alone work for the Lord who think more about his gain than about their own; who serve him with fervour of devotion and with eager love; who are on the watch to gain souls, bringing others with them to the true life. But he who lives for himself, feeding on the pleasures of his own flesh, is but idle, because he does not seek the fruits of divine labour.

If you have been unwilling to serve God in your youth and manhood, at least, in your old age, come to him, since little time is left to you now. . . . Did not the good thief come at the eleventh hour, coming late not through age but through punishment? He confessed God from his cross and almost with those last words gave up his soul to God. The Master indeed began to pay the last comer the wage that was due, because even before Peter, he leads the thief into heaven. . . .

Nor can those who were slaves to their bodies be numbered among his elect, because at that last day the shepherd will separate the sheep from the goats, the humble from those who are proud. Neither shall they receive a kingdom who, though formed in the faith, with all their hearts seek the things which are of this earth.

Within the Church you will find many such, but you must neither

imitate them nor despair of them. You can see what a man is today, but you cannot see what he will be tomorrow. Often one who was seen to be below us has come to outstrip us in virtue and leaves us far behind. Today we are in the lead, tomorrow we may be far behind. We know that, while Stephen was being stoned, Saul held the garments of those who were executing him. Therefore, by that fact, he did himself cast stones, since he encouraged them all. Yet this same man, within the Church, surpassed in labours him whom he made a martyr by persecuting him. Thus there are two things on which we should meditate; let no one presume on his own salvation, because many are called, but few chosen. Though he be called to the faith, no one knows if he is worthy of the eternal kingdom. The second is this: Let no one despair of his neighbour, even though he may see him in sin; for he does not know the riches of divine mercy.

I will now tell you of something that has happened recently, and if from the depths of your hearts you look upon yourselves as sinners, then you will love even more the omnipotent mercy of God. This very year, in my monastery, which is close to the Church of the Blessed Martyrs John and Paul, a certain brother, who was led to repent, entered the monastery and was accepted, becoming even more repentant. His brother followed him into the monastery, in the flesh but not in the spirit. Detesting the monastic life and dress, still he remained in the monastery as a guest because he had neither the occupation nor the means to live.

His evil conduct was a burden to all, but they endured it for love of his brother. Ignorant of what followed this present life, he yet scoffed at all who tried to instruct him; flippant in speech, restless, vain of mind, disorderly in dress and dissipated in conduct, he lived on in the monastery while his heart was worldly.

Last July he was struck down in that epidemic which you will remember, and as he was nearing his end he was advised to put his soul in order. His extremities were already dead and life remained only in his heart and tongue. The brethren stood by him, helping him in his end so far as the power of God permitted. Suddenly, beholding the devil coming to take possession of him, he cried out in a loud voice: I am delivered over to the dragon, to be devoured, but he cannot devour me because you are here. Why do you delay me? Go away, so that he may finish me off!

When he was encouraged to make the sign of the Cross he replied: I wish to do so, but I cannot, for I am held fast by the dragon, who has my throat in his jaws and the foam from his mouth has smeared me. He holds my arms in prison, since he has my head in his mouth.

While he was saying this the brethren prayed more earnestly for him that he might be delivered through their intercession. By God's grace he was delivered, and cried out aloud: Thanks be to God! He

has gone, he has fled before your prayers. There and then he vowed to change his life and become a monk; but from that time until now he is grievously tormented by fever and weakened by pain. He was snatched from death, but not yet fully restored to life, for he is afflicted by various torments, infirmities and weakness; the severe fire of purification is burning away the hardness of his heart. It has pleased divine providence that long illness should cleanse him of even more prolonged habits of evil living.

Who would have believed that such a man would have been preserved from death and converted? Who can plumb the depths of the mercy of God? An evil-living young man sees, at the moment of death, the devil he has served so faithfully during life, so that he might learn who it was that held him in bondage; that he might resist his attacks and overcome him by whom he was enslaved. What tongue can speak of the divine mercy and of its depths? What soul is not in awe at its richness? It was this treasure that the psalmist had in mind when he said: To thee I will sing, the God who strengthens me, the God who watches over me, my God, and all my hope of mercy! (Ps. 58. 18). . . .

Let us keep before our minds the evil which we have done and think of that great kindness through which we are endured in patience. Let us consider the depths of that mercy of God, that alone forgives our offences and then promises us an eternal kingdom if we repent. From the depths of our hearts let us cry out together: My God, my mercy.

SECTION IV. A THEOLOGIAN

I. ST THOMAS AQUINAS

(The phrase: Away with you into the vineyard like the others, refers directly to work for God, but since it can also give us occasion to speak of manual labour, we shall add here some ideas from St Thomas on this point. Also, in brief form, certain others concerning the will of God that all men should be saved and prayer as a means to attain that salvation.)

1. *Work:*

It has four purposes:

- (a) principally to sustain life, which was why Adam was told that he would earn his bread by the sweat of his brow (Gen. 3. 19);
- (b) to avoid idleness, from which so many evils come (Ecclus. 33. 29);
- (c) to avoid attacks of evil passions, since work keeps the body both occupied and also tired (2 Cor. 6. 5);
- (d) so that we may be able to give alms or help to others in their need (Eph. 4. 28).

Thus he explains the meaning of Paul's words when he says that he who is not willing to work should not eat either, in the sense that the principal object of work is to maintain oneself. Therefore anyone who has enough to live on is not bound to do any manual work. That is why Paul orders work so that those who were earning their living in illicit occupations should cease from their sin, and for this reason he mentions robbery (Eph. 4. 28), coveting of another's goods (1 Thess. 4. 11), and also idleness (2-2. q. 187. a. 3).

Having explained that the Apostles had no need to work with their hands for their own support, since they should have received this from the faithful, he goes on to suggest certain reasons why St Paul worked with his hands:

- i. to remove from false apostles the occasion for their preaching, since they used this office to gain money for themselves, not for spiritual reasons;
 - ii. to avoid putting graver burdens on those to whom he preached (2 Cor. 12. 13);
 - iii. to give an example to those who were idle (2 Thess. 3. 8).
- However, he did not do this in those places where he had the opportunity of preaching every day.

2. *The will of God, the salvation of souls:*

The *denarius* is a name given to our salvation. It was a coin which was received in exchange for ten smaller pieces, and so it has been likened to the reward we receive for keeping the ten commandments, because each one within the Church works with the hope of a future reward (*Catena Aurea*, in Matt. 20).

And since eternal life is to be the same for all the saints, a *denarius* is given to each worker, since it is the reward for all. But since at the same time the merits of each one will differ in heaven, so we are told that in the Father's house there are many mansions, and in those mansions one is honoured more than another (1. q. 5. a. 3).

Since the object of our happiness in heaven is one and the same for all, in that sense we cannot speak of one happiness being greater than another. This is only possible in so far as one will enjoy a greater penetration into that happiness than another, because of his greater merits. For the same reason we cannot say that one of the blessed is happier than another, except in so far as this greater penetration is concerned (1-2. q. 5. a. 2). The degree of this penetration into the vision of God will depend on the grade of charity (1. q. 12. a. 6. c).

Although the Old Law was not of itself sufficient to save anyone, still God did not leave those who lived under it without some help through which they could be saved, namely, faith in the Messiah to come (1-2. q. 98, a. 2. *ad 4um*).

St Thomas points out that God is very much like a just judge,

who, while he condemns a murderer to death, can still wish that he might be saved from death, in so far as he is a man. In the same way God wills that all men should be saved, even though some, *de facto*, are condemned (1. q. 23. a. 7. *ad 3ium*). To all, however, he gives the means of salvation in some way or another. Our salvation is a mystery hidden in God, but we can pray for it; and this prayer is one of the best means of obtaining from God the gift of salvation (*ibid.*).

SECTION V. SPIRITUAL WRITERS

I. ST THOMAS OF VILLANOVA

(The Saint interprets the parable in the light of sanctification of souls. Cf. *Opera Omnia, in loco.*)

Even though the vineyard is usually understood of the Church, we are going to understand it in a moral sense, applying the vineyard to the Christian soul, whose master is God, whose manager is Christ and whose workers we are. The day of labour is this present life until death comes, when we receive each one his reward.

The vineyard is like the soul in so far as it is one of the most fertile fields, and one in which it is easy to see the results of labour or the lack of it. A well cultivated vineyard is like a garden; one that is badly cultivated is full of thorns and weeds, the vines are poor, their leaves diseased and their grapes unripened. The Christian soul, which gives abundant fruit if it is worked over, will produce nothing but weeds if it be neglected. It will be full of the thorns of unchecked desires and sorrows, poor in leaf and fruit, that is, few good works, words which are tepid and cowardly in its prayer, envy and hatred, which are the results of laziness, tepidity, vanity and a worldly spirit. The grapes cannot ripen because they lack the heat of the sun of charity and the necessary cultivation of the ascetical life. They are grapes which will never reach the table of the Lord.

On the other hand, in the soul which is well cultivated, the trunk of the vine is faith, the branches virtues, grapes, good works, the wine is devotion and piety. For this reason, just as a branch which is cut off from the vine cannot give fruit, so the virtues cannot please God without faith.

God has placed us in the vale of tears as labourers in his vineyard, and at the end of the day he will pay us our wages. Would that we could keep always before our eyes this fact, that we are God's labourers! Why are we so lazy? Scarcely for a moment or two do we take up the implements to work the vineyard. What reward can the labourer expect who, at the end of a day, has done nothing but eat, drink and sing? The wage is paid to workers, not to slaves, nor

to one who works for himself in his own vineyard. Yet such is God's love for us that, while we are his slaves, he pays us. What is more, we are working in our own vineyard, because the profit is all ours and the fruits are ours. Yet God pays us!

God is there at the door and knocks (Apoc. 3. 20) at every moment of our lives. This is a great consolation. He does not reproach even those who arrive late, saying to them: Why have you come now, to give me the remains of your life, the rest of which you have wasted on your own pleasures? However, they may well be happy who have served God from their youth. Great will be the mercy of the Lord towards them! . . .

The vineyard needs four kinds of care if it is to be fruitful:

- (a) the earth must be opened up if it is to receive the sun and the rain;
- (b) the roots of the vines must be cleaned and the earth around them freed from weeds;
- (c) they must be pruned; all dead branches removed, so that new life may burst forth;
- (d) the vines themselves must be renewed, because if they are too old they produce little or no fruit.

So, too, in our souls, these four kinds of labour are necessary. We must open them up, so that the rain of God's grace can get at them, together with the sun of charity. We do this through our good desires and intentions. When the soul despises earthly things it turns its desires towards God.

But desires are not enough; it is also necessary to hoe the earth around the soul by means of exhortations and, above all, contrition.

The third labour consists in cutting off the dead branches of our vices, passions, ambitions and desires, not forgetting the useless branches of worldly business. . . . One thing only is necessary (Luke 10. 42) and to that we must apply the whole of our strength.

The fourth labour is that of renewing our interior spirit from day to day (cf. Eph. 4. 23; 2 Cor. 4. 16). Interior virtues are very delicate and grow old very easily. Here is one who was full of fervour; but a long illness is enough to make him tepid, should he be in the least bit careless. This continued renovation is the fruit of reading, meditation, prayer, consideration of the examples of the saints and of a retiring into ourselves. Just as penance is necessary to soften our hearts, so is prayer in order to renew the spirit.

When we come to consider the fruits of this labour we find that they are bunches of grapes which are made up of good works, and also the generous wine of piety and love, worthy to be drunk by our Beloved. The prophet (Zach. 9. 17) speaks of the wheat and wine which nourish. The wheat is the bread of sound doctrine for the intellect; the wine which breeds virgins is ardent piety, which purifies and weakens our animal passions. It is a wonderful thing

that exterior works which are done with real zeal serve to increase this piety, giving us wisdom, love, light, intelligence and devotion.

But we have to preserve these fruits and defend them against those animals who would destroy the vineyard. For that purpose we need two things, a living hedge around it, which is the guarding of the senses, and also a closed door, which is silence.

Among the diseases which attack the vine we may mention four: drought, the attack by foxes, locusts and hail. The first is common in those who are beginning, the second is frequent among the perfect, the other two are common to both.

It is frequent among beginners in the midst of their fervour to feel the dry wind of worldly memories which destroys their vocation. The perfect are not so liable to be attacked by this evil, but on the other hand they have to be afraid of the foxes who destroy the vineyard (Cant. 2. 15). These are the vices which come disguised as virtues, angels of Satan transformed into angels of light, animals who do harm and yet are difficult to discover or to trap. How many souls are lost through this deceit of the devil! The remedies against them are two; first of all, as St John tells us, not to trust in every spirit, but to prove them, to see if they be from God. In order to know them the best thing is to use the second remedy, which is the counsel of those who are by this time experienced in the spiritual life. With their long practice they can detect what is good and what is bad. More than one soul has been lost because it wished to rely on its own knowledge, thus perishing as victim of its own errors and through not wishing to recognize the power of God in prayer.

The third evil, which gnaws both trunk and leaves, thus destroying the vine, is that of impurity. We must root out this locust. The fourth, the hail, are those violent temptations which beat upon us from time to time.

When we come to speak of the reward it is almost better to remain silent. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what things God has prepared for them that love him (1 Cor. 2. 9). It is a reward which no one knows until he has received it (Apoc. 2. 17). And you, when you have received it, will say: If only we had known what it was! . . . The *denarius* carries the head of the Emperor; and when he appears, we shall be like him (1 John 3. 2). This *denarius* is not made of any metal, however precious; it is God himself.

II. FRAY MELCHIOR DE CETINA

(Summary of his ideas taken from *Exhortación a la devoción de la Virgen*, chap. 2, BAC. *Místicos Franciscanos*, t. 3, p. 739.)

St Bernard says in one of his sermons that while it is true that a man never knows if he is worthy of praise or of hatred so far as God

is concerned, since in this life we can never be sure of our election . . . nevertheless, to help us, God has given us certain signs which can prove our healthy state, and in this other learned doctors agree. . . .

Signs of predestination:

(a) A holy life:

Among the signs of predestination which the doctors lay down is that of a holy life, in which, once we have examined our consciences, we do not find any mortal sin, or if there were such a thing, it has been absolved in the sacrament of penance, and we have not fallen into it again for a long time. The Holy Spirit, who dwells in such souls, gives testimony that they are the sons of God and his chosen ones, according to Rom. 8. 16. Thus the Apostle was able to say: My conscience does not, in fact, reproach me. . . (1 Cor. 4. 4).

(b) A docile hearing of the word:

Another sign of predestination is that of a docile hearing of the word of God, as St Luke says (Acts 13. 48). When the Apostles preached, those listened to them who were predestined to life. And the Lord himself, reproving the incredulity of the Pharisees, says that he who is of God hears the word of God (John 8. 47). He goes on to say: You do not hear my words because you are not of God. To hear and obey the word of God is a sign of predestination.

(c) Labours undertaken with patience:

As St John Chrysostom says: By such blows God works the stones which are to be the foundation of the New Jerusalem. This is a great consolation for those who have to suffer in this life, because they know that, through such labours, they can earn an eternal rest.

(d) Mercy:

Our Lord tells us, through the words of St Matthew, that those who have mercy on others will receive mercy themselves. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. The eight beatitudes are all signs of God's predestination.

(e) Devotion to the Blessed Virgin:

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin and a desire to serve her are an obvious sign of predestination to glory. The author proves this by quotations from saints and theologians, especially St Anselm and St Bernard. The former, devoted to Mary, wrote a book entitled *De Excellentia Virginis*, and in chapter 4 he says that meditation on the services she did for Christ, on her life and devotion, is a sure sign of salvation. St Bernard, in his *Hom. super Missus est*, says: We can go with confidence before the tribunal of God, where the Mother stands before her Son and the Son stands before his Father. The Mother presents to the eyes of the Son her bosom and breasts; while the Son presents to his Father his wounded side, hands and feet. There can be no rejection where there are such signs of love.

III. BOSSUET

(Summary of a sermon preached in the chapel of the Daughters of Providence, Paris, 1659.)

1. *The last and the first:*

The world clings to the fortunate ones of this earth while it abandons the poor to their misery, which is why the prophet says: The poor are in thy hands (Ps. 9. 14). God sees and takes care of the poor, that is why, as priest, as preacher and advocate of the poor, I am going to speak to you of them. The phrase of the Lord about the last being the first will be completely fulfilled when those just who were despised by the world occupy the first places in heaven. But it also begins to be fulfilled in this life with the foundation of the Church, a wonderful city, whose foundations were laid by God. Christ, on coming into this world, in order to organize a revolt against the order established by pride, inaugurated a policy completely opposed to that of the world.

This opposition can be reduced to three things:

- (a) In the world, the advantages and the first places are reserved for the rich; in the kingdom of Christ, to the poor.
- (b) In the world the poor serve the rich, and would even appear to have been born for that purpose. In the Church the rich are only admitted on condition that they serve the poor.
- (c) In the world the favours and privileges are reserved for the powerful; in the Church the blessings are for the poor.

2. *The citizens of the Church:*

In the time of the synagogue, to encourage them, besides heaven they were promised worldly goods; but in the Church there is no word about the latter, riches are despised and the affliction of the cross is substituted for them. The rich, who had the first places in the synagogue, do not exist as a class apart in the Church, whose citizens are the poor. Do you wish to see this in our Lord's preaching? Then listen to those words in which he orders his servants to go out and bring in from the highways the poor and the needy.

Christ was sent to preach the Gospel to the poor (Luke 4. 18). To fulfil his mission it is to them mainly that he directs his preaching, and in his greatest sermon, that on the mount, he does not address the rich except it be to reprove their pride. Blessed are you who are poor, he says to them; the kingdom of heaven is yours (Luke 6. 20). If heaven belongs to the poor, then so does the Church; and if she belongs to them, it is because they are the first to enter. So it was, in fact, as St Paul proves (1 Cor. 1. 26). The early Church was practically a Church of the poor, and the rich who entered into it had to strip themselves of their goods and lay them at the feet of the apostles. So far did the Holy Spirit go in his efforts to make clear

the essence of the Christian religion and the privileges of the poor as members of Christ. . . .

3. *The rich, servants of the poor:*

If Christ promised nothing but afflictions and crosses, then there is no reason to point out that he does not need the rich. Why should he want them within his kingdom? So that they can build him temples of gold and precious stones? Do not imagine that he esteems such things very highly. He accepts them merely as signs of piety and religion. When he founds his religion directly, as distinct from that of the Old Law, he chooses the most simple elements, such as water, bread, oil. . . . Instead of surrounding himself with pomp, Christ has the poor around him.

Here is a secret I will make known to you (1 Cor. 15. 51), Christ does not need anything, and yet he has need of all things. He does not need anything because he is omnipotent; he needs all things, because he is merciful. Just as the mercy of our innocent Jesus led him to load upon himself the miseries and crimes of us all, so now, that same Jesus carries the same miseries in the persons of his poor. . . .

But if there were only poor within the Church, then who would help them? That is why the rich are admitted. He could have used the angels for this task, but he chose that men should be aided by their fellows. The love for his sons, the poor, made him permit the entry of strangers, the rich. Do you see the miracle of poverty? The rich were strangers, and the service of the poor has given them nationality. The rich had a contagious disease, and God permitted their riches to act as a cure for it. Rich and poor should help one another. The poor carry a heavy burden, and the task of the rich is to help them bear it. But the rich also carry a burden. As Augustine says: Who would believe that the burden of the poor is their necessity and that of the rich their abundance?

I know that there are worldly people who long for such a burden as this; but a day will come when such worldly errors end and they come to a judgement in which they will know the true weight of those riches they coveted. Do not wait until that dreadful hour. Help one another to carry your burdens. You rich, carry something of the weight of the poor, and remember that, as you lighten his burden, so do you remove some of the weight of your own. . . .

Without this share in the privileges of the poor there is no salvation for the rich. And privileges do belong to the poor, for theirs is the kingdom and the first places in it. It is easy to understand. In every kingdom, privileges are reserved for those who are nearest to the Ruler, either by birth or office. It is the ruler who distributes them. You know perfectly well that those nearest and dearest to Christ are the poor. The crown of his monarchy is one of thorns, his throne a

manger and a cross; his whole life one of suffering. Therefore it is not the rich who are nearest to him or who enjoy his privileges. Do not despise poverty; for if the world thinks of it as something foul, the King of glory has taken it for his spouse and has granted it his favours.

4. *The right use of riches:*

And what does the Gospel reserve for the rich? Read it through and you will find nothing but reproof: Woe to you, rich! (Luke 6. 24). Do you not tremble at this curse hurled at you by the very instrument of our salvation? However, hold fast to your hope, because if the privileges are the right of the poor, still you can enjoy them also, provided you draw near to the poor to receive them at their hands. You who are rich know now the source from which you can obtain heaven's graces: the poor. Do you wish to wipe away the memory of your sins? Then redeem them with almsdeeds (Dan. 4. 24). Do you long for God's mercy? Seek it at the hands of the poor by being merciful to them! Do you wish to enter into the kingdom? The door is open wide to you, says Christ, provided you have the poor to lead you in.

Therefore grace, mercy, pardon of sin and the very kingdom itself are all in the hands of the poor, and the rich cannot enter unless they are received by the poor. How rich you are, you who are poor! And in what real misery you live who are rich! If you live attached to your worldly goods then you will find yourselves deprived forever of the graces of the New Testament and the only thing left to you will be that terrible curse: Woe to you who are rich.

SECTION VI. PAPAL TEXTS

(The theme of the Gospel for today obviously leads us to consider those questions which are intimately connected with social justice; but here we meet with a difficulty, because on no other subject has the Church spoken out at such length or perhaps so wisely—which makes both direct quotation and also a summary extremely difficult, if not impossible, within the scope of this book. Four documents need detailed study if we are to understand the Church's teaching on these social questions which are vital in modern life: *Rerum Novarum* of Leo XIII, *Quadragesimo Anno*, of Pius XI; the Whitsun broadcast message of Pius XII (1941) and lastly, as a magnificent summary of them all, the Encyclical *Mater et Magistra* of John XXIII. In view of the difficulty which this wealth of literature presents, together with the complexity of the subject itself, we shall limit ourselves here to a quotation from *Mater et Magistra* in which the Pope makes an appeal for more detailed study of the Church's solution to social problems. Many of our laity are not aware of the fact that the Church has given a solution and directives which

could do much to avoid the poverty of modern social teaching. The task of the preacher is to make this fact known.)

1. *Pope John XXIII says:*

First, We must reaffirm most strongly that this Catholic social doctrine is an integral part of the Christian conception of life.

It is therefore our urgent desire that this doctrine be studied more and more. While We note with satisfaction that in many Institutes it has been taught for some time, We urge that such teaching be extended by regular, systematic courses in Catholic schools of every kind, especially in seminaries. It is to be inserted into the religious instruction programmes of parishes and of Associations of the Lay Apostolate. It must be spread by every modern means at our disposal: daily newspapers, periodicals, popular and scientific publications, radio and television.

Our beloved sons, the laity, can do much to help this diffusion of Catholic social doctrine by studying it themselves and putting it into practice, and by zealously striving to make others understand it.

They should be convinced that the best way of demonstrating the truth and efficacy of this teaching is to show that it can provide the solution to present-day difficulties. They will thus make converts of those people who are opposed to it through ignorance of it. Who knows, but a ray of light may one day enter their minds.

It is not enough merely to formulate a social doctrine. It must be translated into reality. And this is particularly true of the Church's social doctrine, the light of which is Truth, Justice its objective, and Love its driving force.

It is vitally important, therefore, that our sons learn to understand this doctrine. They must be educated to it.

No Christian education can be considered complete unless it covers every kind of obligation. It must therefore aim at implanting and fostering among the faithful an awareness of their duty to carry on their economic and social activities in a Christian manner.

The transition from theory to practice is of its very nature difficult; and it is especially so when one tries to reduce to concrete terms a social doctrine such as that of the Church. There are several reasons why this is so; among them We can mention man's deep-rooted selfishness, the materialism in which modern society is steeped, and the difficulty in determining sometimes what precisely the demands of justice are in a given instance.

Consequently, a purely theoretical instruction in man's social and economic obligations is inadequate. Practical training must also be given in the proper fulfilment of these obligations. . . .

There are three stages which should normally be followed in the reduction of social principles into practice. First, one reviews the concrete situation; secondly, one forms a judgement on it in the

light of these same principles; thirdly, one decides what in the circumstances can and should be done to implement these principles. These are the three stages that are usually expressed in the three terms: look, judge, act (*Mater et Magistra*).

SECTION VII. SERMON SCHEMES

I. LITURGICAL

In sight of Lent

1. With this Sunday the pre-Lent period of the liturgy begins; it is a time of preparation for the rigours of Lent and its fast.
2. A simple reading of the various parts of the Proper of the Mass is enough to lead us to the conclusion that we must make good use of the time of salvation which is announced to us.

Four fundamental ideas

1. *The conviction that we are sinners:*

(a) Historical origin of the Introit:

It was composed by St Gregory when Italy and Rome were in danger from the Lombard invasion. It expresses the symbol of God's punishment for the sin of the human race. In the breviary we read that passage from Genesis which tells us about the sin of the first man. We have all come into this world with this sin on our souls and are worthy of punishment. The terrors of death have surrounded me . . . (Introit).

(b) Present application:

It would seem that this Introit expresses the reality at the present day, when we see sorrows, fears, threats and afflictions on all sides. We are afflicted justly for our sins, says the Collect. This is the first step towards salvation and the Church wishes to fix it in our minds.

2. *The redemption is announced:*

(a) This is the idea of the Epistle:

The miraculous favours granted by God in the Old Law, such as the passage through the Red Sea, the cloud and pillar of fire, the water from the rock . . . all were symbols of Christ and of the wonders of our redemption. The rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10. 4). Just as the water came from the rock so the blood which came from the wounds of Christ saved the world and brought it to a new birth.

(b) Co-operation:

But the Epistle also indicates that our co-operation is necessary if we are to enjoy the fruits of this redemption. All the Israelites

received the benefits, but with many of them God was not well pleased (1 Cor. 10. 5). The redemption was for all, because Christ died for all; but not all obtain the fruits of it. For this man's labour is needed.

3. *Invitation to labour:*

(a) In the Gospel, which is related to the Epistle:

- i. *there is need for labour in our souls* if we are to take advantage of the benefits of the redemption;
- ii. *it does not matter at what age the labour is undertaken*. Even though, until today, we may have done nothing, the Church extends to us her invitation: Go into the vineyard.

(b) At the end of the Gospel the reward is indicated:

The *denarius* which is a symbol of heaven. Our transformation into Christ on Easter Sunday will be the fruit of our labours during Lent.

4. *Lent:*

(a) St Paul, model for Christian conduct during Lent (1 Cor. 9. 26).

(b) The Christian who wishes to gain heaven must listen to the voice of the Church, calling him to prepare for Lent. He must be prepared to labour as Paul was. If athletes are ready to train their bodies and abstain from certain things so that they may win a corruptible crown, how much more the Christian, whose reward is eternal (cf. 1 Cor. 9. 25).

(c) This Sunday should see our first resolution and our prayer that God may take pity on us and make effective our desire to work at the sanctification of our souls during Lent.

II. THE EPISTLE

Religion and life

1. *Judgements from within and without:*

(a) Non-Catholics frequently ask us what influence our religion has, both in the life of the individual and also in the social life of those countries which are supposed to be Catholic.

(b) We often ask ourselves the same type of question and complain about those Catholics whose religion has no impact on their lives.

2. *Divorce between thought and conduct:*

Often it is due to the lack of clear ideas that there is this divorce between thought and conduct.

3. *The religious man:*

The very phrase reveals the fact that religion is something which embraces the whole of life in all its departments; something which includes the whole man and describes him.

(a) **The religious man is one who has ideas:**
Especially ideas with regard to redemption and God, creator and rewarder.

(b) **But ideas alone are not enough:**
Ideas must be put into effect. There must be action.

i. this is implied in the fact that St John gives the name *life* to religion;

ii. Christ says that he is the way, the truth and the life—which again implies the whole of life as included under terms of thought and action.

4. **This action cannot be limited to worship alone:**

(a) Worship is necessary for religion, but it only covers a part of our lives, namely our relations with God in so far as we owe him worship.

(b) Once we have satisfied this obligation there are still many other departments of life to be covered by religion, e.g. obedience towards God and help given to our fellow men, in justice or in charity.

(c) Not everyone that saith to me: Lord, Lord . . . (Matt. 7. 21).

(d) Which means that religion is not a mere Sunday garment, which we wear once a week and then put away carefully until next Sunday. It must cover the whole of life.

5. **A life of struggle:**

(a) It is not enough to receive God's favours as did the Jews in the desert:

It is necessary to persevere in the midst of its drought and with the monotony of the same food, with the hope of a land of promise whose conquest is no easy matter.

(b) It is not enough merely to present oneself in the stadium:
It is also necessary to run in it. Good athletes deprive themselves, not merely of those things which are forbidden, but also of many things which are lawful, so as not to lose their form.

(c) It is not enough to be a Catholic; we must be good Catholics:

i. *As Jerome says:* It is not enough to live in Bethlehem, we must live a holy life there! We have to continue in a life which, at any given moment, can become a real desert, without flowers, with only the manna for food and our eyes fixed on heaven.

ii. *the Lord did not deceive anyone on this point.* His phrases are definite and energetic: I came, not to bring peace, but the sword (Matt. 10. 34). Enter in by the narrow gate! He who would come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me (Matt. 16. 24).

iii. *St Ignatius sums up in two meditations the whole plan of the*

Christian life: We are called to a campaign in which we will have to suffer the same hardships as our Leader. In that of the two standards the struggle between pleasure and duty is clearly outlined for us.

(d) The word *asceticism* means a struggle.

6. **A definite purpose and an enemy who is known to us:**

(a) **All good athletes say the same thing:**

Once they have started the race they look only at the goal, so as to direct all their energies towards it.

i. a champion swimmer once said that he lost a certain race through looking to see the distance between him and the man behind him.

ii. a good shot hardly takes aim consciously; he fixes his gaze on the target.

iii. St Paul did not run towards any uncertain goal; he looks at heaven, knows that Christ is there who is his life; he thinks of nothing else.

(b) **We must also learn to know our enemies:**

Paul knows them well, and he is not like a fighter who delivers his blows at the empty air. He knows that the main enemy he has to fight is his own body.

7. **Without this fight there can be no true Christian life:**

The Epistle of today was deliberately chosen to be read to those who had walked a long way to the Stational Church of St Lawrence, with the idea of teaching them that it is not enough to come to church, but there is also need of perseverance and living like Christ's champion.

III. THE GOSPEL

A: Christ in all things

1. **Christ, the provider:**

(a) The father of the family, the master of the vineyard, is Christ, in so far as he is sent by his heavenly Father to contract labourers. As the Father hath sent me . . . (John 20. 21).

(b) Christ calls people at various stages of life; in infancy, youth, manhood and old age.

2. **The workers take the place of Christ and are Christ:**

Paul, an Apostle not holding his commission from men, not appointed by man's means, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father . . . (Gal. 1. 1). Which is why he can truly be called another Christ, and can say that it is not he who lives, but Christ in him (Gal. 2. 20).

3. *To labour is to preach Christ:*

Christ did not send me to baptize; he sent me to preach the gospel; not with an orator's cleverness, for so the cross of Christ might be robbed of its force. . . . Here are the Jews asking for signs and wonders, here are the Greeks intent on their philosophy; but what we preach is Christ crucified; to the Jews, a discouragement, to the Gentiles, mere folly . . . (1 Cor. 1. 17-23).

4. *The vineyard is Christ:*

(a) Until Christ is formed in souls they are sterile and give no fruit. Thus the labourer does not merit his reward (Gal. 4. 19).

(b) Paul demands that the vineyard should produce fruit; but it will not do so until Christ be reproduced in it.

5. *The denarius is Christ:*

(a) I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have redeemed my pledge; I look forward to the prize that is waiting for me, the prize I have earned (2 Tim. 4. 7-8).

(b) And what prize was that? Hear him, says Augustine: I long to be dissolved and to be with Christ (Phil. 1. 23). I wish to die so as to be with Christ. It is the cry of the aged worker in the vineyard at the end of his day's labour. After the triumph of his labours he claims the prize which is his by right, owing to Christ's promise. That prize is Christ for all eternity.

6. *Only Christ enters heaven:*

(a) A commentary of St Augustine:

Commenting on those words: No man has ever gone up into heaven; but there is one who has come down from heaven, the Son of man, who dwells in heaven; he says: Who comes down from heaven? He who is born of a mother without abandoning his Father, who receives flesh without putting off his divinity. He who was born from eternity takes on another birth in time. He who wished to have no mother and who, on earth, had no father. He who wished to become the son of man so that men might become sons of God. He who came down to us so that we might go up to him. But no one enters into heaven save only he who came down from heaven. Only Christ came down to us from heaven. We must become Christ in order to ascend into heaven. We transform ourselves into Christ when, as living members of the Mystical Body of Christ, we put on Christ.

(b) Did the fall of the evening find us working in the vineyard or idle in the market-place?

i. *if the latter, then we have not yet put on Christ, we are not Christ, we cannot ascend into heaven with Christ, we have not gained the denarius.*

ii. *if the former, then we are in Christ and with Christ, we can rise with him.*

(c) **No one enters into heaven who is not reconciled with God:**

i. no one is reconciled with God unless it be in Christ (2 Cor. 5. 19).

ii. no one can enter into heaven unless he can say with Paul: I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.

iii. Christ is all in all (Col. 3. 11).

B: In the vineyard of the Lord1. *Workers in the vineyard:*

(a) All activity is not true labour, nor does everyone who works do it in the vineyard of the Lord. There is a type of work which is directed towards a useful and honest end, but it is a natural one. There is also a supernatural labour which is directed to one end; doing the will of the Father.

(b) To labour in the vineyard is an act of love, whose end is the Lord or Master of the vineyard.

2. *Idle in the market-place:*

(a) Many who are excellent workers from the natural point of view are not good when considered through the eyes of faith. They are not workers in the vineyard, but are still standing idle in the market-place. They will not receive the reward. St John of the Cross says: In the evening you will be examined on love.

(b) Others worked hard, but without love. Can you understand how it is that in one hour a man may earn as much as if he had worked the whole day? Because merit does not depend on the time spent, nor on the quantity of work done, the fatigue and heat supported. The reward is in proportion to the intensity of love that went into the work.

(c) Those who labour with their eyes cast down, their hearts fixed on things of earth and for worldly gain have their reward here below. They need expect nothing more when evening comes. The master of the vineyard will not recognize them as his labourers. They did not know how to lift up their eyes and hearts during the day; their efforts were born in them and died in them.

3. *Earthly labours inspired by the love of God:*

(a) **Not a question of abandoning earthly labours:**

It is a question of informing them and perfecting them through the love of God.

(b) **This is impossible unless some part of the day is given over to prayer:**

i. there are some who objectively work in the Lord's vineyard, because they are engaged on apostolic work, yet they are not labourers in the vineyard, but idle in the market-place;

ii. through lack of prayer their apostolic and even priestly ministry has been turned into merely human work of little or no value in God's sight.

(c) **Wasted labour:**

To all who labour in the apostolate or in public work we may well address this quotation from John of the Cross: So much misery is there in the sons of men that I believe that most works done in public are either bad, or will have no value, or are imperfect and defective before God, since they are not disinterested and free from human respect (*Avisos y sentencias espirituales*, 10, No. 326).

4. *The sublime idleness of the contemplative:*

(a) **Martha and Mary:**

Those who live an active life should understand and envy the lives of the contemplatives. Idle in the eyes of the world, they are the labourers who do most work in the sight of God.

i. Martha, Martha, how many cares and troubles thou hast! (Luke 10. 41):

ii. *the world needs souls given over to prayer; mystics.* Not so much souls who spread love through their office, but souls whose office is love.

(b) **The Queen of Apostles:**

The world is sustained by these chosen souls and they are the most useful part of the Church. Revelation shows us Mary at this task.

i. the apostles, full of love of God, go forth to preach the Gospel in all the world;

ii. Mary, the Queen of apostles, remains in the Cenacle in prayer. She was not idle, but the first worker in the vineyard; and perhaps one hour of her prayer is worth more for the good of the Church than the activity of all the apostles for all time.

C: **The ascetic value of labour**

1. The Gospel of today is an invitation to labour; not to any labour, but to that which is done for the greater glory of God.

2. *We have an obligation to work:*

(a) **Because we are men:**

God put man in the garden of Eden to cultivate and care for it; work dignifies a man, because it is a way of bringing inferior creatures into his service.

(b) **Because we are sinners (Gen. 3. 19):**

All who are born of Adam are born in sin and have a punishment to undergo—that of labour.

(c) **Because nature herself demands it:**

By nature man has been created with hands which are full of ability and naked, so that he might work with those hands and procure enough for his natural needs.

(d) **Because it is a defence:**

i. against the world and its vanities, because work humbles us; against the devil, who finds it hard to attack one who is occupied; against the flesh.

ii. if it is practised in a spirit of penance and mortification, apart from gaining merit for us, it also lessens the passions, especially in youth.

(e) **Because it is a source of grace:**

i. *by labouring we fulfil a command of God*, which merits grace and glory;

ii. *work is prayer*, according to Augustine.

iii. *by it we imitate Christ*, who also laboured with his hands and who came to give us an example for life. The members of his mystical Body continue his work until the end of time and thus increase the treasury of merits within the Church.

(f) **Because it is a social duty:**

i. civil society has the right to receive the benefits of the talents God has given us;

ii. the Church demands labour from the Christian so as to fulfil the law of God and for all the reasons we have already mentioned. She also demands that the Christian should give a brilliant example to others by his labour. The better it is the more Christian it will be.

D: **The coin of eternal life**

1. *Three lessons from today's parable:*

(a) the reward is the same for all;

(b) it does not depend on the length of time we have worked;

(c) it does depend on perfect labour, and it often happens that a man may do as much in an hour as another in a whole day. . . . Therefore no one should have proud thoughts about the length of time he has laboured.

2. *The denarius is the reward of eternal life, according to Augustine:*

(a) Eternal life is essentially the same for all, consisting as it does in the vision and enjoyment of God.

(b) This does not mean that there will not be degrees of glory:

i. in my Father's house there are many mansions (John 14.2).

ii. the sun has its own beauty, the moon has hers, the stars have theirs, one star even differs from another in its beauty (1 Cor. 15. 41).

iii. although they will shine with a different beauty according to their merits, one more than another, still, in what refers to eternal life (essentially considered) it will be the same for all (Augustine, *ibid.*).

3. *Eternal life depends on love:*

(a) There is no comparison between the work done and the reward received.

(b) But this does not exclude man's labour; on the contrary, it supposes it.

i. glory is not a reward for vocation, because not all those called to the faith, nor all the baptized, are saved. Many are called, but few are chosen.

ii. nor does it depend on the antiquity of that vocation, because the last shall be first and the first last. Undoubtedly, Augustine, called in manhood, enjoys a greater glory in heaven than many who were baptized as infants.

iii. I will give to every man according to his works (Matt. 16. 27). It is sanctifying grace and charity which give the value to these works; for which reason there are times when a hidden work, done with great love, is of more value than others done in the public eye. The monotonous work of a farm labourer, the work of a mother in her home, if they are done from love, have an eternal reward. The greater the love the greater the reward and the glory.

4. *Our work in Christ:*

For these reasons we may say that the only work which is worth while is that which is done for Christ and which transforms us into him.

(a) *St Augustine:*

Commenting on the words of Christ to Nicodemus (John 3. 13), he says that no one but Christ enters heaven.

(b) For which reason we shall enter if we are one with Christ:

i. the main objective of our life has to be this transformation into Christ. The more we are so transformed the closer we shall be to him in heaven. He came from heaven so that men might have life and might have it abundantly (John 10. 10).

ii. for which reason the most fitting application of today's Gospel is to make every effort to produce in our lives the virtues of Christ and thus live his life.

E: Go into the vineyard of your soul

1. *Individual application of the parable:*

What is fundamental and most important in it—its purposes:

(a) To teach the equality and gratuitous nature of heaven;

(b) manifest the choice of some and the rejection of others;

(c) represent the spiritual economy in each soul, in whom the truths of the parable are realized.

2. *The vineyard is a soul which has been redeemed:*

A vineyard planted by the hand of the Lord, watered by the abundance of his graces, defended by his providence and power. But it has to be worked.

(a) The vineyard of the just produces good works and acts of virtue because it is worked, by rooting up the weeds of vice and sin and by watering it with true piety.

(b) The vineyard of the sinner is like land owned by someone who is lazy; full of thorns and weeds. Sin has appeared there and choked it, blinding and enslaving the soul.

3. *The labourer—man:*

(a) Christ contracts labourers who will cultivate the vineyard of the soul:

Men are at once the vineyard, in so far as they possess a soul redeemed by Christ, capable of supernatural life and eternal fruits; but they are also labourers, because they have powers and senses through which they can work.

(b) On them depends the fruit of the vineyard:

Many, however, hardly worry about it. They are still idle in the market-place.

4. *The hours:*

Christ passes through the soul in infancy, in youth, in manhood and in old age.

(a) At every moment his inspirations are there, softly, so as not to interfere with our liberty.

(b) An interior inspiration, advice given by our parents, or friends, or something we have read, some exterior event . . . they can all be calls to us from Christ.

(c) How many times has he passed through our souls, calling us!

5. *Go into my vineyard:*

(a) Once again today, making use of the words of the preacher, the invitation comes to you: Go into my vineyard. Age does not matter. Even though many years may have passed without your doing any work in your souls, still have confidence. If you go into the vineyard you will receive the reward.

(b) But do not let the invitation pass you by, or say that you are but children or still young and that you will wait to be invited some other time. If you reach the sixth or ninth hour of course, the Lord will pass by as he does now; but who is to guarantee that you will reach that age? It is not enough to be baptized or the children of good parents; nor is it enough to have made your first Communion, nor to have been redeemed. There is need of positive labour.

i. Rise up from sin, leave the occasions of sin, break with bad friends, abandon anything that may harm your souls.

ii. Think of Paul and his example, in the Epistle: think in terms of prayer, sacrifice, mortification; of your spiritual renewal.

iii. The sunset will not be long in coming; and with it will come the reward or the punishment due to the idle.

F: No one has hired us

1. *The workers who were still idle at the eleventh hour:*

(a) When the Lord of the vineyard goes out at the eleventh hour he finds some labourers still in the market-place and when he asks them what they are doing there so idle they reply: Because no one has hired us.

(b) This remark can be a just defence or a terrible accusation.

2. *It is a reply which is not valid against God:*

(a) Because he wills all men to be saved and gives to all sufficient graces to assure their salvation (1 Tim. 2. 4).

(b) He calls all men to him in some way or another. We might say that he insists in his calls, and this can be explained only by his infinite love. To all he has been like the father of the prodigal son, who was looking out for him all the time. In the face of the passion and death of Christ no one can say he has not been called.

3. *But this same remark can be a just defence against men:*

(a) The responsibility is of the one who commands. God, who makes this universal call to all, has also arranged our life, both natural and supernatural, in a social and hierarchical order. The redemption and prosperity of nations is attained through the work of men; apostles in the Church, parents in the domestic society, those who govern, teachers, employers, etc.

(b) This responsibility is a great one for which they will have to render an account at the day of judgement. There it could be said to them:

i. *they have led us astray.* They did not know how to make full use of the talents we had in our minds, our hearts, our bodies and souls.

ii. *there was no one to hire us* for the task of our salvation.

4. *The formation of leaders:*

(a) *A general obligation:*

i. every Catholic is, in some sense, a leader of his brethren, especially of those who are in bodily or spiritual need.

ii. all are obliged to collaborate in the extension of the Gospel throughout the world, so that the great multitudes of pagans cannot rise up and say to us: There was no one to hire us.

(b) *The formation of apostolic minorities:*

i. to form leaders or to collaborate in their formation is one of the great apostolic tasks. Christ chose this method. Our enemies know how to form their minority leaders. We should learn from the communist example.

ii. to help in the formation of leaders is to offer to the Father those who leave the market-place of idleness, who go back into it to invite others to work in the vineyard of the Lord: priests, employers and employees, apostles of Catholic Action.

G: God's hour in the infidel world

1. *The eleventh hour:*

According to the exegetes, the different hours signify the various ages of the world.

(a) Since Christ, we have been living in the eleventh hour; the hour of the call to all men.

(b) We know that there are still many millions to whom the vineyard of the Lord is still unknown.

(c) The hour is an important one, because many obstacles have vanished and the possibilities are greater than before.

2. *Many difficulties have vanished:*

The world is better known day by day; the majority of nations now open their gates to preachers; communications are more rapid and easy.

3. *Progress at the service of the missions:*

(a) There is no distance which cannot now be covered in a few days;

(b) correspondence is easy;

(c) there are now seven hundred and fifty different reviews and periodicals on the missions;

(d) radio and television could be a magnificent help, if properly used.

4. *Many prejudices have also vanished:*

(a) *The consequences of contact with the Church:*

Her superiority is manifest; the heroism of missionaries in war and peace; respect for native customs, language, etc., have all tended to destroy the idea that the missionary is a political agent.

(b) The failure of other religions and philosophies turns the eyes of men towards the Church of God.

5. *God's hour has sounded for the call to the infidel and pagan:*

(a) There are many millions awaiting the call—and that call may depend on us.

(b) The Gospel of today makes us all missionaries in some sense.

(c) Not one of us can afford to remain idle in the market-place; charity and zeal for Christ's cause impel us to help our neighbour in difficulty.

(d) All, in some way or another, by prayer, by our financial help, perhaps by our active apostolate, must help the pagans in this, God's hour for their conversion.

H: Idleness

1. *The Church and idleness:*

(a) *She has been accused of fomenting it:*

It has been said that, by placing man's end outside this world, the Church has killed all initiative to work for the improvement and greater beauty of this present life.

(b) *Against this:*

We may point to the fact that, in both the Old and New Testament, idleness is condemned. The Old Testament condemns it (Ecclus. 33. 29); says that it was one of the reasons for the destruction of Sodom (Ez. 16. 49); and in the Book of Proverbs, places before us the other example of the strong woman.

2. *In the New Testament:*

(a) Christ is the son of a worker and a worker himself.

(b) The first apostles were drawn from the working class and lived by their labours.

(c) *Paul worked without ceasing:*

His second letter to the Thessalonians: Thessalonica was a great port in Paul's time, an important link in communications between East and West. The Church there was made up of rich merchants and bankers, together with many others who were casual labourers or very poor. A group of the poorer Christians, in view of their idea of the proximate coming of Christ, did not work, but lived entirely on the alms given by their richer brethren. Paul exhorts them and threatens them, presenting to them his own example as one who worked with his hands to provide what was necessary for his life among them (cf. 2 Thess. 3 *passim*). He goes so far as to tell them that the man who will not work should not eat! It should be remembered that he is speaking of the special situation which existed in Thessalonica, and not giving a general principle. He is trying to avoid an abuse, not establish a general rule.

3. *Work and order:*

The Church recommends work because it gives good example, from a spirit of justice and for ascetical and moral reasons. Work includes a virtue which imposes both order and peace; it joins men together and brings order into their lives.

4. *The master of the vineyard reproves those who are idle; but who are they?*

(a) *Those who do not work:*

Even those who do not need to work because they have enough money for their needs still need to do something in the line of the apostolate and for charity. Also those who live in mortal sin are idle.

(b) *There is no excuse for this:*

i. *because the faith imposes on us work for the good of our souls;* whether we eat or drink or whatever we do should be done for the greater glory of God (1 Cor. 10. 31).

ii. *reason agrees with this conclusion of faith.* Spiritual values are above temporal ones; the latter are subordinated to the former as means or instruments to attain man's end. That which does not help him to attain it should not be undertaken.

iii. *because the devil is waiting for moments like this* to sow the seed of evil in the soul, as he sowed the tares among the wheat.

iv. *because the night comes when no man can work*—we can only work in this world (John 9. 4).

v. *because, in the next world, we shall receive our reward according to the works we have done in this world.* There will be rest from our labours then (Apoc. 14. 13).

5. *Idleness is a vice:*

(a) Not only sins of commission are imputed to a man, but also sins of omission (James 4. 17).

(b) Christ also commands us to work without rest (Luke 19. 22-23).

(c) We shall have to render an account even of our idle words (Matt. 12. 36).

(d) *There are cases in which this sin can be especially grave:*

i. *parents* who do not fulfil their duties;

ii. *sons* who waste their time of study when the expenses are very great for their parents;

iii. *the rich* who think that they have no need to work and therefore give scandal to the poor by their waste of money.

6. *It is the mother of all vices:*

(a) For this we have two texts of Scripture (cf. Prov. 15. 19; Ecclus. 33. 29).

(b) From it is born impurity (Ez. 16. 49).

(c) It is the source of injustices and the cause of ruin and poverty (Prov. 20. 4).

(d) It dries up the sources of charity towards the neighbour.

7. Conclusion:

In the idleness of the market-place we cannot serve the Lord. We must always spur ourselves on, reminding ourselves that the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and that it is the violent who bear it away (Matt. 11. 12).

I: Envy

1. *Envy: sadness at another's good:*
They murmured . . . (Matt. 20. 11).

2. Extent and effects of envy:

(a) It is a sin which is widely spread:

- i. *the angels fell into it*, bitter at the thought of God's supremacy;
- ii. *it was the cause of man's fall* (Wis. 2. 24);
- iii. *it pursued Christ all his life*: the Pharisees gave him up to death through envy (Matt. 27. 17-18);
- iv. *even spiritual souls are guilty of it*. St John of the Cross tells us that it is a common sin in beginners in the spiritual life.

(b) Its fruits:

- i. *injustice*; the envious person plays down the merits of others so that they will not shine as brightly as his;
- ii. *hatred* (Gen. 37. 4);
- iii. *murder*. The first murder committed was through envy (Gen. 4. 5);
- iv. *evil speech*;
- v. *lack of charity* and therefore of peace;
- vi. *torment* for the envious man (Prov. 14. 30);
- vii. *a text of St Cyprian*: The terrible destruction wrought by envy is palpable and innumerable. It is the root of all evils, source of all disputes and law-suits, arsenal of all crimes and matter for all disorders. It kills the fear of God and the knowledge of Christ. It makes us forget everything; death, judgement, salvation—even God himself (*Tract. de Zelo et livore*).

3. Remedies:

(a) Humility:

- i. which puts us in our proper place, without any thought for what is good in our neighbour;
- ii. which makes us take an interest only in that which increases our incorporation in Christ;
- iii. which takes with it a spirit of mortification.

(b) Charity:

- i. which teaches us to consider ourselves as all members of Christ;
- ii. and we rejoice or are sad according as our brethren triumph or are unhappy. Just as in a man's body, if one member suffers, all suffer (1 Cor. 12. 26).

J: God's call

God calls all to his vineyard, although at different times and in different circumstances.

1. When does he call us?

(a) In childhood:

Not all, but those only who are born into Christian families; but this call can be most fertile and with little effort.

(b) In youth:

A time of great decisions, when priestly vocations are born. It is a time of great ideals, and there is none greater than the ideal of Christ and his mission. It was the moment when Christ called the rich young man. . . .

(c) Adult manhood:

- i. *it is the time of intense work*, in which we have an individual mission to fulfil and also a social one, the priest in his mission, the adult in the family.
- ii. *it is the fertile age* for those who are connected with Catholic Action.

(d) Old age:

i. at times this call comes with great force in old age, and perhaps with greater efficacy. In this way a whole life can suddenly be illuminated by the light of faith and former scandals removed. Examples can be given which have a great influence on others.

ii. The reply on the part of the worker is so advantageous that by means of it an obscure life can be brightened by the light of faith and grace to such an extent that the reward of the *denarius* of eternal life may be obtained by these who come late, just as by the first comers.

(e) Any hour in which the call comes to us is a good one.

3. How does he call us?

(a) By baptism:

By it the seed of grace is sown in our soul and we become part of Christ, the sower, so that this life may develop in us through our own efforts at its cultivation. Receive this white garment, we are told, and see that you carry it before the judgement seat of Christ unstained, so that you may have eternal life.

(b) By means of other ordinary calls:

The light of conscience, which is the voice of God; the Church and her ministers, who form part of the teaching magisterium of Christ; words and examples of our neighbour; the events of every day.

(c) By extraordinary calls:

Samuel, David, St Paul, St Augustine. Also by great national or personal sorrows.

IV. SOCIAL APPLICATIONS

A: Wages

Four moments in the teaching of the Church on wages

1. The general doctrine is the same in the four great Popes, Leo XIII, Pius XI, Pius XII and John XXIII, even though there have been some apparent modifications in that teaching.
2. What happens is that there has been a gradual modification which is really a development of the general teaching, from the 'personal and necessary' wage of which Leo XIII speaks to the wage as a sharing in the nation's wealth and rent of Pius XII and John XXIII.

The teaching of Leo XIII

1. The wage system is not unjust in itself although it may be changed for other systems which are more perfect as time goes on. It is not opposed to the natural law.
2. *A personal and necessary wage:*
 - (a) The labour of a worker cannot be separated from his dignity as a person;
 - (b) it is not a merchandise which can be opened up to the law of supply and demand, because this would suppose exploitation of the weak and needy;
 - (c) this was, in fact, what took place in the early part of the nineteenth century.
3. *Family wage and the right to work:*
 - (a) This is not explicit in *Rerum Novarum*, although it is easily deduced from the principles laid down.
 - (b) The solution of Leo XIII is an increase in the number of small owners.
 - (c) This cannot be done without some saving; and saving is impossible without a wage which makes it possible.

Pius XI and Pius XII

1. *The relative documents:*
These are *Casti Connubii* and *Quadragesimo Anno* of the former and the radio messages of the latter.

2. *The teaching of both Popes can be summed up thus:*

- (a) The worker must receive a living wage, that is, one which is enough for himself and his family.
- (b) It must be a wage which allows for some saving.
- (c) There is such a thing as the right to work, and if this should become impossible then social reforms must be brought in to make it possible; social justice demands this.

John XXIII

This teaching is confirmed and enlarged in *Mater et Magistra*.

1. *He confirms the doctrines of his predecessors:*

- (a) The remuneration of work is not something that can be left to the laws of the market.
- (b) Nor should it be fixed arbitrarily.
- (c) It must be determined by justice and equity; which means that workers must be paid a wage which allows them to live a truly human life and fulfil their family obligations in a worthy manner.
- (d) Other facts also enter into the assessment of the just wage, namely:
 - i. the effective contribution which the worker makes to the production;
 - ii. the financial state of the company for which he works;
 - iii. the requirements of the common good of the particular country, having regard especially to the repercussions on the overall employment of the labour force in the country as a whole;
 - iv. the common good of the universal family of nations of every kind, both large and small.

2. *He enlarges upon certain points:*

- (a) Economic progress must be accompanied by a corresponding social progress, so that all classes of citizens can participate in the increased productivity, and social inequalities should be reduced to a minimum;
- (b) he outlines the demands of the common good in the case of any adjustment between wages and returns, namely:
 - i. the employment of the greatest number of workers;
 - ii. care lest privileged classes arise, even among the workers;
 - iii. the maintenance of equilibrium between wages and prices;
 - iv. the need to make goods and services available to the greatest number;
 - v. the elimination or at least the restriction of inequalities in the various branches of the economy, i.e. between agriculture, industry and services;
 - vi. the creation of a proper balance between economic expansion and the development of social services;

- vii. the best possible adjustment of the means of production to the progress of science and technology;
- viii. the need to regulate the present standard of living with a view to preparing a better future for coming generations.

(c) On the international level, the demands of the common good include:

- i. avoidance of all unfair competition between the economies of different countries;
- ii. the fostering of mutual collaboration and good will;
- iii. effective co-operation in the development of economically less advanced communities.

Obligation of Catholics

There is an obligation on all Catholics to know and propagate the papal social teaching:

- (a) By knowing it themselves;
- (b) by training of small active minorities who will be able to state that teaching clearly to others;
- (c) by giving good example, both as employers of labour and as employees.

B: Participation in benefits

1. *John XXIII confirms directive of Pius XII:*

(a) The small and average-sized undertakings in agriculture, in the arts and crafts, in commerce and industry, should be safeguarded and fostered by granting them the benefits of the larger firms by means of co-operative unions; while in the larger firms there should be the possibility of moderating the contract of work by one of partnership.

(b) These two categories of citizens—craftsmen and co-operatives—are fully entitled to the protective surveillance of the State, for they are upholding true human values and contributing to the advance of civilization.

2. *The participation of the workers in medium large concerns:*

Important teaching of John XXIII (*Mater et Magistra*):

(a) We, no less than our predecessors, are convinced that employees are justified in wishing to participate in the activity of the industrial concern for which they work.

(b) But it is not possible to lay down hard and fast rules regarding the manner of that participation, because it depends on prevailing conditions, which vary from firm to firm.

(c) However, the general principle holds good everywhere, and every effort must be made to ensure that the company is a true community of persons, concerned about the needs, the activities and the standing of each of its members.

(d) What this implies:

- i. that the relations between management and employees reflect understanding, appreciation and goodwill on both sides;
- ii. that all parties co-operate actively and loyally in the common enterprise, not so much for what they can get out of it for themselves, but as discharging a duty and rendering a service to their fellow men.
- iii. that workers have their say in, and make their own contribution to, the efficient running and development of the enterprise.
- iv. the workers must not be treated as mere cogs in a machine, denying them any opportunity of expressing their wishes, or bringing their experience to bear on the work in hand, and keeping them entirely passive in regard to decisions that regulate their activity.

3. *The participation of the workers in the economy as a whole:*

(a) It is both timely and imperative that the workers should be given the opportunity to exert their influence throughout the State, and not just within the limits of their own spheres of employment.

(b) The reason for this; all concerns in the State form a part of a nation's entire economic and social life, upon which their own prosperity must depend.

(c) Hence it is not the decisions made within the individual productive units which have the greatest effect on the economy, but those made by public authorities and by institutions which tackle the various economic problems on a national or international basis.

(d) Therefore it is only right that workers and those who represent their interests should be brought into such discussions.

4. *High praise:*

For the professional and Christian associations of workers which exist and operate in so many parts of the world.

(a) The importance of their work must be judged, not merely by its immediate and obvious results, but also by its effect on the labour world as a whole, where it helps to spread sound principles of action and the wholesome influence of the Christian religion.

(b) **The Pope adds:**

We wish to praise those dear sons of ours who in a true spirit of Christianity, co-operate with other professional groups and workers' associations which respect the natural law and freedom of conscience of their members.

(c) We must also express here our heartfelt appreciation of the work that is being done by the International Labour Organization. For many years now it has been making an effective and valued contribution to the establishment in the world of an economic and social order marked by justice and humanity, an order which recognizes and safeguards the lawful rights of the working classes.

Sexagesima Sunday

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

SECTION I. SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Epistle: 2 Cor. 11. 19-12. 9

Gospel: Luke 8. 4-15.

Cf. Matt. 13. 1-23; Mark 4. 1-20

Some texts concerning the word of God

(cf. Texts given on the sixth Sunday after Epiphany)

1. *A new doctrine:*

All were full of astonishment: What can this be? they asked one another. What is this new teaching? See how he has authority to lay his commands even on the unclean spirits, and they obey him! Mark 1. 27.

2. *Given by the Father:*

The learning which I impart is not my own, it comes from him who sent me. Anyone who is prepared to do his will, can tell for himself whether such learning comes from God, or whether I am delivering a message of my own. John 7. 16-17.

And this, because it is not on my own authority that I have spoken; it was my Father, who sent me, that commanded me what words I was to say, what message I was to utter. And I know well that what he commands is eternal life; everything, then, which I utter, I utter as my Father has bidden me. John 12. 49-50; cf. 14. 10-24.

3. *Living water:*

If thou knewest what it is God gives, and who this is that is saying to thee, Give me drink, it would have been for thee to ask him instead, and he would have given thee living water. . . . The water I give him will be a spring of water within him, that flows continually to bring him everlasting life. John 4. 10-14.

4. *Bread:*

It is written, Man cannot live by bread only; there is life for him in all the words which proceed from the mouth of God. Matt. 4. 4; cf. John 6. 27, 33-35.

5. *Light:*

In him there was life, and that life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness, a darkness which was not able to master it. John 1. 4-5; cf. John 8. 12.

6. *Truth:*

Through Moses the law was given to us; through Jesus Christ grace came to us, and truth. John 1. 17.

I am the way; I am truth and life; nobody can come to the Father, except through me. John 14. 6.

Keep them holy, then, through the truth; it is thy word that is truth. John 17. 17.

7. *Freedom:*

If you continue faithful to my word, you are my disciples in earnest; so you will come to know the truth, and the truth will set you free. John 8. 31-32.

Believe me when I tell you this; everyone who acts sinfully is the slave of sin, and the slave cannot make his home in the house for ever. To make his home in the house for ever is for the Son. Why then, if it is the Son who makes you free men, you will have freedom in earnest. John 8. 34-36.

8. *Spirit, peace and charity:*

Only the spirit gives life; the flesh is of no avail; and the words I have been speaking to you are spirit, and life. John 6. 64.

I have said this to you, so that in me you may find peace. John 16. 33.

If a man has any love for me, he will be true to my word; and then he will win my Father's love, and we will both come to him, and make our continual abode with him. John 14. 23.

9. *Immortal and eternal life:*

Yes, this is the will of him who sent me, that all those who believe in the Son when they see him should enjoy eternal life; I am to raise them up at the last day. . . . Believe me when I tell you this; the man who has faith in me enjoys eternal life. It is I who am the bread of life. John 6. 40, 47-48.

I am the resurrection and life; he who believes in me, though he is dead, will live on, and whoever has life, and has faith in me, to all eternity cannot die. John 11. 25-26.

The power of the word

1. *It gives immortality and eternal life:*

Cf. John 5. 24; 8. 52.

2. *It condemns those who refuse to believe:*

The man who makes me of no account, and does not accept my words, has a judge appointed to try him; it is the message I have uttered that will be his judge at the last day. . . . John 12. 48.

3. *It unifies:*

And I have given them the privilege which thou gavest to me, that they should all be one, as we are one; that while thou art in me,

I may be in them, and so they may be perfectly made one. So let the world know that it is thou who hast sent me, and that thou hast bestowed thy love upon them, as thou hast bestowed it upon me. This, Father, is my desire, that all those whom thou hast entrusted to me may be with me where I am, so as to see my glory, thy gift made to me, in that love which thou didst bestow upon me before the foundation of the world. John 17. 22-24.

4. *It enlightens, sanctifies and brings happiness:*
Cf. John 12. 46; 17. 19; Luke 11. 28.

SECTION II. GENERAL COMMENTS

I. LITURGICAL

The formulas of the Mass for today were composed at the same period as those of last Sunday, namely, during the Lombard invasion; for which reason they indicate a time of suffering. This is especially so with the Introit, which is as sad in its tone as that of Septuagesima. We are beaten down flat to the earth; and why do you sleep, Lord? Lent is a time of penance, and so it is convenient that, even now, we should begin to think of the reasons for doing that penance; our sins and their terrible consequences. In the breviary we read the sections concerning the flood for that very reason.

Another idea brought out in the liturgy of this Sunday is that of human co-operation in the work of grace. The Gospel teaches us that the Church spreads the seed abroad as best she can, by her sacraments and by her teaching; but it will only be of benefit to those who hear her words and conform their lives to that preaching. As did St Paul, who was a persecutor of the Church of God, and yet received the word in good soil. This was not the idea which motivated the section chosen for the Epistle, but rather the fact that the Stational Church for today was St Paul's Outside the Walls, and from this also comes the reference to the Apostle in the collect.

II. EXEGETIC AND MORAL NOTES

A: The Epistle: 2 Corinthians 11. 19-12. 9

1. *Argument:*

Today's passage may appear at first sight to be full of vanity and strange irony; but we must remember that Paul is not defending himself, but his work.

2. *Texts:*

(a) *The labours and sufferings of Paul:*

The list is impressive; five times he was scourged by the Jews, and three times beaten with rods. Suffered hardships and ship-

wrecks—and his present list cannot include that of Malta, because it did not happen until after this section was written! The perils by land we can well imagine, on those perilous routes he travelled. Above all, Paul was a father and organizer, with anxious care for all the churches, including the care for each and every individual.

(b) *He also reveals himself as a mystic:*

It would almost seem that he is ashamed to have to mention it, and so does it in the third person. The reference to the third heaven means paradise, because the Jews distinguished three classes of heaven, that of the clouds, that of the stars and that of God himself. This may refer to the three types of mystical visions, namely through the senses, the imagination and the intellect.

(c) *The sting of the flesh:*

There have been many and varied interpretations of this phrase; some having understood it of temptations against purity, some of the persecutions Paul had to put up with from the Jews and from the Gentiles; while others have insisted that it was a physical illness of some kind which was a burden to him and to others. That he had temptations which made him hate his own body is certain (Rom. 7. 23); and also that he punished his body severely (1 Cor. 9. 27). Knox, commenting on this verse, says in a footnote: This is often understood as referring to temptations against purity, but some of the earliest Fathers would interpret it rather of those persecutions which were stirred up against the Apostle by his fellow-countrymen. Other commentators have supposed that St Paul is speaking of some bodily disease or deficiency. If we see here a reference to Num. 33. 55, the second of the explanations given above is to be preferred.

However, other indications would lead us to believe that it is definitely a reference to temptations against purity. In any case, some things are certain:

- i. the sufferings are sent by God to counterbalance divine favours and prevent vanity or other sins;
- ii. grace is enough to stand up to them;
- iii. the weaker we are, the more we need grace—and we have it at our disposal;
- iv. but all the time we have to accept the cross and sufferings of Christ, attributing all our strength to him.

4. *The lesson:*

(a) *For the apostle:*

We can do all things in and with Christ. There can be no apostolate without suffering.

(b) *For the ordinary faithful:*

A magnificent lesson for Lent—asceticism.

(c) For all:

Doing one's duty with energy as an instrument of Christ and for his glory.

B: The Gospel: Luke 8. 4-15

1. *The parables:*

The word, exclusive to the Synoptics, is of Greek origin; it is also frequent in the Old Testament. We may remember the parables of Nathan directed against David and the song of the vineyard in Isaias (5. 1-7). In the time of Christ they were used frequently by the Rabbis and have come down to us through the writings of Hillel, Jehoshua and others; and have only served to illustrate the superiority of those of Christ.

A parable told to the people has greater fame as it is simpler and more direct, logical and convincing, so that the ordinary people cannot deny its force. For its interpretation we must keep in mind that:

- i. it is fiction;
- ii. that we must compare the content of the parable with its total meaning;
- iii. the context is necessary in order to see the real point of it and its essential meaning, which may sometimes be given to us at the beginning and sometimes at the end.

2. *The purpose of parables:*

Why did the Lord use them so extensively? The answer would seem to be this; he deliberately veiled some things from his hearers so that they should not be so guilty when they rejected them. The veil which covers his doctrine is so slight that it incites his hearers to question him, and once they do that, he will expound the full truth to them. Jerome says that he mingles what is clear with that which is obscure so that, by means of what is clear, they may understand that which is obscure.

Chrysostom is a decided patron of this thesis of mercy, and so is Augustine, in spite of the fact that he also plays on the desire of Christ to blind the Jews who were too confident in themselves, in the hope that they would be brought to humility and therefore to mercy.

3. *Texts:*(a) *The parable:*

The preaching of it probably took place in the second year of the public life, when John had already been put into prison, Christ had chosen his disciples and now began to preach the kingdom. It was somewhere near Capharnaum and there was a great multitude to hear him. For this reason he used a boat as his pulpit.

This boat, a sign of the magisterium of his Church, rocks gently to and fro on the waves; to the North there is the backcloth of

Mount Hermon; to the South the white of the roofs of the town of Tiberias, and to the right of it, Capharnaum; in the foreground, the slopes of the fields leading down to the sea, which gave our Lord inspiration for the theme of the parable. The land, although fertile, abounds in stones, and therefore in places the soil has little depth and there are many thorns and thistles. In a word, all the elements of the story.

(b) *The sower:*

Primarily Christ, who took flesh, not to punish the sinful world, but to cultivate it. Then all those who preach, who must expect the same fate as Christ. They can count on help from heaven in the form of graces, but they also need fertile soil. It is constant labour. In our soul, the sower is God, three in one, by means of inspirations, grace, reading, preaching, etc. By means of illustrations in the mind, desires, counsels and affections in the will. I must find out what it is that makes the soil sterile (La Puente, *Med.* 44. 2).

Of the rest of the parable there is little to say. The sower would cast his seed by hand, as was the custom; and it would be good seed. But part of it fell on one of the paths which were hard by constant treading down, and the sparrows whom Fr Lagrange saw take the seed before it had time to fall on the ground even, would eat it up. Other seed fell on ground where there was no great depth of earth. It germinated, but when the drought came it had no depth of root and so was soon killed by lack of water. Other seed was choked by the many weeds and thistles which grew up together with it.

Other seed fell on good ground which produced a hundredfold, at least in some cases.

4. *The explanation:*

It would seem that the disciples asked our Lord two questions, why did he speak to them in parables and also the explanation for this one. These questions were probably put to him at the end of the sermon, when he was alone with them.

(a) *The seed is the word of God:*

This seed, which is buried in the soul to enrich it, not the sower, is a wonderful thing, because it comes from God who places it on the lips of the preacher; it is most fertile, because it contains God's mysteries and has within itself the strength necessary to grow, transforming the whole of man and increasing his knowledge until it is capable of capturing the most profound meaning and infinite applications of it. There is one condition, that the soil on which it falls should be good.

(b) *The wayside:*

This path is open to all who wish to walk along it; like that heart which is open to every kind of thought. . . . For that reason, when

the word of God falls in a heart which is vain and unstable, it is just as if it fell on a path (St Thomas, *In Matt.*). It is not a question of mere lack of intelligence, but of want of attention, which is denied because a man does not wish to make his life conform to the Gospel, as was the case with the Pharisees.

The birds of the air—that is the devil—take advantage of this lack of interest in order to destroy the seed. The enemy is always close to the preacher to render his efforts useless. Let us remember that Satan is not an imaginary figure and that he takes advantage of our carelessness. Those people who, thinking themselves to be wise, refuse to hear the word, or those who make as their excuse the life of the preacher, are very like the hard road of the parable.

(c) **The seed which falls on rocky ground:**

The former did not wish to listen; but these receive the word with joy, delighted with its goodness and beauty, as we see so often in times of missions. But they did not meditate on the doctrine they had received, nor make it penetrate into the depths of their hearts. They are sentimentalists—nothing more.

Since man is an intellectual animal, unless his reason is fully convinced he will not be able to stand up against difficulties and sufferings, the need for which he has not yet understood, perhaps. He is like those who followed Jesus in the breaking of bread, but not in the bitter drink of the chalice of the passion. This chalice could consist merely in the smiles of the world and its temptations, while the lack of roots is inconstancy.

(d) **That which falls among thorns:**

It also takes root; but let us not deceive ourselves, Christ will not live in companionship with either Belial or Mammon. Excessive attention to worldly things, riches and pleasures must be rooted up from the soul. Notice that the Lord does not refer here to those whose vices will not allow them to hear the word, for such are represented by the path; but he talks of those who receive the word but are not careful to root out the weeds which grow up with it.

No one can doubt this inverse ratio: the greater the attachment to creatures the less the union with God. It has many degrees, from the impediment to the highest grades of perfection to a total loss of God and subsequent condemnation.

(e) **That which falls on good ground:**

Here are the conditions for good soil: to hear and understand (Matt. 13. 23); maintain the seed with a good and generous heart and so bring forth fruit by perseverance (Luke 8. 15). The intellect and will both have to play their parts, aided by perseverance. There will still be grades of fruitfulness, according as there is greater attention on the part of the intellect and generous goodwill. St

Thomas applies these different grades to the various grades of perfection in the soul.

The purpose of the parable is to make known the varied success of the preaching of the kingdom, according to the dispositions of those who hear it. Since the kingdom is eternal and the hearers are not restricted to the time of Christ, the parable has a meaning for all of us. Not merely the spread of the kingdom, but also its growth and conservation depend on these dispositions.

For the Jews it had a special application, since they forgot the need to hear the word, understand it and let it grow in their hearts, being confident that it was enough for them to have descended from Abraham.

The obstacles come from a mind which does not desire to understand (the path), from the will which is weak and inconstant in time of adversity (the stones) and a heart which is too attached to the things of this world (the weeds).

SECTION III. THE FATHERS

I. ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

(With his customary eloquence he tries to explain the reasons why the seed remains sterile in some and produces fruit in others. Good or bad dispositions of soul are the answer. PG. 57, 463-472.)

1. *The sowing:*

Where did he go who is, by nature, present everywhere, filling all places? He went out, not into a place, but into a way of life in which he saved us by being clothed in our flesh. Since we could not enter in, because our sins had set up an obstacle in the way, he came out to us. And why did he come? Was it to destroy this earth that had brought forth thorns; or to punish the bad husbandmen? No; he came to till and care for the soil and to sow in it the word of compassion. Here he calls his teaching seed; the souls of men a field, ready ploughed; he himself is the sower.

What happened to this seed? Three parts of it were lost and one saved . . . the fourth portion; and that again not in equal measure, for here there is greater variation. He speaks thus to show us that he is teaching all men without distinction, just as the sower makes no difference, but scatters his seed broadcast. So neither did Christ make a distinction between rich or poor, wise or foolish, slothful or diligent, courageous or timid. He speaks to all, fulfilling his mission although he knew what was going to happen, so that he might be able to say: What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard and have not done it? (Isaias 5. 4). . . .

Here he speaks only of seed. Why is this? That obedience may now be easier, more prompt and more quick to bring forth fruit.

When you hear that the sower went forth to sow his seed, do not think this to be mere repetition, for the sower often goes out for other reasons, to plough, for instance, or to destroy weeds and uproot thorns. But why is the greater part of the seed lost? It is because of the earth that receives it, not by reason of the sower. . . . But you may ask: what sense is there in sowing among weeds or thorns, on stony ground or on a pathway? If we are talking about seeds and the earth in which they are sown, then there is little or no sense; but when it is a question of men's souls there are several things to commend it. A farmer would rightly be blamed for doing this, because rock cannot become earth, nor a path be anything else. Nor can thorns cease to be thorns. But with the hearts of men and the things of the mind it is very different. The rock can be changed and become rich, fruitful soil. The path may cease to be trodden down by everyone and become part of a fruitful field. Thorns can be uprooted, and the young plants, once freed from them, can grow to fertile maturity. Unless this could be so he would not have sown thus.

That such a transformation has not taken place in all men is not the fault of the sower, but of those who were unwilling to be changed. If they have wasted the seed they received at his hands, he is not to blame who has shown such goodness to them. Notice, however, that the way to condemnation is not one, but many, and each differs from the rest. They that are like the path are the depraved, slothful and indifferent; they who are like the rock are those who fall from weakness. . . . Now it is not the same to allow the word of doctrine to wither up when no one is tempting you or persecuting you, as it is to fail under the hail of temptations. They that are like thorns are less to be excused than these.

So that we may not suffer any of these evils let us bury safely in our memories what has been taught us. For though the devil may steal it, we are the masters as to whether or not he shall steal. And if the young shoots of wheat wither, it is not because of the heat, for he did not say that; he said that it withered because it had no roots. If what he has taught us is checked, it is not the fault of the thorns, but of those who allow them to grow unchecked. For you can, if you will, make the most of your riches and oppose their evil growth. . . . Let us not put the blame on earthly things, but on the corrupt will.

It is possible to be rich and yet not be deceived by riches; in this world, yet not oppressed by its cares. For the rich man has two opposing disadvantages; the one, care, which weighs down the mind; the other, luxury, which makes it soft. Rightly therefore does Christ speak of the deceitfulness of riches, for all that pertains to wealth is a deceit to men. They are but a name and not something inherent in things themselves. Pleasure, praise, the love of display

and all such things are a kind of make-believe, not the reality of life. . . .

Hearing all this, let us strengthen ourselves in every direction, attending to his teaching, sending down the roots of our faith deep into our minds, cleansing ourselves from worldliness. However, if we do but one of the things he taught us, forgetting the rest, then we do not gain anything. If we do not lose ourselves in that, we shall lose ourselves in some other way. What difference does it make if we do not lose our soul through riches, but lose it through laziness instead; or if not through sloth, then through impurity? The farmer grieves whether he loses the good seed through this or that reason. . . .

Let us burn up the thorns which choke us; and let certain rich people remember this, that those who are without worth in this are also useless in other respects. Being slaves and captives to pleasure, they also are of no value in public or civic affairs; and if valueless in this respect, how much more unprofitable are they in the things of God? A twofold evil has entered their minds, that of softness and that of care. Either is sufficient by itself to sink the boat; but when both join hands, then how mightily the waves mount over her!

Do not be surprised that he compares impurity to thorns. Those who are drunk with their passions will not understand it, but one who is free from it knows that it pierces more sharply than any thorns; that all self-indulgence wounds the body more than care and causes more grief to the soul. No one is wounded more by care than by bodily excesses. . . .

As thorns draw blood from the hand that grasps them, no matter how carefully it may be done, so does self-indulgence injure the hands and feet, the eyes, the head and all the members. It withers up the body, making it unfruitful; it hurts more sharply than any thorns and in a manner more vital. It brings on old age before its time. It dulls the senses and blights the mind, so that the intelligence that was sharp becomes cloudy. It weakens the whole body, multiplies its ills, making the burden of life too heavy, its load too great, so that our falls are frequent and our evils multiplied.

II. ST BASIL

(We shall give a summary of his main ideas in this sermon, the central theme of which is the harm done to the soul by riches. PG. 31, 1744-1753.)

There are two kinds of temptation which are very dangerous, misfortunes, which prove the soul as in a crucible . . . and, more frequently, prosperity. It is just as difficult to keep the soul pure and in touch with God in the midst of adversity as it is to avoid the neglect of our neighbour in time of abundance. Job was an example

of one who triumphs over the former, and the rich man in the Gospel a proof of the dangers of the latter (Luke 12. 16-21).

The harm done by riches:

(a) Ingratitude towards God:

It is God who gives all these good things, who commands his rain to fall on the whole earth . . . and what do we find afterwards in the heart of man? hardness, hatred and meanness towards God, and towards his neighbour. It does not occur to him that he is of the same nature as other men, nor does he think of distributing what is over to him among those in need.

(b) Anxieties:

As his riches increase, the miser finds himself daily with new cares. He is made miserable by his present abundance, more miserable by that which he hopes for in the future. . . . He is like a glutton who would rather burst than share what is left over to him.

(c) Unfaithful administrator of God's goods:

Know, O man, your benefactor and who he is whose goods have been handed over to you so that you might administer them, and why you have been preferred to many others. You were named God's administrator for the benefit of your fellow-servants. Never imagine that these things were given to you as a personal gift; you have to dispose of them as if they belonged to another. They will serve as a source of pleasure to you for a time, and then will disappear and you will be asked for a strict account of every one of them.

(d) Riches bring evil on those who have them:

The rich man, were he to imitate the earth and bring forth fruit as she does, would be a heavenly husbandman; instead of that he kills himself by hiding his treasure in the earth he is expected to till. He could present himself before God surrounded by a great multitude who would acclaim his good works, but in his desire to keep the stupid honour which riches can bring him in this life, he loses everything. He would rather count the coins in his purse than be called the father of many sons before God. God would approve of you; praise would be yours from the angels; the blessed in heaven would bid you welcome; you would receive the reward of heaven, eternal glory, the crown of justice as recompense for your good administration of corruptible goods. But, too attached to the present life, you have thrown away all this.

(e) Hardness of heart in time of want and poverty:

Do not raise the price of things or take advantage of necessity so that they may be worth more. Do not delay the opening of the doors of your barns until the price has risen (Prov. 11. 26). Do not cause hunger through love of money, nor want in order to increase your

private fortune. Never exploit public calamities nor draw profits from God's punishments. Do not heap more anguish on those already under the blows of the lash. But no; you think only of your money and not of your brethren.

(f) Riches, a source of the common good:

Let your wealth flow freely. Just as a mighty river is divided into smaller tributaries and canals so that it may water the whole countryside, see to it that your riches pass through different channels until they reach the houses of the poor. A well from which water is drawn constantly remains always crystal clear; if it is allowed to become stagnant it goes bad. That is the image of riches; stored up, they are useless, but when they are allowed to move and pass from one to another they increase the common good of all. Men will praise you, and their praise will only be a prelude to that of God.

But what harm do I do, says the miser, if I keep what is mine? Tell me; what is yours? Where did it come from? The rich are often like that spectator who, having taken his place in the theatre, tried to cast out all the rest as if all that belonged to them was his. When you occupy that which is common property you really seize that which belongs to all. If each one took what he needed and left the rest for the poor, then no one would be rich, but neither would anyone live in misery.

You were born naked. Your possessions are God's and I do not think that you can accuse him of not having distributed with equity the things necessary for life. If he gave you more than to others it was so that you might receive the prize reserved for the faithful administrator of his goods. . . . What is a thief, except one who takes that which belongs to another? Can you, then, deny that you are a thief when you take for your own that which was given to you to distribute? Or are we to give that name to one who takes another's garment and not to one who refuses to clothe the poor?

The bread you hold back belongs to the hungry; the garment you keep in your cupboard is the property of the naked; the shoes that rot in your home should be on the feet of those who have none and the money you keep buried is the treasure of the needy. . . . To move your heart I must speak to you of the judgement, of the reward given to those who are generous with their alms and of the punishment which awaits those who refuse to give alms. Do not leave it until tomorrow, because the need is great and urgent; what is more you do not know when you will die.

III. ST AUGUSTINE

(We give some extracts from his works in which he speaks of the duties of the preachers of the word.)

1. *The responsibility of the preacher:*

Those of us who address the people have to remember two things: we are Christians and preachers; Christians for our own benefit, leaders of the people for theirs . . . because many Christians, and not especially the preachers, reach God by a road which is easier, moving along with greater agility since they are not burdened by office. We, however, who as Christians will have to render an account to God of our own lives, are also your prelates, and because of that we are also bound to give an account of our administration. I put this difficulty of ours before you so that, having pity on us, you may pray for us (PL. 38, 270-295).

2. *He should not seek material gain:*

The milk of the flock is all that goes to the maintenance of their leaders. . . . The apostle Paul says that he had the right to take this milk and that the Lord had so arranged things. . . . One who cannot renounce his right as did Paul and who does not know how to live by the work of his own hands, let him take milk from the flock and sustain his life, but let him not be careless about the weakness of the flock. Let him not seek it for his own comfort, as if he were preaching the Gospel in order to administer to his own needs. Rather let him take care to show to others the light of truth. . . . To receive is a necessity of life; to give is charity; but not as if the Gospel were an object of commerce and its price were those things which the preacher receives in return for his ministry. If they sell it for that it is a poor price they receive indeed! Let them receive from the people enough for their needs and hope in God for the true reward of their labours, because the people cannot reward sufficiently those who preach the Gospel in charity. Never let the preacher hope for reward from any other source except that from which his hearers hope to receive salvation.

3. *Nor honours:*

He who gives milk gives food, but he who gives the wool honours another. There are the two things desired by those preachers who seek themselves, not God: comfort and honour. They seek themselves because they feed on honours and praise and for that reason they do not reprove. . . . I cannot say to you, Live as you please, your salvation is assured as long as you keep the faith. . . . If I were to permit the spectacles, the feasts in your cities, the abundance of food at your tables, I would certainly have a larger audience for my words, but then I would not be speaking the words of Christ, but my own. I would be a shepherd who feeds himself in order to obtain applause.

4. *Avoiding scandals:*

Even the strongest Christians observe their shepherds, and if they see them giving bad example it may kill their souls, because they

may say: If those who teach me live like that, why should not I? And even if they had sufficient formation to be able to understand what was said to them about doing what they teach you, but not imitating their works, yet still such preachers do all that lies in their power to kill the sheep.

5. *Where the evil shepherd fails:*(a) *He does not strengthen the weak:*

Those sheep are weak who are frightened at the thought of suffering and effort. Simple souls, to whom some preachers address themselves by hiding the truth from them and promising continued happiness within the Christian framework. That is to build upon sand and construct a Christianity which will tumble down when the torments of temptation and tribulation appear.

The weak should be comforted by telling him: You can expect sufferings in this life, but you can be perfectly certain that God will save you from them and do not depart from him. To strengthen your heart he came on this earth, suffered and died. . . . Christ announced suffering after suffering, and will you, O preacher of the word, try to exempt the Christian from them? Just because he is a Christian he will have to suffer even greater sorrows. . . . Knock down that house built on sand and construct another, built upon that rock which is Christ. . . . We may not deceive anyone with false hopes, just as we may not force anyone to despair by terror. To announce the struggle to him is to strengthen the sick man; and if one should suffer excessive terror, promise him the mercy of God, not because he will not have to suffer temptations, but because God will not permit them to go beyond the powers of those who believe in him.

(b) *He does not cure the sick:*

The sick represent the sinners, those whose soul is paralysed and who must be carried to the feet of Christ once we have opened for them the way of the Scriptures. Like the young man in the Gospel whom they let down before our Lord after having taken off part of the roof. It is possible that they may attack you and say: If I live in error and the shadow of death, what is that to do with you? Leave me in peace! Precisely because you live in error I wish to call you; and because you have strayed I wish to find you. But my desire is to be in error and to lose my soul! You wish to be wrong and perish? Much more reason why I do not wish that to happen to you. I will preach in season and out of season, as the Apostle tells me. I do not wish you to be lost because he does not wish it whom I serve and fear. What is more, you are a peril to my other sheep, and if I long to save those who are without, I am still more afraid of any harm that may come to those within.

6. *The qualities of a preacher of the word:*(a) *Before all this, charity:*

God sends as ministers of his Gospel those who are spiritual, not carnal, so that they may preach as if they were flames of fire (Ps. 103. 3-4). If the preacher is not on fire himself he cannot hope to kindle a flame in those who hear him (PL. 37, 1353).

(b) *Full of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (PL. 36. 139).*(c) *One who practises what he preaches:*

To the impious man God says: How do you dare to speak about my commandments? (Ps. 49. 16). . . . It is true that God accepts the preaching of those who are evil, because of their hearers, who are warned not to practise what such men teach by their example, but only that which they teach by their words. The purpose of this warning is to stir up confidence among the hearers, so that they may not fear their preachers, no matter who it is who talks to them, not so that they who preach the good news and do not live it should feel secure. You can rest assured that, if you hear anything good, it is from God, no matter who the preacher is. But the Lord will not allow him to go unpunished who, having preached the word and feeling satisfied with that, sleeps in his evil life, thinking that God could never allow one to be lost who had announced such good things to his people.

On the contrary; do you just listen to yourselves; if you wish your hearers to listen to you, be your first audience!

(d) *One who preaches mainly by example:*

Our sermons should be arrows of love, with which Christ can pierce the hearts of our hearers. But words are of little use by themselves, no matter how many of them we may utter. Preaching, of itself, is but a small thing; it requires our example. Christians are often afraid that they are not capable of virtue, and then we have to teach them, by our example, that it is possible for all (PL. 36, 1600-1601).

(e) *Never allowing himself to be discouraged by apparent failures:*

The remedy against this is to have full confidence in God and none in ourselves. The results of our preaching must be left to him (PL. 36, 241-246).

(f) *The truth, without fear or favour:*

The preacher must never forget that he is but the Lord's servant, who is expected to serve the food to God's workmen. How can I enter into the houses of those who close their doors on me unless there is someone who will open that door for me, says God to the preacher? How can they hear me unless there is one who will

preach me to them? Timid preachers would like God to send new apostles to convert the world in their place, but the Church, looking at those who can preach, but who are afraid, teaches them to pray thus: Christ, wash our feet, forgive us our sins, because our charity is not extinguished and we can still forgive those who sin against us. . . . It is true that we go through the world opening doors for you, and if they criticize us we are disturbed and if they praise us we become vain; but wash our feet, which were clean before, but which have become stained with the dust of the road we have had to travel in order to open the way for you . . . (PL. 35, 1790-1792).

IV. ST GREGORY THE GREAT

(One passage from the famous Hom. 15, which was preached in the Basilica of St Paul on this Sunday. PL. 76, 1131.)

The good ground brings forth fruit in patience, because the good we do is without value unless we bear with the evils done to us by others at the same time. The higher anyone ascends in virtue the more the world will bear down on him; for the more the heart turns away from the joys of this present life, so much the more will the opposition of that world mount up. That is why we see so many strive and do that which is good, but at the same time they have to labour under a great burden of afflictions. Having turned away from earthly things, they are still harassed with increasing tribulations. But the word of the Lord assures them that they will bring forth fruit in patience and after their time of trial has passed they will be received into eternal rest, because they have borne their cross in patience.

The grapes must be trodden so that the wine may flow. So the virtue of the olive, pressed out by crushing, must leave the olive and become oil. Before being brought into the barn the grain must be beaten out on the threshing floor and separated from the husk. Whoever desires to overcome his defects completely must bear with patience the pain of being made clean. The more he is purified in the fire of tribulation now, so much the more worthy shall he be to appear at the judgement seat of God.

SECTION IV. A THEOLOGIAN

ST THOMAS AQUINAS

(The seed is the word of God, and this is contained mainly in Sacred Scripture. St Thomas's writings contain many useful ideas concerning preaching, a summary of which will be given here. There is also, among his authentic writings, a copy of a sermon he delivered on the occasion of his being named Master of Theology. The principal ideas in it are those which head this section.)

1. *Scripture:*

He begins by quoting from Augustine, who says that the preacher must do three things, he must teach the ignorant, delight those who are bored and move the hearts of those who are tepid. These three things contain a perfect eulogy of the Scriptures, which teach eternal truth, delight because of their usefulness and move hearts by their authority.

The authority of Scripture is revealed in its origin, which is God, in the obligation it imposes on those who hear it and in the uniformity of its teaching, which is at all times the same. Its truth is immutable and eternal. Its utility obvious from the fact that it leads us to a life of grace, to acts of virtue and to life eternal which it promises us.

It is sublime in its origin, in the truths it teaches us about the life of God himself and in its purpose, which is eternal life.

Those who teach it or preach it should have certain basic qualities, namely, a spirit of contemplation and sanctity of life, true knowledge, and one which is free from error. Those who hear it should do so in humility, rightness of intention and receive it with fertile co-operation, so as to act on what they hear.

2. *Preaching:*(a) *Its purpose:*

To instruct the mind; move the will to receive the word of God willingly; stir up the love of the hearers, thus inducing them to put into practice what they hear (2-2. q. 177. a. 1. c).

(b) *It belongs to the contemplative and active life at one and the same time:*

Teaching has two purposes, because it is done by means of the spoken word, which is the external sign of the interior thoughts. When a man has those thoughts about divine things and takes an interior delight in them, such activity belongs rather to the contemplative life than to one which is purely active. When he teaches those to others by his words his action is essentially part of the active life (2-2. q. 181. a. 3. c).

(c) *Preaching is more perfect than contemplation:*

Even though a contemplative life is better, absolutely speaking, than an active one, still that branch of the active life which is given up to teaching others, by preaching things which have already been the object of contemplation, is more perfect than a life given up exclusively to contemplation, because it supposes an abundance of contemplation. This was why Christ chose it (3. q. 40. a. 1).

(d) *It is an act of perfect charity:*

He says that the life which is given over to preaching and the administration of spiritual good to our neighbour, such as the sacraments, is a life of perfect charity and enjoys a singular perfection

(*Opusc.* 29. 14). It is an office which is proper to the bishop (3. q. 67. a. 1 *ad Ium*).

(e) *Qualities of the preacher of the word:*

God demands that his ministers should be:

- i. pure,
- ii. intelligent,
- iii. fervent,
- iv. obedient.

Although no one, of his own power, can be capable of such a great ministry, he can receive this office from God, to whom he should direct his petitions (*Opusc.* 40).

Preaching also requires austerity of life, poverty of spirit, together with detachment from the things of this life and also a love of solitude. The latter is necessary at times to rest the body from its labours of preaching, at others to give time for prayer and contemplation, on which the efficacy of preaching will depend. Also to avoid the temptation of preaching to secure the praise of men (3. q. 41. a. 3 *ad Ium*; q. 40. a. 1).

SECTION V. SPIRITUAL WRITERS

I. ST TERESA OF AVILA

1. *The tribulations of those in the first Castle:*

You must note that the light which comes from the palace of the King hardly reaches these first Mansions at all; for though they are not dark and black, as when the soul is in a state of sin, they are to some extent darkened, so that they cannot be seen (I mean by anyone who is in them); and this not because of anything wrong with the room, but rather—I hardly know how to explain myself—because there are so many bad things, such as snakes, vipers and poisonous creatures, which have come in with the soul, that they prevent it from seeing the light. It is as if one were to enter a place flooded with sunlight with his eyes so full of dust that he could hardly open them. The room itself is light enough, but he cannot enjoy the light because he is prevented from doing so by these wild beasts and animals, which force him to close his eyes to everything but themselves. This seems to me to be the condition of a soul which, though not in a bad state, is so completely absorbed in things of the world and so deeply immersed, as I have said, in possession of honours or business that, although as a matter of fact it would like to gaze at the castle and enjoy its beauty, it is prevented from doing so, and seems quite incapable of freeing itself from all these impediments.

Everyone, however, who wishes to enter the second Mansions will be well advised, so far as his state of life permits, to try to put aside all unnecessary affairs and business. For those who hope to

reach the principal Mansion, this is so important that unless they begin in this way I do not believe they will ever be able to get there. Nor indeed, although it has entered the Castle, is the soul free from great peril in the Mansion which it actually inhabits; for, being among such poisonous things, it cannot, at some time or another, escape being bitten by them (*Interior Castle*, I, ch. 2).

2. *The importance of perseverance and the war the devil wages against us:*

This has to do with those who have already begun to practise prayer and who realize the importance of not remaining in the first Mansions, but who often are not resolute enough to leave those Mansions, and will not avoid occasions of sin, which is a very perilous condition. But it is a great mercy that they should strive to escape from the snakes and other poisonous things, if only for short periods, and should realize that it is good to flee from them. In some ways these souls have a much harder time than those in the first Mansions; but they are in less peril, for they seem now to understand their position and there is great hope that they will get further into the Castle still. I say that they have a harder time because the souls in the first Mansions are, as it were, not only dumb, but can hear nothing, and so it is not such a trial for them to be unable to speak; the others, who can hear and not speak, would find the trial so much harder to bear. But that is no reason for envying those who do not hear, for after all it is a great thing to be able to understand what is said to one. . . .

I do not mean by this that he speaks to us and calls us in the precise way which I shall describe later; his appeals come through the conversations of good people, or from sermons, or through the reading of books; and there are many other ways of which you have heard in which God calls to us. Or they come by sicknesses and trials, or by means of truths which God teaches us at times when we are engaged in prayer; however feeble such prayers may be, God values them highly. You must not despise this first favour, nor be disconsolate, even though you have not responded immediately to the Lord's call; for his Majesty is quite prepared to wait for many days and even for years, especially when he sees that we are persevering and have good desires. This is the most necessary thing here; if we have this we cannot fail to gain greatly.

Nevertheless, the assault which the devils now make upon the soul in all kinds of ways is terrible; and the soul suffers more than in the preceding Mansions; for there it was deaf and dumb, or at least it could hear very little, and so it offered less resistance, like one who, to a great extent, has lost hope of gaining the victory. Here the understanding is keener and the faculties are more alert, while the clash of arms and the noise of cannon are so loud that

the soul cannot help hearing them. For here the devils once more show the soul those vipers—that is, the things of the world—and they pretend that earthly pleasures are almost eternal; they remind the soul of the esteem in which it is held in the world, of its friends and relatives, of the way in which its health will be endangered by penances (which the soul always wants to do when it enters into this Mansion) and of impediments of a thousand and one other kinds.

Oh, Jesus! What confusion the devils bring about in the poor soul, and how distressed it is, not knowing if it ought to proceed further or return to the room where it was before! On the other hand, reason tells the soul how mistaken it is in thinking that all these earthly things are of the slightest value by comparison with what it is seeking; faith instructs it in what it must do to find satisfaction; memory shows it how all these things come to an end, and reminds it that those who have derived so much enjoyment from the things which it has seen have died. Sometimes they have died suddenly and been quickly forgotten by all; people whom we once knew to be prosperous are now beneath the ground and we trample upon their graves. . . .

My Lord, it is here that we have need of your aid, without which we can do nothing. Of your mercy, do not allow this soul to be deluded and led astray when its journey is just begun. Give it light, so that it may see how its welfare consists in this and may flee from the companionship of evil. It is a very great thing for a person to associate with others who are walking in the right way; to mix, not only with those whom he sees in the rooms where he himself is, but also with those whom he knows have entered the rooms nearer the centre, for they will be of great help to him and he can get into such close touch with them that they will take him with them. . . .

You may think that you will be full of determination to resist outward trials if God will only grant you inner favours. His Majesty knows best what is suitable for us; it is not for us to advise him what to give us, for he can rightly reply that we know not what we ask. All that the beginner in prayer has to do—and you must not forget this because it is very important—is to labour, be resolute and prepare himself with all possible diligence to bring his will into conformity with the will of God. As I shall say later, you may be quite sure that this comprises the very greatest perfection which can be attained in the spiritual road. The more perfectly a person practises it, the more he will receive of the Lord and the greater progress he will make on this road. Do not think we have to use strange jargon or dabble in things of which we have no knowledge or understanding; our entire welfare is to be found in what I have described. If we go astray at the beginning and want the Lord to do our will and lead us as our fancy dictates, how can this building have a firm foundation? (*Interior Castle*, II).

II. ST BERNARDINE OF SIENA

(Apart from some complete sermons of his which were copied down by his hearers, there exist some complete schemes of sermons, full of division and quotations, from which we have taken this summary of his ideas about the word of God as a seed, and how to receive it. Cf. *Sermones eximii*, 1745.)

1. *Conditions of the sower of the seed:*

It must be received with humility first of all, and the understanding of it must be given by God, otherwise it will not be fruitful. St John received the book from the hands of an angel which teaches us that:

(a) *We must not trust in ourselves:*

We must trust in Christ, directing our prayers to him so that he may instruct us.

(b) *Consider ourselves unworthy, although chosen instruments:*

The more the preacher mistrusts his own gifts and depends on the help of God the more graces he will receive. It is as if the word of God were enclosed in a prison from which it can only be liberated by means of our prayer.

2. *Meditation on the word:*

If the truth is not made the subject of meditation it is like food which is not digested. For example, the preacher who does not know how to have compassion for sinners because of the evils which they deserve, but who merely shows his anger against them, has not meditated on the word of God.

The bad ground

Those who do not hear the word as they should. The soul has three kinds of powers, those of the appetites and those of the reason, all of which can be under the direction of free will and directed towards eternal good, by believing, hoping and loving God; in which case the ground will be good and fruitful. But these same powers of man can be directed towards temporal goods, pleasures, honours, riches and the like. Then the ground will be like that of the path or will be covered with thorns and stony. Hard ground indeed, like that of the path, is concupiscence, steeped in pleasures. Stony is the man who is wrapped up in honours. Thorny that ground which is given up to the desire for riches.

1. *The path:*

The saint takes it for granted that this means gross pleasures and then goes on to speak of some others, more refined, but which also render the seed useless.

(a) *Those who are too curious:*

Those who are in search of literature or oratorical gifts, not the word of God. To these correspond the preachers who, in their desire to shine as learned men, spread themselves in oratorical phrases . . . teach things which their hearers cannot understand, seeking ostentation instead of what is useful. . . . The less they are understood, the more they are praised . . . because many like to hear things they do not understand so as not to have to practise the things they should. Others appear to listen with their eyes, not seeking that preacher from whom they can learn most, but rather those churches where there are most people. Others admire a voice or eloquence of gesture . . . like those who buy corn because of the pictures on the sack.

(b) *Those faithful who are too delicate:*

Speak to them of virtues, but do not reprimand vice or talk about punishment. This is easier, but still it is better for us to reprove vice, simply because it is more difficult to root it up.

(c) *Those who are bored by so many sermons:*

They are tired of those preachers or sermons which are not surrounded by ornate style or delicate phrases. Those who presume to be wise are incapable of listening to a simple preacher, seeking only human brilliance.

2. *Stony ground:*

Those who are so wrapped up in the thought of worldly honours that they are not well disposed to hear the word of God, which is wrapped in humility.

3. *Thorns:*

Those who are merely concerned with accumulating riches are also unable to adapt themselves to the word, because their eyes are fixed on this earth and they cannot lift them up to heaven. If the preacher mentions usury or restitution . . . they appear to be like bees who sting anything that touches them.

III. BOSSUET

(This sermon, of which we give a summary, was preached on the 2nd Sunday of Lent on the text, Hear ye him. *Oeuvres de Bossuet*, ed. Lebarcq, t. 3, p. 317.)

1. *The body and word of Christ:*

The tabernacle and the pulpit are the two places in church which deserve our reverence; in the one God is spoken of, and in the other God speaks; in the one Christ is adored in his true body, in the other he makes himself known in the truth of his doctrine. They are the two places from which the heavenly food is distributed. . . .

St Augustine used to say: Brethren, I ask you: Which appears to you more important, the word of God or the body of Christ? If you tell me the truth you will be bound to recognize that his word is no less to be esteemed than his body and the very same precautions which we take to make sure that the body of the Lord does not fall to the ground when it is handed to us should also be taken to make sure that the word of Christ does not fall from our hearts when it is preached to us. He is no less guilty who hears the word of God with negligence as the man who allows the body of Christ to fall to the ground.

Three ideas:

In this passage there are three ideas; namely:

- i. We owe the same respect to the truth of the body of the Lord and to the truth of his word;
- ii. just as the heavenly bread has to be received into the heart, so it is not enough to pay outward attention to the word;
- iii. just as the body of Christ must become our food, which is demonstrated when we live as those who have received it at the table of the Lord; so the word must transform our lives and produce good works.

2. Seek the word of God:

Christians who do not understand the cross seek for sermons which will please them; but just as no one should be so stupid as to seek anything else at the altar rail except the true body, the mystery of Christ, so no one should seek anything else in the pulpit except the word in all its purity. The Incarnate Word desired to make himself known to all men in two ways, in his visible body and, to the end of time, in the word. Do not think that, because we do not see him, he is no longer among us. As Tertullian says: On instituting his life-giving mission of preaching he called it his flesh. Preaching is like a second incarnation of Christ. . . . The ears can take pleasure in the literary form of the words, the imagination in the delicacy of the thought; the mind can be convinced by the logic. But conscience demands the truth, and it is to her that preachers speak.

3. Eloquence and preaching:

If you want to know what place eloquence holds in preaching it is St Augustine who tells us: Wisdom must come forth from her house, that is, from the breast of the wise man, and eloquence must follow her as a faithful servant, who never leaves her, even though she has not been summoned. . . . Drink deep of the Scriptures, borrow the sacred words, not only to strengthen but also to beautify your sermon. In passing, take up if you can find them all the adornments of eloquence, but let these come spontaneously, not as something which is forced. . . . Do you wish for preachers of this kind? Then

I will tell you a secret; the hearers make the preacher. . . . Do you know when God chooses to speak? When the earth is prepared; when men are ready and willing to listen. Seek true doctrine and God will raise up the preachers of it. Prepare the field and the sower will not be wanting. Look for human things, on the other hand, and God will shut up the clouds so that they do not give their rain and will withdraw the sacred word from the mouths of his preachers.

4. Hear the word in the heart:

Like the Eucharist, the divine word must be received in the heart, listened to with attention. Understand well what we mean by attention. Apart from the sound which reaches our ears, there is another, secret voice, that true preaching which speaks to us within, and without which the word of man is but a useless sound. We should all listen to the word within us, because, as Augustine says, there it is only God who speaks to us. Men and angels are not capable of preaching this truth to us; they can only point to it with their fingers, like one who shows another the beauties of a splendid cathedral, which would be invisible without the light of the sun. The light which enlightens every man who comes into this world is Christ. . . . The words may ring in our ears from the pulpit, but the true preaching is done in our hearts; that is why the Lord says: He that hath ears to hear, let him hear—and he is certainly not speaking of the ears of the body. The teacher of hearts has his pulpit in heaven.

This does not mean prescind from the exterior word, because the law of the New Testament is to enclose grace under external signs. . . . Assist at sermons and allow the words to fall into your hearts. . . .

5. We must reach the will:

There is a secret school, far removed from the bodily senses, where God is the teacher. And where is this school? I will tell you. Even though God himself were to speak directly, there would be a need to go deeper still, because while his light remains only in the intellect the lesson of God has not yet been heard. Truly, to hear the word of the Gospel we must not go to that place where judgement is given, but to that other which is the rule of morality. . . . God gives to preachers, at times, the grace to penetrate through the tortuous lanes of our passions and arrive at that sin which we have hidden deep in the secret places of our hearts. It is then that we should listen most attentively to the word of God, which will certainly disturb our so-called peace, act contrary to our desires and put a finger in our wounds. . . . And if the blow has not sufficed, may he give us strength to take up the sword in our own hand and strike even deeper. We may reach the living flesh beneath, perhaps even to that which Augustine calls the blood of the soul!

6. *Live the word:*

A good communion implies a life which is lived in conformity with that of Christ. The fact that we have heard the word of Christ is demonstrated by our life, which must be lived in accordance with it. It does happen at times that, on hearing a sermon, certain sentiments arise in our hearts which are an imitation of the true ones, capable of deceiving us; fervour and desires which are imperfect. But believe in the works (John 10. 38). They will tell you the truth.

Chrysostom said that his hearers listened to him as if they were in a theatre. It is true that, even there, people can be moved to tears and to anger. But do you know what is the real proof that all is false? When they leave the theatre all is forgotten. Something like this can happen with our sermons. Chrysostom also heard the shouts and applause of his audience, but he waited to see evil customs corrected before giving way to real joy. If you do not change your way of life you have not listened to God, but to man. Preaching is meant, not merely to teach, but also to instil love into our hearts.

IV. ANTONIO VIEIRA

(One of the great preachers of the seventeenth century. We shall give one extract in full from a sermon preached in the Royal Chapel in Lisbon in 1665; but before doing so, we shall also give a brief scheme of the rest of this sermon, which he regarded as the introduction to his life as a preacher.)

He begins by asking why the word of God does not seem to bear much fruit today, whereas the first centuries of the Church represented the triumph of preaching. The fault cannot lie with God, who never denies his co-operation. It must lie with men. The preachers tend to blame their hearers, but this is not correct, nor is it in accordance with the ideas of the parable, because there we see that even if the seed does not produce a hundredfold, at least it has some effect. There are still stony ground and thorns, it is true, but they are not the only explanation, because Christ wore a crown of thorns.

The fault very often lies with the preacher—his own life, his knowledge, the matter he chooses for preaching and his style. To deal very briefly with these four elements we may say that:

- (a) His own life should be a holy one, because preaching is best illustrated by sanctity, and the least word of a saint has more effect than the vast eloquence of one who is a sinner.
- (b) The matter should be simple, adapted to the hearers, not overloaded; carefully chosen and a natural unity, as a tree trunk with its branches and leaves.
- (c) Knowledge, based on Sacred Scripture and the Fathers, of true doctrine. It is the word of God which must be preached, not

opinions of men. The principal cause for the lack of effect in sermons is this one, of not preaching the word of God.

(d) The style should be simple, not ornate. It should be natural, not affected. Our words, like the seed, must fall naturally on the ears of those who listen to us, almost as something they have known from childhood, but which is now presented to them as something which must be acted upon, a way of life.

He finishes with this passage which we quote in full:

There were, in Coimbra, two famous preachers and the opinions of the faithful were divided as to which one was the better. One of those who was listening to such a discussion put an end to it very quickly by saying: When I listen to this one I go out full of admiration for the preacher. But when I listen to the other I leave the church very dissatisfied with myself.

That is the greatest praise which can be given to a preacher. If I sought to please men I would not be a servant of Christ, says Paul. . . . What an account the preacher will have to give to God! While the hearers can excuse themselves by saying that it was not their task to preach the truth, the preachers will have to confess that they did not say what they should have said. We are at the very gates of Lent. Let us preach against sin, against vice, pride, ambition, hatreds, avarice and sensuality. Let heaven see that there are still on earth those who range themselves with God and let the devils see that there are still those who oppose them!

SECTION VI. PAPAL TEXTS

Under this Section there are two great documents which should be studied in full and which it would be impossible to cite here, namely *Humani Generis* of Benedict XV (15 June 1917) and *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii* of Pius XI (20 Dec. 1935). In the Discourses of Pius XII to the Lenten Preachers of Rome there are many valuable directives of which we give here a very brief summary.

1. The preacher of today is in the vanguard of the army of Christ and to fulfil his mission he needs, above all other things, a deep knowledge of the sacred sciences, especially of the Scriptures. As ambassador of Christ, his chief mission is to give verbal testimony of the truth.
2. Above all, he must concentrate his attention on the great truths of the faith, especially the four last things, which are essential at all times and in every place.
3. His charity must abound, because preaching without it is vain and useless. In fact, it would be a contradiction in terms. He quotes St Gregory: *Qui charitatem non habet, praedicationis officium suscipere nullatenus debet.*

4. He should be clear and simple in his teaching, which ought to be suited to the needs of the present time.

5. He should speak to the people of Christ and of God, of the fact that man is made in God's image; with the Book of the Scriptures in his hand and mind, so that all men may find consolation in that doctrine and learn to know Christ, who is at the head of all power. He who speaks in accordance with the Scriptures, also speaks with the power of the Holy Spirit behind him.

Here are two quotations which show the richness of the Papal teaching and how well it is accommodated to modern needs.

It is the priests who are destined to carry out this sublime mystery. Not only do they procure and communicate Christ's graces to the members of his mystical body, but they are also the organs whereby this mystical body develops, because they must ever give to the Church new sons, bring them up, educate them and guide them. Priests are the stewards of the mysteries of God; therefore they must serve Jesus Christ with perfect charity and consecrate all their strength to the salvation of their brethren. They are the apostles of light; therefore they must illuminate the world with the teachings of the Gospel and be so strong in the Catholic faith as to be able to communicate it to others, following the doctrine and example of the Divine Master so as to be able to lead everyone to him (Pius XII, *Menti Nostrae*).

The purpose which sacred orators should keep before their minds in performing their duty may be understood from the fact that they may say to themselves, as did St Paul, On behalf of Christ you are acting as ambassadors. If, then, they are ambassadors of Christ, they ought to have the same purpose in discharging their office as Christ had in conferring it upon them, nay, the very one that Christ had on earth. . . . Now, we know why Christ came down from heaven, as he says himself, to be witness to the truth and that they may have life.

Both these purposes, then, must be carried out by those who devote themselves to the ministry of preaching. They must diffuse the light of God through the truth made known by him, and they must quicken and nourish the supernatural life. In a word, by seeking the salvation of souls they must promote the glory of God. As it would, therefore, be wrong to call any man a doctor who does not practise medicine, to style anyone a professor of some art who does not teach that art, so he who, in preaching, neglects to lead men to a fuller knowledge of God and on the way to eternal salvation may be called an idle declaimer, but not a preacher of the Gospel. . . . (Benedict XV, *Humani Generis*).

SECTION VII. HISTORICAL AND LITERARY NOTES

The three qualities of a preacher according to St Thomas of Villanova

The secret of his success in the pulpit is revealed by the saint himself in a reply he gave to some of his friends who asked him what books he had read in order to produce such an effect on his audiences. All books are good, he replied, so long as the preacher has three qualities, sanctity of life, humble prayer and a real zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

He gave the reason for this remark. An exemplary and holy life will be as a credit to him in the minds of his hearers; by a humble life of prayer his mind will be enlightened and his heart kindled with love for his hearers; and thus the arrows which must pierce and attract hearts will be forged. The zeal for the glory of God and salvation of souls will give force and efficacy to his words. Study alone, without prayer and a living zeal, will only fill the mind, but leave the will dry and arid. And how can burning words come from a breast which is cold?

SECTION VIII. SERMON SCHEMES

I. LITURGICAL

Sexagesima

1. *Continuation of Septuagesima:*

(a) This Sunday is a continuation of our preparation for Lent, and therefore we should take into consideration the characteristics of the pre-Lent period, which have already been mentioned in previous schemes (cf. Septuagesima Sunday).

(b) One of the characteristics of Lent has always been instruction—the word of God.

i. It was a time when the catechumens were being prepared for baptism on the night before Easter Sunday, i.e. the Vigil ceremony.

ii. Special instruction was given to them during the whole of Lent, to dispose them for baptism.

(c) Even today there is this element in Lent:

i. the Church urges parish priests to insist on instruction during Lent, especially on the four last things;

ii. the Gospel of today is a preparation for this.

2. *Our dispositions:*

(a) The word of God is spirit and life; to it God has linked the power to transform our lives and make them progress towards God.

(b) The fruit of this will depend on our dispositions to receive it:

- i. humility;
- ii. strength of will;
- iii. spirit of renunciation and mortification;
- iv. a heart free of thorns and ready to follow God according to his inspirations.

3. *The Apostle of the Gentiles who gave fruit a hundredfold:*
- (a) The Epistle presents Paul to us as one who has reached the height of sanctity, who has received extraordinary graces, docile always to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.
 - (b) In the Collect we ask especially for his protection.

II. THE EPISTLE

Virtue and pride

1. *Pride, a great evil:*

- (a) The false doctors of Corinth were probably men of virtue, but with a large element of vainglory.
- (b) Paul, after speaking of his apostolic work, also tells us of the dangers of vainglory and the temptations which God allows to attack us in order to overcome it.
- (c) Virtue and revelation are opposed to vainglory as light is opposed to darkness.
 - i. There is nothing easier than the fall into vainglory and pride;
 - ii. the first man fell in this way, in spite of not being troubled with concupiscence; the angels fell in a similar fashion. St Paul, that vessel of election, was afraid of it. Should not I be afraid, too?

2. *Causes of pride:*

- (a) It often rests on real virtue. Other vices, such as drunkenness, rest on sins; but not so pride, which has for its basis virtue in which we take inordinate pride. Therefore we cannot avoid the things which may be incentives to this vice, as we can in the case of others.
- (b) The natural inclination to pride which is in every man comes from his state, as one who has been made in God's image and destined for glory. Pride is merely a disorder in the natural inclination which God placed in man.

3. *Against pride, humility:*

- (a) **The doctrine and practice of Jesus Christ:**
Thirty years of hidden life and three of the public life, in holy humility. Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart (Matt. 11. 29).
- (b) **God gives us grace so that it may produce the fruit of humility:**
 - i. Paul confesses that, in his case, God did so by means of that sting of the flesh of which he speaks;

- ii. actual grace illuminates the mind so that it may see the truth, and the first truth is that God is everything and we are nothing. That is why those who have reached the heights of sanctity have always been those who were most humble.

4. *Conclusions:*

- (a) **Every virtue comes from God:**
There is nothing we have not received from him. Of ourselves we have nothing—except sin. We cannot persevere in virtue without grace; nor can we even say the name Jesus in a meritorious fashion without it.
- (b) **The greatness of this world is nothing:**
We must, therefore, be humble.

III. THE GOSPEL

A: The word

1. *Its importance:*

- (a) **I will put my words in your mouth:**
God said to Jeremias: See, I have inspired thy lips with utterance. Here and now I give thee authority over the nations; and with a word thou shalt root them up and pull them down, overthrow and lay them in ruins; with a word thou shalt build them up and plant them anew (I. 9-10).
- (b) **The spoken word:**
The value of the spoken word as a weapon to conquer and transform men and the masses is incomparably superior to the written word. A true orator has a vital communication with the spirit of the people, which he can dominate and draw after him. The collective soul which is formed among the hearers makes the penetration of the word into the individual soul much easier.
- (c) **History confirms this:**
Athens, Rome; the French revolution; recent examples in Germany and Italy.

2. *The word as an instrument of the apostolate:*

- (a) **Preaching:**
Faith is attained by preaching, and preaching through the word of Christ (Rom. 10. 14-17).
- (b) **The word as a means of edification:**
 - i. but in the church I would rather speak five words which my mind utters, for your instruction, than ten thousand in a strange tongue (I Cor. 14. 19).

ii. Apostles and prophets are the foundation on which you were built, and the chief corner-stone of it is Jesus Christ himself (Eph. 2. 20). The apostles were of the word (cf. Apoc. 21. 14).

iii. Whoever, then, hears these commandments of mine and carries them out, is like a wise man who built his house upon rock (Matt. 7. 24).

(c) The spread of the Gospel was achieved through the spoken word:

i. the Acts of the Apostles prove this without any doubt and it is confirmed by the history of the Church.

ii. the great Christian nations of Europe each has its own apostle who preached the Gospel to them.

(d) The great reformers:

i. at critical moments of history God has sent great reformers of public morals, all of whom have made use of the spoken word;

ii. in the thirteenth century the Popes knocked at the gates of the enclosed monks and ordered them to go out and preach the word against the heretics of the time. Innocent III says: No one can live among the sweetness of contemplation when the Christian people is perishing for want of preachers of the divine word.

iii. Honorius III ordered the bishops of Europe to select three or four monks who could be sent out to preach.

(e) In modern times:

i. the great preachers of penance in the fifteenth century;

ii. organization of seculars at the orders of the bishops to spread the doctrine of the Church;

iii. this began at the First Vatican Council and was further developed by Leo XIII, Pius XI, Pius XII and John XXIII.

B: The word of God (1)

1. *In a strict sense:*

(a) Divine revealed truth, which is far and away above any human words because it is of a different nature.

(b) We could never give all the quotations from the Scriptures in praise of this word of God, both in the Old and the New Testaments.

2. Cf. the texts we have quoted in Section I above.

3. It is alive, penetrating and efficacious, reaching to the very division of soul and spirit (Heb. 4. 12).

4. *It gives life to the soul:*

(a) Because it is food for the soul:

Not by bread alone doth man live . . . (Matt. 4. 4).

(b) *But not like human bread:*

i. *material bread does not give life*, it merely sustains it for a time, if it already exists; but spiritual bread gives life, since the soul begins to live when it adheres to the word of God (St Thomas).

ii. *the bread of divine wisdom is life-giving of itself*, because every word of wisdom comes from the word of God (*ibid.*).

iii. Cf. 1 Pet. 1. 23-25.

5. *It transforms the soul:*

(a) Believe and you have eaten (St Augustine).

(b) It is a spiritual and incorruptible food; being spiritual it is incapable of corruption. It cannot be assimilated; on the contrary, of its nature it assimilates men into itself.

(c) I am the food of great men; grow, and you will eat me. I will not be changed into you, but you will be changed into me (Augustine).

6. *Soul and spirit:*

(a) The word infuses into the soul a new element of life, and the soul, thus vitalized by the word, becomes in very truth spiritual. It is the principle of supernatural life in us.

(b) Supposing grace and charity are effects of the word, the soul is divided into two; the inferior soul and the spirit.

(c) In so far as the soul adheres to the word of God and is given life by it, it has a share in the life of the word and is strictly called a spirit.

i. A spiritual man is one who lives by the word;

ii. progress in the spiritual life means a more perfect sharing in the word of God.

(d) In this mortal life there will always be a conflict between the inferior and superior parts of the soul, because the soul is subject to two different laws (cf. Rom. 7. 24).

7. *Man, a light:*

(a) The vital transformation of the spirit by the word produces a new man who is as different from other men as light is from darkness. Souls which contain the word are like lamps which contain a light.

You live in an age that is twisted out of its true pattern, and among such people you shine out, beacons to the world, upholding the message of life (Phil. 2. 15; cf. Eph. 5. 8).

(b) Because this light gives life, since we live as long as we have understanding, which is a certain share in that light. When that light shines perfectly, then we have perfect life; because in you is the source of life and in your light we see the light (St Thomas).

8. *The beginnings of eternal life:*

The word of God does not die, nor do they die who are faithful to it.

(a) . . . Thou hast the words of eternal life . . . (John 6. 69).

(b) Believe me when I tell you this, the man who listens to my words, and puts his trust in him who sent me, enjoys eternal life; he does not meet with rejection, he has passed over already from death to life (John 5. 24; cf. 8. 51).

(c) But the word of the Lord lasts for ever. And this word is none other than the gospel which has been preached to you (1 Pet. 1. 25).

C: The word of God (2)

1. *The principle of our faith:*

Uttered by Christ it kindled the light of faith in persecuted faithful; spread by the apostles and preachers, it lit the lamp of faith in the world. See how faith comes from hearing; and hearing through Christ's word (Rom. 10. 17).

2. *The principle of happiness to come:*

Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it (Luke 11. 28).

The most important thing is not the reception of extraordinary favours and graces from God, but to give ourselves heart and soul to the keeping of his word, which is truth and morality as far as we are concerned.

3. *The foundation of firm sanctity:*

(a) He who builds on this foundation is like one who builds on rock (Matt. 7. 24).

(b) The word of Christ, received and acted upon, is the code of true and lasting holiness.

4. *Food of the soul:*

Not by bread alone doth man live . . . (Luke 4. 4). It gives strength against temptations of the enemy and causes a strongly developed spiritual life.

5. *A guarantee of the efficacy of our prayer:*

(a) As long as you live on in me, and my words live on in you, you will be able to make what request you will, and have it granted (John 15. 7).

(b) When Christ's words remain in us we are permeated with his spirit; it is he who prays in us, and his prayer is always heard.

6. *It is a distinctive sign:*

(a) of true love for Christ (John 14. 23-24);

(b) of one who belongs to God (John 8. 47);

(c) of the sheep who belong to the fold of Christ (John 10. 27).

7. *A remedy against fear:*

(a) But let a man give heed to me, peace undisturbed shall be his, happiness shall be his, free from all threat of danger.

(b) To adhere to the word of God is our greatest source of strength in this life.

8. *The judge of our conduct:*

If a man hears my words, and does not keep true to them, I do not pass sentence on him; I have come to save the world, not to pass sentence on the world. The man who makes me of no account, and does not accept my words, has a judge appointed to try him; it is the message I have uttered that will be his judge at the last day (John 12. 47-48).

9. Source of eternal life (John 5. 24; Mark 16. 16).

10. May the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly (Col. 3. 16).

D: Part fell by the wayside

1. A part of the seed fell by the path at the edge of the field, and the birds of the air consumed it.

2. *The hardened heart:*

Represented by this symbol are those who are dissipated, lazy, indifferent, hardened by a life which is lived with one's back turned to God, from which they make no effort at their own conversion.

(a) *Uncultivated souls:*

Those in whom we find abandoned all practices of piety, spiritual laziness and tepidity; lack of prayer, gradual forgetting of the truths of faith.

(b) *Those who are open to all dangers:*

From bad companions, books, places of amusement and occasions of sin. They are paths without fencing or guards, along whom anyone can walk.

(c) *Stained and hardened by sin:*

Down-trodden by all the passions.

(d) *Insensible to the word of God:*

i. there are times when they hear it, but they do not open their hearts to it;

ii. both Isaias and Jeremias have described them perfectly (cf. Isaias 6. 10; Jer. 7. 23-28).

(e) *The devil lies in wait for them:*

To remove from them as soon as possible the seed of God's word; to prevent them from meditating on it, he attracts them even more towards their habitual ways of life.

3. *St Bernard describes this hardened heart:*

What is meant by a heart which is hard? It is one which is not torn by compunction, softened by piety or by pleas. It does not

give way under threats and only becomes harder under punishment. It is ungrateful for benefits received, mistrusts advice, is cruel in its judgements, shameless in its laziness, inhuman with its fellow-men, shows temerity when faced with God. It forgets the past, is careless about the present and does not provide for the future. The only things it remembers of the past are injuries received; it makes bad use of present things, and the only prevision for the future is that of revenge. To sum it up in all its evil, it neither fears God nor respects men.

4. *The greatest punishment for this hardness of heart:*

- (a) To be left in its present state.
- (b) Examples: The Jewish nation, crying out for the Messiah, and then unable to recognize him when he came. Judas, traitor and impenitent.
- (c) God has a habit of rejecting those who are hard of heart.

5. *Remedies:*

- (a) true sorrow;
- (b) vigilance in avoiding the occasions of sin;
- (c) confession;
- (d) prayer;
- (e) sermons and spiritual reading;
- (f) devotion to our Lady especially;
- (g) firm resolutions to produce a hundredfold.

E: Part on stony ground

The seed which withers up

1. *Inconstant souls are represented here:*

- (a) Exteriorly they fulfil their duties well:
They receive the seed with joy, think about it with pleasure, approve the beauty of its doctrine and delight in its holiness.
- (b) But they lack true interior dispositions:
 - i. *they are not humble*; it is humility which gives depth to the soul, and which longs for the word to take deep root, so as to destroy the evil seed of self-love;
 - ii. *they do not persevere*;
 - iii. *they do not feel a profound horror for sin.*
- (c) *Manner of life:*
They live in such a way that they are still attached to things which are not of God and which cannot be referred to him. Normally there is within them an obstacle which has not yet been overcome completely, such as some passion which is not held in check. Thus it was with the young man in the Gospel and who received Christ's call, but could not overcome the obstacle of riches (Matt. 19. 16). Or

like the disciples who rejected the doctrine of the Eucharist (John 6. 61).

- i. *they do not practise true devotion*; nor do they try to increase what they have by a consideration of Christ's life;
- ii. *good resolutions wither promptly without due care*; it is frequent to find this in those who have been recently converted to the spiritual life.

2. *Remedies for inconstancy:*

- i. *interior life* (cf. St Teresa *supra*);
- ii. *deep faith*; the just man lives by faith and accommodates his life to the doctrine of Christ and not to the maxims of the world;
- iii. *charity*;
- iv. *knowledge of and constant meditation on the life and whole mystery of Christ*, to which we have been called.

F: Part among thorns

1. *The evil weeds which choke plants:*

By these are understood immoderate preoccupation with the things of this life, its pleasures and riches.

2. *Riches and their effects:*

(a) *They are like thorns:*

- i. *sterile*; unable to satisfy the soul; with no value for eternity;
- ii. *do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth*, where there is moth and rust to consume it, where there are thieves to break in and steal it (Matt. 6. 19; cf. Eccles. 5. 9; Ps. 48. 17-19).
- iii. *they take away peace* by bringing anxieties, desire for more, injustice, jealousy, pride (cf. Eccles. 5. 10-13).
- iv. *they are an occasion of sin*, for which reason the Lord calls them thorns, so as to make us understand that he who handles them with his will cannot avoid the wound of some sin (John of the Cross).
- v. *they choke God's word*; And Jesus looked around, and said to his disciples, With what difficulty will those who have riches enter God's kingdom! (Mark 10. 23).

(b) *Source of great evils:*

The love of money is a root from which every kind of evil springs, and there are those who have wandered away from the faith by making it their ambition, involving themselves in a world of sorrows (1 Tim. 6. 10).

(c) *It is impossible to serve God and riches at the same time:*

- i. *he who loves one will despise the other* (Matt. 6. 24).
- ii. *they are the chains of the devil*: Yet how few they are who congratulate themselves that they are not enslaved by them! On

the contrary, they do all they can to become more and more entangled (St Bernard).

3. *We must tear up these thorns:*

(a) What doth it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? (Matt. 16. 26). Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6. 33).

(b) Riches should be used as though we had received them as administrators of them rather than owners; then they become sources of merit, because they fulfil the social role assigned to them by God.

(c) The law of charity towards the neighbour and the use of riches.

(d) A life of temperance and mortification.

(e) If God calls us to the priestly or religious life, let us leave them in order to serve him.

G: Part in good ground

The earth in which the word of God is fertile

As good souls receive that word:

(a) They hear it:

Christ sowed his word generously and many did not wish to receive it. The apostles opened their hearts to it, so did Mary Magdalen.

(b) They receive it with a good heart:

Enlightened by faith; prepared for the practice of the things of faith; free from grievous sin; full of love for their neighbour and true love for themselves.

(c) Not only a good, but a very good heart:

Full of grace and given up to divine contemplation; with positive conformity to the will of God; full of love for God.

(d) They keep it:

i. putting their intellects at its service so as to meditate on it, they cherish it with holy affections in their hearts and reject every attempt of the enemy to take it from them;

ii. *examples:* Our Lady, first and foremost; the shepherds who obeyed the call of the angels (Luke 2. 15); the wise men, who followed the star faithfully.

(e) They bring forth fruit:

These souls, full of peace, joy and light, are the true seed of God. St Paul describes them: Our prayer is, that you may be filled with that closer knowledge of God's will which brings all wisdom and

all spiritual insight with it. May you live as befits his servants, waiting continually on his pleasure; may closer knowledge of God bring you fruitfulness and growth in all good. May you be inspired, as his glorious power can inspire you, with full strength to be patient and to endure; to endure joyfully, thanking God our Father for making us fit to share the light which saints inherit, for rescuing us from the power of darkness and transferring us to the kingdom of his beloved Son (Col. 1. 9-13).

(f) They persevere with patience and meekness:

They do not allow themselves to be discouraged by trials or falls. They know that it is patience in tribulation which is the main road to salvation (James 1. 2-4).

(g) They bring forth different fruit:

According to the seed sown, the different types of soil and cultivation. Each will receive his reward according to his works (1 Cor. 3. 8).

H: The heart of Mary—the best ground of all

1. *Mary is the earth which is most free of obstacles to the word of God:*

- (a) She had no original sin and not even the slightest imperfection;
- (b) she had no inordinate passions.

2. *The best prepared:*

- (a) Full of grace;
- (b) virtues in the highest grade;
- (c) perfect knowledge.

3. *The one who best received the word:*

(a) The reply of Christ to the woman who praised his mother implies that Mary was even more blessed because she had heard the word of God and kept it.

(b) Our Lady receives the word:

- i. with complete conformity to God's will: Be it done to me according to thy word.
- ii. keeping it in her heart and meditating on it (Luke 2. 19);
- iii. during the hidden life and also the public life of her son;
- iv. at the foot of the cross, in perfect union with him;
- v. in the Upper Room at Pentecost a new illumination and understanding of it came to her who was the Queen of the Apostles;
- vi. the one word of advice she gives us all is that which she gave to the servants at Cana: Whatsoever he shall say to you, do!

4. *The one who bore most fruit:*

(a) In terms of personal sanctity, greater than that of all the angels and saints in heaven, as their Queen.

(b) In the most excellent fruit the world has ever seen—her Son, the light of the world. Elizabeth calls her blessed for having received the word of God.

(c) For the Church; it was she who kept the secrets of Christ's infancy in her heart until the moment came to reveal them to us (Luke 2. 19). She sends the Apostles from the Cenacle to preach the word of her son.

(d) It was this word of God, received with joy and entirely, which enabled her to grow in sanctity until she reached the crowning glory of her assumption into heaven, body and soul.

I: How God speaks to us

The ways of God

The sower casts his seed over the field of our soul in very different ways.

1. *Natural reason, which can tell us so much about him:*

Even the heavens proclaim his glory and the works of his hand make him known to us (cf. Ps. 18. 2).

Man's reason knows the natural law as a reflection of the eternal law of God.

2. *Supernatural revelation:*

In old days God spoke to our fathers in many ways and by many means, through the prophets; now, at last, in these times, he has spoken to us, with a Son to speak for him . . . (Heb. 1. 1-2).

(a) *In the Scriptures:*

This is the formal word of God (cf. 2 Tim. 3. 16-17).

(b) *In tradition:*

i. not all that Jesus said and did is contained in the gospels (John 21. 25).

ii. there were many things which he said to the apostles during the forty days after his resurrection which remained in their minds and hearts until the time came to preach them.

iii. Christ imposed on them the preaching of the whole truth. This tradition has its witnesses in the Fathers, in theologians and in the living faith of the people of God.

(c) *In the teaching magisterium of the Church:*

i. This teaching authority has known how to adapt the word of God to the various historical circumstances, within the framework of God's will and under his guidance.

ii. This has proved to be the great instrument instituted by Christ for the conservation, expansion, defence and explanation of his teaching. If we follow it we can never go wrong, because the Church is the very column and foundation of truth (1 Tim. 3. 15).

3. *Its direct relation to us:*

(a) Through our angel guardian, who has been given us for our protection and guidance;

(b) directly through the divine inspirations and graces (Apoc. 3. 20);

(c) through the ordinary events of our daily life, which are a direct manifestation of God's will for us; through the trials he sends us or allows to happen to us;

(d) constantly in prayer and meditation.

4. *Conclusion:*

(a) To receive the word we must offer to God a pure heart, free from stones and thorns.

(b) The carnal man (in the Pauline sense of the word) cannot receive the word of God nor perceive the things of the spirit (1 Cor. 12. 14).

J: To hear the word of God with profit

1. *The word of God brings forth fruit or not:*

It does so more or less, according to the preparation of the earth in which it is sown.

2. *Dispositions:*

Those which are absolutely necessary in the hearers for the fruitful hearing of the word (cf. Vieira above).

(a) It is necessary to desire it (Wisdom 6. 12);

(b) and prepare oneself to hear it through prayer (Wisdom 7. 7).

(c) It should not fall on a heart which is stained by sin (Jer. 4. 3; James 1. 2).

(d) It must be heard with the greatest attention:

i. so that not even the smallest particle of it should be lost, as we do with the Eucharist.

ii. I have hidden thy words in my heart so as not to sin against thee (Ps. 118. 11).

(e) Kept carefully in the memory;

i. Mary kept all God's words in her heart (Luke 2. 51);

ii. because thus it can cure us of all evils; the example of the Magdalen.

(f) and meditated upon frequently. This we are told in Deut. 6. 6-9.

3. *He who is of God . . .*

(a) . . . hears the words of God (John 8. 47).

(b) . . . the sheep follow him because they know his voice (John 10. 4).

(c) Pilate asked: You are a king then? Jesus answered, It is thy own lips that have called me a king. What I was born for, what I came into the world for, is to bear witness of the truth. Whosoever belongs to the truth hears my voice (John 18. 37).

4. *With humility:*

(a) It is the voice of our superior and also it has the advantage that God cannot err; what he tells us is the infallible truth.

(b) No matter how poor the preacher may be in oratory or delivery, God speaks through him and sows the seed through him. Therefore we should not listen in a critical spirit, but with a heart full of humility. God gives his graces to the humble—no matter how poor the instrument!

(c) Behind the words of a simple priest there is the omnipotent authority of God! It is God who speaks to us, through his minister, to whom he has given special graces.

K: The missionaries as sowers

1. *The apostles and their successors as sowers of Christ:*

As the Father hath sent me, so I send you (John 20. 21); going, therefore, teach ye all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you (Matt. 28. 19).

Faith comes by preaching:

i. *Christ demanded faith for salvation:* He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned (Mark 16. 16).

ii. *faith is born of preaching,* because preaching communicates the word of God, which is the seed of faith (Rom. 10. 14-15).

iii. which is why Christ sent the Apostles to preach.

2. *The missionary sowing:*(a) **The missionary:**

i. *he is the official envoy of the Church* to the pagan world to preach and spread the Gospel.

ii. *he is to be found in every part of the world* where there are souls redeemed by Christ and where the seed is still to be sown.

iii. *he is a sower;* leaving home, country, family in order to spread the word of God.

(b) **The numbers:**

i. *never as many as today,* but still not enough;

ii. *the figures speak for themselves;* if we compare the number of missionaries with the total number of pagans in the world we find that there is one priest to every 60,000 pagans. One European diocese will often have more priests than a whole pagan continent.

(c) **Their activities:**

i. preaching; administration of sacraments; teaching;

ii. often they have to give medical and hospital facilities as well as spiritual aid;

iii. all things to all men so as to gain all for Christ.

(d) **Their purpose:**

To establish the Church in a permanent and visible form in all pagan countries so that they may find in her a means of salvation.

3. *Native clergy:*

(a) The day when a pagan country formerly under missionaries has its own native clergy it ceases to be a missionary country.

(b) That is why the Popes have always been most interested in the formation of a native clergy. It was the greatest dream of Pius XII and he spoke about it frequently; on one occasion he consecrated twelve native Bishops of various countries on the Feast of Christ, the King.

4. *Our duties to the missions and missionaries:*

(a) Pray the Lord of the harvest that he send forth labourers into his harvest. This is open to all.

(b) Help them by our interest and our alms.

(c) All priests should give active support and aid to the Missionary Union of the Clergy.

(d) Co-operate in the formation of the native clergy so desired by the Church.

IV. SOCIAL APPLICATIONS

A: Sacred Scripture—the Book of the Word

1. *Sacred Scripture* (cf. St Thomas, above):

(a) A collection of books which contain the word of God.

(b) At the present day laudable attempts are being made to get our people to read the Scriptures more often.

2. *A divine book:*(a) **All of it:**

Everything in the Scripture has been divinely inspired, and has its uses; to instruct us, to expose our errors, to correct our faults, to educate us in holy living; so God's servant will become a master of his craft, and each noble task that comes will find him ready for it (2 Tim. 3. 16).

(b) **Only these books were divinely inspired:**

i. there are no other books of the Scriptures except those contained in our Bible.

ii. inspired means to say that they have God for their author, the human writer being but an instrument of God. They are 'God's pen', as the Fathers put it.

iii. they may each have their own style, but God's inspiration tells them what to write. The pen would be a dead thing without the hand and mind to guide it.

(c) In which there can be no error nor anything evil: God cannot err or teach error, and he is infinitely holy.

3. Usefulness:

(a) They teach the way to heaven by means of the commands they contain, the advice they give and the examples we read in them.

(b) A source of truth and a protection against false teachings.

(c) Instrument of perfection.

4. The Bible in the Christian life:

(a) Benedict XV recommended its reading most highly (*Spiritus Paraclitus*).

(b) Pius XII repeated this, telling Bishops that they should encourage the reading of the Scriptures by all the means in their power (*Divino afflante*).

5. Conclusion:

(a) The Jewish people read the Scriptures and heard commentaries on them.

(b) In the early Church the night hours of the great vigils were given up to the reading and exposition of parts of the Scriptures.

(c) Every Christian should know the Scriptures. Each time we read them the Sower goes out to sow his seed.

B: Preachers

1. The teaching of the Church:

There is abundant literature on this point. Among other documents we may cite:

(a) Leo XIII:

i. an important discourse in 1880 on preaching;

ii. the encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* mentions it several times.

(b) St Pius X:

Iucunda sane (1904), *Communium Rerum* (1909).

(c) Benedict XV:

Spiritus Paraclitus (1920).

(d) Pius XI:

Divini Redemptoris (1937) in which there is an important text concerning the social aspect of preaching.

(e) Pius XII:

Divino afflante (1943).

2. Special mention of the Encyclical *Humani Generis* of Benedict XV, 15 June 1917 (AAS. 9, 305).

3. Grave statements in the introduction:

(a) Those who are engaged in the work of preaching today are more numerous than ever before in the history of the Church;

(b) yet day by day the ordinary people seem to be less and less interested in the supernatural and there is a gradual return to the decadence of paganism.

(c) Has the word of God ceased to be like a two-edged sword living and effective? No; but the ministers who use it do not do so in the right way.

4. Causes of the poor results of preaching:

(a) It is sometimes undertaken by those who should not undertake it:

i. *it belongs principally to the bishops* and to those who are sent out to preach in their name;

ii. *these must have the qualities* necessary for their mission;

iii. *be more concerned with the fruit of their words* than with the thought of oratory or self;

iv. *have a true vocation for it*; no one takes this on himself, but he only who is called by God (Heb. 5. 4);

v. *they should have both knowledge and virtue*. St Peter Damian: Two things are above all required in the preacher; that he should abound in spiritual wisdom and that he give the brilliant example of a pious life.

(b) There is not always purity of intention:

i. *the preacher must be, like Paul, an ambassador of Christ*; he must preach Christ, not himself.

ii. *his mission is to teach, not to please*. The correction of vices sometimes implies recalling doctrines which terrify our hearers. The preacher should deliver to his hearers the whole of the Christian faith, without fear or favour.

iii. *it is not their task* to convert the pulpit into a theatre or civil tribunal.

iv. *St Gregory says*: The priest should not preach in order to eat, but should eat in order to preach.

(c) The Encyclical goes on, in the positive part of it, to describe the qualities of the preacher, his preparation, and what the spirit of the preaching should be.

C: Doctrinal preparation

1. Remote:

(a) The lectures on Scripture in the seminary should be part of the remote preparation for preaching.

(b) The same is true of the lectures in theology—in fact, the whole life of the student for the priesthood should be one long preparation for his future mission.

(c) The advice given by Pius XII in *Divino afflante Spiritu* covers this point extremely well; he warns professors and those who have anything to do with the training of priests that they should:

- i. propose the literal sense and the theological content of the Scriptures with solid doctrine, simply and with fervour;
- ii. the students should acquire from it some of the sentiments experienced by the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. . . . Were not our hearts burning within us while he expounded to us the Scriptures? (Luke 24. 32);
- iii. he also mentions the fact that the Scriptures are a pure and permanent source of spiritual life for each and every one, also food and encouragement for the ministry of preaching;
- iv. the professors must be aware of the fact that they are contributing greatly to the honour and glory of God, to the salvation of souls and the advance of the Church;
- v. that they are carrying out a work which is most intimately connected with the apostolic mission and ministry.

(d) **Classes in preaching:**

- i. these should be of a very practical nature; with emphasis on the composition and delivery of homilies and sermons;
- ii. students should be taught to learn by heart the important texts of the Scriptures; how to read and extract the thoughts from the great spiritual writers, especially the Fathers of the Church, and accustom themselves to adapting these ideas in a modern form to their preaching;
- iii. to produce their own ideas, based on this solid foundation;
- iv. how to determine the fundamental theme of their sermon and its practical conclusions; all this without neglecting the external literary form.

2. **Proximate preparation:**

- (a) The homily of the next Sunday should be meditated and lived the previous week.
 - i. From the previous Monday the text for next Sunday's sermon should be studied and made the subject of a certain amount of reading;
 - ii. by mid-week the main theme should have been decided upon and the simple scheme drawn up accordingly.
- (b) The preacher must dominate his material and feel it intimately himself if his sermon is to produce fruit. St Francis Borgia advised that it should be made the subject of prayer, or at least that some part of it should be prepared before the Tabernacle.
- (c) It is not necessary to write it all out in full, although this is useful for beginners; at least the main passages should be written in full, and especially the conclusion.

Demosthenes used to say that he wrote his discourses in full and then never gave them exactly as they had been written.

3. **Improvisation:**

Never, if possible. There should always be some proximate preparation. The discourses of the greatest orators have always been well prepared, even though they may give the impression of being improvised! That is the art behind them, and it is of great effect. Circumstances may make improvisation necessary, but we should remember that the man who can improvise is the one who has always had the habit of preparing his discourses.

4. **Recommended reading:**

(a) **The Scriptures—first and last:**

- i. *St Jerome's advice was:* Never let the Scriptures out of your hands! Let all your preaching be based on them.
- ii. *Bl. John of Avila gave the same advice:* Your study should begin with the Scriptures—always, and, if possible, together with:

(b) **The Fathers:**

- i. in them there is eloquence, knowledge, piety and prudence (Leo XIII).
- ii. they have a certain intuition in divine matters, acute intellect, intimate with the divine word (Pius XII).

(c) **St Thomas:**

The *Summa* especially, but also the Commentary on St John, which should be in the hands of every preacher. We can say the same of the other commentaries on the Synoptics, although he never had time or opportunity to revise them.

(d) **The mystics:**

Especially St Teresa and St John of the Cross. Both can be adapted to the needs of modern times.

(e) In sacred oratory the great preachers of past centuries can teach us much, especially Bossuet and Newman.

(f) The doctrine of the Popes, especially the recent ones, and on social questions this is essential.

(g) From the point of view of literary form the English priest would be well advised to make a special study of Chesterton—and Churchill!

D: Formation—and the matter of sermons

1. **In spirit and truth** (John 4. 23):

Those who preach to others must be 'dispensatores mysteriorum Dei' (1 Cor. 4. 1). As fathers rather than teachers (*ibid.* 4. 15). Not in words of human wisdom, but in the power of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2. 5).

2. *Just as Paul was to the inhabitants of Thessalonica* (cf. 1 Thess. 2):

To understand from their seminary days what this implies the students should be trained on the basis of 2 Cor. 3, 4 and 5.

3. *He who preaches and he who listens:*

(a) The word of God cannot be received as the words of men—it demands intellectual effort, but above all, good will and purity of spirit. Charity must be the operative motive here. Preaching is a work of love.

(b) The Holy Spirit is the very soul of our preaching. Without him we can do nothing (John 14. 26).

4. *The Matter:*

(a) Apologetic themes are not the best nor the most essential, except in special circumstances.

(b) Conferences are also difficult, especially when they have a political bias.

(c) At the same time the preacher cannot neglect the social doctrine of the Church and it has been well set out for him by the recent Popes.

5. *Themes which are proper to the pulpit:*

(a) The whole of the Gospel (Matt. 28. 19; Mark 16. 15):

i. Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2. 2).

ii. may we never forget that in Christ everything is eloquent, even his silence (St Augustine).

iii. the passion—a theme which has brought many souls back to Christ.

(b) The person of Christ:

In all its aspects; his words, his example, his works.

(c) Doctrine, dogma, morals:

i. first of all dogma, as in the letters of St Paul; it is the basis for morals and properly grasped, contributes a great deal to spiritual formation;

ii. it prevents preaching from becoming mere human philosophy on a slightly higher level;

iii. moral theology, all of it, but especially the first commandment of the law, that of charity;

iv. positive sanctity, following the example of St Paul, who wrote to his converts about grace, the virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, etc.;

v. there should be emphasis on mercy, both that of God for man and that of man for his fellows;

vi. an element of preaching which is nearly always neglected is the need for almsdeeds and their advantages for the ordinary sinner.

(d) *The four last things:*

A theme which is fast going out of our preaching programme, but which is of vital importance to our hearers. Benedict XV says that it is the virtue of a really good preacher to be able to deal with these unpleasant subjects in such a way that they are well received by his audience.

(e) *Themes which are difficult and delicate, which must be treated with tact:*

i. those referring to social problems, political questions, relations between Church and State, social justice in its varied aspects, the limits between justice and charity, strikes, etc.;

ii. these themes must not be left out, but they must be handled very carefully.

6. *Conclusion:*

Christ is to be preached, in season and out of season, just as the Apostles, the Fathers and the great theologians preached him.

E: Co-operation of man, necessary so that the word may bear fruit

1. *The seed is the word of God:*

(a) *Christ gives us the explanation of the parable:*

i. the seed is the word of God; the soil is the heart of man; the different kinds of soil indicate the varied dispositions in which the seed is received.

ii. the purpose of the parable is to manifest the varied results of the sowing in comparison with the dispositions of the individuals concerned.

(b) For the word to bring forth fruit it needs the co-operation of man.

2. Nowadays the teaching of religion has attained a height of perfection which it has never reached before; but its practical effect is less, because of the coldness and indifference with which it is received.

(a) This is the cold statement of Pius XII in one of his talks to the Lenten Preachers of Rome, 1944.

(b) He repeats the same idea in an Allocution of 10 February 1952.

(c) In both statements he plainly attributes the little effect of modern preaching and teaching to the indifference, hardness of heart and insensibility of spirit which exists in so many people today.

3. *The obstacles which man puts in the way of the word of God:*

(a) *On the part of his intellect:*

i. one who hears the word and does not wish to understand it; another who is wilful and full of pride. Both are symbolized in the path at the edge of the field.

ii. those who, through pride in their own scientific knowledge, reject the simple ideas of the Gospel as only fit for women!

(b) On the part of the will:

i. those who hear the word with joy and even become enthusiastic about it; but when the moment comes to put it into practice they feel incapable of doing so. Stony ground, indeed, where the seed germinates, but has little or no root;

ii. the Jewish nation is a good example of this.

(c) On the part of the heart:

i. those who surround themselves with other affections, perhaps not evil ones in the moral sense, but worldly and inordinate, which impede the full fruit which the word of God would give them if it were not for such things.

ii. example, the young man in the Gospel, who did not follow Christ because of his affection for riches. The apostles, before they received the Holy Ghost. Many Christian souls, called to greater spiritual perfection, who do not make progress because of obstacles which they themselves have set up in their hearts.

4. *The good soil:*

It does not put obstacles in the way; the heart is clean, the intellect humble, the will strong. The seed falls and produces fruit, some thirty, some sixty and some a hundredfold.

(a) Our Lady, who kept all the words in her heart.

(b) St Paul, who was transformed by the word of God.

(c) All the saints, and the ordinary faithful who co-operate with the word of God.

5. *Lent, a time which is especially appropriate for the sowing of the word:*

The best preparation is humility, prayer and sacrifice. With these three, ahead of us is a great reward, the growth and fruit of the seed of God's word.

Quinquagesima Sunday

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE PASSION AND THE BLIND MAN AT JERICHO

SECTION I. SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 13. 1-13 Gospel: Luke 18. 31-43.
Cf. Matt. 20. 17-34; Mark 10. 32-52

Some texts concerned with charity

1. *The charity of God:*

All things thou lovest, nor holdest any of thy creatures in abhorrence; hate and create thou couldst not, nor does aught abide save at thy will, whose summoning word holds them in being. Wisdom 11. 25-26. Cf. Deut. 7. 8; Jer. 31. 3.

God so loved the world that he gave up his only-begotten Son, so that those who believe in him may not perish, but have eternal life. John 3. 16. Cf. Matt. 5. 45. Rom. 5. 5-8; 8. 32.

How rich God is in mercy, and with what an excess of love he loved us! Our sins had made dead men of us, and he, in giving life to Christ, gave life to us too; it is his grace that has saved you; raised us up too, enthroned us too above the heavens, in Christ Jesus. He would have all future ages see, in that clemency which he shewed us in Christ Jesus, the surpassing richness of his grace. Eph. 2. 4-7. Cf. 1 John 3. 1; 4. 8-10.

2. *Towards the just:*

If a man has any love for me, he will be true to my word; and then he will win my Father's love, and we will both come to him, and make our continual abode with him. John 14. 23.

... because the Father himself is your friend, since you have become my friends, and have learned to believe that I came from God. John 16. 27.

Meanwhile we are well assured that everything helps to secure the good of those who love God, those whom he has called in fulfilment of his design. Rom. 8. 28.

3. *The charity of Christ:*

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. . . . I have other sheep too, which do not belong to this fold; I must bring them in too; they will listen to my voice; so there will be one fold, and one shepherd. John 10. 11-16.

Before the paschal feast began, Jesus already knew that the time had come for his passage from this world to the Father. He still loved those who were his own, whom he was leaving in the world, and he would give them the uttermost proof of his love. John 13. 1-2.

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? For thy sake, says the scripture, we face death at every moment, reckoned no better than sheep marked down for slaughter. Yet in all this we are conquerors, through him who has granted us his love. Rom. 8. 35-37. Cf. 2 Cor. 5. 14.

May you and all the saints be enabled to measure, in all its breadth and length and height and depth, the love of Christ, to know what passes knowledge. Eph. 3. 18-19.

4. *The love of man for God:*

Love me, keep my commandments, and mercy shall be thine a thousandfold. Ex. 20. 6.

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with the love of thy whole heart, and thy whole soul, and thy whole strength. Deut. 6. 5. Cf. 11. 1; Ecclus. 7. 32.

He is not worthy of me, that loves father or mother more; he is not worthy of me, that loves son or daughter more; he is not worthy of me, that does not take up his cross and follow me. Matt. 10. 37-38.

Jesus said to him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and thy whole soul and thy whole mind. This is the greatest of the commandments, and the first. Matt. 22. 37-38.

And so, I tell thee, if great sins have been forgiven her, she has also greatly loved. He loves little who has little forgiven him. Luke 7. 47.

Yes, we must love God; he gave us his love first. 1 John 4. 19.

5. *Charity towards the neighbour:*

But I tell you, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute and insult you, so that you may be true sons of your Father in heaven, who makes his sun rise on the evil and equally on the good, his rain fall on the just and equally on the unjust. Matt. 5. 44-45.

Which of these, thinkest thou, proved himself a neighbour to the man who had fallen in with robbers? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then Jesus said, Go thy way, and do thou likewise. Luke 10. 36-37.

I have a new commandment to give you, that you are to love one another; that your love for one another is to be like the love I have borne you. The mark by which all men will know you for my disciples will be the love you bear one another. John 13. 34-35. Cf. *ibid.* 15. 12; Rom. 12. 10, 13. 9; Eph. 4. 15, 5. 2; Col. 3. 13-14; 1 John 4. 7, 11-16, 3. 23.

6. *It must be practical—in works:* cf. Matt. 25. 34-36; 1 John 2. 5; 5. 3.

7. *It is the virtue most frequently preached by the Apostles:*

The texts are too numerous to quote in full, but we may note the famous eulogy of charity contained in 1 Cor. 13.

SECTION II. GENERAL COMMENTS

I. LITURGICAL

Typical of the last Sunday before Lent. As in the former Sundays, we see the soul groaning under the weight of sin and seeking God's help. Be to me a protective God! In the prayer we also ask him to free us from the bonds of sin so that we may live far from all evil. The Epistle contains the famous hymn to charity which we have mentioned above. God is the principal object of this virtue, and for that reason it is above all others in excellence, superior even to faith and hope. The latter disappear on death; but charity remains. As a consequence of our love for God is the love for our fellow-men, whose characteristics are outlined by the Apostle.

The Gospel speaks to us of the Passion and the cross, mystery hidden from the Apostles, but towards which Christ was moving slowly on his journey to Jerusalem.

Here are the two great ideas for Lent: Charity and the cross. Not merely for Lent only, but also for the whole of the Christian life. As St Augustine says in one of his sermons, the spirit and practice of Lent are not exclusive to that season, even though we enter into them with greater fervour during that time. The whole purpose and end of Lent is to enter into the spirit of Christ, the charity of God and the life of the resurrection. The means to this end are charity towards our neighbour and the cross. Three days remain to us before we enter into the penitential season of Lent; and there are three ideas which should be brought to the minds of our hearers:

- (a) We must work for our salvation;
- (b) by hating sin through true repentance and a positive co-operation with grace;
- (c) the means to attain this are charity and the cross.

II. EXEGETIC AND MORAL NOTES

A: The Epistle: 1 Corinthians 13. 1-13

1. *General argument:*

The first letter to the Corinthians, especially after chapter four, is dedicated to the solution of certain questions proposed to Paul in a letter he had received from that Church. One of these questions seems to have been concerned with the charismatic gifts and their

organization; because it would seem that there was considerable disorder in the gatherings of the faithful because of them, and possibly not a little vanity as well! This is not easy for us to understand, but there must have been some possibility of a human control over these gifts, because Paul gives positive rules for it. Attentive to the spiritual good of all, he tries to make them understand that the charismatic gifts are not so important as charity, the queen of the virtues. He points out that these special gifts, even though they may come from the Holy Spirit, are intended for one purpose—the good of the whole Church, in which every member is important and in which no one should envy another.

For that reason he is going to show them a better way, a more sure road to perfection—hence the famous hymn in praise of charity in chapter thirteen.

2. *The charismatic gifts:*

A difficult subject, because we do not know enough about them to be very definite in our exposition of them. However, there is a very good summary of them in Riciotti's *Pablo Apostol, Introduccion*, chap. 9. *Los carismas en el cristianismo primitivo* (Ed. Commas, Madrid, pp. 173-184). We know something of the primitive Christian liturgy through the Didaché, written in Palestine or Syria between the years 70-90. Gathered around a table, the faithful read or listened to passages of Scripture, together with some hymns. Then the bread and wine were consecrated and communion was distributed. It was after this that the charismatic gifts began to be manifested. They were intended by the Holy Spirit for the good of the community as a whole, not for the individual.

St Paul gives us at least five lists of the charismatic offices, but without pretending that any one of them is exhaustive or systematic. Since we cannot be sure of the equivalence of the various names he uses, we do not know for certain how many there were or in what they consisted exactly (cf. 1 Cor. 12. 8-10, 12. 28-30, 14. 26; Rom. 12. 6-8; Eph. 4. 11).

The gift of the apostolate compelled a person to leave all things and go throughout the world preaching; while that of evangelist consolidated the work of the former by continuing this preaching, but in one locality. The gift of prophecy, which to Paul was superior to the rest, was intended for preaching, exhortation, consolation and, at times, for discovering the secrets of hearts. Those who had this gift were the ones who usually rose to give thanks after Communion, moved by the Spirit.

The gifts of instruction, words of wisdom and knowledge were intended for the making known of Christ's doctrine by words. To confirm the action of these came the gifts of faith and miracles, so necessary in the early days of the Church for the rapid spread of

Christianity. Here faith implies, not the theological virtue, but an inner certainty that God will work a miracle at a given time.

There were many others of these charismatic gifts, but the one which seemed to have caused most admiration, even though Paul did not esteem it very highly, was that of tongues. The one who possessed this gift spoke in a language unknown to himself and, very often, to his hearers. Therefore he warns such as had this gift not to intervene all together at any of the Christian assemblies, lest people should think them mad (1 Cor. 14. 23); and never without an interpreter.

In general these charismatic gifts lasted only a short time, and by the middle of the second century most of them had vanished, leaving the greatest gift of all—charity.

3. *Texts:*

The chapter read today is a eulogy, based on the last verse of the previous chapter, in which Paul tells the Corinthians: Prize the best gifts of heaven. Meanwhile, I can shew you a way which is better than any other. It is divided into three sections:

- i. charity is superior and indispensable to the other gifts;
- ii. a hymn in praise of charity, especially that towards our neighbour;
- iii. the ontological perfection of this virtue.

This can be expressed in another form by saying that, where charity does not exist, all the rest is worthless. Where it does exist, so does every other virtue. Until at the end only charity remains and is the most perfect of all virtues.

(a) *The superiority of charity:*

The argument has all the more force because it comes from the pen of Paul, the apostle of faith, who on this occasion seems to have adopted the style of St John, the apostle of love. He begins by pointing out that, were we to possess all the other gifts and were lacking in charity it would be as if we had nothing at all. To demonstrate his point he begins with the gift which most excited the attention and curiosity of his readers—that of tongues. One who could speak every tongue known to men or angels, but who had not charity, is compared to a wind or a percussion instrument which, like our own church bells, can be of use or can merely serve to deafen their hearers, but which obtain no advantage themselves from the sounds they produce.

In the following verses he calls attention to the more precious of these extraordinary graces and then goes on to point out that, even if a man possess them in an heroic degree, but without charity, it is all of no use to him. We may point out that these gifts were not intended for personal sanctification, but for others; therefore it is possible for them to exist without charity. Even in the spiritual order

of holiness we know that it is possible to divorce faith and hope from the virtue of charity. Much more so in the case of these charismatic gifts. St Augustine remarked: It is not the martyrdom that makes the martyr, but the motive for it. A fanatic can give his life, even for a cause which is not right or just.

This is the constant preaching of Christianity. The king is not distinguished by any ornament of gold or silk, nor by his servants; but only by the purple, which is proper to him alone. So the Christian is known only by charity (St John Chrysostom, PG. 61, 275). It is charity which separates the sons of God from the sons of perdition (St Augustine, PL. 36, 773). Since we know that the very essence of Christianity is union with God through his first commandment, which is that of love, there is no need to insist more on this point. However, we may point out that the love for God and our neighbour are so linked one with the other that Paul would even seem to confuse them in the verses which follow.

(b) The hymn in praise of charity:

His present thought is that charity contains all the rest. The thought is so clearly expressed that there is no need for us to spend more time on it. Note, however, that Paul passes immediately from the love for God to its social effects; and also that the words with which he adorns charity are all essentially active in their nature. Charity is not a vague sentiment, but an energetic and vital power which has an influence on all our actions.

(c) The ontological perfection of charity:

In verses 8-13 he begins to compare charity and the theological virtues of faith and hope. The latter can, as we know, exist without charity; but charity is the element which gives them life; without her they are dead. This, however, is not Paul's argument here. His theme at the moment is based on the idea that the most perfect thing is that which remains. The charismatic gifts will disappear soon enough; faith and hope will not exist once we attain the true face to face vision of God. But charity will remain and will be increased. Therefore it is more perfect than all the rest.

(d) Natural and intuitive knowledge:

In verses 9-12 Paul includes one of those precious passages of deep theological content which he is accustomed to hide away in his letters. Through this one we learn something about the face to face vision of God, and also the fact that it is not possible for us in this life. Both our natural knowledge and that of faith have one thing in common, the fact that they have to use human terms and human images to express divine things. For that reason they are imperfect; and for that very reason, when perfection steps in, all that is imperfect is abandoned; just as we abandon childish games and pursuits when we reach adult age.

In the course of this argument St Paul places side by side our present knowledge of God and that which we will have in heaven. Once we have reached the end and see God face to face, faith will disappear together with all abstract knowledge. He indicates the differences between the two. At the moment our knowledge is imperfect because:

We see through a glass—a Jewish expression which is very graphic, indicating as it does a knowledge by means of an instrument which reflects the object. We know God only because he has been visible in his creation from the beginning of the world. Even though faith adds new truths and new motives for our belief in God, we are still bound by human concepts. For that very reason the knowledge we have is obscure—like that of one who sees an image in a mirror. It is an imperfect knowledge; we know only a part of the object, not the rest of it. But when perfection comes, then we shall know perfectly, with a total knowledge and one which is immediate—with no image to get in the way. It will be a face to face knowledge, one by which I know as I am known.

B: The Gospel: Luke 18. 31-43

1. Two scenes:

We are on the verge of Lent, during which, as we can see from the passages of St Augustine and St Gregory, the Church invites us to practise fasting and mortification, together with almsdeeds. In other words, mortification and charity. The liturgy could not have found a better Gospel to encourage us than this one, in which two scenes are presented for our consideration; one in which Christ announces his future passion and the other in which he has compassion on the blind man.

Against this we have the crowd who try to stop the blind man from drawing near to Jesus; and also the two sons of Zebedee, who draw near to him to ask of him the first places in the kingdom—not having understood a word he said about his passion and death. Both of them are examples of a Christianity which has tried to exist without the cross and without mercy.

2. Historical situation and argument:

Both scenes took place during the last journey of our Lord to Jerusalem, which we have described in detail on Palm Sunday. On his way he takes the twelve aside and tells them about his coming passion and death, the fourth announcement of its kind recorded in St Luke (cf. 9. 22, 9. 44, 17. 25). The apostles did not understand; a fact which is proved by the incident of the two sons of Zebedee and their mother. Once this was solved, not without a certain annoyance on the part of the other ten, the journey was resumed towards Jericho, where the blind man appears on the scene.

It is usual to indicate the slight differences in the various accounts of this incident—a proof that the Synoptics did not copy one another slavishly. According to Matthew and Mark, the scene took place after leaving Jericho; while in St Luke's version it happened on entering into the city. St Matthew mentions two blind men, while Mark and Luke only mention one, whom the former calls Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus.

The first difference is easily understood when we remember that there were two cities of Jericho, the old one and the new one built by Herod. Both were very close, separated by a narrow strip of land. Hence it is easy to see how one and the same incident can be described as happening on leaving one city and on entering the other.

Nor is it difficult to explain why some speak of two blind men and others of only one. It is not the first time in the gospels that an evangelist refers only to the principal person in a scene.

3. Texts:

(a) **Jesus went ahead and the apostles followed him but with faint hearts . . .**

They were afraid because they did not like the idea of going to Jerusalem; but they were also bewildered by the action of Jesus, who walked ahead of them, deep in his own thoughts. What was he thinking about? Almost certainly of his coming passion and death; it is his longing and desire for it that makes him walk faster than usual, perhaps. We who have merited suffering are afraid; but he who suffered for us can say: With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer.

(b) **Then once more he brought the twelve to his side . . .**

He tells them clearly about the coming passion, because they are the ones who need that knowledge most. If they did not understand, how could the common people possibly comprehend it? Therefore he speaks to the latter in more vague tones.

On this occasion his words are very clear, being more like a description of something which is past rather than a prophecy. They are more concrete than anything he has said before, since at this moment it was necessary to prepare the minds of the apostles for the temptations to come. Yet the details make it clear that this is also a prophecy based on certain knowledge, not mere conjecture.

The Fathers, in an apologetic mood, dwell frequently on the incredulity of the apostles and their lack of understanding as a factor which excludes any idea of the gospels being fiction, and this for two reasons. On the one hand, it proves that they were little inclined to admit such happenings as true; and on the other, if they were lying in their account of what happened, there was no reason

for them to paint themselves in such unattractive colours for the first generation of Christians.

On the other hand we see the freedom of Christ on this journey to a death which he had chosen. No one would take his life from him; he would lay it down freely when he wished, and when he wished he would take it up again (John 10. 17).

(c) **but they did not understand . . .**

See the commentaries of the Fathers and also Bossuet's sermon on this. It is always difficult to understand a thing which is for our benefit but unpleasant. The apostles were full of their ideas of a temporal kingdom. Our own lives, whether we wish it or not, are sown with crosses. The only choice we have in the matter is to make them fruitful means of merit or useless elements of despair. The road to holiness is one in which more subtle crosses take the place of others which are more simple. The best encouragement for us is to see how Christ journeys towards his own cross. The only ones who know how sweet it is to suffer with and for Christ are those who have actually experienced it. We shall see Christ healing the blind man. This is but another kind of blindness, which does not allow us to see and understand the doctrine of Christ concerning the cross or about anything else which we do not happen to like.

(d) **The blind man:**

The Gospel exposition hardly needs comment. Seated near a frequented road there was a blind man, begging. The unusually sensitive hearing of the blind made him aware of the fact that a crowd was approaching. He asks and is told who it is that is passing by; Jesus of Nazareth. He begins to call out, using the messianic title: Son of David, have pity on me. With time his cry will become a prayer, like that of the leper and the centurion, which is a model for us all. An act of faith in the messianic title of Christ and an act of petition, simple, persevering, without the need for long discourses or many beautiful words.

(e) **They who were in front rebuked him . . .**

He annoyed them, either because they wished to hear the Master or because they had no pity on his misfortune. Christianity without mercy, disguised at time as pious egoism.

(f) **but he cried out all the more . . .**

If the world opposes us, temptations increase, together with other difficulties; the remedy is even more persevering prayer. From this point onwards St Mark is more detailed in his description of the scene. Christ stops and orders the man to be brought to him and he, in order to obey more easily, casts aside his cloak. More than one author has mentioned this small detail as an example of how necessary it is to cast aside all impediments in order to come to Christ.

(g) Lord, give me back my sight:

The prayer is a simple one, and so is its answer; Receive thy sight; thy faith hath brought thee recovery. At once the man received his sight and followed our Lord, glorifying God.

4. Applications:

Before all else, the two kinds of blindness, that of the body and that of the spirit. The former could be cured easily by Christ; the latter is more difficult. It would seem that the apostles would have to await the proofs of the resurrection before they could be cured of their spiritual blindness. They would have to see why it was necessary that Christ should suffer in order to enter into his glory.

Blindness of soul is more sad than bodily blindness, in spite of the fact that it usually passes unnoticed. It is far worse, because first of all it deprives us of the sight of other and more important truths of the faith, and also because it can easily lead us to eternal darkness. Often he who is spiritually blind does not even realize that Jesus is passing by. For its cure there is need of a special act of the will, which does not allow an occasion to pass and which knows how to combat human respect, which does not allow us to change former opinions easily, since they are known to all.

We need to ask for light, because faith is a gift of God. We all need to ask for light, even though we may already possess that of faith, because there are so many things we ought to see clearly and do not. Our constant prayer should be: Lord, that I may see!

SECTION III. THE FATHERS

I. ORIGEN

(Beyond praise is the oratory and profound doctrine of Origen on this theme. We give a summary of his commentary on today's Gospel, together with other extracts from his works on the same idea. The citations are taken from *Originis Adamantii operum . . . D. Erasmo Rotterdamo interpretante, Vincentius de Portonaris, de Tridino de Monte Ferrato. Lugduni in aedibus . . . 1512.*)

1. To Jerusalem:

He begins by talking about the Christian who is in danger, either from persecution or temptation. Paul teaches us that we should imitate him as he imitated Christ. Once he knew, through the mouth of the prophet Agabus, that he was to die for Christ, he noticed in himself certain very human sentiments which had been awakened by the tears of those who loved him and who tried to stop him from going to Jerusalem. He says to them: What do you mean by lamenting, and crushing my spirit? I am ready to meet prison and death as well in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

If we understand this and meditate on it then we shall realize that, on many occasions, when temptation comes upon us we must be ready to offer ourselves for the suffering of as much as may be necessary to ward off the danger. In doing this we follow the example of our Lord first of all, and then of St Paul. . . .

2. Taking up the cross and following Christ:

From the thought of St Mark and Luke: If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me, it is very clear that it is no light matter to follow Christ, and that no one can do so who is not prepared to deny himself. He denies himself who, on being converted, abandons his former evil life. If he was impure, he ceases to be so; if foolish, he now flees from stupidity and embraces wisdom; if timid, he puts on courage. . . .

In the same way we have to see to it that he who begins by denying himself does not end up by confessing himself and, denying that he is just, makes a profession of justice. For if Christ is justice, he who receives it should not confess himself, but Christ; and he who finds it, by the very fact that he has found it should confess Christ. . . . He who does not deny himself, but who is full of vainglory, is really denying Christ; and it is well known that he who denies Christ will, in his turn, be denied by him.

3. Denying oneself:

As we read these words we remember the example of Paul, who denied himself, saying: I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me. In saying that he does not live, he is denying himself and putting off his own life in order to be invested with that of Christ, so that henceforth Christ will live in him with his justice, wisdom, sanctification, peace and power of God, and would work in him all these things. . . .

What is more, although there are many kinds of death, the Son of Man chose to hang from the wood of a cross, so that those of us who die to sin may do so in no other way except by the cross; and so that we may say: I am crucified with Christ. And also: God forbid that I should make a display of anything, except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world stands crucified to me, and I to the world (Gal. 6. 14). Even though you see someone abstain from sin, so that it would seem to be dead so far as he is concerned, yet if he has not attained belief in the cross of Christ and does not abstain from sin through faith in that cross, then it cannot be said that he is crucified with Christ.

4. To die in order to live:

The man who tries to save his life shall lose it; it is the man who loses his life for my sake that will secure it (Matt. 16. 25). Origen applies these words first of all to the martyrs, and then he says: We can also interpret this text in another way, namely: If anyone

understands what salvation really means and wishes to secure it for his own soul, such a one will renounce this life, denying himself, taking up his cross, and will follow Christ. In this way he loses his life so far as carnal desires and pleasures are concerned. . . . Notice, too, that he does not say: He who saves his life shall lose it, but: He who *tries* to save his life. . . . But in the second half of the verse he does not state that he who tries to lose his life for Christ shall save it, but he who loses it. . . . Therefore, when we wish to save our life we must lose it to this world, like those who are crucified with Christ, glorying in the cross of our Saviour. . . . To be condemned it is sufficient to try to save our life; to be saved it is necessary to deny ourselves.

II. ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

(The saint has several isolated passages which refer to the idea of today's Gospel, especially with regard to the prophecy of the passion and death. There is also a Homily attributed to him on the theme of the blind man which is probably not authentic. However, St Thomas quotes freely from it in the *Catena*. Cf. PG. 58. 617; 59. 599-610.)

1. *The ascent to Jerusalem:*

At length he approaches the city, and since he is about to go up there, he speaks again of his passion. It was more than likely that they, who did not wish these things to happen, would put them out of their minds; therefore he recalls them frequently, thus strengthening their spirit and pacifying their grief by constant reference to what is going to happen.

He speaks to them apart from the crowds, because it was not time to speak openly to all about these things nor to make them too plain, since no good would come of it. If the disciples were troubled in mind at hearing these things, how much more would they trouble the common people? Was it not foretold to the people, then? you may ask. It was, but not so clearly. For he said: Destroy this temple, and in three days I will re-build it. . . . But not thus does he speak to his apostles. As in other matters, so in this, he speaks to them more clearly. But if the people did not understand his words, why did he speak them? So that, after these events had come to pass, they might learn that he went forth to meet his death, not in ignorance of what it implied or by compulsion, but knowingly and willingly.

But not for this reason only did he foretell these things to his disciples, who needed to be strengthened by expectation of these things, so that they might meet his coming passion with greater courage and not be entirely overwhelmed by coming upon it unexpectedly. For this reason, he begins by telling them only of his

death; then, when they had reflected on this, he told them other things, for instance, the delivery to the Gentiles, that they would mock at him and scourge him. Then, when they came to witness these sorrowful events, they would turn to the resurrection; for one who does not hide what is sad and even, to human eyes, shameful, must also be believed when he tells of things which are joyful.

See, however, with what care he looks for a suitable moment. He did not tell them all this at the beginning, in case they should be frightened, nor at the actual time of the happenings, lest they be confused. It was after they had received adequate proofs of his power and when he had given them the promise of eternal life that he speaks of all this, mingling it with his other teaching and with his miracles. . . . They knew that he was to die, although they could not see clearly the whole of his plan. Nor did they know clearly the truth about the resurrection nor what great things were to follow it.

All this was hidden from them and they grieved about it. They had known that some people had been raised to life by others; but they had never heard of anyone who had raised himself from death to life, and especially in such a way that he would not die again. Though it were told to them often, this they could not understand. . . . and so they were bewildered and followed him in fear. . . .

In spite of all these warnings, they did not take courage, even though they heard frequently about the resurrection. Apart from the prophecy of his death, this especially saddened them, to hear that he would be mocked, scourged and have to endure other things of this kind. When they thought about the miracles he had worked, the possessed people out of whom he had cast devils, those whom he had raised to life again, and other wonderful things of this nature, they were bewildered at the thought that one who could do such things should also undergo these indignities. . . . And so far were they from this understanding that the sons of Zebedee came to him at the same time and began to speak to him of advancement for themselves. . . . Let no one be troubled at seeing these apostles so imperfect; because the cross had not yet come and the grace of the Spirit had not yet been given. If you would know their true virtues, then see them after these things had come to pass, when they rise above all weakness. For this reason he makes known their weakness, so that you may know afterwards what they became through grace.

That they were seeking nothing spiritual and that they had no idea of a heavenly kingdom is here very evident. See how they come to him and what it is they ask of him. But Jesus asked them: What would you that I should do for you? Not because he did not know, but so that they might speak freely what was in their minds and so reveal the evil, that he might heal it. . . .

Then he adds: Can you drink of the chalice? . . . he draws them away from their ideas, speaking to them of things which are the very opposite. It is as if he were to say to them: You speak to me of honours, while I speak of a struggle, of wars and dangers, of the sweat of toil. This is not the time for rewards, nor shall my glory be now revealed. And notice how he speaks to them and with what kindness he encourages and exhorts them. For he does not say: Can you endure slaughter? Are you prepared to shed your blood? Instead he says to them: Can you drink the chalice . . . and then goes on: That I shall drink? Thus, in his company, they might be more willing. This he also calls a baptism, so that he might show that, from it, the whole world would receive purification.

They say: We can. Thus in the fervour of their spirit they promise immediately, not knowing what they say but looking forward to receiving what they had asked for. He replies: You shall indeed drink of the chalice that I drink of, and you shall be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized. He foretold great things for them: You shall be held worthy of martyrdom, you shall suffer the things which I have to suffer, ending your lives with a death of violence as I am going to do, thus being sharers with me. But to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give you; it is for them for whom it is prepared. After he had lifted up their hearts and made them more noble, then it is that he reproves them.

How imperfect they all were, both those who tried to obtain precedence over the other ten and also the ten, who were annoyed at their action. But, as I have said, look at them after this and you will see them free of every passion. Hear how this same John, who now comes to Christ for this base purpose, later yields the primacy to Peter, both in preaching and in miracles, as is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, describing his great deeds and his confession, which he made when all the rest were silent.

Let us be humble, that we may be exalted, for it is arrogance that lowers us completely. . . . For God is opposed to nothing so much as to pride; and for this reason there is nothing that he has not done from the very beginning to overthrow this vice. Because of it we are subject to grief and death, we live in pain and suffering. Because of it we have to endure labours and live by the sweat of our brow, in afflictions without end. Through pride the first man sinned, aspiring to become like God. So he did not even keep that which he already had, but lost everything.

It is the very nature of pride that not only does it add nothing to our life, but it also takes away from us all that we have. Humility, on the other hand, takes from us nothing of what we have, but rather adds things which we do not possess. Let us form ourselves on this virtue, praying that we may obtain it, so that we may obtain joy in our present life and attain to future glory.

2. *The blind man:*

It is to me a source of great wonder that this blind man, who had not read the Law or the prophets, who had not yet read the gospels or been confirmed by the apostles, should so address the Saviour of mankind and say to him: Son of David, have pity on me. Where have you learned so to address him, you who have not read books, because you are blind; you who have not given your years to study, but who have sustained your life by begging from door to door? Where have you come to learn that this is the Light of the World? Being without sight, you have not seen him, either on earth or in heaven. Truly in this was fulfilled what was said by the prophet David: The Lord giveth sight to the blind (Ps. 145. 8).

There was a crowd about the person of Jesus. This blind man could not see the Light, but in his soul he could feel his presence and with the desires of his heart he laid hold of that which he could not see. . . . Those who could see made answer from what they knew by common report, but the blind man makes known what he had learned from Truth itself, for he cries out: Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me.

What happens here is rather like what happens at the grave of one about to be committed to the earth. Many have assembled there, looking upon the body of the dead. Seeing him wept over by his family, all weep together with them. Some because they grieve for the same reason as the bereaved family; others, because they are thinking of their own griefs. Frequently a woman will mourn and weep, not for the person now being prepared for the grave, because he is unknown to her, but for her own dead husband. Another's loss becomes to her a reminder of her own sorrow. So any one of you, on hearing this gospel, will apply it to himself and will cry out for the healing of his own afflictions: Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me.

Let every heart put forth the cry according to its own miseries. This one, because he is blind in heart; another because he is deaf of soul; another because his reason has been clouded; another because he has lost the power of true judgement. The illnesses that Christ healed in the bodies of men have their counterpart in the soul, and need remedies that are divine. Blind indeed is the soul that needs to have its eyes restored to sight of heavenly things; that cannot see the wonders of the law or that there is a world to come. Blind is the soul that looks on the Body of Christ, but cannot see his divinity. Isaias bears witness that the soul which cannot see the things of God is blind indeed (42. 19-20). . . .

The soul is deaf which does not listen to the word of God or which despises his teachings . . . and like a leper is the soul of the man smothered in darkness. . . . And they that went before rebuked him, that he should keep silent. But his courage was not diminished by

their rebuke. Faith instils into a man the strength to withstand all things and to triumph over all. Men shouted at the blind man to be silent, but his faith was not shaken nor his eagerness abated. He sought the Lord as one who well knows that honest presumption may serve the cause of justice. There may be many who thrust themselves forward for gain, but should not a man put himself forward, all bashfulness aside, when it is a question of his immortal soul?

III. ST AUGUSTINE

On the love of God and the cure of the blind man

(We give some extracts from his homily on this Gospel, PL. 39, 1539-1542; and also a summary of his ideas contained in seven sermons on Lent. Almost all of them coincide in the themes: Prayer, fasting, pardon for our enemies and almsgiving. The complete text can be found in PL. 38, 1039-1058.)

1. *The love of God:*

Love God, because you will not find anything more worthy of your love. You love silver because it is more precious than bronze or iron; gold still more, because it is more precious than silver. Still more precious stones, as being prized above gold. You love this light of day, which all who fear death dread to leave. You love this light as he loved it who cried out: Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me. He cried out as Jesus was passing by, fearing that he might pass by and not heal him. And how earnestly he cried out! Though the crowd rebuked him, he refused to be silent, overcoming his attackers and holding the attention of our Saviour. . . . Love Christ and seek the light that is Christ. If the blind man longed for the light of the body, how much more should you long for the light of the soul! Cry out to him, not in words, but by your virtuous lives. Live in virtue and do not esteem the world. To us, all that passes is as nothing. . . .

The crowd cries out so that the blind man's cries shall not be heard. There are not a few Christians who seek to hinder us from living as Christ did, like the crowd that walked with Christ and yet hindered the man who was crying out to Christ, hungering for light from the kindness of Christ. There are such Christians; but let us overcome them and live in virtue, and so our life will be the voice of our cry to Christ.

2. *The reasons for Lent:*

Because we are not yet reunited with our Lord, who sits at the right hand of the Father; just as Paul desired to be with Christ, but would not refuse to stay on this earth while he might be of use to the Church. The lion who seeks us out at the moment is not the

Lion of Juda, our King, but the enemy, who seeks to devour us. For this reason we fear and tremble—and hence the reason for our fasts and prayers.

There is no better time for penance, since we are commemorating the passion and death of Christ. Like him, we should be crucified so far as the flesh and the desires of the flesh are concerned. We should nail those desires to the cross with Christ.

It is a time for humility, in imitation of the humble Christ, who allowed himself to be mocked, scourged, handed over to the Gentiles. What he suffered we must be prepared to suffer. All this, in a spirit of charity and pardon. No enmity should be allowed to remain in our souls after this time of preparation for Easter.

Do you know of anyone who does not wish to forgive his enemy? Bring him to me and I will teach him to pray. Say: Our Father, who art in heaven. Go on; continue. Hallowed be thy name. Continue: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Carry on: Give us this day our daily bread. Stop there and be careful before you continue. You are now bound to say, truthfully, Forgive us our trespasses, because you have committed sins. . . . If the consciousness of your weakness and your evil make you feel remorse, then go ahead and say with me: Forgive us our trespasses; but then, remember what follows. You are not prepared to forgive your brother, and yet you will have to say: As we forgive them that trespass against us.

What! You dare not say it? Then, one of two things; if you do not say it, you will not be forgiven, and if you do say it, you lie. Say it, then, and say it with truth. But how can you say it truthfully if you have not forgiven your brother his sin?

IV. ST GREGORY THE GREAT

(This simple homily was preached on the Gospel of Quinquagesima Sunday in the Basilica of St Peter. The main theme is that faith must be accompanied by good works. Cf. PL. 76, 1081-1086.)

Our Saviour, seeing that the minds of his disciples would be troubled by his passion, foretold it to them, together with its humiliations and the glory of his resurrection. When they beheld him dying as he had foretold, they would also remember that he would rise again. And since his disciples, who were still carnal, could not yet understand the mystery, he wrought a miracle, and before their eyes a blind man receives his sight . . . but his works proclaim one thing by their power and another by their hidden mystery.

For who is this blind man? Truly the human race, driven out from the pleasures of paradise by the sin of our first parents, suffering the darkness of its own condemnation, but given light by its redeemer that it may see its way clear to the light of good works. . . .

He who does not know the brightness of eternal light is blind indeed, but if he believes in his redeemer, then he is sitting by the wayside, but if he sees the light and also the blindness of his own heart, then he is not merely sitting by the wayside, but he is also begging.

Whoever, therefore, admits the blindness of his own heart and sees within himself the need for eternal light, let him cry out from the depths of his heart and say: Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me. . . .

And whom do they signify who went before Jesus and rebuked him that he should be silent, if not our carnal desires and the tumult of vice which scatter our thoughts with their temptations and confuse the soul with their noise when it is in prayer? Often, when we wish to turn again to the Lord after we have committed many sins against him, and while we are still engaged in the struggle against those vices which have led us to offend him, the images of sins committed rise up against us, in war against the fervour of the soul, darkening the spirit and striving to silence the voice of our prayer.

They who went before rebuked him and told him to keep silent; so the sins to which we have given way beforehand mock our pious aspirations by their very memory, because before Jesus enters the heart they check our desires with their images and bring confusion into our prayers. The blind man who was about to be cured made answer to this: He cried out the more, Son of David, have pity on me. . . . So the more we are tormented by the multitude of carnal thoughts within us, so much the more we should persevere in prayer. . . . When we are earnestly steadfast in prayer we hold Jesus, who is passing by . . . for while we yet suffer the crowding images of the senses in our prayer, we are, as it were, hearing Jesus pass by. When, however, we persevere in prayer, Jesus stands, that he may bring back the light, for when God is held fast in the heart the lost sight is returned. . . .

We should also notice carefully what he says to the blind man: What wilt thou that I should do to thee? Does this mean that he who has the power to restore sight to the blind man does not know what it is he wishes? Of course not. However, he wishes to be asked for that which he knows of beforehand and which he is already willing to grant. In season and out of season he tells us to pray, while at the same time he tells us that our Father in heaven knows all our needs. Still he requires that we petition him and that our hearts be moved to prayer. So the blind man prays, not for money, but for sight, reckoning nothing worth the asking except this gift of the light. Even should he be granted whatever he wishes, it would all be as nothing without light, for without that he cannot see what he has.

We should imitate this man who was cured in mind and body, seeking from the Lord, not earthly gifts, riches which are but vanity

or worldly honours, but the light. . . . For that light which we and the angels alone may see, which has no beginning and no end. To this light the only way is by faith. Therefore he tells the blind man: Receive thy sight; thy faith hath made thee whole. . . . And if we have been enlightened in our blindness, then Jesus whom we see by that light in our souls, we also follow by our works. Let us look and see whither he is going, and thus find our way by following in his footsteps. . . .

Behold, although he is the Lord and creator of the angels and of all things, he comes on earth to take upon himself in the womb of a virgin that nature which he has created. Nor did he wish to come in wealth, but rather chose parents who were poor. . . . He willed not to be prominent in the world, but submitted to its scorn and mockery, endured being spit upon, scourged, a crown of thorns and a cross. And because we fell from eternal joys through bodily pleasures, he shows us through what pain we must return there.

What, then, should a man not suffer on his own behalf if God has suffered so much for men? He, then, who already believes in Christ, but who still pursues earthly gains and avarice, he whose heart is full of pride, who burns with the flames of jealousy, who soils himself with the filth of lusts, who seeks the world's approval and its good fortune—such a one refuses to follow Jesus, in whom he professes belief. He to whom his guide has shown the right path walks by another road if he seeks only delights and pleasures.

Recalling to our minds, then, the sins we have committed, let us think well on the sternness of the judge who will come to avenge them. Let us dispose our hearts to repentance and taste its flavour in good time, lest we taste for ever the bitterness of condemnation. We are told on the word of truth itself that we shall come to everlasting joy only through the bitterness of our tears: Blessed are they that mourn. . . . But the same truth teaches us also that through delights we shall only come to sorrow. If, then, we hope for the reward of eternal joy, we should hold fast to self-denial on the way. Thus, not only will our life be a journey towards God, but also we shall encourage others by our example, to praise God in their turn.

SECTION IV. A THEOLOGIAN

ST THOMAS AQUINAS

(A summary of his teaching on the virtue of charity, as a commentary on the teaching contained in today's Epistle.)

1. *Charity consists in the love of God as the object of our eternal happiness:*

It is a sharing in the eternal love of the Holy Spirit. Therefore the primary object of charity is God himself, as he is in himself,

infinitely good in his essence and infinitely good to us. The neighbour is the secondary object of charity, and he is loved for God's sake (2-2. q. 23).

2. *Charity implies true friendship:*

Friendship is founded on the love of benevolence, by which we wish good things for the person we love; but this is not enough by itself, there must also be the aspect of mutual love and communication of good things in real friendship. God communicates to us his own eternal happiness, and the love which is founded on this exchange of gifts is true friendship (2-2. q. 23. a. 1. c).

3. *Charity does not pass away, as do the other theological virtues:*

Faith and hope cannot continue to exist in heaven, because they have no object once we have attained our eternal good; but it is one and the same charity which we have in this life which passes over with us into the next. However, there is no comparison between the perfection of charity in this life and in the next; for, no matter how great our degree of charity here below, it can never equal the charity we have in heaven (1-2. q. 67. a. 6).

4. *Our grade of charity will depend on the will of God for each individual:*

It does not depend on any natural inclination of ours. The Holy Spirit distributes his gifts as he pleases (2-2. q. 24. a. 3. c). At the same time, it can be increased; so much so that there is no limit to its possibilities in this sense. This increase is not brought about by the addition of quantity to quantity, as in material things, but by a deeper rooting of charity in the subject. In other words, it becomes more intense (2-2. q. 24. a. 5). It is destroyed by one mortal sin, since by it man prefers some created good to the friendship of God, which demands that we do God's will in all things (2-2. q. 24. a. 12. c).

5. *Its relationship to the other virtues:*

Having pointed out that charity is a special virtue, St Thomas goes on to indicate its relationship to the other virtues, both theological and moral. It directs and governs the actions of all the other virtues, directing them towards divine good. This happens either directly, by acts of charity itself, or by command, as when actions come from the other virtues under the command of charity. It is the most excellent of all virtues, because of its object, God as he is in himself. It is the root and foundation of the other virtues, because they feed on charity and without it they are dead; it is their mother, because the others are born of our desire for the love of God, which is charity. It is called their form, because it directs the actions of the other virtues towards the infinite end of this life—God. Without it there can be no perfect moral virtue (1-2. q. 65. a. 2. c).

Any mortal sin is opposed to charity and destroys it in the soul; but not every mortal sin is opposed to faith and hope, and therefore these two theological virtues may remain in the soul without charity, although without it they are dead. The basic reason for this is that charity implies always a certain degree of union with God in friendship; the other theological virtues do not include this element of union (2-2. q. 24. a. 12 *ad 5um*).

SECTION V. SPIRITUAL WRITERS

I. THOMAS A KEMPIS

(The original *Palabra de Cristo* quotes two chapters from the second book of the *Imitation*, i.e. chaps. 11 and 12, as applicable to the preaching on the cross and its necessity in life. For English readers it will be sufficient to note the citation and refer them to the original.—Tr.)

II. ST THOMAS OF VILLANOVA

(This is the second sermon preached on the feast of a martyr, on the joys of the Cross, listed in *Opera Omnia*, Manille, 1883. We give a summary of the ideas contained in it.)

1. *Antithesis:*

Contained in two phrases of the Gospel, which appear to contradict each other: If any one will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me; . . . my yoke is sweet and my burden light. But this type of antithesis is not uncommon in the life and teaching of Christ. To some: These are hard words, and who can hear them? To others, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. For some, the words of Christ are words of life; to others, they are too hard, and these seek consolation elsewhere. The hardness is not in the Lord, but in those who hear his words. To those who court their own ruin, the message of the cross is but folly; to us, who are on the way to salvation, it is the evidence of God's power (1 Cor. 1. 18). What sweetness there is in the cross! This is something which only those who have experienced it can realize; there can be work without fatigue, a burden which is not a weight, and a yoke without oppression.

How can this be? I do not know. All I know is that it exists and that it is true. Even in human friendship something like this happens; and therefore what limits shall we set on the love of God? If it were not so, how could Christ have promised to those who left all things for his sake, one hundredfold in this life together with the persecution of this world? Persecution, as a reward for effort? There are many souls who have not understood this teaching, but if they had put it into practice they would have seen its results.

2. *The fruits of the cross and its sweetness:*

In the midst of the storms of the passion the cross teaches us the peaceful road to heaven, it is the true key of David, which opens and no one can shut; it shuts, and there is no one who can open (Apoc. 3. 7). Even though it be heavy, what does that matter, provided we have not to carry it? The cross is carried by love, which endures all things (1 Cor. 13. 7).

3. *Variety of crosses:*

There are some which mortify the flesh, fasting, labours, hunger and thirst . . . (2 Cor. 11. 27); this is the first kind of cross. The second is compassion and zeal for souls. The second cross is not reached except through the means of the first, for who can feel real zeal for souls if he has not felt the same for himself? Zeal which sees the mote in the brother's eye while it does not see the beam in its own is a false zeal. But there is a third cross and a sad one, which is the work of the devil, like the cross to which the bad thief was nailed. Sad indeed is the fate of those who are tormented by their illicit gains, their honours of a day and their gross pleasures! How wisely Augustine said that it is not martyrdom, but the motive for it which gets the reward! A heavy cross and one without hope, this cross of theirs; with no hope but death and hell to follow. Hard labour, the reward for which is eternal toil. If we must carry a cross, why not choose that of Christ, which is gentle and meritorious?

It is not my intention to tell you to strip yourselves of all material things, because that is a counsel, not a precept. But I do warn you to possess everything as though you possessed nothing; to weep as if you did not weep at all; to use the things of this world as if you did not use them, because our flight is rapid. In this sense, to renounce the world is to use things of necessity, not for mere pleasure.

III. ST CHARLES BORROMEIO

(A summary of the Homily he preached on the 6th Sunday after Pentecost, in 1583, taken from *Opera omnia*, Mediolani, 1749, t. 5, p. 61.)

1. *The poor and humble:*

He begins by pointing out that it was the poor and humble who followed Christ while he was on earth and that much the same is true today. The reason is simple. The powerful considered it unworthy of their position to follow Christ, when he had placed them in that position to give good example to others.

The blind men in the Gospel story represent the human race before the advent of Christ's revelation, including the most wise of philosophers, who spent their lives without knowing whence they

came or where they were going. Sad effects of original sin! The man who was on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho fell among robbers, who stripped him of all that he possessed, leaving him half dead. From that day onwards we suffer from a weakened will and an intellect which is obscured by darkness. Like those poor blind men who sat by the wayside, unaware of the blindness, through force of habit. Something similar to the world, which has lived for so many centuries without the realization that it has lost its sight. But if the sin was great, greater still was God's mercy (Rom. 11. 32). All of us find ourselves faced with the choice of two roads, that of God and that of creatures.

The road followed by creatures is as dangerous as was that from Jerusalem to Jericho, attacked by robbers and murderers, in spite of the flowers which lined the path. There we ask alms of those who cannot give them to us—creatures like ourselves.

2. *But Christ passes by:*

He passes by the blind world in many ways; in the beauty and movement of the heavens, which should lift man's thoughts to God, even though it is an imperfect knowledge. How happy were those blind men, whose eyes were closed, and yet they had light enough to recognize the Lord! How many of those who were healthy did not attain that which they attained! How many philosophers have not reached the vision of God!

3. *Prayer:*

Those blind men made their cries heard above those of the crowd. Such is the nature of living faith, which overcomes all obstacles. May we learn from this passage of the gospels that we must never desist from prayer, even though the crowds may shout against us or the world increase the violence of its seduction. Nay, even though it may seem to us that Christ does not hear us, we must insist in our pleas, without doubts and with a firm faith. The cry of the poor reaches God; and what does it matter to me if the whole world remains deaf and if its wise men refuse to hear me, so long as the Lord is attentive to my prayers?

4. *Following Christ:*

The blind men immediately followed Christ. How can anyone continue to beg things from this world after he has seen Christ? . . . There is nothing more pleasing to God than that we should follow Christ to heaven, in order to occupy the vacant places there. . . . And whom shall we follow if it be not Christ? Shall we follow the world, the devil, the flesh, death and sin? Or Christ, the Son of God, all-wise and eternal, the living truth, who seeks us out with infinite love, to live with us and to take us with him into glory? . . . The blind men made their request from afar, and obtained it; but you have Christ

so close to you that he allows himself to be touched and to be your food; he longs to receive your prayers and yet you forget to make your requests. There you have him on the cross, his arms bound, not by the nails, but by love. Here you have him on the altar under the form of bread. Ask, and you shall receive; you will never come back with nothing, because in him is the fulness of all good.

IV. BOSSUET

(A summary of *Serm. I in Quinquagesima*, ed. Lebarcq, t. 5, pp. 224-49.)

The Christian and suffering

1. *The ignorance of the apostles—a lesson for us:*

The apostles went through three phases: during the life of Jesus they were ignorant, without true understanding of spiritual things. During the passion they became so bewildered that they were on the point of losing their faith. Finally, after Pentecost, they were filled with light. These three stages of their lives were permitted by God for our good, and we can learn, even from their ignorance of spiritual things. . . .

The evangelists tell us repeatedly that the apostles did not understand the prophecies of Christ concerning his passion. Why? Because they wish to teach us that it is not enough for the sun to shine; there is also need of healthy eyes if we are to see. The fact that they could not understand the more profound discourses of Christ is not to be wondered at, but were not his announcements about the passion clear enough? Why, then, did they not understand? St Luke gives us the reason when he tells us that: They could not understand what he said; it was hidden from them, so that they could not perceive the meaning of it; and they were afraid to ask him about this saying of his (9. 45). If they did not understand these things, in spite of their clarity, it is a sign that there was some defect in the minds and hearts of the hearers. So it was, in fact.

The words of the Lord were hidden from them because of the prejudices with which their minds were filled and the imaginations about a temporal kingdom. At the same time fear of seeing the light held them back to such an extent that they were afraid to question him about these things. These are the two obstacles which prevent us from receiving a truth which is inconvenient for us, namely, an intellect which is absorbed in other things and a will which is afraid of the light.

2. *Our judgement of divine things:*

St Thomas tells us that the intellect should be like a mirror, which reflects images without distorting them or altering their colours. There are few minds so perfect as this, because prejudices

cloud them over. Again it is St Thomas who explains the reason; it is due to what he calls precipitate judgement. He gives the example of two men coming downstairs, one does so in an orderly fashion, step by step; the other is in such a hurry that he would appear to wish to attain the goal without using the steps at all. The reason should proceed in an orderly fashion, checking each step in the reasoning, instead of judging without weighing the evidence, as we so often do.

The remedy is to consider the reality of things without allowing ourselves to be prejudiced by subjective arguments. We have an example in the apostles. They wished to judge divine things by means of human criteria; and we know that to understand divine things it is first of all necessary to listen to God's own words.

3. *Fear of the truth:*

The apostles were accustomed to ask the Master about those things which they did not understand, but in this case they did not do so because, according to the interpreters, their carnal love for Christ made them deaf to all that signified suffering and humiliation. At the same time they knew that their own fate was linked up with his; therefore they understood him well enough when he spoke to them of honours and greatness, but any reference to a passion, with which they also would be associated, passed them by. Yet the Lord could not have spoken about it more clearly. He announced it after the confession of Peter, he spoke about it to Moses and Elias in their hearing, he mentioned it to the sons of Zebedee under the symbol of his chalice—thus showing them and us that no one can share in his triumph who is not baptized in his passion and death. But the apostles did not wish to listen to this truth. And we, who go to communion so frequently?

4. *The Christian and suffering:*

Two kinds of suffering await the sons of God; one is simply the fulfilment of the law, the other consists in those sufferings sent to us by the inscrutable providence of God.

(a) *Sufferings which are necessary for salvation:*

The first kind of sufferings are absolutely necessary for salvation. The flesh desires things which are contrary to the spirit, and the Lord commanded all who wished to follow him (and this following is necessary for salvation) that they should take up their cross. What a contrast. The Lord speaks thus, to all men; but the only thing men seek is flattery. They want us to invent a gospel for them, one which is comfortable, in which the world and Christ go hand in hand. Yet when we tell them that the way is narrow, that what they love is evil and dangerous, and he who loves the danger will perish in it; that certain sins and vices should not as much as be named

among them, then they turn their backs on us, afraid that we shall penetrate too deeply. In a word, they are afraid to ask! But the true disciple of Christ and of his gospel is one who draws near to the divine Master, not to hear what he wishes, but to love what he hears.

(b) Sufferings as a gift from God:

If we persevere in this necessary suffering God will reward us by sending us other and greater sufferings. In the Old Law he promised earthly goods, but now he has told us that his kingdom is not of this world. To those who leave all things to follow him he has promised a hundredfold, together with persecutions in this world (Mark 10. 29-30). After my passion and cross, he says to us, this is the reward I promise: for each persecution you shall suffer another hundred; great prosperity is a great suffering; my punishments are favours. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear (cf. Heb. 12. 6-8).

Welcome suffering. In this exile of ours we are inclined to run the risk of falling asleep in the midst of pleasures and forget its passing nature. So that this may not happen, God is careful to interrupt the soft and smooth course of our lives. It is not surprising that Christ should make you share in his cross if he has decided to make you share in his glory too.

(c) Generosity in suffering:

Let us go up with him to Jerusalem and there embrace the cross. Have not our sufferings served to correct us? More often than not, if he punishes us, we turn to him and ask his pardon; but once he forgives us, we give him fresh reason for punishing us.

Let us go to the cross, not like the bad thief, who merely annoyed God and increased his own sufferings through his impatient attitude, but like a repentant sinner, that we may deserve to hear from the lips of our Lord: This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.

SECTION VI. PAPAL TEXTS

The world of today, without the cross and without mercy

1. The world is sailing towards shipwreck, perhaps more than ever before, because it is following the false north-star of happiness; and happiness can only be found in God and his laws. That is why our times need apostles, which you should be. But remember that your credentials are charity—By this shall all men know that you are my disciples . . . (Pius XII, to the clergy and people of the Argentine, 1 Feb. 1948).

2. Today concepts are altered; the divine is made human and the human divine. This has brought about a forgetting of God and his law which is increasing every day. The world of today ignores the

most noble values, being fascinated by immediate and material pleasures. In this mechanized age the individual becomes nothing more than a perfect instrument for labour, or—which is worse—for fighting (Pius XII, to *Catholic Action*, 14 April 1939). The truth is that the modern world is suffering from anaemia and spiritual apathy, which is produced by the progressive exclusion of religion from life. This has led to a decline in faith on the part of many (Pius XII, to the clergy and Lenten preachers, Rome, March 1945).

3. It is a world which flees from the cross and from suffering, which limits man's goal to the material. This technical spirit of materialism has created a false notion of self-sufficiency and satisfaction in material progress which has blinded many to religious realities. The result may be to make man a mechanical giant, but at the same time his spirit will be reduced in stature to that of a dwarf where spiritual values are concerned (Pius XII, *Christmas Message*, 1956). This same thirst for pleasure and comfort has also affected many Catholics, who forget that it is not right that pleasures of this life should go beyond what is just and what is honest (Pius XII, to the Bishops of the world).

4. The world is sadly lacking in true mercy, because mercy consists in loving the image of God reflected in the miseries of his creatures. The world has forgotten how to love and is full of hate instead. Never have men treated each other with such lack of fraternal charity as nowadays. Racial differences have developed into hatred which is now open and undisguised. More than by their frontiers, nations are divided by hatred. Even in one and the same nation or within the walls of one and the same city, social classes are set against one another, while private relationships are guided by egoism, which has now become the one supreme law (Benedict XV, *Ad beatissimi*, 1 Nov. 1914).

5. On the other hand, when Christ founded the kingdom of peace, he wished to do so on love and fraternal charity (*ibid.* cf. *Pacem in Terris*, John XXIII, 1963).

6. There is need for a real campaign of penance and fraternal love, because the feverish search for pleasures only plunges the human heart into the vacuum of death. There is need of a real spirit of mortification and charity. Only thus may we hope to wipe out our own sins, give good example to others of the same faith as we are, and also help our needy brethren by giving to them what we save by not indulging in pleasures. This was the system and method of action of the first Christians, who abstained even from things that were lawful, so that they might be able to increase the treasury of active charity (Pius XII, to Franciscan tertiaries, 20 Sept. 1945).

7. The cross of Christ is the symbol of all that man has to endure in the way of humiliations, pain and suffering; but it is also the symbol of our victory, because its shadow, cast over all ages and nations, reminds us of our future goal. Through that passion of Christ, faith came into the world, and while men are filled with hatred for each other, the cross is the compendium of the whole of the Gospel (Pius XII to the clergy and faithful of the Diocese of Novara, 4 June 1952).

8. No natural explanation of physical pain can ever satisfy our minds completely. This can only come when we see in pain an instrument of divine providence, for our glory and sanctification. Suffering and death, in the new law are, if we may use the expression of St Paul, God's foolishness, a folly which is more wise than all the wisdom of men (Pius XII, to eight hundred Italian doctors, 12 Nov. 1952).

9. There are misfortunes which have no human remedy, and that is why we must lift up our eyes to Christ, who lightens every burden. Sufferings are a great treasure, we must know how to receive them well. Not merely do they draw us ever nearer to God, but also they belong to the very essence of Christianity. They purify and redeem us. To embrace the cross is the first of all penances and the greatest means of sanctification for every Christian. To know how to put up with the ordinary crosses of everyday life; that is the first of all penances, the first condition imposed on every Christian by his vocation and the greatest means towards our sanctification. The docile resignation of one who believes in God and in Jesus Christ is necessary for all, for Christ is the teacher and the guide of hearts. Therefore embrace the cross with courage in the life of every day; it is frequently heavy, but if we carry it with Christ it becomes light. The grave state of the world today compels every Christian to make up in his own body what is wanting in the passion of Christ, not merely in a spirit of reparation, but also as a contribution to the salvation of all the redeemed (Pius XII, to all the faithful, 26 March 1950).

SECTION VII. HISTORICAL AND LITERARY NOTES

ST ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY

There are many stories told about her extraordinary charity towards the poor. How she gave away everything she had, money, jewels, provisions, clothing. There were occasions when there was a reception in the palace and the Duchess could not assist because she had nothing to wear—she had given all to the poor!

On one occasion, when her husband was absent from the castle, she gave away all the food and wine in the store houses. The servants

were indignant at this and reported the matter to the Duke on his return. His only answer was: Is the Duchess well? Very well, they replied. In that case I am satisfied, he said.

Scarcely had he moved a few paces when he met his mother, who shouted at him furiously: Come and see how your wife loves you! She took him to his bedroom and, leading him to the side of the bed, pointed down and said: See, the filthy woman!

But the Duke did not see the poor beggar in his rags, whom the Duchess had put there to look after and cure. Instead he saw Christ crucified (From *Año Cristiano*, t. 4, pp. 316-17).

SECTION VIII. SERMON SCHEMES

I. LITURGICAL

A: Quinquagesima

1. *We are sinners:*

(a) As on former Sundays, the main idea which the Church tries to engrave on our minds is that we are sinners. The words of the Introit are like the plea of a soul loaded down with sin, who longs to be free from the burden of its guilt and flees to God for his protection and help.

(b) The prayer asks God to free us from the bonds of sin.

2. *Invitation to charity:*

(a) Charity is the fundamental Christian virtue, without it we are nothing and have nothing.

(b) The first object of charity is God; but it also reaches out to all men, in so far as they are images of God and members of his Mystical Body. No one can love God who does not love his neighbour.

(c) The Epistle, in which St Paul speaks to us of charity, is a clear invitation to the practice of this virtue during Lent, as one of its main features.

3. *Invitation to sacrifice:*

(a) Up to now the Church has only spoken to us of an effort (Septuagesima) or of our co-operation during Lent (Sexagesima).

(b) Today she describes to us clearly in what these things consist, namely, in sacrifice and in the cross:

i. *in the breviary* we read the story of the sacrifice of Isaac which was demanded from Abraham; in recompense for which he is given the great promises, that he will be the father of a great nation and that will be blessed (Gen. 22. 17).

ii. *in the Mass* we read the Gospel in which Christ speaks of his Passion, of his cross and of his death. The Church calls on us in his words: We go up to Jerusalem. Lent is a journey to Jerusalem with Christ.

4. *That they may see!*

(a) Few things are so little understood as sacrifice:

Nature rebels against it, while our passions blind our minds, which fail to see the benefits enclosed under the form of the cross.

(b) Sacrifice is not an end in itself:

- i. it is a means to attain life;
- ii. but it is not easy for our carnal minds to understand this supreme idea of Christianity;
- iii. the apostles themselves did not understand it before Pentecost.

(c) A symbol:

The blind man presented to us in today's Gospel is a symbol of so many Christians, faced with this sublime message of the Church.

- i. the Lord will work the miracle;
- ii. we have only to ask him; Lord, that I may see! In the Mass of today, at the moment of communion, what petition could dispose us better for the weeks of Lent which will begin within a few days? Lord, may I see that sacrifice was your way! May I see the benefits which come from the Cross; that in it alone is expiation for my sins. May I see, so as to live crucified with you during Lent, that I may also live with you in the glory of the resurrection.

B: Lent, a time of pardon

1. *The penitential character of Lent:*

(a) One of the most frequent ideas in the pages of the Missal is this one of pardon and penance.

(b) We may give the one example of the blessing of the ashes, in which the Church recalls the ancient rites of Israel, when the priests cried out: Pardon thy people, O Lord!

(c) The liturgical chant for Lent is the *Attende, Domine!* Pay heed, O Lord, and have pity on us, because we have sinned against thee.

2. *Penitential observances in the Middle Ages:*

Then public penance was done for sin, a practice which came down from the fifth century. It was a common thing to see these penitents at the doors of the churches, clothed in sackcloth and with ashes on their heads, carrying heavy chains. This penance lasted from Ash Wednesday until Holy Thursday, when they were given absolution by the Pope.

3. *Our repentance:*

(a) A precept of the Rule of St Benedict:

We exhort you that, in these days of Lent, there should be a purity of life so perfect that it may wipe out the neglect of the rest

of the year. We shall observe this worthily if, abstaining from all vice, we consecrate ourselves to prayer with tears, dedicating ourselves to reading, sorrow and fasting. Let us, therefore, add something to the ordinary duties of our life. . . .

(b) A comment of Leo the Great:

Behold, now is the acceptable time; the days of salvation! If at all times, much more during these days will our sins be forgiven.

(c) A time of grace:

This was the name given to the jubilee year in the days of the Old Law. Lent is rather like that. The Church gives us her invitation, her mind full of the words of God to his people, when he said that he did not wish the death of the sinner, but that he should be converted and should live (Ez. 18. 23).

(d) Our reply:

It could well be in the words of the blessing of ashes: Let us change over to a better way of life.

C: Lent, a time of prayer

1. *Prayer, as well as fasting, is a characteristic of Lent:*

(a) St John Chrysostom:

Our fathers ordered forty days of fasting and prayer, so that, purified during those forty days by means of our prayers, vigils and other pious practices, we may be prepared for the holy mysteries with our consciences as pure as possible.

(b) St Augustine:

i. *More frequent prayer:* You who fast also on other days, do so during these days with greater intensity. You who, on other days, crucify your bodies in perpetual continence, should direct your thoughts to God during these days by means of more frequent and more intense prayer.

ii. *Prayer, fasting and almsdeeds.* So that our prayers may reach God more easily, let us add to them the wings of piety, alms and fasting.

(c) The stational Mass:

Prayer was always added to fasting, so much so that, in the early Church, Mass was always celebrated on fast days. The stational Mass is one explanation for the spirit of prayer which was so characteristic of Lent.

(d) God's truce:

The faithful of Rome always thought of these days as God's truce. For this reason, after their work, they would gather and walk in procession to the stational church, singing the litanies as they went along.

2. *Prayer accompanied by virtue:*

So our prayer seeks peace, says St Augustine; and it finds it in humility and charity, by fasting and giving, forgiving and forgetting, giving good things, not evil, departing from evil, doing good. With the aid of these wings of virtue, our prayer flies up and enters more easily into that place where Christ, our peace, has entered before us.

3. *The practice of prayer during Lent:*(a) *The Mass:*

Many have the pious custom of going to Mass every day during Lent.

(b) *The stations of the Cross.*(c) *Special prayers for sinners:*

- i. the grace of God and the seed of the word are poured out on them more abundantly in Lent, especially through our prayers;
- ii. let us ask God that their hearts may not be hardened;
- iii. at the moment of the prayer over the people at the end of the Lenten Masses, let us ask especially that those may be brought back to God who, still having faith, have lost charity.

D: *Lent, a time of mortification*1. *Lent commemorates the passion and sacrifice of Christ in a special way:*

- (a) The liturgical year tends to contemplate each one of the mysteries of Christ, so as to make their teaching live.
- (b) The permanent sacrifice which was the life of Christ comes to an end in his sacred passion. This is commemorated during Lent. Even though this reminder is not the historical reason for the introduction of this period of fasting, nor its main characteristic, still we can say that it is commemorated in a special way during Lent.

2. *The Lenten fast:*(a) *An inseparable part of Lent:*

- i. *it commemorates the fast of Christ, also that of Moses and Elias in the Old Law;*
- ii. *it is specially recommended by the Fathers.* St Ambrose can speak for them all: Just as the gates of the Gospel were opened unto you through the forty days fast of Christ in the desert . . . so he who desires to enter into the Gospel and collect the fruit of the resurrection, should fulfil the fast which Moses in the Old Law and Christ in the New indicated as a strong ally of virtue.
- iii. *in the early Church it was most rigorous;*
- iv. *the faithful fasted every day except Sundays, eating nothing until sunset;*

v. *in Jerusalem the daily Mass was suppressed as a sign of mourning; while in Rome it was celebrated each day in a different basilica.*

vi. *St Benedict in his Rule* advises each one to offer up some special, individual sacrifice or mortification, cutting down on food, drink, sleep, or amusement.

(b) *The present practice of fasting:*

i. it has been considerably diminished, although the mind of the Church is that we should do some fasting, if possible, in Lent.

ii. but if the external observance has diminished, the interior spirit of fasting must remain;

iii. when the Fathers speak of fasting they stress that it should be first of all interior.

iv. St Augustine says: One will say to you; I cannot fast, because it makes me ill. But who can ever say, I cannot forgive one who has done me an injury, because my health prevents me?

v. St Isidore says: If you cannot fast, alms are sufficient without fasting.

vi. St Bernard: If only the tongue has sinned, then let it be the tongue alone that fasts and it will be enough. But if the other members have also sinned, then why should they not also fast? . . . Let the eyes fast by avoiding curious looks; the ears, by not listening to rumours; the tongue from detraction and lies. . . . But much more let the soul fast from its vices and its own will.

vii. We must always do some mortification to obtain the full benefits of Lent.

3. *The best fast, that of charity:*

- (a) Almost every one of St Augustine's Lenten sermons mention almsdeeds and the pardoning of our enemies.
- (b) The Epistle for the 1st Friday of Lent says the same.

II. THE EPISTLE

A: *Charity, queen of the virtues*1. *The envy of the Corinthians and the charity of Paul:*

He is going to show them a better road, that of charity.

2. *The superiority of charity (cf. St Thomas, supra):*

(a) The category of the virtues is determined by their object and the perfection with which they attain it.

(b) Thus, literature stands higher than architecture, because the word is superior to physical material; it is also more noble than music, because it is a more perfect form of expression.

(c) Charity lifts us up to God more perfectly than any other virtue, for which reason it is superior to them all.

(d) It unites us directly to God; while the moral virtues regulate human actions.

(e) Faith and hope unite us to God like charity, but they do so much less perfectly:

i. *faith unites our intellect to God*, but still leaves us in the dark to a great extent; we believe that which we do not see. Its object can only extend as far as divine revelation goes, and no further;

ii. *hope unites the will to God*, but no one desires that which he already possesses.

iii. *charity is the perfect union of love*; it unites us more perfectly than faith, because it reaches God as he is in himself, and thus does not possess the imperfection of faith; it possesses God in some way even now, and so avoids the imperfection of hope.

(f) Love is an end in itself; faith and hope are both means to that end. Without charity grace is impossible, sanctifying grace, that is, The virtues without charity are as nothing. Their value increases the more charity has its influence upon them.

(g) Thus to administer justice from the motive of the love of God is far superior to any other acts of that virtue, which may come from fear of hell or from some other reason.

3. *I will show you a better way:*

The ten commandments are reduced to two: love, and then do what you will.

B: The Vision of God

1. *Heaven—the vision of God face to face:*

(a) Texts of Paul:

i. he says that eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what things God has prepared for them that love him (1 Cor. 2. 9);

ii. in this passage of today's epistle he tells us in what this vision consists.

(b) Three things which cannot be bettered in creation, according to St Thomas:

He says that God could have created a better world than this in everything except three things:

i. *the humanity of Christ*, because it is united to the Word of God;

ii. *our Lady*, because she is the Mother of God;

iii. *the happiness of heaven*, because it is the enjoyment of God as he is.

2. *Our happiness in heaven, a share in the eternal happiness of God himself:*

(a) It is this vision which makes us most like God himself: By it we are made to share in his happiness, which consists in the vision of his own essence.

(b) That is why St John can say:

Beloved, we are sons of God even now, and what we shall be hereafter has not yet been made known to us. But we know that when he comes we shall be like him; we shall see him, then, as he is (1 John 3. 2). The Lord tells us that we shall eat and drink at his table (Luke 22. 29-30). This cannot be understood of any material food, and therefore it can only be applied to that food which is eaten at Wisdom's table (Prov. 9. 5). It is a share in the happiness by which God himself is happy.

(c) From all of which we conclude:

That God has made us partakers of his own happiness, which will consist in seeing God face to face, as he is in himself.

3. *Its explanation (Summa Contra Gentiles, I. c. 100):*

(a) **The happiness of an intellectual creature:**

This consists in the most perfect exercise of the highest faculties.

i. this happens even with the lower faculties; the eye is happy when it sees, the palate when it savours varied tastes. Forced inactivity is, for all of them, a punishment.

ii. the happiness of the rational creature is on the same general line—only that the highest faculty of man is his intellect.

(b) **The highest object:**

But this happiness does not merely consist in the exercise of that highest of the faculties, but in its exercise when directed to the highest possible object. The eye enjoys a beautiful view more than it enjoys an ordinary one. The intellect, geared to truth, will only reach perfect happiness when it is considering the most perfect truth of all—God, and in the most perfect way, i.e. by face to face vision.

4. *Even the pagan philosophers saw this, although in a vague manner:*

(a) When they placed happiness in the contemplation of the truth (Aristotle).

(b) But they did not even touch the surface or suspect what was contained in that *better part* chosen by Mary (Luke 10. 42).

5. *Complete happiness:*

In this vision man finds the happiness of all his faculties, both the higher and the lower.

6. *A light and momentary affliction:*

It brings with it a reward multiplied every way, loading us with everlasting glory; if only we will fix our eyes on what is unseen, not on what we can see. What we can see lasts but for a moment; what is unseen is eternal (2 Cor. 4. 17-18). St Bernard comments on these words and points out that our sufferings are very small indeed in

comparison with the reward which has been promised us and which can be attained by obeying the commands of one who loves us and by loving him in return.

III. THE GOSPEL

A: Lent—a journey to Jerusalem

1. *Christ, alone in the midst of the crowds:*

(a) The gospel of today and the spirit of Lent.

(b) The gospel scene (Cf. *supra*):

A great crowd on their way to Jerusalem. Jesus makes his way there with a firm step. The apostles follow him, bewildered and afraid. Now we are going up to Jerusalem, and all that has been written by the prophets about the Son of Man is to be accomplished (Luke 18. 31).

(c) Who were they who went up with Jesus?

We can detect the answer if we study the gospel scene:

- i. from the physical point of view, a great crowd; the twelve to whom our Lord speaks in confidence; the mother of James and John; probably the group of pious women who helped our Lord with their alms and their service; many other disciples.
- ii. spiritually, Christ goes alone.
- iii. the apostles and the rest did not understand the spirit that moved him on this journey.
- iv. while he is thinking about the redemption and his own sacrifice, they are thinking about the first places at the table, the first offices in the kingdom he has come to found.

2. *The Church's invitation:*

(a) Now we are going up to Jerusalem . . .

i. *the Church repeats for us the words of Christ to his apostles.* We are on the way towards Good Friday. We are going to journey with Christ through Lent so as to crucify ourselves with him on that Good Friday.

ii. *the mystical Christ is on his way to Jerusalem.* Lent, with its spirit of mortification, of renunciation and sacrifice, is an authentic journey to Jerusalem. It is not the historic Christ who is on his way there now, it is the mystical Christ. The Church goes there, and so do we, as Christians.

(b) The world does not understand this call of the Church:

- i. things have changed very much, and the old spirit of Lent is in danger of being lost.
- ii. the Church goes up to Jerusalem, but there are many who go with her, not in the Christian spirit, but in body only. May

God give us his grace so that we may be of those who understand and practise the true Lenten spirit.

(c) **United with Christ, and embracing his cross:**

Lent without the cross is impossible. Ask Christ, as the blind man did, to open your eyes. May our Lent be a sacrifice of ourselves with Christ and with the Church. A real journey to Jerusalem.

B: We go up to Jerusalem

1. *The historical situation:*

(a) To understand this fully it is necessary to read the chapters of St John which refer to it (Chap. 7-11).

(b) And only thus will we understand how difficult the position of Christ was at this moment of his life. Week by week the atmosphere was worse and more imminent the danger that he would fall into the hands of his enemies. From the merely human point of view, this journey was a very dangerous one.

2. *We can see it build up:*

(a) Jesus had to go to the feast of tabernacles secretly (John 7. 11-13).

(b) The Jews dared not lay hands on him on that occasion (John 7. 44-47).

(c) **but he openly defied the Pharisees:**

- i. he was hard with them (John 8. 44);
- ii. he escaped from their hands (John 8. 59).

(d) **The man who was blind from birth:**

The indignation of the Pharisees at his cure is reflected in the harsh way they speak to him (John 9. 34).

(e) **The good shepherd:**

i. Christ presents himself in the temple as the good shepherd and maintains that the others are thieves and hirelings (John 10. 8).

ii. again there is a violent argument; many of the hearers said that he was mad or had a devil, while others were on his side (John 10. 20-21).

iii. the argument becomes more violent still, until it reaches the point where they hurl themselves on him to take him prisoner. Christ thinks it more prudent to leave them for a while, and goes over to the other side of the Jordan.

3. *The resurrection of Lazarus and the return to Jerusalem:*

(a) Jesus once more leaves Transjordan and returns to Jerusalem:

The disciples warn him that his enemies are seeking to kill him (John 11. 7-8).

(b) The resurrection of Lazarus:

- i. the cause of the conversion of many Jews, for which reason the chief priests call a reunion in which they decide to kill him (John 11. 45-53).
- ii. Jesus once more retires from Jerusalem.

(c) But he returns to the city again:

But before he does so, he announces his passion to his disciples in no uncertain terms (Mark 10. 32-34; Luke 18. 31-33).

i. *his courage*. This is a man, an iron will and character. Here is a sublime attitude towards life, duty, sacrifice and the cross. Here is the complete dominion of a will which is in all things subject to that of God.

ii. *he will die when the moment comes*; before this he has dodged the stones and the aggression in the temple, not from cowardice, but with full dominion over his actions and decisions. The moment had not yet come and Christ would not allow anyone to anticipate the hour set aside by his Father.

4. Now the moment is at hand:**(a) Here is a splendid example for all men:**

It is especially an example to those young men called by God to his special service.

(b) Here is a magnificent meditation for a retreat:

i. *there are times when it is necessary to make a decision*; and at such times the decision can have only one guide—the will of God.

ii. *everything is accepted when it is necessary for our duty*, face to face and with a spirit of sacrifice. Let the mockery come, the blows, the crown of thorns and the cross! We have to take the road to Calvary with decision and courage.

iii. *without anticipating it, but without delaying the moment when it comes*. Putting that moment off only implies timidity and cowardice.

C: Thy will be done**1. The cross for love of the Father:**

(a) Jesus tells his apostles the great secret of the cross.

(b) The love for souls drives him towards it, but this love is only the reflection of his love for his Father. It is the desire to do the will of his Father which directs his steps towards Jerusalem.

2. Jesus and the Father; he goes to his Father at all times:

(a) His exquisite providence clothes the flowers of the field and gives food to the birds of the air. He knows our needs (Matt. 6. 26-32).

(b) He makes his sun shine on the good and the wicked alike (Matt. 5. 45).

(c) He does not even forget the little sparrows who were sold at five for two farthings (Luke 12. 6).

3. The Father is the chief personage in his parables and teachings:

(a) The father sees our secret prayers (Matt. 6. 4).

(b) He is more generous to us than the friend on whose door we knock to ask for bread (Luke 11. 6-8).

(c) He is the king who makes a feast for his son's wedding (Matt. 22. 2-14).

(d) The creditor who forgives the debt of ten thousand talents (Matt. 18. 27).

(e) He it is who waits longingly for the prodigal son, to give him the embrace of pardon (Luke 15. 20).

(f) He who gives us his son so that we may not perish (John 3. 16).

(g) He it is who sends us the Holy Spirit, who is to remain with us (John 14. 16).

4. The doing of the will of his Father was the main thing in Christ's life:**(a) From the very first moment of the incarnation:**

See, then, I said, I am coming to fulfil what is written of me, where the book lies unrolled; to do thy will, O my God (Heb. 10. 7).

(b) It inspired the first recorded words of his in the gospels:

Why did you seek me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business? (Luke 2. 49).

(c) It is a rule of his whole life:

I do always the things that please him (John 8. 29).

i. for that reason he limits his teaching and personal apostolate to Israel, because the Father had limited that personal apostolate to the lost sheep of Israel (Matt. 15. 24).

ii. for that reason he chose simple, humble folk to be his followers, because the Father had revealed to them his secrets, while holding them back from the wise of this world (Matt. 11. 25).

iii. to fulfil his Father's will he goes after sinners (John 6. 37).

(d) It is food and drink to him:

My meat is to do the will of him that sent me (John 4. 34).

(e) It makes him take up the cross:

i. even though his friends advise against it;

ii. even though he fears the agony of his death; Let this chalice pass, but not my will . . . let thine be done! (Matt. 26. 42).

(f) His last words from the cross:

With them he hands his soul over to the Father (Luke 23. 46).

(g) His prayers begin with the word Father:

His greatest prayer, which he taught us, asks that the Father's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

D: The hidden word (I)

The mystery of the Cross

1. Christ explained clearly to his apostles the reason for his journey to Jerusalem, so that it might ease their sorrow and comfort their weakness. For this reason he also anticipates the news about his future resurrection. The third day I shall rise again.

2. The apostles did not understand:

(a) Luke insists on this ignorance of the meaning of his words (18. 34).

(b) Bossuet comments, and with reason: I cannot see anything hidden or secret here, in the words of our Lord. What he says is perfectly clear: they will mock him, spit upon him, scourge and kill him. What is there in all this that is not clear?

3. Four possible attitudes:

Face to face with the mystery of the cross there are four possible attitudes which human beings can adopt:

(a) Incomprehension:

The cross is folly. This is the attitude of the apostles. They do not wish to understand what he says to them, because although the words are clear enough, the interpretation, to their way of thinking, is absurd. A man who goes voluntarily and with decision to be nailed to a cross!

(b) Fear:

i. *the apostles did not understand, but they were also afraid to question him.* They suspected that the interpretation might be a sad one for their weak nature.

ii. *he would be betrayed.* They were warned of this on several occasions, but again they did not want to know the truth and they were afraid to ask him any questions about it (Luke 9. 44-45).

(c) Flight:

On one occasion they do seem to have understood, and Peter, speaking for the rest, took our Lord on one side and advised him against the cross. Christ rebuked him, as one who savours of the things of men rather than of those of God (Matt. 16. 21-23).

(d) Sadness:

i. after the scene we have just mentioned came the transfiguration, which was intended to strengthen the authority of Jesus in their eyes and also fortify their wills;

ii. but still they did not understand—or did not want to understand—the mystery of the cross.

4. A natural explanation:

(a) The four attitudes we have outlined are very natural ones:

Our sensuality flees from pain; our self-love rejects humiliation; even Christ in the garden asks his Father to allow the chalice to pass from him. The greater affection men have for the things of this world, the more carnal they are, the more they flee from the cross. The modern world, safe in its modern comforts, hates to hear of the cross.

(b) But this attitude is unworthy of men of faith:

He who allows himself to be dominated by such sentiments and who does not react violently against them is not a good Christian.

The Christian and Calvary

1. The true Christian takes this word *Cross*, which is so bitter to human nature, and keeps it in his heart. The Son of man is soon to be betrayed into the hands of men (Luke 9. 44).

2. The example of the saints:

(a) The coming of the Holy Spirit:

It changes the hearts of the apostles and modifies their attitude to the cross.

(b) From that moment, for them, for Paul and for all the saints, the cross becomes:

i. *a joy.* They came out of the Council chamber rejoicing that they had been found worthy to suffer something for the name of Christ (Acts 5. 41).

ii. *a glory.* Paul could say that he did not wish to glory in anything else save only in the cross of Christ (Gal. 6. 14).

iii. *wisdom.* Again Paul, who did not presume to have any wisdom save that of the cross (1 Cor. 2. 2).

iv. *salvation for the whole world.* In the cross is salvation for all; Behold the wood of the cross, on which the salvation of the world was nailed (Good Friday Liturgy).

3. Let us follow Christ:

All the saints have gone up with Christ to Jerusalem.

(a) Peter and Andrew rejoiced at the sight of the cross on which they were to suffer.

(b) St Augustine could say that the cross is the ship in which we can cross the seas of life safely.

(c) St Francis rejected the world so as to embrace the cross.

(d) St Ignatius leads one who follows his Exercises to suffer every humiliation for the love of Christ.

(e) Teresa exclaims: To suffer or to die!

(f) St John of the Cross chose suffering and being despised by men as the only reward he wished for after a life of holiness.

4. *A profound text:*

The author of the *Imitation of Christ* says: In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life, in the cross is defence against our enemies, in the cross is all gentleness, in the cross fortitude of heart, in the cross true joy of spirit, in the cross the height of virtue, in the cross is perfection of holiness.

5. *Exhortation:*

(a) St Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, has a long description of all the saints suffered for their faith in Christ. He begins with Abel and then goes through the list of the great saints of the Old Law.

(b) He begins the next chapter (12) with these sublime verses:

i. Why, then, since we are watched from above by such a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of all that weighs us down, of the sinful habit that clings so closely, and run with all endurance, the race for which we are entered.

ii. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the origin and crown of all faith, who, to win his prize of blessedness, endured the cross and made light of its shame, Jesus, who now sits on the right of God's throne.

E: Face to face with the Cross

1. *The word cross was a hidden mystery for the disciples who followed Christ:*

Let us meditate on it and on the benefits it brings with it, so that we may both understand it and live it during Lent.

2. *It was convenient that Christ should suffer:*

(a) Was it not to be expected that the Christ should undergo these sufferings, and enter so into his glory? (Luke 24. 26).

(b) Then he lowered his own dignity, accepted an obedience which brought him to death, death on a cross. That is why God has raised him to such a height, given him that name which is greater than any other name . . . (Phil. 2. 8-9).

(c) This is the example which is, of all others, the most encouraging for those who have to suffer.

3. *Suffering is necessary for the members of Christ's Mystical Body:*

(a) Christ himself demands it of them. He who would come after me . . . (Matt. 16. 24). If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you . . . (John 15. 20).

(b) St Paul says the same thing (2 Tim. 3. 12).

(c) The body cannot lie at ease while the Head is crowned with thorns (John Chrysostom).

(d) It is demanded by our supernatural life, whose very laws exact certain things from us:

i. that we should make up in our bodies what is lacking in the redemption of Christ (Col. 1. 24);

ii. that we should dominate the vices and concupiscence which prevent the full development of the supernatural life within us (Gal. 5. 24);

iii. that we reproduce in ourselves the mortification of Christ (2 Cor. 4. 10);

iv. that we suffer with him on the cross and so enter into our glory with him, on the same conditions as he entered into his glory (Rom. 8. 18).

4. *How we are crucified:*

(a) We need not seek extraordinary means to carry the part of the cross which is assigned to us in the Mystical Body.

(b) It is enough if we carry well the cross of every day:

i. those sufferings and crosses which are proper to our state of life and which come to us in the course of that life;

ii. faithful and persevering fulfilment of the duties of our state of life. It was this that led Thérèse of Lisieux to the heights of sanctity.

iii. together with the mortifications and penances which we impose on ourselves voluntarily as part of our Christian life.

5. It is those I love that I correct and chasten; kindle thy generosity and repent (Apoc. 3. 19).

F: The hidden word (2)

1. In three different phrases the gospel of today tells us that the apostles did not understand the words Jesus spoke to them about the cross.

2. *Yet Jesus preached it without ceasing:*

(a) He proposes it as the only way for those who wish to follow him (Matt. 16. 24).

(b) He has it so much on his mind that, when Peter, his chosen head of the Church, tries to advise him against it, he calls him Satan (Matt. 16. 23).

(c) He makes use of the moment of his greatest glory in the transfiguration to speak of it (Luke 9. 31).

3. *Especially to his apostles:*

(a) After the transfiguration (Luke 9. 43-45);

(b) in the course of his last journey to Jerusalem (Luke 18. 31-34);

(c) at the last Supper, when he spoke to them of the persecutions which would come upon them, etc. (John 15. 18-25).

4. *They then did not understand and did not want to understand this word:*

(a) They had a typical Jewish interpretation of the Messiah in their minds; that he would restore a temporal kingdom to Israel.

(b) They were typically carnal men, who could not understand that the road to glory was that of the cross, which was against all their natural instincts.

(c) They had not yet received the Holy Ghost, the only one who could open their minds and hearts to this idea.

5. *But finally they do discover the secret and give their all to it:*

(a) **The cross is the hidden secret of the Gospel:**

i. it reveals to us the love of Christ for us;

ii. the gravity of sin, which is expiated by the cross;

iii. the pains of hell; because if Christ, who was innocent, had to suffer so much because of sin and in order to expiate in the eyes of divine justice, how much more grave will be the lot of the sinner condemned to hell?

iv. the value of the human soul, for which such a high price was paid;

v. the excellence of glory, which such a price merited for us.

(b) The apostles ended by giving their all to the cross (1 Cor. 2. 2).

(c) The great saints knew well its value. Teresa asked for sorrow or for death; John of the Cross, to be despised and to suffer for Christ.

G: Without cross and without mercy

1. *Two ways of following the Lord:*

(a) **The episode of the woman with an issue of blood:**

i. the crowd surrounds Christ and presses against him on all sides.

ii. but this woman makes her way through the crowd and manages to touch just the hem of his robe. Virtue goes out of him and at once Christ says: Who has touched me? The disciples try to answer him in a human fashion, saying that the crowd is very great and who can answer that question. Christ insists that power has gone out from him (Mark 5. 25-34; Luke 8. 43-48).

iii. Many accompanied and surrounded Christ on that occasion, but only one touched him.

(b) **Today the same thing is repeated:**

i. Christ goes on his way with a great crowd to accompany him, on the way to the temple for the great feasts;

ii. yet he goes almost alone—only one woman really accompanies him. Mary, his mother.

(c) **Who touched him?**

The woman with the issue of blood touched him in the material sense; but today there is one among the crowd who touches him in the truly spiritual sense; his mother.

i. it is logical to suppose that his mother would be with the other women who accompanied him everywhere; because she would not permit the others to minister to him while she kept apart. The whole scene of these days of the last journey to Jerusalem gives us to understand that Mary would be there, although she is not mentioned specially.

ii. in any case, she was the only one who accompanied her Son spiritually in this journey to his end. She knew what he was about to do and what sufferings he would have to undergo to fulfil the will of God.

iii. those about him did not understand either the lesson of the cross or the lesson of mercy. They tried to make the blind man keep quiet.

2. *History repeats itself:*

(a) **A peculiar way of understanding the Gospel:**

i. there are many who will be in the front rank when it is a question of receptions, processions, carrying banners, etc.;

ii. or at a sermon in which the preacher does not mention such things as humiliations, mortification, hell, death or the cross . . . or who does not insist on such themes as the obligation of charity towards the needy.

(b) **Fashionable Christianity:**

Reasonable, comprehensive, elegant, human . . . the external practice of religion.

(c) **Defective piety:**

Those who go to church but reject the cross. Their lives are comfortable; hard of heart at times when others are in need.

3. *The cross and mercy:*

We must not be like these.

(a) We must accept the Gospel as it is; he who does not take up his cross and follow me is not my disciple! (Luke 14. 27).

i. with the cross on our own shoulders and also ready to help other to carry their crosses.

ii. charity does not seek what is its own, but what is best for others (1 Cor. 13. 4-8).

(b) Let us practise Christianity, the cross and mercy.

H: Two mothers

The first petition

1. Mary, mother of Jesus, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee, in the company of Jesus.

(a) The spiritual mother:

Mary was in the company of Jesus when he went up to Jerusalem. Her motherhood began in Bethlehem; but when he was born the whole Mystical Body was born with him. From that day we are all sons of Mary, although the solemn proclamation of that fact may take place from the cross.

(b) The natural mother:

In his company was another mother, the mother of the two sons of Zebedee.

2. What they ask:

(a) The natural mother:

She does not know what she wants. She awakens in us a certain natural and human sympathy, but her love is not a spiritual one. She asks for things which are not convenient (Matt. 20. 20-23).

(b) The mother of God:

She was present, but she was not a passive witness. Love knows no rest. She would unite her petition to that of the mother of the sons of Zebedee—but it would be a very different request:

- i. nothing to do with the first seats in the kingdom;
- ii. but instead fortitude and love to be able to drink the chalice; love and constancy to embrace the cross. It was she who inspired their reply: We can!
- iii. Her glance of love embraced the two; James, who would do so much for Christ; and John, to whose care she would herself be committed.

The second petition

(a) The blind man of Jericho:

- i. we need have no doubt about it. Mary would be the first one to see the blind man and inspire his request: Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me.
 - ii. as she did in the marriage feast of Cana, Mary would suggest to her Son the idea: there is a blind man here who needs the light.
- (b) The result is a hymn of glory to God, to which Mary adds her voice.

The lesson

- (a) It springs naturally from the conduct of the two mothers:
- i. one represents natural love, limited to those who are nearest to us by blood.

ii. the other represents a spiritual love, that of heaven, a love for eternal things, love of the cross in order to attain glory, love for all of us who are still on the road to Jerusalem.

(b) We are all brothers:

- i. all children of Mary;
- ii. Christ goes up to Jerusalem to shed his blood for us all.

I: The blind man who sat, begging

1. He sat, blind, and begging: A Gospel portrait of the sinner in three words.

2. The blindness of the sinner:

- (a) The fruits of light and those of darkness (Eph. 5. 8-11).
- (b) The sinful act is against that of the supernatural light, or against that of conscience and natural reason.
 - i. the sinner flees from the light which is Christ. At times he resists it positively. Meanwhile, others persecute him. Not a few go from sin to sin until they fall into the eternal darkness of hell.
 - ii. he hardly realizes the malice of sin; his knowledge of God is small (1 John 3. 6).
 - iii. nor does he understand what it cost Christ to satisfy for our sins; nor the value of sanctifying grace.

3. Seated and immobile:

- (a) Those who are in grace accompany Christ on the road to Jerusalem and towards the triumph of the resurrection.
- (b) Sinners, like the blind man, cannot move, and live a sterile life with no fruits of holiness, unless Christ draws near them in his mercy.

4. Begging:

- (a) The sinner lives like the most miserable of beggars, without spiritual riches, without God's friendship and in absolute poverty.
- (b) He begs from creatures that food which can never satisfy him.
 - i. Cf. Jer. 2. 13, on the sins of the people of God;
 - ii. also Augustine: Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts can find no rest until they rest in thee.

5. Conclusion:

- (a) Let us avoid eternal punishment.
- (b) And say with the Apostle: It is the light that rebukes such things and shews them up for what they are; only light shews up. That is the meaning of the words, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light (Eph. 5. 14).

J: Spiritual blindness

1. The blind man of Jericho is a symbol of sinners.
2. The darkness of sin:

(a) Sinners are blind:

- i. Once you were all darkness . . . (Eph. 5. 8).
- ii. their minds are clouded with darkness; the hardness of their hearts breeds in them an ignorance, which estranges them from the divine life . . . (Eph. 4. 18).

(b) There is a comparison between the darkness of sin and that of blindness:

- i. both deprive us of light, one of the natural light, the other of the light of grace;
- ii. they cause a man to go from fall to fall and dirty himself worse as time goes on;
- iii. darkness and light are opposites; they are incompatible (John 3. 20-21);
- iv. the devil, who is the prince of darkness, is also the prince of sin;
- v. there is no greater blindness than that which is caused by passion and which leads to the loss of God, of the soul, and of eternal good (Prov. 4. 19).
- vi. Mortal sin drags us down to the darkness of hell.

(c) The world is blind:

- i. Christ came unto his own and they did not receive him, though he was the true light of the world (John 1. 9-11);
- ii. yet the world has had ample proof and testimony to the fact that Christ was sent by God (John 17. 25-26).
- iii. *the darkness of the world.* The world has its nights, says St Bernard, and they are many. In fact, it is sunk in the most profound darkness and never sees the light. The perfidy of the Jews is one night; so is the ignorance of the pagans, the error of heretics! The carnal conduct of evil Catholics is also a dark night. Truly darkness reigns where there is no knowledge of God.

3. Causes of this spiritual blindness:**(a) Passions and concupiscence:**

What the eye is to the body, the intellect is to the soul; but the soul which has fallen under the sway of the passions is like a brute beast and has no intellect (cf. Matt. 6. 22-23).

(b) Riches:

- i. the god Pluto, god of riches, was depicted as being blind from birth;
- ii. riches blind a man to the true light (cf. Luke 8. 14).

(c) Corruption of heart:

- i. the worst punishment God can send sinners in this life is an increase in the darkness which surrounds them and complete abandonment to their own caprices (Rom. 1. 21-24).

- ii. the sins which are the principal causes of this are those of pride and impurity. St Thomas says that one of the effects of impurity is blindness of mind.

(d) The devil:

- i. he was, and is still, the cause of the blindness of infidels (cf. 2 Cor. 4. 3-4).
- ii. he is the father of lies, of pride and of error. He began by blinding Adam and Eve and continues to exercise his function in the modern world.
- iii. the remedy is to cling to Christ.

K: Effects of and remedies for spiritual blindness

1. The sad condition in which the blind man found himself at the gates of Jericho.

2. The effects of spiritual blindness:

- (a) It kills faith;
- (b) makes a man rebel against the truth;
- (c) destroys the divine life within him.

i. Their minds are clouded with darkness; the hardness of their hearts breeds in them an ignorance, which estranges them from the divine life (Eph. 4. 18).

ii. If we claim fellowship with him, when all the while we live and move in darkness, it is a lie; our whole life is an untruth (1 John 1. 6).

(d) It is the source of many and continued temptations:

- i. thieves seek the darkness for their crimes;
- ii. the devil seeks out those who are spiritually blind, and therefore almost helpless, in order to rob them of what little good there may still be in them.
- iii. the world also seeks out the spiritually blind, like the friends of the prodigal son, in order to take possession of what little remains to him.

(e) It leads us from depth to depth, until we reach true hardness of heart:

- i. the hardened sinner is almost unaware of his state and makes no effort to free himself from his bonds;
- ii. he becomes tired and does not advance. He is like a blind horse, turning in circles round a well in order to draw up water. He ends his days tired out, but without having taken one step towards heaven.

(f) It brings down on us God's anger—as it did on the Jews (cf. Ps. 80. 12-13).

(g) And ends in eternal condemnation (cf. Wisdom 5. 6-7).

3. Remedies:

- (a) That of the blind man of Jericho—to return to Christ:
 i. he is the way, the truth and the life, and no one can go to the Father save through him (John 14. 6).
 ii. he is the light of the world, and anyone who follows him does not walk in darkness but in the light of life (John 8. 12).

- (b) To that end, like the blind man, we must:
 i. shake off our laziness, the great danger which attacks sinners;
 ii. pray to Christ and ask him to enlighten us;
 iii. once we are cured, then we must follow Christ faithfully as the blind man did in today's Gospel; the path of good works must be ever under our feet (cf. John 12. 35).

L: Lord, that I may see!

A model of prayer

1. The Gospel offers us various examples of this type of prayer:

- (a) Lord, what would you have me do? is St Paul's reaction at the moment of his conversion (Acts 9. 6).
 (b) Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean (Matt. 8. 2).
 (c) Jesus, Master, have pity on us, was the prayer of the ten lepers at Capharnaum.
 (d) There are many others, but one of them is this prayer of the blind man; Lord, that I may see!

2. Interpretation of the scene from the spiritual point of view:

- (a) There are few who are blind from the physical point of view in comparison with those who are spiritually blind.
 (b) In one sense we are all spiritually blind, because we could all see more than we do. We have not complete vision. We can all say this prayer of the blind man and mean it. May God grant us that part of the spiritual vision which is lacking to us.

3. The blindness of the apostles:

- (a) All who went on that journey, with the one exception of Mary, were blind spiritually. Not one of them really saw Christ.
 (b) But above all the apostles. The Gospel underlines this fact. The Lord addresses them specially, but they do not understand a word he said to them. They did not see with their minds.

The true light

1. The clean of heart and eye:

- Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God (Matt. 5. 8).
 (a) This clean heart is usually interpreted of purity, but perhaps it refers more to a right intention.

(b) It is true that impurity creates in the soul a spiritual blindness, but it is usually one of which we are more or less aware.

(c) On the other hand, many of our good actions lack this purity of intention; they are done for a double motive, not for the single purpose of the glory of God or the good of our neighbour. The tares are so often mixed up with the wheat!

(d) It is also true that any disordered affection can create in us a spiritual blindness. When Christ appeared to his apostles after the resurrection his question to them was: What thoughts arise in your hearts? (Luke 24. 38). As Augustine wisely says, he used the word *arise*, because these thoughts are like fumes which come from the lower depths of the soul to choke us and hide Jesus from us.

2. The intellectual gifts of the Spirit:

(a) By means of purely human knowledge we shall never possess this gift of spiritual insight. The vision we are asking for demands the activity of a motive force which is beyond our reason.

(b) We see by faith, but we should amplify our vision by allowing ourselves to be under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

(c) It is he who acts in us through the influence of his gifts:

i. *knowledge*. The gift which enables us to recognize God in his own creation, so that the whole world speaks to us of him who is our God and Lord.

ii. *understanding*, which enables us to penetrate into the mysteries of faith and draw from them their hidden meaning for us, as individuals and as members of Christ's body.

iii. *wisdom*. The greatest gift of all. The one which enables us to be conscious of God's presence and to see everywhere and in everything the marks of his love and of his providence. By it we see the truth of all things in the light of divinity, not in the light of this world.

3. God in his creatures:

(a) Those who were truly illuminated by the gift of wisdom saw God in all his creatures and in the whole of nature.

i. David saw him when he said that the heavens themselves show forth the glory of God (Ps. 18. 2).

ii. Francis saw him when he regarded all creatures as his brothers, and in all of them he saw the marks of God's hands.

iii. John of the Cross saw him when he said that everything that was alive reminded him of God.

(b) To all of them we can apply the phrase from the *Imitation of Christ*: For the truly saintly soul all things are a mirror of life and book of holy doctrine. There is no creature, no matter how low and miserable it may be, which is not a reflection of the wisdom and the goodness of God.

4. *Interior light:*

(a) There are two verses of the Sermon on the Mount which are at first sight mysterious, but clear in the light of what we have already said.

The eye is the light of the whole body, so that if thy eye is clear, the whole of thy body will be lit up; whereas, if thy eye is diseased, the whole of thy body will be in darkness. And if the light which thou hast in thee is itself darkness, what of thy darkness? (Matt. 6. 22-23).

(b) When the eye of the heart is clear, then the whole of our interior life is illuminated by it. The world is reflected in its retina. The purity of our intention has allowed us to see it as it is.

(c) When that gaze is clouded by inordinate affection for creatures, then there is interior darkness.

The light of hearts

1. Our greatest efforts must be directed to this purity of heart (Augustine).

2. *We can only do this with the help of God:*

(a) The light of hearts:

This is the description of the Holy Ghost given to us in the hymn for Pentecost.

(b) *O lux beatissima, reple cordis intima tuorum fidelium:*

i. only by the help of the Holy Spirit will we be enabled to see clearly the things of God. It is he who pours out on our souls the true light which enables us to comprehend the breadth, length, height and depth of the charity of Christ.

ii. he alone can make us see!

3. *Let us recognize our blindness:*

(a) We may not be as blind as the apostles on that day, but enough at least not to know the true mystery of the life of Christ, that of the cross.

(b) Let us ask God, from the bottom of our hearts, for the grace to see and understand what we have to do in order to share in this true light. Lord, that I may see.

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