

St. GASPAR BERTONI



At Saint Paul Parish, in Verona, another homage to St. Gaspar Bertoni:
behind one of the altars, a painting of his Ecstasy, by A. Del Vecchio.

Early Spiritual Writings

PARISH SERMONS

1801

[Manoscritti Bertoni ## 406 – 592]

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1801406:**SERMON 3**Jesus' Name

Preached in the Church of St. Paul. of the Campo Marzio section of Verona, on the 11nd Sunday after the Epiphany, in the year 1801. The Sermon lasted 26 minutes.

Even though it is true, my listeners, that no matter how lovable an object might indeed be in itself, it can never inspire a heart-felt response unless it is first seen and contemplated from near at hand. It so happens, nonetheless, that a rare beauty is able to attract the hearts of others, even when it is traced only on **the lifeless canvas by a well-directed brush**. While this is so, it does not upset me excessively if to our mortal eyes there is denied the possibility of seeing face to face a more lovable object, such as Jesus is. He is able to enkindle in my and your hearts a raging inferno of love. On my part, I am able to show you the portrait of His beauty, and the most vivid painting that is borne to us from heaven by the hand of those angels who gaze on Him there.

407: Come now, my devout hearers: prepare your hearts this day. Prepare them not only to love, but to do so with ardor. I could say even better, prepare your eyes to see, as surely very soon your hearts would respond with fervent affections.

Bring out the portrait, then - this is what it seems that each of you with almost impatience turns to me, saying: if such a beauty can indeed be seen on earth, why is there any further delay in seeing it?

PROPOSITION: There will be no further delay, my hearers, no more. Here it is. The august Name that we venerate on this day- yes, indeed, Jesus' Name is a portrait of a most loving lover. I will only ask you for a few more minutes of your time, then you will be able to see it. This will leave your hearts in full liberty that they might indeed direct your affections.

408: **PROOF:** And so that you will not think that I have had the courage to hazard such a new and unproven proposition, I am quite sure that before all else, I should make clear the foundation on which I base this. My proof is St. Bernard, who makes quite clear to me that in this very Name he found a portrait painted with all those perfections that made his Jesus so lovable to him:

“When I see the Name of Jesus”, he says in fact ¹, “I place before myself the most perfect man, the most holy, adorned with all beauty and virtue. He is at the same time the omnipotent God, all just, clement, merciful, the supreme and infinite good. All these qualities resound in my ears when I

¹St. Bernard, *Sermon 15 in Canticles*.

hear the word, ‘Jesus.’ And this is why this Name is honey on my lips, a melody to my ears and sweetness to my heart.”

409: APPLICATION: Having stated this, I believe that I have, therefore, proven my point, as well as also demonstrating that solely in this Name of Jesus, that is without anything added, all those qualities are manifested that tend to establish Jesus as the most beloved Lover. This is the property of all authentic portraits: they present to the eyes the object depicted by them, even when this is unknown to the viewer. They thereby present the idea that I form in contemplating the illustration as fully adequate, or at least, something like the original, very close to the idea that I could form were I to see the Object in Person.

410: INTRODUCTION: Let us continue, then, let us explain, unveil this Name! Please do not think that I pretend to speak with such authority with my ordinary intelligence. That Angel who first came down from heaven, it was he who made this Name known with a sureness to his voice: *...you shall call His Name, Jesus,* he said, *for he shall save His people from their sins...* [Mt 1:21].

Now, it seems to me that we can see, and very clearly, in this Name: a Savior, a Mediator between God and human beings, One Who satisfies divine justice for the sins of the entire world. However, all of this I see only as an enigma and confusedly. How can indeed He be called Savior of the world unless He is also God. St. Cyril, the Alexandrian, penetrates my darkness here ², and he sheds some light on this point, In fact, if Jesus were not of infinite dignity, equal to that infinite God Who is indeed offended by our sins, one could not understand how He could have given satisfaction equal to the offense. Jesus, therefore, is God.

411: However, if He is only God, St. Augustine adds ³ by asking how could there ever be a Mediator between God and humanity? Otherwise, God would have made satisfaction to Himself, and not humanity which has been offensive to God, as every reason demands. Jesus, therefore, in so far as He shows Himself us a Savior of the whole world from its sins, presents us a man who is at the same time God, with all those perfections that would be fitting both to human and divine nature.

412: Amiability: The veil has already been removed from this **portrait**, and there has already been introduced sufficient light to emphasize the coloring. There only remains now, my listener, that we fix our gaze devoutly in contemplation to savor His amiable qualities.

Do you love beauty? Here is the most perfect man, Whose beauty was already foreseen from a distance in spirit by the Prophet. He exclaims out of wonder that He is beautiful above all the sons of men. Grace is not merely dispersed through His lips, but is diffused in abundance [Ps 44:3].

²St. Cyril Alex., *De Trinitate*, 1, 4

³St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk 10, 41, 67. t. I, 194 A; *De Civitate Dei*, Bk 9, 15. t. 7, 22 9 B, ff.

Do you love a spirit rich in knowledge, endowed with virtue? Here before you is a mind in which are all the treasures of God's knowledge and wisdom. He is a holiness that is so perfect that it challenges all the models, who come up short in comparison.

Do you love gentleness, courtesy, goodness of heart? Ah, but here we are reflecting on Jesus' gentle, kind, affable, clement, merciful heart! Who ever experienced Him delay in feeling pity over human miseries, or hardened to requests, or severe in offering pardon for one's sins?

413: O Jesus, all lovable! Indeed, I no longer find wonder in other than fixing my concentration on You. This like Mary Magdalen, who has forgotten all else, both loves and lovers, being unable to love anyone other than You, to listen to anyone but You, and to live with anyone else but You, and for You alone. And Martha, Martha, do not disturb those sweet colloquies with her only good. See her now in that domestic setting, all alone, at the feet of her Jesus, as she pours out all the most tender affections of her heart. Mary has chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from here [Lk 10:40-42]. And what will she do in heaven? Even further, what else will we do, my listeners, than see God, and in seeing Him, to love Him, and being blessed in loving Him? But, in seeing Jesus, do I now also see my God? In loving Jesus, do I not also love my God, that God Who is so perfect in every type of perfection? Is it not so that informing an eternal beatitude for Himself that He renders blessed all the Saints by this vision? What else, then, could be a worthy object of my love, other than Jesus?

414: 2. Love. But, let us move on, my listeners. While it is true that we have seen in this Name that which may render Jesus to us as the most lovable reality, there still remains to be seen that which qualifies Him as the most tender of Lovers. This will accomplish my goal, to show that Jesus' Name is a **portrait** of a most beloved Lover.

And do you not see in fact, in Jesus' Name a Savior, that is, a God Who for us human beings and for our salvation, descended from heaven, and became man ⁴? Did He not give His precious life in redemption for those sins that had rendered our souls slaves of the devil, condemned to hell? Did He not wash us with His blood, embellish us with His grace, in order to crown us with His glory? And what else is all this than to see a most passionate lover?

415: Is it a trait of passionate lovers to love so strongly that no difficulty slows them down, no danger discourages them, not even death itself, even when it approaches in a most cruel form, it is just unable to terrify them. Such lovers are entirely forgetful of themselves - they do everything, suffer anything - and dare all, in order to bring pleasure and to be joined to the one who is loved. And it even happens sometimes that love so blinds them, that they cannot even see those very defects that could indecently vitiate the object of their love, rendering such a one disgusting to the eyes

⁴The Nicene-Constantinople Creed.

of all but them. Even more, the base ingratitude with which they receive in exchange for their love, does not douse their flames, like water would on a strong fire - rather, this response seems to enkindle them the more.

416: Jesus is a lover of this sort. God, as He is, has loved you, my friends, because in you He sees His own image. But, this image has been soiled by sin; this soul, created by Him was sold out as a slave of hell - this soul has become an enemy of God. His love is powerfully contrasted with His Divine Justice, which cannot tolerate anyone who loves sin. And yet, what can you imagine? His love overcomes every difficulty. A way has been found to satisfy His justice and to content His love. It will prove fitting, I would almost say, to the point of offending His Divine Majesty, by subjecting His human nature already taken on, even to the most shameful death. But, not even death, and even a death of this type, is able to contend with love, since, in the words of the Wise Man, love is as strong as death [Ct 8:6].

417: It is not, then, through corruptible gold and silver that this Lover has poured out to regain His beloved, but all of His Precious Blood. And should the beloved once more fall into the hands of the infernal enemy, staining herself with sin, Jesus would return each day to offer the same victim on the altars, to wash her with His Blood, of which there is opened a perennial source in the bosom of His Church.

418: And just what is it, my Jesus, that you intend by so much love? Listen, give ear to these words, rather - to these transports of love! It is that You love me and give Your consent to a chaste **nuptials** with me. I have already given my word for this to my friends, and there was said in my name: *...Hearken, o daughter, and see, and incline your ear: and forget your people and your father's house. And the king shall greatly desire your beauty...* [Ps 44: 11, ff.].

But she was still too shy to hear these Words of Mine. I, therefore, took the resolve to go to visit her in person - and so that the sheer brilliance of the radiance of My glory would not overwhelm her timidity in responding to Me, I found a way to hide Myself under the sacramental veil. In this way, I devised a way of entering almost furtively into her heart when I could speak to her in gentle manner. Now I am waiting for her consent to My designs. All that is needed is single word, that would be enough to make her blessed eternally, and this word would be sufficient to make my hart happy.

419: What do you, my listeners, think of all this? Does it not seem to you that Jesus is as much to be loved as He is Himself a most passionate lover? But, how have we been able to deduce this, and see it first-hand, if not by explaining and removing the veils from this most sweet Name of His? I can therefore conclude that Jesus' Name is a **portrait** of the most beloved of loves, as I proposed for your contemplation from the beginning of my sermon.

PERORATION: And so, lovers of Jesus, in this most sweet Name you find the **portrait** of your most lovable Lover. This is what I have proposed to you, at the cost of not easy personal research, to rediscover Him, to place Him before you. And not being

content to have Him in our own hands, having contemplated Him delightedly this day, I have placed Him much like a precious jewel on your breast, within your homes. Here is the quiet of your own rooms, in times of solitude, as lovers together, you enjoy each other's presence. You can gaze with fondness, in fueling your ardor, bringing consolation to your spirit, comfort to your heart. Nothing is more dear to a person in love than to have endured the suffered hope to see and to possess the much loved good, by having before one's eyes a precious portrait.

420: Might it easily happen that among the many devout people that make up this pious audience, some might be concerned by extraneous affections? Might these have more willingly heard me speak of other loves, or would have enjoyed more looking at other portraits? Such as these, even being confronted with such loveliness, can they now forget earlier loves, as I can readily understand? Should this be the case, is the only road open to me to lay the blame on my excessively poor eloquence? Have I been able only to shed a dim light on this very charming portrait? Can I not weep at having lost the more charming portion of that fruit that with a sweet, longing, yearning, inspired me to speak today?

421: Anyway, listen to me, a bit more, however wretched and unhappy you may be. Reflect, as the Apostle already has persuaded you to do, on the fact that the fashion of this world passes away [1 Co 7:31]. Nothing other would be required, therefore, unless for those still bound by bonds that have been contracted, or for those who want to contract them, to remain attached, at least in part, with hearts riveted to the goods of this earth. The appeal to such as these is that the more noble and the more ample portion of their hearts be still reserved to other affections, to other loves and to other yearnings.

What would your desperation be when all these apparent goods have slipped away from your hands and your glances? What will it be like, then, when you finally open your eyes to gaze on the genuine beauty and unchanging goodness of this Jesus - but, then only to have to repent for having so cheaply exchanged Him, and to weep for having lost Him for eternity? What envy will you not experience to see yourself deprived of every good, while others will be called to the **nuptials** of this most lovable **Spouse**, Who is also extending His hand so sweetly? Is it possible that your heart, is so easily enkindled before every lesser lamp showing more wretched and passing beauty? Can it be so tender that it does not know how to deny broader rewards of affection to one who extends meager or flattering invitations, that are then shown to be so cold in the face of the sun of beauty, and so hardened at the sight of such a vivid transport of love?

422: I can already see it now. At this unexpected assault, your heart that is still hardened, seeks to cover itself over under its misery. You think that you are dispensed from the obligation of corresponding to such affection, just by saying that you are not worthy. Nonetheless, Jesus insists on asking it of you, nor does His love cede a whit in the face of your wretchedness, even though it may even be a thousand times worse. You defend yourself in vain in this manner, and you are already forced to surrender. So, what have I been doing? Did I not promise from the outset that I would have left

each one free in his affection? I will do no more violence to your hearts. However, if I leave your hearts undisturbed, I will no longer be able to contain my own.

423: Here I am, my Jesus, at Your feet. Yes, here is one who has abandoned You, supreme Good, even too worthy of my love, in order to chase after all too curious vanities: .. *Late have I loved You, ancient Beauty; late have I loved You, eternal goodness...*⁵. Now, I cannot remain in ignorance of You, and can no longer put off loving You. And if my ugliness did not hold back, I would have offered You already, right now, all of my heart to You, Who with such love asks this of me. And so, what do I say now? You do not love us because You find in us such goodness, but You love us only to fill us with goodness. Here, now, is my heart. My soul is now all Yours. Wash it, cleanse it, embellish it, to make it Your worthy **spouse**. Yes, it is all Yours.

424: I am not the only one to offer You my heart. Look here, look at this person whom I despaired of being able to persuade by my sermon, he now accedes to my example. And if some did not believe when I stated that You are a Lover Who is most passionate, now they believe it, seeing themselves adorned with so many gifts, as You extend Your hand to souls as sinful as my own.

Yes, then, here we are, together saying farewell to the empty beauties and to the coarse goods of this earth, now to love none other but You. Let us make resound on our lips this most sweet Name. We now see in it the **portrait** of our most lovable Lover. Let us be a reminder to those to whom we have given our hearts up to this day, that for the future we will no longer do so. All are less worthy than the One Who asks our hearts of us.

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Sources

OT

Bible quote	MssB #
Ps 44: 3	412
Ps 11, f. [espousals]	418
Ct. 8:6	416

NT

Bible quote	MssB #
Mt 1L21	410
Lk 10:40-42	413
1 Co 7:31	421

Magisterium

Nicene - Constantinople Creed

414

⁵St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk 10, 27, 38. t. 1, 184 A.

Fathers & Doctors

St. Augustine, <i>The City of God</i>. Bk 9, 15. t. 7, 229, B,ff.	# 411
“ <i>Confessions</i>, Bk 10, 27, 38. t. 1, 184 A	# 423
“ <i>Confessions</i>, Bk 10, 41, 67. t. 1, 194 A	# 411
St. Bernard, <i>Serm. 15, In Canticles</i>.	# 408
St. Cyril of Alexandria, <i>De Trinitate</i>. Bk 4.	# 410

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425:**SERMON 4****The Passion**

Preached in the Church of St. Paul's, in the Camp Marzio section of Verona, on Good Friday, April 3, 1801. - It lasted for about one hour and a quarter.

This Sermon was repeated, with the "Addition" found below, in St. Paul's, Campo Marzio, on Good Friday, April 4, 1806, in the evening. This lasted about one hour and three quarters.

426: The Passion of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. - *The just perishes, and no man lays it to heart...* [Ps 57:1].

Therefore, Jesus has died, and is there no one who is moved? So, the Just Man perishes in a sea, drowning in sufferings, and is there no one to weep? I have to say it again, *and no one lays it to heart.* And so, what is being said here: there is no one who is moved? It would be necessary to be on that mountain a few minutes earlier, when in all His anguish of dying, as He was just about to give up His last breath. One could note however, nature itself responded out of pity for Him: the sun hid its face, the rocks were rent, the earth trembled on its axis. Would I, therefore, see before me only these, my listeners, with tranquil faces, serenely looking on? Why is it these faces are not reddened with weeping? How is it that these hearts are not broken? Why is it that the by-standers are not profoundly moved? And these women, who weep so bitterly over the deaths of their own children, their husbands, their lovers - and these men who are so deeply upset by their own reverses, as well as of those of their fellow-citizens - they do not shed a single tear, nor do they have a simple sigh left for Jesus? Is it that only Jesus is not mourned, He is not wept over? Just listen to His own complaint regarding you: *...Ad I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none...* [s 68:21].

427: Why is it, my brothers and sisters, that there are such coldness, such ingratitude, and even injustice, and that those tears of compassion that you shed so prodigiously at the sufferings of just any poor soul, you so cruelly deny Jesus? Have you perhaps had a change of heart on this very point that the underlying motives - that are even stronger - that Jesus offers you for having compassion in His regard, to not move you? Or, is it that you just do not know these motives? Do you not realize that He has suffered? But, you do know through faith that He had to languish on a cross. Do you understand that He suffered all of this for you? Faith, though, teaches you that "... for us men and for our salvation..." ⁶ He did this for us. How can it be, therefore, that you are not deeply moved, believing all this? Should we conclude, then, that there is either lacking faith, and that your faith has grown so languid? It cannot be this, my listeners. May heaven keep me from drawing any such conclusion so insulting to your piety.

⁶Nicene-Constantinople Creed

428: What, then, is the origin of such insensibility of heart? The Holy Spirit responds for us: ... *The just perishes, and no man lays it to heart...* [Is 57:1]. He is just not considered, and this is why no compassion is given. This is the real reason, while the Philosopher also teaches on the other hand that to bring something within the sphere of compassion so that this will excite compassion in others, it is necessary that it be brought close ⁷. Thus, we observe that the miseries of others far from us, either distant in space, or in the passing of time, either do not touch our hearts, or do so only in a very slight manner. For this reason, all I have to do is expose these facts, with all simplicity, as they unfolded. My task, then, is to render Jesus' Passion close, not only to your thought, but to your very eyes. In this way, the reality of it which is of all events. the most able to draw a compassionate response, will indeed become the object of your most actual and most tender compassion.

429: However, before going on in drawing out for you this sorrowful narrative, there is suddenly before me that warm Cross, that is still marked with the blood of this Just Man. I now place this before your eyes, prior to any other reality. to test the impression that such a sight is able to make on your hearts.

Holy Cross, that I should now adore as that which alone was worthy to bear that August Victim sacrificed on you for our sins - I know only too well the many and varied affections that you can arouse in the hearts of these listeners. You have now become the standard of their faith, the sure guide of their lives, the foundation of their hope, comfort in their wretchedness, the desire of the just, the terror of hell. But, I ask you that the sight of you arouse today only a sadness and a dolor that will be most vibrant for those terrible sufferings that you brought to our Jesus, when He united Himself to you out of love for us.

430: Show, therefore, to these souls who devoutly gaze upon you those **cruel clefts of those nails** made in you, first lacerating His hands, and then His feet. Show the very place where His head reclined upon you, expiring, as their loving Father, indeed their faithful Friend, their most tender Brother, their most lovable and most kind **Spouse**. Lastly, show that blood shed out of love for them, with which you still trickle and redden in long streams. In addition to the impression that you can bring about in them, let there be joined also the eloquence of this blood, as the Apostle describes [Heb 12:24]. Let there be attained, therefore, through you such a great commotion in the hearts of these listeners that I believe I will see this very day, even though I cannot achieve this with my words.

431: I do fear, my listeners, that the sheer multiplicity of facts, even exposed in their natural simplicity, might impede your otherwise gifted intelligences, keeping them all straight in your minds at the end of my sermon. But, since you can all the more easily gather all this in by a single glance, I ask you that while I speak, you will keep in mind the various aspects of this mystery: first, the most perfidious betrayal; then, the most unjust sentence; and finally, the most torturous torment.

⁷St. Thomas Aquinas, 4 Sent., d. 17. q. 2. a. 1, sol. 1 ad 1 um.

432: I am not unaware that you might be able to recall to memory other examples. It is not totally new in this world to see an innocent, virtuous, beneficent person thus betrayed by a friend, and very often one who has benefited the most from the friendship. Nevertheless, there could not be found any other person more innocent, and better than Jesus. Furthermore, there was no one more trusted and no greater beneficiary in this band than His traitor. For these reasons, there could never be heard, and never will be, a betrayal more perfidious than this one. Just who is Jesus? Is He not that God to Whom by title of creation, conservation and final blessed end, all human beings are indebted for what they have, for what they are, and for all that they hope? Who would ever thought that among all human beings there could ever be found one who would prove to be more disloyal, more cruel, more ungrateful, that he would then decide to betray Him? And yet, such a person was found. He was Judas. He did not only think about this, or just plan it. But, he brought this evil scheme to term, that of betraying this most beneficent God. This God proved Himself to be so beneficent that out of greater love for humanity, He gave up His blessed trappings, and put on our flesh. He became like a king in disguise, and enjoyed treating with human beings on friendly terms. He did this with all His servants, and in particular, with Judas.

433: Maybe Judas did not recognize Him for what He was, in that His disguise was so complete? But how could he not have recognized Him after all those truly divine charms that He manifested? Further, did not Jesus many times, in the presence of Judas make known the nobility of His figure? Was not Judas an eye-witness of many of the miracles that He worked? Even further, did not Judas Himself work some of those prodigies with that totally divine authority that Jesus had communicated to Him?

Just think of all the honor that Jesus inspired for him, from the crowd, even the most uncouth. Even if this were not enough honor, Jesus had prepared a most honorable throne among the 12 places that He had promised that the other Apostles would receive, when He would have returned with them to judge the whole world. Judas, among all these, was the most “domestic” minister, His very own brother and friend, with whom Jesus often dealt, with whom He often ate, and with whom He lived, without ever sending him away from His side.

434: That very same night in which Judas had determined to betray Him, Judas was sitting at the same table with Jesus. Jesus could see that his heart was evil, but even so, He did not send him away, He did not reprove him. Rather Jesus reached out to him, showing every manifestation of love. It was that very night when Jesus chose to wash the feet of his disciples, even those of Judas. And when He did mention His approaching death, and even gave indications of his own betrayal, He did this to shake up the hardened heart of Judas, who simply did not grasp these favors. He did all this with such a calm soul that at the same time, He communicated every reason for confidence in His pardon. It happens quite often that such ingrates, harboring evil thoughts of betrayal, are moved to make some response when they are treated well by their friend. It is hard to know whether such as these are moved more by confusion, or by stupor, but often they do make a switch, and transform their earlier hatred, that was so powerfully nourished in them, into like affections of love. But, it did not turn out this

way for Judas, and this points out the fact that among betrayers, he proved to be the most perfidious.

435: As the Supper was drawing to a close, Jesus blessed the bread and wine: *...Take this,* He said to His Apostles [Mk 14:22, ff.]...This is my Blood... which shall be shed for you.... This is the Pledge that I leave you of My love: *... Do this, as often as you shall drink, for the remembrance of me...* [1 Co 11:25]. And you, too, Judas, you take this Bread in your own hands. It is no longer bread, but it is My own Body, take it and be nourished. Bring your lips to this chalice - first drink My Blood and then go, and betray Me.

436: I tremble, quiver and shake. He, too, approaches, to receive His Master in this new and unheard of manner, which His charity imposed upon Him. He receives Him into that heart ... But, I can hardly go on. I can see clearly, my listeners, that you hardly have room in your hearts for the indignation that springs up in you at this malice. You are overwhelmed with stupor at such perfidy, and seek some explanation for what could ever move this wretch to such excess. And contrasting such virtue, such amiability in Jesus, you will encounter ever greater difficulty in trying to find it.

437: It seems to me that you may be making this conjecture: perhaps Judas had been wronged somewhat by his Master. He may have been placed below the other Apostles in some post of honor, and so his ambition was further strengthened by his envy. But these conjectures hardly stand up. Only Judas was given the honor bestowed on no one else, in that he was placed over the meager resources of the little group. Do not try any harder to find out the reason for his perfidy, that I have already pointed out to you.

438: Let us, then, follow Judas, who has already set out to betray his Master into the hand of His enemies who seek to put Him to death: *...And He said to them, what will you give to me and I will deliver Him unto you...?* [Mt 26:15]. Here it is, this is the reason: sordid gain. What a criminal! But you might have thought that some large sum would have been thrust into Judas' hands, that would have befuddled the heart of this ingrate. But what did Jesus' enemies offer him? Just thirty pieces of silver! Just thirty pieces? When such a stingy hand is able to buy off a disciple, and a disciple who had benefited the most, to perpetrate such an enormous betrayal, they must have been sure of the refusal. But, what did Judas respond? What was his answer? He accepts without even bartering over the miserable amount and reached agreement on just how he would do it. Now I am sure that your hearts will burn with indignation against a betrayer that the world has never seen anyone worse. But, are you not likewise moved with compassion towards Jesus, Who is so good, so beneficent, so lovable and so ungratefully betrayed? What a blow this must have been to His heart. Through grace, let us return to Him, to see how He got through such sorrow.

439: We no longer find Him in the Cenacle room, as He has already left with His disciples. But, we will find Him a short distance away, in Gethsemane.

And here He is, and separates Himself a bit more in order to enter all alone that garden in which He was accustomed to praying the nights through. Judas had already set his plan in motion. Jesus was no longer able to hold back the anguish of His spirit: ... *Then he said to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death...* [Mt 26: 38]. ... *For if my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it...* [Ps 54:13].

But he is a person who is so dear to Me, and one for whom I have done so much good - this really pierces My heart.

440: And do you think that this betrayal was not sufficient to fill His heart with sadness? Just say, any of you who have experienced it, or who may have known this in the bosom of your own families - or, those who have loved with excessive affection and extended special kindnesses toward some disguised enemy who then about your present calamity. Just think of David when he had to flee by this same path from the rebellious Absalom [2 K 1:1, ff.]. David experienced the greatest pain in abandoning all at once his palace, his people and even his wives. There was great suffering in seeing all of this brought about by his most loved son. It was he who betrayed the King, the one who incited the most faithful subjects in the plot against his own father. He even dishonored his own father's bridal chamber.

441: But, there is hardly any comparison in this! Just think of Jesus, and what a bitter sight that is! All the horrible apparatus of his sorrowful Passion is arrayed against Him. He could see that His most favored disciple was the very one who had handed Him over to the unjust judges, to those very cruel butchers, to those horrible sufferings. It is true, of course, that the horrible sight of the sins of the whole world that He was destined by the Father to carry was overwhelming. However, among all these, the most horrible aspect before His face was Judas' enormous crime: .. *Therefore, He confessed, he who has delivered Me to you, has the greater sin...* [Jn 19:11].

It is true that He felt the heavy weight of so many people for whom He died who would separate themselves from Him: and what a cruel separation He saw this to be! He could see in this how many would share in Judas' betrayal.

442: This is the very kind of argument that His envious enemies would raise against Him to withdraw the simple of hear from following Him! Just look, they would say, what a great success His disciples have had, those first disciples, and most steady students in His school. Did we not say that He is an impostor? If anyone would give credence to Him, then it should b His most intimate friends. But, you can see that these are the very ones who have raised up their hands in opposition to Him.

What do you think of all this, my listeners? Could Judas have wounded Him any more in life? Could we not say that this betrayal alone would be enough to overwhelm Him with sadness? Or, at least, would this not add one more very strong reason among so many others that had already invaded Jesus' heart? This injury by one so close, would this not have been a kind of *coup de grace* to his spirit?

443: And now just look at Him: even though Jesus is the stronger [Mk 3:27] and indeed is invincible, nonetheless, of His own free choice, to satisfy for our sins, He subjected Himself as man to those afflictions that we still experience. Even more, because of the superior knowledge of His mind and the greater sensibility of His heart, He was even further disposed to suffer all this. He is already being constrained to hand over His heartfelt freedom to that sadness that scourges Him, and He falls face first on the ground. Not even the very powerful resistance that He brought to opposing the dolor which oppressed Him was beaten back. This brought about His sweating right through His clothing in abundance, and dampened it, leaving many drops on the grass, and the stones on the ground under Him. This is a very strange sign of a totally new type of pain, supreme suffering.

444: Hurry, Judas, hurry! Hasten forward that band of assassins that you are leading with you. Even should you be unable to witness your Jesus killed by the weapons of His enemies to whom you chose to betray Him, you will take delight in knowing that you alone have killed Him, killed Him first with immense suffering that you brought about.

Alas! what will happen to Jesus? Have no doubt about it: there remains still so much for Him to suffer. However, an Angel comes down to comfort Him, and then we see that He even takes the first step to go to meet the betrayer who seeks Him.

445: *Friend, why have you come?* [Mt 26:50].

What is Jesus' response to all this? Judas approaches with peaceful air and reached for Jesus neck, to embrace Him. It seems, therefore, at long last Judas is beginning to be moved. What would Jesus' heart do if this were the case? How He would have willingly received him, how He would have comforted him, by giving him pardon for all! Yes, my listeners. He does not reject him, but receives him, allows Himself to be kissed, and then says:...*And Jesus said to him: Judas do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss...?* [Lk 22:48]. How can he betray You, Jesus, if he is coming to see your peace?

But no, my hearers. You can finally see the supreme perfidy of this betrayal Judas had already made some agreement with those soldiers who had to arrest Him. You can see that at the agreed upon signal, they charge Jesus, they bind Him, they drag Him away, they rain blows down upon Him, with sticks and they kick Him. And where do they drag Him? And here is still one more motive for your deeply felt compassion: an innocent man is being arraigned before the Tribunal, to receive from it the most unjust of sentences.

446: It would be, it is true, a major injustice to condemn to death even one who is truly guilty, without first having heard the case. But, Jesus is not the only one among the innocent upon whom a similar destiny has fallen, being dragged to the place of execution by an angry mob. He is, though, brought before a tribunal to experience deeply the pain that is all the more unjust in that His enemies wanted to go through the motions of making use of the organs of justice to condemn Him.

447: But how can you gaze on this scene, without an almost overwhelming commotion deep within your hearts? As you look at Jesus, innocent, alone and abandoned, even by his own, standing before those judges who are already His enemies - do you not see how they almost tremble in their haste to carry out their duty which they see as putting Him to death? They look for the witnesses, and even pay them so that they will bear false witness. They interrogate Jesus, and then do not let Him respond - and if He remains silent, they take this for the admission of guilt. And yet, when He does open His mouth to speak, they punch Him in the face. I just do not want to lead your thought, and with that, your hearts that are already very sensitive, before tribunals such as these. But, this is where Jesus has been led, where everything has served to pervert justice, and where only anger, fury and tumult dominate.

448: Suffice it for me to lead you to Pilate's tribunal. He is a more reasonable and impartial judge for Jesus, as well as for the Hebrews, His accusers, since He is the Roman Governor. And so it was that Pilate, having examined Jesus in accord with the accusations leveled against Him, had clarified His innocence. He had been able to see that it was only out of envy that they wanted Him dead. He goes out from the Pretorium, where all His enemies were gathered awaiting His condemnation, and Pilate declares Him innocent. Praise the heavens, then. Jesus has received a just sentence. He had been betrayed by His own disciple, He had been judged unjustly by the priests who ought to have been favorably disposed toward Him, but finds justice before a foreign judge. I can see that you are consoled, seeing Jesus absolved by that tribunal, which alone had jurisdiction in such cases.

449: But, just a minute! Do you not hear that those who earlier were judges, have now become the accusers, and that they are insisting on His death, and they even bring forward new charges? ... *We have found this man perverting the nation... saying He is king... [Lk 23:2].* Jesus is brought back to be examined under this point. He confesses that He is indeed a King, but that His Kingdom is not of this world [Jn 18:36]. ... *If My Kingdom were of this world, My servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered...*

So much evidence is lacking for Him to be convicted of sedition, because it would be necessary to show the arms that He would have cached away, to uncover His secret plots. However, all His actions, His public statements testify to the contrary. So, the Judge goes back out and proclaims once more that he can find no cause in him. This is all the more significant in that even Herod himself, to whom Jesus had been sent, even though he was more versed in the Hebrew law, let Him go. Then Pilate makes the declaration that he would punish Him with blows and then he, too, would set Him free.

450: How is this explained? If Christ had been declared innocent, how can it be that He is first to be scourged, and then allowed to go free? What injustice is this? - you ask in complete wonder. But, hold back your indignation a little while against the injustice of a sentence such as this. In the interim, listen as Pilate continued the

custom that at Passover there would be freed, at the request of the people, a person already condemned to death. Pilate leaves this up to the crowd to decide which of the two they would want to set free. They could choose either Barabbas, who was a real criminal, caught in sedition, and homicide - or, Jesus. I can see, my listeners, that now you tremble all the more, seeing Jesus first declared innocent, and now placed side by side with one condemned. I know that He should not have to wait to be pardoned, as justice would demand that He be allowed to go free. But, what happens? In order to calm down the furor of His accusers, Pilate has decided to make the choice, and he turns toward the people.

451: Entertain no doubts about it. The people seemed well disposed toward Jesus. This multitude is made up of those blind men whose sight He had restored; of those lame whose limbs He had restored; of those mute to whom He had given the ability to speak; of those hungry people, who - after He had abundantly satisfied them - they sought to make Him their king; of those countless infirm, whom He had cured. What is there to be afraid of, then? And with all the less reason, because He is being put up along side of a criminal who was the most hated of all, an enemy of both the public as well as the private good.

452: *..Whom do you wish that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus...?* [Mt 27:17]. The people will certainly choose Jesus.

But, alas! everyone at this gathering of the people presented with the same question, replied to it at the top of their voices: *Barabbas, Barabbas!* [v. 21]. How perfidious they were! What, then, should I do with this innocent man, toward whom you are all indebted? *Let Him be crucified, let Him be crucified!* [v. 23].

What wickedness, ingratitude! What insult, what fury! Here will an innocent Man have to pay as one guilty? Is Jesus to be compared to a revolutionary? Pilate, though, who is convinced of the innocence of this Man, should not give in to such injustice. And yet, Pilate sends Him to be scourged.

453: Shortly he would deny Jesus the justice due Him as an innocent Man under judgment. What is worse, he still denies that He is guilty as He is being condemned. In such sentences imposed on all guilty persons, the judge first specifies how many blows to be imposed, what kind of instruments are to be used in tormenting Him, and the number of those involved in meting out the punishment. These would rarely inflict more blows than had been prescribed. But, Jesus hands Himself over to the discretion of the most irresolute ruffians. They were not content with the simple scourgings, but take up into their hands knotted clubs, heavy chains, iron switches. One is missing the point should he think that the number of the blows was counted, even though these were already prescribed according to their laws. They were not supposed to go over forty lashes, but in this case, they were multiplied without number. No effort was made to stop even when the blood flowed down His body in little streams. Up and down went the blows until the flesh was literally torn. No effort was made to stop until the arms of the executioners had become tired, even though they worked in relay

teams. Each new scourger attended to the task with new strength and renewed vigor, laving Him alive only to entertain their cruelty.

454: My soul rebels in mentioning here that harsh joke played on that innocent Man, so badly wounded, and hardly breathing. There was placed on His head a crown of very sharp thorns, beaten down with plaited maces. There was placed in his hand a kind of reed for a make-believe scepter, and a red mantle was draped over Him. In this way, they made fun of Him, making believe that He was a king and bowing down before Him in fake acts of homage. You could hardly tell whether His physical pain, or His shame were the greater. While He was gasping for breath in real pain, they laughed, they struck Him in the face, pouring out over Him their inner bile in mockery.

455: And what court sentence ever allowed the executioners to mock Him as a false king? And all of this took place in the very hall of the Pretorium, under the eyes of the judge, and the judge made no effort to impede them. What a barbaric and unjust judge! Is this how, therefore, that justice, innocence are betrayed? What can you say in your own behalf? Is it that you wanted to allow the people this satisfaction, and then you wanted to let Him go? No, just no. Kill Him as well, kill Him! The people are not content with His death. All right, let Him die, then, but with a single blow. It makes no sense for you to cry out from your balcony: *...Behold the Man...!* [Jn 19:5]. And then show Him so disfigured, so lacerated,. The crowd once more took up the cry, even stronger, that He be condemned. Get on with it, then, condemn Him, and at least draw to a close by an unjust sentence the dolor of this innocent man.

456: And thus, my listeners, Pilate conducts his tribunal in public. He sits down in order to pronounce his sentence before the crowd. Just wait - you would imagine an unjust sentence: but, none will be worse than this one. I do realize that many others have been condemned, innocent though they may have been. But, if there have been unjust judges, where has there ever been one like this one? Was there ever one who first declared that he found no cause for the capital punishment, and yet condemned Christ to death? This, the height of injustice, was perpetrated on Jesus.

457: Just listen: *... I find no cause in this Man...* [Lk 23:4], then, such a person should be let go. No: for the judgment is that He should die, therefore, that He should be crucified. Therefore, let Him be condemned as you have asked.

Poor Jesus! He is yours, handed over to you, raging Hebrews. What else is left? You have already heard the sentence: He is in your hands. Even hungry lions and wolves do not leap on their prey as all do now: the executioners, the soldiers, the crowd. The entire city is set in motion, and thus there is prepared the most terrible execution for Jesus.

At this point, however, kind listeners, I cannot go any further to present you an even more dreary scene, if first you do not grant me a brief rest, in order to give some comfort to my own heart.

[Translators' Note: here could be substituted here the addition that opens with the words: "...Listen to the uproar..." - cf. ahead, # 467].

458: The facts that remain now. beloved listeners, to be placed before your consideration are so cruel - that if I was not afraid of lacking excessively in my duties, I would omit them. But, if I do I would conclude my sermon very shortly, not mentioning a point I had proposed to myself to offer these very facts for your reflection. I do believe that you are already sufficiently moved by what you have heard up until now. Take some comfort at least that I will spare in part my own and your spirits, from an additional and even stronger pain. I will prescind now from the most bitter circumstances that you might experience, in theory, that the torment that Jesus underwent were the most terrible.

459: We are still talking about generalities. There is no doubt that among all the ways of dying, that on the Cross is the most bitter. We have this on the testimony of those gentile writers who lived in such barbaric times. In this kind of death there is no kind of torment that is unknown and not employed on these poor condemned wretches. In fact, in this form of execution of the Cross, the greatest torment that the poor guilty person suffers, reach precisely those parts of the body that are the most sensitive because of the presence of delicate nerves in them. These are the hands and the feet; the weight of the whole body itself hanging on the cross continuously increases the pain. The fact that the pain lasts for such a long time renders the death all the more bitter, as it is protracted over a longer period of time.

460: Even within this same general heading, just notice how the execution of Jesus surpasses and thus transcends other deaths on the Cross in its torments. He not only had **His hands and feet torn open by the nails which brought their own pain**, but also all the other parts of His body. Covered with wounds, as He was, He experienced most penetrating pain. These openings must have been all the more agonizing in that they were all reopened as His garments were stripped from Him in a very rough manner. These garments had been put upon Him after the scourging had become attached to the open skin. The cruelty increased as His arms were stretched beyond limit so that His hands could be nailed. This stretching of His limbs was so fierce that it disjointed all the bones from their natural place. This suffering was augmented further when the Cross was allowed to slip into the hole on the ground prepared for it. The shock of the Cross falling into place produced a horrible effect on the body hanging from it.

461: Job [7:5] complained that the Devil, allowed to be his tormentor, had left only the lips around his teeth healthy. However, Jesus' executioners were even more cruel than the demons. They did not leave all over His entire body even a single member in which He was not wounded. They saw to it that not a single sense was without its own torment. With gall, they soured His taste; His sense of smell was tormented because they crucified Him in a place where dead bodies had been thrown, making a fetid odor. His sense of hearing was violated with the most horrible cries, with the insults and most biting slogans they hurled His way, along with the most gross curses.

462: For His sight, they prepared a particular torment, by crucifying Him between two thieves. Hence, anywhere He could turn His head, He would meet that shameful scene they placed before Him. And what I think was the torment to end all torments, before His eyes they hurled countless insults against those languishing in such agony. They ridiculed His moans, and laughed at His suffering.

463: I am just skimming over these facts: but, what do you think of Jesus' torment? What do you think brought the greatest agony? I have already pointed out that this punishment, to which He was condemned with the most unjust sentence, by the most perfidious betrayal. This morning I have placed before you Jesus' Passion, then, as a reality drawing the most sublime compassion. I have just noticed, however, that I have given every effort to prescind from the most bitter circumstances, in order to diminish that dolor that I see is gradually increasing in you. By so doing, perhaps I have only poorly corresponded to the affections of your hearts. I note that once you have come to consider more fully the situation of this Just Man, that there was the desire to remain with Jesus overwhelmed in His sufferings. It seems that there is the yearning not to deny Him the most just response of compassion. What is there to fear Should I not also carry out this pious desire of yours, of extending your tenderness Jesus' way?

464: And now, therefore, no longer just with your thoughts, but also with your eyes you can see His pain. *Behold, behold the Man!* [Jn 19:5]. Just look at this body, how lacerated it is with so many wounds. Not only have they taken from Him every beauty, all graciousness, but even the very figure of a man [Is 53:2]. Just look at His head, pierced by so many thorns. **Look at His hands, His feet that are so wounded; this side that is gaping open.** Look on in sadness, and this will help you grasp this scene and also will satiate the desires of your hearts. You could never weep over Him as He merits to be mourned.

465: And You, o Jesus, take note of the compassion that these pious souls offer you: for such is what I proposed for myself with Your grace obtained this morning. My purpose is to move them and soften their hearts with an affectionate compassion. This was all to dispose them to bring You some comfort in Your pain. It is now up to You to speak, to show and to make known to the what they ought to do and how they can bring consolation to Your most afflicted heart. Even before You open Your mouth, see that they are disposed to anticipate Your requests. Since they know that nothing can bring You more comfort than to see in them that fruit come to them for which You have suffered so much. All You want is for them to love You and to destroy all sin in them

466: They are already disposed to offer You their hearts, freed from every wrong affection. They are planning now the way, the means to be taken, and the time to give up entirely the sin in their lives. They are disposed to despoil themselves of that affection that is displeasing to you, so that they can begin a new conduct of a virtuous life, in accord with Your wishes.

But, no - they do not intend that all their compassion should be consumed in tears. They want the compassion that they feel for You should move them to console

You with their deeds. Come now, give them Your blessing as a kind of pledge that their tears are pleasing to You, that their tenderness for You is beloved to You. our out on them the abundance of Your most efficacious graces, whence they will be moved when they proceed now to kiss Your wounds, and to mingle their tears with Your blood. they will be able to grasp and to carry out for Your comfort whatever You request of their hearts on this point.

[Here begins the third part, following a brief rest. This could substitute the paragraph above, that begins with the words: *The facts that remain now... -cf. # 458*].

467: Listen to the uproar! More than the sound of trumpets and drums, it is the unsettling roar of anger, fury, tumult, hoots and insulting whistling. It is like a sea of people in agitation. Christ is being dragged along the street, outside of Jerusalem, to the place of His execution. Why is there such a crowd? *Why have the Gentiles raged...?* [Ps 2:1]. To execute a malefactor, one executioner alone would suffice, and sometimes it is even hard to find one. Is it that against this one innocent man, maliciously condemned, that all have conspired to torment Him? Yes, all play their part, since His personal torment is to be the most painful. All are there, of every order, class and condition.

468: There have been times that an innocent person was persecuted by many, but was always able to find some defense, refuge in others, or at least compassion. It is only Jesus, in being hated, all play their role to bring about His death. There are princes and ministers, Jews and soldiers, lay people and priests, nobles and the masses, learned and ignorant, citizens and foreigners, Jews and Gentiles, Romans and barbarians: all concur in this execution, of the most painful kind. All are able to have a share in it, to incite further the executioners. Some shout their insults from afar. Some seem to enjoy the sight of His spasms of pain in His death: *... they stood up... met together...* [Ps 2:2].

469: How is it that there is such a furor in everyone, and how is it that in such furor there is also such harmony in such a disharmonious mob? This is what brings the greatest pain to the heart of that innocent Victim: *... They are multiplied above the hairs of my head, who hate me without cause...* [Ps 68:5]. They give Me evil for good, hatred for love. What is the source, then for such wrath, for such fury? And just notice, my listeners, what wrath, and what fury! Just look: with a slow pace Jesus moves ahead, *led like a sheep to the slaughter* [Is 53:7], *for many dogs have encompassed me* [Ps 21:17], *wild bulls have besieged Me...* [v. 13].

470: Drained as He was from the excessive flagellation, they placed on His sagging shoulders the cross-bars of His gibbet. How barbaric, and cruel they are! Every step He takes, He grows more weary. He wavers, and falls. Just look at Him, o heavens! Look at Him, stretched out on the ground under this weight. Alas! Just look at Jesus, *the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people...* [v. 7], no longer a man, but He is

a worm, crushed under those villainous feet. On the strength of the kicks and blows they rain upon Him, they vainly strove to have Him climb Calvary.

471: Still, what is the source of such fury in the human breast? But, it is not just human beings who are tormenting Him: the Devil himself is among His tormentors. For it is the Devil who, on entering into human hearts, changes them into such fury. Human beings assume his ancient livery against this man-God. Rather, it is not just a single demon, but all hell has broken loose: *...this is the Power of Darkness...* [Lk 22:53]. Do not even begin to think, however, that it is from any sense of compassion in those inhuman executioners for the remainder of the climb. They only did this to keep Him alive for even more cruel, and more protracted torments.

472: And yet they had to harass one another to see who would carry the Cross in His place. And where are His friends who do not step forward, freely offering to carry it for Him? They have abandoned Him.

Hence, the distress of Christ had to be all the more painful as His torment was universal. His suffering was universal not only because it was brought on Him by all, but He hurt in every way possible for a human being to do so. He experienced anguish not only from His friends, but also in the loss of reputation. They dragged two thieves long with Him, and so, *He was reputed with the wicked...* [Is 53:12], being placed among the condemned and the evil. Thus, losing His reputation, He experienced a loss in the honor and glory due Him.

473: The Cross was the torment bringing with it the greatest shame. Such a death was the most shameful [Ws 2:20]], *for he is accursed of God that hangs on a tree...* [Dt 21:23].

There remained His robe. Despoiled of all else, even now His clothes were stripped off Him. He was stripped nude! and this in the sight of such a huge crowd! and it all took place at high noon! and on a high hills! *..He shall indeed be filled with reproaches...* [Lm 3:30], *shame has covered his face...* [Ps 68:8]. And that whole day long, the shame He bore wounded Him more, pierced Him more painfully than all His wounds, than all those openings brought to His body.

And now, where are the beauty, the decor, the most pure candor of those members? There is no beauty in Him, no comeliness [Is 53:2]. He is all one large bruise, one terrible wound.

474: Look over all the members of that body just to see if there is a single part that is healthy and without torment. There is no crown of gold, but one of thorns. The black tresses of His hair are all streaked with blood. His eyes are no longer those of a dove [Ct 1:14], but are daubed with mud, covered with dust and spittle. His cheeks are no longer rosy red, but are bruised, swollen by the slaps, the punches, His tresses totally bereft of comeliness. His neck, once a tower of ivory [Ct 7:4], is livid and bruised from the ropes they used to drag Him along like an animal. His shoulders, His back, His sides and legs, all are lacerated by the whips. And, o my God, on what a bed of pain they place Him now, and stretch Him out!

475: O God, how those arms and wrists are stretched and cut and by such crude knots. Now He is fully flattened out on the Cross. **And His hands and His feet are contorted... those very hands and feet that offer themselves now to the nails. The measure is taken for the blows, and how heavy are the hammers raised above. Dear God! It seems that even before they fall, the blows strike my very heart...** I cannot stand, beloved hearers, I cannot stand these particulars that are so atrocious, so sensitive. Let us proceed rather to consider the kind of pain being administered.

476: There is no doubt that among all the deaths that of the Cross is the most bitter. We have this on the testimony even of those gentile authors, who, even though they were living in the most barbarous times in which there was no form of torment that was unknown, or unused to carry out execution on condemned unfortunates. These writers, therefore, can offer a sure witness. In fact, on the Cross the greatest torment that the wretched guilty one endured was suffered precisely in those parts of the body where the nerves are the most active. Hence, the most sensitive areas of all seem to be the **hands and feet**. The weight of the body itself as it hangs, increases continuously the agony. And the slowness of the distress renders the death all the more bitter, as it is all the more slow.

477: Not only are all the other forms of execution surpassed by that of the Cross, but all other kinds seem to be compressed and included in this one alone. Therefore, the gashes brought by the swords, the pulling and drawing of other instruments of torture, the tearing of the limbs, being crushed by wild beasts, all this followed by convulsions, the spasms of the most acute suffering - it was like a fire that burned deep within, literally broiling His members and slowly consuming Him.

478: Furthermore, along these same lines, just see how this awful pain inflicted upon Jesus almost exceeds, and it might even be said, transcends Him. The reason is that He was afflicted not only in His hands and feet, but in all the parts of His body. He was wounded in every way, and in an instant was the recipient of most acute distress. And these terrible wounds became all the more sorrowful as they were reopened as He as furiously stripped of His garments. These had been draped over Him after the flagellation, and had become attached to the forming scabs. This was all very crudely intensified when He was most roughly stretched out on the Cross to bring the arms to the holes already made to nail Him to them. This stretching was so excessive that His bones were dislocated from their proper place. His suffering was augmented even further when the Cross with Him affixed to it was raised up, and then dropped into the deep slit in the ground prepared for it. With this, His distended body was horribly shaken.

479: Job complained bitterly that the demon, who had become his tormentor, had left nothing well, other than the lips about his teeth [Jb 19:20]. Jesus' executioners, however, did not even leave a single member of His entire body unwounded. They even willed that not even any one of His senses should remain without its own particular torment. With gall, they embittered His taste: to torment His sense of smell,

they crucified Him in that place which because of the number of bodies buried there, was most fetid; they continuously wounded His hearing with the most horrible shouts, with insults and the most biting sayings, and the most enormous curses. For His sense of sight, they had prepared its own particular torment: right before His eyes they hurled scorn at Him as He languished, they made fun of His groans and laughed at His pain.

480: And so, after having tormented His body in every way, they insidiously took steps to wound even more profoundly His spirit. What more bitter wound could there be for a loving hart than to see one's death being obtained, but being subjected to insults unto death, precisely by those for whose salvation He has chosen to die? And what deeper laceration could there be for that hart that is already wounded and full of compunction for the sins of all, of all human beings who ever were, or ever will be until the end of time for whom He underwent all this, and for each one is particular? Did He not suffer all this especially for those committing the horrendous crime of Deicide? Was it not He personally Who experienced most bitter contrition as if all these were His own sins, in that He had applied to Himself these words: *... these are the words of my sins..* [Ps 21:2].

481: Nonetheless, Jesus prays even for them, and also excuses them: *... Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do...* [Lk 23:34]. Yet they do know how cleverly to curse Him: *'...He saved others..', they derided Him, saying: 'Let Him save Himself...* [v. 35]. And these are the leaders of the people, and there are Levites among them, and they are the well-educated among them who talk this way. As for the vile members among the crowd, and even the thieves crucified with Him, all join in insulting Him: *... If You be the Christ, save Yourself...!* [v. 39]. At these wicked voices, the sun left this world, *... and there was darkness over all the earth...* [v. 44]. And what about Jesus through all this? If even one of them would withdraw into himself and recognize his sin, Jesus is ready to say to him: *... this day you shall be with Me in paradise...!* [v. 43].

482: But, even this actually aggravated His pain. Thieves are saved: "but, My People, My Chosen Nation; My dear Disciple, and Judas are damned." Only one repents and he will be followed by so few. The greater part of those for whom I suffer so much will profit nothing by My distress. What good will there be from so much blood being poured out? [Ps 29:10]. For many, all this blood will serve only for judgment [1 Co 11:29], and this Cross will prove only to be a scandal [1 Co 1:23]. He sighs heavenward, and then looks in great affliction toward the ground, and there He sees Mary.

483: At this sight, the bitter floods of compassionate suffering that had inundated the Mother's heart, turn in all their might an impetus, to the most bitter sea of pain [Lm 2:13]. They rush into the Son's heart, and He is overwhelmed by them, as this time the tide sweeps all in its wake.

Sharing thus in His pains, only increases them in the Son. The barbarians do not block her in this, but only deny her the possibility of extending comfort to Him.

There is no veil allowed to cover the confusion of His nudity, nor is there permitted a drop of relief to His dying lips burning with fever.

Mary weeps, and with her, John does too: “... Ah, woman [Jesus no longer says, ‘Mother’] ... I now leave you. Behold the one who from now on will be your son in My place [cf. [Jn 19:26](#)]. ...And then He turned to the disciple... [[v. 27](#)]. And she, He said, now that I have to leave, will be your Mother”.

484: Now from that heaving chest, His panting breath blocks His throat. At the violent shaking of His body, all His members shake in convulsion, and the whites of His eyes appear. O God! Jesus is dying! But, no, my listeners: the end of His sufferings has not yet come. This is but the natural horror of death, it is the love for her life, and one that is so precious, and a life that is so dear. This combat between love and life together seem to exhaust His nature. It is a veritable flood of pains arising from every part of His body, and rushing up out of His spirit, that they seem almost to bring shipwreck to His heart. This distress transcends all human judgment, or experience, in that Jesus’ senses are the more perfect and thus more capable of suffering.

485: His Body is that formed of the most pure blood of the Virgin and through a miracle formed immediately by the Holy Spirit. So, in the words of St. Bonaventure⁸, His body was all the more delicate, and therefore, the more sensitive. The sole of His feet was more capable of pain than would be the pupil of our eyes.

Christ’s soul, both because of the sublime excellence of His mind, and the immense depths of His Heart, was, as St. Thomas teaches⁹, the most disposed to be saddened to a supreme degree for all the motives for sadness that came to Him in abundance.

486: Would that at least this humanity that was agonizing in the dolors and the sadness of the most tormenting punishment, have had at least some comfort from the Divinity, conjoined and inseparable to it! But, what do these words entail: *...My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me...?* [[Ps 21:2; Mt 27:46](#)] - if not to mean: is it not so that the Divinity, as far as easing My human nature from its distress, conducts itself with this humanity as though it were not conjoined to it by any union? And not only by a prodigious barrier there is kept in full His glory in the superior part of My soul - but, this very glory, immovable in Me, of a blessed fruition, also militates in Me to even greater discomfort.

487: Even if in others who suffer there is often mitigated either the sadness of the spirit, or the dolor of the body, by reflections that appeal to reason - in this case, by a certain redundancy of the superior forces over those that are inferior, there was closed to Me this path of consolation. And so, since the way to every torment is open in My

⁸St. Bonaventure [precise citation not given].

⁹St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 46, a. 6.

Body and in My Spirit, with all natural efficacy, thus - every sense, or strength, or potency, is allowed to suffer. this holds true in all intensity and purity for that sadness and that dolor proper to them.

O, all of you, therefore, who pass by today in compassionate meditation along the path signed by My pain, fix upon Me the look of your contemplation, ... *and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow...* [Lm 1:12]. O, my Jesus!

488: But, does not the sheer power of Your love not diminish Your pains, or at least, Your interior sadness? Is it not this powerful love that forces You to say: ...*I thirst...* [Jn 19:28]. Is not this the thirst for the salvation of souls, a thirst of suffering even more for their salvation?

So, my listeners, thus His sufferings increase beyond measure. Therefore, if He willingly assumed these in order to liberate us from sin, then He had to take them on in such quantity that they would be in proportion to the greatness of the fruit that He desired. This quantity and proportion He achieved not only by the strength and by the worth that His Divinity always united to His pain and dolor. Hence, even a single drop of His blood was superabundant in removing all the sins of the whole world. Even further, even according to His human nature alone, His distress would have had a certain sufficiency, and His pain would have achieved a notable satisfaction. The reason is that He emptied all of His blood from His veins under the crushing press of the most tormenting execution.

489: O Eternal Father! Your will, Your Decree is now accomplished by me. Now the human race is liberated from sin, not by power alone, indeed possible for Your omnipotence. But, all is accomplished with justice and with full rigor of justice, as Your violated honor required of Me: ... *it is consummated..!* [Jn 19:30]. Your justice is satisfied. Enormous was the debt of human sin - and enormous were the pains that My will, in harmony with Yours, assumed in this torture. In this distress, My very life is now lost, and is rather consumed. ... *It is consummated... Into Your hands I commend My Spirit...* [LK 23:46]. And here, Jesus bows His head and dies.

490: So dies the Just Man. In a most tormenting torture, condemned by a most unjust sentence, by the most perfidious betrayal. Thus, Jesus' suffering ends. Here His enemies have ceased tormenting Him, but their cruelties have not yet terminated. **They insult Him even in death, they lash out against His dead body. With a lance, they open in His dead body a large wound on His right side. The cruel iron penetrates right through to His heart, and the point comes out the other side. What cruelty! what barbarity! O supreme injury! even worse than the torture itself! O, our love, Jesus! O, who would give to us that dead and bloody body, that we might make reparation with the just obsequies of our tears for the most atrocious injuries of those cruel men!**

491: O my God! Look at Him, my hearers. Unleash your hearts, loosen the bonds of your tears, satisfy the warm affections of your compassion. The motive is all too just, honest - this alone is reason enough to cry, to weep. You are alone on this day to

offer your compassion for this innocent, betrayed Man, this Just Man Who has been condemned, this Crucified Love. Weep for Him. He is Your Father, Your Redeemer. It was for you, for you, that He chose to die. This tribute of your tears is all that the One Who gave all His blood for you is asking.

492: O God! Stop ... What do I hear?... Alas, do you also hear the eloquence of this blood> I am shaking... and I tremble. And what about you? Is your heart still deaf? Well, must I tell you what I feel, that these **wounds** correspond to our tears? But, even better, pay close attention yourselves. Listen: ... *weep not over Me...!* [Lk 23:28]. Does this mean, then, that Jesus refuses the tribute of our tears? But, how can this be? Listen as He goes on: ... *but, weep for yourselves and your children...!* [ib]. O God! I understand You, I get it. Our sins are the sole reason for Your suffering.

493: Let us weep, then, Ladies and Gentlemen, let us weep, all of us. Mourn for Jesus, but let our hearts feel compunction. We are the cause of the death of this Just Man. We have betrayed Him, and how many times, and at what price! Just for some sordid gain, for some unclean pleasure. We have been unfaithful to promises made, ungrateful for gifts received, with no understanding of His love. we have been more perfidious than Judas, the traitor. What betrayal, what perfidy, what sin! Pardon, my Jesus, give me pardon: give vent to your tears always. Let us commit no more sins, no more sins.

494: O God, just what have we ever accomplished by sinning! What injury have we heaped on Jesus! We have placed the King of Heaven below the mud of our own bodies. What should have died in us was that degrading passion, and yet our evil will cried instead: Let Jesus die, let Him be crucified, but long life to that passion in us. What perversity of judgment, what injustice of choice, what disorder of sin! Give me pardon, O Jesus, pardon! Let us sin no more, no more sins! Death to sin, let sin be put to death! Our evil will is condemned to perpetual contrition. As long as life lasts, these eyes of ours will find good reason to weep - this heart of ours should feel sorrow - these members, suffer.

495: Give to us, O Lord, give to us these thorns that pierce the temples, the horrible fruit of our bad thoughts. **Give us those nails, tragic result of our bold and lascivious hands and feet.** Give to us this cross, shameful accounting for our sin. Our pride, our anger, our gluttony, our lasciviousness, all are Your Cross. We have put You to death, we have crucified You. What cruelty, what barbarity!

496: **And even dead, our scandals continue to lacerate this Body, to wound this side, to open Your Heart, to wrench from You the souls that are so dear to You, and to snatch them from Your paternal bosom.** And your veins are emptied still, this blood is bludgeoned out by us. He is trampled under foot on every corner, in every street, and in every square by so many blasphemies. He is trampled under foot in these temples, at the very feet of these altars, with so many sacrilegious profanations. He is still being trampled under foot in every place, at all hours, by all of us, washed clean from sin so many times by this blood - yet, we sin, and we go on sinning.

497: What supreme fury! What heights of cruelty! How excessive the sin! And should anyone not know what sin is, come to the Cross and learn. Right now, I myself will place it before your eyes, I will stretch it out at your feet. And whoever has not sinned, I am content that such a one would not have to weep this evening. But, we sinners, we who have re-crucified this Son of God so many times in ourselves - we who have trampled under foot the Blood of the Covenant: we should weep, we should all weep, and weep even more.

498: This is most suitable for us, all of us who would merit to weep eternally, buried in hell, even below the perfidious Judas; worse than the evil Hebrews, even the very demons themselves. We have beat all these in perfidy, in insult, in cruelty. It could very well be that the last blow awaits us in the next few minutes. Let us all weep, Ladies and Gentlemen, before this day of copious Redemption and Salvation draws to a close, and gives way to the day of wrath and vengeance. Let us cry at the feet of the deceased Christ, Who reaches out to us - before He turns in His Majesty and in His anger to pass judgment on our fault. Let us weep, Ladies and Gentlemen, let us weep even more. It is more than helpful for us to weep this day. For this is the day in which pardon is extended even to the crucifiers. This is the day in which Jesus manifests to us His Mercy and gives us His blessing as pledge.

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499:**SERMON 5****The Ascension**

Preached in the Parish Church of St. Paul's in the Campo Marzio section of Verona, on the 14th day of May in the year 1801.

At the harmonious sound of the angelic trumpets [Ps 46:6], at the joyful jubilation, Jesus in triumph ascends toward His Kingdom. I am quite sure, devout listeners, that you, too, direct your yearning on this day toward heaven. There you have affixed your hearts where indeed is guaranteed happiness¹⁰, where there is perfect beatitude and where peace is eternal. You are indeed exultant, animated by these noble promises with which Jesus consoled you before His departure, when He said: *...I go to prepare a place for you...* [Jn 14:2]. Indeed, your affections have been inspired and placed on such a sublime level.

500: But look, it would not be terribly offensive to your inspired charity to direct a compassionate regard toward so many of your brothers and sisters. They, too, are participants with you in the same promises, and yet, they are discouraged with their eyes lowered. The reason is that they are afraid of being forced to give up those wretched delights that they still badly enjoy. They make no effort, therefore, or they lack the confidence to lift up their eyes boldly toward heaven to where they have also been called.

501: PROPOSITION

As for me, I have to confess, the pain that I feel at their loss does not allow me to do anything other than to direct my words up this day for their salvation. In order to shake them up, I will make clear to them just how stupid it is for anyone to deliberately enjoy the present goods at the cost of an irreparable future good. You should not refuse to extend your helping hands in the form of your most fervent prayers. If you do, then I have absolutely no doubt that we will succeed in lifting them up out of their most sorry abjection.

502: 1. The first point is that one should come to elect quality goods in contrast with those that are excessively inferior; in other words, the choice is between short-lived goods as against those that are eternal.

Let us imagine, then, my brother or sister in sin, that you could accept as directed to you all my words this day. Let us just imagine for a little while that it were possible for us to choose one of these two realities: either to enjoy for a single night a pleasant dream, and then on awaking the next day, to be confronted with a series of misfortunes that should have to last the rest of your life; or, to go without that very brief and only apparent sweetness, and even be willing to suffer a somewhat sad dream,

¹⁰cf. Liturgy for the 4th Sunday after Easter.

but with the assurance, however, that there would be placed in our hands until death all the goods that this earth could offer ¹¹.

503: Should there be anyone, desirous of that vain happiness of a short dream, who would be content to lose an entire life-time of joy, then I do not know what judgment to make. It would be hard to say whether such a one making such an extravagant choice would merit the more to be pitied as imprudent - or rather derided as ridiculous. What else is this present life than a fleeting dream, a waft of smoke, a shadow, a vapor, that dissipates when confronted with eternity? The choice now is up to you: either to enjoy in this short dream some delight forced out of creatures, as it were - or, to enjoy a blessed life that would know no end.

504: That such a choice is given to you, you have from the very words of Christ: *...the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy...* [Jn 16:20]. And do you resolve to rejoice now with the world and thus lose eternal joy? And are you not ashamed of yourself to entertain such a sorry deliberation? What opinion can the truly wise form regarding your judgment? Is not this already some indication of that rectitude of understanding with which each and every one of you, to your great honor have been endowed by God?

505: But, I do not want to find any further fault with you in this since I notice that you already are beginning to be a little shamed of yourself; I can see that such an unfortunate deliberation has proceeded in you rather from not fully understanding the reality as it is in itself, rather than from any malice in your mind. This is also confirmed because I notice in other matters regarding which you surely have full knowledge, as regarding affairs that have to do with the necessities of this temporal life, you make use of prudent and praiseworthy counsel. Hence, let us understand well the quality of temporal goods and heavenly goods, and then all the more clearly will you perceive the ill-judged choice of such a determination. It is not just that you elect a delight that is at best fleeting, but even more you opt for a good that is only apparent over one that is authentic.

506: Apparent goods, over those that are authentic: Indeed, what are these benefits that are enjoyed in the brief dream that this life is, if not just that, goods that are merely dreamed? The avaricious person dreams of having his hands full of gold and silver - but, then with the new day, he gets up thinking that he is still clutching that wealth in his hands, but rather finds his hands empty. Thus is the way it is with the goods of this world, says the Holy Spirit - Who, however, speaking of those persons who abound in this, thus expresses Himself?

They have slept their sleep; and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands... [1s 75:6]. And just as the illusion of a dream that does not render the state of anyone more comfortable than that of the poor person. He has dreamt that he had become rich, but this only increased his wretchedness realizing to his greater inner sorrow that he was indeed bereft of the wealth that with such pleasure he

¹¹St/ John Chrysostom *Ad Theod. lapsus*, bk 9, t. 1, 8/1 A.

imagined that he possessed. Much like this, the goods of this present time will never satisfy our hearts. This is an evident sign that such appurtenances are not all that they seem to be.

507: Just listen for a minute: what else does that emptiness mean that you experience after having satisfied your passions; after you have not denied your senses some pleasure that is really forbidden to you? What is that inner yearning, always desirous of other trappings, of ever new delights, over and above those that you achieve only after much effort? What is that regret that still weighs on your heart, and what is this restlessness that only increases, as your desires intensify even the more? Is it not that you are something like a feverish person who wrongly thinks that with just a little water he might be able to extinguish the burning fever, and yet seems to increase it even further?

508: These are inadequate benefits, in comparison to the last end, which is perfect beatitude: But, I would like to point out that these goods seem to be genuine. However, they are not adequate for the deepest yearnings of our hearts: and this is why they can never be fully satisfying. Whatever delight and joy that might quiet our spirit put in motion by desires spring from the application of the faculties to objects pleasing to them. However, the object of any being, practically infinite in its desires, can only be an infinite good. How, then, can we want such insignificant rewards, that are so limited, for our satisfaction? If indeed our heart is as vast as another ocean, how could these little streamlets of water ever fill the immensity of its capacity?

509: O, but in heaven, only in heaven will we ever find an object suitable to our heart: a God, an infinite good. O, my God, only then, then only will I be satiated, when Your glory will appear [Is 16:15]. Only You can slake my deepest yearnings with the torrent of Your delights [Ps 35:9]. This is why You have created me with an insatiable heart, that it might come to understand that it has been made for You, and that it will always be restless until it rests in You ¹². Human heart, understand your folly! Just to enjoy a passing dream, you would lose eternal beatitude. You chase after the shadows, vanity, and you leave the genuine good, Uncreated Beauty, you lose that God Who is everything.

510: 2. In the last analysis, it is only a matter of depriving yourself of just a few counterfeit goods, and delights that are really base.

These arguments that I have advanced up to now prove of themselves that whenever it is a question of renouncing each and every one of the goods and the pleasures of this life in order to be assured of eternal blessings, it would be supreme folly to prefer the present over the future. However, it is not necessary to go this far. God did not forbid Adam from enjoying all the fruits of the earthly paradise: He forbade only one tree. And the condition with which Adam could have assured for himself and for all his descendants his felicity was so easy to comply with, that his bad judgment is all the more deplorable when he lost so much for such a small gain.

¹²St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk 1, t. 1, 69 B.

511: This is our own situation now. Are those delights truly honest ones, and are those pleasures truly innocent that you enjoy so much? If so, then continue to enjoy them. However if due to bad intentions of your mind, or if there is an unregulated manner in which you make use of them, or if you love them - you yourself make illicit what, in other circumstances, could become licit. Nothing other is being asked of you than that you reform your heart and that you regulate the use of these realities. Hence, it is apparent that you can indeed enjoy these benefits or delights in this life provided they are correct in themselves, or that they can be rendered good by your manner of making use of them. In this way, you can pass on to eternal joy of heaven, as passing over from what is imperfect to what is more perfect. What it really all comes down to is the necessity of depriving yourself from those false goods and pleasures which are already unworthy in themselves. The reason here is that there is nothing that can change the nature of evil that is intrinsic to these.

512: And will not your poor judgment be all the worse when it is simply a matter of giving up some very insignificant delight that would dishonor your right reason with its malice? Is it not true that you can enjoy abundantly other benefits promised to you? Why would you be willing to lose eternal delights which are promised to you and which, by contrast, and so incomparably advantageous to you? Even further, you really do not have to wait all that long, as in this life as well, you will be compensated with a superabundance of joy.

513: 3. Because such deprivation will be compensated with an even greater delight:

In fact, even before condemnation to hell, a life of vice forms also in this life in its unfortunate followers, a very grave torment of bitterness and bother. By contrast, virtue is not slow in rewarding its noble lovers, nor does it wait long to crown them with immortal glory in heaven. But, it showers in the meantime with anticipated delights their entire life with sweet hopes nourished with pure pleasure ¹³.

514: But, pay no heed to my words, any of you who perhaps is used to looking at a mortified and virtuous life as one of melancholy and sadness: I would not be surprised. The sick person believes that wine is bitter and that music is bothersome, while the healthy individual enjoys its taste and takes pleasure in its sweetness. As long as Augustine lay in the filth of his own pleasures, he himself confesses that it seemed impossible for him to live, in that he could find no comfort outside of them. But, when he made the generous resolution to hold back his passion from those unclean pleasures, he himself tells us ¹⁴: O, how very quickly, how very soon was I able to experience the sweetness of being deprived from that vain sweetness! And those pleasures that just a short while before I had dreaded losing, were now a delight to leave behind - since You, o my God, You expelled them from me. You Who are true

¹³St. John Chrysostom, *In Ps 124.*, 2 t. 5, 216/ B, C.

¹⁴St. Augustine, *Confessions*, 9, 1. t. 1, 157/B.

and supreme Sweetness, You ejected them, and You entered Yourself in their place, much more sweet than every supreme delight.

515: For this, you could very well believe a person who, after having experienced the bother of illness, the sweetness of restored health is made all the more evident. Let us conclude, then. If the deprivation of some benefit and of a very vile pleasure is compensated not only with an immense excess of beatitude in heaven, but also with the superabundance of joy even on this earth, then what is the extent of poor judgment of anyone who would decide not to give them up - even at the cost of having to lose forever one's future perfect and ultimate happiness? I leave this for you to judge and do reflect upon for a while, until I catch my breath, and then will draw this to a conclusion.

516: PERORATION: And now, sinner, here you are, and all are waiting for your resolution. Yes, all await it. We wait for it impatiently as he desire of all of us, for whom the salvation of your soul is as much in our hearts as our own is. God knows with how much affection, we have begged today for your conversion, and we have not even yet given up the most fervent appeals to obtain it.

517: Heaven awaits it, that I see opened up, above your head. Jesus is sitting there at the right hand of God [Ac 7:55]. He is holding between His hands a crown, and He is inviting you to win it with the victory over that passion of yours. I can see all the saints, who are encouraging you onward to come to where they are now. Do not be afraid, they are saying, do not put it off. Even to us, this ascent seemed too difficult, but the grace in which we placed our confidence, has made it very easy for us, all sweetness, by extending its living arms out toward our weakness. Many of us living in this land have sinned just like you have and perhaps even more than you have. However, since fortunately in good time we have renounced the vain pleasures of this world, confiding in the mercies of God. And this is why we are now here to give praise to those mercies forever.

518: I can see that the Angels are preparing already to place everything in Paradise in motion for a new, most joyful festival, for the conversion of your heart which they feel is by now proximate. What more? Hell, too, is waiting, with indignant agitation and with fear of your resolutions. And I can almost see it yawning wide at your feet. This is the moment that decides - perhaps it will snatch you to have you lost forever. They are very much afraid, these enemies of yours, offering temptation that the vision of heaven and of so many eternal and incomparable blessings that are being promised to you, might in the long run move you to resolve to cast aside these very empty earthly delights, with which they have for so long filled your hearts' desire.

519: What do you think, then, what are you going to do? What do you decide? What are your resolutions? Are you still uncertain? Are you still doubtful? But, if you want to go on living as you now do, there is no need to make any resolution. Hell is for you. And I can already see that the demons are making even greater efforts to tighten your chains, while you delay making the resolution of escaping from their hands. Come on, now. If you do resolve, resolve in this very instant. The grace of God does not know of

slow preparations ¹⁵. Have you, therefore, resolved to kick aside your unregulated passions? Yes, you have, I no longer have any doubts. It would be already an indication of poor judgment that you have not done this before; but, it would seem absolutely impossible that you do not do it at this moment.

520: Lift up your eyes boldly to heaven. Yes, heaven is yours. Already at this hour the Saints of heaven recognize you as their fellow-citizen. Jesus has already prepared the place that you are to occupy, the glory with which He wants to reward you. He already disposes the graces to assist you even unto the final realization. All the high-ways and by-ways of the heavenly city resound with most joy-filled chants and with most sweet music, with which they celebrate as a festival this most blessed moment of your conversion.

521: O, my God, my Jesus! If this is the way it is, if this is the state of the matter, I cannot longer put it off. The proposal of this soul who hands himself over to you - by the words of a poor sinner such as I am, assisted by your grace - and by the intercession of so many prayers of such a pious and devout audience - have gained on this day even a single happy soul to be added to the squads of those blessed souls, like happy prisoners, conquered by Your grace - they now form the most solemn pomp of Your triumph, following Your glorious Ascension into heaven. If this is the way it is, then, I do not request of You any other consolations for myself, no other comforts in the hardships of my life and my spirit. This is enough for me, joined to the hope with which I trust that my innumerable sins are benignly condoned, I will be together with all of these, my devout bothers and sisters, after these few days, to enjoy your glory forever.

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Liturgy

4th Sunday after Easter

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¹⁵St. Ambrose, *In Luc.* 2, 19. t. 1, 1288/ E.

Fathers and Doctors

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<i>In Psalm 124, 2 t. 5, 216, 2/B</i>	# 513

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522:**SERMON 6****Charity towards our Neighbor**

Delivered in the Parish Church of St. Paul's in the Campo Marzio section of Verona, on the 21st of June in the year 1801, on the Fifth Sunday dedicated to St. Aloysius Gonzaga.

A virginal purity, really angelic - an heroic rigor of penance - a most sublime and almost uninterrupted contemplation of spirit along with other similar virtues and gifts, are presented to you, devoted listeners, for your reverence, with obsequious admiration, as well as for your emulation of your beloved St. Aloysius Gonzaga. Keep all these before your minds, as the most sublime, as well as the most perfect form of life to imitate.

523: Just notice, however, how I believe that I am sufficiently sustained by a doctrine as certain as it is clear, of the Apostle. This removes all fear from saying openly what I am going to state in proposing to you today better gifts to emulate in your saint [1 Co 12:31]. This is a more excellent path to show you, which you can follow in his noble footsteps with greater assurances. This will enable you to arrive more comfortably, whenever you want to do so at that sublime indication of perfection to which you see that He has arrived. If such a lofty ideal should disturb you, have the precise words of the Apostle ready for you to present to you immediately. Just listen: ... *but, the greatest of these is charity...* [1 Co 13:13].

524: Yes, my listeners. If you notice all the other virtues of this angelic young man shining forth, like so many stars in another spiritual heaven in his beautiful soul, charity stands out among them all like a brilliant sun that surpasses all the others with its splendor and with its excellence. Charity not only conquers them, much like less noble and lesser stars, but they receive from his charity that light which is so beautiful that they are enflamed by it. The reason is that charity is the form, the complement and the crown of all virtues ¹⁶.

THEME: This is precisely the virtue that I propose to you this day to imitate in St. Aloysius: in the way he lived it and practiced it with such perfection. This will be so that you will now hear from me here, if you will choose to favor me with your customary patient attention.

525: DEFINITION ¹⁷:

Charity is the perfect friendship that passes between us and God, which, however, from God's perspective, is extended also to our neighbor. It is a reality that is totally of God and totally pertaining to God ¹⁸. Each neighbor is created by God to His

¹⁶St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 4, a. 3, etc.; St. Albert the Great [no citation]

¹⁷St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 23, a. 1 c, et ad 1 um.

¹⁸Antoine, *De caritate prox.*, t. 1, 200.

image, redeemed with His Blood and made by him capable along with us for eternal beatitude. It is in the communication of this that this entire holy love is based.

526: REDUCTION: It is precisely about this holy friendship of charity, in so far as it is extended to our neighbor, that I must speak to you this day, and nothing else. So that I might not go beyond the limits already marked out for me, I would like first of all to show it to you as in a vivid **portrait**, just as the Apostle had precisely described it for you. There it has such distinct characteristics that you simply could not but come to know it with perfection.

527: DESCRIPTION [1 Co 13:4, ff.]¹⁹:

Charity, the Apostle says in the very first place, is patient in supporting the defects of one's neighbor: ... *charity is patient...*

It is kind for the purpose of gaining with sweetness the souls of one's brothers and sisters for Christ: ...*[charity] is kind...*

Yearning for their eternal salvation, and with this, for every good in their behalf, charity does not envy their prosperity: ...*[charity] envies not...*

In order not to give them any occasion to trip upon the way to salvation, it takes special care not to work any evil: ...*[charity] deals not perversely...*

It never swells in pride for any qualities of spirit or body, by looking down on other human beings: ...*[charity] is not puffed up...*

It is not ambitious, wanting to lord it over, or dominate over others: ...*[charity] is not ambitious...* [v. 5]

Rather, in order to serve others in a pious manner, charity is entirely solicitous for the well being of others, and does not seek its own advantages: ...*[charity] seeks not her own...*

528: Whenever charity is provoked by injuries, it is not irritated into taking revenge: ...*[charity] is not provoked to anger...*

It never thinks badly of others, but also puts the best possible light on situations, while maintaining the truth, seeking only emendation: ...*[charity] thinks no evil...*

It weeps over the sins of others as though they were one's own, and never rejoices in any iniquity: ...*[charity] rejoices not in iniquity ...* [v. 6].

Charity always seeks to further the genuine virtues of others, is exultant in, and rejoices with the truth: ...*[charity] rejoices with the truth...*

Charity, then: ... *Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things...* [v. 7].

Charity does all this out of love for one's neighbor, whenever it is a matter of procuring authentic good for the other. In this life, this is principally grace, and for the future life, it is glory. In this way, charity knows that it brings great pleasure to that God for Whose love it is gently moved to love its neighbor.

529: INTRODUCTION: Of all these characteristics of charity, for the love of brevity be content that I choose only one. This one seems to me to be the most proper and

¹⁹Nat. Alex., *De Caritate Prox.* ; Concina, ib.; St. John Chrysostom, *In Epist. S. Pauli*, ib, Hom. 33. t. 10, 178, 1, ff.

special, so I will try to pint it out as the expression of this most excellent virtue in the life of our Saint: *...[charity] seeks not her own... [v. 5]*. Anyone who genuinely loves with an authentic friendship ought to seek what is most useful for the friend - whereas, anyone who seeks what is useful for one's own pleasure in the friend, such a person is more in love with himself, and indeed, does not love the friend ²⁰.

530: 1. In what manner, and with what perfection, St. Aloysius Gonzaga practiced it:

What more luminous proof could we desire in St. Aloysius than that which he gave that time in Rome. There was a terrible plague there, and he threw himself into the care of others with such little concern for his own life. He exposed his own health to danger for the comforting of his afflicted neighbors. He went directly to the place where the disease raged with greater ferocity, in the public hospitals. Did he not show in a brief time that he had much to lose by contacting the common scourge> *...[charity] seeks not her own... [v. 5]*.

531: And so, what wonder is there that he, out of love for his neighbor, had manifested a most sublime act of perfection? He thereby surrendered his life that he most willingly sought to exchange with the perfect union with Christ! It is the more to be amazed that he had been called by an extraordinary gift of a truly celestial union with God, also on earth. He even surrendered in part this sweetness out of pure zeal for the salvation of the souls of his brothers and sisters.

532: For, what other reason did he have for abandoning the thought, that had already taken shape with him, in accord with the most sweet inclination of his affections, to enter into a cloister of peaceful solitary contemplation? And Who was it that drew him instead to give his name to that Company just shortly before instituted by that great saint, and companion of Christ, Ignatius of Loyola? Was it not so that there, in an almost perpetual exercise of apostolic discipline, new soldiers were being prepared to sally forth into the open field, and there sustain the heavy weight of the most arduous and fatiguing expeditions? What else could have moved him, if not charity, which does not look out for what is one's own, but rather what is for the benefit of others, for the greater glory of God? What love, what zeal, and what charity, not unworthy of the most fervent apostolic hart, of a St. Paul?

533: Do you not see now, my listeners, with what a display of light of mid-afternoon that this soul flames out in St. Aloysius? But, sad to say, that in the face of such light I can hardly perceive that there scarcely appears our charity as nothing more than an excessively languid flicker. Who is there among us who would be willing - I dare not say to be disposed in this same way, to surrender his life out of love for other human beings, as this is proper only to the already perfect ²¹? But, would any of us be willing to hand over what is superfluous of those riches to be distributed to sustain another human being, perhaps already struggling out of hunger - as this would hardly fulfill the

²⁰St. Thomas Aquinas, I - II, q. 66, a. 6, ad 2 um.

²¹St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Io.* XV, , 24. t. 3, 779.

simple precept? Who would, out of zeal for other human beings - I would not ask it - who would renounce spiritual consolations and undertake extraordinary endeavors, such as Aloysius gave such clear indications of doing? But, even would there be any among us who with the discreet use of fraternal correction, at last by good example, or by prayer, would be dedicated to recover another human being? Would it not be a demand of ordinary virtue that it is required to observe, without going beyond it, that rigorous precept which God: ... *gave to everyone of them commandments concerning his neighbor...* [Si 17:12]?

534: How, and in what manner, it is proper for us to imitate Him: Come on now, it is only this to which the precept obliges you - just this little bit, and nothing more. This is what I would like to propose to you today, and by so doing, you might in some manner, even though from a great distance, imitate St. Aloysius his charity. This is what he principally distinguished himself in, not in seeking what was his own, but seeking only what was best for his neighbor.

535: But, my God! If everyone from now on, if all this day should no longer seek anything that is useful beyond their own interest, their own taste, what is useful, just for them! ... *For all seek the things that are their own...* [Ph 2:21]. Now, therefore, can so little be hoped for? What should I do, then? Should I become disheartened? Should I give this all up? But no - but, rather here I am trying to catch you with the same nets. You, therefore, seek nothing other than what is best for you. And I will tell you that you could never have what is truly best for you, when you do not take every care for that which is to your neighbor's benefit ²².

536: Motive of Usefulness: For now, you have to grant me that all our advantages are in the hand of God and depend on God: as for the spiritual benefits, this is already manifest. As for those of the temporal order it is already very clear as St. Paul stated when he said [1 Co 3:7]: ...*neither he that plants, is any thing, nor he that waters; but it is God who gives the increase...* In fact, all is in God's hands: the favorable, or adverse seasons; the fertile rains, or the destroying hail; the wars that destroy the friendly peace of art and commerce - and so many other similar matters. All are independent totally from human industry and are solely subjected to the free and most provident will of God, which may concur for our usefulness, or disadvantage.

537: Now what would you say if God had bound all our advantages to the care that we ought to have for our neighbor ²³? This is the way it is, as I will point out to you clearly in the Scriptures, which is the same as saying it is based on immutable decrees. You will find it written in Proverbs 19:17: ... *He that has mercy on the poor, lends to the Lord and He will repay him...* For confirmation, just read Malachias 3:10: ... *try me in this, says the Lord: if I open not to you the flood gates of heaven, and pour you out a blessing even in abundance...* In Proverb again, we read: ... *he that despises the entreaty of the poor shall suffer indigence...* [Pr 3:27].

²²St. John Chrysostom, *In I Cor.* Hom. 13, 3. t. 10, 180.2 B.

²³St. John Chrysostom, *In Ep. I ad Cor.*, Hom. 33, 3. t. 10. 180/2 B.

538: Let us come now to the spiritual advantages, which are the more desirable. Is it not God Himself, Who - as Isaiah says, speaking of the generous man who redresses the afflictions of his neighbor is promised that his soul: ... *shall be like a watered garden, and like a fountain of water whose waters shall never fail...* [Is 58:11]. And once again, the Book of Proverbs states: ... *He that stops his ear against the cry of the poor, shall also cry himself [to the throne of Mercy] and shall not be heard...*

539: Listen finally to the New Law: ...*for with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again...* [Mt 7:2]. This is what the Gospels say. And again, in the Catholic Epistle of James: ... *pray for one another that you may be saved...* [Jas 5:16]. And there, after having shown how efficacious is such prayer, concludes with this motivation: ... *He must know that he who causes a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins...* [Jas 5:20].

540: And here note Tirinus ²⁴ where we read: "...he will save his soul..." The reading here is *eius* - but, many other interpreters read *suam* in this place - such as Bede ²⁵, the Gloss ²⁶, Denis ²⁷, Cornelius a Lapide ²⁸ And this is the meaning of the expression: Anyone will save his/her soul when having been instrumental in converting another person, either by praying, or by instructing, or by drawing by example, or by other charitable interventions, as the interpreters also point out.

541: And just note these words: ...*and he shall cover a multitude of sins...* [Jas 5:20]. These words are explained by Scripture itself in another place: .. *charity covers all sins...* [Pr 10:12]. That means "all", each and every one. It covers those of one's neighbor, a very learned exponent continues ²⁹, those of the past as well as the present sins, by means of penance. It covers future sins by means of prudence. Charity covers one's own sins and extinguishes them with zeal; that is, the venial sins, if we are in grace, and the penalties due to past sins. Charity also arranges it that the occasions and the dangers of falling in the future will be scarce. And, if we have been sinners, this new commitment, this solicitude and ardor of sharing in the conversion of one's neighbor, excites - and it might almost be said - merits, by a certain fittingness, the efficacious grace from God. By means of this, we are also excited to detest earlier sins, and to change our lives for the better.

²⁴Tirinus, *ibid.*

²⁵St. Bede, *In Jas 5:20*

²⁶The Gloss, *In Jas 5:20*.

²⁷Dionysius, *In Jas 5:10*.

²⁸Cornelius a Lapide, *In Jas 5:20*.

²⁹Tirinus, *loc. cit.*

542: Therefore, St. John Damascene³⁰ teaches that the most sure manner of doing away with one's own sins is the commitment to abolish those of others. This is also the constant view of St. John Chrysostom in many places³¹, and also of many other of the more accredited interpreters of this passage.

What do you think now, my listeners? What could you desire that is ore clear, more uniform, and more expressed? Impress it well, therefore, on your minds that anyone who desires that which is best for oneself should begin by striving to find what is best for our neighbor. The not seeking for what is one's own, as charity teaches, is precisely the true, and indeed, the only way to achieve this.

543: CONCLUSION: Come on, now, revered listeners, and you, most beloved brothers in Christ. I will speak to you more with my heart than with my words. Come on, now - begin from this moment on to extend that loving care of your neighbor which is so highly recommended to you by God Himself. Resolve to do this at least for your own good, even though you should do it out of love for your common and most lovable Father Who commands you to it³². But, just note how this reciprocal care weighs on His paternal and most loving affection. Whenever the gentleness of His love does not suffice to lead you to it, He has not hesitated to move you to do it by the very necessity of your best interests.

548: You are all but one body, I will conclude with St. Paul. And as I began with his words, and as with his doctrine I have brought you thus far with my preaching, such as it is: ... *you are one body...* [1 Co 12:27], And therefore, as members, you ought to be solicitous one for the other; solicitous of your mutual temporal well-being, and all the more, for that of eternity. Do you not see in our bodies³³ how one member helps, bears, sustains, holds up, defends, nourishes another member? It is from this reciprocal care that the health of the whole body springs, no less than that of the individual members. But, just imagine what would happen if each member would only seek its own interests: the foot would hold back in lazy repose, refusing to bear the weight of the other members. In like manner, the hand could refuse to bring the usual food to the palate; and the palate, in its turn, enjoying the taste of the food, might not end it on its way to the stomach. Or, if the digestive tract were already full, keeping everything for itself, it would deny to the other members their necessary nourishment - what would be the end result of all this? The body would perish, as would also each of its members. This is what will happen to you if you seek only what pertains to yourselves, since: ...*you are the body of Christ, and members of one another...* [1 Co 12:27]. These are beautiful words - ... *one for another, the members might be mutually care for one for another...* [1 Co 12:25].

³⁰St. John Damascene, Commentary on Paralipomenon [Chronicles] 21

³¹St. John Chrysostom, *De Sacerdotio*, 6, 10. t. 1, 265/10; *In Mt*, Hom 59, 6. t. 7, 375/1 E; *In Ac. Apo. Hom.* 20, 4. t. 9, 98/2 A.

³²St. John Chrysostom, *In Gen.*, 9, 2. t. 4, 401/10.

³³St. John Chrysostom [no citation: maybe *In 1 Co 12:27*].

545: COLLOQUY: Behold us now, o Holy Protector, our Aloysius, as I have found these, my hearers, in the devout yearning to imitate your virtues. And I have proposed to them your charity as the most excellent of them all. I have not been lacking in any industry on my part in order to dispose them to set fire to this beautiful flame of love. There remains now only to set the fire with a most ardent peroration, all animated with zeal. But, how can these fiery sparks come out from my heart, which is so cold? To us, therefore, has been reserved this, which is the most noble undertaking, and this is why I now turn to you.

546: Please, beloved Saint, just a spark, a single one, from your roaring charity, and set it in our hearts. If you will only enkindle this vibrant flame within us, it would then spread in behalf of our neighbor. It would then be nourished, intensified, purified, and would merit to be raised up to your much desired sphere, that is, to heaven. There it would be united to God, immense Fire of Charity, by His very essence, from whence it first sprang. It would be completed in Him, as in its center, finding eternal quiet for all the centuries.

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Sources

OT

Bible quote	MssB #
Pr 3:27	537
Pr 10:12	541
Pr 19:17	537
Pr 21:13	538

Bible quote	MssB #
Si 17:12	530
Is 58:11	558
Mal 3:10	537

NT

Bible quote	MssB #
Mt 7:12	539
1 Co 3:7	536
1 Co 12:25	544
1 Co 12:27	544 [2 x]
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1 Co 13:4, ff.	527
1 Co 13:5	527; 529; 530

Bible quote	MssB #
1 Co 13:6	528
1 Co 13:7	528
1 Co 13:13	523
Ph 2:21	535
Jas 5:16	539
Jas 5:20	539; 541

547:**SERMON 7****Pride**

For the 10th Sunday after Pentecost - preached on the Sunday before, July 26, 1801, in the Parish Church of St. Paul's of Campo Marzio. It lasted about 36 minutes.

There is no more prevalent vice in the human heart that wrecks more commonly and with greater efficacy its slaughter. There is nothing that is more insidious that covers over and unleashes its assaults. And lastly, there is nothing that is cured with greater difficulty than pride. This is evident if we are to give faith to the Scriptures that are so clear in this point. So, do not reject this teaching that is the constant doctrine of the Masters and the Saints.

548: it is altogether reasonable, therefore, that I turn my attention and give all my strength to this matter today. Up until now, beloved brothers and sisters, in accord with the level of grace granted to me, up to the present I have exhorted you to the love of the most beautiful virtues. It seems now time that for your benefit, and for carrying out my duty, that I must now be committed to speaking to you against the more dominant vices, so that you might be forewarned against them. But, what fine and well-tempered strong sword may I make use of that is capable at a single blow, of killing this hydra with so many heads? Here it is, right here - it is the Gospel itself that puts the weapon into my hands: .. *everyone that exalts himself, shall be humbled...* [Lk 18:14].

549: In fact, a person feels nothing more than disdain, while living nothing more than exaltation. One's head swells only by thinking that the former can be avoided, while the latter gained Right here is where the deception lies.

CONJECTURAL PROPOSITION: Should such a person come to realize that pride, rather than exalting one, depresses, lowers, humiliates one, makes an about face, of the use of reason remains in his head. Then, after having confessed the error, very shortly puts aside the pride, precisely as something that excessively harms the much desired goal.

And this is why I set before myself that of leading you to touch with your hand this very day these truth, if you would be kind enough to favor my spirit with your courteous attention.

550: DEFINITION ³⁴: Pride is usually defined as a disordered appetite of one's own excellence and thus leads a person from raising himself up beyond that which is prescribed for him by divine rule and measure. This is reached by insisting on the

³⁴Antoine, *De Pecc. Cap.*, Chapter 7, art. 1. t.1,124; St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q, 162, a. 5 c.

etymology of the word as does [the following] ³⁵, as St. Thomas teaches ³⁶. And it should be noted that which the Angelic Doctor teaches in the same question ³⁷ - that in the other sins, a person pulls away from God, whether through ignorance, or weakness, or through the desire of some other good. Pride, however, brings with it aversion from God for the very reason that an individual does not wish to be subjected to God and to His Rule.

551: CONJECTURE: Even God's resolute mind of humiliating the proud: For the one who distances himself from God, which in other sins is as a consequence, of itself pertains to pride, in that its proper act is disdain of God. Boetius ³⁸ writes: While all other sins flee from God, only pride rises up against Him. The proud person reaches his hand out against God [Jb 15:25], and flexes his muscles in the face of the Omnipotent. It prances against God with defiance, and is endowed with a fat head. Such a person is a rebel, as Sirach had already written: *...the beginning of the pride of man is to fall off from God...* [Si 10:14]. As to the most bold rebel, with his weapons in his fist, he goes forth to assail his supreme Sovereign, His God on His Throne, in order to despoil Him of His glory.

552: We should keep in mind that while all other Princes oppose with all the power at their command, all rebels to humble them, is our God any different? Is not He alone, the most powerful of all, a God so jealous of His own glory, as He has clearly stated in the most resolute terms, that He does not wish to cede this to others, under any conditions whatsoever? Has He not stated: *... I, the Lord, this is My name: I will not give My glory to another...* [Is 42:8]?

Could we ever imagine that God after having been offended in a point that is so delicate, would pass over it indifferently? Is it possible that when He is assaulted, He would not defend Himself - that when He is under attack, He would allow Himself to be despoiled of His most august rights? No. God resists the proud, the Scriptures cry out [Jas 4:6]. To reject contumacy, St. Ambrose writes ³⁹, God wages a very special war against pride to humiliate it, as though He were saying: so this is My adversary who does defy Me. It is up to Me, then, to respond with this blow, with this attack.

553: Even more serious, my hearers, is that in this wicked rebellion, the proud person uses no other arms than the very gifts that he has received from God. The rebel raises these gifts up in defiance, and rather than laying down his crown before the Throne of God [Apoc. 4:10], he refers all to himself as though it were his own merit. He wants to have others attribute to him all that glory that is due to God alone, thus erecting a rival throne against His. It seems that I see God as an angry Prince,

³⁵St. Isidore, *Etym. Pecc. Orig.*, bk 10, c. 18

³⁶St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 162, a. 1.

³⁷ib. a. 6.

³⁸Boetius is cited here by St. Thomas, l.c., art. 6, c.

³⁹St. Ambrse, *In Ps 118*, Sermon. 3, c. 37. t. 1, 1005 F

who takes away the honorable weapons, the privileges, the dignities of the feudal tributes from that disloyal knight who abused all these in his rebellion. And so, He hastens now to remove His most generous gifts from the one rebellious to Him, and reduce him to shame. He will then invest the humble with these gifts, those faithful subjects who with prompt obsequiousness promise to employ them in His service. It is from these that He hopes to garner the glory that is due to Him: ... *He has scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He has put down the mighty from their seat, and He has exalted the humble...* [Lk 1: 51, 52]. ... *And I will visit in that day upon everyone that enters arrogantly over the threshold...* [Zp 1:9].

554: And what will the nature of these visitations be as accomplished by a God bought to such anger by the proud? The Book of Ecclesiasticus will tell us: ...*for pride is the beginning of all sin: he that holds it shall be filled with maledictions, and it shall ruin him in the end... He has made the roots of the proud to wither... He has overthrown their lands. He has made some of them wither away, and has destroyed them, and has made the memory of them cease from the earth...* [Si 10:15, 180-20].

And thus to remove that self-confidence that is so common among the wicked, He says this: ...*For he has said in his heart: God has forgotten, He has turned away His face not to see the end...* [Ps 91, or 10, according to Hebrews, v. 11]. ... *The Lord has sworn against the pride of Jacob: surely I will never forget all their works...* [Am 8:7].

555: Nor should you entertain the idea that the Mercy of God would intervene in this case to lighten the consequences for His children, although they may be rebellious. For God not only insures the rights of His supreme Being when He humiliates the proud, but at the same time, makes provision for our well being. In fact, pride is considered to be a very special kind of vice among all the others, and in respect to them, is the greatest. Considering what influence it has on other sins, it is thought to be the queen and the mother of all others: ... *for pride is the beginning of all sin...* [Si 10:15].

It is also the ruin of all the virtues. Promptly the proud person seems himself thrown into the chasm of every evil, and notes that his soul is like a devastated field, bereft of every virtue. All is suddenly changed into a den of all the most monstrous and horrible wild beasts. He would be prone to all these evils, were not God to intervene with a ready humiliation.

556: A further consideration is that pride is very difficult to recognize, both because it is a spiritual sin, and further, because it is specious. It covers all of its deformity under a specious vesture that imitates the virtues. Its presence among virtues, even the most perfect, is hidden, not unlike a poisonous snake among the flowers. For this, the saints feared it more than any other vice. They understood well that pride is the very first to insinuate its presence, and is the very last vice to allow itself to be conquered. Therefore, they used great diligence to investigate its traces in the most secret depths of their spirits. And the more that the light increased within them, all the more did they

fear being proud. Very often, they confessed themselves to be so, and they referred to themselves as rebels and thieves of the glory of God.

557: And so, even the fact of not realizing that we are proud is perhaps a sign of greater pride in us! Is it not, then, a great grace to have been humiliated by God, when thereby we come to recognize and begin to take steps to correct such an evil? But, is not this the way it truly is? Is it not true that God's Mercy rather than handing the proud over into the hand of the scourgers, it is rather there to stimulate those so afflicted that they might the sooner fall from it? Who could still doubt, then, the most decisive spirit of God is to humiliate the proud?

558: 2. From the Power of God to humiliate the Proud: Would there perhaps be anyone who would doubt His power in this regard? Would He not, therefore, have thunderbolts all aflame to knock down these well fortified towers? Doe He not have in His possession whirlwinds that are so violent to uproot these most robust cedars? Can He not call upon tremendously powerful earthquakes to topple over those high mountains of presumption? And, yet He really does not need such an arsenal. It would simply suffice that He turn His face in another direction in order for all immediately to be upset. He could bring confusion by an untoward experience of the proud soul's basic weakness, which but a short time before would have succumbed to vainglory because of the freely given supernatural gifts that might have made fun of the falls of others.

559: The slightest of fevers suffices to tame that young man who, much like a roaring lion, presumes on his own strength. An insignificant illness might wither a bit the flower of good looks, and this would be enough to bend the proud head of the proud woman. So, then, all that would be required would be that He would recall, or no longer take care to conserve His gifts in us, in order for us to be humbled. Let the proud then realize the most resolute decision n God and the equally powerful arm at His disposal to humiliate them, even if He does not actually do so. Let it suffice, then, to say that they should think over the best means at their disposal to resist it.

560: And who are you, man or woman, who would resist God? Are you not in God's hand, much like a vessel of clay in the hand of its Maker? How could you ever resist the heavy blows of an iron rod, which, as the Psalmist describes: *... You shall rule them with a rod of iron, and shall break them into pieces like a potter's vessel... [Ps 2:9]? ... Why have the Gentiles raged, and the people devised vain things..? [Ps 2:1]. ... The kings of the earth stood p, and the princes met together against the Lord and against His Prophet... [Ps 2:2].* And what will God do? What will He do? *... and the Lord shall deride them...* The Lord will laugh at them, and will make fun of them, much as though a powerful warrior, rather a giant, were put under attack by a swarm of shy, defenseless children.

561: Argument from the facts: because the proud have always been humiliated by God: Come now, let us take a look at what the result is of the undertakings of these bold people.

It is Lucifer in heaven who was at the head of an uproarious revolt and attracted to his side a good third of the Angels. But, I see him overthrown, he and all his followers, by one and the same decree. They all fell like a meteor into hell, there to be bound by God by eternal weights [Apoc 12:4, ff.].

562: Our first parents, in their earthly paradise, thought of becoming like God: *...knowing good and evil...* [Gn 3:5, 22]. They then open their eyes, but only to see their nakedness, and to discern what an enormous difference there now was between the good that they had enjoyed up to this moment, as long as they kept themselves faithful to God - and now the evil to which their pride had dragged them ⁴⁰ And God makes fun of them. This is what He says: *...behold, Adam is become as one of us...* [Gn 3:22]*...And the Lord shall deride them...* [Ps 2:4].

563: Shortly after the flood, that awesomely powerful proof of God's might, human beings tried to build a tower to repair their memory against the weapons of the time and perhaps even against the blows from heaven. And the Lord confounded their tongues and they were forced to leave their undertaking in embarrassment [Gn 11:3, ff.]: *...and the Lord shall deride them...* [Ps 2:4].

564: The Pharaoh answered Moses: *... who is this God...?* [Ex 5:2]. Will He perhaps be able to liberate His People from my hands? To confound a proud man who was at the same time, so powerful, God chooses the most infirm [1 Co 1:27]. He uses timid flies, spineless frogs, but the powerful man is forced by this terribly bothersome siege, pressed in on all sides, to agree to the pact And if the Pharaoh, the more as he was the more obstinate, once he had obtained a truce of some days did not choose to give in to the demands of God, God finally buried him with his whole army under the foaming vortices of the Eritrea [Ex c. 8, ff.].

564: Can you see, my listeners, that proud king who strides so arrogantly on the balconies of his palace? He is Nabuchodonosor, and he says *...Is not this the great Babylon, which I have built to be the seat of the kingdom, by the strength of my power and in the glory of my excellence...?* [Dn 4:27]. this is how he exalts himself, and in a short time, God will depose him. The proud man had scarcely finished speaking this way in such pride, when there was heard a powerful voice from heaven: *...to you, o king... it is said: Your kingdom shall pass from you. And they shall cast you out from among men, and your dwelling shall be with cattle and wild beasts: you will eat grass like an ox...!* [Dn 4:28, ff.].

What an extraordinary change! He is already taken off his balcony, and thrown out of the company with other human beings, and begins to eat grass. The evening dew bathes his body; and his hair grows much like the feathers of an eagle, and his finernails were like birds' claws [Dn 4:30].

⁴⁰St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, 14, 17. t. 7, 368 E.

But, I will stop here, since it seems to me that I sufficiently have proven that the more exalted one raises up with pride, so much the more quickly should such a person expect his fall to be the more ruinous.

566: CONCLUSION: That proud king, about whom I have spoken to you a few moment ago, spent seven years among the beasts of the field. Touched by God, he eventually raised his eyes to heaven [Dn 4:33], he confessed his airs of grandeur, and that all genuine power comes from God, and so humbled himself under the hand of the Almighty. His senses and spirit were restored to him. His nobles and magistrates came to seek him and he was restored to all his former splendor of his royal dignity, and even greater majesty was added to him.

567: If only many other proud people would raise their eyes to heaven in this way, and would that they would reflect on the error of their ways. This would mean a good many of our Christian men, and I would include also our Christian women. There are so many with an exalted view of themselves and who are on a collision courses with being also humiliated in this way - and not only with an equal but perhaps even a stranger metamorphosis. And what is worse, they do not even know it. And therefore, I believe that rather than go wandering around through the forests and woods, I do not know if more with a sacrilegious insult to God's Majesty, or with the greater horror to the good, should they dare to enter so brutally transformed into our churches. And, that I would have here a mirror, not one that would be flattering, but one that would give the true shape of reality!

568: Just look at yourself, I would like to say to that young fellow - just look at yourself from the top of your head to the bottom of your feet. And I will ask you if indeed this is the image of that man created by God in His likeness, adopted by him as his own Son, and constituted him an heir of heaven.

Look at yourself, madam. Just look to see if this is the real figure of a Christian woman. And rather than say an honest woman, I ask if this is the way even for a reasonable woman to appear. Of whom, then, is this image, I ask you - of whom is this figure? I can see that this comparison is too humiliating. And yet this is what results just from looking at the way some are dressed, from their exterior appearances. What should be remarked, then, for the feline, almost animal like, even brutal manner of dressing?

569: But I have no desire here to insult your confusion. As I think it all over, I could almost weep. I much desire your revision of your lives and this is why I have gone to such lengths so that you might come to realize what would happen to you should such a ruinous fall come to you, if previously your heart had not been very foolishly exalted [Pr 16:18] ⁴¹. In fact, this is what happened to the Roman philosophers, as St. Paul makes known [Rm 1:21, 24] when they knew God, they have not glorified Him as God, as they should have. But they became vain in their thoughts. God finally let them follow the systems and the inventions of their hearts that were in rebellion, and

⁴¹St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, 14, 13. t. 7, 364 E.

abandoned them to the most reprobate dishonor. The unhappy person trembles at this example, and let it humble you. This is the sole means that still remains for you to repair, if you wish, the honor already lost, and thus to work out salvation.

570: But directing myself now more to you, devout listener, let us also tremble. I would even say that we should all tremble, and at the sight of such deplorable failures, we should also tremble ourselves. My God! Who knows whether perhaps we, too - by some hidden pride, and far more abominable in God's eyes? Who knows, therefore, whether there is already imminent and very close to us an even more grace and unfortunate ruin? And who knows whether by chance, we, too, at this very moment, in all the more hidden manner, and one that is all the more dangerous, have already fallen?

571: Let us lower our heads, therefore, and cast our eyes to the ground. Let us look beyond what we wear, what our bearing may be - and may all pride be far from our lips, from our hearts. Let us immediately reflect within, let us withdraw if we are still in time, and humble our spirit. Let us fix before minds the recognition of our own nothingness, of our sins, of our weakness. Let us never again allow ourselves to be drawn even an iota by any thought or any event that may take place in our regard. Let us remain sure that the more we lower ourselves, all the more will God be close to us with His grace. And to anyone who might ask of us an explanation of this manner of our conduct let us respond with the most prudent simplicity of that saint - St. Egidio⁴² - who said: "... have seen many who by desiring to go too high have fallen. I stay well attached and firmly on the ground so that I will not fall..."

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⁴²St. Egidio - no citation given.

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[NB: for the sake of chronology, the translation of Fr. Bertoni's Sermon delivered at Illasi, on November 8, 1801, on the 24th Sunday after Pentecost - using the readings for the 5th Sunday after Epiphany. This is found in *Manoscritti Bertoni*, I ## 1464-1483, pp. 335-339]

1464: PARISH SERMON

Or, the exposition of the Gospel of the Vth Sunday after Epiphany for the 24th Sunday after Pentecost. This was delivered in the Parish Church of Illasi, on November 8, 1801. It lasted 20 minutes.

The Kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field. But while men were asleep, his enemy came and over-sowed cockle... Mt 13:24-30]

[And the rest that follows in this Gospel].

1465: The Parable of the Holy Gospel that on this day, most beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, that is my challenge to expose for your piety, needs little explanation. It seems that it should suffer no other exposition than the one that its divine Author has given to it. It is evident, as the evangelist himself refers, that the divine Author Himself explained it so distinctly to His disciples in His own words [Mt 13: 36, ff.]. This is all the more pleasing to me, in that you can be quite sure that **there will be nothing of my own in this exposition.** While I assure you of this, I hope that you will kindly accept my words into your hearts, as this is an instruction that comes directly from Christ's own mouth, or is drawn from the doctrine of the Holy Fathers and Doctors ⁴³. All of these have very wisely interpreted the Gospel, and I have been able in a short time to leaf through them, and consult them.

1466: STATE OF THE PARABLE: It is necessary, then, first of all, to know that Christ wished in this parable to denote the present state of his Church here on earth. For here, both good and bad Christians are all mixed in together.

MORAL PURPOSE: This may be for many an occasion of undue stupor; for others, it might be a reason for unjust complaint; and for still others, and these would be the most weak, it could give rise even to scandal.

1467: DIVISION : St. Thomas ⁴⁴ first points out the source from which proceeds so much diversity of virtue, on the one side - and, malice on the other. The purpose of this is to remove the wonder from some observers. He then descends right away to show

⁴³St. John Chrysostom, *In Matth.*, Hom. 46, aliis 47. t. 7, 305/1, ff.; St. Augustine, *Serm. 73 de verbis Ev. Matth.* t. 5/1, 407, f.; *Sermo* 88, 19, 21. ib., 479 F, ff.; St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Matth.*, c. 13. t.3, 183 [b], ff.; Cardinal Ugo.

⁴⁴St. THomas Aquinas, *In Matth.*, c. 13, 6, t. 183, b.

the progress of both of the good, as well as of the malicious. He points out at the same time with what reason He tolerates the wicked in this world, to justify to the second category, His Providence. Finally, He predicts the very different final end that awaits both the good and the evil in the future - as against these latter, He will raise up His justice.

We will begin now with the help of God to explain this whole parable already understood by you, and in all its parts. In doing so, we will limit ourselves always to the sacred text in order to comply at the same time with equal effort, with both a simple clarity and an easy brevity.

1468: 1. THE ORIGIN OF GOOD AND EVIL:

THE ORIGIN OF THE GOOD: *The Kingdom of heaven is likened...* With the expression, "Kingdom of Heaven", Christ in this place refers to His Church, because in heaven, as God reigns in glory among His saints, so in this Church He reigns by grace in the hearts of His faithful. And the Gospel states that the Church is like a man who plants good seed in his field [v. 24]. The One Who plants is the Son of Man, i.e., Christ [Mt 13:37], and the field is this world. The good seed means the Children of the Kingdom, i.e., the good Christians, those who are heirs to the Kingdom and destined to reign together with Christ.

1469: But, some might object: is not the Word of God the good seed that God plants in the heart of the saints [Mt 13:23]? How is it then, that now it is said that the saints themselves are the good seed?

O God, my brothers and sisters, the good Christians have little worth alone! They do draw with their words, with their prayers, and much more with their example, many others to serve God. This is the way they are in the countries, in the cities, in the world in which they are planted, as the good seed of piety, devotion, and every virtue. Blessed are those lands in which this excellent seed takes root! O, perhaps we, too, could say with Isaiah 1:9: *...Except the Lord of Hosts had left us seed, we had been as Sodom and we should have been like to Gomorra...*

1470: This, then, is the origin of all good that you notice in the Church of God: *... every perfect gift... comes down from the Father of lights ... [Jas 1:17]*. He plants the seed of the Divine Word in the hearts of the good. This, then, fructifies in a way that these persons themselves then become the good seed that Christ sprinkles throughout the world to spread, to propagate, the increase of His Church ⁴⁵.

1471: THE ORIGIN OF THE WICKED: O blessed field, planted with such good seed, and with such hopes has not the good Sower and Master placed within you? But: *... while men were asleep, so proceeds the sacred text [Mt 13:25], his enemy came, and oversowed cockle among the wheat and went his way...*

⁴⁵St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Matth.*, c. 13, ib.

The men asleep here ⁴⁶ are the Holy Apostles, to whom Christ had entrusted the care of His field and of His Church. By their “sleep” is understood their deaths, according to a phrase used by the Scriptures. In fact, St. Paul states: *...I know that after my departure, ravaging wolves will enter among you not sparing the flock...*

1472: The enemy who takes advantage of the situation and comes into the field is the devil, an authentic enemy of God and human beings. The cockle he oversows [Matthew 13:38] are the children of iniquity, all those who live and work iniquity, especially the very bad Catholics, the schismatics, the heretics. The Devil has oversown this cockle in the midst of the good grain. The reason is that it matters little to him that there are very evil people and of no faith at all among the gentiles, where already all belong to him. But his work is to over-sow these among the good faithful.

1473: *...and after having done this, the enemy goes away...* [Mt 13:25], because as Scripture says: *...he lies in wait in secret like a lion in his den...* [Ps 9:9]. And this is likewise the source of all that evil that has also been germinated in the holy Church. After the deaths of the Apostles, the Devil - seeing the Church spreading - experienced and moved the hearts of heretics, and of other depraved Catholics to injure her even more greatly. These were and still are the evil seed that then have pullulated and been diffused even to our own times, through so many scandals, so many divisions in charity, so many errors, so many heresies. But let us come to see now the progress that both the good and evil have made and the reason why God tolerates these latter for a while anyway. This is the second point of the parable proposed from the outset.

1474: 2. PROGRESS OF BOTH THE GOOD AND THE EVIL ⁴⁷: as the good grain came to fruition, there appeared also the cockle. The evil, as St. John Chrysostom ⁴⁸ comments, are the heretics, the seductors, who first were hidden, because they do say things that have good in them. They pretend zeal, compassion, humanity, in order to deceive the simple; but then, they insinuate some harm against ecclesiastics, Bishops and Religious. What they have to say is willingly listened to, and thus they succeed in drawing the people away from their love of priests, their Shepherds and other ministers of the Church. They then succeed, as a consequence, in attracting many away from the love of the Church herself. In this way, there is seen that after the good grain had grown a while by itself, and even after such as these have manifested some good fruit, and not before then - the cockle ultimately makes its appearance.

1475: THE ZEAL OF THE GOOD AGAINST THE EVIL: in the meantime, the servants of that good father of the family, come to him, saying: *.. Sir, did you not sow the good seed in your field? whence then does it have cockle [v. 27]. And he said to them: an enemy has done this. And the servants said to him: do you wish that we*

⁴⁶St. Thomas Aquinas, *ib.*

⁴⁷St. Thomas, as above.

⁴⁸St. John Chrysostom, *ib.*, cf.# 1465, above, p. 305, 1 D.

go and gather it up...? [v. 28]. These servants indicate the zeal of good Christians against those who are evil. They are doubly laudable, both for the correction intention that animates them, as well as for the prudent discretion that accompanies them. They do not want to undertake anything by themselves without first consulting the Lord's Will and to wait upon His command.

1476: THE REASON WHY GOD TOLERATES THE EVIL IN THIS WORLD: Beyond all their expectation, he responds: ... *No, responds the good father of the family - lest perhaps gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it...* [v. 29]. *Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest...* [v. 30]. Do you see, my brothers and sisters, the reason why God supports the wicked in this world? For this, you have a primary source as you note in St. Thomas⁴⁹ that goodness always has the advantage, and always overcomes evil. Good can exist without evil, but evil has no existence without good. Therefore, God tolerates many evils, and allows them to happen, and also so that many good realities do not cease.

1477: And truthfully, the evil do serve for the exercise of good. The Apostle writes: *...For there must also be heresies: that they also, who are approved, may be made manifest among you...* [1 Co 11:19]. And, in another place: *...the fool shall serve the wise...* [Pr 11:19]. Furthermore, it happens that those who right now are evil can become good, as was the case of St. Paul. If God had not fulminated Saul, the persecutor, the Church would have been deprived of those doctrines of such a great master, and would have missed an Apostle who worked more than all the others [1 Co 15:10].

1478: The third reason is because many may seem to be evil at first sight, and they really are not. This makes St. Paul cry out: *... judge not before time...* [1 Co 4:5]. And this is why the prudent master did not want the harvesting of the good grain until it had arrived at perfect maturity.

- Does this mean, then, that one has to pardon always, and hold back on the punishments always?

- No, but only to a certain point: up until the harvest. The in-gathering is the Day of Judgment, and the harvesters will be the Angels [Mt 13:29].

1479: 3. THE FINAL END OF BOTH GOOD AND EVIL

THE FINAL END OF THE WICKED: *...and in the time of the harvest, the master will say to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle, and bind it in bundles to burn it...* [v. 30].

GATHER IT: This is the end of the wicked. They will first be gathered up, i.e., separated from the good. As long as this life lasts, the cockle and the grain will grow together, much like the lily among the thorns [Ct 2:2]. But, when the Son of Man

⁴⁹St. Thomas, *ibid.*, p. 185/1.

comes, He will separate the just from the wicked, the goats from the lambs [Mt 25:2] 50.

1480: For now, good comes to both the righteous and the wicked; but then, there will be rendered blessing to those who have done well, and evil for those who have lived quickly.

BIND THEM: This is so that they will not remain mixed in and confused with the good, and for this reason, it is necessary to bind them. In this binding, there is implied the perpetuity of the penalty, that indicates their impenitence and their irrevocable damnation.

TO BURN: They will be bound to be burned in the eternal fire, as the wretched Dives cried out: *...for I am tormented in this flame...* [Lk 16:24].

1481: THE FINAL END OF THE GOOD ⁵¹: The Good Master continues now: *... but the wheat, gather into my barn...* This is the final end for the good.

PURITY: And just note that the grain is beaten and shaken free of all hay, while the cockle is not beaten at all, but put into bundles for the fire. And this means that the wicked will go to hell with all their ugliness, but the good will be well purged and scrutinized closely, because as Isaiah 35:8 predicted: *...And a path and a way shall be there, and it shall be called the holy way: the unclean shall not pass over it...*

1488: UNITY: And the Good Master said further: *...but the wheat, gather into my barn...* This is to show the unity that will be among them. Among the wicked, there are always disputes and they do not ever have union. Of the good, however, it is said that they will congregate: *...Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together...* [Mt 24:28]

TRANQUILLITY: Lastly among them, there will be supreme tranquility, and thus the master orders: *... but the wheat, gather into my barn...* [v.30] The barn is constructed for the conservation of the harvest. So, that homeland will be the barn of the Saints, where: *... there will be praise and everlasting joy shall be on the heads...* [Is 35:10].

1483: CONCLUSION: O, let us pray, my brothers and sisters, that we might be reposed and congregated, all of us, in this barn. O God, in a very short time that good Master, of whom I have been speaking to you about in this parable, you will see Him with your own eyes, descended from heaven: I will show Him to you right between these hands of mine. So, pray to Him also for me: and I will pray to Him for you. At this point, I can already feel my heart swelling beyond measure with the desire for your salvation.

⁵⁰St. Thomas Aquinas, *ibid.*, p. 186/1, about mid-way.

⁵¹St. Thomas Aquinas, *ibid.*, p. 186.2.

What more can I say to you? Love God, my brothers and sisters. And may the peace that surpasses all our senses protect your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus [Ph 4:7].

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Pr 11:29	1477
Ct 2:2	1479

Bible quote	MssB #
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t. 3, [b], bb.

1465; 1470; 1471; 1474; 1476; 1479; 1481

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Ugo, Cardinal [*In Matth 13*]

1465

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572:**SERMON 8****The Holy House transferred into our Hearts: or, Our Hearts made Temples of God**

Preached on the Illrd Sunday of Advent, in the Church of St. Paul, Campo Marzio, in the year 1801, on December 13th, for the Solemnity celebrated by the Young Ladies of the Parish at the Translation of the Holy House of Loreto. It lasted 38 minutes.

573: It is very hard for me to say, my listeners, whether these devout young ladies, so committed on this day to honor Mary, could better satisfy their intense fervor by nourishing in themselves this very tender devotion, or by spreading it also to us. The best way to achieve both seems to me in this, their solemnity, is to recall to our spirits the memory of that prodigious venture in which the holy House of Mary, taken from Nazareth, out of the hands of barbarians, was seen to fly one day over large tracts of lands and seas on angel wings, until it came to our shores in Italy, and ultimately to be set up among us in a stable manner at Loreto.

574: And what else is this if not a sweet invitation extended to our hearts? Are we not being invited to visit in spirit those sacred walls, in order to see and kiss them, together with devout pilgrims from the most remote parts of Europe? O blessed walls! happy custodians for a time of that beautiful lily of the heavenly gardens that grew within your enclosure. There the lily grew and diffused its most precious odor, that sufficed to full the entire world with its fragrance. You are more splendid than sovereign royal palaces, and there received the Queen of Heaven, **the Spouse of God**. You are witnesses of that ambassador's mission of the Angel. And what is even more, you were witnesses of that august mystery of the Incarnation. O blessed walls! A House consecrated by the divine mysteries! O what sublime, and most sweet affections you inspire in us!

575: So, I have put it very well, my hearers, that these young women could not have presented any more sweeter object for our devotion, nor could they better satisfy their own. Except, though, it seems to me that the Virgin Mary herself wishes to compensate on this point, with the present occasion with her own most pleasing obsequious devotion. If, then, it is true that all our sufficiency comes from God, and that we are incapable of ourselves to produce a single good thought - I do not know of any other source for what I will say. This is the origin of the holy thought that has formed in my mind and has remained there always with great constancy, in order to communicate it on this day to you, my entire devout audience.

576: PROPOSITION: It seems to me, my hearers, that God is asking of each one of us, on this day, our hearts. He does this so that just like the House of Loreto, so these hearts of ours, He wishes to consecrate, by making them a Temple where He resides. I will do nothing else, then, than follow in this thought the traces of the present Gospel [Jn 1:19-28]. This will prepare the path for the Lord by disposing you **to give yourselves over to Him** with even greater willingness. This is particularly necessary

should there be anyone among you with a spirit so disheartened that such an individual might refuse out of excessive timidity such a sublime coming.

577: FOUNDATION: And so that no one might think that I am perhaps excessive in proposing very beautiful considerations, rather than those based on what we believe, or practices that can be verified, just listen here at the beginning to how the Apostles speaks: *..Do you know that you are the temple of God, and that the Sprit of God dwells in you?...*[1 Co 3:16]. In fact, while it can be said that God by His immensity is everywhere, He dwells in a special manner in the hearts of the just. To these, He communicates not only grace with all gifts, but the Spirit Himself, the author of all grace and of every gift.

Now, for the sake of our leading you to love such a state even more, I beg you to consider with me for a little while, the happiness of a soul who already, must fortunately possesses Him.

578: 1. Supreme happiness of a soul in which God dwells, as in His Temple:

Absolutely: Here is such a soul, which is much like a most pleasant, delightful temple, or palace. He Himself, God, has chosen and prepared to reside there, and to find His happiness. We notice, by the way, that all Princes have a place of their delight and for their recreation. And here there is explained all that magnificence of a prince, in embellishing its balconies, providing it with superb and splendid halls, and most amenable gardens. And just where is the place of the delights for this King of Heaven - do you know where it is? Here it is: *... my delights were to be with the children of men...* What I want is to converse with them, in the most intimate way, in their hearts, and there speak with great peace, with My Servant. It is to here that He calls out to them, with sweet invitation, by saying: Come! liberate yourselves from all anxious cares, empty yourselves from all impertinent affections of this world. Then you will experience how good, how sweet is your Lord, your God.

579: How fortunate is such a soul! She does not have to arise and go about the city in the streets and the broad ways, seeking Him alone whom she loves [Ct 3:2]. But, she has already found Him Whom she loves [v. 4] - she already has found Him in the midst of her heart. Such a soul can put it even better: *...My Beloved to Me... and I to Him...* [Ct 2:16] *... I will hold Him and not let Him go...* [Ct 3L4].

What peace, then, what serenity, do we believe, my listeners, should such a soul not enjoy? St. Paul has already predicted it, by saying: *... being justified, therefore, by faith, let us have peace with God ...* [Rm 5:1]. Not only does one enjoy it in the present, but in an anticipated way, also that of the future, by hoping for the glory of God's own children, as the Apostle continues [v. 2]. David has put it well when he said that it would not come in drops, but in streams of great power that would bring joy into the soul that God sanctifies [Ps 45:5; 35:9].

580: And no matter how much the tribulations of this life seem to put up a dike to the free course of heavenly consolations, rally all they do is gather them into a greater abundance. they seem to re-double their full impetuosity, so that in their superabundance they overflow. This is why we can even glory in these trials, as the

Holy Doctor of all the just states: *...And not only so; but we glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulations work patience.. [Rm 5:3]...and patience in trial, and hope in trial... [v. 4]...and hope confounds not: because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts... [v. 5].* O, what beautiful words these are: *.... by the Holy Spirit, who is given to us.../ The Spirit of God, in fact, making the soul a participant in His love, sanctifies the person and therefore, **approaches the soul as a most sweet spouse**, dwells within her, and finds His delight there.*

581: What happiness, Ladies and Gentlemen, to have God within us! He is the supreme good Who can perfectly fulfill all our powers, because in Him are all the hidden perfections. All the just are at home here, as each one is satisfied in accord with the personal inclination. And this is why in one place in Scripture [Apoc 2:17] it is called hidden manna. Another passage puts it this way: *... Delight in the Lord, and He will give you the requests of your heart... [Ps 36:4].*

582: COMPARATIVELY: Do we love pleasurable goods? But, when could we ever have them in greater abundance than when we will possess that One Who is all good, all sweetness?

Do we delight in friendships? And what friend can be ever more dear than God? Friends love us because here is some good in us; but, it is God's love that causes this goodness. Hence, God loves us even while we are evil, in order to make us good by extending His own goodness. He loves us even in our deformity, in order to embellish us with His own glory. And who can put off such love as His? Through all your cares on the Lord, says the Prophet [Ps 54:23] and He will sustain you. He is liberal in our needs; He is light in our doubts; consolation in our travail; refuge in our sufferings; repose in our fatigue. He is our Support, our Strength and our Peace.

583: Do we love honors? But, what greater honor is there than being Temples of God [1 Co 3: 16], to glorify and to carry God in our mortal bodies, according to the phrase of the Apostle: [1 Co 6:20]. If so much honor is due to churches because they are the material temples of God's majesty, how much more should a living temple be honored both by the Angels and by other human beings? **Is not such a Temple all splendid, so interior, in which are conducted the most chaste espousals between God and the soul? This was already predicted by His Prophets: ... *And I will espouse you to Myself forever... [Ho 2:19, ff.].* I will espouse you in faith, in justice, in charity, as these are the three precious gems with which He adorns her.**

584: Surely you would like to see also the **wedding-dress of this Heavenly Spouse**. St. Paul will show you how truly wondrous it is! He tells us: *... But put on the Lord Jesus Christ... [Rm 13:14].* And to what beauty might there be compared to that of a soul whom God forms **to make of her His own spouse? The colors to paint this are lacking to me.** I will only say to you, full of stupor, with the Apostle himself: *...But whoever is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him... [1 Co 6:17].*

585: 2. Happiness is possible even to sinners: And what do you think, my listeners? I can see that on this day I could not sound more sweet chords than in the hearts of such a pious and devout audience. However, I also see still that some souls among you hold back out of an excessive timidity from such a sweet invitation as this. Perhaps there are those who are saying to themselves: O God, these are pretty things, but they are not for me.

I understand you, I understand. You do fear perhaps your grave sins and your familiar wretchedness. But, what if despite all this, I could make you see with your very eyes Christ Himself at the door of your heart? What if you were to hear Him asking to come in? Well, open for yourselves the divine Scriptures and you will read in the Apocalypse 3:20, where it is written: just listen to Christ's own words: ... *Behold, I stand at the gate and knock...* Who could doubt this, or that faith itself would not give you greater certainty than any senses you have?

586: Yes, I am standing at the gate of your heart. And of what heart is He speaking if not your own, o sinner, while He is already within the just and well received as a peaceful Possessor? He is knocking at your heart's door in this very instant with so many lights, with so many impulses. He is putting before your eyes the supreme happiness to which you can arrive, with those very affections that by chance this sermon is inspiring you. Yes, I am knocking. If anyone will open the door to me, I will come in to be with him. He speaks as would a guest who comes in the night, and means that He is forgetful of all past injury and ejection. He truly wants to be with you with the great intimacy of friendship, and to receive your obsequious response.

587: He not only says: *I will come into him...*, but also: ... *and will sup with him, and he with Me...* [Apoc 3:20]. In other words, I will make Myself right at home and allow Myself to be entertained with utmost confidence. This will be My delight, conversing in familiar manner with such a person, just as bosom friends do, and with much happiness. And this person will deal with Me in the same manner in this delicious chamber of heavenly pleasures, in the use of My Sacraments and in the communication of My most sweet and loving secrets. I will not refuse this individual at My Table. It is clear that here Christ is speaking always as a guest, but One Who is most wealthy and accommodating. And is entering the home of others He benefits this considerably and brings more gifts than He could ever receive.

588: Are you surprised at such goodness to sinners? For my part, I would be much more surprised in seeing that He is not merely content in having spoken to us of His love through His servants and prophets. But, the fact is that He has descended from heaven, has vested Himself as a man to chaste after us in Person. He is much like a King. St. John Chrysostom would say ⁵² - **He is like a King, Who has fallen in love with a lowly shepherd girl. He is resolved to take her from her hut, to bring her to His royal palace to make her His spouse. He does not content Himself merely in sending illustrious ambassadors to her, but comes down from His Throne and puts aside all His glory. It almost seems as though He were afraid of frightening**

⁵²St. John Chrysostom, *In Ps 5:2*. t. 5, 19/1 D, ff.

her with His overwhelming splendor and of confusing her simplicity. For this reason, He Himself dresses in Shepherd's guise, and looks for her through the forest. He assumes lowly and simply manners, in order that He might strike up a conversation with her and speak to her about His love.

O God, and we wonder about the transports of lovers? But, here we have a **loving King, who goes far beyond any of them being transported by His love, even to the point of leaving behind His life for us.**

What love, what love! Our insensitivity can no longer find reason for denying entrance into our hearts to a King Who is so loving and so tender, who is asking this of us, and begs this of us, only to make us happy.

589: PERORATION: That unusual jubilation that shows on your faces, beloved hearers, is even more manifest on this day. This leads me to the conviction that you have not opened up your hearts to this loving Guest. So, I could not even describe the joy that this causes me. But, at the same time - alas! - should there be even a single soul among you who has not experienced such a loving invitation, then how could my joy be perfect? Would I not be then denied the most beautiful portion of that fruit that I had already thought was the most sure?

590: However, I do not despair of this now. Just look, unhappy and wretched soul, the total boldness that inspires me, and I address myself to you, should there be such person here. I ask you to pay heed to these my final words. It is true-God wants you. God is following after you to ask of you your heart. What do you do? What are you thinking? Why do you still doubt? You see how sad your heart is, even to the point of moaning. Just think of how long it is that you find yourself captive of a tyrannical affection that oppresses you. You are anguished by all kinds of wild thoughts, fed only on suffering, closed in the shadows of sadness and fears.

You have been made for God. Why do you persist in serving sin? How many times has He not asked of you that aft so many unhappy experiences, that you let yourself open up to a priest? Why do you not return to your God, whom you have cruelly denied thus far? And is not all this really true? So you see that God Himself right now is moved with compassion in your regard, He is looking for you, **He is drawing you.**

591: Whoever you may be, o brothers and sisters, whose hearts God might be touching so powerfully on this day, have compassion yourselves on Him. Offer solace to this poor Heart, just do what He asks you, who only seeks what is best for you. What contentment you will then experience! How new it will all seem to you to experience yourselves totally belonging to God, finding yourself surrounded by so many delights, now that so many disturbances have passed! What comfort you will experience in seeing your soul, much like a magnificent temple. You will be able to converse with God with a good conscience in peace - where earlier all was a den of demons and of evil affections that troubled and pummeled you at every hour! You will find within every consolation, and will no longer be afflicted by the past, but will know

only the sweet joy of this present and the joyful hope of the future. And would you delay even a single moment in obtaining for yourself such a sublime happiness? Christ is already waiting for you. Mary calls out to you. Yes, she really yearns that you open your heart to her Son. If you should still be resisting my words, do not resist any more her loving hands.

592: COLLOQUY: Holy Virgin, behold us at your feet. to you, all our vision, all our confidence, and all our supplications are directed to you. Yes, to you is due the honor of this victory, as you have inspired its counsel. Look, even a few tears appear, expression of a more profound regret, and these will wash away past faults. It is toward you that the sinner now turns, is already resolved, and already makes hi offer. The triumph is complete.

Let us rejoice in this love, in the Mother of such beautiful love. Let us exult, all of us, my brothers and sisters. Let us praise God, let us praise Mary.

And you, most chaste young ladies, more than all others, the Virgin, your Lady, has so well compensated your obsequious offerings. You honor her house, and she has made your hearts the Temple of her son. And not only this: but because of you, great happiness has come to us. So, we hope that after having welcomed our loving Kin as a Guest in our hearts, He will make room for us in His Kingdom, where with Him we will live forever.

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Sources

OT

Bible quote	MssB #
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Fathers & Doctors

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