

# St. GASPAR BERTONI



St. Gaspar's Ecstasy painting, by A. Del Vecchio,  
behind one of the altars at Saint Paul Church of Campo Marzio, in Verona, Italy.

## Early Spiritual Writings

### PARISH SERMONS

**1802**

[Manoscritti Bertoni ## 593 – 713]

Translation into English  
Rev. Joseph Charles Henchey, CSS  
1972

Electronic Edition: Holy Thursday, 2005

1802593:

## SERMON 9

[And the Second of this Theme]The Most Holy Name of Jesus

**Preached on the Second Sunday after the EPIPHANY, in the Parish Church of St. Paul, Campo Marzio, Verona, on January 17, 1802.**

It is my task on this day to speak about that most admirable - or, rather, I should say, lovable Name of Jesus. I confess to you, my hearers, that I would be simply overwhelmed to open my mouth to respond to your most pressing expectation, were it not for the courteous expressions of your goodness had not encouraged my experience to hope for some comfort.

**594:** Indeed, the excellence of this Name is such that even after a brief consideration, I was forced, almost despairing of ever being on the level to achieve this, to withdraw from the task, because of my very meager eloquence. However, I had recourse to the most sweet amiability of this Name, so much so that this lifted up my spirits. Nevertheless, I very soon found myself before this vast ocean that opened up in front of me. For this reason, I could very well be fearful. But, by launching out and swimming a bit by courageous thoughts, I was able to make some little headway in this wavy path where almost all of my hopes had been nearly ship-wrecked.

**595:** In fear, my proposal encountered the difficulties of keeping to my arguments, just to shed some relief only on those qualities that could prove to be beneficial to the majority of my listeners, or to respond to the needs at least of some. Then, however, through my good fortune, I came upon those very golden words of **the Spouse of the sacred Canticles**. She compares the Name of her Beloved to oil that is diffused: ... *Your Name is as oil poured out...* [Ct 1:2]. I seized upon these words as the most secure support, to find assurance against every danger and to base my whole theme. I say all this to you in the sincerity of my spirit, and as a stimulus to your kindness. I ask that this kindness be moved to sustain by a more solicitous attention my mind that is still quite timid and still just wavering. so, I will now set about my task.

**596:** The fact that this Name of Jesus is an oil that is poured out, or one that is diffused, would be quite simple to establish. It could be demonstrated with the help of witnesses to this truth that I could produce of certain souls. For them, just as soon as this most sweet Name had touched their ears, it would penetrate their hearts, and would pour out, diffuse within them a most delicate unction of the most delightful affections. But, I would prefer instead to give this day a proof of the virtue of this Name on the heart of a most obstinate sinner. If I am successful, I can possibly heal it gently with this same oil. Then, on the other hand, I may also be able to satisfy your expectations by meeting the challenges of my theme.

**597:** Then, it will indeed be clear that the Name of Jesus has every reason to call itself “all poured out.” For when it is diffused into this heart, it produces effects similar in every way, as oil generally produces when spread over the members of the body, and for other human uses.

Now, among the many effects that I will consider, in the first place, there is the effect of softening. This is in opposition to that hardness which is in strong opposition to healing. This is what it offers to an obstinate heart. Let us see, then, if this Name can indeed render one more gentle, and be able to move one.

**598:** And what does the Name “Jesus” mean, if not “Savior”? Is He not a God Who has come to manifest to humanity that excessive love that He loves all from eternity. Is He not the One Who has descended from heaven so that human beings might ascend there? Did He not assume the vesture of our flesh in order to make of us **consorts of His own nature**? And did He not die to give us life, and life eternal? And does not a love of this type, of its nature, come across as most pleasing, and able to penetrate even the hardest of hearts? Is not all this true? Yet, even further, through a more distinct consideration, the more this oil goes on spreading and being diffused further, we will see it almost overcome in sorrow, as this Love has not been loved anew. It will seem that it has only paid for the injuries inflicted, and for having offended such a beneficent Goodness.

**599:** It is still not enough to insure a perfect restoration to health for a heart that has been this ill, to see it almost reduced to tears in expressing a most tender compunction. Because quite soon, a second opponent to its being restored raises its head, namely pusillanimity, or diffidence. When the sinner has come to realize his own wrongs, he comes to grip with the heavy weight of so many iniquities is such a load, that it may prostrate him to the ground. It is all such a burden, that he can hardly get back up again. The recognition that increases more and more of the sheer excessive number and monstrous deformity of sins committed, seems to diminish and render ever more weak the hope of obtaining pardon. Hence, the need is seen clearly of encouraging the person who is already downcast, and feeling lost.

**600:** But here is precisely a second effect of oil: it fortifies the members. The story of these famous gladiators is well known. Before going down into the arena to give a barbaric proof of their strength, they would rub oil over their sinewy arms and hard members. From this, they acquired a new vigor and a reinvigorated second wind in their desperate contest. But, who could be ever so disheartened that he would not feel immediately being picked up, and finding his hope made more vigorous within his breast, at just hearing this Name: Jesus?

**601:** The Name, therefore, means a Savior, not simply a particular savior of but a few, but the universal Savior of all. St. Paul writes : ... *one [Christ] died for all...* [2 Co 5:14]. Jesus was not limited by time, since He has an eternal priesthood. So, He can save anyone who approaches God through Him. He is always alive to make intercession for us, in our behalf [Heb 7:24, f.]. He is not limited to a specific number, as there can be found with Him a Mercy without any addition that would determine it,

or restrict it: ... *Because with the Lord, there is mercy, and with Him plenteous redemption...* [Ps 129:7]. And so, there can always be verified that principle, that:...*where sin abounded, grace does the more abound...* [Rm 5:20].

**602:** Thus, David would cry out: ... *For your Name's sake, O Lord, You will pardon my sin: for, it is great...* [Ps 24:11]. This clearly indicates the level of confidence that could give strength to a diffident heart: the admirable unction of this Divine Name.

And then comforted in this way, the sinner could rise up. But not even through all this would such a person be yet perfectly healed, even though it can be believed that health is now very near. Therefore, the sinner is much like a sick person who has just experienced a long and serious malady. This has much weakened his constitution and diminished his forces, even though, supported by someone else, he might stand for a while. Yet, he is still fearful and almost despairs of being able to stand alone for any length of time, without a most doleful and very easy relapse. So it is that the sinner hands still somewhat in doubt whether he can even once resolutely stand on his own two feet.

**603:** In order that such a person might proceed further in such a most important deliberation, it is necessary immediately to make provisions against all those circumstances that he might reasonably fear. It is necessary to take precautions against them, and to be sure regarding them by means of an efficacious remedy, that would entirely impede their every activity and effect.

Some of these causes are internal, and others eternal. The internal causes would be ignorance, malice, the passions. The external causes of future falls would be the devil, the occasions of sin, seductions to it, and the scandals of this world.

Regarding the former, we are here to make opposition to them by means of a clear light against the darkness of the intellect. A wholesome good may be offered to combat the unruly food of the will, and a **salubrious medicine** against the disorders of the senses. And all this, you see achieved by this most Holy Name alone. Thus, it is indeed like an oil poured out, offering light, providing nourishment, and **medicine**. All of these are the properties of sensible oil, as St. Bernard has noted so well <sup>1</sup>.

**604:** In fact, before this Name spread about, the whole world was immersed in thick darkness. But, very soon, the Apostle was chosen to bear it, as a lighted candle in his hand, held up to the King of the Nations [Ac 9:15]. From the outset, he cried out:...*Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light...* [Rm 13:12]...*Let us walk honestly as in the day...* [v. 13]. For Christ Himself had said" ... *I am the Light of the world: He that follows Me, walks not in darkness...* [Jn 8:12].

---

<sup>1</sup>St. Bernard, *In Cant.* Sermon 15, near the middle, 138.

**605:** However, Jesus' Name is not only light - it is also nourishment. St. Bernard goes on to say <sup>2</sup> when did you ever recall it to mind and not feel immediately a profound comfort? what other object so feeds in equal manner the mind of the one who considers it? What else is capable of restoring the tired senses, of strengthening the virtues, of nourishing good and upright manners, of fomenting chaste affections? All other nourishment is too dry and tasteless to the soul by comparison - just this oil that is poured out and serves as seasoning.

But, it is at the same time **medicine** against unruly passions. In fact, just as pronouncing this Name there is presented very soon to our spirit the most perfect Man who is God at the same time. He is, then, the mirror of every virtue and the font of every grace. He not only extends an invitation by His gentle example but even more inspires us with the efficacious assistance to repress these passions, and to moderate them.

**606:** The world might try to pervert with its maxims of untruthful dogmas to seduce with very pleasing illusions, of bringing corruption through false friendships. But all will be in vain, every artifice, every machination, every attempt to draw away a heart that has been anointed with this Name. It communicates the courage to flee all this right away. In fact, those gladiators about whom we spoke earlier, combat in the nude. They rub oil over themselves not only to fortify themselves, but also to make it all the more difficult for their adversary to get a hold on them, to pin them in the fray.

And like a smooth parchment resists with inherent obstinacy the unlettered hand that would write upon it - even one hundred pens would tire out before making a mark on it. A hundred pens, no matter how much they bear down, would ever leave the impression of ink upon it. In similar manner, it is even more impossible, as may be seen from what has been said thus far that in a heart in which the unction of this admirable Name, there would be any attachment, and that any impression be made that would bring harm to it from the outside.

**607:** All hell is in a frenzy, takes up arms, aligns itself in battle array, and puts its best forces on the front for the final encounter. The Psalmist of long ago gives us courage to break every assault, saying that this Name is not only holy, but that it is "terribly" so: *....Holy and terrible is His Name...[Ps 110:9]*. He almost seems to say that just as this Name "Jesus" is like a most sweet smelling oil that diffuses itself through the heart of anyone who would invoke Him - but, in like manner, it is also a boiling and fiery oil that spills out over His enemies and puts them to shameful rout in order to exterminate them.

And what does it seem to you, my listeners? Does it not appear clear to you that all the properties, or the effects of oil have been verified in this Name? The proof of this has already been placed before your eyes. I can therefore hope to have demonstrated my theme, that "the Name of Jesus is an outpoured oil."

---

<sup>2</sup>St. Bernard, *In Cant.* Sermon 15, 136.

**608:** So, dear brothers and sisters, if there are any sinners among you, just look at the kind of **precious oil that by my hand there will be spread on your wounds as medication**, without pain, and with such gentleness.

Have you then been restored to health? Has your heart that has been so hard been in any way softened? But, is there not place here for even a single tear? Where are your sighs, your manifestations of grief? Is there even the slightest indication of your revision of life? Rather, it seems to me that I can still see, and not without my great sorrow, that you have maintained to this point, and seem still decided to retain through to the end, a certain disposition that you will also take with you when you leave - that same light-heartedness and set look about you, with which you came in here tonight to hear me. What, then? Should we say perhaps that the medicine that I have brought for you is ineffective? But, how can this be, after such an evident demonstration, and even after such a sensible proof?

**609:** The divine Scriptures are clear. They even go much further than this, even to saying that there is no salvation that could even be hoped for outside of this Name [Ac 4:12]. The fault, then, is totally your own, that you have blocked the effectiveness of the medicine. You are like those death aspens that stop up their ears [Ps 57:5]. Thus, there cannot pass that health-giving unction of this Holy Name into your heart. Come on now, do something about this. It might be that in preference to this your hearts have been impressed, sculptured by other names, infamous names, of those impure idols that you love. These might still be more sweet for you, and they still might for a while be more preferred delights. But that day will come, and it may not now be very far off, when you will be stretched out on a death-bed, in bitter worm-wood when these names will change for you, when these idols will no longer be pleasing to you.

**610:** Yes, such a day will come for you. And then remembering, on your already cold and dying lips, you will make every effort time and again with a weak and trembling voice: Jesus, o Jesus! I will certainly do all I can that you hope and that you hope for all. But, what if at that hour, with all your other troubles, the most difficult of all torments you, the real suffering comes to you? This is DESPERATION, which, sad to say, has already afflicted many like you and it happens every day. This could easily happen also to you, both from the demon's suggestion and also by the malice of your own heart. Is it not so that each day it becomes more set in its ways, refusing to take such health-restoring **medicine**? What if you die obstinate, impenitent?

**611:** Then, this Name would no longer be for you an oil of sweetness, that you so ungratefully rejected while still alive. But, at that moment, it will be aflame in the fury of the already proximate and threatened justice. It will be to you as a fire horribly burning. It will lie in wait for the wicked soul, in order to engulf it in flames, thus vindicating the injustice and disgrace already heaped upon it.

How unfortunate you are! What river of tears will then be able to extinguish such a powerful fire? What confusion you will encounter from your severe Judge, the One whom before you had rejected as a kind of Savior! What horror you will experience in seeing come out against you, much like a roaring lion, ferocious and

ravenous with anger, that most meek Lamb, Who had already let Himself bleed to death out of love for you! What desperation will you undergo at seeing your eternal condemnation sealed by that very blood that had been shed for your salvation!

**612:** However, I do not want to end this sermon, I do not want to end this sermon, with its most sweet theme, with such harsh words. Nor, should I suffer because of just a few who would disturb the great majority of devoted souls who on this day have every reasons to find consolation. What more can I say to you, then, most obstinate sinners, how that I see I have directed my whole sermon to you in vain? What could I say to you?

You are even cruel in your own regard. You have become hardened in your perverse resolution to be lost. Even for this, though, I will not cease loving you, nor yearning for your salvation. I will never cease loving you, nor yearning for your salvation. I will never stop weeping over your extreme danger, without ever giving up the hope of winning you over even at the last instant. I will cast myself down before you, to wash your feet with my tears, begging you and appealing to you, to have mercy on your own selves. And if my tears will not accomplish anything in your regard, I will turn to Jesus Himself, to this crucified love.

**613:** ... *not to us, O Lord...* [Ps 113:9 {114:1}] - not to our words, nor to our tears, nor to our zeal, give glory, but give glory to Your Name: ... *but, to Your Name give glory...* You know how to open up the way to the human heart, even when senseless human beings shut off every access to you. O yes - through Your infinite clemency, infuse that oil of this, Your Name, into the hearts of those who are still obstinate. Soften those hearts, so that once they are rendered more tractable, You will strengthen them to trust fully in You. See to it that they do not despair of being able to rise up from this, and that once they have, they might be enlightened, nourished, preserved by Your Name. Let them experience all those other effects of this for which Your Name, the beloved Jesus, descended from heaven. This beloved Name has already spread throughout the whole world, much like oil poured out. To this Name be honor, praise, benediction and thanksgiving forever.

+  
+++  
+

### Sources

#### OT

|          |       |                   |       |
|----------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| Ps 24:11 | # 602 | Ps 113: 9{114:1}] | # 613 |
| 57:5     | # 609 | 129:7             | # 601 |
| 110:9    | # 607 | Ct 1:2            | # 595 |

NT

|         |       |              |       |
|---------|-------|--------------|-------|
| Jn 8:12 | # 604 | Ac 13:12     | # 604 |
| Ac 4:12 | # 609 | 13           | # 604 |
| 5:20    | # 601 | 2 Co 5:14    | # 601 |
| 9:15    | # 604 | Heb 7:24, f. | # 601 |

Fathers & Doctors

St. Bernard, *In Cant. 15*, “near the middle”, 136                      ## 603;605

+  
+++  
+

**614:****SERMON 10****The Sinner rendered Mute by Shame, invited to Confession**

**Preached in the Venerable Parish Church of St. Paul, Camp Marzio, on the Third Sunday of Lent, in the year 1802, on March 21st, in Verona. This lasted 27 minutes. This same Sermon was repeated, then, on the last Tuesday of Lent, in the year 1810, on April 20th.**

What an unhappy condition does that soul experience that has been seduced by its yearnings, the flattery of its false lovers, by the world, or by the flesh! For such an individual has conceived sin in his heart, the rather tragic sign of a faith already betrayed, in rejecting its true and only celestial **Spouse**, its God! But that situation is even more miserable when a person is tortured by the remorse of its conscience, or deeply moved by the stirrings of grace, and does not act! Some are defeated by a base embarrassment that keeps them from a sincere confession, by closing their lips. The end result blocks repentance from ever being born, without ever unburdening oneself by bringing it to the light of day. The infamous beast will bring about sure death!

**615:** And yet, how many of our sinful brothers and sisters do you think, devout listeners, are already reclining in such a deplorable state? Who, though, would not weep at such a mis-adventure? Who would not fear such an extreme danger to themselves? And who would delay any longer from helping them in their very grave time of need?

Even though the undertaking is arduous, and by far exceeds our ability, I will trust in the efficacy of the Divine word of which I am a minister. I will rely on your prayers, with which, I hope you will accompany my preaching. With these as my support, I can only confront this task with great courage. I beg and beseech you, silent listeners, that if you do hear the voice of God on this day [Ps 94:8], harden not your hearts. For the rest, I do not doubt that Jesus, in Whose Name I preach, has put to flight in the Gospel of today a mute demon from that unfortunate possessed person [Lk 11:14-28]. He can also loosen all your bonds, having expelled all vain fear, and tongues in a salutary manner.

**616:** The explorers sent long ago by Moses into the Promised Land reported back to many wrongs regarding the land to the excessively naive Hebrews, even to stating that the land devoured its own wretched inhabitants [Nb 13:33]. This is what I think has happened in your case, o sinners. For God is calling out to you, desirous of pardoning your sins and of restoring you to grace. He is exciting you, inviting you to confess your sins. But, to what avail! There is scarcely sent forward in your minds some good thought regarding the Promised Land, pointed out to you by Divine Mercy - then, there comes back to you that a rather mournful report of empty fears in your bosoms. You suffer the fear of an almost insufferable shame that you think awaits you.

**617:** The devil himself amplifies these fears, exaggerates them and depicts them so vividly to timid imaginations. He works on these false apprehensions and finally as prevailed in you, with successive damage to your soul, his deceptions regarding the truth of the divine promises. And this same one who just a while before removed all embarrassment from you, so that you could sin with even greater abandon, now redoubles in you the confusion in order to keep you from confessing in sorrow your failure.

And will it be true that in a matter of such great consequence for your salvation, you allow yourselves to be deceived by the false reports of your most sworn enemy? Does the God Who so tenderly loves you, a God who is so faithful in keeping His promises, does He merit less faith, is He less meritorious than a lying betrayer? And is it not God Who reassures you, whenever you might resolve to put down with lively sorrow and ingenuous simplicity or failings at the feet of His minister? Does He not take from you not only the confusion, but changes it into an equivalent glory?

**618:** It cannot indeed be denied, without denying the faith at the same time that He is here to remit amply and to cancel entirely all stain from your soul. No matter how grave a sin may be, while it is a genuine and sole reason for embarrassment and shame - one can be made to flourish again, and to be reinvigorated. The spirit has been put to death by the crude freeze of sin can come to life once more. It is here that the soul is washed, purified, embellished with a ray of that most pure light that the Divine Face, lovingly once more turned toward her, will communicate to her. He invests anew the soul with the precious habit of grace, places upon its head a splendid crown, interwoven with the rare gems of all the virtues. Once again, He will place on its finger, the golden ring of charity. And all the other noble gifts and rich treasures of merits that sin had robbed from the soul - all is restored, as they had been before the sin occurred.

Indeed it could even be that the soul in coming back might acquire an even more intense degree of grace than was enjoyed before the fall. For so many who have made use of the sacrament, their confession gave them a kind of beautiful garment, well suited not only to cover their nudity, but also to surround them with much glory. what is there to be afraid of by remaining so vainly in confusion, and why not rather accept the supreme honor of inestimable glory that awaits you?

**619:** All this is good, some might respond. Nevertheless, that responsibility of making known all the intimate and stark details and secrets of our hearts to a priest, is an insupportable burden to our embarrassment. What kind of an opinion will he form of us? With what bitter recriminations will he not scold us, thus aggravating all the more our shame?

I understand, I see. But, I would like you, for your part, to grasp very well from what source do all these fears of yours arise. In the last analysis, they are really nothing more than a dreary cloud-cover placed before your line of vision. by means of this, your infernal enemy, like he has blinded to many others, so is almost sure of being

able to blind you. I, though, will show you that you ought rather to await to be received by your Confessor with extreme kindness, and held in high honor in his opinion.

**620:** The priest, in fact, when he sits in that Sacred Tribunal of Penance, represents the Person of Christ Himself and takes His place. Christ Himself is very far from ever rejecting with disdain any sinner, no matter how evil he may have been. This is particularly true when the sinner shows genuine signs of repentance. So, any such person who approached Christ, He treated with much affability, as the Publicans. He treated with loving kindness the repentant tears of the lost Magdalenes, and set free in absolute liberty the adulterous women, already condemned to death. He promised to lead that very day into Paradise the thief who was on the Cross along-side of Him and who had turned to him, after first perhaps having cursed Him. If this is Christ - how then, could His Minister not treat with the same spirit of leniency, meekness, the more timid penitents who may present themselves to him? How could he ever show any horror at those **wounds** that the divine **Doctor** sets about to heal? Is it not so that to **heal** them, He did not use wine and oil, but rather poured out all of His own Precious Blood as a celestial balm? Does not the Divine **Physician** restore health with a gentleness equaled to His efficacy?

**621:** Keep in mind, too, lastly, that your Confessor is a man, similar to you. He is subject to the same dangers of falling, he is enveloped in the same weakness. He is thus rendered compassionate by the experience of his own, as well as by the sins of others. He, too, has to present himself to that salvific bath of repentance in order to cleanse his own sins.

He knows all too well the human weakness and knows that a person living in the flesh is not yet an Angel. The fact is that even the most spiritual and most holy human beings, sometimes have gravely sinned.

**622:** Whenever a Confessor sees in the penitent a heart well disposed, he desires for the sinner only his eternal salvation. He conceives a tender compassion for such a person, and his zeal is enkindled all the more. He comes to experience the fervent desire of assisting him and helping him. The Confessor witnesses your humiliations, and you change over to being just in the very act of accusing yourselves to be sinners, according to that golden line of St. Ambrose<sup>3</sup>: "...Since we are all sinners, the more praiseworthy is the one who is the more humble. the more justified is the one who recognizes himself to be the more unworthy..." The Holy Spirit Himself, however, gives even more eloquent witness: ... *The just is the first accuser of himself...* [Pr 18:17].

**623:** And where else if not in the Sacrament do you propose that a matter is scarcely sufficient for very light faults [keeping in mind, though, the very grave temptations and dangers in which human life is immersed]. Perhaps in such a case there could arise some suspicion that your confession is not altogether sincere. On the contrary, though, the more serious the sins that you manifest, how much the greater are the difficulties

---

<sup>3</sup>St. Ambrose, *De Poen.* 2, 10; 91. t. 2, 436 A.

that you have to encounter. There is much consolation in seeing you provided with a most efficacious and superabundant grace. Thus, one is supplied with an almost sure foundation to believe that you pertain already by divine preordination to that sturdy platoon of those chosen, already seen in the vision of the Contemplative on the Isle of Patmos. He saw them in their white robes standing before the Throne of God, and they had already: *...washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb...* [Apoc 7:14].

**624:** All of these reasons adopted by me up to this point are indeed quite true, and they are more than sufficient to clear away all the darkness of an excessively vain fear. However, it might even occur, which is something that I would find very difficult to accept, that the fear of some imagined shame still predominates in you. This could reach such proportions that it could render you speechless at the cost of your soul. I would desire, though, that it be precisely this fear itself that ultimately would move you to speak.

**625:** In the final analysis, it is a matter, if you do speak at all, of manifesting your troubles to a single man, to a priest who does not know you - or, if he does know you, he would cover you in compassion. Should you still be suffering some confusion, this will be but brief and momentary. There follows immediately a profound peace, a joy not experienced before, a sincere and inexhaustible glory. And as far as the past failures are concerned, they will remain buried, as it were, in the most sublime silence. They will have been placed under a most rigorous sacramental seal. In this, there is no case possible where the priest either by speech, or even the slightest gesture, or by any other external indication - made either to others, or to yourselves, outside of the sacrament - could make any mention, or give any hint whatsoever, or even arouse the slightest suspicion.

**626:** On the other hand, if at the sacramental encounter you make up your minds to be silent, a number of effects follow. Not only will you experience a most bitter conscience and a perpetual sense of embarrassment, as your consciences will continually to mull over in you the wrong committed. There will come the day in which it will all be made public and you will be discovered. You will then be standing before an entire world that will be witness to your confusion. God Himself has made it clear in the Scriptures that on the last day of the Final Judgment, that the proud sinners will be indeed shamed. They will be revealed before heaven and earth their most hidden and shameful indecency [Lk 12:2; 1 Co 4:5].

**627:** Consider now with St. Augustine <sup>4</sup> where he maintains that it is better standing before one other human being to tolerate a bit of shame - rather than on the Day of Judgment. Then, one will be confronted by many thousands of other human beings and the Angels, and having to crumble before the dishonor of a very grave rejection. Those very persons before whom you are now pressed to hold your sin hidden - will they not know all about it on that day? And your Confessor, of whom you are now so afraid, will he not also see it? What will he be remarked regarding your

---

<sup>4</sup>St. Augustine, *De Visitatione Infirmorum*, 2, 5. t. 6. Append. 258 C. - spurious.

folly, seeing that you have paid greater heed to a slight confusion now than to your eternal salvation?

**628:** What will your many acquaintances, friends, members of your own household say then? Is it not so, perhaps, that in life they nurtured a good opinion about you, while then they will be the spectators of your infamy and of your desperation?

Come on, now - since you have sinned, it is only right that you should suffer some confusion. But, at least choose the lesser of the two, by confessing your sins now - if you persist in still referring to "confusion" which really will be in you the mother of such glory.

**629:** Come now, silent sinners, what is your decision? Are you still uncertain, still doubtful? And yet you can see to what terms your choice is reduced: "Either victory, or death!" Yes, you can either generously conquer every pretext or embarrassment, or lose your soul for all eternity. The choice is either to confess, or to amend. Do you by any chance think that there is some other means that is available to avoid hell? You can fast, if you want to - even scourge your own body - condemn it to sleep on the bare earth - you can wear a very rough hair-shirt - feeding on tears and ashes - perform the works of the Saints, and even those of the most rugged among them - but, what will all this count? You will still be damned.

So, either confession, or damnation: there is no other means: either damnation or confession.

Would you confess, for example, all your other sins, but hold back on that which gives you the greatest embarrassment? But, you know very well that not to confess them all is the same as not saying anything. It means to go out from the Sacrament with the same sins as before. Rather, it even means that you will be in a more pitiable situation than before: as you will have added a horrible sacrilege to your soul. Do not let this happen! The choice is this: "Either conquer, or die": either go to confess everything, or to be damned!

**630:** What is your decision, then? Would you wait until the moment of death to make a good confession? But, if you already know that you will have to do it at that time, why not go ahead with it now? For, in the meantime the falls will be repeated, the sacrileges will be multiplied, and your confusion of having one day to confess them altogether will be considerably increased. What else? From holding back and from suppressing a shameful sin in one's heart there springs such a blindness, such a darkness, that leads ultimately to obstinacy, and then to hardness of heart. This is the final step on the way to final impenitence.

What, then, will your resolutions be? I ask you once again: what will you decide to do? Will you perhaps be able to sneer at all the devices of the evil one, your adversary? Will you be able to overcome courageously every empty fear, to put in safety this time your eternal salvation? Blessed are you, if indeed this is what your choice is. Blessed indeed are you! Begin, then, right now, if your resolution is so firm.

And you should render all the more fervent acts of thanksgiving for that mercy that has led you on this day to hear His voice and has moved your heart with all efficacy.

**631:** Do not delay a single instant in cooperating with such a prodigious and extraordinary help from God. But indeed, this Divine Mercy, through His Minister, is waiting also for you. As prodigal children who have come back, place yourselves sorrowing at his feet. You will then rise from there quickly and be able to hide your nudity in his loving open bosom. Desire nothing other than being restored, together with your peace of conscience, all the honor, all the glory and all the rights of genuine children of God.

What sweeter, or more supersubstantial banquet could be prepared for you! What more joyful festival will there be celebrated in heaven, because of your conversion! ... *there will be more joy in heaven [before the Angels of God] over one sinner who does penance...* [Lk 15:7].

+  
+++  
+

### Sources

#### OT

|           |       |
|-----------|-------|
| Nb 13: 33 | # 616 |
| Ps 94:8   | # 615 |
| Pr 18:17  | # 622 |

#### NT

|             |       |
|-------------|-------|
| Lk 11:14-28 | # 615 |
| 12:2        | # 626 |
| 1 Co 4:5    | # 626 |
| Apoc 7:14   | # 623 |

### Fathers & Doctors

St. Ambrose, *De Poen.* 2, 10 91. t. 2, 436 A # 622

St. Augustine, *De Visitatione Infirmorum.* 2, 5.

t. 6, append. 285 C, spurious

# 627

+  
+++  
+

**632:****SERMON 11****On Devotion**

**Preached on the Tuesday after Easter, in the Venerable Church of St. Paul's, Campo Marzio, in Verona, in the year 1801 [1802 ??], on April 20th.**

The lovable Master, Christ Jesus, enters on this day among His disciples, to console them with a royal testimony of His glorious resurrection, extending peace to them: *...Peace be to you; it is I, fear not...!* [Lk 24:36] And yet, who would believe this? At such a consoling sight, and with His words of such genuine affection, they were all terrified, as though they were seeing some horrible specter. They paled before Him and trembled as though at a mournful announcement of a said death: *... but they, being troubled and frightened, supposed they saw a spirit...* [v. 37].

Is this surprising to you, my listeners? The scene is in truth quite unusual, but not altogether rare, even in our own days. How many Christians are there not even among modern Christians, who withdraw in fright from approaching their Lord more closely! How many express fear rather than coming to serve Him with greater perfection in their state! They do indeed at certain times, feel alive, with lights penetrating into their minds, and at the same time, experiencing strong but gentle inspirations in their hearts. But to what avail! The more evident pledges and surer offerings of peace become for them as many arguments for discouragement and consternation.

**633:** They look upon the devout life as an object of sadness, of anguish and horror. They make quite clear by their very actions, the extent of the errors and deception anyone would be subject to who would care to judge spiritual matters with an earthy eye, even carnal. What means is necessary, then, to straighten them out? Let them just briefly suspend their judgments until I have spoken. And I will do my best to have them consider devotion under such an appealing, joyful and lovable aspect that they themselves will hasten avidly to embrace it.

Come here, therefore, all of you, who have formed such a false idea of genuine devotion: come with me while I clarify your view from all deception. And so that we might proceed with some better order, I believe it best not to expose with some contrived order, I believe it is best not to expose to you the naked truth, if first you do not pierce the darkness that perhaps impedes your admiring eye, it is not cleared away.

**634:** Devotion, then, according to the image that your senses might draw of it, might seem rather to be a dreary matter, instead of a desirable part of life. It might come across as pallid and pale of visage, severe in its look, horrid in its likeness. It is seen as a reality that thins down the flesh by perpetual fasting; it lacerates the back with heavy scourging, the whip never being taken out of the right hand; it covers under a coarse garment the harsh hair-shirt. It is thought to flee discourteously sweet friendships, and is hostile to every delight, insensible to every pleasure. It is viewed as making every haste to close itself up in total solitude. It is understood as riveting one's

knees immovably to the ground, seeming to nourish one solely on tears, and sighs as the only sign of life. Should it ever once in a while allow one to come out into public view, it would only beg for insults, so that it would then return satisfied with shame.

**635:** I know that some perhaps will tacitly find fault with my shrewdly having been excessive in exaggerating an objection, that might bring real harm to my theme. However, such a concern is so far from me that precisely from such a gloomy description, I am planning to draw the strongest argument possible. And what is it, then, that one would want to conclude from such formidable premises? Does this mean that devotion is indeed less attractive? My response will be precisely the contrary.

In fact, I pose this question: is there lacking to devotion, all covered over in such a severe guise, by devotees and lovers? I see rather to my wonder that every age, both sexes, of every condition in life, every walk of life - witness avid followers seeking devotion. How many have not been seen, and are still being noted among the ranks of generous young people, still in the flower of their lives, so full of hopes -still turn their backs on splendid nuptials, to offer to devotion alone their right hands? In like manner, how many gracious young women, put aside all their delights and comforts, do not still make every haste to enclose themselves in solitary cloisters, to make themselves more tranquil companions to devotion?

**636:** And how many among the wealthy, who live in great abundance in their state, entirely despoil themselves of it all, and put it all aside, in order to run more freely and agilely along the desired paths, to follow Devotion. How many others declare themselves happy to have exchanged ample honors and the most sublime dignities, for the most hidden and neglected abjection. And lastly, how many have there not been who put down the much sought after scepters of power, and glorious diadems from their foreheads, in order to enroll themselves among the faithful servants of Devotion, in order to serve her laws in obedience. These facts, illustrious as they are luminous, are not rare in the world. Such deeds may be attested to in abundance in the memories of so many people, and they surpass beyond measure the stories of all the centuries.

So, it is necessary to conclude that there can be found in devotion a beauty, a sweetness, a wealth, an exultation, a glory that we do not expect to find at first sight. But, the fact is that so many have loved her, and at this beloved sign, they have shown that they prefer devotion to all the beauties, delights, treasures, and honors of this world. And it is fitting to note further that all that very frightening exterior matters nothing in arresting so many fervent lovers from such a harsh pathway in following her.

**637:** Right here, then, is the deception. The majority only look at some of the externals of Devotion. Anyone, though, who does this, does not consider the interior consolation in which the authentic servants of God abound, that is all the more sweet as it is all the more secret. This is that hidden manna: *....which no man knows, but he that receives it...* [Apoc 2:17]. This is that perpetual banquet enjoyed by a secure mind in peace of heart [Pr 15:15]. This is that most sweet conversation with uncreated

Wisdom from which is excluded all boredom, all bitterness [Ws 8:16]. O, how good is the Lord to those of upright heart, exclaims the Psalmist [Ps 72:1]. And in another text [Ps 30:20]: *...O how great is the multitude of Your sweetness, O Lord, which You have hidden for them that fear You...!*

**638:** Now if it is indeed true that among its harsh points, devotion appears nonetheless so beautiful and lovable to anyone who looks at it attentively with a well purged eye, what will happen, then, if we rise above such horrible externals? It could not fail to draw after it most gently bound, our hearts that are still weak and infirm. The time has come, then, that I should descend to unmask the other deception that is committed in making judgments about Devotion. For one is to define it solely from externals - I would like now to show the other extreme. That would be to try to present what is particular and proper to a few, to make this common and almost necessary for all.

**639:** What a great misconception this might easily be seen if one would put in mind the more exact definition that is proposed with St. Thomas<sup>5</sup>. with him are all the more learned and illustrious masters. They hold that **true devotion essentially consists in a will ready to give oneself to God, and to be dedicated to those matters that pertain the more to His services.** Now, while it is true that God calls all to serve Him, and indeed all can, and it is fitting that all should aspire to be sanctified in their state of life. Nonetheless, it is false to think that God wishes to be served by all in the same manner. It is necessary to attend to the difference of the states in which all human beings have been constituted by the same Divine Providence.

**640:** For this reason, Devotion ought to be practiced in one way by a religious in a cloister, and by a lay person in the heart of the world - and differently by a sacred minister in the offices of his Church than by a father of a family in the government of his own home. God is served one way by a virgin who dedicates herself to God, and a married woman who is also obligated to her husband. Genuine devotion does not disrupt any kind of vocation, for indeed it would not be authentic if it should impede even in part, the duties proper to one's state in life.

True Devotion equally has wings to fly to heaven, as well as feet to walk on the earth. While it has hands that are continuously in motion, it knows how to repose its heart in God. It has eyes to maintain the vigil, to supervise and to take care of temporal matters. and at the same time, it has an even more acute vision in the human mind never to lose sight of one's last end. It knows how to enter into counsel with the divine good pleasure in its every action to direct all to His glory.

**641:** Devotion endows one with a tongue in order to speak with other human beings. And, at the same time, secretly, it opens up as many other mouths, all of one's internal potencies in order never to cease praising and blessing its God. Devotion enables one to treat with the world and, at the same time, converses in its spirit in the heavens - thus emulating, as it were, those blessed fellow citizens there. By means of

---

<sup>5</sup>St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 82,a. 1,c.

love, Devotion draws God to itself and possesses Him in the abundance of peace, and rejoices already here on earth in another paradise.

**642:** Therefore, it is admirable gentleness with which it permeates all actions, giving that unchanging uniformity of spirit. The world can perceive nothing in it that makes it stand out from the ordinary, in the mannerisms, the activities, and the duties proper to the state of life of the devout person. And yet, there is no end to the wonder at being forced to love in Devotion an indescribable singularity and sense of the divine, that the world does not know. In prosperity, it does not raise itself over the less fortunate - and in adversity, it does not give in to sadness. It rejoices in the happiness of others, as though it were its own.

**It surrenders all its own personal choices,** and extends a discreet condescendence to the gifts of others, provided these are upright. It communicates in goodness its consolations to those who are prostrate in affliction of their spirits. It is most liberal with its friends, and generally beneficent towards all. Without any pretension, it awaits from its God alone the reward, and it is in His service alone that it delights.

**643:** I could just keep on going, my hearers, in speaking to you about such a lovable virtue, if time were not hurrying me on. Yet, the time allotted does not make me hurry so fast that I will miss heading into the port. What are your views now, then, regarding Devotion? And where are all those difficulties that seemed so overwhelming that you objected against my view? Where are those horrible hues with which you depicted Devotion? Does the reality not now seem altogether different from that which you had judged Devotion earlier? Is the view now not all joyfully, sweet and lovable? You see, then, that also today I have lived up to the expected promise to which I committed myself from the outset.

**644:** And now, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, now that there have been removed - as I hope it is so - those difficulties which alone distanced your spirit from the devout life, what remains? What else is there other than for you to follow with every readiness the impulse of the Holy Spirit? Is it not enough for you now for you to **offer your hearts** at this point to Jesus Christ who is asking this of you? Is it not up to you still, then, to resolve efficaciously **to serve from now on**, all the days of your life, that God who merits so well your **obsequious** service?

**645:** You have been given being and life by His creative hand and for this reason alone you were introduced into this world: to know, to love, to praise and to serve the author of every good. You have been created to promote His glory on this earth, thus to merit also yourselves a glorious recompense up in heaven, a perfect beatitude, enjoying and possessing your God forever.

**646:** You have been purchased back by the Blood of a God; you have been adopted as children of the King of Heaven You have been made sharers in the divine nature by the habit of grace. So, you are not our own, but belong to God, to serve Him alone: ... *we are debtors, not the flesh...* [Rm 8:12]. We are not enslaved to flesh and blood in order to have pleasure in depraved desires. We are rather servants to the Spirit, to allow yourselves to be governed gently by His instincts and to follow His principles. You are no longer of this earth, as though you had to follow this world. But, you are celestial, to work and to live as saints.

**647:** ... *The time is short...* [1 Co 7:29]... *for the fashion of this world passes away...* [v. 31]. We are taking giant steps forward every day and are preparing for a stable eternity. So, all that we still have to do should be done in great haste [Jn 13:27]. Should we wait for the night, perhaps, before setting down to work [Jn 9:4]? Should we await the arrival of the spouse, in order to provide our lamps which have almost gone out [Mt 25:1-13]? Should we wait until we are invited to the **nuptials** to prepare only then the **nuptial garment** [Mt 22:12]?

**648:** ...*Behold I come quickly...* [Apoc 22:12]. I am here among you and I bring My reward with me: [b.]. How happy is that soul who will be adorned and disposed to receive Him Come, He will say, come, My Spouse, receive the crown that your Lord has prepared for you forever <sup>6</sup>: ...*Blessed is that servant whom the Lord, when he comes, shall find watching...* [Lk 12:37]. ...*The Lord will say: well done, good and faithful servant, because you have been faithful over a few things, I will place you over many things...* [Mt 25:2]...*Enter into the joy of your Lord...* [v. 23].

+  
+++  
+

**Sources**

OT

|          |       |          |       |
|----------|-------|----------|-------|
| Ps 30:20 | # 637 | Pr 15:15 | # 637 |
| 72:1     | # 637 | Ws 8:16  | # 637 |

NT

|                     |       |                |       |
|---------------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| Mt 22:12 [nuptials] | # 647 | Jn 9:4         | # 647 |
| 25:1-13 [Spouse]    | # 647 | 13:27          | # 647 |
| 21                  | # 648 | Rm 8:12        | # 646 |
| 23                  | # 648 | 1 Co 7:29      | # 647 |
| Lk 12:37            | # 648 | 31             | # 647 |
| 24:36, f.           | # 632 | Apoc 2:17      | # 637 |
| 37                  | # 632 | 22:12 [Spouse] | # 648 |

Liturgy

Common of Virgins, Vespers [ Epousals ] # 648

Fathers & Doctors

St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life* ## 632-648  
 St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 82, a. 1 c # 639

+  
+++  
+

---

<sup>6</sup>Liturgy of the Common of Virgins, Vespers.

**649:****SERMON 12****Love for God****[To be imitated in St. Aloysius Gonzaga]**

**For the Sixth Sunday dedicated to the above-mentioned saint, that was the Third Sunday after Pentecost. Preached in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio, on June 27, 1802.**

There is perhaps no other name that is able to penetrate with equal delight the delicate ears of a gentle heart than the word "love". Nor is there any more pleasing spectacle that can be offered to the eyes that is more moving, than to see other hearts follow the triumph of a victorious love, after having been **wounded** and conquered by another.

**650:** To you, then, gentle squadron of young people, devoted to running along in the blessed footsteps that in his early years your angelic Protector and example, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, has traced out for you. To you, therefore, on this special day, I direct my sermon in a particular manner. What other theme could be more suitable that could resound here and be heard from my lips, than "love, love"? And under what more beloved vision could I draw for you than the fervent emulation of your Saint - if not he, as the happy prisoner, who would draw you after him with the sweet chains of that love that was so beautiful that it held him bound?

**651:** You can see already that I am speaking of a celestial, supra-human and divine love. And I also take note, nor is there any need to hide the fact, that this nude abstract word delights from the very outset, as much as would an object that is so superior and sublime that I have proposed for you. Yet, such admiration is so surprising that your senses remained suspended from taking any flight. In fact, every step of your affections remain quite timid. However, this is not too upsetting to me, as I believe I have already seen the reason for this. if you would just allow me to move your hearts, right and docile as they are - allow me courteously to enter them with my theme. I am sure that right away I will treat them with every kindness in order to achieve that goal. It is towards this now that the Saint himself turns in his own gaze of love.

**652:** From every day experience it is known to all that secret and wonderful power that draws iron to the magnet. It attracts with a gentle violence and succeed in uniting it to itself. A similar sway is exercised over the human appetite by good. So, just as soon as it comes from the intellect that grasps it and proposes it to the will, that it draws it to itself and unites itself gently and embraces it. And this movement of the will towards good is precisely that which is called "love." You can see what a wondrous, but true reality this is. It happens at times that a good that is all the more sublime in itself, that has, therefore, the greater force to attract - yet, all the less does it move the will In fact, it may even exercise the contrary effect, and of itself, the will rejects it.

**653:** Just imagine an illustrious princess, endowed with beauty, gracious youth, good fortune, honor, good moral training, tastefully dressed, and all this in abundance. It seems that all these embellishments compete with one another to see which predominates to make her the more lovable. The imagine a simple, unlearned shepherd, not used to courtly manners, moved by some inexplicable yearning to see her. He enters into the royal palace and sees the sweet majesty of her virginal decor. There he is able to observe the noble appointments of all her other, very rare qualities. And then we see him, suddenly astonished and fearful, hastily withdraw his eyes and retreats. And if you want to know the reason for this, it is not because the goodness is all that grand, but rather because he considers himself in total disproportion.

**654:** In fact, the Wisdom writer assigns proportion as the principal cause of love: ... *Every beast loves its like; so also every man that is nearest to himself...* [Si 13:19]. Now, this is precisely your situation. I have extended to you an invitation to divine love; but you, considering the Divinity as a good in its supreme sovereignty that is excessively disproportionate to your own extreme lowliness and wretchedness. What wonder, then, is there that you then experience deep within a timidity, and that your thoughts and affections end up in confusion? But if now there is already uncovered the cause of your fears, it would be easy for me to destroy them, in order to set your heart in complete freedom.

**655:** We are made up of two substances quite different in themselves: soul and body. If we do want to consider the bodily part, I can well concede that we will not find between God and us, only disproportion and a lack of fittingness. St. Augustine<sup>7</sup> would say here that God is not color, so that He could be taken in by our eyes; He is not taste, in order to be experienced by our palate; He is not sound in order to be heard by our ears. Nor is He any other material quality in order for Him to have been the slightest convenience for our senses. However, if it is true that from the external sensible world we do obtain our most just reflections on the soul, as this is the superior and the formal part of ourselves - so, then, right here we will be able to find much proportion and suitability.

**656:** Our soul is spiritual: and God is likewise spiritual. His Being is most simple, incorruptible, immortal. God is pure intellect and His will is most free: the human soul is likewise endowed with free will. But, what good would there be if trying to uncover other similar particular points of contact, when God Himself makes clear to us in the Scriptures that He has formed us in His image in creating the soul:

**657:** ... *Let Us Make man to Our image and likeness...* [Gn 1:26]? And so, just as the soul in the unity of its substance represents the unity of the divine nature - as it is in the three distinct potencies, the most august Trinity of persons. Even more perfectly: just like God knows Himself and loves Himself as the most perfect good - so, too, the soul is capable of knowing God and also to love Him. And would not such a great relationship of similarity be sufficient to display the most sensible affection of satisfaction and of love?

---

<sup>7</sup>St. Augustine, *Confess.* 10, 6, 8. t. I, 173/D.

**658:** But I can sense that some would want to object to me: but, God is supreme good, and we are miserable, defective, sinners. Just observe, though, how I will make use of this very objection in order to conclude in my favor. God is indeed Supreme Good, you say: and, therefore, I immediately reply then He is supremely communicable. The Philosopher understood it in these terms <sup>8</sup>: good, in that it is the more perfect, it is all the more diffusive.

**659:** We are indeed wretched, and if you want, miserable to the extreme: then, that means we are needy also to the extreme of help and of goodness. Furthermore, our spiritual potencies have a marvelous capacity, since they are perfectible to an indeterminate degree, according to this word: *...and he that is just, let him be justified still...* [Apoc 22:11]. Now, what could be more fitting, more suitable to an infinite goodness that yearns, and I would almost say, without any restriction, to communicate His perfections - than to find one as capable as well as deprived and needy of every type of good?

Even among human beings, those who are genuinely liberal are not made happy when they find someone as rich as they are. But they do rejoice when they meet the poor and the needy, so that the lavish on them their wealth, while they rejoice deep within. Would not this be all the more true regarding God?

**660:** He is not content, in fact, just waiting for them, or hoping to encounter them. Rather, He goes in search of the most needy, and calls them strongly, crying out through Isaiah: *... All you that thirst, come to the waters: and you that have no money, make haste, buy and eat: come buy wine and milk without money and without any price...Why do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy you? Hearken diligently to me, and eat that which is good, and your soul shall be delighted in fatness...* [Is 55:1, 2]. Christ Himself has stated: *... I have not come but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel...* [Mt 15:24]. *... I have come to save that which was lost...* [Mt 18:11]. *... that they may have life and may have it more abundantly...* [Jn 10:10].

**661:** Now if all this still seems insignificant to you, I would further add that our hearts are so made for God that there is nothing outside of Him that could not be brought into proportion with Him. What else do those very broad desires,, that inability to be satiated with any good, or pleasure - all of which only enkindle the appetite the more? Does not all this imply that the goods of this world are indeed out of proportion to the fullness of our hearts? Does not all this tell us that a heart that is almost infinite in its yearning can only find its fulfillment in a good that is likewise infinite? But, now it is time that I come to the example of Aloysius Gonzaga in order to convince you with his example.

**662:** It can very well be said that Aloysius had just begun, at the first light of his dawning use of reason to know God, that he already began to love Him. You could

---

<sup>8</sup>St. Thomas Aquinas, I, q. 5, a. 4 ad 2 um.

have seen him, still a tender child, in the most remote corners of his home, seeking his God in solitude. And just as God is always ready to manifest Himself to anyone who would seek Him in simplicity of heart, so Aloysius committed himself to Him. He strive in all his thoughts and affections that nothing else would distract his mind, nor occupy his heart. This was why he worked so diligently at the custody of his senses.

**663:** He elevated his spirit, already orientated toward a most sublime contemplation of the divine beauty. As his knowledge of this increased, in like manner, so do his love. And o, how I wish that I could show him at the foot of those altars. When there was granted to him to receive his God for the first time under the sacramental veil, how expressive his face became! From that warm flow of tears from his eyes, you could come to know that flame. Could you not imagine that fire burned and even raged in his young chest - and what rapid progress this fire made within Aloysius?

**664:** The world with its hardy obstacles would close off all the paths in order to hold him back in its clutches. But, the love in his heart had already become strong and most vigorous. This opened wide for him that which he chose to follow in order to be more united to the Good he had chosen. He wished to enter into the peaceful enclosure of a cloister. And it is here that his love grew to such a sublime level that in just the few years that remained to him, one could no longer tell if this was really just Aloysius, or rather God Who lived in Aloysius.

**665:** In his mind, God was all that mattered. In his will, the only affections were those for God. Whenever he spoke, his conversation centered around God. And in his eye, all that he saw was God, as nothing pleased him other than his God. All his exterior actions were not only dedicated to God, but there was evident in him an inexplicable sense of the divine. This was at such a level that in any activity that he undertook, the hearts of the many who noticed him were moved all the more toward divine ideals through devotion. The mere sight of him more than any other specific means very often was more than enough to excite them to fervor.

**666:** This, then, is the height to which love carried Aloysius. It was not without purpose that I wanted to trace his path, as though he ascended by so many steps. This is the journey that he took. My hope is that your hearts are already directed in this way, having put aside your initial fear and hesitancy. I am hoping that now you are animated, and almost spurred on to follow him. Your hearts will rejoice even more as you learn better how to direct and guide your steps more securely in this way even to the goal desired.

**667:** So, my listeners, we have already arrived at the end of the six Sunday's that we had promised in honor of St. Aloysius in preparation for his Feast. This was all to dispose ourselves better with the imitation of his most beautiful virtues. I do not know any better way that we could conclude this than by exercising our spirits with his example for the love of God.

**668:** So, my hearers, if we should only know who God is slightly, what sublime joy would be ours to be able to love a goodness that is so sublime. And what an immense good is it for such a holy love to be so fecund in us. I am convinced that with this we would forget all else, and even our own selves, so that all our thoughts, all our affections would be of God - of, in God alone.

**669:** So, let us push aside once and for all the darkness, this gloom that is so thick and dense around us that it blocks our view. Let us receive at this opportune moment that vibrant ray of light that already comes alive in this moment, enkindling our spirit of

faith. God commands us to love Him and threatens us with eternal death if we deny Him this love. He promises us with eternal life and Himself as a reward to anyone who loves Him. He has taken the initiative in loving. Even before we existed, He loved us. We could not even think of Him, and He had already taken the most tender care of us. He lavished upon us a large abundance of the goods of nature and grace upon us, while it still was not even possible for us to recognize the benefit, and much less the beneficent Hand from which it all had its source.

**670:** We have finally come to know this, and even more that His goodness was paid for by the most base ingratitude. Even though we were hostile and ungrateful, He never ceased to love us, and it even seems that He reinforced His love. O, my listeners, just a glance at this cross, and it will clearly testify how this Man-God has already paid for your hearts, with the dear price of all His Blood. And to whom else will we give these hearts of ours if not to God?

**671:** Our souls are the adopted children of God. We bear impressed upon them the most illustrious likeness and clear image of Him. By grace, we have been raised above our own nature, by being divinized, deified, made like the very one the Angels dedicate themselves to serve with ambitious courtship. Christ is our Brother and with Him we have in common the inheritance and the kingdom.

A soul, then, of such exalted origin and embellished with such ineffable qualities - to whom should we give ourselves as **Spouses?** To whom, other than to the divine love?

Let us love God, then! Let us love God!

+

+++

+

### Sources

#### OT

|                 |              |                |              |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>Gn 1:26</b>  | <b># 657</b> | <b>Is 55:1</b> | <b># 660</b> |
| <b>Si 13:19</b> | <b># 654</b> | <b>2</b>       | <b># 660</b> |

#### NT

|                 |              |                   |              |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------|
| <b>Mt 15:24</b> | <b># 660</b> | <b>Jn 10:10</b>   | <b># 660</b> |
| <b>18:11</b>    | <b># 660</b> | <b>Apoc 22:11</b> | <b># 659</b> |

### Fathers & Doctors

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| <b>St. Augustine, <i>Confessions</i>, 10, 6, 8, t. 1, 173 D, ff.</b> | <b># 655</b> |
| <b>10, 10, 17. t. 1, 176 E</b>                                       | <b># 655</b> |
| <b>St. Thomas Aquinas, I, q. 5, a. 4, ad 2 um</b>                    | <b># 658</b> |

+

+++

+

**672:****SERMON 13****Respect for Priests**

**For the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost - September 26, 1802, Verona, in St. Paul's, Campo Marzio.**

There is a truth that is so evident that is in a way in need of being brought forward. It is dogma of faith, already established even by an Ecumenical Council <sup>9</sup>. The truth is that human beings have nothing of their own but falsehood and sin. There is every reason, then, that by the constant opinion of men and women that through the infallible sentence as well of the Gospel of today, Lk 14:1-11: Anyone who would exalt himself is judged worthy only of shame and humiliations: ... *Because everyone that exalts himself, shall be humbled...* [v. 11].

**673:** It is not in this way, most gifted listener, this is not the way to be exalted by God. Whoever possesses Him as a most just good and a well-founded right to that honor and that glory that much like one's shadow, merit proceeds along at equal place. Hence, in this case, if it is well thought over, there is not so much honored what pertains to men and women, but rather that which is of God that may be found in them. God's gifts merit always greater esteem, and every reverence of human beings wherever they may be. His gifts are given as coming from His most sublime providence.

**674:** If this is the way it is, and this truly is the situation, on the one hand, I cannot find any whom God wised more in this world to be exalted than His priests. So, on the other hand, I see that many run the real risk of making themselves culpable of a seriously grave, harmful and insufferable presumption. I cannot grasp, unless with great damage to their consciences, why so many among our Christians, so many, give signs of understanding so poorly and venerating even less, a dignity that is so sublime and a character that is so sovereign.

**675:** The very fact that I am speaking to you here today regarding the respect due to priests can only be a theme that is very necessary for some among you. For others, it will prove very useful, and at last opportune for everyone. For this is a day in which with such solemn ceremony, we have seen for the very first time this morning this fine young priest ascend the altar <sup>10</sup>. Our eyes were loving spectators, with tenderness and happiness We have this day been witnesses of such a sublime, portentous, and ineffable exaltation.

**676:** The fact that you owe, ladies and gentlemen, an obsequious subjection to priests appears in the first place from that super-human dignity with which they have been invested by the Most High King of Heaven and earth. St. Paul has said: ... *Let a*

---

<sup>9</sup>Denz. ## 793; 811, ff,

<sup>10</sup>**Translator's Note:** It seems that this is the homily for a First Mass of newly ordained Priest.

*man so account us as of the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God... [1 Co 4:1].* This is the right idea that the Christian People should form of its priests. This is the way in which one should refer to them: this is Christ's minister; he is a dispenser of the heavenly ministries. this is an Ambassador of the supreme Monarch, just as the Apostle expressed himself in another place: ... *For Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors, for God, as it were, exhorting us... [2 Co 5:20].*

**677:** Now, if so much honor and respect is attributed to the ministers of an earthly king and to his ambassadors, by all his subjects, what do you think should be the obsequious reverence due in this case? What reverence do you think would be fitting to these most illustrious ministers of a court that is not of this earth, but of heaven? It is noted that the princes of this world are so solicitous that there be tendered to their delegates an honor that is almost the same due to their own august personages. This is so true that they do punish any outrages with that same severity meted out to those who would offend them in person. God will not do otherwise when it is a matter of the honor due to His ministers.

**676:** By grace to attend to the force of one's senses with which He Himself forms but a single law, in *Ecclesiasticus*: ...*with all your soul fear the Lord and reverence His priests... [Si 7:31]... With all your strength, love Him who made you: and forsake not His ministers... [v. 32]... Honor God with all your soul, and give honor to the priests... [v. 33].* Three separate times he repeats the same precept. And how many other times does He not command that His ministers should be loved, revered, feared, as well as directing that they should be honored. This only goes to show clearly that in the very first place, after God, honor, reverence and love are due to them. He Himself has constituted them that they should take His place and represent to us His image here on earth.

**679:** In the old law God commanded that the blasphemers of His divine Name should be stoned. His judgment also was that the lack of respect toward priests was a situation no less worthy of death. These are the very words of another one of His laws, in *Deuteronomy*: ... *But he that will be proud, and refuse to obey the commandment of the priest... that man shall die... [17:12]... And all the people hearing it shall fear, that no one afterwards swell with pride... [v. 13].*

**680:** He was not even content with having determined such a grave penalty that would then be carried out by the leaders of the people on the culpable. He Himself anticipating their judgment, in more than one case, carried it out Himself. Hardly has the three proud Hebrews appeared, Core, Dathan, and Abiron, the first among the people, to insult the new priesthood of Aaron, that there opened a fearsome gulf at their feet. They were suddenly swallowed up in it, along with their numerous family and their rather substantial holdings, all enveloped together, in a whirlwind of flames, down into its most gloomy depths [*Nb 16:1-19:22*].

**681:** Another time, forty youths got together on the top of a hill to mock a prophet who was going that way. Among their shouts and their laughter, they said to him: ... *G up, you bald head, go up....! [4 K 2:23].* But what a tragic ending their ridicule had!

For, by the order of God, from the near-by forest two hungry bears came forth, and they attacked the worldly flock. In a very short time, the animals made of their tender, but crushed and torn members big meal, by filling their stomachs. Thus, God chose to punish hem, judging their childish prank to be no less a wrong than the crime of their unhappy elders. It seems that their parents had done nothing to restrain the foolish temerity of their very unfortunate children.

**682:** Many other examples! For the fact that he raised his voice a little out of duty, brought upon Elias a royal command. And did this not cost the lives of that Tribune and his entire company of fifty soldiers sent after him? Thus, God has shown to what extent he wished those ancient priests and ministers of His to be honored. And they were nothing more than a figure of the priests of the New Law, and of the even more illustrious ministers of his Gospel. Indeed that old law was nothing more than a shadow of our more perfect law of grace.

**683:** It would suffice to ponder that sovereign and indeed divine authority that Christ had communicated to them. The reason is that we are convinced that all reverence that might be given to them is insufficient for the eminent character with which they are endowed. The Divine Redeemer had cured that paralytic of which mention is made in the Gospel [Mt 9:1, ff.]. The whole crowd looking on practically lost sight of such an extraordinary happening, as they were most amazed in considering these authoritative words: *...your sins are forgiven you...[v. 2]*. Thus, it is clear that the divine **Physician** chose to heal first the soul of that sick man, even before his body. And they began to say among themselves: *... who is this man who forgives sins? Who can forgive sins but God alone...?* [Lk 5:21]. Does it not seem to you, my listeners, that you could repeat these some words about even the least of priests? Is it not so that when any priest raises his hand to absolve you, do you think: 'who is this man who forgives sins? Who can forgive sins, but God alone...?'

**684:** And you see here an authority that is proper to God alone, by means of His extension, He has communicated it to priests: *... Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained...* [Jn 20:23]. What prince, what king on earth has such power? Even more, what saint, what Angel in heaven, has indeed been commissioned with such sublime authority over the Mystical Body of the Church? And yet, what wonder is there that God has chosen to subject to priestly authority all the subjects of the broad kingdom of His Church - when, in fact, He has subjected Himself, who is its Sovereign, to it?

O most lofty, sublime, o ineffable dignity of priests! For they call down on earth their God - and he obeys: *... the Lord obeying the voice of a man...* [Jos 10:14]. Thus, he inclines, comes down, to be under them, even to being held and blessed in their hands.

**685:** I do not know, my hearers, whether up to the moment you have garnered valid arguments to submit yourselves with a good spirit to the authority of your priests. I am not sure whether you revere in them such an august character. With this last phrase, I have touched upon the main argument, that is the crown and the complement of all the

others. Nonetheless, I will not cease investigating other arguments still, as for yourselves it is almost too important, such subjection. And I really want to present what would be a strong motive for your interest.

**686:** Tell me, please, what good in the order of your salvation could you hope for without such a just dependence - when all the good you have received up until now has it not come to you through any other hands than those of the priests? This is an argument of St. John Chrysostom <sup>11</sup>. If no one can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, unless first being reborn in the water and the Holy Spirit; and if it is true that anyone who does not eat of the Flesh of the Lord is deprived of eternal life; and if these gifts cannot be had other than through the hands of priests - then, who, without their works, can either escape the inextinguishable fire of hell, or achieve above those incorruptible crowns that have already been prepared?

**687:** For priests have brought you into life and regenerated you through Baptism; through their mediation you have put on Jesus Christ and have become members of His holy Body. Your parents have generated you into this world, and meant you for heaven. They have given you a life which they cannot defend against the maladies that assail it, and much less, can they keep you from death. How many times, though, have priests been able to rescue your weakened and dying soul. How many times have they restored you to life, to grace, even when you were already in the very threshold of hell to be eternally buried there. How often have they snatched you right out of the hands of demons, and closed the doors of that horrendous prison, by reopening the gates of heaven. How often have they adorned you in your nudity, filth and deformity with those earlier gifts and your lost beauty.

**688:** If indeed you have now already grown and you abound in spiritual riches, it is because of those who have nourished you with the salvific pasturage of the divine word. It is because of them who set the banquet table for you each, with that supersubstantial food, and with that angelic bread is ministered to you by their hands. If you are at peace in the depths and the calm of your hearts, if your enemies do not prevail over your spirit, and if among the threats of a disturbed justice, there can still be seen in the world the ever propitious countenance of mercy - much is due to priests. By their office and by institution they pour forth daily and most efficacious prayers to the Almighty for common peace and tranquility. They offer on these altars that Host that is so acceptable to the Divine Father in order to placate His disdain against sinners. They offer this to incline His favor on the desires of the just, and finally to open up an inexhaustible mine of graces to respond to the spiritual and temporal needs of all. In the last analysis, it is the priests, perhaps uniquely and alone, who watch over what is for the greatest good for the salvation of your souls. They are responsible to render a most strict account to the severe Judge, in the same way as they must for their own souls.

**689:** The time has come now, my hearers, for me to take advantage of that generous confidence that your courteous presence inspires in me. After having pondered up

---

<sup>11</sup>St. John Chrysostom - precise citation not given here.

until now, on what is best for you; now grant me these last few minutes at least for my own benefit. The evidence of the arguments adopted here by me have brought to light in you, as I am sure they have - a sentiment of veneration and dependence on the priestly character and authority. All this, though, is uniquely for your own advantage. Provided you keep the order already established by God, you merit His grace. He considers as rendered to Him the honor show to His ministers. the most precious fruit that you gain from the same order maintained by you, are indeed all the benefits that are necessary and that lead to your salvation. All this, He has annexed and bound to your dependence on His ministers.

**690:** The priests themselves, then, do not draw any personal benefit from this - whether they are revered or not by other human beings. Either way, it does not increase nor diminish their praise of God, for which He alone proves them. I will say even more. It would be in their behalf if they could desire this without bringing harm on you, to be held in low esteem and scorned by you. Truth itself has made known to us: *...blessed are you when men shall separate you, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil... [Lk 6:22]... for behold your reward is great in heaven... [v. 23]/*

**691:** Do you really know what is best for us, rather what we can yearn for, as our only good? Well, I will tell you: when we assist our fellow human beings in order to obtain salvation, we should come with mutual dedication, assisted with prayers by them in order to achieve this. Since we are superior to you in dignity, like the Angels in our office, we remain men by condition, equal to you by nature. There weigh down upon us on all sides the same tribulations, we are assailed by the same enemies, we are threatened by the same dangers, and even greater difficulties.

**692:** Yes, it is true, my listeners. If, for you, it is impossible, as I have already demonstrated, to obtain grace and salvation without us, as for me, I have no hesitation to state that I am much afraid of my own negligence and tepidity. With such an excessive burden, the concern I have is to lose myself before this Judge Who clearly states: *... Horribly and speedily will he appear to you; for a most severe judgment shall be for them that bear rule... [Ws 6:6].* This is the situation unless the prayers of many do not precede to render Him more propitious and placated.

**693:** We are certainly nothing more than very fragile fir trees in comparison with that very robust cedar of Lebanon, Paul, the Apostle. Yet, in so many of his Letters he seeks nothing other as recompense for the faithful for his tremendous travail and solicitude in their behalf, than that they pray incessantly for him. It almost seems as though that he stood in need of being held up by the prayers of the whole world. In his need, he had already spread out a protective shade by his more than paternal care of them. Inspired by such an example, we, too, exhort your charity not to defraud us of this most necessary reward for us, no matter how meager our fatigue may have been for you.

**694:** Pray, pray very much to the Lord for all your priests, for those especially who watch over your way of life, both interior and your exterior conduct for the good of your spirit. Do not ever forget also this priest before you now, the useless servant who

now speaks to you. He is the most needy of all. Pray so that it might never happen that after having preached to others, that he himself become a castaway [1 Co 9:27].

+  
+++  
+

### SOURCES

#### OT

|                             |       |         |       |
|-----------------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| Nb16:1-19:22 [anti-priests] | # 680 | Ws 6:6  | # 692 |
| Dt 17:12                    | # 679 | Si 7:31 | # 678 |
| 13                          | # 679 | 32      | # 678 |
| Jos 10:14                   | # 684 | 33      | # 678 |

#### NT

|         |       |           |       |
|---------|-------|-----------|-------|
| Mt 9:1  | # 683 | Lk 14:11  | # 672 |
| 2       | # 683 | Jn 20:23  | # 684 |
| Lk 5:21 | # 683 | 1 Co 4:1  | # 676 |
| 6:22    | # 690 | 9:27      | # 694 |
| 23      | # 690 | 2 Co 5:30 | # 670 |
| 14:1-11 | # 672 |           |       |

#### Magisterium

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Trent, Denzinger, n. 793 [ Decr. on Justif.] | # 672 |
| Denzinger, n. 811, ff. [Can. on Justif.]     | # 672 |

#### Fathers & Doctors

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| St. John Chrysostom, <i>On the Priesthood</i> [no citation] | # 686 |
|---|-------|

+  
+++  
+

**695:****SERMON 14****On the Universal Judgment**

**For the First Sunday of Advent. Preached in the Venerable Church of St. Paul's, Campo Marzio, in the year 1802. November 28th.**

*...Fear God and give Him honor, for the hour of His judgment has come...*

[Apoc 14:7]

*...The great day of the Lord is near, it is near and exceeding swift: the voice of the Day of the Lord is bitter, the mighty man shall there meet with tribulation... [Sop. 1:14]*

*...That day is a day of wrath, a day of tribulation and distress, a day of calamity and misery, a day of darkness and obscurity, a day of clouds and whirlwinds... [v. 15]. [Is 13:6, ff.].*

**696:** Give way yourselves to such loud shots and cries, because that day God has set for universal devastation is now near. You will see the most robust arms fall down languidly, and the most staunch hearts will weaken and melt. The insides of all will be contorted in most bitter pains, and unbelieving eyes will stare at one another, lifeless and consumed by fear. This is the terrible day, so cruel and full of indignation, wrath, furor. This will place the whole earth in solitude and sinners will be dispersed from this world. The stars in the heavens will no longer send down their rays; the sun will be darkened from the instant of its rising, and the moon will no longer shed the light of its beams. A great and terrible day: *... and who can stand it...?* [Jl 2:11].

**697:** My God, how and when will this terrible day come? St. Peter cries out: *..But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away, with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with the heat, and the earth and the works that are in it shall be burnt up... [2 P 3:10]*. Now, when will this day come? The Apostle responds: *.... For when they say: peace and security; then shall sudden destruction come upon them as the pains upon her that s with child, and they shall not escape... [1 Th 5:3]*. But, more specifically, when will it be? The Gospel answers this one: *... But of that day and hour no one knows... [Mt 24:36]*.. *as in the days of Noah, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be... [v. 37]*.

**698:** *.... For as the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, even till that day on which Noah entered into the ark... [v. 38]....And they knew not till the flood came, and took them all away; so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be... [v. 39]. ...Fear God, then, and give him honor, for the hour of his judgment has come... [Apoc 14:7]*.

I would, however, not even be happy, my listeners, that you this evening should see that the judgment is indeed near at hand. I would prefer that you consider it already present. Do not wait from me the order and manner of expressing this in such confusion. I would not want to note in you a sterile stupor, or just apparent grief. My

theme here seeks rather a much more solid resolution on your part, to better, or even to change your way of living,

**699:** Look around you in the meantime, for the world itself gives the appearance of being a desert. The skies are covered with a dark and funereal sack-cloth. Across the burnt out face of the earth, it still seems to be smoking from the vast conflagration. Nothing passes over it but an ominous silence from on high. Where are those powerful and populated cities now? Where are those monuments and those proud trophies, raised up by ambition and display? where are those broad fertile and delightful fields? Alas! where now are their so avaricious owners, where are your fanatic lovers? - ... *And the voice of the harps, and of the musicians... shall no more be heard in you... [Apoc 18:22]... And the voice of the bridegroom and the bride shall be heard no more in you... [v. 23]. ... for the fashion of this world passes away... [1 Co 7:31].*

**700:** Indeed God has already sent four angels: ... *standing on the four corners of the earth... [Apoc 7:1]* - to announce with the strong blast of trumpets the end to the mute, sleepy world. Arise, all you dead, arise! - ... *And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hell gave up their dead that were in them... [Apoc 20:13]: ...there was a noise, and behold a commotion: and the bones came together... [Ezk 37:7]* - and the dust dispersed by the power of the Almighty God came together" ... *behold the sinews, and the flesh came upon them: and the skin was stretched out over them... [v. 8].* Arise, you dead. Heaven is open, hell has been closed. The blessed souls fly joyfully to revive those members that served through life for their sanctification, and now are companions in their glory.

**701:** The souls of the damned come forth from their pits and violently they are forced to be imprisoned in their old bodies. They are horrified to see themselves immersed in such fetid and monstrous looking filth. This permeates the air with a heavy odor, and frightens them with its horrid specter. And yet, this is indeed your body, o vain woman, unthinking young man. this is what you pampered with such care, what you dressed with such delicacy, that you loved unto such perdition! O wretched human being, to what have you dedicated your thoughts, your concerns, your loves? " Arise, arise, come now to judgment!" Come to the great valley, to the valley: ... *and I will bring them down into the valley of Josaphat and I will plead with them... [Jl 3:2].*

**702:** Flee, o sinners, run away from the sword of an angry God: ...*Where shall I go from you spirit? Or, where shall I flee from Your face... [Ps 138:7].* What, then would you do in such a terrible day of visitation and of such bitter calamity? to whom, then, would you turn in the quest for help? How wretched I am, what will I do when God arises to judge me? And when he asks me for an explanation, what will I ever be able to respond to Him? Where will I be able to shield myself from Your indignant face? - ... *Who will grant me this, that You may protect me in hell, and hide me until Your wrath pass...? [Jb 14:13].* In vain, will sinners dry out: ... *And they shall say to the mountains and the rocks: fall upon us, Hide us... Cover us...! [Apoc 6:16].*

**703:** ... *and immediately the sun shall be darkened... [Mt 24:29]... and then shall appear the sign... in heaven... [v. 30].* The Cross is raised on high. Sinners, here is

the Legislator, the Judge Who alone can save, or condemn you [Jas 4:8, ff.]. *...Behold, he comes on the clouds... and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him...* [Apoc 1:7] ... and crucified him with so many sins. And they will have much to weep about over Him, all the tribes of the earth [Jl 2:3; Apoc. 1:7]. *... a fire shall go before him, and shall burn his enemies round about...* [Ps 96:3]...*For behold the Lord will come with fire, and his chariots are like the whirlwind...* [Ps 66:15]. All will be engulfed in the flames. And after Him there will be only be the solitude of a desert. There is nothing that can flee from His hand: majesty, power and glory will be over-turned. His ardent and heavy wrath are most difficult to sustain: His lips are filled with indignation, and His tongue is much like a devouring flame. His spirit is like a torrent that inundates up to the neck, in order to submerge sinners in His impetuous flood.

**704:** *... So shall it be at the end of the world. The Angles shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from the just...* [Mt 13:49].... *and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats...* [Mt 25:32]. What a bitter separation this will be! Forever, the son will be divided from his father, the mother from her daughter, the brother, the spouse - from brother and other partner, friend from friend. Some will go to the right, others to the left. Two may have lived together in the same family: two might have worked in the same office; one is taken among the elect, while the other is abandoned among the reprobate. The elect will be taken away on white clouds to meet Christ, with peaceful and joyful countenances. He invites these to His bosom and to repose: *... Come all you blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...* [Mt 25:34]. And thus, they will be seated, forming a kind of majestic crown around Christ, and they: *... shall tread down the wicked when they shall be ashes under the soles of their feet...* [Ml 4:3]. This is also in accord with this other thought: *...do you not know that the saints shall judge the world...?* [1 Co 6:2].

**705:** *...And the wicked shall fall after this without honor, and be a reproach among the dead forever: for he shall burst them, puffed up ad speechless, and shall shake them from the foundations, and they shall be laid waste, and their memory shall perish...* [Ws 4:19]....*They shall come with fear at the thought of their sins, and their iniquities shall stand against them to convict them...* [v. 20]. *... The heavens shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him...* [Jb 20:27].

Some have not known how to overcome human respect on their way of life, or now to put aside a little embarrassment, just by whispering their sins into the ear of one of God's ministers that would be beneficial for their salvation. At that time, they will suffer the useless confusion in seeing their most hidden shame then laid bare before the whole world.

**706:** In but a single point are the innumerable and grandiose benefits of God distinguished from their most ungrateful lack of correspondence. They manifest the strange abuse made of heaven's most outstanding gifts. They reveal the whole wonderful mechanism of infinite kindness, that always sought to lead them to penance and to salvation. They come to realize that it was not so much grace that was lacking

to them, but that they were deficient in regard to the grace offered. They will know all too well, then, how empty without it would be their lives. They come to understand how wrong were their habits and manner of dress, so little in accord with the Gospel of Christ. they came to see finally their exaggerated human weakness was against God's Law.

**707:** We, too - the elect, will then cry out against sinners - were vested in the same nature, enmeshed in the same weaknesses. And yet, we always supported that weight as sweet and light. This is the very same weight that you did not even want to look at, thinking it as insupportable. Other saints will chime in: we, too, were sinners, and great sinners at that, once. And yet we were able to overcome both the occasions as well as the habits, and our excessive self-respect in order to convert our hearts totally to God: ... *Then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them, and taken away their labors...* [Ws 5:1].

**708:** At this sight, the wicked will remain disturbed by a horrible dread. They will be overwhelmed with the sudden blow that scarcely preceded their ruin. They will then say among themselves, but too late, their words of repentance. These will be interrupted with the troubled groans of their anguished spirits. They will cry out: are not these the very ones that one day we had derided and made fun of them. How senseless we were! We thought their lives were crazy and that their ends would be without glory: and now look, just see how they are computed among God's children, and their sort has been placed among the saints. Therefore, we are the ones who were wrong, we fell by the way-side, along the path of truth. We tired out along the way of iniquity and perdition: we have walked along difficult paths, and we have ignored the Lord's way. Of what benefit was our pride? What good now is the pomp of that wealth we enjoyed? All these realities have passed like a shadow. But now, there is no time left: time has run out.

**709:** But, what about Your mercy, divine Judge?

If they have abused this in life: now they will experience Me and call me: 'Merciless, Merciless' [61:6]

But, what about Your blood?

They did not want to make use of it for their salvation. Let it serve them now unto condemnation.

But what about you, Guardian Angels, holy Advocates? And you, what about you, Mary? Mary!

Yes, they all did their share, they prayed for all in the proper time, as long as life lasted. Now, in the awesome flood of the excited wrath of God, there is no one who would either want to, or be able to approach them. Rather, all are committed to glorifying His justice. They cry out: ... *Yes, Lord, God Almighty, true and just are your judgments...* [Apoc 16:7]. Now, o Kin, o Lord: revenge, revenge against Your enemies!

**710:** O sinners, sinners all! The judge has already sounded against you His immutable sentence: Desist from your sins, desist from them. Depart from Me, go away from Me, you accursed...: ... *depart from Me, you accursed, into everlasting fire,*

*which was prepared for the devil and his angels...* [Mt 25:41]. Struck and knocked down to the ground by this lightning stroke is the experience of sinners. The earth already trembles under their feet and chasm opens up. Stones crash down upon them burying them in the deepest abyss. And the earth once more closes over them, and the chosen remain alone with Christ.

O blessed sort of the just, who will be with God, always with God! O wretched sort of sinners, to pine away, always separated from God! What an unequal lot, and yet equally unchangeable! O eternity! Human beings go beyond time, and already are at Your doors, and are established in Your house: there they will stay forever. O eternity, o eternity!

**711:** Why would you delay any longer? Why do you hesitate from throwing yourselves into the arms of this Mercy while there is still time? Act now before this Mercy gives way to all our offenses, to an enraged Justice - why not? Now is the acceptable time for our repentance: for then, it will be absolutely vain and useless. These are the days to insure our salvation. On that day, all hope will be lost: ... *for it shall surely come, it shall not be slack...* [Hab 2:3]. When we are least thinking about it, it will come.

To neglect a matter of such importance, is the same as declaring to wish one's own damnation. To put off deliberation, means to expose oneself to the supreme danger. It is the matter of a soul: once it is lost, it is lost forever. This is a matter of a state that will be perpetually unchangeable. This is a concern of an eternity, either of glory, or of pain. Why, then, do you delay?

**712:** This Man-God, our Judge, no matter how tenderly He loves us as a loving Father, acts in a given way so that He will not lose us eternally, His Children, under the scourge of His most just vengeance. He threatens us, He warns us, and cries out strongly so that we do not fall under the bitter fatal blow. He commits all His Blood in order to wash our sins. He shows us His merits, because we are invested with the just rights of His Kingdom. He makes us participants in His satisfactions, to lighten for us the weight of our penance: ... *Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you...* [Mt 11:28].

**713:** O merciful, infinitely kind Lord! Indeed anyone would be most worthy to share with the demons should he refuse now to participate with such a good Lord. It is only right that such a person should experience all the fury of Your inflexible justice. This is fitting for whoever would disdain Your most excessive Mercy. Anyone rejecting You, merits to be struck down on that day,, with that very bitter condemnation: "Depart from Me!" this will be the lot of anyone who still remains deaf to the gentle invitation: "Come to Me!"

+  
+++  
+

Sources

|              |            |                    |             |
|--------------|------------|--------------------|-------------|
|              |            | <u>OT</u>          |             |
| Jb 14:13     | # 702      | Ezk 37:7           | # 700       |
| 20:27        | # 705      | 8                  | # 700       |
| Ps 96:3      | # 703      | Jl 2:3             | # 703       |
| 138:7        | # 702      | 11                 | # 696       |
| Ws 4:19      | # 705      | 3:2                | # 701       |
| 20           | # 705      | Hab 2:3            | # 711       |
| 5:1          | # 705      | Sop 1:14           | # 695       |
| Is 13:6, ff. | # 695      | 15                 | # 695       |
| 30:27, ff.   | # 703      | MI 4:3             | # 704       |
| 66:15        | # 703      |                    |             |
|              |            | <u>NT</u>          |             |
|              |            | <u>S</u>           |             |
| Mt 11:28     | # 712      | 1 Co 7:31          | # 699       |
| 13:49        | # 704      | 1 Th 5:3           | # 697       |
| 24:29        | # 703      | Jas 4:8            | # 703       |
| 30           | # 703      | 2 P 3:10           | # 697       |
| 36           | # 697      | Apoc 1:7 [Pierced] | # 702 [2 x] |
| 37           | ## 697 698 | 6:16               | # 702       |
| 38           | # 698      | 7:1                | # 700       |
| 39           | # 698      | 14:7               | ## 695;698  |
| 25:32        | # 704      | 16:7               | # 709       |
| 34           | ## 704;713 | 18:22              | # 699       |
| 41           | ## 710;713 | 23                 | # 699       |
| 1 Co 6:2     | # 704      | 20:13              | # 700       |

+  
+++  
+