

St. GASPAR BERTONI



Some paintings at Saint Paul of Campo Marzio Church, in Verona, Italy,
where St. Gaspar Bertoni preached most of the parish sermons.

Early Spiritual Writings

PARISH SERMONS

1807

[Manoscritti Bertoni ## 1297 – 1463]

Translation into English
Rev. Joseph Charles Henchey, CSS
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1807

1297:**SERMON 38****The Spiritual Life**

For Low Sunday, April 5th [98], of the year 1807, Verona, in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio.

With what desire, most illustrious listeners, and my most gentle brothers and sisters, with what desire always comes over me when I ascend here in this place to speak.. And with what pleasure there is for me to speak to you, God knows. Moreover, today I cannot hide my joy, I do not know how to contain my rejoicing.

Having just completed in these past days, the laments of penance, and your justification being completed, celebrated in these days, as I believe, today, for all of you, is Easter. I see you, then, risen in Christ, walking joyfully in newness of life, solicitous to hurry on with the disciples to see Christ in Galilee.

1298: I am speaking, then, with men and women who from fear and contrition, ascend with sureness to the confidence of divine mercy. You have ascended from the joys of this world and from its consolations, through compunction and sadness that is from God. You have now passed over into a holy devout exaltation, into a vibrant spiritual joy in the Holy Spirit. Hence, it is not so much that past sins remembered give pain, as the memory delights and influences the desire for eternal rewards. You are indeed happy, and I call myself blessed today in that I share in your joy.

1299: However, my tongue is not free except to serve the most bold dispositions of your and my heart. You are running along quite well: I have to feel joy, and I must congratulate you. I cannot hold back from exhorting you to move your bodies along toward heaven, even to touch the blessed goal toward which you tend, without ever going back to retrace one's steps. I exhort you not even to give a glance at this unhappy earth, from which, as a sorrowful bitter place, you have by now much distanced yourselves.

1300: If you have risen with Christ, I have to take on the sonorous expressions of St. Paul and put them on my own lips:*Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above; where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God... [Col 3:1] -mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth... [v. 2]. - ...for you are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God... [v. 3].*

Here are two very strong reasons for this: I will only try to explain them to you. I promise you on such a day of much joy that my sermon will have much consolation, and as is my custom, it will be brief.

1301: First of all, *you are dead*. There are various kinds of death. Bodily death: according to this, Abraham, being dead, yet was not dead, since God [the Gospel

speaks, Mt 22:32] is not a God of the dead, but of the living. Then, there is the death of the soul. Christ alluded to this in His saying: *...let the dead bury their dead...* [Mt 8:22]. Another, very praise-worthy death is that which comes from virtue, of which the Doctor of the Gentiles writes in this same place: *...Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth...* [Col. 3:5]. There is still another death, the cause of the antecedent one. This is achieved in Baptism, or in Penance, which is a laborious Baptism. It is of this that St. Paul wishes to have you understand how it is that you are *dead*.

1302: He explains this quite well himself in the Letter to the Romans: *...For we that are dead to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?* [Rm 6:2]. This is about the subject of this death. And what does it mean to be *dead to sin*? It means not to make any more use of sin. Baptism has accomplished this once, and Penance has renewed it: it has put us to death to sin. It is necessary now to carry this death out with our solicitude, that whatever sin should command us, or evil passion, perverse affection, we are not to be obedient, but to be totally deaf to it all. We will thus be as dead, and let us persevere immobile.

1303: A person who is deceased, said a Saint ¹, never speaks badly of another. The dead do no injury, violence, offer no calumny, oppress no one. They show no envy toward the good, and do not insult the evil. Luxury does not pamper their flesh, nor do they burn with hatred. They do not adulate the powerful and the rich of this world, nor are they attracted by a restless curiosity. They do not seek the applause of the crowds that surround them. They do not chase after gold or silver, or rich, and pompous trappings. They do not cultivate honors, and do not respond to injuries. Pride does not swell them up, ambition does not vex them, and vain glory does not agitate them. The false wealth of this life does not elevate them, the insane fury of wrath does not perturb them. The frail beauty of a face does not fascinate them. This is what it means to be dead, dead to sin: not to be spent on earthy attractions, animal-like affections, the desires of this world and of the flesh.

1304: The Apostle continues: *...Know you not that all we, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in his death...?* [cf. Rm 6:3]. [You add to this: or washed in the blood of Christ, or Penance]. This is the manner of such a death: Baptism and Penance are our Cross. This is also our sepulcher. We are, in fact, the Apostle continues: *...for we are buried together with Him by Baptism unto death...* [v. 4]. This is so that each one of us would die as he has died, although not in the same way, he has died in the flesh and was buried; we are meant to be both of these in regard to sin. Both of these are 'death', but not of the same subject. The death of the flesh, that is Christ's death to sin, is ours: and both the former, as well as the latter, are true *death*. However, even though this is true, it is fitting that we should still contribute all that activity that is expected on our part. Thus, the Apostle adds: *... that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life...* [v. 4].

¹ cf. Cornelius a Lapide, in Col 3:3; Rodriguez [t. 3, tr. 1, 23, 2 (99)].

1305: Having thus proposed the future resurrection, St. Paul requires another resurrection of us, a new institution in the present life, for the changing of our ways. When, in fact, a fornicator becomes chaste, or an avaricious person becomes merciful, or a wrathful individual becomes meek, there takes place in these instances a *resurrection* which is the principle of the future, And how is this a resurrection? Because one dies to sin, and resurrects to justice. The former way of life is cancelled, and the new and angelic way almost flourishes anew. Thus, we can say with St. ANSELM²: intemperance has died in such a person, and sobriety has risen up; in that young man impurity has died, and purity has risen. In that woman, uncleanness has died, and modesty has arisen. On hearing *new life*, let each one seek out in himself much diversity, and great changes.

1306: However, the thought of how much virtue the Apostle might ask of us makes one weep, especially in seeing how much weakness there is in us. After Baptism, we have gone back and aged in the old vices, and after the Manna from heaven, we have again sought out the vile food of Egypt. Even, we have been rejuvenated so many times and liberated from slavery, and we have fallen right back into that sad old age of sin, and once more put our hands freely within chains. Now, however, in this Easter we have once more risen to grace and died to sin. Do we not now wish no longer to abuse such mercy, and to persevere with every effort?

1307: Would that past sins, I repeat yours, and never could sufficiently: would that all past sins were buried, as this is the gift of grace. Would that after penance, we would keep ourselves as dead. This is the challenge for our commitment, although we see that even in this, grace must help us very much. Penance does not only cancel previous sins, but also confirms one against future lapses. As we have employed in the sacrament what is our part, namely contrition, the accusation and the will to make satisfaction - so, we also for the future, commit the care of our dedication not to become contaminated anew.

1308: This is the counsel of our apostle, and he proceeds: ... *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection...* [Rm 6:5]. With this word *planting*, there is implied also the eventual fruit that is expected in us and from us. Just as the Body of Christ buried in the ground, had for its fruit the salvation of the world - so we, too, planted anew in Penance, we have borne the fruit of justice, of adoption, of sanctification, and of numberless gifts. We will bear also later on the gift of the resurrection.

1309: All this while our lives are hidden with Christ in God [Col 3:3]. As this fruit of blessedness is to be produced, it is necessary to let it come to maturity. We could still say much about this plant of death, but already without even being aware of it, we have touched upon the more joyful motive of the fruit of life. This, too, contains some difficulties at first sight to understand it, so cutting this out of love for brevity, with just the idea dropped, let us move on in haste to the **second thought**.

² Cited by Cornelius a Lapide, Col 3:3.

1310: And let us see right away how there might be explained this hidden aspect of our life with Christ in God. Our brand new life is the life of grace that we possess. It is the life of glory that we await. Both of these are hidden from the eyes of the world. The world has no knowledge of this new kind of life, that is interior, spiritual and holy. In fact, the world thinks of it with abhorrence, and esteems it as melancholic and death. Furthermore, such a life proceeds covered under the humble veil of mortification, of apparent sadness and of corporal tribulations. And grace, the virtues, and the gifts, that are like the soul of this life, remain intimate in the spirit, and enclosed in the mind.

1311: And the good, points out the Holy Father, AUGUSTINE ³, the good remain hidden because their good is concealed. What they love is neither visible, nor corporal. And thus, their merits are held back in secret, as are their rewards.

St. GREGORY THE GREAT also explains to you how these virtuous individuals are hidden in God. Thus, he writes in the Gift Book of his *Moralia* ⁴: Anyone who loves to mortify himself, rejoices much in the repose afforded in contemplation. Such a person is dead to this world, and is shielded from all the perturbations of human realities in the bosom of the interior life where he remains in obscurity.

1312: To cite still another example, CORNELIUS a LAPIDE ⁵ relates the story of the Holy Count, Eleazar, immobile in his mountainous solitude, lived there a celibate life with his virgin wife, Delphina. She sent him letters to find out how he was getting along. He responded: I am healthy of body and safe. **If you wish to see me, look for me in the wound of the side of Christ. For it is there that I dwell; and here it will be easy to find me. You will search in vain in any other place.**

Do you see, my hearers, **the just idea of a person risen with Christ?** Could such a person even yearn for the lowly realities of this life? Could such a one seek for anything else in this life, other than the supernatural and heavenly goods, among which he will live eternally?

1313: But, precisely this life of glory, in the hope of which we now glory, is much less known and seen by the world. Similarly, there is not seen the glorious life to which Christ has risen, and of which He lives in God, that is, near His Father. This is why St. Paul states [Col 3:3, ff.] that our life is hidden with Christ in God: ...*When Christ shall appear, who is your life [i.e., the cause of your life], then you shall also appear with Him in glory...* [v. 4]. This is just like the pearl, says St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ⁶, whose end is hidden as it is in its shell.

³ *Enarr. In Ps 53:3* [t. 4, p. 493 g].

⁴ 5. 5 [t. 1, p. 91, 1 B].

⁵ Col 3:3.

⁶ *In Epist. Ad Col.* Hom 7, 2 [t. 11, p. 227/2 D].

1314: Even more fitting is the example that St. AUGUSTINE ⁷ uses to dilucidate this passage, that later St. ANSELM [100] would copy. In the bitter **winter** even the green tree seems dry to the sight. As the summer approaches, the living root once again is vested with fruit. This is our life, that is much like that **winter**, when the sun is further away from us and concealed behind the clouds. This sun for us is Christ.

1315: We are much like the plants, dry on the outside, and without foliage, without honor, and without the appearance, or the luster of beauty. However, within we have living roots: charity, planted in God, as in a vital, stable, and living earth. The summer will appear, as the glory of Christ comes. And the plants will be seen to come to life again, rising up, and once more give their fruits and vital foliage. There will be the glorious traits of beatitude, both in the spirit as well as in the flesh. Come on now, exclaims St. AUGUSTINE [104], come now, most sweet Jesus, that this pact with You be a firm one for me: that I might die totally to myself so that You alone might dwell within me. Within, totally in recollection, I will keep silence, so that You alone might speak in me. I will be totally at repose, so that You alone might work in me. The Apostle cries out: *... And I live now, not I; but Christ lives in me...* [Ga 2:20].

1316: And in another place: *...But our conversation is in heaven...* [Ph 3:20]. And: *...But you are not in the flesh..* [Rm 8:9]. And again: *... having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ ...* [Ph 1:23]. These are some of the sublime affections of a person dead to sin, one who no longer has a taste for the tings of this earth. These **are the sublime feelings of a spirit living hidden together with Christ in God**. Such a person seeks only the **superior realities, those that are of heaven, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God** [Col 3:1]. These are the sweet transports of a heart ravished by the sweet hoy of these holy thoughts.

1317: You, though, my hearers, you also prove how true is that which I promised you at the beginning: that my sermon should have been a reason for much joy among you. And so, to keep my word perfectly of abbreviating it as much as possible, I will soon conclude [and I can do this handily, and you are absolutely right, wise that you are!]. At any rate, it is totally fitting for you and with all diligence to persevere in your holy proposal to tend in a lively way, toward heaven, without even turning an eye to this earth. If you have indeed **risen with Christ**, seek those realities that are above you, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God: taste those heavenly goods and not the earthly ones [Col 3:1, ff.].

1318: Heavenward, then, my beloved brothers and sisters, to heaven your thoughts, to heaven direct your affections. Elevate your hearts to heaven, where your treasure is, where your glory is, where your life is. The riches of this earth will flatter you, its honors will enchant you, all of which this earth offers you. But, this is not your life. When our life will indeed appear, we will then seek the delights, the leisure, the repose. And then we will find the riches, but without thorns; the pleasures, but without sadness; the honors, but without jealousies. We will be inebriated by the divine delights [Ps 35:9]. And we will be seated in the beauty, in the tranquil order of peace

⁷ cf. *De Script. Vet. et Nov., Test.*, Serm. 36, 4. [t. 5/1, pp. 176 G, ff.].

[Is 32:18]. And in the very bosom of God we will have rest from our fatigue, without any necessity to disturb us, without adversities that wear us down, without upsetment that would disturb us.

1319: In the meanwhile, as long as our life remains hidden, let us be content with keeping ourselves, and even being considered to be dead: *...we have been crucified to the world, and the world is a crucifix for us...* [Ga 6:14]... thus, we will mortify ourselves as the apostle goes on to say: *...mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth...* [Col 3:5]. He mans: you are already dead; persevere in this death by mortification.

1320: Mortify in you the members of the old man, the sinner in Adam [Col 3:5, ff.] these members are the passions, that even after Penance, they come to life again with their acts which are, as he explains immediately, fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is the service of idols [v. 6]. For all these, there comes, or has come, the wrath of God upon the children of incredulity, reveals to he sight of God and to the Gospel: *...in which you also walked some time, when you lived in them...* [v. 7].

1321: *...What fruit, therefore, had you,. Then, in those things of which you are now ashamed...* [Rm 6:21]. Would you like, then, to return to your vomit? Exhume your sin, put yourself back into slavery, throw away the most copious redemption of Jesus Christ? Would you annul the priced of so much Blood, call down this Blood upon yourselves, with all the intolerable weight of His wrath? Would you exchange the supreme future goods that have been promised to you, for the abysmal evils from which God has dug you out? Would you choose rather the glory of your state, an eternal shame; the rights for an inheritance, for a sentence of condemnation? Would you swap divine filiation and its honor for infamy, for a brute-like life? Would you prefer the flesh to the spirit, the earth to heaven, paradise for hell?

1322: No, of course not! To heaven, to eternal life, to heaven, you have been called. You are already well along your way, and moving along with giant steps. Follow through to the goal, to your heavenly home. You have been enrolled by God for an eternity to be the citizens of heaven, domestics, heirs of God. Upward, then, with all vigor, with all your strength, hurry onward, hasten your steps. The saints await you, already sure as they are of their happiness and solicitous also for yours. Christ awaits you, and has already prepared a place for you - rather, a throne. Why do you hesitate, why look anymore to earth, to heaven, to heaven! **If you have risen with Christ...**

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SOURCES**OT**

Ps 35:9 # 1318 Is 32:18 # 1318

NT

Mt 8:32	# 1301	Ph 1:23	# 1316
22:32	# 1301	3:20	# 1316
Rm 6:2	# 1302	Col 3:1, ff.	# 1317
3	# 1304	1	## 1300;1316
4	# 1304	2	# 1300
5	# 1308	3	## 1300; 1309; 1313
21	# 1321	4	# 1313
8:9	# 1316	5	## 1301; 1319; 1320
Ga 2:20	# 1315	6	# 1320
6:14	# 1319	7	# 1320

FATHERS

St. AUGUSTINE, *Ennarr. In Ps 53:3*. [t.4, p. 493 G] # 1311
De Script. Vet. et Nov. Test. Sermon 36, 4
[t.5/1, pp. 176/G ff.] ## 1314;1315
St. GREGORY the GREAT, *Moralia*, Bk 5, 5 [t. 1, p. 97/ 1 B] # 1311

DOCTORS

St. ANSELM [Col 3:3 - cited by Cornelius a Lapide] # 1305
[Uses Augustine's idea of the cold winter in the spiritual life] # 1314

OTHER AUTHORS

CORNELIUS a LAPIDE, *In Col 3:3*. ## 1303; 1305; 1312
RODRIGUEZ, *Christian Perfection*. [t. 2, tr. 1, 23, 2] # 1303

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[NB: Translator's Note: there follow here several pages of notes, or perhaps a rough outline, that Fr. Bertoni drew up in his composition of Sermon 39, on the Rosary. There are over 16 typed long pages of these notes].

1323: [NOTES FOR SERMON 39: THE ROSARY]

...as the flower of roses in the days of spring... [Si 50:8] ...as a rose planted in Jericho ... [Si 24:18]: full of grace. *By the odor*; the King desired your beauty⁸. - *We will run after you to the odor of your ointments...* [Ct 1:3].

In Tribulation: in the shadow of the rose bed - joyful the rose⁹.

A devotion common to all. *Come over to me, all you that desire Me* [Si 24:26]. The *Our Father* and the *Hail, Mary* belong to all: the wise, the ignorant, the nobles, the masses, beginners, the proficient. 'All other (prayers) are not for all ages, nor for everyone; this prayer, however, fondles the infant, and does not offend the elderly; it exercises the lazy, and does not impede those who are busy; it attracts the powerful and the rich, it does not exclude the poor and the weak, and does not lead the tepid to boredom.'

1324: (The Rosary) is like a garrison for the Church. 'They surround her with the flowers of the roses¹⁰.' *Stay me up with flowers.* [Ct 2:5].

Its excellence: may be derived) from its origin, nature, authority. Institution (by) Mary. Promulgated by St. Dominic, propagated by a religious Order. Its Purpose: to oppose it to heresies. Occasion: the most terrible heresy. Its result was the most fortuitous.

Its nature, various parts. The most excellent prayer is the *Our Father*, (taught) by Christ; the *Hail, Mary*, (taught) by the Spirit; the Mysteries (which are the) motive of being graciously heard, and the means.

1325: Extension: (the Rosary is a prayer) that is both vocal and mental, (useful) for sinners, for the proficient, for the perfect; for every circumstance of persons, of place, of time, etc.

(It enjoys a) heavenly authority, demonstrated) by miracles: The Tables, the war at Lepanto, in Hungary (and with a) human (authority): the Pontiffs who approved it, who formed societies with it, who enriched it with indulgences, who preached it, who made a feast of it, and who extended it to the whole Church.

Excellent origin. (The Rosary comes from) Mary (through tradition); (St. Dominic) was admonished to preach it, 'as a singular garrison against heresies and vices.' (We know this) through the approved tradition of the Church; (besides),

⁸ *In Annunt. B.M.V.*, Grad.; cf. Ps 44:2.

⁹ Cf. # 6945.

¹⁰ In the Feast, Annunt., response. 2.

because Mary was invoked by Dominic, and because he was impeded by those heretics, and because 'she alone has abolished the rest of the heresies', there being no means to destroy it.

Promulgated (by) St. Dominic, great saint of vast doctrine, head of a most glorious Order. Benedict XV ¹¹.

1326: Propagated (by) a religious Order of Preachers, learned men, holy men, the flower of the Church, because of their constant practice: 'illustrious seminary of Saints' ¹².

Its purpose: to oppose heresies with this, 'to be against all heresies, vices, etc.' Mary was invoked by St. Ominic for this purpose, with much prayer, fasting, penance.

Occasion: the most terrible heresy: kind of a sewer in which were dumped all the feces of other heresies (which) infected not only the simple crowd, but priests, and bishops and princes ¹³. The Churches (were) uprooted or destroyed: Baptism was denied, the Eucharist was abominated, penance was annulled, along with all the sacraments: the resurrection was denied, and two principles were admitted.

1327: Christ was cursed impurely; the Blessed Virgin was slandered. In the 13th century, they corrupted the people, in the 14th, at the beginning, assisted by the Count of Toulouse, they began to wage war against the Churches, (to) despoil the temples, to burn down houses, to violate sacred virgins, to slaughter the innocent, with excruciating tortures and deaths, to kill priests, and to put to the sword and flames many of the most flourishing provinces of France. There was carried about in pomp the armed arrow in furor, satiated with the blood of the citizens. Parents with their children, the rich with all their means, and the ordinary citizens paid with their heads, an army of ten thousand was arrayed...

The result: the armies were conquered, the heresy was soundly destroyed, the temples were restored, and on the Church were heaped advantages that were not of a passing nature, but enduring, and they last until our own times.

1328: (This Devotion) is excellent in itself, because of the perfection of its parts.

It is made up of decades of the *Hail, Mary*, and *Our Father*, and the Mysteries that are meditated. The *Our Father* comes from Christ, and the *Hail, Mary* from the Holy Spirit; the Mysteries of Jesus; life (are) the sublime object of the meditation. The purpose of it is to imitate the content of the Mysteries, to achieve the promises. The Means: are the most efficacious prayer, the most potent meditation, the most powerful motives.

¹¹ *De Festis*, Bk 2, 12, 5, ff.. Rtom. Ed., 1751, t. 10, 523. St. Agatha's, Rome

¹² Baronius.

¹³ Gervas. In Chron.]

Extension: (it is a prayer) that is both vocal and mental: ... *and my tongue shall meditate Your justice...* [Ps 34:28]. (It is adapted) to all Christians, both the vocal, as well as the mental prayer.

1329: (The Rosary, like) the *rose*, brings joy to the just, offers fragrance to the proficient, heals the beginners, it is the hedge of the Church, it is a rose-garden that gives shade to the troubled. The rose is a common flower, (suitable) for the nobles and the rich, to children, etc. *rose* (seems to be from the Latin word) *rugiadosa*, full of grace.

It is so diffused that the Rosary is a sign of Catholicism, (and the source) of so much anger on the part of the Church's enemies, and of the devil ¹⁴.

Human authority: (the following give authority to this Devotion): the Catholic Church by practicing it; princes; the Roman Pontiffs, who approve it, and they establish societies to it, they give their names to it, they enrich it with indulgences; they preach it, and they have established its feast and office, and they extend it to the whole Church.

Antiquity: from 1200 up to 1716.

Heavenly (authority): the Victory at Lepanto in Hungary.

Excellence: deduced from its source.

1330: The Origin of the Rosary - Origin of the Feast.

October 7, 1571, the First Sunday of the month. St. PIUS V ordered that the victory at Naupactum should be celebrated every year, by the commemoration of Holy Mary of Victory. GREGORY XIII set up the day of the Feast of the Most Holy rosary.

On the day of St. Mary of the Snows, in the year 1716, Charles VI, at Temisvaria, defeated the Turks in Pannonia. At this time, the Rosary was recited in a solemn procession. In the following days, it was continued by the order of the Roman Pontiff, this devotion of the Rosary. The siege of Corcyra was lifted on the Octave Day of the Assumption.

CLEMENT XI extended the Feast to the whole Church ¹⁵.

Common: there are employed both the tongue and the heart: internal and external cult.

A prayer that is common to all.

¹⁴ St. Francis Xavier

¹⁵ cf. Graveson, t. 5, p. 523.

... and my tongue shall meditate Your justice: they shall praise all the day long... [Ps 34:27]. ... the mouth of the just shall meditate wisdom... [Ps 36:30]. ...take a harp... [Is 23:16]... sing well - ...the voice I heard was as the voice of harpers, harping on their harps... [Apoc 14:2]. (The harps are the heart, its works). - ... I cried with my whole heart... [Ps 118:145] - ...this people honors Me with their lips: but their heart is far from Me... [Is 29:13; Mt 15:8].

1331: It is an antidote against sin: it brings joy to the just, fragrance to the proficient, heals the beginners. - *... in me is all hope of life and virtue ... [Si 24:25].*

St. BERNARD ¹⁶: Eve with the thorn inflicted death on all: Mary, with the rose, brought salvation. Pep: Just like a rose, by its own power, brings joy, gives off a fragrance, and heals, so the Virgin Mary, by the most sublime power of her Rosary, brings joy to the perfect, gives off a fragrance for the proficient, heals beginners.

(An Antidote): through the meditation of the mysteries.

St. BONAVENTURE: The contemplation of the life and death of our savior, is the most perfect antidote against the poisons of the flesh and the senses. - Like Moses' serpent [Nb 21:9]: A certain remedy followed upon the accompanying contemplation, because a mystery was hidden in that serpent ¹⁷.

Through prayer: If prayer takes hold of us given over to sins, it renders us quickly purged. (Because) when Lazarus, already dead for four days was raised up, Martha is sent to Mary, because without Mary, death could not be avoided, nor could life be restored ¹⁸.

1332: Dispositions: Faith. *...Go forth, you daughters of Sion, and see King Solomon in the diadem, wherewith his mother crowned him.. [Ct 3:11].*

CARDINAL UGO: This voice is the voice of the Church inviting all to faith. Of the Nativity: crowned with the lowly spoils; Of the Passion: crowned with thors; **resurrection: crown of glory.**

Form the facts: St. Dominic converted one hundred thousand heretics, preaching the Rosary. The greatest sinners.(B. ALAN.) from brutes, they were transformed into Angels ¹⁹.

1333: Pray the Rosary, and you will be cleansed from the leprosy of your crimes...: *...if the prophet had bid you to do some great thing... surely you should have done it... From Eliseus to Naaman... [4 K (2 K) 5:13].*

¹⁶ Serm. 1, De B.V.

¹⁷ Caes. Arles, Hom 4 - [143].

¹⁸ St. Pet. Chrysologus. *Serm 54*, before the middle. PL 52, 380 B.

¹⁹ Carthagen.

It is excellent in itself because of the perfection of its parts: vocal and mental; (also for the perfection) in its parts: the *Our Father*, the *Hail, Mary* : the most noble prayers; the Mysteries (of the) Life of Jesus; the most sublime object of meditation; the Meditation of the Virgin: the most powerful. Its purpose: the Imitation of Christ. The most religious. In its totality: for its extension: vocal and mental prayer.

(It is adapted) to the capacity of every one: *...and the book shall be given to one that knows not letters... [Is 29:12]. - ...And I saw a book written within and without, sealed with the seven seals... [Apoc 5:1]*, that it might contain in itself all the plenitude of the Mysteries of Christ. They should be opened up in Meditation....

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NB: translator's Note: this is the end of the first fragment of Sermon 39.]

1334:

[A rough sketch of the Complete draft]

SERMON 39

[The Holy Rosary]

The humble piety of the faithful, that looks to this practice of cult with devout **obsequiousness**, perhaps awaits from me a panegyric of praise. The sublime wisdom of the world, which in an inseparable air of pride disdains it and makes fun of it. This forces me to a just and necessary defense. The pious custom of many that cultivate this both in themselves and in others, to the great fruit for their own souls and likewise for their families, merits to be approved, sustained and confirmed. On the other hand, the negligence of some who do not take care of this. Either because they have interrupted it, or they make use of it only in a tepid manner, needs to be addressed. This is not without detriment and danger, and needs to be reprov'd, and encouragement given, and they need to be spurred on.

1335: this variety of circumstances imposes different purposes for my sermon, and leaves me indecisive regarding the various choices of means. Nonetheless, if you will be as courteous as you are, might dispense me from decorating with vague and delicate flowers my preaching style, to which I feel that my ability is unequal anyway - and if you do not ask of me to sharpen my talk with strong and vibrant words of contention. As for this, my nature is not made, nor is it in harmony with it, I can respond. I think that I have already found a way to satisfy the devotion of the former, and to close the mouths of the latter. I think I can comfort those who are already fervent, and to warm up those who might be cold, in a manner that will be no less appealing to your intelligence, and also effective for the various needs. I will do this by demonstrating the excellence of this practice, from the nobility of its origin that illustrates it, and from the intrinsic perfection that distinguishes it. I can also present my thoughts from the authority that proves this devotion and forms it, with the most solemn testimonies that establish the devotion.

1336: I do not know what other Devotion can claim any more noble traits of excellence even from the very instant of its institution. The Queen of Heaven herself, proposes it from her own mouth, she teaches it, she prescribes it. One of the most celebrated heroes of Christianity - no less great and outstanding for the nobility of his background as well as for his sanctity, is the great Patriarch, St. Dominic. The responsibility for preaching this was committed to him. An entire order of the sons of St. Dominic, flower of ecclesiastical erudition, an illustrious seed-bed of saints, I will say with Baronius, received this devotion as their patrimony and their inheritance to promulgate it. Instituted, introduced, promoted by the most interesting object for Christianity, which is to employ it in opposition to heresy and to vice, and in the most urgent needs, as well as in the most powerful struggles of the Catholic Church. Lastly, the result has been so fortunate that has come, the Church has intervened with indescribable promptness, and placed the devotion in security with a valid and perpetual protection from the most powerful enemies. Let us now prove these facts, if that is pleasing to you, in the light of history.

1337: From the XIIth Century, the Albigensians, a terrible descendent of the Waldesians, opened up with their errors in the Church of God something like an impure sewer, in which there came to be deposited all the refuse of heresies. And it was not only the simple crowd that was attracted. But even priests, Bishops and Princes were also seen to have fallen wretchedly into this pit by its subtleties, and everything became filthy by contact with that swamp. Babies were denied Baptism, the Eucharist was abominated in the faithful, penance was derided, the sacraments were annulled, the hope in the Resurrection was taken away. The true faith of the one God was destroyed, He who is Creator of all. And in His place there were admitted two principles, as the old Manichaeans had taught. There went up abundantly everywhere, and arose to high heaven the intolerable stench of the most execrable blasphemies against the Saints, Christ, Mary most Holy, whose purity was defamed in a most villainous and singular way.

1338: In order to extinguish and arrest this plague, in vain was the vigilance of the Pastors brought into the fray. Their vest efforts were left empty, as was the sweat of the illustrious and copious missionaries. All these were promoted by the zeal of the Supreme Vicar of Christ, INNOCENT III. Their numbers increased, they fanned out, they were strengthened, and at the appearance of the new century, there arose even more of them, sustained by the strong right arm of the Count of Toulouse. And the heretics from their fetid base, tore down temples, demolished altars, burned houses, violated sacred virgins, shed the blood of the innocent, and sought the death of priests through terrible tortures. There was thus placed under the iron and fire many of the flourishing provinces. The error was paraded around in pomp. Armed with fury, inebriated with blood, parents were forced to sacrifice their children, nobles had to surrender their riches, and the ordinary people, their heads. And what more? Arrayed against the weak forces of not more than a thousand foot-soldiers, and eight hundred horses which were all that could be assembled in those harsh circumstances by the state in its defense, and that of religion - there was opposed a terrible army. This was made up of one hundred thousand armed men, all arranged according to their ranks, inspired by the same spirit of anger and fanaticism. At their head was the King of Aragon himself, a powerful ally of the count. The enemy was already in sight: and a battle could not be avoided, and there was imminent decisive action.

1339: With circumstances, what danger, what consternation! A torrent that was so impetuous, that it rushed on toward such a meager dyke. It threatened, after having flooded everywhere in the vast land where it flowed. It threatened to overthrow everything on the beautiful terrain, the seat of religion and faith, where there had already been introduced under ground and filtering through many troubled waters. They seemed to be waiting for their right moment to all come together, for a universal deluge.

To whom, then, could one turn for help in such need? To Mary, to Mary.

- Precisely, my beloved, to Mary; to her who is the most powerful support and aid for Christianity in its necessities. 'Help of Christians', to the one about whom the

Church chants her singular praises: *Rejoice, o Mary, all the heresies you alone have conquered in the universal world*²⁰!

1340: Then, in fact, St. Dominic alone, and with an insignificant squad of his sons remained in their fortification to comfort the Catholics. He presented himself to Mary, as a strong soldier in an entrenched camp of his solitude, took up the arms of prayer, of fasting. He awaited with lively confidence, to go out on the fateful day, with help from heaven beyond measure. With his own strength waning, and almost overwhelmed by fear, he administered to this earth. Nor was help at the opportune moment lacking.

1341: The heavens opened, smiling, to the prayers of the Saint, and the Queen of heaven herself descends to receive him in person.

- Go, Dominic, preach my Rosary; and know that this form of praying that I give to you, will be most pleasing to My Son and to me. Furthermore, it will be a powerful and singular defense in the Church to weaken heresies, to extinguish vices and to promote virtues, and to implore divine mercy: 'Like a singular garrison against heresies and vices.' To this effect, I want you and your sons to be forever the promulgators of this heavenly ritual instituted by me, from which will spring extraordinary usefulness in the spirits of the faithful: 'Innumerable fruits from this most salutary institution within the Christian Republic.

1342: Go out, Dominic, from the entrenchment of your retreat, comforted with the heavenly promises, furnished with new support. And what was the outcome of all this? Of this huge army that covered the whole earth, there was but a mountain of cadavers, among whom, the General himself, Peter of Aragon, lay stretched out: the rest of the army was totally broken and in flight, was dispersed and evaporated. The Count of Toulouse shortly thereafter had to capitulate, and to lay down all arms. He had to make restitution for all that the enemies of religion and of Mary had done, under the shadow of his protection. All that had been ravished and destroyed, he had to make up for, and to give back all the treasures that had been taken from the Church. All those that he had previously protected, he was called now to exterminate totally with that same right arm with which he had first unjustly received and defended.

1343: But there is still another aspect to be esteemed even more. The one hundred thousand of those most obstinate heretics were ravished to the point of freely bending their necks to the sweet yoke of Christ. They were not so much overcome by the force of arms, or by any authority, but by the gentle power of the Rosary preached by St. Dominic. Along with these armed men, there was even a greater number of sinners, and these were the most corrupt in the very tragic depravation of that unhappy age. They were raised up to grace within the bosom of the Catholic Church.

²⁰ Common of the Feast of the BVM, tract.

These results were wondrous, and were like the first-fruits of the Rosary. However, it simply could not have been otherwise, because of its intrinsic excellence, that brings such realities about.

These are authentic prodigies that surpass all the others. These were accomplished in such abundance, with such readiness, and with such stability, that are perpetuated in the Church. They showed in this most fortunate event, the most excellent character of such a devotion, even from its very inception. However, it simply could not have been otherwise, once one grasps its intrinsic excellence. This is the result of the perfection of its parts, as well as from the extension in its practice.

1344: The Rosary is made up of 15 decades of the *Hail, Mary*, the Angelic salutation. These are then distinguished one from the other by the *Our Father*, the Lord's own prayer that intervenes between these. These set aside the same number of mysteries of our reparation, that is commemorated by a pious meditation. Now, I ask: Find me a more excellent prayer than the Lord's Prayer - and after this, one that is more noble than the angelic salutation! Then, as far as the Mysteries of the life, death and glory of Christ, what more sublime object could there be for meditation? Then, the essential scope of all this, which is to imitate that which the Mysteries contain and to achieve that which they promise, what could possibly be more holy, more interesting, more sublime? The Meditation of Mary, is there anything more powerful?

1345: Now, just take care to make use of this prayer, what fullness, what extension! For in this, there are committed in like manner both your tongue to praise, your mind to meditate, your heart to love, and with what happiness! So it is that this is the prayer that is common to all. The Lord's Prayer is for all Christians; for all is the *Hail, Mary*, a prayer of salutary power; for all is extended the possibility of calling to mind the very sacred mysteries of salvation. Sinners find in the Rosary the most efficacious means for their conversion. Mary makes her own the very words of Wisdom"*In me... in me, is all hope of life and virtue...* [Si 24:25]. The just find the rosary a sweet pasturage for their devotion: ... *I am the mother of fair love... and of knowledge and of holy hope...* [v. 24]. All these have in the meditation of the life and death of the savior a powerful antidote against the poisons of the flesh and the senses. They have all this in the Meditation of Christ's glory as well as a gentle invitation to aspire to the eternal sweetness.

1346: Yes, Mary is that Mystical Rose who brings joy to the just, heals sinners, she sends out a sweet fragrance to beginners, adorns the proficient, crowns the perfect, spreads the most sweet shade for those in tribulations. She sets up a powerful hedge against temptations. From this cultivated garden there spring forth equally great souls, and also the poor ones in this little garden. All flourishes equally in the humble valleys, as well as on the proud summits of the hills. She never indignantly withdraws, whether it is a gentle or rough hand that reaches out for her. She attracts the youth, she does not offend the aged, she moves the lazy to act, she does not get in the way of the already busy, she recreates the fervent, and is not annoying to the tepid.

Finally, the Rosary of the Virgin is a devotion common to all the faithful in the universal Church. By means of it, you are able to know the Christian from the Turk, or

from the Hebrew; but also the Catholic from the heretic; the most pious faithful from the incredulous libertine. And thus, one sees the wrath that the devil, their father, inspires in all heretics against the Rosary. There is in this a sign of the great reverses that the Catholic practice heaps n hell.

1347: In this regard, St. Francis Xavier has written the following account. With eight of his companions, he was passing through France, by way of Germany, into Italy. They were dressed in the garb of poor pilgrims, with a staff in their hands, and a pack on their backs, and the Rosary of our Lady around their necks. They were most courteously received by Catholics, and with tender tears, as they saw nine men coldly wearing the Rosary around their necks. This was in public protestation of the Roman faith, in neighborhoods full of heretics. They also had many times to experience the insolence and the wrath of the enemies of the faith, and not without an evident danger to their lives.

1348: One day, when they had passed by Constance, and about a mile distant from a castle, they saw an elderly woman coming forward to meet them. Crossing her arms, and raising her tearful eyes to heaven, she manifested toward them supreme demonstrations of reverence. As then she was close by, she began to kiss the rosaries that they had around their necks. She was saying something in her own language, with vivid expressions of joy and devotion in the Catholic faith. She recognized that they, too, professed this faith at the sign of their rosaries. Then, she begged them to wait for her, ran to the hospital, and returned with a great quantity of rosaries and images of the Crucifix and Mary, that had been broken into pieces by the Lutherans, but which she had collected and saved. She begged the Fathers in tears to look at these sacred things torn to shreds by those heretical dogs, and kneeling down they revered these and tenderly kissed them.

1349: And then, the woman entered into the castle, and the Fathers followed her, and she pointed them out to all whom she met. Strongly crying out, she said: 'Just look and find out for yourselves if it is really as you say it is, that there is no longer any man in this world who follows the Roman faith. It is good for me that I never believed you. You have called me crazy because I never let myself be deceived by you. You are the crazy ones.' Thus, this Catholic woman remained most constant. This is all so true, beloved listeners, that the Rosary is a devotion adopted by the whole Catholic Church, to the point of its becoming a sign of Catholicism, as the glorious standards of the orthodox faith.

1350: And notice here what force of authority forms the consent of the entire universal Church, with which to judge the excellence of this devotion. For the confrontation with this judgment that is both authoritative and infallible in its decisions, I see clearly their weight. I note that the statements are formulated that are still the most famous of the most learned and illuminated authors that I could here recite. They all exalt the Rosary, and praise it in an unbelievable manner in their writings. The weight of such authority could indeed confirm you in the esteem, the use and the profit that the many and great saints derived from it. This was for their own personal benefit, as well as for that of others. Throughout all of Christianity, the glorious concern

for this devotion was had among princes [168], Bishops, important prelates, all of whom were ascribed in the devout exercise of this practice. You could add to this by listing the long series of Roman Pontiffs, as the Supreme Shepherd, BENEDICT XIV notes. Through an unbroken succession of Pontiffs stretches out of six whole centuries, and they approved it with very serious praise. They promoted this devotion with supreme zeal for all of Christianity the exercise of this devotion. And they enriched it with a profuse liberality of indulgence for the practice of it among its devotees.

1351: But now, from this supreme human authority, as this is by now sufficiently well known, I pass now to the supreme divine authority. In the most solemn and luminous signs this has been made manifest in behalf of the Rosary. I just relate one of these, not because there are only a few of them, or that the others are less outstanding, but simply that because from one you could conjecture the light of the other motives.

Come with me on the agile wings of your thoughts, flying over the sea that separates Italy from Greece, toward Lepanto, to be spectators. Here with your own eyes you might see the prodigious benefit that the immortal preaching of all the centuries since have recalled. You could see that there the sea was groaning under the weight of the formidable Turkish fleet.

1352: Go back in memory to that epoch: in the year 1571, the Turks were threatening with extreme ruin of the Christian name. Proud by nature, they were terrible beyond nature in their power at that time. Then, supremely swollen in their hope and boldness because of their recent conquests, they easily presumed on the total destruction, following infinite losses by Christians, who were exhausted and their forces divided. The Turks were about to send out their fleet with the backing of a slight breeze. They saw open to them all the ports, and the islands and the maritime beaches of the Catholic world. They already had on the sea the best armed armada, the most furnished inhuman memory. There were well provided with food stuffs, convoys, arms, sailors, soldiers, well backed with artillery, weaponry and munitions.

1353: In the year 1571, the Turks were a haughty and proud nation, terrible for their bold war-like undertakings. They were much strengthened by the very rapid subjugation of two empires. To this would be added the recent and infinite losses among the Christians. They were exhausted and their forces hopelessly divided. Thus, the Turks swelled with hope and boldness in that they presumed that their total destruction would now be easy. They believed that they could send out their fleet with but a slight breeze behind them. They saw opened up to them all the ports and the islands and the maritime beaches. They were facing Lepanto, in the strength of three hundred sails, with their fleet well armed. In human memory, this was the most grandiose, well supplied and directed by powerful generals and valiant officials. They were well supplied with good-stuffs, convoys, arms, sailors, soldiers, all furnished with artillery, weaponry, equipment, munitions, that seemed already to bring with them the ultimate desolation, total defeat, fire and the slaughter of all the Christians.

1354: And there, one general commanded all. Insolent in his happiness, almost too sure of victory, with impudent confidence even to offering insults and threats, he

presented himself. Italy trembled as did Europe, at seeing the exultant boldness of these barbarians, about to bring the ultimate ruin to the Christian name. Within the bosom of the attacking force, there could be seen the flames, the steel, the slaughter, the plunder. The enemy would wreak their licentiousness on the lives of the faithful, in their homes, with their fortunes, with their bodies. There were threatened sacrilege in the temples, the sacking of the country-side, and the desolation to the fields.

1355: In opposition to this terrible horde were the Christians, in their fleet of Confederates, assembled only with great difficulties. Almost all were gathered together by the extreme efforts of the nations who found themselves offering some resistance behind their defenses. But, all seemed languid, because of the many different individual interests and their own ends. There was not a good grasp of the situation by the generals, who were just about to separate among themselves in the very act of leaving Messina. The troops were very inexperienced, and the greater part of the recent draftees had no training in the use of firearms. There was also dissension among the soldiers themselves, for the reason why they had taken up arms in the first place, and the generals themselves were about to quit the field. For all these reasons, the thought was disseminated by the more cautious that it would be better just to observe the enemy, or make some treaty with him, rather than attack.

But as the battle was about to get underway, there intervened an endeavor by Divine Providence. As the various ships from both sides took up position, in order to have reconnoissance in mutual fashion, they failed. And they did not make contact until the dawn of the new day that both entered into the sight of the other. This happened in such a way that it seemed that now the battle was inevitable. The Turks advanced in good order, all organized in the shape of the crescent. The Christians, as they passed through the shoals had seemed all dismembered and disorganized.

1356: It was a Sunday, the 7th day of October, the sky was placid and serene, and the sea was calm. The scene was a place of destiny, where other times the victory of Octavian Augustus decided the empire of the world, except that the apparatus of the Ottoman forces was more awesome, and it seemed that the sea groaned under the weight of such a formidable armada. The vivid apprehension of the danger kept the deliberations among the Christians paralyzed. The more cautious were still offering their advice against engaging in battle. However, the time for counsels and words had passed, and the hour for deeds and execution had dawned. The flag was raised, and the generals were mounted on the frigates. They went through their armada, and placed the glory under the eyes of the soldiers, and held up the fatherland. They held high the cause of religion, and they gave every assurance that they were fighting for the cause of Christianity.

1357: Meanwhile their armada left the shoals, and it was stretched straight away on high. A general who commanded the left wing, because of the misunderstanding of the one who commanded, and moved more by private interests, delayed in coming out to battle, in order to keep himself disengaged. The Turks chose precisely that point as one of the most favorable to them, and they gave the sound with the drums, the cymbals, and with fearsome cries. They attacked with all their force the six galleasses

that were in the fore, and it all happened in an instant. And it was precisely at that moment [167], on that 7th day of October that in that year fell on a Sunday, that throughout the whole Christian world the Rosary was being recited, with solemn and devout supplications to beg for help from Mary. And she was not lacking evidently in the opportune moment.

1358: In fact, the six galleasses, as they were surrounded by the enemy armada, having abandoned the right wing that was almost totally disjointed, accomplished prodigies of valor. Firing away fore and after, and on the sides, as if they were all alone, vomited forth bolts of canon-shot, a hail of bullets from their muskets, and clouds of smoke from their artificial fire. They caught the Turkish masses in a cross-fire, and truncated limbs, pierced breasts literally piled up, with a slaughter and butchery of human flesh that would remain famous and memorable. At this point, the Turks began to retreat, to become disunited, and then disorder set in. The wind that was needed for them to carry the battle, abandoned the Mussulman armada, and so they could not flee. Smoke was in their eyes, and they were unable to see their own disarray. The wind turned and favored the Christians and moved them, even those unwilling on the right side, to be dashed right into the enemy lines.

1359: Then Ali, finding himself confronted by light galleries, and being pounded from the rear by heavy guns, reinforced the rowers to get out from underneath the cannonade. But the Christian generals bravely took up the attack in harmony, uniting to them all their captains. And they engaged in a truly ferocious combat, with their captains being supplied with select troops, and they were alleviated by receiving refreshments from those near by. By now, the battle had reached a high pitch, with equal ardor, equal damage being inflicted. While slaughter was inevitable, the outcome was still uncertain. The soldiers on both sides were inflamed with a kind of connatural hatred, and they exposed themselves with all courage to every danger. And those who were not incinerated by the fire, fell into the sea, enveloped by the waters.

1360: The roar of the canon, the whistle of the muskets, the cries of the defeated Turks, the thick clouds of smoke that hid the sun, the screams of the oppressed, the groans of those who were drowning, all together composed a hellish music, between the fire, the smoke, the laments. The outcome was still in doubt, but all the while the furor increased, but finally the scales were tipped and the Turkish leadership was overwhelmed. The Christians then took over. The desperation was redoubled, soldiers slugged it foot to foot on the ships, as if they were on land. And when the galleys of Ali seemed to be right down to the wood, nonetheless, because of their obstinate resistance and successive reinforcements, the battle still hung in the balance. Just then, the Christians who were in the back, with a miracle of valor, they put their strength where the greatest danger was. They met a certain risk head on, and fought back the continuous reinforcements of the enemy. At long last, the flag with the crescent was exchanged for that one with the Cross.

1361: With the center in total rout, the stubborn conflict continued along the flanks. On one flank, the Christians were engaged by the courage of a Turkish general who all recognized as a great commander, without in any way forgetting the great courage of

the ordinary foot-soldier. On the other flank, the Christians were surrounded and had reached the extremes. But, the victorious reinforcements that came from the center, the high shouts claiming victory, and finally, the head of Ali was seen, held high on a pike. Then both flanks collapsed, and the day ended with a total rout of the enemy.

The battle lasted for five continuous hours. Such as the obstinacy and the wrath of the nations on both sides, that they battled even all entwined together even in the water. This was by now full of the half dead, cadavers, beheaded bodies, and truncated members. The sea was so cluttered with broken wood, sails, oars, masts and rudders, that the waves could hardly be seen. Only 30 Turkish ships survived and not a single one would have returned had not the poor strategy of one of the generals allowed it. At first, he seemed to dismember and disjoint the entire armada, by spreading the right flank out too thin in the sea. He is the one who left open the passage. On that same side, and because of the same reason, the Christian suffered the greatest damage, with about 5,000 who perished.

1362: 180 were the ships put to the task, 90 were sunk. Many fortifications and convoys were taken, as well as a prodigious train of artillery. 30,000 Turks were killed; 10,000 prisoners entered into those very chains from which were liberated 15,000 Christian slaves. 180 galleys were taken, etc. etc. It took fifteen days to divide the spoils. The advantage of this victory might have been just the conquest of a number of Turkish Provinces. But, even Constantinople itself could be now taken, even without arms, just by presenting oneself in the city. There were ports and places just empty of all ships and garrisons, and the spirits that were struck with terror, already shook the entire empire.

1363: Thus God had matured also the fruit of this victory, that just because of the fault of the delay of human beings brought such harassment. In human memory, no other victory was ever accomplished in which the hand of God was more clearly demonstrated. Selimus himself, the Emperor of the Turks, in his defeat, recognized this, confessing that prayer had hurt him more than the weapons did. The victorious Christians even more clearly recognized this, by ascribing it all to a prodigy. St. PIUS V, to whom there was revealed at the very moment of the victory, all that had happened, and had predicted it, ordered that there be celebrated each year, on the First Sunday of October, the commemoration of St. Mary of Victory. Also, his successor, GREGORY XIII ascribed that victory to the prayers of the Rosary. And he wished that Mary be venerated under this title, and he instituted the Office in all the Churches where there had been an altar of this name. CLEMENT XI, finally, after another victory, by means of the Rosary against the Turks obtained in Hungary, no less great than the earlier one, spread to the whole Church this solemnity in perpetual manner.

1364: This is why, my most distinguished hearers, that in the Rosary there was a devotion that is the most noble in its origin, most perfect in its nature, the most confirmed by the authority of its witnesses and prodigies. This is the sublime excellence of the Mystical Roses, with which today the veneration of the faithful eaves the trailing and joyful crowns of the Virgin. These are those roses from the heavenly

gardens that have been transplanted into the fertile field of the Church: the pious faithful admire their glory. The form, the structure, the fruit of these flowers exceeds the limited ideas and the rules of all art, of all science even that the most elevated among human beings. There is confounded the vain pride of the world, the vain wise people of the world, and the foolish and most vain wisdom of this world, in the splendor of so much perfection.

Just as the use of flowers is so ample, the culture is as universal. As you, devoted cultivators, in your private and domestic garden: diligently guard these from all excessive heat and cold. High is the price that both heaven and earth esteem this; your negligence is condemned, as are you who are tepid, who allow these flowers to dry up and become all arid...

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[NB: Translators' Note: From ## 1323-1333, there is a rough draft characteristic for its citations; and a different draft that runs from ## 1334-1364, that is more historical in content. Now follows the final rendition of this Sermon 39, on the Holy Rosary, for October 1807].

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1365:**SERMON 39****The Holy Rosary**

On the 4th day of October, 1807, Verona, in St. Paul's, of Campo Marzio.

The Feast of this day, the solemn Feast of the Most Holy rosary of Mary, determines, my most distinguished hearers, the object of my sermon. It is only that as far as the manner of this sermon that I have not yet decided.

The humble piety of the faithful that regards this practice of cult with very partial devout **obsequiousness**, expects from me perhaps a panegyric of praise. The haughty wisdom of the world, with disdainful air, insults it and derides it, forces me to a just and necessary defense of it. The pious custom of many who cultivate it, both in themselves and in others, to the great benefit of their own souls, no less than that of their families, merits to be approved, sustained and confirmed. The negligence on the other hand, of some who do not take much care of this, or who only make use of it in a cold manner, or have already discontinued it, but not without detriment and danger, need to be reprov'd, inspir'd, encouraged. This coming together of such a variety of circumstances that imposes different purposes to my sermon, leaves me undecided in the different choice of means.

1366: Nonetheless, if you will dispense me, courteous as you are, from embellishing with rare and delicate flowers my ordinary style, to which I feel that my capacity is unequal to the challenge, and from sharpening my presentation with a strong and vivid contention of words, and to this my nature is neither made nor adapted, I think I have found a way. I believe that I can satisfy the sense of religion of the former, and also close the mouths of the latter. I may be able to comfort the fervent, to enkindle those who have grown cold, by proceeding in the demonstration in a manner that is no less easy to grasp, by your intelligence, and no less efficacious for your real needs.

I will establish the excellence of this practice from the nobility of its origin that illustrates it, and from the intrinsic perfection which distinguishes it, and from the solid authority that with the most solemn testimonies distinguish it, promote it, confirm it.

1367: I do not know what other devotion can boast of more noble traits of excellence from its very inception. The Queen of heaven herself proposes this from her own mouth, teaches it, prescribes it. To one of the most celebrated heroes in the history of Christianity, no less outstanding for the nobility of his birth, for his doctrine as for his holiness, the great Patriarch, Dominic, was committed the responsibility of preaching this. An entire Order that was so accomplished, the sons of St. Dominic, the flower of Christian erudition, an illustrious seed bed of Saints, as BARONIUS referred to them, received this as the patrimony an inheritance to promulgate it.

Instituted, introduced, promoted as the most interesting object of Christianity, which is to oppose this to heresy and vice, it proves valid in the most urgent necessities, and the most trying concerns of the Catholic Church. This devotion had

such a fortunate result, that is available to the Church with indescribable promptness. Hence, it has been placed in security with a valid, perpetual, universal protection from the most powerful enemies and from their most formidable attacks. Let us prove, if you are agreeable, these facts in the light of history.

1368: From the 12th century, the Albigensians, a most terrible descendent of the Waldesians, opened with their errors in the Church a kind of unclean sewer in which all come together to through the feces of heresies. This did not effect only the uncultured masses, but priests, Bishops, princes were also seen to fall miserably by the subtleties into that pit, and everything became soiled by that swamp. Baptism was denied to babies, the Eucharist was abominated, Penance was derided, the sacraments were annulled, all hope was removed in any future resurrection. There was destroyed the true faith in the one God, Creator of all, and there were admitted in His place, with the Manichaeans, two principles.

1369: There rose up around and about, and went high into the heavens, the intolerable stench of the most terrible blasphemies against the saints, Christ, Mary most Holy, whose purity was singularly and most villainously defamed.

In vain proved to be the vigilance of the Holy Shepherds to extinguish, or to attest the plague that opposed them. The sweat, the fatigue of illustrious and copious missions, provided by the zeal of the Vicar of Christ, Innocent III.

The hostilities increased, spread, were strengthened, and at the opening of the century, the heresy was renewed. The heretics arose, sustained by the strong right arm of the Count of Toulouse [103], up out of their stench-laden depths.

1370: They violated temples, demolished altars, burnt houses, ravished sacred virgins, shed the blood of the innocent, sought the death of priests with excruciating tortures. They put to the flame and sword many and flourishing provinces. Error preceded ahead in pomp, armed with the fury, inebriated with blood. In some instances, fathers of families sacrificed their own children, nobles were robbed of their wealth, and the lowly people many were forced to sacrifice their own heads.

And what else! Against the weak forces of not more than a thousand foot-soldiers and 800 cavalry, which was all that the forces of the state could enlist for its own defense and that of religion - there was arrayed a terrible army. It was comprised of 100,000 armed men, at the head of which was the King of Aragon himself, powerful ally of the Count. The enemy was already in sight: battle could not be avoided, and a decisive action proved imminent.

1371: What a set of circumstances, what danger, what consternation! Such a swollen torrent and impetuous flood that was mounted up against such a weak dyke. After having been able to inundate the broad land that it dominated, it also threatened to overthrow on this beautiful land, the seat of religion and the faith. There had already been infiltrated underground, as it were, many turbid waters that were gathering in force for the moment of a total deluge.

- To whom could one turn for help, for comfort, in such trying circumstances?
- to Mary, to Mary¹

This is precisely true, my brothers and sisters, to Mary, to the very one who is the most powerful support for Christianity in its necessities; “Help of Christians”. To the one to whom the Church chants her singular praises ²¹: ‘Rejoice, o Mary, all the heresies you alone have conquered for the universal world.’

1372: Thus, indeed, St. Dominic, all alone, with a small squadron of his sons, remained in the ordeal to comfort the Catholics who presented themselves to Mary. And that brave soldier awaited in his entrenched cap of solitude, and armed himself with prayer, with fasting, and with full confidence. He waited for the opportune moment, and for support from heaven that this earth cannot offer, once its own resources have been exhausted and it has been beaten down by fear.

Nor was the help lacking at the opportune time. The heavens were opened smiling on the Saint’s prayers, and the Queen of heaven herself descended to assist him in person And she said to him:

- Go, my son, go and preach my Rosary; and know that his form of praying that I teach you will be most pleasing to my Son and to me. Furthermore, it will be of great and singular assistance to the Church in weakening heresies, in extinguishing vices, in promoting virtues, in imploring divine mercy: ‘A singular protection against heresies and vices.’ For this purpose, I want you and your sons to be forever the promulgators of this heavenly rite instituted by me, from which will spring very great helpfulness in the souls of the faithful: ‘...innumerable fruits from such a salutary institution in the Christian republic.’

1373: Dominic went out from the trenches of his retreat, comforted by the heavenly promises, endowed with additional helps. And what took place? Of that numerous armada, that covered the whole earth, there was nothing left but a mountain of cadavers, on which the King of Aragon himself lay stretched out, all the rest were in full rout, in flight, dispersed and diluted. The besieged Count was reduced to capitulation, and to make restitution by putting all back up that was destroyed. He himself had to make payment for all that the enemies of the faith had destroyed and wasted, under the shadow of his protection. He had to give back to the Church all that was taken and kept under his tutelage. All else, he had to exterminate entirely, with that same powerful arm with which he had first received them and defended them.

1374: But what has to be esteemed even more is that one hundred thousand of those most obstinate heretics, were taken, not so much by power or by arms, or by authority, but by the sweet voice of the power of the Rosary, preached by St. Dominic. These most obstinate enemies had to bend their necks freely to the gentle yoke of Christ. And an even greater number of most corrupt sinners were raised up to grace, and returned to the very bosom of the Catholic Church, taken from that tragic depravation of that unhappy age.

These are those special prodigies that cover all the others, and which were accomplished in such abundance, with such promptness, with such stability, even to

²¹ Common of the Feast of the BVM, tract.

be perpetuated. These were shown in the most fortunate of outcomes, and established the character of a devotion that was so excellent even from its very beginning.

1375: These are the wondrous results and first-fruits of the Rosary. However, it could not have been in any other way, once admitting the intrinsic excellence of the devotion, that results thus from the perfection of its parts, as from its extension and practice.

For the Rosary is made of 15 decades of the Angelic Salutation, distinguished one from the other by the 3rd's Prayer. This separates the same number of the Mysteries of our reparation, that for each decade there is recalled to mind for pious meditation.

Now, I ask you: Find me a more excellent prayer than the Lord's own Prayer; and after this, one more noble than the Angelic Salutation. As for the Mysteries of the life, death and resurrection of Christ, what object would be more suitable to meditate? The essential purpose, then, of all this is to imitate what the Mysteries contain and obtain what they promise - could anything be more holy, more sublime? The meditation of Mary, could anything be more fitting, more powerful? In this prayer, there is committed equally your tongue to praise, your mind to meditate, and your heart to love: and with what ease!

1376: Furthermore, this is a prayer common to all. The Lord's Prayer is for all Christians: for all is the Salutation of the Virgin through the *Hail, Mary*. For everyone is intended to recall to mind with affectionate devotion the sacred and holy mysteries of our salvation. Sinners may find in the Rosary the most efficacious means for their conversion: *...In me is all hope of life and virtue... [Si 24:25]*. The just can find in the Rosary the sweet pasturage for their devotion: *... I am the mother of faith love ...and of knowledge... [v. 24]*. Sinners have in the meditation of Christ's life and death a powerful antidote against the poisons of the flesh and of the senses. The just have in the contemplation of the glory of Christ a sweet invitation to aspire to eternal sweetness.

1377: Yes, Mary is that Mystical rose who brings joy to the just, heals sinners, gives fragrance to beginners, adorns the proficient, crowns the perfect. She spreads her sweet joy in tribulations, and she makes valid the defense against temptations. This grows equally in the cultivated gardens of the great as in the simple little gardens of the poor. It flowers equally in the humble valleys, as well as on the proud summits of hills. And she does not disdain or withdraw at all, whether it is a gentle or coarse hand that cultivates her. She attracts the youth, she does not offend the elderly, motivates the lazy, but does not get in the way of the busy, recreates the fervent and does not annoy the tepid.

Thus, finally, the Rosary is a devotion that is common to all the faithful in the Church universal. In this sign you can usually and with security and ease not only distinguish the Christian from the Turk, or from the Hebrew, but also the Catholic from the heretic, and the pious believer from the incredulous libertine. And this also contrasts the wrath of all the heretics which the demon, their father, inspires against

the Rosary. All this, then, is a sign that is not equivocal of the great harm that is heaped on hell by this Catholic practice.

1378: In this regard, there comes to mind St. FRANCIS XAVIER. He relates that once with eight other companions he passed through France by way of Germany, into Italy. They were dressed as poor pilgrims, with staff in hand and a pack on their shoulders. They had rosaries around their necks. As such, they were courteously received with tender tears. They were seen as nine men who boldly wore their rosaries on their necks, in a public protestation of the Roman faith, in neighborhoods that were full of heretics. On many occasions they had to experience the insolence and the wrath of the faith, and not without an evident danger to their lives.

1379: One day, the story goes, they had passed through Constance and were about a mile distant from a certain castle, that was given over totally to the heretics. They saw an elderly woman making her way toward them. Crossing her arms, and raising her tearful eyes heavenwards, she made toward them demonstrations of reverence. As she was by then close to them, she began to kiss the rosaries that they had around their necks. She was saying something in her own language, with vivid expressions of joy and devotion for the Catholic faith, which at the sign of the rosaries she saw was professed by them. Then, she beseeched them to wait for her, and she ran and returned with a great quantity of rosaries and images of the Crucifix and of Mary. These had all been broken into pieces by the Lutherans, and had been collected and saved by her. The Fathers wept at seeing these sacred objects torn apart by these heretical dogs, and having knelt down, they revered them and devoutly kissed them.

1350: Just as soon as the woman had entered into the castle, with the fathers following her, she pointed out to all whom she met, crying out with a loud voice: - 'Look again, o wretched ones, if it is indeed as you say, that there are no longer any men in the world who follow the Roman faith. It is good for me that I did not believe you. But you called me crazy, because I did not let myself be deceived: you are the crazy ones.' So spoke the most constant Catholic woman. So it is, my beloved brothers and sisters, that the Rosary is a devotion adopted by the entire Catholic Church. And once adopted and become her own, it has even become a sign of Catholicism, and almost the glorious standard of the orthodox faith.

1351: And here note what force of authority there is rendered in the consent of the entire Church universal, that you might have some idea of the excellence of this devotion. Along with such an authoritative and infallible judgment as has been made regarding it by its judges, I see well that there will appear also the most serious declarations of the most learned and illumined authors. By these, they exalt the Rosary and praise it above all belief in their writings.

To confirm the weight of this authority, I could well add for you here not so much the glory that many kings and emperors, and Bishops and sublime Prelates seek for their names, in enrolling all in the devout exercises of this practice. Even more the esteem, the use, and the profit that many and great saints made of this, for their own

usefulness and the particular help of others. This is no less true for the religious communities they founded, and for all of Christianity, from the examples and from their preaching, that so extended sanctification.

1352: I could here add above all the long series of roman Pontiffs, described already by the great BENEDICT XIV. Through an uninterrupted succession for six entire centuries, they offered their approbation with the most sublime praises in their Briefs. They consistently promoted with supreme zeal its use in Christianity, and they enriched with devotion with a profuse liberality of indulgences, for both the private and public practice of it in its devotees. But, from the supreme human authority, as this is already well known, I pass now to that supreme divine authority. In the most solemn and luminous signs it has sown itself to be in favor of the Rosary. I only relate one of these, not because there are only a few, or that the others are less outstanding. My reason is that from the one example you might conjecture the light of many others.

1383: In the year 1571, the Turks were a haughty and proud nation, terrible for their bold war-like undertakings. They were much strengthened by the rapid subjugation of two empires. To this would be added the recent victories over the Christian forces which were exhausted and divided, and this just increased their authority. It was thus presumed that their total destruction would be an easy matter. Making use of a slight breeze that would dispatch them over the sea, they saw opened to them the ports, islands and beaches.

1384: They were facing Lepanto, a force of three hundred sails. In the memory of human beings, their armada was the greatest ever assembled. It was the most flourishing, and so well directed by capable and valiant captains. They were so well supplied with food-stuffs, convoys, arms, sailors, soldiers, and so furnished with artillery, weaponry, equipment, and munitions that it seemed that they already had brought about the ultimate desolation, total waste, fire and slaughter to all Christians. Ali 'Bascia' was the commander-in-chief. He was insolent in his good fortune, and almost cock-sure of victory, with impudent confidence. With haughty insults, he threatened the extreme ruin to the Christian name.

All Italy trembled and it seemed to her that she could already see exulting the barbaric audacity bringing within her very bosom the flames, the steel, the destruction, the rapes. There could be imagined the licentiousness in the homes, in the streets, in the lives, in the fortunes and on the persons of the land. There was imagined the sacrilege of the temples, the sacking in the squares, the destruction of the fields.

1385: There was opposed to all this a fleet of Confederates. This was assembled only after much difficulty, and was found already behind the Curzolari. All was put together with extreme effort and resistance. The force was languid because of the difference in the interests and the purposes of the nations, and for the lack of good intelligence among the generals, who more than once were on the verge of separating themselves from one another. Added to all this was the lack of experience among the troops, the greater part of whom were new draftees. Much dissension arose among the troops, and frequently weapons were drawn in their ranks, one against the other and much

tumult. For all these reasons, from the more cautious the advice was to observe the enemy rather than attack him.

1386: But, as the battle got underway, an intervention of Providence took over. As they were watching one another in their ships, on both sides of the armada, in order to take reconnaissance of the formation of the ships, they fell in upon one another. But they did not actually engage until dawn of the following day that both were in sight. This made it by now inevitable that a conflict would ensue.

The Turkish fleet proceeded in good order, all formed as in the shape of a crescent. The Christian fleet, on the contrary, in passing through the shoals, seemed all dismembered and disorganized.

It was Sunday, that 7th day of October: the sky was placid and serene, and the sea was calm. The scene and location was a place of destiny, in that on another occasion, the victory of Octavian Augustus had there decided the empire of the world.

The apparatus of the Ottoman forces was the most awesome, and it seemed as though the sea itself groaned under the weight of such a formidable armada. The vivid apprehension of the danger held the Christians still in doubt and uncertain in their deliberations. But, there was no more for counsels or words, but only of deeds and the execution of plans.

1387: The flags were raised, and the general mounted on their frigates, looked across the armada, and placed under the eyes of their soldiers their glory, their fatherland, religion: this was so that each one would be animated to fight well for the defense and the honor of the Christian faith. And it was also so that they could assure all of god's protection, the most powerful Father of His faithful, and the great Remunerator for anyone who would put down his life for the cause of His holy religion. All of the soldiers were deeply moved at these words, and moved to tears out of joy, they responded: Victory! Victory!

1388: Meanwhile, the armada was making its way through the shoals and in a straight formation, extended itself forward. However, the right flank did not advance, held back by the mistaken purposes of the one who led them. His idea was to disengage himself from the battle, and so he remained detached from the rest of the body. Then the Turks stood at attention watching every movement of the Christians, avidly took advantage of this situation. And they gave the sign for the drums to beat, for the cymbals to clang, and fearsome cries. And they struck with all their force the six galleasses that were in front, all took place in an instant. And that was also the precise moment in which all of Christianity with its solemn and devout supplications recited the rosary of Mary, in order to ask her for her help. And her help came promptly, abundantly, manifestly.

1389: In fact, the six galleasses, although surrounded by the enemy armada, and abandoned on the right wing which had separated itself, showed prodigies of courage. They fired away, fore and aft, on both sides, and it seemed as if they were all ablaze,

vomiting out bolts of cannonade, hails [125] of musket fire, and clouds of artificial fire. Taking in the Turkish dreams, they piled up instead truncated members, pierced corpses, with a famous slaughter and memorable butchery of human flesh.

The Turks began to give way, to withdraw, then were in disarray, and finally, total confusion. The wind that was needed for their battle plan, abandoned the Musmulman armada. Thus, it could not get away, and brought them rather right into the eye of the smoke. Hence, they were unable to see the dimensions of the havoc wreaked upon them. The wind seemed to pick up in the Christians' favor, and pushed them even unwillingly, those on the right wing, directly into a clash with the enemy.

1390: Then Ali' Basci', finding himself before the lighter ships in front, and being pounded in the back by the larger ships, gave word to begin rowing: at this point, the Christian generals charged him as one person. There ensued a ferocious battle. The captains were furnished with select troops, and received from the nearby ranks, reinforcements. Then, the battle raged with equal ardor on both sides, equal damage with a certain slaughter in the offing, with the outcome still uncertain. The soldiers of both nations, charged up by their connatural hatred, exposed themselves courageously to every danger. And those who were not incinerated by fire, fell into the sea, absorbed by water.

1391: The roar of the canons, the whistle of the muskets, the cries of the beaten Turks, the thick clouds that hid the sun, the screams of the oppressed, the groans of those who were drowning, all together resulted in a tragic, hellish music, between the smoke, the fire and the lamentations. All the while the fury increased. The captains stormed the enemy ships. The Christians leapt on the enemy ships and a hand-to-hand combat ensued. Foot-to-foot, they slugged it out, as though they were on land. The besieged Turks contested the battle with fierce desperation, every step forward the Christians took. And as the imperial galley of Ali' was won over even to the last timber, yet for the successive reinforcements, the battle remained in the balance.

1392: At this point, a few small Christian ships, holding up the rear, with a superhuman effort of courage, pounced upon the spot where there was the greatest danger [105] with their assistance. Others crossed over entire squadrons with sure risk to themselves that were coming to the help of the enemy. Finally, the Turkish leadership surrendered, and the flag with the crescent was exchanged for that with the Cross.

Thus, the center caved in, even though on the flanks the battle went on furiously. As one, the Christians were committed to a very dangerous struggle, due to the valor of the Turkish general, who was the commander of all their forces. And this is said without overlooking the ordinary soldier. They were surrounded on the one side by superior numbers, and were at the extremes. But, with the help of that part of the combatants who were already victorious, the head of Ali' suddenly appeared on a pike, the tide turned. Up went the shout of the conquerors. The wings collapsed and the day was won with a complete rout of the enemy.

1393: The battle lasted over five continuous hours. Such was the mutual obstinacy and wrath of the nations involved that they even fought all entwined with one another, even in the water. This by now was covered over by the half-dead, and was full of cadavers, truncated members and remnants. The sea was so encumbered with broken pieces of wood, sails, oars, masts, and rudders, that the waves would hardly be seen. The Turks had committed one hundred and eight galleys to the encounter, ninety were sunk. Many armaments were taken, and convoys, as well as a prodigious train of artillery. 40,000 Turks perished, then thousands entered into the very chains that were taken from the liberated 15, 000 Christian slaves.

1394: It took 15 days to make inventory and to divide the spoils. The advantage of this victory could be estimated not only in the conquest of various provinces, but included even Constantinople itself. This was now defenseless, and could be taken by just walking in. the ports and the laces were devoid of ships and garrisons, and the spirits shook by fear, and the empire itself wavered. In this way God had matured the fruit of victory which only because of the fault of human delay was decided.

Inhuman memory, no other victory was ever achieved in which the hand of God had been so clearly demonstrated. Selimus himself, the emperor of the Turks, in defeat, recognized this. He confessed that he had been hurt much more by prayer than by force of arms. The victorious Christians saw this more clearly by ascribing the entire prosperous outcome of that action to Mary's powerful intercession.

1395: St. PIUS V, to whom was revealed in that hour that all this had happened, and had predicted it, ordered that every year on the First Sunday of October, there should be celebrated the commemoration of St. Mary of Victory. GREGORY XIII, his successor, testified that that victory had been obtained through the prayers of the Rosary. He wished that under this title Mary be venerated on that day. And he instituted the Office of the Feast in all the Churches where there might be an altar dedicated under this title, Finally, CLEMENT XI, after another victory that was won by means of the Rosary, also by Christians against the Turks in Hungary, that was in no way inferior to the former one, spread to the whole Church and perpetually, this solemnity.

1396: And this is why, most distinguished listeners, that in the Rosary we have a devotion that is most noble because of its origin, most perfect in its nature, the most confirmed by the authority of its witnesses and prodigies. This is the sublime excellence of the Mystical Roses, of which today the devotion of the faithful still weaves trailing and joyful crowns for the Virgin. These are the roses of the heavenly gardens transplanted in the fertile field of the Church. Let the pious faithful admire its glory. The form, the structure, the fruit of these flowers, exceeds the limited ideas and the rules of every art, of all science, even the most sophisticated among human beings. The foolish and most vain wisdom of this world is confounded in the splendor of such perfection.

1397: As the use of these flowers is so wide-spread, so universal is its cultivation. For you, my devout cultivators of this devotion, it is fitting for you to keep these flowers in

your private and home gardens, with the diligence of all ardor, with all yearning. The price in which the both heaven and earth hold this devotion is most exalted. Your negligence is condemned to tepid devotees, that allows these gardens to shrivel by lack of cultivation, and when allowed to dry up. Come, now, all of you, plant these roses, irrigate them, nourish them, propagate them! Let them always smile for you, in a perpetual spring-time. This devotion is in the defense of your piety, the protection of your purity, for your sons, o fathers, for your daughters, o mothers! Let these flowers be in your hands, in your bosoms, on your temples.

May their fragrance permeate both your private rooms, and public offices, your proud halls and your humble hovels. May every station be signed with these variously colored flowers, and may every path be covered with them. May the temple be adorned with this, your prayer-wishes be crowned, and may the tombs of the faithful be sprinkled with this devotion. May the trophies of our heroes be decorated with these, and may the altars of the saints be surrounded by them. May the august throne be garlanded with these, and may the cloud of these roses be placed at the illustrious feet of our Mother and Queen.

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SOURCES**OT**

Nb 21:9	# 1331	Si 24:18	# 1323
4 K [2 K]5:13	# 1333	24	##1345; 1376
Ps 34:28	## 1328; 1330	25	##1331; 1345; 1376
36:30	# 1330	26	# 1323
44:12	# 1323	50: 8	# 1323
118:145	# 1330	Is 23:16	# 1330
Ct 1:3	# 1323	29:12	# 1333
2:5	# 1324	13	# 1330
3:11	# 1332		

NT

Mt 15:8	# 1330	Rv 5:1	# 1333
		14:2	# 1330

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GREGORY XIII, Feast of Rosary [successor to Pius V]	## 1330; 1363; 1395
INNOCENT XIII, opposed Albigensianism	## 1338;1363
St. PIUS V - Feast of Rosary	## 1330; 1363; 1395

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UGO, Card., Church in CT # 1332

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1328:**SERMON 40****Against Impure Speech [106]****First Installment**

Preached in the Venerable Church of St. Paul's, of Campo Marzio, in Verona, on the 26th Sunday after Pentecost, Feast of the Patronage of Mary, on the 15th of November, 1807.

As far as I know, most distinguished brothers and sisters, as far as you are concerned, in that you have your salvation at heart, and the glory of the name "Christian". Nonetheless, I will commit myself to treat today in your presence, of something that is indeed new and of supreme importance and most necessary.

Therefore, regarding the patronage of Mary, may no one condemn me, if I do not say anything about it. It is of great good fortune that I speak today on a day in which this is invoked, both on my address and on your deliberations. I So, you are not just simple hearers that I hope to address, or just polite listeners, or those who will kindly put up with my lack of style. I have always experienced these from you, to my great confusion and to your great glory. But, today you must be judges yourselves, and consultors, to form judgments, to believe, even if this should not apply to you in every particular.

1399: In fact, there has been introduced - I will speak freely in order to help you better - there has been introduced, I do not infer that it is among all of you, but certainly it happens among you - a dishonorable custom. This is as unfitting to the religion that you profess, as it is not dangerous to the purpose of the supernatural happiness toward which you tend. This is a certain manner of speaking boldly, unguardedly, incautiously, indelicate jokes, bold double-meanings, inter-mingled with pointed allusions, witticisms, phrases offensive to décor, purity, modesty.

I know where this weed comes from to contaminate the most purged grain in your field. It was too abundant the fruit to leave the envy of our common enemy undisturbed. And in silence, and in the shadows, he has planted his wicked seed [107]. But, I also know all too well that this new style hides itself very well under the appearance of civil and educated treatment. It seems urbane, gallant, spirited, this infernal dandelion, as it is so difficult to discern by so many. The fact is that were it to be discerned, your piety would not have allowed it to make such headway, and surely means would have been sought to remedy the situation efficaciously.

1400: I understand well the difficulty in overcoming opinions that are common and customs at the same time. This is particularly true when this practice is sustained by seductive reasoning. This new manner of speech seems to be authorized by the credit of individuals who are not uneducated or of low birth, or disreputable persons by their way of life. This way of speaking is supported, it seems, by a prescription of a long and peaceful practice, even among Christians, who are the most cultured, and is found in

the most select circles. At any rate, as its evil is intrinsic to it, and since it is harmful, I do not refuse the challenge. Even if because of my defects, I do not acquit myself well, at least my spirit will be absolved of the fault after having made the effort to the best of my ability to meet my duty.

I would not want you to condescend, out of your inclination toward my good will for you, that I presume this is unknown to you. I would not want you to agree with me until you had weighed with your subtle minds my reasons. And even when, after your mature judgment, you might come to condemn this evil custom, I would not want to see you in motion to resolve to distance yourself from this, and from society, until first you had seriously consulted on the abundance and the quality of the means that you have at your disposal.

1401: In the last analysis, it is up to you to judge this style, whether it is fitting, or unsuitable; if it is helpful, or harmful. You are free. We are not here to dominate, but only to help your faith with our exhortations. Yours is the right for your own salvation, for you happiness. And all yours is also the harm that comes from this. For what purpose have you received reason from God? - ... *Do not become like the horse and the mule, who have no understanding...* [Ps 31:9]. God Himself cries out. If you do not open your eyes on your own, they will be opened for you, but only to see yourself beyond any help.

The judge is at the door and He will judge to your loss and confusion that which you could have been able to judge for your own benefit and supreme glory. It pertains to you, in the last analysis, to attend to what is helpful for you, to remove all harm from your way: the means God has supplied and placed under your authority.

But, this suffices for the **Introduction**. Now that you see what is going to be presented here, and what is your responsibility in its regard, consider seriously now the points that I will propose to you. And first, the **nature** of this custom, then the **seriousness** of its harm, and lastly, the most expedient **ways to get rid of it**.

1402: The **nature** of this language presently in vogue is always abominable, because it is always mischievous, always deformed, and it is ever accompanied by an evil stain of obscenity. Defenses are invented for it, reasons are discovered to defend it, excuses are manufactured. It is disguised, embellished, and decorated. But, it is like the Ethiopian, always black. Wash those members, dry them, polish them smoothly, scrub them, rub them: they become all the darker. This style seeks ornamentation, dresses in the purest linen, cover it over, down to the fingernails: but, the face shows, all that remains of the filthy body uncovered, there is brought together all its deformity and there is evident the rest of it. If you do not choose to do away with it entirely, and do not choose to bury it totally under ground, all that is required is its snout above ground to bring horror. This is so even if it were decorated with flowers, or rich pearls were hung from its ears and they be put around its neck the treasures of the deep indigo.

1403: You will say: we will conceal its head, as though there did not remain underneath all its baseness. And really, there is no way to do this, admit it. One has to cover entirely the malice of speaking, to the point that it would not even be noticed by your listeners. Then, it would be all bottled up in your own hearts, and you would be forced to accept the restraint of modesty between your lips. The other alternative is that there be allowed to appear openly at least its main thread. This is the intention of the one who wants to clown around in the brigade, he just never cases being crude at all times, and this is distressing.

But, come on now, what kind of veil do you think about? Custom? This serves nothing. When is it that any custom could take over from against the divine law? We will see in a little while how nature itself, or natural modesty, intimates this very law. In the meantime, St. Paul cries out on the part of God: *...But, fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, should not even so much as be named among you...* [Ep 5:3]. Have you heard this? It should not even be mentioned. Thus, your veil is dissipated.

1404: - O, but we speak without any malice, really not about filthy matters. There is no danger of scandal among equals, as it is but a way of passing time, or to appear gallant. And we just listen to such conversations out of simple curiosity or to pass time.

Your innocence, and that of others, pertains to your beautiful souls. Indeed, you do not have on a beautiful garment, that is on you now. If it is not, as I might fear, then we will talk about that. But, for the sake of gallantry, or curiosity, this is indeed a very thin veil [108]. And for the head it is too light, too delicate and fine, so that all the ugliness native to this kind of evil speech would not appear right through it.

1405: *...For every idle word...* [Mt 12:36], it is necessary to make an account, even if these words are not base. And when conversation is obscene, just think it over whether the purpose of making your friends laugh can ever make such conversation, good, honest: *...or obscenity, or foolish talking, or scurrility, which is to no purpose...* [Ep 5:4]. The Apostle adds this to tear away also this wretched veil, and he leaves you uncovered, and bereft of all further excuses. *...It is all to no purpose...* It does not pertain, it has nothing to do with what we are, it is entirely impertinent. All of this clearly indicates that there are other upright ways of speaking, other decent manners, even spirited and seasoned conversation, that are not dissolute, or crude, with which a conversation may be spiced without letting it degenerate.

1406: And what else really is gained from these low jokes, if not to lose one's reputation? Is that senseless person who once said to Pythagoras one day in a spirited manner think that his joke was indeed a good one: 'I would prefer to stand in a chorus of beautiful Venuses than in a circle of philosophers.' And the answer he got back was: 'Also pigs prefer to roll around in the swamp over limpid water.'

In such an encounter this is a spirited exchange, and philosophically it might be called *eutrapelia*. But do not scandalize me that Pythagoras would have been able to

find in our neighborhoods an animal who could put together such a humiliating comparison. In his time, Italy was a forest, uncultured in spirit, caught in the dark horror of tragic ignorance, hearts were wild under the domination of the passions, in the confusion of vices. He was the one who took away the first rough scales of our barbarity.

1407: It would indeed be very strange, and a great surprise, if in these days, after so much culture of letters, of polishing of customs, refinement of intelligence, in a century in which in broad daylight there are pushed forward all sciences, should this ancient philosopher still be able to find spread throughout our neighborhoods this kind of very unclean speakers. This is a far cry from his metempsychosis. And it is much to be feared that if there should be a race, that is the most fecund of all, be allowed to multiply itself in our cities, that would not expel all men.

I return to Pythagoras. If he should come to Italy in these days, he would be reduced, in order not to run up against these beasts, without ever taking on the air of being closed up in a philosophical assembly, and to treat only with such minded spirits. But, I think it would be fitting to light Diogenes' lamp here at mid-day. Many are stung today with this spirit. For all that the world hears of this, and especially the women, who seem to stand around perhaps to learn it. It almost seems that they do not know how to speak of anything else, nor in any better manner, than would donkeys and horses, if they had tongues.

1408: These are people with an education, fine intelligence. What will I say about the lowly masses, with our formal education? I have spoken about this other times, and so will spare your shame any further proof of it. If the most educated salons have already been transformed into so many stables, then the shops will be little more than pig pens. What infamy, what dishonor, what disgrace! The human tongue, therefore, is so dishonored, degraded, debased, condemned to transform a human being into a filthy animal. This is what is supposed to distinguish men and women from the beasts! What supreme insult this is to the Creator of all reality, and the sovereign Architect of the world. By no other trait has He declared that human beings are separate from the rest of the animals than by the example of the word.

1409: So, as far as the body is concerned, we are humiliated by the size, by the strength, in vigor, in velocity. In all these traits, we are much surpassed by the brute animals. In all these traits, we are much surpassed by the brute animals. They also have much less need of outside help, because they move much more quickly for their food, and they know how to perform many other activities without any teacher, as their nature leads them. In us, truly the distinguishing mark is reason: it is that perfection so sublime that it makes us resemble God. But, how can reason contribute to this characteristic, and how above all, could it be in us that divine trait that is evident, other than those thoughts that we think of that we have in our minds, that we could not yet express with speech? That which most evidently and at first sight is lacking to animals in every way and is always noticed, is precisely this. They surely do not give any indications of a sign or any semblance of thought, of understanding, of judgment, of estimation [109].

1410: One is not deceived, in fact, in any manner, in seeing the beasts prepare with much caution their little dens, or to see them stitching together with such fine art their nests, to train their parts, to teach them, to make preparation for the winter, to make both wax and honey, works that we cannot imitate. Such phenomena might arouse the slightest suspicion that there is in them some mind or reason. However, since they lack words, these very creatures that manifest such abilities, are said to be mute, and from this one immediately judges that they are irrational, which they are. For which reason if the power of speech is the greatest gift that we have from heaven to communicate with others, then what would be more esteemed as worthy than to make a good and praiseworthy use of this with every solicitude?

Indeed what is more admirable than the very rapid and sure exchange of human thoughts, through the most simple organ of the tongue, and the artful modification of so many sounds? What more joyful, and at the same time, sweeter communication of affections is possible, on which friendship is based. Or, what is more useful and also more powerful than to draw ready assistance in our needs? Is it not this way in which we show the need for medicine for our sufferings, comfort in our afflictions, counsel in doubts, light against the hostile darkness of ignorance?

1410: What is more sublime, more generous, more magnificent, than to inform one about morality, or to give directions toward an upright life, to withdraw one from vice, to give help to those asking for it, to bring salvation, to free from dangers, to conserve the good of others, their reputation, virtue, peace, security ²². And what other power has ever been able to gather dispersed human beings into one place, and from a base, savage life, lead them to a civil and human conduct? And once the societies are formed, what better way than to describe the laws, the judgments, and the rights to confirm them?

And to come to the summit, by what other way can there be manifest here on earth to mortal beings the most sublime final end of their superhuman beatitude and the most noble object in store for them? And how else can there be made known the most powerful motives to make them aspire to, and what more simple means to reach there? What better prepares the paths, insures one's steps, measures one's progress, comforts those already tired, spurs on those dragging their feet, or straightens out again those who have wandered off course? To summarize in a few words the innumerable benefits that derive from the moderate and wise use of this gift, it contains the dignity not only of the one who possesses it, but of very many private individuals and human society. It is here that one may find the political and spiritual well being of all.

1412: How culpable, then, how detestable, would its sacrilegious use be, my brothers and sisters. This means converting a gift of such honor for you, of such utility for your friends, of such salvation for the civil and Christian republic, into harm not only for society and ruin of your neighbors, but at the same time a loss of reputation for

²² Cf. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Oratore*.

yourselves? Does this wrong use of speech not weigh you down with shame through those very means that God has intended to be employed to assist in your greater dignity? And will there still be among you those who would make excuses for this so unworthy an abuse? Are there those who would protect it, defend it?

And should there be anyone, either friend of yours, or one jealous of your dignity, would you not reprehend him with frankness, or tacitly correct him with the embarrassment that appears on your reddened face? Would there then be found anyone who would deride virtue, who would trample religion under foot, or would attack your modesty with villainous audacity? And will there be anyone who will glory in it its infamy, who would rejoice in your confusion, and would be honored by your unhappy feelings?

1413: This is the summit of all evil: just do not recognize it. It is not unlike those who are seriously ill who are frantic because of their sickness, and they rail out against the doctor. I do not mean to insult the wretched; rather I feel even greater compassion for them and there increases my commitment and fervor for their cure. I will never tire of patience, as do those who assume extravagant humors like those children who are incapable of reasoning by their age. So, I cannot call such people either healthy or human who either do not feel their malady, or take no steps to cure it. Nor will I believe that such individuals have recovered, or have achieved good sense, until they do not speak decently and in a rational manner.

I know what some might respond: - We do not speak this way.

But, your children, do, your servant and your friends use this kind of speech. Such language is used in your homes, it may be heard in your shops, people speak to you this way. Whose children are yours? To whom do your servants belong? What kind of friendships do you nurture? What kind of care do you give your families, what zeal do you exercise for your reputation, for a good name, for your own honor? Do you not speak by your expression, would you not frown at hearing such speech? You listen, and then do you laugh at it? Then, you are doubly wretched: if it is that this evil has surprised you, then why do you not remove it, by taking away the listening any more to it.

1414: And do you laugh? Why do you not rather show your indignation? Why do you not at least flame up with embarrassment? Why do you not show your confusion at hearing such talk? Come now, I would rather talk this over with you, rather than treat you with harshness and rigor. For your wretched and deplorable condition of your state merits rather a kind regard. You laugh, o, my dearly beloved, does this seem to you to be the time to laugh? There is still evident the smoke from the slaughter, there dances before your eyes the avenging sword in the hand of God. This is not the season of diffused and immodest joy, but rather this is a time of crying, tears, lament.

What insane glory, what delirium this is, to find reason for laughter in this very filthiness, that to wash away its stain with which life is drenched there would hardly suffice two rivers that would flow continuously from our eyes, until they were to close for good? Is this the way to prepare ourselves to appear before that awesome tribunal

to give an account? Could you joke, and laugh, and be amused, at the formidable threshold, being cited there, for eternity? What stupidity this would be, what fraud, what enchantment!

1415: But without stretching our sights too far into the future, would it not suffice to open them and gaze around? Look out for a bold enemy for your life. And what athlete would ever descend into the arena, and would thus forget the arms and the restless care to combat with the adversary, who would be just thinking of nice expressions, witticisms, and jokes ²³? The devil himself rushes out against you, he prepares the attack, plans the assault, encircles around many times, screaming out savagely against his prey. He is filled with eager longing to devour you, he tries every access, moves everything and directs all to your harm. He increases his wrath and his boldness to cast you from the nest, he grinds his teeth, he unleashes his fangs, distends his claws, beats on his panting breast, he lashes out with his restless tail, his coat is ruffled up and out from his swollen cheeks vibrates his tongue, he roars and trembles, and spits fire against your salvation. And all through this, you would sit around telling stories about romance, impure jokes, and a thousand other stupid impertinent matters?

1446: This is a time of war, and would you treat of those things that are more befitting to those clowns who wander about in a crazy revelry, in festivity and dancing? Do you not see the visages of those on their way to war, how sad and wrinkled they are, their brows all showing evidence of fear and their full horror? You see their severe looks, their hearts that palpitate, vibrate, and jump, their minds concentrated, trembling, worried, restless. There is much discipline in their ranks, moderation in their gait, much silence among the soldiers. Here, one does not hear a single unclean joke, or hardly even a word.

This is the way it is with those who wage war with visible enemies; they do not receive offence from words, as there is much silence. You who must wage war also regarding speech, and use the same energy as in a war, would you leave this side of you unprotected and disarmed? Are you ignorant of the fact that even great traps are being prepared for you? And do you still joke, and amuse yourself with obscene jokes, and strive to make others laugh, and you really do not at all. We all see this [112].

1417: But, tell me something, is it not sufficient to cast away all desire to laugh and to fool around, in a time of war and of battle, of vigils, of being on guard, of taking up weapons, and to draw up the battle lines? There is no position here that would have the time for laughter; for this is the time of the world. Christ Himself tells us this: *...the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful...* [Jn 16:20]. Christ Himself says this, and He is nailed to the Cross for your evils: and you laugh? He received slaps and punches, and suffered even more for the calamities that you did and the storms that you created: and you want to remain among delights and jokes. And how is it that you are not more disturbed? Do you receive the most sacred pledges of His redemption, and then waste them, corrupt them, profane them? St. Paul said

²³ St. John Chrysostom, *In Mt*, Hom 6, 7 [t.7, 811/S 3, ff.]

regarding this impure talk, and obscene language: *...and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God: whereby you have been sealed...* [Ep 4:30].

This is the height of malice, and I will go on to explain it after a brief rest...[!]

1418: You must not sadden the Holy Spirit with Whom you have been sealed. This sentence of the Apostle is terrible, my brothers and sisters, and of grave horror. And as he said also in another place: *...Therefore, he that despises these things, despises not man, but God...* [1 Th 4:8]. It is not a matter then, of defying and of affronting man, which was the consequence of this above-mentioned statement for myself. In fact, having proven that this bad language is unsuited to the extent that it is proper only for stupid animals, and that it deserves to be relegated to the stables, or to the banks of the swamp. It happens that anyone who uses such talk in conversation, he not only lowers himself, but also seems to think of the persons with whom he speaks to be also on the animal level. Such people imply that even the most civil company in whom they may be little more than a herd of dumb animals.

1419: The affront, however, goes much higher, all the way up to God by grieving His Spirit, *...whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption...* [Ep 4:30]. For He has made of us His Kingdom [Apc 1:6], indeed princes and kings with Him [Apoc 21:24]. He has taken away those evils and miseries of before, and of the most unhappy number of those who lay under His wrath. And would you embitter Him, you would sadden Him? The totality of His benefits increases the accusation against you, and your shame likewise increases.

You are sealed... [Ep 4:20]" this seal is on your lips; do not violate the seals, then. A mouth sealed by the Holy Spirit would never speak in this way. Will you still say: well, it is not a very serious matter ²⁴? It is precisely a serious matter because you take it so lightly, and thus it becomes incurable. Your mouth is sealed with the Holy Spirit, and causes the first word that issues from your lips on the day in which you were re-born in the spiritual and salvific waters, *unto the day of redemption...* [Ep 4:30]. How great, then, is the dignity of your tongue!

1420: *Our Father* [Mt 6:9]. You call God, *Father*, and then you speak in a manner unworthy of a son? And how can you address Him that way? By adoption, in that you share not only by name, but you also participate in the nature of God. And then, in your speech, you would lower yourself to the animals, and equal yourself to the most filthy, and you conduct yourself as one of these? And you call God *Father*, and then render and then heap such shame and contumely on this name. And where do you address Him? In the heavens. You are elevated by this word, and almost put on wings that raise you up to heaven. Why, then, do you turn so low, and fall back into the dust from which you were called?

Think over, think about the august words that you pronounce with your mouth. Think of the table to which you have been made worthy to share. Think of what it is that you touch, and what you taste, of what nourishment you are fed. Think of with whom it is you sit down to that banquet in the time of the mysteries. . With the Angels,

²⁴ St. John Chrysostom, *In I ad Co.* Hom 12, 78. [t.10, p. 64/2 C]

with the Seraphim. The Seraphim do not speak of dirty things. For one duty alone is their sacred tongue committed: to praise the supreme God, to glorify Him. The priest, taking their place, and acting in their stead, and with the whole Church exclaims in one voice: ‘Holy, Holy’. You can repeat this, at least hear it, and you will be standing among them. You will open your mouths for that food, and will you then employ that same mouth for lascivious language, for uncleanness ²⁵?

1422: Tell me, I beg you, if a royal dish was reserved for the kingly meal, and was set aside precisely for this, and then one of the slaves were to use it for garbage, for feces, would any one dare again to make use of this most noble vessel that had been so debased and used for dung? This is what impure speech is likened to. This is just what unclean talk is. Look there on the altar, those sacred vessels: would you dare use them for anything else ²⁶? You are more holy, much more holly than those sacred vessels. How, then, can you profane yourself, dirty yourself? You stand in heaven and speak of mud? You approach the king’s throne, and talk about debase things. You converse among the apostles, and talk like an animal? You are admitted to the divine kiss, and then talk about impure realities? God has decorated your mouth with hymns, with praise,; on your tongue Christ places His own Body, and reddens your lips with His Blood, and you should speak of base, obscene, disgusting realities?

No more, my brothers and sisters. Let this suffice, and let the malice of such talk go ahead to instruct you on its innate debaseness, deformity, enable you to judge it for yourselves. See how unfitting it is to every reasonable person, and even more, for a Christian. And when, in a second installment, there will be exposed to you the greatness of the harm it brings to you, in a second harangue, we will see what you will resolve....

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SOURCES

OT

Ps 31:9

1401

NT

Mt 6:9

1420

Ep 5:3

1403

12:36

1405

4

1405

Jn16:20

1417

1 Th 4:8

1418

Ep 4:30

1417; 1419 [3 x]

Apoc 1:6

1418

21:24

1419

²⁵ St/ John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos*, 12, 2 [t. 2, p. 142/D]

²⁶ St. Jhn Chrysostom, *De Anna. Serm. 3, 2. [t. 4, pp. 422: 2D]*

FATHERS

St. John Chrysostom, <i>Ad Illuminandos</i> 12, 2 [t.2,p. 142.d]	# 1421
<i>De Anna. Sermo</i> 3, 2 [t. 4, p. 422/ 2D]	# 1422
<i>In Mt. Hom.</i> 6, 3 [t. 7, p. 811, 3/3 F [not clear]	# 1415
<i>In I ad Cor., Hom.</i> 12, 7 [t. 10, p. 64/2 C]	# 1419

OTHER WRITERS

Cicero, Marcus Tullius, <i>De Oratore</i>	# 1411
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1422:**SERMON 41****Against Improper Speech****Second Installment**

Preached in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio, on the IIIrd Sunday of Advent (*Gaudete*), December 13, 1807.

With a great wonder, my brothers and sisters: the spirit of the Church, the spirit of the world, in eternal discord, today they seem to come together. Joyfully, they both seem to cry out in unison: *...Rejoice..>!* [Ph 4::4]. Joyously,, they repeat it and enthusiastically: *... again, I say, rejoice...!* What is this? What harmony, what agreement this is! Really, what a pleasant surprise if this agreement could continue! But, also, all too quickly they are in disagreement, by what follows then: *...Rejoice in the Lord...!* . This is what the Church sings ²⁷. The joyful voices of this world sound with totally different accents than those of God.

1423: And these voices make themselves heard all the more discordantly, even to the most unattuned ears. And they sound really flat both in rhythm and in cadence. In fact, the Church announces its theme with that same finale: *...Let your modest be known to all men..* [Ph 4:5]. Precisely in the very area where the world raves more than ever in proving with bold tunes and with lascivious variations of the voice of its own immodesty. And so it is, that that sound that is heard today by the ecclesiastical trumpets gives a clear signal of open war, where at first there seemed to be a peaceful concert.

Yes, the immodesty of this world, manifested singularly in its speech, is a sad consequence of an even worse motive. And this is the senseless joy that is totally carnal. Immodesty in speaking, I reply, is combated then, more than by anything else by the spirit of the Church on this day. This suffices to comfort me, and makes me full of confidence as I take the field against this impure practice. And this is the day also set aside for me, to give a second, even more vibrant resolute attack against it.

1424: I feel the unavoidable commitment of my challenge, but even more, the regard that I owe, most distinguished brothers and sisters, to your expectancy. No more, no more. I put before this unclean practice the spirit of Christian modesty, that the battle might be continued from that part where we began it. In the meantime, I will bring all of my powers to strike out at this even in the back, for those harmful effects that it brings about, and that stand behind this practice.

And this is advantageous position that I chose for my camp to line up my forces, to deploy my arms [196]: *... Evil communications corrupt good manners...* [1 Co 15:33]. This divine text is taken from St. Paul. Thus, malicious conversation are harmful both to the tongue of the one who speaks, as it is fatal to his soul - and also to

²⁷ Introit of the Mass for *Gaudet* Sunday

the ears of the one who listens, through which scandal passes. It is also hurtful to the body of society, where its good order is upset, thrown into disorder, disturbed.

1425: All right, I will grant you a point: dishonesty is not loved by you: therefore, this means you hate it. But this hatred, how would you prove it? Let us place here an enemy of yours, that some of you do have, would you enjoy seeing him? Would you not turn away your face? Would you not purposefully avoid every encounter with him? If you bumped right into him, would you not make a face, would not your visage register your discomfort? Would not your stride be broken, would you not be speechless, with your tongue trembling? And all this when still a prudent, or cunning dissimulation you would employ to contain the rest of your feelings. May God grant, then, that among the friends of God this be not even mentioned, and even more, that it never be spoken of in praise.

1426: This is clearly evident when it is truly your enemy: but, this is not the case with indecency. When you run into shamelessness, it is met with laughter. There is ready a kind joke that comes forth from your lips, to give signs of your friendship. When friends talk with one another of this, it is not only in praise of it. They offer incense to this ugly divinity, you echo this, you applaud it. And without waiting any further invitation, even an importunate one, in conversations, in select circles, in secret, in public, along the walks, in close quarters, you add your tongue to its beloved name. You do so at the tables of banquets, at the gaming tables, in the coffee shops, on the public benches, at work and in the county seats. It appears under a thousand disguises, and is even written down, as is the custom between delirious lovers, rereading their own notes to one another, they often become tasteless, and one is consumed by it all. Are not the affections made clear enough through speech?

1427: We also have the facts. As the tongue speaks, where do the eyes wander? On what objects, on what images, on what scenes? I will say no more. I will say only that everything in you speaks of it, all is tongue to make it manifest: the eyes, the hand, the head, the feet, your sitting down, your gait, your approaching some, avoiding others.

And where, and with whom and at whose places do your dirty conversations unfold? Perhaps you can admit this without scandal, so that the whole world could see it. However, for this it is necessary that I should say something more.

1428: We still have some other facts that need to be made more clear, as brought forth by you in the darkness. And we have these from your own mouths, not whispered in some one's ear, but made public by trumpet blasts. These are broadcast in the enthusiasm and in the furor of your imprudence, whenever you can reach the level of glorying in the most deform iniquities, in the most filthy malice, in the most nauseating uncleanness. This is done when you list the number of your 'triumphs', when you break down the most powerful walls of marital fidelity. It is noted when you force, or betray the camps of virginal purity, as well as from the slaughter of the most pure simplicity and the most remarkable innocence.

1432: But, enough of this, as I know how my lips pierce you with these stories, that in your own conversations were considered very sweet, even more so than honey. You just cannot deny now your affection for these. I have placed before you a most faithful mirror, the work of your own hands. Now you must take a good, honest look at the face of your own hearts, without any deception. I love to correct you, it is not my intention to confound you. So, I retreat immediately and I leave up to you the care of applying in secret the remedy for the harm of what is within you. I presume that you would like to appear to me as you did before, innocent of all affection for unclean realities about which you speak. However, I do not declare you free from serious sin, even only because of the danger in which your tongue places you in taking enjoyment in that evil in which you joke and laugh, and where you find your amusement.

1433: All human beings know of their fragility and that they stand in some danger from exterior attractions to fall into agreeing to those that are less decent. But, in the ordinary course of events, such danger is remote, whereas in indecent speech, it becomes close, even proximate. So, ordinary circumstances are necessary for life, whereas such conversation is freely chosen. Those in ordinary circumstances will sin only if they give in to it, in such talk, already sin without going any further, by simply putting yourselves into the danger of sinning: *..he that loves changer shall perish in it...* [Si 3:27].

1434: Sensual pleasure runs through the world like a broad torrent, that is quite deep: every person in his life's journey has to cross it, and each passes over with stepping stones that are quite narrow and not firm. The awesome vortex, the impetus of the fall and troubled waters that roar below, the crash of the waters that in a deafening roar along side where they rush downward, breaking upon the precipices, the sparkling of the foamy waters in suspension, the quivering spray and the piercing foam that splashes on high, with a gurgling sound. The continuous roar and the rushing toward the high banks, the cloud that always seems to arise from this and the kind of bow that is seen all around, all this makes the eyes flutter often, distracts the mind, and makes the feet unsteady for that timid wayfarer, and one is often lost.

1435: The more cautious, however, reach out their hand to the divine arm which helps them and escorts them. With their left hands they hold on to the rails of human prudence, and make sure at each step of the way that their foot is solid under them before going on. Acting this way, much of the danger is removed for them. But, for you, it is the total opposite. Your unclean speech, proceeding from the affections of your hears are like your steps. You are distanced from the divine assistance, there is removed from you the supports of human caution and you put yourselves on the narrow and slippery path. Who can hold you up there, and who can sustain you? This is your danger, not just proximate, but voluntary.

1436: First of all, you distance yourself from God. And like the stench of putrid and corrupt waters from the stagnant swamp, and the heavy odor of the mud, the busy bees are put to flight. [And thus, we see that the cloud is spread by the wind, and the industrious villain with the pleasing flavor of crushed clover, of wild thyme and of aromatic herbs which call them to new trees]. In similar manner, the odor of an

unclean tongue chases one far from the Spirit of God and His gifts. And although in everything and always human beings need sovereign assistance, this is more true than ever in knowing how to contain oneself. Purity is a gift from there: ...; *who can be continent, except god gave it...* [Ws 8:21].

1437: Not only this, by the intemperate joy and the immoderate laughter and the license of the lascivious tongue takes one beyond all restraint of proper circumspection. As a result, ruin will come most securely, at great speed, and will not delay. And do we not see this in the most strong squares and defenses. They might have the technique to arrest even for a long time the rapid course of the victory to the most happy conquerors. This would be an unexpected festival, where all would crumble, and the most valid ammunition would be rendered useless. And would not there be opened to the enemy that passage way that the reinforced batteries would try in vain, and all previous assaults having been repelled, would then be won over?

1438: Syracuse is an outstanding witness for all ages to see. The towers, the forts, the stockades, the embankments, the weapons, the soldiers, and the famous machines of Archimedes that so frightened Marcellus. The unconquerable boldness of the Roman Legions in their attack on those walls, was inexorable. After a long and useless block, it was thought that nothing more could be done to divert from that part as the only undertaking seemed impossible. And even earlier there was seen before that city the numerous Attic Navy was seen to be sunk, and two powerful armies with their most courageous leaders were defeated. Who ever would have believed it? The brief solace of a festive day, that allowed the citizens just for a little while to put down their arms, so they could put on the crowns of joyous rest. This gave the opportunity to not more than one thousand Romans to burn down everything, and all was reduced to ashes in an instant.

1439: An impure tongue does not remove just the obstacles to an eventual fall, but even makes the path slippery, and places a slide on it. We already have the fire of concupiscence that burns within us, that is, right under our ashes. An impure tongue blows on these and agitates them and shakes them up: and can you imagine that they will not blaze out? The fire of the rebellion burns within our flesh: an impure tongue puts wood on this fire, piles it up, stacks it well: and do you not think that this will become a fire?

1440: And further, do you not see that one who speaks of malicious realities, is meditating on malice? An amusing story is recounted, a joke is made, a novel is talked about. The friend reflects on this, then almost immediately makes a comparison. Thus, then, passes to application, it comes to the individual. The first person just depicted it, a second person sheds light upon it for you. One may just advance all the reasons for pleasure, and another might suggest and prepare the means. And this is just the way, in the words of the Holy Spirit: ...*the mouth of the just shall meditate wisdom...* [Ps 36:30]. In like manner, the mouth of the wicked meditates malice. It is in meditation that the fire is lit: both in those regarding God's love, as well as in those regarding the love of the flesh.

1441: What more do you need? Would you also have to hear, and even see, the accounts of those enormous beasts of the broiling arenas of Africa - or, from the forests of the frozen north? They are dragged along, weighed down with chains, closed into strong cages of iron, they are brought by ferocious hunters into our lands, in order to make money and offering a spectacle before our eyes. Like the proud lion, the ferocious tiger, the furious panther obey, and hold back their wrath, and forget their anger, at the signals and the blows of the harsh master, in patience.

1441: But, just let them discover but a single passage way of escape, and we will see then that not a person is able to dominate them. Not even the whole theater would be able to restrain their impetuous fury. And the beasts would make their get-away, with the people terrified at this sight, and all hurl themselves against the doors, walking over and pressing against one another. At the beastly roar, there are tumult, running to and fro, the cries of the people - the whole city is full of fear, and even of slaughter. Your passions are like this. If you wish to close them in your hearts where they are born, it is easy to hold them back. But if you incautiously release your hold over them, they escape through the narrow passage way of the tongue, and there ensues a horrible inevitable slaughter. This is why I say to you that where you may not have sinned, yet with your affections, nor by entering into the danger of sin, you have sinned at least by scandal that your unrestrained tongue causes in others.

1442: Those who listen to such talk, are either innocent or they are malicious. Regarding the former, it is simply impossible in our times that tender young men and pure young ladies do not in plenty of time, learn about every evil. The serpentine colloquies cast out from paradise itself all innocence: how much the ore do they not cast it out from our world now. And there, in that happy garden, there was only one snake who spoke: their number her is infinite.

1443: It is not necessary to go look for them among the thorns and the thickets: they crawl along the dust of every street. They make their hiss heard insidiously from every balcony. They stand curled at the entrance of temples, even if they do not enter there themselves. And they whisper in the ready ear of listeners, God knows what. They are at home in the shops, they fool around in the schools, and they enter into the homes, if they are not there already. And who would believe it, but many times the parents themselves are the serpents! All the innocence that ordinarily in the most tender age is esteemed, is reduced, in the final analysis, to a blessed ignorance. Take this way: and the innocence itself soon disappears. It is like an unripe fruit that is picked still green, tucked into the leaves where it is enclosed.

1444: How little it takes to learn malice: and by what master it is taught, and with what lessons? It's all the style now! Just be observing the fact of it, with the experience of the hand: so much like the serpent from that fatal tree, with the death-dealing fruit in its mouth.

Poor innocence! On a youthful spirit, even novelty itself makes a great impre3ssin. Then, curiosity follows, which is the first escort, according to St. THOMAS, to the works of malice. There begin then to sprout up in the heart the first desires of

sensual delectation, as St. AUGUSTINE relates ²⁸. He tells us of that friend of his who was overcome not so much by the lust of pleasure, but much more by the charm of trying it out.

1446: There remain still two obstacles to external falls. The first is a religious fear of God, a natural repugnance for sin. But, these individuals of unclean tongues use precisely the tongue of the ancient serpent, and they repeat in the ear of a young man, or of those shy and modest children [127]: What is this rudeness of yours? Why do you have such reserve? Do you want to go without all delights at your age? - ... *Why has God commanded you that you should not eat of every tree...*? [Gn 3:1].

1447: But this is wrong; it is a sin. God punishes these things. And is it not true, that once the pleasure is tasted even briefly, there comes eternal death? - ... *lest perhaps we die...* [v. 3].

- O, these are just scruples, scruples. Why would we then, be in such a delightful meadow of pleasures, if we cannot pluck the most charming flowers, and weave lovely garlands of them before they wither and dry up? be a man, come to know the world! You will then be above all the prejudices of age, sex, the masses: ...*no, you shall not die the death...* [v. 4]... *you shall be as gods...* [v. 5].

1448: There remains only embarrassment And shame, this is the last and strong restraint of not falling into sin. But, listening to the accounts of those who admit serenely their escapades, they make no effort to excuse themselves as a plague on humanity. But, rather, many of them even boast of what they have done. They present as quite normal to trick young people. There is depicted to the imagination this pleasure in such vivid colors, that nothing else is seen that is either more beautiful, or more rewarding: ...*and the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold: and she took of the fruit thereof...* [v. 6].

1449: And even if one sometimes does not immediately give in, there is planted fixed in the spirit the temptation; and from this there occur later on those ruinous falls, and the habits and the chains that lead to the sepulcher. It is much like the doe in which the hunter has placed the mortal blow in its side. It may still flee, up the mountain, and down into the valley, through the woods and across the meadow, through the fields to the waterfalls. But, it carries always and everywhere the sharp dart that wounds it. And panting the more as it runs along, with the blood gradually emptying out of the veins, its members lose sensation, the heart loses life, and the doe falls to the ground.

Poor innocence! I just cannot bear to go on describing a reality that is too moving for me, too real, and a continual sorrow to my spirit.

1450: I come now to those who, full of malice, listen to evil talk. For this part, if they are not more grave, they are certainly more numbers the scandals that occur. This is because of the great facility with which they are given, and for the even greater ease with which they are received. The use of pleasure in no way slakes the thirst for it,

²⁸ *Confessions*, 6, 12, 22 [t. 1, 1129/D, ff.].

rather it teases it the more. The more easily will one abstain from carnal delectations when it never occurs on one's lips, of those who have experienced it also one time. Furthermore, the passions are made all the more bold as they are pampered.

1451 Habit, custom, practice, only despoil the object of that horror that evil inspires at first sight, by making one more at home with it. The intellect is no longer able to discern it. The imagination can only look upon it from the point of view of its usefulness, or from the aspect of its pleasure. Inclination becomes all the more strengthened, and the will is made the vassal of the appetite.

1452: The innocent soul is something like a strongly walled and well provided square. There, the fear of God is like the soldier, and the sense of shame like a parapet. An unrestrained heart is not like this. In such a heart, the fortifications have already been knocked down, and the fears have all been put to route. What could be easier than to enter where there is no resistance or guard - rather, even where there are signs of welcome, where one is awaited, invited? A word makes it dear, as a sign that an entire army can approach there for carnal discourses. One hastens in, a festival is celebrated, applause given, one draws up a chair to join in the jokes, with double-meanings, that are spicy and suggestive. O what pleasures, delights, and consent! And since all proceed from habit, they thus become all the more voluntary and culpable. Who could even count their number? Only someone who would add up all the words.

1453: Just enter into the circle of these malicious conversationalists through a crack in the wall. And of what else do they speak? From beginning to end the ears of all are fed on this most filthy pasturage. One tells an ingenious little story, another relates what actually happened: then one offers a jibe, followed by a discourse: and all is base, sated and seasoned under diverse forms. It all happens as occurred to that QUINTUS FLAMINIUS, that he himself narrated as having taken place in an assembly for another occasion. He had been invited to a dinner in Calce of Negroponce, by a friend of his, who was a true gentleman and solicitous for his own well-being and that of his guests. He was overwhelmed by the quantity and the variety of the foods that were prepared. He asked his friend who he had been able in the month of June to kill so much game. The friend broke out in laughter and confessed that the entire 'game' was nothing more than a little pig that had been seasoned and prepared with different sauces.

This offers a good comparison with the base conversations so much in style now: these are conversations that kill the soul of the one who speaks, scandalize the one who listens, and which upset and disturb society.

1454: How often in their play do the children from the shore of a fishing pond pick up a little stone. They carefully cast it out to the middle of the quiet and clear water. It crashes through the clear crystal, and one hears the splash and it falls to the bottom. The spray goes up into the air and then the water closes over it. Afterwards there is seen not only the water near by that is moved about and agitated for a short time. However, from its movement many and successive little circles form, being brought

about in a kind of perpetual motion. These become larger and larger until they reach the extreme sides of the pond. Thus, going out from the center, they keep getting produced and extended, until the whole pond from shore to shore is moved and disturbed with these ripples.

1455: This is something like a lascivious conversation. It not only agitates and disturbs the souls of those few among whom it is first cast, and those who stand around listening to it. But very soon the disciples of the malice become its teachers. From these, it is passed on with ever new twists and eventually involving also the affections, and from this, it finally becomes the practice: ...*Evil communications corrupt good manners...* [1 Co 15:33].

1456: A single bird that the hunter allows to fly on high with a small string attached to its foot, draws down a whole flock of birds that might be flying overhead. What should we do about the very many engaged in these conversations, almost endless, one after another, in a long series from morning until late at night? Are not their crudities something like that sticky substance [to catch birds] that is most tenacious of that lasciviousness that comes from hell? What should we do not that the fetid mouths of so many sepulchers are open, full of putrid, decaying flesh - especially since the plague-laden breath of a single man, even still alive, can corrupt an entire city?

1457: In 1630, in Verona the plague was brought by a single soldier. From one single person so much harm came to an entire people? You see, almost expelled from the walls of their own land, many left on foot stumbling along, carried on the arms of others, or in carts. The infected, and even those suspected of being so, were torn from their homes by their relatives, their children, their friends. They formed a long weeping file, making their way as beggars do. And if one would come to the gates of the city, the bridges were raised, or barred. There were weapons and guards and places of examination of great severity as in the climate of a war.

1458: And even were one to get inside, there would be an even more tragic spectacle. There would be two or more bodies in the one coffin, or piled up on the wagons, one after another, the dead were being transported. There was no funeral pomp for these; no sound of the bells, and hardly even a cross to accompany them. And once the tragic convey would pass, the silence, the solitude took over the streets, where there were only the cruel guards, the unrelenting officials. There would pass by only those all wrapped in their black mantles, and mourning clothes, the fat undertakers, a few doctors, and a few priests.

1459: Meanwhile, new bodies would appear at every exit, and from the windows the furniture would be thrown out to burn in the middle of the street. The houses in which its inhabitants were like kidnapped, seemed to have been changed into so many prisons. These often, then, became sepulchers, where lying one on top of another, from entire families nothing would remain to spread the news of their deaths, except the odor that came from them.

You are horrified even recalling these terrors to mind. And what if I could show you, present to your view, even more horrible evils, that come from impure tongues to the body of society?

1460: I will not show you the infirm as Lazarus. Rather, I would like to take you to the Hospitals to see of whom there are full. I would take you through the public streets, and were it possible in many cases, to add up the number of those who still might be sent there, to increase the list considerably. Very worthy fruits of those lessons that from its chair of pestilence, the obscene language in vogue today holds forth. I will show you even more pitiable sick people, not of body, but of heart - not physically, but morally sick, and of wounds full of vices.

1461: OO, how many have been led by their former passions that still blaze up. How many are carried away by their very evil, seductive companions! How many are carried off by custom and by the folly of the examples that they see! How many are led astray by their families, by their spouses, by their own land, all led into voluntary exile! You see, their faces, boldly fixed even joyful, not even crying, nor wept over! You see them delay in the adulterous arms of some foreign woman, or who fall into the clutches of a lover! How they find themselves in a far-off land, either throwing away their patrimony in luxuries, or endangering their honor in adventures!

1462: Impure speech, where it is accepted as in vogue, has broken down all restraint, has corrupted all the custody, it becomes free and easy. It easily moves on them, to exchange, to the contagion of the most fatal iniquities, such as fornication and adultery, prostitute women and effeminate men, perverted boys and lascivious young girls. All of this is full of horror, confusion, disorder, and not only of vices and villainy as much as it is monstrous and portentous. Thus, the real threats to the bridal chamber, then, the jealousies, the wars, the divisions among married couples. The children become more and more independent, who with their friends consume the heritage. The daughters become an eternal weight for the dishonored family.

1463: The youth trained in these evils without restraint, become dissolute, lazy, ready for excesses, bold, audacious. They are feared by society and become like a terrible plague. These are the ways that the slaughter becomes common and the damage irreparable. This is how the bodies become so corrupt that neither white-wash, nor the flames can burn off, nor can the earth itself cover over them.

The truly dead are up walking around and they become confused with the living. The inhabitants of the tombs are up and about, and they are not distinguished from the cadavers: ... *Evil communications corrupt good manners...* [1 Co 15:33].

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SOURCES**OT**

Gn 3:1	# 1446	Gn 3:6	# 1440
3	# 1447	Ps 36:30	# 1440
4	# 1447	Ws 8:21	# 1436
5	# 1447	Si 3:27	# 1432

NT

1 Co 15:33	## 1424; 1455; 1463	Ph 4:4	#1422
		5	# 1423

LITURGY

IIIrd Sunday of Advent - Introit	# 1422
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FATHERS

St. AUGUSTINE, <i>Confessions</i> 5, 12, 22 [t. 1, pp. 129 /D, ff.	# 1445
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DOCTORS

St. Thomas Aquinas [no citation: curiosity, first escort of Malice]	# 1465
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OTHER WRITERS

Archimedes [no citation : frightful war machine]	# 1438
FLAMINIUS, Quintius [no citation: relates a June banquet]	# 1453
Mercello [frightened by Archimedes]	# 1438

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[NB: Translator's Note: This is the end of the Regular Parish Sermons, that have been translated and transcribed in chronological order. There follow here fragments of other Sermons found in the MssB, Vol. I].

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