

SERMONS

ON THE

DIFFERENT STATES OF LIFE.

ADAPTED TO ALL THE SUNDAYS AND HOLYDAYS OF THE YEAR.

BY THE

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TRANSLATED BY THE

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VOLUME I

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AUTHOR'S DEDICATION.

TO MARY, THE VIRGIN MOTHER OF JESUS CHRIST,
THE QUEEN OF ANGELS.
BLESSED VIRGIN !
CHOSEN MOTHER OF THE LORD !
GREAT QUEEN OF ANGELS !

Behold at thy feet a twofold work of thy hands ; for if thou deignest to look on him who lays this offering before thee, thou wilt see a poor mortal, who must acknowledge, with thy servant St. Bernard, and must confess before the whole world, that whatsoever good is in him, he has received from thy beloved Son, through thy motherly hands. If thou lookest on that which is offered to thee, thou wilt again find thy own work, for it has been accomplished by thy gracious intercession and special help, and if it has hitherto worked any good in souls, that must be attributed to thee, after God.

Both the gift and the giver place themselves under thy powerful protection ; mayest thou in thy mercy graciously accept of both, since they are thine, and make them useful instruments to increase the glory of thy Son, and thine also, in many souls throughout the world.

For the slight trouble that I, insignificant creature, have had, in preparing this offering with thy help, I ask no other reward, during my pilgrimage here below, but to love thee and thy Son constantly with my whole heart, to fulfil His holy will in all things, and to persevere under thy motherly protection, in the grace of thy Son, to the end of my life ; so that I may see thee in the land of eternal joys, and as a living and immortal witness may praise thy special goodness to me, which I cannot now fully understand, and may love and bless our God forever with thee and the holy angels.

Prostrate before the throne of thy Majesty,
Oh Great Queen of Angels !
Mistress of the World !
Thus prays

Thy most unworthy slave and servant,

FRANCIS HUNOLT, S. J.

APPROBATION.

I feel very great pleasure and consolation in commending the translation of Hunolt's Sermons to the Catholic public. I am gratified because I have been instrumental in supplying thoughtful Catholics with the means of meditating profitably on the great truths of their religion, and particularly in supplying good priests with the most valuable help, in discharging the arduous duty of preaching. My consolation arises from the fact that the priest to whom I confided the task of translating the work has accomplished it with remarkable ability. My long experience of twenty-five years on the missions enables me fully to understand how difficult it is for priests, engaged all day, and often far into the night, with the labors of the confessional, and attending the sick, to prepare their sermons with that care and study which so important a function demands. They must often feel, as I have felt, the want of a work in which sound matter is condensed in fitting order, and easily consulted. There are many admirable books of sermons, translations, and original compositions in English; but they are, generally speaking, too elaborate, and the language is often so polished, that attention is taken away from the matter by the attractions of the style. Few priests will care to commit to memory these beautifully rounded periods, and the tropes and figures of speech by which they are adorned: fewer still to adopt a mode of expression which may differ altogether from their own peculiar way of clothing their

thoughts. They want food for thought and texts of Holy Scripture, and from the Saints and Fathers of the Church, which support or illustrate the great truths announced. A priest is often too poor to acquire, even after years of rigid economy and careful saving, anything like a good library; and if he was so fortunate as to have the shelves of his study filled with learned tomes, he has not time to study the subject before his mind, in different treatises. The great desideratum is sound and solid matter plainly and simply put, that will fix itself in the memory, as it is read. This, it appears to me, is admirably supplied in the sermons of Father Hunolt. This learned preacher, it is evident, had no thoughts of self, but constantly kept before his mind the purpose of expressing what he had to say in the plainest and simplest language. The chief excellence, in my judgment, of the translation, is that this highly gifted priest has so caught up the spirit and mode of expression of the learned author, that he seems to have made it quite his own. As paragraph after paragraph is compared with the original, the very quaintness that sometimes exhibits itself, in the plain and simple garb in which Hunolt loves to present his thoughts, seems to manifest itself in the most singular and striking manner. To be able to render in this way, without idiom or peculiarity, the profound thoughts expressed in a language so different in its construction from English, is in itself a rare gift; and I can hardly express the satisfaction with which I regard the work now offered to the public. I wish it heartily the success which I believe it deserves; and earnestly commend it to the priests of all countries, where English is the language of sacred instruction.

✠ J. D. RICARDS, Ep. and Vicar Apostolic
In the Eastern Districts of the Colony of
the Cape of Good Hope.

KING WILLIAMSTOWN,
March 21st, 1884.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

Hunolt's Sermons have been long and favorably known in Europe. They are sound in doctrine, powerful in appealing to every motive that could lead men to virtue, or to repentance, and they display a knowledge of human nature which can be acquired only by long experience united with rare learning. These considerations, coupled with the fact of his knowledge of the toilsome and arduous duties of priests in large missions, have induced the translator to offer the present work, "The Christian State of Life," to his brethren in the Ministry, in the hope that he may thereby lighten their labors in the pulpit. Such is the principal object of the work he has undertaken.

But he hopes that it will be found useful not only to the pastors, but to the people also, and that many of the latter will be glad to have "The Christian State of Life" in their houses, as a book of spiritual reading, and a sort of catechism for grown-up people, as it may, in truth, be styled. It may be objected that people do not care for reading sermons, and that they prefer to listen to them. No doubt there is a great deal in the objection worthy of consideration, for what dead letter ever equalled the living power of the human voice? But people cannot always hear sermons, nor can they always remember everything they hear in them, and therefore it seems desirable to the translator that they should have a means of refreshing their memories on

subjects of the most vital importance. If the sermons now presented to the public were uninteresting in style, no matter how instructive they might otherwise be, there would be very little hope of their ever effecting that desirable result, for people will certainly not read dry sermons. But Hunolt's Sermons are entirely free from that defect; they are interesting in the highest degree; they arouse attention and keep it fixed without difficulty, so that there is a constant desire in the reader to know what is coming next. Nor are they without flashes of humor that evidently come from the author's profound knowledge of human nature and its weaknesses. So that if any of them fail to be interesting, the translator must take the blame, as it certainly could not in justice be attributed to the author.

It has been found necessary to modify many forms of expression that suit well enough in the original, but would be out of place in a translation. This modification has been caused as well by idiomatic differences of language, as by the fact that the translation is made from the original edition published at Cologne in 1740, six years before the author's death, at a time when the German language was much less refined than it now is. Otherwise the translation will be found complete and faithful.

That it may help all in whose hands it comes, to work for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, is the earnest prayer of

THE TRANSLATOR.

KING WILLIAMSTOWN,

October 19th, 1884.

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ON THE
DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS IN GENERAL.

FIRST SERMON.

THE TRUTH OF THE CATHOLIC RELIGION.

Subject.

The Christian Church is founded on Peter and established and spread by Peter, Paul, and the other Apostles, and that in such a manner that nothing can overcome her; therefore she must necessarily be founded by God, and cannot be false.—*Preached on the Feast of the Apostles SS. Peter and Paul.*

Text.

Super hanc Petram ædificabo ecclesiam meam et portæ inferi non prævalebunt adversus eam.—Matth. xvi. 18.

“Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Introduction.

Is Peter, then, he on whom the Church of Christ is built? Are Paul and the other Apostles those who have spread the Church throughout the whole world and established her so firmly that no power, not even the gates of hell, can prevail against her? This is a matter, dear brethren, that deserves our greatest admiration; it is one which, in itself alone, if we had no other proofs, would show the infallible truth of our Christian religion, and would convince any one that this religion can come only from God; it is a matter which is in itself sufficient to convince and to confound all unbelievers, who either do not believe in the Church, or who have separated from her, or who live as if they really had

no faith at all. Since there are, alas! many of the latter class even amongst Catholics, in our days, I shall now try to develop these ideas a little more fully. Therefore we shall take as our

Plan of Discourse.

That, since the Catholic Church is founded on Peter, and established and spread by Peter, Paul, and the other Apostles, in such a way that nothing can overcome her, she must necessarily be founded by God, and cannot be false.

This will form the matter of my sermon of to-day, to the consolation of all true Catholics, and to the shame and fear of all apostates, and of all those who, though still in the Church, are only Christians in name. Do Thou, O Jesus, strengthen us in Thy faith, which, through Thine Apostles, Thou hast so wonderfully begun, perfected and continued: this we ask of Thee through the intercession of Thy blessed Mother Mary and of the holy angel guardians of Thy Church.

The spread of Christianity thro' the whole world is the greatest miracle when we consider all the circumstances.

I begin the discourse of to-day, in which sound reason alone shall be our guide, with what St. Augustine says on this subject; the Christian religion was begun and spread throughout the world by Peter, Paul, and the other Apostles, with real miracles, or no such miracles were necessary. If miracles really helped to found the Church, as is in truth the case, then God must of necessity be their author, for He alone is the Almighty God who has nature in His power, who can set bounds to her and work against and beyond her strength, and perform real miracles; consequently this religion cannot be erroneous or false, for God cannot approve of and confirm falsehood by miracles wrought either by Himself or by others; otherwise He would not be an all-true and perfect God, but one who could and would deceive and betray. Did the Apostles work no miracles in founding the Church? Then that is the greatest miracle of all; for who could imagine that such a work could be accomplished by such men, in such a manner, and with such effect, with such fortunate, permanent and complete success, if a higher, supernatural and heavenly strength had not helped in the work? We shall now consider these circumstances in order.

For this religion was quite new, different

First: what sort of a work was it that was about to be commenced? A religion and faith had to be founded and introduced over the whole world into all kingdoms and countries,

according to the command of Our Lord to His disciples. "Go forth into the whole world and preach the Gospel to all creatures." ¹ Not a single nation was to be excluded. "Teach all nations," ² an entirely new religion of which the world had hitherto known nothing. A religion which brooks no rival, and which alone is necessary to salvation: "He who shall not believe, shall be condemned." ³ A religion whose mysteries are completely opposed to all other religions then known in the world; and to introduce those mysteries, it was necessary to overthrow so much idolatry, so many forms of belief, nay, even Judaism itself, to confound all worldly wisdom and convict it of ignorance, gross error, and falsehood, to confront all human power and the rage and anger of kings and emperors and to conquer all by the force of truth, and to root out the ancient manners and customs of all peoples and nations in which they were born, which they had inherited from their forefathers, and to cause them to be abandoned at once and forever. Only think, my dear brethren, what trouble it costs, what disquiet and opposition it occasions, to deprive, I will not say a town, but even a village, of an ancient right or custom, no matter how small the thing is, or how unimportant: so hard is it to depart from an old custom, or to give up what we think we have a right to. And yet, that had to happen amongst all the peoples of the world, who had to be completely changed and converted, as far as their ideas and morals were concerned. And it all really happened. Just as in the beginning, a single word of God created the world. As the Prophet says: "He spoke and it was done;" ⁴ so, also, says St. Augustine, when the world knew nothing of the Christian faith, that faith was announced: "He ordered it to be announced and it was received;" ⁵ the world accepted it and men gave up their old usages to conform to this faith.

A faith which appears to go against all reason and which seemed utterly unintelligible to the worldly wise of the time; a faith which teaches, for instance, that there is one God and that in Him there are three distinct persons. How can that be? who can believe it? If there is only one God, how can there be three to constitute Him? If there are three distinct persons, how can there be only one God? A faith which believes in one who is God and man at the same time, so that it can be said with truth,

from all others, and could alone be true.

This religion seems opposed to all human reason.

¹ *Euntes in mundum universum, predicare Evangelium omni creature.*—Mark xvi.

² *Docete omnes gentes.*

³ *Qui vero non crediderit condemnabitur.*

⁴ *Dixit et facta sunt.*

⁵ *Jussit, et creditum est.*

God is man and man is God; a man is Almighty, Eternal, Immortal; God is born in time, he grew up and died as man; who can understand that? God is immortal, how then can He be a man who died? That man is subject to weakness, change, and the miseries of this life; how can he be God, who is unchangeable, impassible, all-perfect, and happy? Yet people, even the most learned and the wisest, were to be convinced of this seemingly strange truth, and to such an extent as to be ready to give up all they possessed, even their life's blood, for the sake of it. And that really happened: He ordered them to announce the faith and it was received. ¹

Never unbecoming a man of honor.

A faith which appeared opposed, not only to reason, but even to honor (which is so precious in the eyes of the world, that it is valued more than life itself); which was branded with a mark of infamy, inasmuch as its author (as was also necessary to be believed) was publicly seized by the authorities, tried in various tribunals, condemned as a malefactor and crucified. What a stumbling-block for the Gentiles! What an opportunity, and an apparently justifiable reason were thus offered for saying (as was really often said) that christianity was the religion of the wicked and a cesspool of vice, since its teacher and author suffered the shameful death of a thief or murderer! Yet the world has believed. "Behold," says St. John Chrysostom, full of astonishment, "behold a wonderful faith; after the crucifixion of its Author, the world received the faith," ² and adored the crucified man. We wonder at the blindness of the heathens, how they can deify men and pay them divine worship; yet they did that to those who had been great kings, on account of their power, wisdom, and glory; it was a species of flattery not unknown in the political world, in which the creature is often preferred to the Creator, through human respect, self-interest, or blind love; but, to adore a man after having scourged Him and nailed Him to a tree, that is a thing that, naturally speaking, no reasonable man could bring himself to do. Nevertheless, "after the crucifixion the world believed and received the faith." That a crowd of people should run after Christ when He changed water into wine, or multiplied the loaves, or healed the sick, the dumb, and the blind, or raised the dead, there was nothing in that to do violence to sound reason; but that so many people should follow Christ after His mis-

¹ Jussit, et creditum est.

² Post crucem orbis ad fidem accessit.

erable death on the cross, that is what the human mind cannot grasp.

If, at least, this religion had prepared something agreeable and pleasing, something to appeal to human sensuality and to natural desires ; or, if God had created for the purpose a new race of people, free from all bad inclinations, then this wonderful work might have been explained, and would have ceased to be so wonderful ; just as it is not a matter for great astonishment that before Christ heathenism, and after His time, Mahomedanism gained such influence in Asia and Africa, or that, in later times, Luther, Calvin and other heresiarchs had so many followers in Germany, England, France and other places ; there is nothing, I say, wonderful in this : the wonder is, rather, that all the kingdoms of the world did not follow suit. And why? Because some adored gods from whom they had little to fear, and who were favorable to carnal desires and all sorts of vices; others gave free rein to their passions, and others again were satisfied with a general sort of faith and confidence in Christ and His merits, while they looked upon good works as unnecessary; they put aside everything that is disagreeable and difficult, so that what remains does not interfere with our sensual and natural desires, and our own daily experience tells us what a mighty influence these latter have on the human heart. But the real Christian religion, which had to be introduced in those days, was a law severe and strict and opposed to all sensuality ; it inculcated the necessity of temperance, fasting, self-denial, and mortification ; it called upon men to say, "Blessed are the poor."¹ What does that mean? Had not poverty been always considered as the greatest evil of life? It proclaimed, "Blessed are they who suffer persecution."² How could that be? Was not freedom always considered the greatest good, and oppression hated everywhere? It said, "Blessed are they who mourn."³ What a wretched happiness! Is it not better to laugh than to weep, to be merry than to be sad? What sort of a law is that which says to the proud that they must be humble and become like little children; to the avaricious, that they must detach their hearts from earthly goods, and look upon riches as dust? What sort of a law is it that tells the sensual man to mortify his flesh with its desires, to take up his cross daily and follow Christ; that commands a vindictive, injured, and angry man to pardon his enemy

A religion,
difficult and
opposed to
sensuality.

¹ *Beati pauperes.*—*Matth. v.* ² *Beati, qui persecutionem patiuntur.* ³ *Beati, qui lugent.*

and love him, to do good to those who hate him, to pray for those who persecute him, and so on, as the Christian law prescribes? What think you now, my dear brethren; is that a work which a human, or merely natural strength is capable of accomplishing?

In our own days we can hardly preach those truths to Catholics. And yet they were formerly accepted by Jews and heathens.

Alas! even in our own times, to preach the same truths to a Christian congregation, to teach the young to avoid occasions of sin, to watch over their senses, to be reserved and modest; to exhort the rich to give alms, these to be temperate, those to be humble, and all to be concerned in their salvation, is not that often a fruitless and profitless labor? Yet, those things are preached to people who make profession of the true Christian religion, of its laws and chief doctrines. And what great result could we not hope for in their case, since the same truths had to be preached in the synagogues of the Jews, in the temples of the heathens, in the courts of kings and emperors, who had never before heard anything of that law, and were accustomed to quite the contrary, who were brought up in pride, avarice, lust, vindictiveness, intemperance and other vices? For my part, it seems that this work presents an insuperable difficulty, nay, even an impossibility to be accomplished; or, if a religion that, apparently, opposes all natural reason, honor, and inclination, finds credence amongst men, then, some supernatural Being must have had to do with it, for such a result could never have been brought about, unless by the strong arm of the Almighty God. Therefore, this law was received and spread throughout the world.¹

It would seem impossible, to all human reason, before its accomplishment.

Let us consider a few other circumstances. What sort of people were they, in God's name, who began and accomplished that work? Imagine, it is again St. Augustine who speaks, that you are back again in the old heathen times, that you have before you a Plato, who was then a miracle of wisdom, or a Socrates, who was then called the master and teacher of moral virtues; tell one of them that the world is about to be improved, a new faith and religious law to be established, which all kingdoms and people must accept, and a new kind of life to be introduced; describe to him the religion and life that we have just been considering; ask him to advise you how to make a good beginning of the work, so that it may succeed. What would he think; what answer would he make to your question? Would he not

¹ *Creditum est.*

say that you had lost your senses, that you were a dreamer, a fool? I—Plato would answer—I have shown how man can live in the greatest possible happiness, I have demonstrated it in the clearest manner; and what have I gained thereby? There is not a single town that I have been able to persuade to live according to my idea. And Socrates would say, I tried to speak of the falsehood of the heathen gods, and the attempt cost me my life; and now you wish to introduce a new religion, and such a religion as you have described, which all people of the world must approve of and believe in? Have you lost your senses? Are you not building castles in the air? Are not these the ravings of a disordered imagination? But if one of those dead came to life again, without knowing anything of what has happened in the world since his time, and if you were to show him how that work prospered with all the circumstances before described, how this religion is spread over the whole world, how there is, at the present moment, no single form of belief that is so general and so respected, as this; how it is received by great and small, without distinction; by the experienced and the inexperienced, by emperors and peasants, by savages and statesmen; could he ever imagine that to be the case, if he did not see it with his own eyes? Would he not be astonished at such a work?

Are they gods, he would say, or men, who have done this? They were men, you would answer, their chief was called Peter, the others were named Paul, Andrew, John, &c., twelve in all. What! twelve men to renew the whole earth? What could twelve men do in a single kingdom; in one country, nay, even in a single town? How could they then suffice for all the peoples and nations of the earth? Nevertheless, they were twelve in number who undertook this work; they separated from each other, one went here, another there; they went north, south, east, and west, from one kingdom to another, from one town to another; they presented themselves almost alone before the people, and preached their doctrine to them: “But they went forth and preached everywhere.”¹ And by the help they received they brought matters so far, that in their own life-time, their religion was planted everywhere in the world.

But, at least, they must have been twelve powerful kings, he would say, who could frighten people with their glory and power, or bribe them with their money and riches, or compel

And this work was accomplished principally by twelve men.

Who had neither authority, money, nor power, nor learning,

¹ Illi autem profecti ; prædicaverunt ubique.

and were
hated and
persecuted
everywhere.

them by force of arms, or enchant them by their wonderful wisdom and oratory? Twelve mighty kings indeed! They were twelve poor men, mostly fishermen, as ecclesiastical and profane tradition tells us, who owned not a finger's breadth of land; who travelled about barefoot, without scrip or staff, as their Master told them;¹ who carried all their property on their persons, suffered from hunger sometimes, so that they were glad to have a few ears of corn to eat, lived constantly on alms, and left poverty behind them as their only legacy; whom could they have bribed? Their learning and knowledge, as far as worldly matters were concerned, consisted in knowing how to make nets, and to catch fish; they had learned nothing else. From this you may see that they could have had very little authority, either from their own persons, or from their lowly descent, or from the person of their Master; for He, who sent them forth, was looked upon as a malefactor by the world, and was therefore put to death. And what could these twelve contemptible men do, by force of arms, against the whole world? Peter, indeed, once had a sword, but he, and all the others as well, were forbidden by their Master to make use of it. On the contrary, wherever they came, they found everything against them; as their Master told them, they went like sheep among ravening wolves; they were banished from one town to another and driven away, they were dragged before the tribunals, imprisoned and scourged publicly; he who could deliver them up, living or dead, thought he was doing a service to God. And are these the people who accomplished such a work, in such a manner? Yes, these poor, ignorant, lowly, and weak fishermen have accomplished that work; they have made kings and judges tremble, they have brought the world over to their conviction and faith. But how can that be? They were everywhere hated and persecuted and yet they carried out their design. Yes, that is what excites my astonishment, that is what St. Jerome could not understand. He says, "The Master is crucified, his disciples are in chains, and yet their religion increases daily."² It is this which convinces us all that such a work must come from a supernatural power.

They began
the work in
the most
celebrated
cities of the

One question more, says the worldly-wise philosopher: where did they first begin to preach their doctrine? They must have been simple, stupid people who first believed in them. And you

¹ *Nolite portare sacculum neque peram.*—Luke x.

² *Magister suspensus et servi vinciti sunt, et quotidie religio crescit.*

will answer, they began in Jerusalem itself, in the very city where Christ, their Master, was crucified, where His name was still in odium in that city in which a number of people, from all nations under the sun, were at the time assembled. ¹ There were Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judæa, Cappadocia, Pontos, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphilia, Ægypt, Lybia, Cyrene, Rome, Crete, and Arabia, as history tells us; and it was in this little world that they began to preach the new Christian law. Let us dwell a little longer, my dear brethren, on this circumstance. I imagine that I see these twelve poor men rushing out into the streets on Pentecost day, from the room in which they had hidden themselves through fear. Where are you going to? I ask them; and they answer, we are going to announce to all the people that He whom they crucified is their God, that they must adore Him, submit to His law, be baptized and give up their ancient faith as well. But, my good people, what idea possesses you? You will have the same reward that your Master received on the cross. And yet, a little while after, hardly has Peter opened his mouth, when I see with astonishment the people throw themselves in crowds at his feet, weeping and doing penance, and that three thousand of them are baptized, on that very day. After that, I see the Apostles going to the greatest city of the world. Peter, I ask, where are you going? I am going to Rome to the Capitol, to the governors and rulers of the world, to the courts of kings and emperors. And what will you do there? I will tell them that they must pull down their false gods, that their religion is a false, devilish, and impious superstition, and that they shall adore the crucified Jesus as the true God. And Paul, where are you going? To the Senate-house at Athens, to the schools of the worldly-wise, to preach the same doctrine. But what a fruitless undertaking that will be! And yet, I learn that their words have produced fruit; a few years later I see the cross glitter on the crowns of emperors and kings, the idols trampled under foot by the common people, the city of Rome, formerly the centre of all kinds of idolatry, become the head of the Christian religion, and all countries of the world full of Christians. They believed, although they were hunted down everywhere, condemned to wheel and sword, crucified, thrown to lions and tigers, cut down in thousands, flayed, and roasted alive, and exposed to every imaginable kind of cruelty; yet “they believed,” ² nevertheless, “the faith

world and carried it out successfully in spite of persecution.

¹ *Ex omni natione, quæ sub cælo est.*

² *Credtium est.*

was spread abroad." Tertullian says, reproaching the heathens The Christians were imprisoned and tortured and by that very means their numbers increased. ¹ Ye tyrants may do what ye will! Threaten them, tell them not to embrace the Christian faith, and that faith will be spread all the more quickly. Scorch, burn and butcher as much as you will, in the place of one murdered Christian you will find two thousand ready to die; their blood is nothing but the seed from which they grow up abundantly. Such is the result of the great work which the twelve fishermen began. It is believed in everywhere, believed in constantly, believed in up to the present moment, while other sects cannot last over a century or two. And it is believed in so strongly, that they who do not live up to their faith, are secretly ashamed of themselves, and try to keep their transgressions private, while they esteem and admire those who observe it strictly.

Therefore this work can have no other than God for its Author, and therefore it must be the true religion.

And now I challenge all who have the use of right reason, and I ask them, if any one, after having considered all these circumstances, can ever imagine that the beginning, progress, spread, and duration of such a religion can be a mere natural work, if it can come from any one but the Almighty God Himself? For my part, I can say to God, with Richard of St. Victor: "Lord! if there is an error in what we believe, we are deceived by Thee, because this religion is endowed with wondrous signs that can come only from Thee."² If this religion is founded by Thee, it cannot be false, it must be that Church of which Thou hast said that no power nor the gates of hell shall ever prevail against it, and therefore, it has remained constant to the truth in which it commenced; it could not admit error, for otherwise it would be overthrown in an instant; if it could not admit error, it never required reformation or improvement, so that it is true and must remain true; consequently, all those who have abandoned that religion, or who embrace another form of belief, are not in the true Christian Church, which alone can lead to eternal happiness.

Pious Christians have reason to rejoice.

But, why have I undertaken this unnecessary labor, you will probably think, my dear brethren; what good is it to us, what profit are we to draw from it, why do you speak so to us? Do you think that we have perjured ourselves, or that we are waver-

¹ Incarcerabantur, torquebantur et multiplicantur.

² Domine, si error est, quem credimus, a te decepti sumus! quoniam tuis signis prædita est illa religio, quæ non, nisi a te, esse potuerunt.

ing in the Catholic faith, since you make such efforts to convince us of its truth? You might preach your sermon in Turkey, or in Japan, amongst heathens, or at least amongst heretics; it would suit them much better. We are all good Christians here, praise be to God! We believe in the old, Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman faith, and we have never doubted of its truth. It is all true, my dear brethren, and you must forgive me, I have not considered the matter enough; and it seems to me that I forgot, at first, that I am here in a Christian town, amongst Catholics, and actually in the town of Treves, in which so many countless thousands have given up life and property for the Christian faith, and you are their descendants, therefore let what I have said go for what it is worth, and let us be, at least, more strengthened and encouraged in this true faith of ours; let us console ourselves, be glad and rejoice in our hearts, and thank God unceasingly for so great a benefit, by which He has made choice of us before so many others, to be born and brought up in this one true religion which alone can bring us to eternal happiness. It seems to me that I hear a countless multitude of reprobate heathens and heretics howling and crying out from the depth of hell: "Why had we not this grace also! what would we not have done for our God! how carefully would we not have worked out our salvation!" And meanwhile I think to myself: I have received this grace, and how often have I lived hitherto according to the laws of my Christian faith?

Yet, what am I thinking about? On reconsidering the matter, my dear brethren, I must say that my subject is not unsuited, or out of place; it is perhaps only too well adapted to some. Although all of you are Christians and Catholics, although all are convinced of the truth of our religion, yet all do not, so to say, believe in its truth: for what proof do we give that we live according to the truths of our religion? How do our works agree with our faith? We believe and profess one thing, we do and practise another; we are and profess to be Christians, and yet we often live in vice of all kinds, just as if we were the worst of heathens. What do I say! if we really were heathens and knew nothing of the Christian law, it would be no great wonder if, carried away by our wicked nature and evil inclinations, we cared for nothing but satisfying the lusts and desires of the flesh. But to profess and acknowledge such a religion, whose laws are so holy, and at the same time, to show nothing of its holiness in our manners and actions; a holiness which makes humility the foun-

**The impious
must feel a
heartfelt
shame.**

dation of the Christian life, while we do not wish to hear of humiliations ; a holiness which tells us to take up our cross and bear it patiently after Christ, while we fear the cross as we do the foul fiend ; a holiness which commands us to live in meekness, unity, and love with one another, as brethren and children of the one Father, while we live in bitterness, hatred and enmity with each other, and refuse to tolerate the least injury ; a holiness which tells us to keep our bodies pure and holy, while we dishonor them by foul passions ; which tells us to begin and end everything in the name of Jesus, and our mouths and hearts are full of oaths and curses ; that is, indeed, subject for the greatest wonder, for instead of living according to the truths of our faith, we rather trample them under foot like the heathens.

Of whom
the Church
complains.

Let us hear how St. Augustine represents the Christian Church as complaining of those who are Christians in name only : “ Alas ! my children,” says this mother, “ how many persecutions have I not suffered in the first years of my existence ! Yet they have not been able to overcome me ; ¹ I have always been victorious ; tyrants have taken the lives of my children, but they could not take away their hearts from me : their limbs were cut in pieces, their bodies were burnt, yet all that could not induce them to stretch forth their hands and offer incense to false gods. Those were days of combat and repeated victories ; but now, in times of peace, when there are no tyrants, nor executioners, no rack, no torture, what condition am I in, O Christians ! and where are ye, oh, true-hearted Christians ! How many there are who profess to be my children, and who in reality persecute and harass me with their works ? How many there are who require very little threatening or punishment to induce them to give themselves up body and soul to creatures ? Nay, even a slight pleasure or trivial gain can lead them to that act of treachery. How often have I suffered.” I repeat it ; all the persecutions I suffered in my youth, all that heresies have caused me to suffer since, have not prevailed against me ; but the enemies that I now have to contend with I nourish in my own house, and the more they appear to be my friends, the more dangerous they are.

Conclusion
and resolu-
tion of
amend-
ment.

Ah, my dear brethren, my Christian brethren ! let us at all events not give any reason for this complaint to be made against us ; let us not depart from the sublime spirit of our religion. We are ready to believe its truths to the last moment of our lives, but

¹ *Sæpe expugnaverunt me a juventute meâ, etenim non potuerunt mihi.*

our lives must harmonize with the laws of our faith ; otherwise, what can we expect from the religion that is given to us, but which we dishonor? Alas! what excuse can I offer, when Thou, O God! reproachest me, because the faith that the idolatry and heathenism of the most cruel monsters could not overcome, has not been able to destroy the false maxims of the vain world in me, or to root up those evil habits that have taken possession of me? How shall I defend myself when Thou wilt prove to me that the faith which overcame the pride of emperors by the humility of the cross, could not free my heart from vanity, pride, impure love, hatred and envy? What answer shall I make when Thou shalt say to me that the faith which renewed and improved the whole world by its holy law, could not reform or sanctify my sinful life? How shall I defend myself when Thou shalt reprove me, because the religion that made the most cruel tortures sweet and pleasant to so many martyrs, could not induce me to bear the least trial with patience? Alas! I shall find no excuse, unless I now begin to lead a Christian life. Let it be so, O Lord! so Thou comfort me by Thy grace, enliven and strengthen my faith that has hitherto been so weak, and that has lost its energy and life through a want of good works; so that I may henceforth live in and by this vigorous, active faith, and thus gain eternal life. Amen.

Another Introduction of the Same Sermon for the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost :

Text.

Ex hoc jam eris homines capiens.—Luke v. 10.

From henceforth thou shalt catch men.

The bark of Peter, into which Jesus entered to teach the people, was, according to the interpretation of the Holy Fathers and other writers, a figure and symbol of the Catholic Church, in which Peter as chief steward of Jesus Christ, and his successors, the Popes of Rome, were to have the chief authority. The miraculous draught in which Peter, having launched his nets at the order of Christ, caught a countless multitude of fish at one haul, is a symbol of the preaching of the Gospel, by which Peter and the other Apostles, sent for the purpose by Christ, spread the Christian religion throughout the world, caught a countless multitude of people of every nation and brought them into the true Church. A circumstance, my dear brethren, which merits our

greatest admiration, &c., &c., *continues as before in the Introduction.*

Subject.

The Christian religion was introduced and spread throughout the world by Peter and the other Apostles, therefore it must necessarily be from God and cannot be false. This is the subject of my sermon to-day, &c.

SECOND SERMON.

ON THE GREAT BENEFIT OF THE DIVINE VOCATION TO THE CATHOLIC FAITH.

Subject.

The exceeding great benefit of our vocation to the Catholic Faith imposes upon us the duty of unceasing gratitude to God, who has given us that vocation.—*Preached on the 6th Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Ille testimonium perhibebit de me, et vos testimonium perhibebitis.
—John xv. 26.

“He shall give testimony of me, and you shall give testimony.”

Introduction.

The Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, shall give testimony of Jesus Christ that He is the Son of God, and the Apostles and Disciples shall also give the same testimony. This happened when the Apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost on Pentecost Sunday, were dispersed throughout the world, announced the Gospel of Christ to all people, and converted numberless souls to the Christian faith. Oh, what a great grace for those souls who were formerly in the darkness of heathenism and infidelity! The same grace has fallen to our lot, my dear brethren, inasmuch as we are descended from Catholic forefathers, and born and brought up in the Catholic faith, in which we still persevere. Do we ever think of the benefit we have received? We are Catholic Christians, and yet perhaps we do not think once, in a whole year, that we are therefore under a special obligation to God; much less do we thank Him for it every day. This sermon is intended to put a stop to such injustice.

Plan of Discourse.

The exceeding great benefit of our vocation to the Catholic faith imposes upon us the duty of unceasing gratitude to God.

Such is the subject of the sermon. The end and object of it is to show how this gratitude may be rendered, in case we have been hitherto wanting therein. For this end, oh, God! we beg of Thee a new grace, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the holy angels.

The greatness of a benefit is measured, not only by the excellence and costliness of the gift in itself, but much more by its usefulness and necessity for a great end and object. Thus, gold is a precious thing in itself, but if you give a piece of gold to a hungry man, who is not in a position to buy anything with it, you have done very little to help him to attain his end; a piece of bread would be much more acceptable to him, for without it he would die of hunger. Now, we mortals, on this earth, have no higher end and object than that for which we are all created, the attainment of eternal happiness in Heaven; consequently, he who gives me something that is useful and helpful for that end, benefits me greatly, and places me under an obligation; but if that thing is not merely useful, but even necessary, then there is no greater favor that he could do me.

The greatness of a benefit is measured by its use and necessity for eternal life.

Such a favor, my dear brethren, is the vocation to the true Catholic faith; for in this alone can we be certain of being able to work out our salvation, and to gain the kingdom of Heaven. Without it we are certain of not being able to attain eternal happiness, or to perform the least supernaturally good work that will be pleasing to God and deserving of Heaven, according to the words of the Apostle St. Paul: "Without faith it is impossible to please God."¹ Therefore, the true faith is not only useful and helpful to attain Heaven, but it is also an absolutely necessary means, the first foundation of our salvation, the first source of all the other good works that are useful for salvation. Without this we cannot do anything good or gain eternal happiness.

Such is the vocation to the true faith, which is absolutely necessary to eternal life.

Oh, most gracious God, without this, how could all the other benefits, numberless and precious as they are, that Thou hast bestowed upon me hitherto, how could they help or profit me? Thou hast created me instead of so many other creatures who still remain in their nothingness, and to Thine own image; Thou hast given me a reasoning and immortal soul, endowed with memory,

No other benefit would be of any good to us without this.

¹ Sine fide impossibile est placere Deo.—Heb. xi. 6.

understanding, and will. Thou hast given me a living body with its five senses ; and after having thus endowed me, Thou hast preserved me every moment for so many years in health and strength. What do I not owe Thee, oh, God ! for these benefits? If I could give Thee, in return, my life and everything that is in me or outside of me, and if I gave Thee all these things anew at each moment, and sacrificed them to Thee, even then I should only be returning to Thee what belongs to Thee already. That I readily acknowledge. But what would it all help me, if I had not the true faith? I should live, certainly, but as an object of Thy displeasure, who could have no share in Thee for all eternity. Jesus Christ! Thou hast shed Thy blood for me, Thou hast suffered the bitter death of the cross for my sake and thereby freed me from hell. Oh, what a merciful and incomprehensible love! If I could die a hundred thousand million times for Thee, I could not make an adequate return for Thy love! But what could the benefit of such a redemption help me, if I had not the true faith and were thus unable to share in the merits of Thy Passion and Death so as to save my soul? Thou hast given me the value of Thy Blood in holy Baptism, when Thou hast received and adopted me as Thy child and heir, oh, my Sovereign Benefactor ! What return shall I make Thee? But not even this would help me to salvation (if I fell into sin after having attained the use of reason), if I had not the true faith, and therefore could have no supernatural love for Thee, no repentance for my sins, and were incapable of performing a single work that might be pleasing in Thy sight. The same truth holds: “Without faith it is impossible to please God.”¹ I should be, after all those benefits, in the number of those, “who will not believe, shall be condemned.”² So that faith is the necessary foundation on which all the other benefits and gifts must be founded, and it must prepare the way so that they may be profitable to my salvation.

God has bestowed this benefit on us Catholics in preference to so many countless unbelievers.

See now, oh, Catholic Christian, and acknowledge the great debt of gratitude you owe your God. The good God has given you and me this great and necessary benefit, when He called us to the Catholic, and only true and saving faith. Do not imagine that this happened by chance, or by good luck, or that it is a general sort of thing to which you and I and all the faithful have a right. No such thing : “Faith is a gift of God,”³ who

¹ *Sine fide impossibile est placere Deo.*

² *Qui vero non crediderit, condemnabitur.—Mark xvi. 16.*

³ *Fides est donum Dei.*

does not scatter His gifts and graces by chance, but dispenses them according to His own pleasure, when, where, how, and to whom He wills. Look around the world, in thought, for a moment, and after you have considered all the nations therein, you will be compelled to acknowledge the truth of what the Prophet David says: "He hath not done in like manner to every nation, and His judgment He hath not manifested to them."¹ For, in the three parts of the world, Asia, Africa, and America, how many peoples and nations will you not find in the darkness of infidelity, heathenism, Mahomedanism, Judaism and idolatry, who will perhaps never come to the knowledge of the true faith? Think how unfortunate these people are, compared to you. Here and there amongst them you will find one who is naturally good, honest, upright, temperate, and honorable; but since he has not the true faith, the foundation of real virtue and holiness, you might well say to him, "You run well, but you are not on the right way."² Think what merits could you have above all these poor people, that the great gift of true faith was bestowed on you and not on them.

Look around a little more, and consider the fourth part of the world, Europe, in which Christianity has the strongest footing; how many countries, provinces, and kingdoms will you not find groaning under the yoke of the heresies of Luther, Calvin, Jansenius and other teachers of error; and think, too, what have so many lords and ladies, citizens and peasants done, that the Lord God has allowed them to be bred and born in a country infected with error, where they suck in the poison of heresy with their mother's milk, and who are now in such a state that, if they obstinately persevere in it, they will be lost forever; for, as no one was saved in the deluge, says the Holy Martyr, St. Cyprian, so there is no salvation to be hoped for except in the bark of St. Peter, that is, the Holy Roman Catholic Church. "There is no salvation outside the Church,"³ as the Council of Lateran says. Think that you, in preference to all those others, are in that bark of Peter, the only true Church. And why? Ah, my God! you must conclude, what a debt do I not owe Thee? If I do not acknowledge the greatness of this benefit, I am not worthy to enjoy it. And it is that, oh, most merciful God, that, when I think of it as I ought, oftenest excites my astonishment at the mercy Thou hast shown me, and compels me to ac-

In preference to so many heretics.

¹ Non fecit taliter omni nationi et judicia sua non manifestavit eis.—Ps. cxlvii. 20.

² Bene curris, sed extra viam.

³ Extra Ecclesiam non est salus.

knowledge the great debt of love and gratitude that I owe Thee. Why am I called and not the others? Why are the others left out while I am called? I know well, oh, most just God, that Thou hast pity on all whom Thou hast created, that Thou art He “that enlightens every man that cometh into the world.”¹ Since, as my faith teaches me, Thou hast an earnest wish and desire that all men should be saved, I am certain that Thou givest to all men, that have ever lived in the world, sufficient light to arrive, if they wish, at the knowledge of the true faith; and I am certain, too, that by some extraordinary ways and means (even if a miracle were necessary), Thou wilt bring to the true faith those who live according to the natural law, and who, though they may be heathens, lead a life free from sin. But how widely different is the manner in which Thy goodness deals with me, from that in which it deals with them!

We are bred
and born in
this faith.

Here, oh, Catholic Christians, I beg of you to give your full attention, in order to understand still clearer the greatness of this benefit. The Apostle St. Peter, writing to Christians who were converted to the true faith from heathenism and Judaism, calls them a people elected by God: “You are a chosen generation, a purchased people, . . . that you may declare His virtues who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.”² Certainly those people had good reason to declare the mercy of God. Now, my dear brethren, we cannot exactly say of ourselves that we have been called out of darkness to this light, for the faith was infused into us with the grace of holy Baptism, and we have more reason to say that we were born, without knowing anything about it, and brought up in the bosom of the true Church, than to say that we have been called to it. Is not that the truth? And what follows therefrom? It follows that we are placed under a far greater obligation to God for the benefit of the faith, than the heathens, Jews, and heretics who are called to it out of darkness. And this is the reason: if we had been born and brought up in America amongst the savage people there, or in Africa amongst the idolatrous heathens, or in Asia amongst the Turks and Jews, or in England, Holland, Sweden, or Denmark, amongst the heretics, what would then be the case? Without doubt, as we have seen already, the all-merciful God, who desires the salvation of all men, would not have failed to send

¹ Qui illuminat omnem hominem, venientem in hunc mundum.

² Vos genus electum. . . . ut virtutes annuntietis ejus; qui vocavit vos de tenebris in admirabile lumen suum.—I. Pet. ii. 9.

us some rays of His light by which we, like converted Christians, might have come to know the truth of the Catholic faith ; but do you think we would have followed this grace and have immediately embraced the faith according to divine inspiration ? Alas ! what a difficulty there would have been in doing so. My opinion is that neither I nor you would have done it, but would have acted as they who are in the darkness of error have hitherto acted and still continue to act, although they are not without sufficient grace from God. How many heathens, Jews, and heretics are there not who acknowledge, and even openly, if they are questioned, that ours is the true faith, and yet they cannot make up their minds to embrace it, being prevented by one cause or another. One is prevented by selfishness, another by human respect, another by fear of his prince ; the greater number are kept back from a clear knowledge of the truth by the love of ease and freedom of life. I have known and questioned Lutherans and Calvinists, and they have acknowledged that they were fully persuaded of the truth of the Catholic religion, yet they remained as they were. “ Why should I become a Catholic ? ” said one ; “ if I did so, I should get nothing from my parents. ” Another said, “ I have a relation who intends making me his heir ; if I changed my religion I should lose that hope. ” A third said : “ If I had turned all my land into money, and had placed it in safety, I should not long hesitate. ” “ What shall I live on, ” said the fourth. “ What will my relatives think, ” says the fifth, and the sixth says, “ I should lose my situation. ” And so on. I know of Calvinistic and Lutheran preachers who offered to become Catholics if they were supported with their wives and children. There is no use in urging on them the loss of Heaven and the eternal pains of hell ; that will not solve their difficulties. In spite of their better knowledge they remain in their false religion and lose their souls. Now, I ask you, once again, my dear brethren, if we were bred and born in such circumstances, should we have less difficulties than they ? Should we have more courage to overcome those difficulties and to embrace the true faith at once ? Alas ! I fear that at the very least, we should have found it hard and very hard, and that only a few of us would have succeeded. Praised and blessed, therefore, be the all-merciful God, who has not only brought us to the right way of salvation in a much gentler and milder manner, but also has forced us into it, without asking our consent, inasmuch as He has caused us to be born and brought up in a Catholic country,

under a Catholic sovereign, by Catholic parents, in the bosom of the true Church, in the only religion that can bring us to salvation ; in which, even if we did not otherwise desire it, we are compelled to live and to die, at least through human respect, by a fortunate necessity. Christians! do you not yet understand how much we owe to the good God for this special benefit ?

We live in this faith, as the Christian religion enjoys peace and tranquillity.

There is still another circumstance which brings out the greatness of this benefit, in a stronger light. We who are Catholics, and who have lived till now in the true faith, in what sort of times do we live ? In times when the Church can make public profession of her faith in peace and tranquillity. Go back in thought to those dangerous times when the Christian faith was persecuted by tyrants and pagan emperors, everywhere, with armed force, of which this city of Treves was witness. In what state were things then ? To profess the Catholic faith meant to be deprived of all one's goods, to be driven out of house and home, to be imprisoned, loaded with chains, derided and mocked, stretched on the rack, torn with iron hooks, burnt with torches, mangled with scourges, flayed alive, roasted, crucified, and put to death with all sorts of terrible tortures. What would you think if those times were to come back again ! Happy times, indeed, I must confess, were those of the early Christians, when hearts were so inflamed with the fire of divine charity, that they gladly and joyfully sacrificed property and life, and gave themselves up to all sorts of torments in defence of their faith. But would that be the case now, when charity has grown cold in most hearts, if each one of us were told, with the sword hanging over our heads, either to give up our faith, or to sacrifice our property and possessions, or our honor and respectability, or to deliver up our bodies to a martyr's death ? I must again say that God would still deserve, on account of His infinite majesty and the love He has shown us, that small token of love from us. To gain the eternal joys of Heaven, it would certainly be worth while to suffer all kinds of torments ; the beautiful crown of martyrdom is surely worth the price paid for it. Oh, would that I were so happy as to suffer martyrdom for the faith ! Thus we often think and speak, but it is a different thing actually to feel and experience. If our words were really put to the test, oh, how many would turn their backs and abandon the faith ! It is a fine thing to say that we could bear courageously the scorn and derision of a whole people, when we can hardly tolerate an angry word from our neighbor, when we seek revenge for the

least affront, when, through fear of ridicule, we cannot resolve to give up some worldly custom that is displeasing to God. It is a fine thing to say that we could give up all we have, when we are actually ready to curse and swear, and swear falsely too, for the sake of a little money, and to keep up feuds among brothers and sisters, year after year, for a bit of land. We may say that we are willing to suffer scourge, rack, wheel, and fire, and yet, the least inconvenience prevents us from coming to church, the least opposition troubles and casts us down. We boast of being ready to shed our blood, and to suffer the most painful death, when we are so easily led away by the least allurements, a flattering word, human respect or some new, worldly custom, to offend against our faith and against the law of God. No, my dear brethren, let us candidly and humbly confess, that God has conferred a great benefit on us by placing us peacefully and tranquilly in His Church, in which, without fear of persecution, we can enjoy the fruits of faith with all desirable security, and can work out our salvation without let or hindrance.

And now, I appeal to your reason, Catholic Christians! God has called us to the true Church and to the one saving faith, and has called us in preference to so many millions, and has called in such a manner. He has hitherto kept us in that faith with such ease and comfort to ourselves, do we not owe Him something for that? Would it be too much, would it be even enough, if we were to thank Him heartily every day, morning and evening, for such a great benefit? Would it be too much, nay, would it be enough, if we fulfilled, out of gratitude, all the commands of our faith with the greatest punctuality, and led a holy life according to the teaching of our holy religion? But how is it, if we do not think of this benefit even once in the week or month; if we abuse it to break the commandments and to offend God and to dishonor such a holy religion by a bad life? What would we deserve to be called then? Seneca tells a story of a soldier of Philip, the king of Macedon, who having suffered shipwreck, was cast on shore half-dead, on the lands of a certain Macedonian. The Macedonian, through pity, took the poor man into his house, laid him on his bed, cared for him for thirty days, until he was fully restored to health, and finally gave him money to go home. The soldier, after having thanked his benefactor, promised to speak a good word for him to the king; but what did he do? In place of speaking the good word, he asked the king to give him the land of that Macedonian, who had treated him with so much courtesy and

We are therefore, obliged to be grateful to God, yet the contrary happens.

kindness, and Philip, who loved the soldier very much, granted his request. The good Macedonian, thus plundered of his goods, bore the injustice in silence, but sent a letter privately to the king, stating what he had done for the shipwrecked soldier; whereupon Philip, justly enraged, restored the property to its lawful owner, and caused the soldier to have the words, "This is an ungrateful guest," branded on his shoulders with a hot iron. Catholic Christians! how many of us deserve to have those shameful words branded, not on the shoulders, but on the forehead, where we make the sign of the cross as a token of our Catholic Christianity! This is an ungrateful guest. This is he who, after the shipwreck of original sin, was thrown, spiritually dead, on the land of the living, who was recalled to life, in preference to so many others who are lost eternally, by a merciful God in the sacrament of Baptism, who was received into His house, into the bosom of the true Church, in which he has been brought up in the true faith and nourished with the Sacraments and the Word of God. And how has he acted with his best benefactor? In place of paying the debt of gratitude he owes Him, he has often risen up against Him, he has stained the purity of the faith by a sinful life, and dishonored the holiness of the Church to which he belongs. This is an ungrateful guest—what a disgraceful name!

The greater,
therefore,
our condem-
nation.

Woe to him who goes into eternity branded in that shameful manner! We can be quite certain, my dear brethren, that the greater our good fortune in being bred and born in the true faith, the greater will be our misery if we are damned in the same faith. We can hardly refrain from shedding tears of pity, when we think that so many nations of the world are lost through heresy and infidelity; but for a Catholic Christian to go to hell, while still belonging to that faith in which alone salvation can be found, out of which there is no salvation, in which no one is lost who does not wish to be lost, that is, indeed, a terrible thing! And yet it happens, and, alas! in so many cases; for faith is not enough, if we do not lead a holy life according to our faith. "What good is it," asks Peter Damian, "to believe as a Catholic, if one lives as a heathen?"² It will be far more tolerable in hell for one who has been a heathen, a Turk, a Jew, or a heretic, than for one who has been brought up a Catholic and yet has lost his soul; for the very fact of having received and enjoyed the light of faith will

¹ *Hic ingratus hospes est.*—Seneca de benef. l. 4, c. 37.

² *Quid prodest, si quisplam catholice credat et gentilitur, vivat.*

make eternal damnation still more terrible; there is no doubt of that. St. Macarius, as Boland writes, once asked a skull that he saw lying on the ground, who he had been and in what state was his soul, and the skull answered: I was a pagan priest and my soul is in hell. The saint asked whether he was in the deepest pit of hell. No, answered the other, but as deep as we heathens who knew not God are under the surface of the earth, so much deeper are Christians below us in hell, and so much more grievously are they tortured. And then he howled out: "Woe to the man who transgresses the commandments of God."¹

Oh, my Lord and my God! how will it be with me, who have so often deliberately transgressed Thy law? As Thy love and goodness to me have been so great, in causing me to be born and brought up in the fold of the true Church, great also, and abominable has my ingratitude hitherto been! I must acknowledge, when I think of my sins that I have committed in the full light of Thy faith, that there is no punishment, amongst the infidels in hell, too severe for my ingratitude. Yet, that very faith that I have contradicted by my life, teaches me that Thou, who art infinite mercy, dost not repel any sinner who returns to Thee. Look, therefore, upon my repentant and contrite heart, with which I now hate and execrate my former sins, and the many times I have dishonored my holy religion, and with which I now firmly resolve to live, for the future, as a worthy child of my dear Mother, the Catholic Church, and to direct my life according to her laws with the greatest exactness; and in this, along with daily acts of thanksgiving, shall consist my gratitude for the great grace of vocation to the true faith. I will believe as a Catholic, I will live and die as a Catholic, so that I may praise and glorify Thee forever, for the benefit Thou hast conferred upon me, with Thy triumphant Church in Heaven. Amen.

Sorrow and
resolution
of amend-
ment.

THIRD SERMON.

ON THE DIGNITY OF CHRISTIANS, WHO ARE CHILDREN OF GOD.

Subject.

By the sanctifying grace that we Christians receive in Baptism, we are beloved children of God. What a high dignity, what honor and glory for us poor mortals.—*Preached on Pentecost Sunday.*

¹ Vae homini illi, qui mandata Dei transgreditur.

Text.

Si quis diligit me, sermonem meum servabit, et Pater meus diliget eum.—John xiv: 23.

“If any one love Me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him.”

Introduction.

By charity is understood, not merely the real inclination that we have towards God, when we awaken love to Him, but also, and chiefly, a constant love, or the state of sanctifying grace, which we receive in Baptism from the Holy Ghost, in virtue of which He makes His abode in our souls and remains there until He is driven out by mortal sin. Of each one, then, who so loves, that is, of each one who is in the state of grace, Christ says in the Gospel, “My Father will love him.” How will He love him? Here, Christians, I beg of you to give me your attention. It is a happiness, a dignity, the like of which is not on earth; it is an honor and glory of which we think very little, perhaps not at all, although we are raised to it: “My Father will love him,” as His own child. And now, to our consolation and encouragement in the love and service of God, we shall consider this point.

Plan of Discourse.

By the sanctifying grace that we, Christians, receive in Baptism, we are beloved children of God. What a great dignity, honor, and glory for us poor mortals!

That is the whole subject, from which a moral conclusion will be drawn. Come, Holy Ghost! open the eyes of our minds with Thy light, that we may know the dignity of the state to which we are raised by Thy grace; and that we may always labor to keep in that state with the greatest care, and by avoiding every sin. That is the favor we implore of Thee, through thy virginal spouse Mary and our holy angels guardian.

Human ambition has often striven for divine honors.

Men have inherited from nature such a great desire of honor and glory, that many raised their ambitious thoughts up to Heaven, because they found only men like themselves here on earth, and, as it were, tried to take away the eternal crown from the head of the Almighty, and to place it on their own. Adam and Eve, the first human beings, when they heard the deceitful words

¹ Pater meus diliget eum.

of the serpent, "You will be as gods," were so tickled by them and were excited to such a pitch of audacity, that, in spite of all threats, they forgot the command of their Creator, and ate the forbidden fruit in order to become as gods. Although by that sin they placed themselves and all of us in the way of eternal death, yet they have had many imitators who strove for divine honors. Domitian published no edict without the words, "Domitian our Lord and God."² Menecrates required no other reward from the man whom he cured than the title, He is the God Jupiter. Phoso taught his parrots to say: "Phoso is a god."³ So general was this ambition amongst the heathens, that in order to have a new divinity, it was only necessary for vanity to inspire some ruler or other with the fancy.

And what, my dear brethren, should most excite our astonishment, the unreasoning folly and audacity of these stupid people, or the goodness of God and His incomprehensible love for them? Instead of drawing the sword of vengeance, and humbling their pride, He has found a means of satisfying most abundantly their ambition and desire for divine honors. For, what has he done? "God has become man," says St. Cyrillus, "so that He is truly adored in human form."⁴ So that man can and must now say with truth, God is man, and man is God; consequently, that man, who is God at the same time, deserves divine honor. But it does not exhaust His love, nor complete our dignity to have only one man of our nature, Jesus Christ, who is truly God; but, "the only Son of God having become man, makes many sons of men to be sons of God."⁵ For, in Baptism, in which they are regenerated and receive the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost, all faithful Christians become adopted children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, the co-natural Son of God, to whom, as co-heirs of Christ, the kingdom of the Eternal Father belongs, as a lawful inheritance, if they bring that grace of the Holy Ghost with them into eternity.

God has abundantly satisfied this ambition, by making men His children in Baptism.

"Oh, wonderful goodness of God!"⁶ cries out the holy Pope St. Gregory; "we are not worthy to be servants of God, and He calls us His friends!"⁷ What! do you wonder, St. Gregory, that we are friends of God? That would certainly be an honor and a happiness for us, the like of which we would never hope for or imagine;

How great is the goodness of God to us.

¹ Eritis sicut dii.—Gen. iii. 5.

² Domitianus Dominus et Deus noster.

³ Phoso est Deus. ⁴ Deus homo factus est, unde in humana figura vere Deus adoratur.

⁵ Factus Filius hominis unicus Filius Deus, multos filios hominum facit filios Dei.—St.

Augustine.

⁶ O mira divine bonitatis dignatis.

⁷ Servi digni non sumus, et amici vocamur.

but listen to what the Apostle St. John says: "Open your eyes, open your hearts." And what dost thou desire, what have we to look at? Understand, if you can, the length to which the love of God has gone, who has made us, not merely in name and likeness, but in deed and in reality, children of God. "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God."¹ If He had merely allowed us to take that name and title, it would have been a far greater honor than we merit; if He had said, simply, I will allow you to call Me your Father, although I really am not your Father; just as He allowed the Blessed Virgin to say of Joseph: "Thy father and I have been seeking thee in sorrow;"² even then, this apparent paternity would have been a great honor for us, but He is not content with this. Our heavenly Father wills, not only that we should be called His children, but that we should be so in reality. Dear brothers and sisters, consider well what this means; we are sons and daughters of God.³ "When He shall appear, we shall be like to Him."⁴

What honor
and glory
for us!

Oh, Christians! what nobility, what honor for us! Have we ever thought of it as we ought? What glory and happiness it is for the children of the world to be the friends and favorites of an earthly sovereign? How proud they are if they can show, in their genealogies or escutcheons, the names of illustrious warriors, cardinals, bishops or statesmen, and say: Look, these people belonged to our family. When Christ said to the Pharisees that He was not of this world, as they were, they immediately appealed to the antiquity of their race, descended from Abraham: "We are of the seed of Abraham;" "Abraham is our father."⁵ Whence comes the dignity and nobility of families in our own days? Is it not from their ancestors who, in former times, made their names illustrious, either by valor in war, or by skill in statesmanship, or by other praiseworthy actions, and who were therefore raised to high dignities by kings and emperors? And on this account, all their descendants are separated from the common people and held in greater honor. Yet, if we consider the matter seriously, how can it be to my praise or honor, that some of my ancestors, whose bodies are now crumbling into dust, were great, or skillful, or virtuous people, or were celebrated in

¹ Videte qualem charitatem dedit nobis Pater, ut filii Dei nominemur et simus.

² Pater tuus et ego dolentes querebamuste. ³ Charissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus.—I. John iii. 2

⁴ Cum apparuerit, similes ei erimus.

⁵ Semen Abraham sumus. Pater noster Abraham est.—John. viii. 33-39.

their day, if I have inherited none of their virtues or illustrious deeds? And yet, such things are looked upon as a great honor and glory. How great are we not, then, oh, Christians! in deed and in reality? How much more reason have we not to boast and be proud of that nobility which the Holy Ghost impressed upon us in Baptism; for we are raised above the angels and assumed to a share of the divine nature (as St. Thomas Aquinas says of sanctifying grace) and we become children of the Almighty God. So that we can boast with greater reason and more truth than the Jews did formerly. We are born of God, our father is God,¹ the King of Heaven; we can cry out, as St. Paul says, with the greatest confidence, Oh, my God! thou art my Father!² Can we imagine anything more glorious? Does not that mean, according to St. Cyrillus, that we have attained the highest degree of nobility, since we are reckoned among the children of God?³

St. Augustine, explaining with his usual eloquence the words of St. John, "Dearly beloved, we are now children of God,"⁴ makes a beautiful reflection thereon. Suppose, he says, that a man undertakes a long journey and on that journey he is burdened with all sorts of trouble and labor, sickness and misery, and is also poor and needy, and knows nothing of his noble birth and descent; some one meets him and says to him: Sir, do you not know who you are? You are the son of a great nobleman; your father, who is very rich, has ordered me to tell you this and to conduct you to his house. What do you think, asks St. Augustine, would be the feelings of that man on hearing such unexpected news? If he were not in danger of being deceived, how great would not his joy be? Would he not think, oh, how happy I am! I am the son of a rich lord! I should have known that sooner; hitherto I have not known myself. This really happened to Don John of Austria. He was brought up in his childhood by an ordinary citizen, whom he always looked upon as his father. When he had grown up, Philip II., King of Spain, who alone knew the secret, was out hunting one day, with his courtiers, in a forest, where he met the citizen and his son. As soon as the king saw the latter, he leaped from his horse and embraced the young man, to the great astonishment of all present, and to the still greater astonishment of John himself, who, looking upon himself as only a poor boy, did not know what to think of the affair. The king took him

The great happiness of this proved by a simile.

¹ *Pater noster est Deus.* ² *Clamamus, Abba, Pater.*

³ *Fostigium nobilitatis est, inter filios Dei computari.*

⁴ *Charissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus.*

respectfully by the hand, and said, "Away with these rags (for the boy was poorly clad), they are not fitting to your dignity. John, you are the son of the great emperor Charles, and I am your brother." Think, my dear brethren, how the young man must have felt, how he must have been overwhelmed with joy; for he was brought with great pomp and magnificence, alongside the king, his brother, to the city and to the royal palace, where he thenceforth received every sign of honor and respect, as the son of such a great father.

What cause
have we not,
then, to re-
joice.

Ah, Christians! what a happiness and cause of joy it is for us to be in the state of grace! Come, says Jesus Christ to each one of us, open thy heart, raise thy mind above the filth of earth to Heaven. Why art thou troubled on the journey of life! Hast thou hitherto known who thou art? Rejoice, for thou art a son, a daughter of a great King; a kingdom is prepared for thee which has neither limit nor end. Come, thou art a child of God, and I am thy brother! Hear, ye poor citizens and workmen, ye lowly servants and handmaidens, ye toiling peasants; the world gives you scornful names, and looks upon you as a wretched people, as the scum of the earth; but the great God calls you His children; Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, calls you His brothers and sisters. Do you but serve your Heavenly Father truly, be careful not to lose the grace of the Holy Ghost by mortal sin, and your nobility and dignity will far excel that of all the heathen kings and emperors of the world. Principalities, kingdoms, empires, no matter how glorious and magnificent they may be, are as nothing compared to the title of child of God.¹ Dear brothers and sisters, exult and rejoice; we are children of God. And when we consider this, can we contain ourselves for wonder and spiritual joy!

The saints
could not
contain
themselves
for joy at
the thought-

St. Margaret of Cortona, as she once knelt before the crucifix in meditation on the bitter sufferings of Christ, heard Him speaking these words to her: "What dost thou want, my poor little one?"² Whereupon she answered: "I want nothing but Thyself, oh, Lord Jesus!" And on another occasion, as she was thinking of the immense love and goodness of God to us mortals, she took courage and spoke thus confidently to her Saviour: "Thou hast lately called me a poor little one, and I am so in reality; for every good thing I have in soul and body is an alms, which I have received from Thee; but, my dear Lord, when shall I have the consolation of hearing Thee call me Thy child?" And then she got

¹ *Charissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus.*

² *Quid vis pauperula?*

this answer, by an inward inspiration : “ When thou hast cleansed thy soul from all stain by a general confession.” For some days Margaret redoubled her penances. She repented of and confessed all the sins and the smallest faults of her life with the greatest sorrow, whereupon she heard after holy Communion the sweet and long desired words : “ My daughter.” At these words she fell into an ecstasy of surpassing joy, and having, as it were, come to life again, after a long time, she cried out aloud, “ Oh, infinite sweetness of God !” “ Oh, happy word—My daughter ! So has the great God called me. Is it possible that I can still live, and that my soul has not left the body at hearing such sweet words ! My daughter ! So has Jesus said to me. What else is there that I can wish for, or desire upon earth ?

My dear Christian brethren, would not each one of us rejoice also, if we now heard the same words from the lips of Christ : my child, my son, my daughter ? But it is not necessary that He should speak to us so clearly, if we only have a conscience free from sin and are in the state of grace, our own conscience will say the same words to us as St. Paul writes : “ For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God.”³ “ But if sons, then heirs also, heirs indeed of God, joint heirs with Christ,”⁴ and that is the only thing that a Christian should boast and be proud of. “ We glory in the hope of children of God,”⁵ whether we are of high or lowly birth, rich or poor, honored or despised by the world, matters nothing and is not worth troubling ourselves about ; for temporal prosperity cannot cause us real joy, nor can temporal misfortune cause us real misery ; we glory in the hope of children of God. Our highest honor and greatest happiness, our only joy and boast consists in this, that we are children of God. Yes, says St. Cyprian, “ Nothing earthly will ever appear precious, nothing wonderful, to him who says to himself with a lively faith, I am a child of God.”⁶ This dignity and nobility surpasses everything.

But, alas ! amongst all the titles of honor and prosperity that are in use amongst men, there is not one less thought of than that of child of God. With what courage, energy, and frenzy are not all the others sought after ? We ruin ourselves with law-suits to gain possession of a handful of earth ; whole

We can and ought to do the same.

We prize this honor but little.

¹ *Filla mea !* ² *O infinita dulcedo Dei !*

³ *Ipsæ enim Spiritus testimonium reddit spiritui nostro, quod sumus filii Dei.—Rom. viii. 16.*

⁴ *Si autem filii et hæredes, hæredes Dei, cohæredes autem Christi.*

⁵ *Gloriamus in spe filiorum Dei.*

⁶ *Nunquam humana opera mirabitur, quisquis se cognoverit filium Dei.*

families dispute about the difference between mine and thine; there is any amount of quarrelling and contention about some ridiculous question of precedence, or rank, as if everything depended upon it; nay, even these disputes are brought into the very churches; it is a grievous sin against the laws and regulations of the world if one man does not give another his proper titles; if he does not make a sufficiently profound bow to a lady. But the title of child of God is willingly given up to any one who thinks it an honorable one. The grace of the Holy Ghost, the divine adoption of us as children, which nothing on earth can equal, is looked upon as of no value; the majority do not think of it, nay, they do not even know what it means, nor have they any idea of the dignity to which it raises them. St. Paul, meeting some disciples of St. John on the way to Ephesus, asked them: "Have you received the Holy Ghost?" Do you believe in Him? No, they answered, "we have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost." My dear brethren, must I ask the same question to-day? Have you received the Holy Ghost? Do you fully understand this truth, that sanctifying grace makes you children of God and brethren of Jesus Christ? I fear that you would have to answer: We have not heard whether there be a Holy Ghost. We know nothing about it, it is too high for our understanding, we have hardly heard anything of it. Oh! the blindness and ignorance of men! that they should be so ignorant and so inexperienced in the things of faith, which concern their greatest honor and happiness! you know well where your birth-place is, you know where your room, your cellar, your bed is, and you do not know what you are, nor to what the mercy of God has raised you.

Conclusion,
with differ-
ent moral
deductions-

I must again repeat to you, my dear brothers and sisters, we are now children of God.¹ Understand this truth clearly, and keep a firm hold of it; let it never slip from your memory, as long as we are in the state of grace, we are children of God. An infallible faith assures me of this, so that parents may say, I must not look upon my children as mine, but as God's, and I must carefully bring them up for the end and object with which their Heavenly Father has intrusted them to me; that is, to the praise and love of God. I must be very careful not to lead them to evil by word, or work, or example. I must keep a watchful eye upon all their actions and omissions, instruct them in good, chastise them, as a parent should, when they commit a fault, so that they may

¹ *Si Spiritum Sanctum accepistis.*—Act. xix. 2.

² *Sed neque, si Spiritus Sanctus est, audivimus.*

³ *Charissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus.*

not become vain children of the world, or be led away from the path of the children of God, and be delivered over to the devil as his prey, through my fault. We are children of God. Therefore, the rich and noble may say, I must not look contemptuously on any one, no matter how poor or lowly he may be, not even on my own servant or handmaid, but I must consider all as children of God. I am a child of God, each one may think for himself, and therefore I must act as becomes my high dignity, and behave as a child of God ought. I am a child of God, so that I must not live as the vain children of the world, according to the false maxims and usages of the wicked world, but according to the law of the children of God, according to the eternal and fundamental truths that Christ, our eldest brother, has left us in his Gospel. I am a child of God, therefore I must and will show all honor and love and childlike obedience, as a well-reared child ought, to my Heavenly Father, under all circumstances and in all places. I am a child of God, so that I have no evil to fear but sin. In all dangers and necessities of soul and body I will fly to my Heavenly Father with child-like confidence, for He knows all my wants; He knows how to help me, and He will help me as He has promised. Into His paternal bosom and all-wise providence do I cast myself and all that belongs to me, with full resignation of my will to His, for I am certain that whatever happens to me will be for the best. I am a child of God, so that it does not matter much if I have many crosses and troubles to bear here on earth, for I am not yet where I ought to be. I sojourn in misery, in a valley of tears; my true country is Heaven. I must comfort myself with the hope of the children of God, that the present short and insignificant suffering will be changed into everlasting joy. My thoughts, desires, and sighs shall be directed principally to Heaven: "Our Father who art in Heaven, Thy kingdom come."¹ I am a child of God as long as I am in the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost, therefore I will fly all occasions of evil with the greatest care, I will watch over my senses, that I may never lose this grace by a deliberate mortal sin, nor be cast out of the number of the children of God. If I have sinned, then I will not defer my repentance a single hour, but, by a true sorrow and confession, will free my soul from the unhappy state of sin, and will thus be restored to the number of the children of God. I am a child of God by the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost, therefore I must spend the

¹ *Pater noster qui est in caelis, adveniat regnum tuum.*

precious time that my heavenly Father has given me in this life, in increasing that grace every moment, not in idleness, nor long sleeping, nor in plays and amusements, nor in gaming and dancing. I must not forget the good intention in all my acts, and must often renew it before all my works, so that sanctifying grace may increase more and more in my soul, and that, consequently, the eternal glory that I shall enjoy in my heavenly country may also be greater, until the day when God calls me out of this vale of tears, and I am placed among the number of His elect children in Heaven, to rejoice eternally with Him as my Father, Jesus Christ as my Brother, and with the Holy Ghost, too, by whose grace I am now raised to that twofold dignity. Amen.

FOURTH SERMON.

ON THE LIFE BECOMING THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

Subject.

1. By the grace of the Holy Ghost received in Baptism, we are children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ; we must therefore live as becomes children and brethren of God.
 2. We are children of God, brothers and sisters of Christ; what a shame for us if we live as children and relations of the devil!
- Preached on Trinity Sunday.*

Text.

Baptizantes eos in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.
—Matth. xxviii. 19.

“Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Introduction.

All we who are Christians have received this happiness, in preference to so many millions of heathens, that we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. But all Christians do not acknowledge and profess the greatness of the happiness that falls to their lot in Baptism. I will say nothing of the wretched condition from which we are thereby freed; I will speak only of the high dignity to which we have been raised. We have received a portion of the infinite nature of God, we are in close communion and relationship with the Most

Blessed Trinity; relationship with God the Father, whose children we are; with God the Son, whose brothers and sisters we are; with God the Holy Ghost, by whose grace we are raised to this twofold dignity. Realize, if you can, my dear brethren, the great dignity of this position; children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ! What an honor and glory for us poor mortals, as I explained in last Sunday's sermon. From that sermon we shall now draw the conclusion.

Plan of Discourse.

1. *By the grace of the Holy Ghost received in Baptism we are children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, therefore we must live as becomes children and brethren of God. This shall form the 1st part.* 2. *Children of God, brothers and sisters of Christ, what a shame it would be for us to live as children and relations of the devil! This shall form the 2d part.*

Deliver us from this shame, and make us partakers of the honor opposed to it, O Most Blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! This we ask of Thee, through the merits of our Mother Mary and our holy angels guardian.

First Part.

“Honors change manners” is a common proverb. Experience proves it true. If a man of lowly descent is raised to an influential or lucrative position, or is invested with a high dignity, either through good luck, or through his own diligence and industry, or by some great man's favor, then the whole man undergoes a change. If any one who had known him in his former humble state were to see him now, he would wonder whether it was really the same person he beheld, or a complete stranger; so great is the change in his outward manner and behavior, in his clothing, his gait, his speech; for he talks now in a manner suited to his dignity. If it were not so with him, if he remained, as before, lowly, awkward, and simple in his manners, then every one would certainly think that the office or dignity was thrown away on him: a wooden image might as well be ennobled. Even a poor student, who represents the person of a king or a courtier in a play, must and does put on a different demeanor to that usual to him when he goes to school: during the short time he appears on the stage, it seems to him that he really is something

Honors
change
manner.

¹ Honores mutant mores.

great, and he assumes the proud manner and dignified bearing suited to so lofty a personage.

The old heathens deified their heroes, that the latter might behave as gods.

And this is the reason why, in former times, amongst the heathens, brave heroes either proclaimed themselves to be gods, or were deified by the people. This did not always happen through vanity and empty ambition, nor because the people wished to flatter them; it was rather a clever invention of these men, the object of which was, in making such heroes believe that they were descended from the gods, to induce them to behave in a manner worthy of their divine descent and to do great things for the welfare of their country. Therefore Varro, quoted by St. Augustine, writes: "It is useful for states that brave men should think they are descended from the gods."¹ For, thus they will be forced to live, not as ordinary men, but as gods. Caius Valerius was one of the most vicious and desperate men amongst the ancient Romans; he lived a thoroughly sensual life, like a brute animal. Publius Lucinius, in order to induce him to amend his ways, formed a wise plan, and made Valerius a high priest of Jupiter, which was one of the greatest dignities of the time. It is wonderful how a man changes when he is raised to an honorable position! This dignity made such an impression on Valerius that he became another man. He felt ashamed whenever he thought of his former vicious life, and, as he could before find no one to equal him in vice, so he now was unsurpassed in virtue and honorable conduct. "As he before gave an example of sensual indulgence," writes Valerius Maximus, "so he afterwards became a pattern of modesty and virtue."² This change was effected in him by the light of reason alone, assisted by the consideration of the dignity to which he had been raised; so that he saw himself obliged so to live in the sight of honorable men as became the position he occupied.

Christians are children of God; they must live as such.

Ah, Christians! to what are we raised when we are baptized in the name of the Most Holy Trinity? Do we think and believe what a high dignity is thereby conferred on us? It is an article of faith; we are children of God,³ and brethren of Jesus Christ. We are admitted to a participation of the Divine Nature; do we then acknowledge that this dignity far surpasses all others in the world, no matter how great they may be? Doubtless we acknowledge that. Now, if a worldly dignity requires that we should

¹ Utile esset civitatibus, ut se viri fortes ex Diis genitos esse credant.

² Quantum prius luxuriæ fuit exemplum, tantum postea modestiæ et sanctitatis specimen evasit.

³ Nunc filii Dei sumus!

five and behave in a proper manner, how are we to live and behave, what sort of a life must we lead as children of God Almighty? Oh, Christian, "ask of thy condition," says St. Maximus; "see how great thou art and see what thou owest." We are children of God. Well could St. John Chrysostom say: "We ought to be better than the angels and purer than the archangels, since we surpass them all in honor and dignity."³ What would it help us, he asks further on, to be children of God, if our lives were not conformable to our dignity? "Although you have an illustrious Father, yet that will not be any honor or glory for you unless you imitate Him in your life."⁴ "If you are children of Abraham," said Christ to the Pharisees, when they were boasting of Abraham their father, "do the works of Abraham," and do not be satisfied with mere words. He says the same to us: "If you are children of God, do the works of God;"⁵ live as becomes children of God; let it appear in your manners and behavior that you are children of God.

And, my dear brethren, what sort of a life must that be? See how the children of the vain world act. They consider that life to be suitable and becoming for them which they see and admire in others of a similar condition to themselves, so that we can see how one seeks to imitate the other in everything. It is the fashion, it is the custom, others of my station do the same, they are clothed in such a manner, they send their daughters to foreign countries, they have so many servants, they sleep so long in the morning, they keep such a table, they behave so and so in their visits and conversations, in society and assemblies, &c. I am as much as they and I must do what they do. Equality must be kept up, let it cost what it will; there is no use in trying to persuade them of anything else. See, that is what it means to live properly and according to one's station, in the ideas of the children of the world. "Children of this world,"⁶ as they are called by Christ. Best "leave them to themselves."⁷

The rule of life for the children of this world, is to do as others like them do.

Christians! we are children of God by the grace of Baptism, in which we renounced the world and its vain works; we must live, then, differently from the world, if we wish to live ac-

Hence the children of God must act as others

¹ Interroga statum tuum. ² Respice, quantum vales, et perpende quantum debeas.

³ Angelis oportet esse meliores et Archangelis majores, ut qui iis omnibus sumus honore præpositi.

⁴ Etiam si celebrem habeas parentem, ne putes tibi illud ad salutem sufficere, aut ad honorem et gloriam, nisi et moribus illi cognatus sis.

⁵ Si filii Abrahæ estis, opera Abrahæ facite.—John viii. 39. ⁶ Si filii Dei estis, opera Dei facite.

⁷ Filii hujus sæculi.

⁸ Sinite illos.

of the same noble descent do, and live according to the life of their divine Father.

cording to our high position and descent. We must see, too, how others of the same station live. Now God is our Father, Christ is our eldest brother, by Him we are adopted children of God; consequently, from Him we must learn the manners, customs, and usages of our lives. St. Gregory Nyssen says, "We must carefully examine the attributes of our heavenly Father, that we may reproduce them in ourselves as far as possible, and so be legitimate children of God." St. Peter Chrysologas says, "Let us live according to our descent, not for the world, but for heaven, which is our inheritance, and let us show forth the likeness of our Father in ourselves." This is the warning of the Son of God Himself: "Be ye therefore perfect, in sanctity of life, as your heavenly Father is perfect."³

That means to imitate Jesus Christ.

But how? you will say, as Philip said: "Lord, show us the Father." We have never seen Him, we know not what He is like. How, then, can we be like to Him? Hear the answer that was given to Philip and to us: "He who sees Me, sees also my Father." In Me you have the image of my heavenly Father and yours. From Me you shall take pattern and example, as to how you are to live and to behave according to your high dignity as children of God. "Learn of Me." What? To be meek and humble of heart, to be temperate and amiable with all who contradict you, to be merciful and patient. He who will come after Me, must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me. Love your enemies, do good to those that hate you, pray for those who persecute and calumniate you, as I have done. Then you will be really children of your Father who is in Heaven.⁷ See, my dear brethren, how much is said in a few words. The life and conduct proper for the children of God is the imitation of the life of Christ.

But that is done by very few Christians.

But, alas! how few Christians there are who really practise those virtues! With what reason has not Christ Himself complained: "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."⁸ They are much more energetic and diligent in adapting and suiting themselves to the world and to their equals among the children of the world, than the others in harmonizing their lives with that of the Son of God,

¹ *Exacte convenit inspicere Genitoris nostri proprietatis, ut ad similitudinem Patris nosmet formantes, legitimi filii sumus Dei.*

² *Respondeamus generi, vivamus cœlo, Patrem similitudine referamus.*

³ *Estote ergo perfecti, sicut Pater vester cœlestis perfectus est.*

⁴ *Domine ostende nobis Patrem.* ⁵ *Qui videt me, videt et Patrem meum.*

⁶ *Discite a me.* ⁷ *Ut sitis filii Patris estis, qui in cœlis est.*

⁸ *Filii hujus sæculi prudentiores filiis lucis in generatione sua sunt.—Luke xvi. 8.*

and with the lives of those holy children of God who imitated Him. How is it with us, my dear brethren? How are your lives and mine regulated? "All you who are baptized, have put on Christ as a garment."¹ When Joseph's brothers had dipped his coat in the blood of a kid, they showed it to their father Jacob, and said, "See whether it be thy son's coat or not." If we were now to appear before our heavenly Father, to give an account of our lives, and the angels asked: See whether that man has on the garment of Thy Son or not; dost Thou acknowledge his life to be an imitation of the life of Thy Son? what sort of an answer would be given? Ah, what little resemblance there is! How the beautiful robe, that I gave thee in holy Baptism, is soiled and torn! No, I can see nothing like my Son in that man, and, therefore, nothing becoming my children. And how would it be if our heavenly Father were to reproach some of us, on account of our perverse and vicious lives, as the Son of God formerly reproached the Pharisees: I do not acknowledge you as my children, you belong to your father, the devil,³ whose works you do. After I had adopted you as my children, and given you that holy name, not only did you not live according to your dignity, as becomes my children, but you lived as children and slaves of the devil. What a shame that would be for us, Christians! For our admonition we shall consider this in the second part.

Second Part.

In the celebrated city of Athens, a play was once produced, in which the person of the god Bacchus was to be represented. There was no one capable of taking the part but a certain slave, who belonged to a noble named Nicias. The slave, having obtained permission from his master, performed the part of Bacchus so well, and was so sleek and well formed, that the whole audience were mightily pleased, and congratulated Nicias on having such a talented slave. Nicias, who was present, said with an earnest countenance: Henceforth I do not wish to keep him as a slave, and I give him his liberty. The people were very much surprised at this apparently strange conduct, for they thought he would look upon it as an honor and pleasure to possess such a slave, who could please so well by his acting. Certainly, answered Nicias, it is an honor for me, but it would be a shame for

The ancient heathens considered it a shame for a slave to represent a god in a play.

¹ Quicumque baptizati estis, Christum induistis.

² Vide, utrum tunica filii tui sit, an non?—Gen. xxxvii. 32. ³ Vos ex patre diabolo estis.

him to remain my slave, and therefore I give him his liberty; for it is not right that one who has represented the person of a god, should serve a man in slavery. These are the words of Plutarch in his history: "He stood up, and because he thought it a shame that the body consecrated by representing a god should be any longer in slavery, he freed the young man."¹

What a far greater shame it is then for a child of God to be a slave to the devil by mortal sin.

And now I ask you, my dear Christian brethren, is there any comparison between a senseless idol and the true and living God? between a false and a true divinity? Certainly not, as you must acknowledge. I ask you again, is there any comparison between a man who represents the person of a false god, by means of a disguise, for an hour or so, on the stage of a theatre, and one who has received a real participation of the divine nature, a child of the Most High God? Certainly not, you must again acknowledge. I ask you a third time, can any comparison be made between the servitude and slavery in which some poor man serves another man, in order to earn his bread, and that by which a child of God, an heir to the kingdom of Heaven, is held under the yoke of the devil? And you must answer, certainly not. Now, we are the image of the true God, we become His children by adoption in holy Baptism, as our infallible faith teaches us. If, then, an ignorant heathen could see, by the light of reason alone, that it was wrong and shameful for a poor man, who represented the person of an idol only on the stage, to serve another man as his slave, what reason can ever grapple with the enormity of the shame, if a child of God becomes a slave to the wicked spirit of evil? And yet, all those who consent to a mortal sin are in this slavery, and with their own full consent and deliberation. As the Apostle says, speaking of all sinners: "And they may recover themselves from the snares of the devil, by whom they are held captive at his will."² What a shameful dishonoring of one's self and one's own high dignity! The bare idea of the son of a rich man sinking so low, through his own fault, that he is reduced to feed swine and to satisfy his hunger with the husks thrown to them (as the gospel says of the prodigal son), the bare idea of this is enough to make one shed tears of pity and compassion; what a pitiful thing, then, is it not, to think that a child of the true God should, by his evil conduct and vicious life, abandon his

¹ Surrexit, deoque dicatum corpus servire, nefas se putare inquiring adolescentem manusist.

² Resipiscant a diaboli laqueis, a quo captivi tenentur ad ipsius voluntatem.—II. Tim. II. 26.

heavenly Father, lose his eternal inheritance and become a slave to the devil, while his soul is perishing with hunger!

Alas! how many there are who sink to that vile and wretched state for the sake of a momentary pleasure, a little money or a worthless gain. Of such as these may the complaint of the Psalmist with truth be uttered: "When man was in honor he hath not understood;"¹ "he hath lowered himself to the senseless beasts, and is become like unto them."² "Their glory they have changed into the likeness of a calf that eateth hay."³ So he speaks of the godless Israelites, who, after having been so wonderfully led by God Himself in the desert, and after having been protected and fed by Him, adored a golden calf as their god. Could not the same complaint be made of most Christians? St. Paul, wishing to give the baptized Ephesians a true idea of the great grace they had received in Baptism, and to lay down a rule of life for them to follow quite opposed to that they had formerly observed, says to them: "You were dead in your sins, wherein, in time past, you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of this air, of the spirit that now worketh on the children of unbelief, in the desires of the flesh, by nature children of wrath; you being heretofore gentiles in the flesh, having no hope of the promise, adulterers, thieves, avaricious, calumniators, idolaters." Such were you formerly; but rejoice and thank the divine mercy, for now you are justified and cleansed from those sins, and are sanctified in Christ Jesus by the Spirit of God. "You were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord."⁴ You were formerly slaves of the devil, now you are children of God. "Fellow-citizens of the saints and friends of God."⁵ But I, my dear brethren, could invert these words of the Apostle, and say to many Christians: You were formerly justified and enlivened, and sanctified in holy Baptism, but now you are dead in sins of all sorts. You were formerly children of light, but now you are children of anger and darkness, who walk according to the world, the flesh, and the temptations of the devil. You were formerly children of God, fellow-citizens of the saints, friends of God, but what are you now? For your great shame, you are slaves of the devil, adulterers, idolaters, avaricious, thieves, calumniators, drunkards, blasphemers. I say adulterers, for St. Paul calls by that name, not only those who

Very many
Christians
live in this
way.

¹ Homo, cum in honore esset, non intellexit.

² Comparatus est jumentis insipientibus, et similis factus est illis.

³ Mutaverunt gloriam suam in similitudinem vituli comedentis fœnum.

⁴ Eratis aliquando tenebræ; nunc autem lux in Domino. ⁵ Civis Sanctorum, et domestici Dei.

give way to the foul desires of the flesh and violate the sanctity of marriage, but also all sinners who dishonor the grace of Baptism for the sake of a vain and frivolous creature, although they were brothers and members of Jesus Christ. I say idolaters and blasphemers, for, according to St. Jerome, "We adore as many new gods as we have sins and vices."¹ If anger makes me violate the law of God, then anger and desire of revenge have become my god.² If I look at a person with an impure pleasure, lust has become my god.³ Am I proud? Then pride is my god. Do I eat and drink to excess? Then my sensual appetites are my god.⁴ See, I repeat to so many Christians, you have deliberately reduced yourselves to this disgraceful condition, you, who before were children of God.

Conclusion
and warn-
ing to sin-
ners.

Like St. John the Apostle, I cry out to all those who are still in the state of sin and in the slavery of the devil: "Remember, oh, sinner, whence thou art fallen,⁵ think of the honor and dignity to which thou wast formerly raised, and the shame and disgrace in which thou art now, and, after having considered thy wretchedness, resolve with the prodigal son, "How well off are even the servants in my father's house, and I am here among swine!"⁶ In what an honorable position are the children of God, who love my heavenly Father, as good children ought, in whose number I formerly was; can I not return to them again, if I will? Why do I still remain among the slaves of the devil? I will arise at once, I will hesitate no longer; I will arise and return to my Father,⁷ by a sincere repentance! I will say to Him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee; I am not worthy to be called Thy child!⁸ Receive me again into Thy favor, and let me hear, to the great joy of the angels, "I have found again my child who was lost."⁹ Yes, sinners, such will really be the case, if you only return to your heavenly Father with contrite hearts.

To the just.

But for you, my dear brethren, or holy hearers, as I should call the just, for you are, as I hope, children of God in the state of grace, my conclusion must be in the words of St. Leo: "Oh, Christian, recognize thy great dignity, and, since thou art made partaker of the divine nature, be careful not to return to thy former vile-

¹ Quaecunque vitia habemus, tot recentes habemus deos.

² Iratus sum, ira mihi Deus est. ³ Libido mihi Deus est.

⁴ Quorum Deus venter est. ⁵ Memor esto itaque, unde cecidisti, et prima opera fac. —Apc. 11.5.

⁶ Quanti mercenarii in domo patris mei sunt, etc. ⁷ Surgam, et ibo ad patrem.

⁸ Dicam, Pater peccavi: jam non sum dignus vocari filius tuus.

⁹ Filius meus perierat, et inventus est.

ness by an unworthy life.”¹ Such was the warning of the elder Tobias to the friend who was ridiculing his piety: “Speak not so, for we are children of saints.”² Such should also be the daily teaching and warning of parents to their children, of masters and mistresses to their domestics, and of each individual to himself: Do not speak so foolishly, leave off swearing and cursing; away with quarrels, abusive language, back-biting, lies, and impure conversation; for we are children of God, who must speak an angelic, a divine language. Away with impure imaginations and desires, with thoughts of vengeance, or despair, or pusillanimity. For we are children of God, whose hearts must be always in Heaven, with their Father, in childlike confidence and uniformity with His holy will. Let nothing of the pride, impurity, injustice, or drunkenness of the world be seen in your conduct, and, to say all in a word, avoid everything that has the least appearance of sin; for we are children of God, who must lead a holy life. In nearly the same way King Menedemus tried to inculcate good manners on his son. When the son was once invited to a feast, and asked leave of his father to go, “Go,” said the father, “but remember thou art the son of a king.”³ He meant by these words, do not forget who thou art, always behave in a manner becoming the son of a king. Ah, Christians! do not forget who you are. Wherever you be, whether you stand or walk, in whatever you do, remember, you are the son of a King; let each of you remember and think to himself, I am a child of God. If you are alone in your own house: remember, think, I am a child of God, my Father sees me, although no one else does. If you are in company; remember, think, I am a child of God, and behave in such a manner, that every one may see, from your conduct and conversation, from your temperance and modesty, that you are a child of God. As often as the devil with his temptations, the flesh with its unbridled desires, or other men with their evil example, tempt you to sin, forget not what you are. Remember, think, I am a child of God; I will do nothing against God, my heavenly Father, nor against the high dignity I possess as His child. In prosperity, when everything goes on according to your desire, say, I am a child of God;⁴ I value that more than everything else. In adversity, when the sensitiveness of nature prompts to impatience, remember, think, I am

¹ Agnosce, O Christiane dignitatem tuam et divinæ consors factus naturæ noli in veterem villitatem degeneri conversatione redire.

² Nolite itaque loqui, quoniam filii sanctorum sumus.—Tob. ii. 17-18.

³ Sed memento, regis filius es.

⁴ Dei filius sum.

a child of God; God is my Father and He will take care of me. It is the will of God, my heavenly Father, that things should be with me now as they are. My inheritance is the kingdom of Heaven; it is there I expect my happiness and unending joy. And that the remembrance of this may be always before you, use these words, for a time, as an aspiration: I am a child of God;¹ I love Thee, my heavenly Father. By this means our thoughts, words, and actions shall be such as are becoming Christians, and we shall insure to ourselves the reward of which St. Paul speaks. If we are children of God and live as such, then we are also heirs of God,² and joint heirs with Christ, our eldest brother, and with the elect children of God, we shall one day possess eternal happiness, in our heavenly Fatherland, with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.

FIFTH SERMON.

ON THE DIGNITY AND OBLIGATION OF MEN WHO HAVE
ANGELS AS THEIR GUARDIANS.

Subject.

Every man has an angel to guard him. 1. How God loves and values man! 2. What great reverence and gratitude each one owes his angel guardian!—*Preached on the Feast of the Holy Angels Guardian.*

Text.

Angeli eorum in cælis semper vident faciem Patris mei.—Matth. xviii. 10.

“Their angels in Heaven always see the face of my Father who is in Heaven.”

Introduction.

I have read an unusual text for you to-day, my dear brethren, because the Catholic Church celebrates a peculiar feast to-day, to which the usual Sunday's Mass and office must give way, namely, the Feast on which we thank and honor our holy angels guardian. I owe these angels far too much ever to forget them, or to pass by their feast-day in silence. When I consider, on the one hand, what sort of creatures angels are, and on the other what sort we men are, and that each one of us has his own

¹ Dei filius sum.

² Si filii et hæredes.

angel guardian, good God! I say with astonishment, how is it that Thou so lovest man? Holy angels! what do we not owe you? Such is the matter of to-day's sermon, or rather meditation.

Plan of Discourse.

Every man has an angel to guard him : the leading idea. How God loves and values man ! the first consideration and first point. What great reverence and gratitude each one owes his angel guardian : second consideration and point.

The object is to awaken in us a constant devotion and love of God and of the holy angels. All ye heavenly spirits, and you in particular, Queen of Angels! I have hitherto experienced undoubted benefits from your assistance; therefore, on this day, which is one of special honor for you, I do not doubt that you will help and assist me, so I begin with great confidence.

First Part.

All princes, counts, and nobles, of whatever degree they may be, give to their children, especially when they travel in foreign lands, an intelligent, prudent, pious and well-mannered tutor, whose office it is to accompany the young nobles at all times, and in all places, to direct them, to instruct them in good manners, to teach them according to their high position, to protect them from being led astray, and, when necessary, to punish and reprove them. To that end, they give the tutor full power and paternal authority over their children, and the latter must obey them as their own father. The tutors, on their side, must also frequently inform the parents, by writing, how their children are getting on, for it is of great importance to a noble family that its children should be brought up and behave in a becoming manner. Now the tutor need never be of nobler birth than the children. Sometimes we see rich counts who are entrusted with the care of the sons of kings or emperors, and nobles who become tutors to princes; but who ever heard of a count or a prince, not to say a king, undertaking the office of tutor to the son of an ordinary nobleman? The higher in rank will never undertake this duty for one who is lower; for a tutor generally receives a yearly salary for looking after his pupil, and he may also look forward to some other reward to induce him to use all possible diligence and care in the fulfilment of his duty.

You see already, my dear brethren, what is the meaning of this simile: we are all children of one Father, to whom all of us, who have the gift of faith, cry out every day, "Our Father, who art

When
princes travel, a tutor
is sent with
them.

We men,
who are
children of
God, are

travelling in
a foreign
land amidst
innumera-
ble dan-
gers.

in Heaven.”¹ But as long as we are on this earth, we are in a foreign land, we are sent as travelling strangers into this vale of tears, as St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: “My dear brethren, we have to know, that while we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord.”² Oh, my God! who can count, or even imagine all the dangers and snares that threaten both soul and body, to which we are daily, hourly and at every moment exposed in this strange land? We are surrounded by visible and invisible enemies who are plotting our eternal ruin. The greater number of people, in spite of the helps they so frequently receive, allow themselves to be led astray, and are ruined eternally. What would become of us if we were abandoned to our own weakness, without any helper, guardian, or leader to take care of us?

God pro-
tects us
against
them with
different
helpers.

Therefore, our heavenly Father takes care of His own, and looks after His children in a foreign land with a more than fatherly care; for, in the first place, we are all bound to look after each other, according to the Wise Man: “And he gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbor.”³ By virtue of this commandment, every one is bound to help his neighbor to good and to the salvation of his soul, however and whenever he can. In the second place, He has so divided the world, and arranged it in order, that each kingdom, province, and district has its king, its prince, its lord, every town and community has its superiors, by whom it is guarded and governed in its temporal interests, as well as bishops, parish-priests, and clergy to instruct it in spiritual things and to lead it to Heaven. Further, every household has the father or mother of the family as its superior and head, to look after the spiritual and temporal interests of the family with parental care, according to the warning of the Apostle: “For they watch as being to render an account for your souls.”⁴ (Take notice of this, parents and fathers of families!) And is not this enough, oh, my good God, for Thy bountiful Providence to do for men? especially, since, in addition, Thou Thyself art always present to help and protect them with Thy continual, unceasing care⁵

God has be-
sides given
each one of
us an angel
as tutor.

No, my dear brethren, we have a great King as our Father, and we have the happiness “to be called and to be children of God.”⁵ All this is not enough for His glory and wealth, and

¹ Pater noster qui est in caelis!

² Scientes, quoniam dum sumus in corpore, peregrinamur a Domino.—II. Cor. v. 6.

³ Mandavit illis unicuique de proximo suo.—Eccl. xvii. 12.

⁴ Ipsi enim pervigilant tanquam rationem pro animabus vestris reddituri.—Heb. xiii. 17.

⁵ Ut filii Dei nominemur et simus.—I. John iii. 1.

for the love and esteem that He has for His children. Besides all this, He has given to every one, no matter who it may be, even to the poorest beggar, and to the most wicked sinner, a special tutor and guardian for his journey, who is invisible to mortal eyes and is never absent from the object of his care. And what kind of a tutor is it? Oh, man! "He has given His angels charge over thee, that they should guard thee in all thy ways." Here I could wish to have a more than angelic intelligence, in order to understand properly the nature of these heavenly spirits, and to represent it to your minds. But, since no eye can see, no ear hear, no finger touch them, we cannot represent them to our imagination, and so I must keep silent on this head, lest I should, like the angel that St. Augustine saw, endeavor to pour a fathomless ocean into a little hole with a spoon; a folly I should certainly be guilty of, if I attempted to describe, with my own unassisted reason, the excellence of the angels.

Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church, you whose minds were so especially enlightened by God, to whom He revealed supernatural things and hidden mysteries, lend me your words and your testimonies, that we may form some idea of the greatness of those heavenly princes, the angels. All acknowledge, with St. Thomas of Aquin, that the lowest and least among the angels surpasses, in nature and excellence, the most perfect of mortals, as much as the brilliant light of the sun exceeds that of the stars. They are called the first-born of God, the first invention of the Divine Wisdom, the first masterpiece of active Omnipotence, the first fruits and flowers of nature; so speaks St. Augustine. Alas! what are we men in comparison with these heavenly hosts? Poor cripples composed of flesh, skin, and bone; while they are pure spirits, not subject to decay and death. Our origin is the slime of the earth, theirs, the beautiful Heaven; we are born in ignorance and weakness, they are created full of wisdom and strength; we are in misery, they in happiness; we in danger, they in security, for they really enjoy the beatific vision of our heavenly Father. ² If it is true, as St. Thomas teaches, that the number of the angels surpasses that of all other created things, in which teaching St. Gregory agrees, we may ask with the Prophet Job, "Is there any numbering of his soldiers?" ³ The stars in the heavens, the different animals on earth, the plants, the leaves on

The dignity and excellence of the angels.

¹ Angelis suis mandavit de te, ut custodiant te in omnibus viis tuis.—Ps. xc. 11.

² Semper vident faciem Patris mei, qui in cœlis est.

³ Numquid est numerus militum eius?—Job xxv. 3.

the trees, the fish in the sea, what a vast number they make, and yet, if they were all taken together, they would not equal the number of the angels. And further, if it is true, according to the opinion of the same Angelic Doctor, that not one of the angels resembles another in excellence, but that one is more beautiful, wise, and powerful than the other, then, I must think, since the lowest of the angels possesses such great excellence, who can understand the glory and greatness of the higher choirs, since one surpasses the other in excellence? Do you wish to know something of the natural strength and power of the angels? Read the 19th Chapter of the 4th Book of Kings, and you will see that a single angel slew, in one night, 185,000 Assyrian soldiers; one angel, even the least powerful, says the learned Suarez, has strength enough to oppose all the powers of hell.¹ One angel, says Cardinal Ægidius, would be enough to protect the whole world. The Holy Ghost calls them in the canticles, “the choirs of armies.”² And therefore the Church sings, “with all the soldiers of the heavenly host.”³

The beauty
of the an-
gels.

St. Bridget, in her Revelations, speaks of the great beauty of the angels; if you only could catch one glimpse, she says, of the beauty of an angel, your body would fall asunder with joy and wonder, like a worm-eaten vessel. St. John the Apostle, that eagle who saw so much of the Godhead that the whole heavens and the Divine Nature were shown to him, yet, when he once saw an angel, was so enraptured with his beauty, that he fell down on his knees to adore him as God, as he himself says: “I fell down at his feet, to adore him.”⁴ What is the reason that, in the Book of Genesis, which gives such a particular account of all that God created on each day, there is not a single word about the creation of the angels, although they are the most excellent amongst all creatures, as far as their nature is concerned? Theodoret answers this question, which he puts to himself, as follows: It would not have been good for the people of the Old Law to have known anything about the angels, for, they were so addicted to idolatry, even to the extent of worshipping a calf as their god, that they would certainly have adored the angels, had they known anything of their invisible, noble, and glorious nature.⁵

The Prophet Daniel can give us some idea of the glory and majesty of the angels, for he saw one, whose clothing

¹ Ita ut minimus angelus custos possit potentiae totius inferni resistere.

² Chorus castrorum. ³ Cum omni militia caelestis exercitus.

⁴ Cecidi ante pedes ejus, ut adorarem eum. -Apoc. xix. 10.

⁵ Quid non perpetrasset invisibilis naturae notitiam assecuti.

he has described: "I saw him," he says, "and I was so overwhelmed by his majesty, that there was no strength left in me; and the appearance of my countenance was changed in me; and I fainted away and retained no strength." Certainly, it was his beauty and excellence that made Lucifer so conceited and proud, that he thought himself equal to the Almighty God, and when it was announced to him that he must one day adore God in human form, he began to rise up against God (in this his sin consisted, according to the general teaching), as if he thought it a shame for such a great spirit as he was to subject himself to one who was to be clothed with weak human nature.

Behold, my dear brethren, it is these glorious princes of Heaven that our heavenly Father gives to you and me, poor mortals as we are, to be our tutors, guardians, and leaders, nay, even, so to say, our servants and attendants, as long as we are sojourning in this earthly pilgrimage. "Behold," says the Lord, "oh, man, and see my goodness, learn how I love and value thee. I send my angel," "who is to go before thee, and with thee and to protect thee on thy way," who will never depart a hair's breadth from thee during thy whole life: "who will bear thee in his hands," wherever thou goest or art during the day. And in the night, when you are asleep, he will stand by your bed, and keep a continual watch over you. If you ask him to do so, he will put you right when you go astray on your journey; and many must be persuaded of the truth of this. If you ask him in the evening with confidence, he will awake you in the morning at the desired hour; as many experience every day. Finally, his greatest care will be to watch over you alone, so that no evil may happen, against your will, to either your soul or your body. "With great care and watchful diligence our guardian angels are with us at all times and in all places, providing for our necessities." Such are the words of St. Augustine. In what necessities, do you say, St. Augustine? In all. What particular hours of our lives do our angels keep guard over us? At all times without exception. In what places? In all places, at home and abroad. And what angels are thus made our tutors and guardians? Not the

These mighty princes of Heaven are guardians of our souls and bodies.

¹ Vidi, et non remansit in me fortitudo; sed et species mea immutata est in me. et emarculi, nec habui quidquam virium.—Dan. x. 8.

² Ecce ecce mitto angelum meum. ³ Qui præcedat te et cusodiat in via.

⁴ In manibus portabunt te.

⁵ Magna cura et vigilantia studio adsunt nobis omnibus horis, atque omnibus locis custodes angeli, providentes necessitatibus nostris.

lowest only but also some from the highest choirs. The Apostle says: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them, who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?"

What great esteem and love God thus shows for us.

Oh, David! As you were once considering in deep meditation the beautiful sky with its twinkling stars, the vast earth with all its fruits, the boundless ocean with all its fishes, the great expanse of air with all its birds, you thought that all this was created by God for man's use, and ravished out of yourself in sheer astonishment, you cried out: "Oh, Lord, our Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him? Thou hast subjected all things under his feet. Oh, Lord, our Lord, how wonderful is Thy name in the whole earth?"¹ But, oh, Prophet, how does that astonish you, when you say, immediately after that, God is not satisfied with having subjected to man all things under heaven, but he has also given what He has in heaven, namely, His holy angels, His own courtiers, for the service of man. You say in the same place, "Thou hast made man a little less than the angels."² Yes, it is true, that so far as our nature is concerned, we are poor beggars compared with those mighty princes of heaven; but when you consider their office, could you not say rather, Thou, oh, Lord, hast raised man somewhat above the angels,³ inasmuch as Thou hast given them to him as guardians.

What a dignity for our souls.

My dear brethren, what are we to think of all this? When Tobias learned that it was an angel who had shown the way to his son, he and all his family prostrated themselves, through holy fear, on the ground. "Then they lying prostrate for three hours upon their face, blessed God. And rising up they told all His wonderful works."⁴ Oh, souls of men, how God esteems and values you, cries out St. Jerome: "Oh, surpassing dignity of souls that each one should have an angel sent to guard it." Could we have a clearer proof of the divine clemency, love, and goodness to us? If God the Son had not died for us, if we had received no other benefit from Him, this alone should suffice to convince us that we are very near, so to speak, to the heart of

¹ Omnes sunt administratorii spiritus, in ministerium missi propter eos qui hereditatem capiunt salutis.—Heb. i. 14.

² Domine, Dominus noster! Quid est homo, quod memor es ejus? Omnia subjecti sub pedibus ejus. Quam admirabile est nomen tuum in universa terra!—Ps. viii.

³ Minuisti eum paulo minus ab angelis. ⁴ Exaltasti eum paulo magis supra angelos.

⁵ Trementes ceciderunt super terram in faciem suam; tunc prostrati per horos tres in faciem, benedixerunt Deum. Et exsurgentes narraverunt omnia mirabilia ejus.—Tob. xii. 22.

⁶ Magna dignitas animarum, ut unaquaque habeat in custodiam sui angelum delegatum.

God, that He is very much concerned about man, and that it is His sincere wish and desire that all men should be saved. This alone would be enough, if we have not hearts of stone or steel, to force us to love, with all our strength, and with our whole hearts, such a kind and loving Father. Christians ! think a little over this matter, and see whether it is not so. And we think so seldom of it ! Have we even once reckoned that amongst the benefits we receive from God, and thanked Him for it? Why have we not done so? Now, at least, let us begin with Tobias to relate the wonderful goodness of God to us, to praise and to bless Him for it. There is still another point to consider: every one has an angel guardian; what reverence, love and gratitude does not each one owe his angel! Have we ever thought of that? Let us do so now, and briefly.

Second Part.

Even if the holy angels were not given to us as guardians, if they were in no way connected with us and we were quite strange to them, if we could neither hope nor expect any benefit from them, we should still have reason enough to hold them in great respect; for, if it is according to the natural order and to all laws that inferiors should show reverence and respect to superiors; if we must honor even foreign princes, to whom we are in no way subject, how much more are not we mortals bound to honor the holy angels, whose glory and excellence far surpasses that of all earthly kings and potentates? But now, oh, man; whoever you are, count, if you can, all the moments of your life, recall to your memory all the dangers that threatened your soul and body, from which you have been happily saved; all the dangers to soul and body into which you might have fallen, but which have been kept away from you. How often might you not have fallen down in your childhood and broken a leg, or an arm, or even your neck? How often might you not have fallen down stairs or into the fire? How often, in after years, might you not have been drowned, struck with lightning, or with a thunderbolt, pierced with a knife or sword, shot with a bullet, or crushed beneath a falling rock or beam? Count the sins you have committed, and those which you might have committed; how often were you in such a state, that if an accident had happened to you and you had lost your life, you would have been condemned to hell forever? How often were you in such a state that the devil and all his creatures were looking out for you, like sleuth-

The many benefits we receive from our angel deserve our greatest gratitude.

hounds, their teeth watering with the desire of being revenged on you, and awaiting only the word of their Creator to fulfil their desire, and out of that state you have been saved by an inward impulse, that you felt, to repent and to recover the state of grace? Count the temptations which sometimes assailed you so violently, and which you overcame, and the temptations and snares which the enemies of your soul laid for you, and from which you were protected. How often have you had, in this or that occasion, a desire to sin, which you opposed by the fear that you felt within you? How often have you wished to go into that house, or that company, in which you would have been in danger of sinning, when something occurred to prevent you? How often might you have incurred many dangers from temptations and seductions, especially in your youth, and you were saved from them all? Count the inspirations that have impelled you to read a spiritual book, or to hear a sermon, by which you have been kept away from evil, or incited to do good. Count all the good thoughts you have had in your life, which have been to you the occasion of meritorious works: when you can bring all these, and a lot more that have escaped your memory, before your mind, then you may cry out with astonishment: My holy angel, what do I not owe thee? These are the benefits I receive from my tutor and my guardian, which he either obtained for me from God by his intercession, or bestowed on me himself, or which were given me through his instrumentality; since, according to the general teaching, God does everything by means of the angels.

Especially since they are much greater and nobler than we are.

And this great service has been rendered to me, a poor, miserable mortal, for such a long time, so carefully and so constantly by a great, mighty, beautiful, and blessed Prince of Heaven. What an honor, nay, what a humiliation! What Clianus writes of the whale is remarkable. This great monster, since it has small eyes and bad sight, would often be exposed to dangers from other fishes, and from different causes, and could not long avoid them, if nature had not given it a pilot and conductor. This pilot, says Clianus, is a small fish of a white color,¹ which swims continually before the whale, is always on the lookout, and when it sees any danger, it gives due warning: it leads the whale to its feeding place, and guides it away from rocks and stones which might do it an injury; in a word, it does everything that, among human beings, one friend can do for another. The same au-

¹ Piscis est parvus colore albo.

thor says it is a very remarkable thing that nature has given to such a small animal the charge of such a huge one.¹ But that does not excite my wonder so much as if the contrary were the case, and the big fish rendered those services to the little one. I should certainly be astonished at that, for it is a common and daily occurrence for the less to serve the greater; but that the greater should be at the service of the less, day and night, that a mighty whale should conduct a small fish about the ocean, that would indeed be wonderful. And precisely on this account, it is no mere natural effect, but an extraordinary beneficence, and an unspeakable love for us mortals, that makes the angels serve us as they do. What are we in this life, my dear brethren? "Men are as the fishes of the sea,"² says the prophet Habacuc, and if we compare ourselves to the holy angels, what small and worthless fishes do we not appear, in contrast to these heavenly princes, whose greatness and might our whole nature cannot reach. Nevertheless, one of these great angels has, up to the present, done me all these services and a great many more, and as long as I live he will not cease to serve, protect, and watch over me. What a great dignity that is, I must repeat, and what a humiliation!

And these services are performed for me by one who has not the least need of me, and who can expect no reward, to say nothing of profit or utility from me, as tutors expect from their pupils. If I gave him, like Tobias, the half of my goods, or even the whole of them, what would it profit him? He has no need of such thing, so that he serves me gratuitously. What goodness! And he showed me that goodness many times when I refused to listen to his warning voice, despised his inspirations, turned a deaf ear to his entreaties, and troubled him with my sins. I have so often tried to drive him away from me, and he would not leave me; he still remained with me and continued his usual watchful care of me. What mildness, patience, and mercy on the part of my angel! And hitherto I have hardly even thanked him, hardly thought of him once during the week. What monstrous ingratitude on my part! And in my temptations, dangers and difficulties, I have hardly ever had recourse to this guardian, who is always at my side, although he is so powerful and so anxious and ready to help me. What a want of confidence! And in his presence, before his eyes (I am ashamed of

They perform these services for us, though we are unworthy of them.

¹ Quod mirum videri debet.

² Homines quasi pisces maris.—Habac. i. 14.

myself when I think of it), I have dared to commit those crimes, which, in order to keep them hidden from men, I committed only in darkness and in secret, to use language which I would not wish an honorable man to hear, and to be so proud, vain, immoral, and passionate in my thoughts, desires, eyes, and behavior, that I have reason to blush even before a mortal like myself. What shameless depravity!

We must therefore, in future, show them all the more honor, gratitude, and love.

When I consider all this, what must I think, what conclusion must I draw? Is it not right that, in the future, I should show all the more devotion, confidence, honor, and love to this, my greatest benefactor, in proportion as I have been hitherto so rude, so thoughtless, so ungrateful, so shameless and so impious towards him? Let us, therefore, my dear brethren, all make the resolution which St. Bernard suggests: "Let us then all be devout to these great guardians. Let us thankfully return them love for love. Let us honor them as much as we can and ought." If we do this with all our strength, it will still not be a sufficient return for the great and manifold benefits we have received from them. It is not in vain that I implore the assistance of the holy angels guardian, in the beginning of all my sermons. My end and object in so doing is to remind you of your duty of honoring the angels. As often, then, as you hear that, in future, let each one think to himself, there is another hint, another warning for me to reverence my angel guardian. And make this resolution also: no day of my life shall pass without my doing something in his honor, either by going on my knees before his image, or by doing a certain work, or by visiting the sick, or giving alms to please him. I shall set apart a certain day of the week in his special honor. In all my business, you, oh, holy angel, shall be my help and support; in doubt you shall counsel me, and console me in trials and difficulties, for I shall always call on you for help. As often as the wicked enemy shall assail me with temptations and evil inspirations, whenever wicked men try to lead me into sin, or my own corrupt flesh incites me to unlawful pleasure, you will be my protector, to you I will fly for refuge, with as much confidence as the child runs to its mother's lap, and I will cry out, as the younger Tobias did to his guide, when the huge fish leaped up at him to devour him: See, oh, master, my holy angel! he is attacking me.² The blood-hounds of hell are opening their jaws to

¹ Simul igitur tantis custodibus devoti simus; grati redamemus eos: honoremus eos, quantum valemus, quantum debemus.

² Domine, invadit me!

devour my soul, temptations are troubling me and I am afraid of being faithless to my God. "Help me, holy angel, protect me, that I may not perish."¹ What have I to fear with you on my side? And at the end of my dangerous journey, when my troubled soul shall be most in need of help, when, on my death-bed, the journey into eternity will begin, you shall be my companion on the way, who, as I trust, will lead me into the land of eternal joys, where I, with the greatest thankfulness, and amidst the congratulations of all the heavenly court, shall see my heavenly Father, and say, as the younger Tobias said to his father on his return home: Behold, this angel has conducted me to and fro, and has happily led me hither.² I must thank him that I have not been devoured by the fish, by the hellish dragon. Through him we have received all kinds of benefits :³ there, oh, holy angel, I shall be thy companion in joy for all eternity, and with thee, I shall praise and love the infinite beauty of God forever. Help me, that this may come to pass. Amen.

SIXTH SERMON.

ON THE NECESSARY OCCUPATION OF CHRISTIANS.

Subject.

1. It is necessary for us to be always and entirely occupied in that alone which concerns God and our soul's salvation. 2. The great majority of men know little or nothing of this one necessary occupation.—*Preached on the first Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Nesciebatis quia in his, quæ Patris mei sunt, oportet me esse?

"Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"—Luke ii. 49.

Introduction.

The Incarnate Word of God preaches for the first time ; who would not wish to listen to Him ? The Master of all masters gives His first lesson ; who could doubt of its truth ? It is true that it is a Child of twelve years who is speaking ; but it is also He who is from eternity, and who inspired the prophets with what

¹ *Salva, Domine, nos perimus.*

² *Me duxit et reduxit sanum.*

³ *Bonis omnibus per eum repleti sumus.*

they had to say. Let us hear, then, oh, Christians, what Christ preaches to us : I must, it is necessary for me ; what ? “ I must be about my Father’s business.”¹ Oh, that is certainly a truth of great importance ! But, alas ! the greater part of men could be asked, regarding it : Did you never know anything about it ?² It is necessary that you, as well as I, should be always occupied in those things which concern my Father and your souls. Did you know that before ? Oh, gracious God ! as necessary as this is, there are few who have a right idea of it, as I will now prove by Thine own words, and bewail.

Plan of Discourse.

1. *It is necessary for us to be always and entirely occupied in that alone which concerns God and our soul’s salvation. Such is the subject of the first and principal point.* 2. *The great majority of men know little or nothing of this one necessary occupation. Such will be the sad complaint of the second point.*

Oh, wisest of all teachers, Jesus Christ, who excited the admiration of all in the temple, give to me to-day, and to all here present, a clear insight into this great truth : it is necessary, and teach us, too, to deplore our blindness, which has caused us to be hitherto so ignorant of that truth ! This we ask of Thee through the merits of Thy Mother Mary, and the intercession of our holy angels.

First Part.

A necessary, important, and indispensable occupation must be undertaken by us with all diligence.

We are obliged to perform, with all diligence and at all times, that business, for the sake of which alone we are sent into this world, and which, if we neglect it, will cause us an irreparable loss. For instance, a servant is dispatched to Treves, in order to appear before the prince, on a certain appointed day, and at a certain hour, to give an account of the service rendered by him, so that he may be promoted to a higher and more lucrative position. Suppose that you are acquainted with this man, and that you invite him, at the time appointed for his business, to dine, to play, to dance, to hunt, or to amuse himself with you, would he allow himself to be persuaded by you to accept the invitation ? No, he would say, I have something else to do now. I must appear at court, for it is for that alone that I came to Treves. Oh, never mind that, you would answer, come with me and let us amuse ourselves. What ! he would reply, amuse myself ? There is no time for that now ; what I have to do is much more im-

¹ In his, quæ Patris mei sunt, oportet me esse. ² Nesciebatis.

portant. But, you might say again, there will be time enough to-morrow. No, he will answer, I have been ordered to come, not to-morrow, but to-day; if I lose the opportunity now, I lose all my future prospects with it. It is not a profitless or trifling thing that I have to do to-day; there is question of my promotion, on which all my future life depends. I must consider that before everything else.¹

My dear Christian brethren, of this kind, and of far greater importance, is the business that we have to do concerning God and our souls. For what end and object are we in this world? What are we doing here? Ask the children in the catechism class why man was created. They will know how to answer better than many grown-up people, and they will tell you that man was created to know God, to love God, to serve God, and thereby to bring his soul to eternal happiness. This is the one necessary occupation, of which the Son of God spoke to Martha: "One thing is necessary,"² without which all the others are worthless, to which everything else we undertake must tend, as to its final object. I may be rich in this world, and have gold and lands, but that is not necessary; it is not for that that God has sent me here. One thing is necessary, and that is, to serve God and save my soul. I may be held in honor and esteem by men, but that is not necessary, it is not for that I am sent here; one thing is necessary, to serve God and save my soul. I may live in quiet and peace, in pleasures and lawful enjoyments, but that is not necessary, I am not created for that. One thing is necessary, to serve God and save my soul. That I can and must do, although I may be poor and despised, although I may be living in trouble and misery. That is the business on which the whole life of man hinges, and it concerns each and every one of us, without exception, to attend to that. Such are the words of the Wise Man: "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is all man,"³ that is to say, every man. This is the business of the Pope, in governing the Church; of the king, in ruling his kingdom; of the courtier in the palace; of the soldier in the field; of the merchant in his counting-house; of the laborer at his work; of the father of the family in his household; of the servant and hand-maid in their employment. To fear God and be eternally happy: "For this is every man." The Pope was not sent into the world to be Pope; the king, courtier, citizen,

Such is the business of our salvation, for that alone is necessary for all men

¹ Oportet me esse.

² Porro unum est necessarium.—Luke x. 42.

³ Deum time, et mandata ejus observa, hoc est enim omnis homo.—Eccl. xii. 13.

peasant, merchant, soldier, father of a family, all these are not in this world to be kings or citizens, peasants, merchants, or servants, but to serve God and save their souls. This is the chief occupation, which alone the Apostle Paul calls our business. "My dear brethren, one business I wish and desire you to perform, that you abound more in every good work;"¹ "and that you do your own business."² All other worldly occupations, no matter how great and important they may seem, are, when compared to that, what St. Augustine calls "most worthless trifles and most empty vanities."³

All other
business
must be
done for the
sake of this
alone.

The same St. Augustine says, when explaining the words of Christ, "Seek first the kingdom of God,"⁴ that the meaning of our Lord is, not that we may seek anything else in this world besides the kingdom of God; but that, first of all, that is, with the greatest care, we must seek nothing but the kingdom of God and the salvation of our souls in every business we undertake. It is not forbidden to labor for worldly wealth, for food and clothing, in order to support decently ourselves and those who depend on us; it is not forbidden to work and to be diligent in the performance of the duties and services required of us, nor to get through our ordinary tasks carefully; nay, even we are commanded to do the duties of the state of life to which God has called us. But no one must separate his daily labor from the business which concerns God and the soul, as if they were two different occupations, one of them consisting in serving God and working for salvation, the other in looking for temporal prosperity and in serving the world. No; all this must form but one business for us all, and must tend to the end and object for which we are created. Money and property: you must be sought for, and labored for and kept, only as a means of serving God better and securing the soul's salvation. Good name and reputation before men: you are praiseworthy and good, only in so far as you can help the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and no farther. Eating and drinking, sleeping and other bodily necessities and conveniences: you must be used and enjoyed for no other purpose but to keep up our strength that we may be able to serve God longer and more zealously, and to gain eternal happiness for our souls. Worldly joys, honors, and riches: you cannot make me happy, if you do not help in the business of my soul to this

¹ *Negotium rogamus, ut abundetis magis in omni opere bono.*—I Thess. iv. 10.

² *Et ut vestrum negotium agatis.*

³ *Nugæ nugarum et vanitates vanitatum.*

⁴ *Quærite primum regnum Dei.*

end; you will make me miserable if you are, in the least degree, a hindrance to me in the business of my soul. Humiliation, contempt, poverty, and contradictions from the world: I must not be esteemed unhappy on your account, if I can only serve God by means of you, and work out my salvation; you are even good and desirable to me, if you furnish me with a better opportunity of doing this. Every thought, word, and act that cannot be referred to this business, is vain and useless. Every thought, word, and act contrary to this business, is sinful and damnable; for this is my only necessary business. Because, "I must be about my Father's business,"¹ in which alone I must be always and everywhere occupied, to serve God and to save my soul: for this reason alone, I have been called by God, for this alone am I in the world.

And, woe to me! if I do not perform this business carefully and terminate it successfully. No favor of an earthly master, no lucrative employment in a worldly court, is to be won or lost thereby; everything depends on it: an endless eternity, an eternal Heaven, the perpetual favor and friendship of the great God of Heaven, an eternal crown of honor, an unfailling treasure, perpetual, indescribable joys in Heaven; all these things depend on this business and occupation, as to whether they are to be won or lost in a short interval of time. Ah, my God! imprint deeply on my heart and memory every one of these words of Thine, that I may never forget them: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul;"² and lose Heaven? "What doth it profit him?" What are the base joys of earth when compared to the beauty of Heaven? What is the praise of man, compared to the dignity of Heaven? What are the vain goods of the world to the eternity of Heaven? "What doth it profit him?" What is the good of all these things if I lose Heaven forever? Oh, what a terrible loss! But, woe is me! now that I think of it, it is not alone the loss of the eternal good, but everlasting damnation also that depends on this great business of mine. It is a very different thing from a temporal, worldly business. If the servant delays beyond the appointed time, and loses the promotion his prince promised him, he has certainly lost his good fortune, but he has not therefore incurred a misfortune: he has gained nothing, but neither has he lost; he re-

Everything depends on this business.

¹ Quia in his, quæ Patris mei sunt, oportet me esse.

² Quid prodest homini, si mundum universum lucratur, animæ vero suæ detrimentum patitur.—Matth. xvi. 26.

mains as he was before. But how will it be with us, my dear brethren, how will it be with all of us, if we neglect the business of our salvation during the appointed time of this life? We shall lose an eternity of happiness, and, at the same time, incur an eternity of misery. If I do not gain all, I lose all. If I am not in eternal joys, I am in eternal torments. If I do not go to Heaven with God, I must remain in hell with the devils. Either Heaven, or hell, forever; there is no other alternative, no third place for Christians during eternity. My dear brethren, is there any business of such importance as this, any on which so much depends? Is it not right, then, that we should direct all our thoughts, desires, cares, and troubles to the successful accomplishment of that alone?

When it is once neglected, the injury cannot be remedied.

Now if this were the same as any worldly business, there might be some hope of a remedy, in case it is neglected. The profit that I lose to-day by carelessness, I may make to-morrow by redoubled diligence, or if I cannot find exactly the same good fortune, I may find something very like it, if I wait long enough. But, oh, man, if you neglect the business of your soul during life, where will you find another life in which to serve God? If your soul is once lost and damned, where will you find another to make eternally happy? We have only one life, and that a very short and uncertain one, for this business. We have only one soul; if that is lost, then all is gone, and forever; there will never be any chance of repairing the loss. In the Areopagus, in Greece, as Father Cataneus writes, there was once a curious case tried. Listen to it, my dear brethren. In those days the old law prevailed, "eye for eye, tooth for tooth,"¹ so that he who gave another a box on the ear, had his own ears boxed, without further trial; he who beat another, was beaten in return; he who killed another, lost his own life. Now it happened that a tradesman, who was blind of the left eye, lost the other eye also, in consequence of a blow that he received from an opponent. The criminal was convicted, the crime proved, the law clear, and the sentence was, that he who put out the other's right eye, should himself lose his right eye also. But a skilful lawyer stood up and said: "Wait, my masters, it must not be so; the sentence is not just." "How is that," said the others, "the law says, 'eye for eye.'" "Yes," he answered, "when the circumstances of the case are the same on both sides. To put out the eye of a man who has only one, is a far greater injury than to deprive of one eye him who has two, for the

¹ *Oculum pro oculo, dentum pro dente.*

former must remain completely blind all his life, while the latter, having one eye left, can still see. Hence the punishment decreed is not proportioned to the injury suffered. The poor tradesman, having lost his only eye, can no longer see: the sun is darkened for him as long as he lives, he has nothing but a continual night, he will never more be able to see his wife and children, his parents and dear friends, nor anything else in the world. Is not that a grievous misfortune which this wicked man has caused him? Consequently, according to justice, the punishment must be equal to the crime, and he who deprived another of his sight, must himself lose his sight completely also, and if he had a hundred eyes in his forehead, they should be all put out, for the loss of one eye is as great to him who has only one, as the loss of a hundred is to him who has a hundred; for it is just as impossible for him to see as if he had lost a hundred thousand eyes." Thus spoke the wise lawyer, and he showed thereby how irreparable is the loss of a thing that is absolutely necessary and that we can have only once.

My dear Christian brethren, if one man had a hundred souls, and another only one, and the latter lost his only soul, while the former lost his hundred souls all at once, is not the loss of him who has but one soul just as great as that of him who has a hundred? Let the latter die one bad death, and the former a hundred bad deaths, is not the eternal misery of hell just as great for one as for the other, if the lives of both have been equally bad? Ah! we have only one soul to lose, we can die only once! If we lose that one soul, then all is gone and the loss is irreparable. Should we not then undertake such an important business with all possible diligence, in order to bring it to a successful termination? Oh, certainly! it is necessary;¹ with this business we should be always occupied, in it we should be completely occupied, with it alone we should be occupied, to serve God and save our souls. But, alas! (and we can make this complaint before God) did you not know² that? Of all business, that of the soul is the only one of which the majority of men care to know little or nothing. This just complaint we shall consider briefly in the second part.

Therefore we must attend to this business with all diligence.

Second Part.

Many men do not know that they are created for this end and object alone; for they occupy themselves with anything rather than the business of their souls. Many do not know that all de-

This business is, generally speaking, set aside.

¹ Oportet ² Nesciebatis?