LIFE FOR GOD

The Inner Way

Johannes Tauler

CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM

Complete English text

1909



2026

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About this edition

The complete historical edition: 36 sermons, introduction, original contents, three instructions on confession, and notes. The English text of the 1909 edition and a new Russian translation.

Russian translation prepared by Priest Sergey Koudy for Life for God.

Based on the second edition of The Inner Way (London: Methuen & Co., November 1909; first published in 1901). Corrected passages in the CCEL electronic transcription were checked against an undated Methuen printed witness with the same body pagination; identified omissions and historical notes have been restored. An unnamed woman translated the bulk of the sermons; Arthur Wollaston Hutton edited the translation and wrote the introduction. The historical contents are preserved, including Sermon V, attributed to Eckhart in the original contents. The new Russian translation is made from this historical English text and preserves its theological judgments and historical manner of expression. The Latin incipits are retained; their following English renderings are translated into Russian in the Russian edition.

The historical English text is in the public domain in the United States. New Russian translation and preparation of this edition: Life for God, 2026. No modern third-party Russian translation was used.

The theological judgments and historical examples are the author’s. Editorial notes are identified separately. Paragraph numbers are provided for reference and language alignment.

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Sources

Johannes Tauler · The Inner Way · historical edition and public-domain catalogue

Johannes Tauler · The Inner Way · CCEL electronic transcription

The Inner Way · Methuen, undated impression · University of Toronto historical scan

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Original title page

[1] THE INNER WAY
BEING
THIRTY-SIX SERMONS
FOR FESTIVALS BY
JOHN TAULER
FRIAR PREACHER OF
STRASBURG
A NEW TRANSLATION FROM
THE GERMAN EDITED WITH
AN INTRODUCTION BY
ARTHUR WOLLASTON
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Introduction I · Scope of the Present Publication

[1] In this volume are contained the thirty-seven Sermons of John Tauler, which form the Third Part of the complete editions published at Frankfort in 1826 and at Prague (ed. Hamberger) in 1872. These are the Sermons for Festivals *(de sanctis),*while the First and Second Parts contain the Sermons for the Christian Year *(de tempore);* the total number being 145. Should this volume of the Festal Sermons meet with a favourable reception, the Sermons for the Christian Year may follow in two or three volumes. Up to the present time only twenty-seven of Tauler's sermons have appeared in English, these being contained in Miss Susanna Winkworth's well-known but now scarce volume, to which Charles Kingsley contributed a preface.[1] Of the thirty-seven Festal Sermons Miss Winkworth translated only three (nos. 4, 12, and 31 in the present volume) so that thirty-four of those now presented to the reader appear here for the first time in English. The Sermons for the Christian Year were translated into French by M. Charles Sainte-Foi, and were published in Paris in 1855; but he did not include the Sermons *de sanctis.* They are to be found, however, together with all else that is rightly or wrongly ascribed to Tauler, in the Latin version, or rather paraphrase, by Laurentius Surius, a Carthusian,[2] which was based on the Cologne German edition of 1543, and which was reprinted at least twelve times before the end of the seventeenth century, while it was also translated into Italian, French and Dutch.

[2] Until the appearance of Hamberger's edition (Prague, 1872), the standard German edition of the Sermons was that published at Frankfort, in 1826, without an editor's name.

This was used by Miss Winkworth, and also by M. Sainte-Foi; and it forms the basis of the present publication, as I have only been able to refer to Hamberger's edition in the British Museum. In the anonymous Introduction are indicated the MSS. sources on which the earlier standard German editions (Leipzig, 1498; Augsburg, 1508; Basle, 1521; Halberstadt, 1523; Cologne, 1543; Frankfort, 1565; Amsterdam, 1588; Antwerp, 1593; and Hamburg, 1621) were based. The original Leipzig edition (1498) was printed from MSS. at Strasburg, said to be contemporary with Tauler, and to have been corrected by him. The eighty-four sermons in this edition may therefore be reckoned as authentic, with the exception of four, which are known to have been Eckhart's. To the Basle edition of 1521 forty-two sermons were added, the editor, John Rymann, saying of them that "they have been more recently discovered and collected with great care and diligence. Although there may be a doubt about some of them, let not that offend thee, for it is certain that they have been written by a right learned man of that age, and are all based on one foundation, namely, true self-surrender and the preparation of the spirit for God." Some of these are probably to be ascribed to Eckhart, Suso or Ruysbroek. Such of them as are found in this volume are distinguished by the mark * in the Table of Contents. Of this Basle edition it should be noted that it was issued in the interests of the Reformation; and the article on Tauler in the new edition of the *Kirchenlexicon* (1899) seems to ignore these forty-two additional sermons altogether, and to admit as authentic only five of those added to the Cologne edition presently to be referred to. Something is said below as to the sense in which alone Tauler can be described as "a Reformer before the Reformation"; but it may be convenient here to note that Luther, who in 1517 put forth an edition of the *Theologia Germanica,* the work of one of

Tauler's contemporaries, had in the previous year written to Spalatin a commendation of Tauler's sermons, of which, as a recognition of their Protestant tendency, too much has certainly been made. The fact that the words were written when Luther was still Prior of Wittenberg, and before there was any breach with Rome, should have sufficed to secure them from such misinterpretation.[3] Finally, to the Cologne edition of 1543 (the standard for all subsequent ones) Petrus Noviomagus, the editor, added twenty-five sermons more, which he had found chiefly in the library of St Gertrude's Convent in Cologne; and the authenticity of these is in a general way supported, both by internal evidence, and by the fact that to the nuns at St Gertrude's Tauler frequently preached. Of the Festal Sermons contained in this volume, eighteen are to be found in the original Leipzig edition, fifteen form part of the Basle supplement, and four are of those that were added to the Cologne edition. Miss Winkworth, selecting from the whole number of 145 sermons, took eleven from the original edition, eleven from the Basle supplement, and five from the Cologne supplement. Of the Festal Sermons she selected only three, her principle of selection being rather edification than authenticity.

[3] But, on the general question of authenticity, it must be confessed that not one of the 145 sermons can claim such as it would have possessed had it been written by Tauler's own hand and been put forth by him as representing what he said or desired to say on the occasion. His sermons were always spoken; and the MSS. are at best only the reports of those who heard him; and such reports, it is hardly necessary to say, do not reproduce the sermons as they actually were delivered; though the way in which the sermons have thus come down to us explains the differences of reading in various editions and also the obscurity of certain passages. A

critical edition of Tauler's Sermons by a competent hand is doubtless a thing to be desired; but it would be a misfortune, from the point of view of edification, if, in such an edition, matter otherwise admirable found no place, on account of the uncertainty of its authorship.

[4] The scope of Miss Winkworth's edition of Tauler's Sermons differed from that of the present publication. She had learnt to admire them by hearing some of them read in German Protestant households as a part of domestic worship; and her idea was to introduce a previously unknown preacher to an English audience, compiling "a volume of sermons for the Sundays and Holy-days of the year, such as any head of a family might read to his household, or any district visitor among the poor." But as she was very properly anxious to publish in their entirety such sermons as she selected, she felt compelled to omit such as, either in whole or in part, were "too much imbued with references to the Romish ritual and discipline to be suitable for the Protestant common people." I cannot say that any of the sermons strike me as particularly suitable for such a purpose. They contain, indeed, many thought that have become pulpit commonplaces since Tauler's day, and other thoughts that might very well acquire such acceptance; but for such a use as Miss Winkworth contemplated, the sermons need more than mere translation. Their spirit must first be made his own by any man who is to expound it profitably; and this he then must do in his own language. My idea has therefore rather been to present these sermons of Tauler's in such a form as may aid towards a more accurate historical appreciation of the man and his teaching. I have had no thought of either pruning or adapting his words. He was a Dominican friar of the fourteenth century, and he held all the beliefs of his age and of his Church without any trace of reserve. The ardour of

his Marian devotion is especially noticeable; and it would be as improper to omit this or to tone it down in a translation, as it would be to correct any other illustrations of his beliefs and practices, crude and almost grotesque as some of them undoubtedly are.[4] Indeed, in order to preserve throughout the impression of a Catholic preacher addressing a Catholic congregation, I have even gone out of my way to give the English translation of the Scripture texts from the Douai version; since, though that did not exist in Tauler's day any more than our own Authorized Version, it is a faithful translation from the Vulgate, which Tauler used in the pulpit, translating it into German for the benefit of his hearers. Such at least has been my intention; though, from inadvertence and a greater familiarity with King James' version, I may not have adhered to it throughout. To the lady, by her own desire anonymous, to whose patient labour the bulk of the translation of the Sermons is due, I desire here to record my most sincere thanks. Tauler's sentences are sometimes obscure because they are so long; and that obscurity the translator has in many cases succeeded in removing by breaking up a sentence into two or more; but it has not been found possible to remove in all cases the obscurity of the original. (See, at the end of this Introduction, an illustration of the methods used by some earlier translators of Tauler.) The version here presented will, however, be found as a whole, readable and easy; and it should serve to render more familiar one of the most notable figures in the history of the Christian Church; one whose teaching shows how essential is the unity that underlies a spiritual conception of the Christian Creed, however much its exponents may differ as to matters of form.

5 A word must be said in explanation of the title, "The Inner Way," which the present volume bears. It is used merely by

way of convenience, at the urgent request of the publishers. For myself, I had thought that “Tauler’s Festal Sermons” would have amply sufficed to identify the contents of the volume for all those whom it is likely to interest; and that any additional title might even cause perplexity, especially to those who know that all the spiritual works, except the sermons, once attributed to Tauler, are now generally regarded as unauthentic. But it appears that, in book selling regarded as a business, the word “Sermons” bears a fatal significance, and must be avoided at any cost. Thus urged, I have selected a title which marks the general character of Tauler’s teaching, and which will not, I trust, give rise to any misconception as to what the volume professes to be.

Introduction II · Some Notes on Tauler’s Life

[1] The historical criticism of the nineteenth century did not leave Tauler undisturbed. When Miss Winkworth published her “History and Life of the Reverend Doctor John Tauler” in 1857, no one had questioned, save on grounds of religious sentiment, that he was the “Master in Holy Scripture” who was converted by the “Friend of God from the Oberland,” as is narrated in that quaint and edifying legend. The story in question had, in fact, been printed in every edition of Tauler’s Sermons, and was regarded as an authentic and almost contemporary document. Quetif and Echard, in their*Scriptures Ordinis Praedicatorum,* had suggested, early in the eighteenth century, that the legend should be regarded as an allegory;[5] and this view was supported by Weiss, in his article on Tauler in the *Biographie universelle* (1826) already referred to. But it was reserved to H.S. Denifle, a learned Dominican of our own day, to point out that the story, as applied to Tauler, involves grave historical difficulties, and is barely reconcilable with certain matters of ascertained fact.[6] His criticisms would seem to have settled the question; but to him Preger, a Protestant, whose life has been largely devoted to the study of the German mystics, and who was selected to be the biographer of Tauler in the “Universal German Biography,” has made a detailed reply in the third volume of his *Deutsche Mystik* (1893); and many will hold that he has succeeded in rebuilding the edifice which Denifle was thought to have destroyed. The latter’s criticisms are however ably reinforced in the article on Tauler by Von Loe, also a Dominican, in the eleventh volume (1899) of the new edition of the *Kirchenlexicon;* and it would be impossible for

anyone who had not made a prolonged and independent study of the question to decide between the disputants.

[2] Moreover, the controversy is mixed up with a further question, as to whether Tauler did or did not submit to the Papal interdict, under which Strasburg (and other cities that espoused the cause of the Emperor Louis the Bavarian) lay for many years after 1329. The evidence certainly seems to point to the conclusion that Tauler, and the Dominican house at Strasburg, did submit. But Preger holds it as proved that a certain Merswin, a layman who had withdrawn from a distinguished civic position and led a penitential life as one of the “Friends of God,” received the sacraments from Tauler during the interdict. Specklin, however, the Strasburg chronicler, on whom Preger relies for this assertion, also says that Tauler wrote a book (or two books) in which he protested against people being allowed to die without the sacraments during the interdict, and in obedience to it; and that his book was condemned as heretical. To this his Catholic apologists reply that such a thing was impossible, since such administration of the sacraments during an interdict was not prohibited by the ecclesiastical law at that date. It is a pity that so admirable a legend should have proved the occasion for so keen a controversy.

[3] Proceeding now to sketch the undisputed facts of Tauler’s life, we note that he was born at Strasburg, about the year 1300, of a respectable citizen family, dwelling in a house “near the Miller’s Bridge.” At an early age (Preger says at fifteen) he entered the Dominican convent at Strasburg as a novice; and he was through life a brother of that “Order of Preachers,” known in England as the “Black Friars.” He passed the two years of his novitiate and the eight years of his preliminary study in his native city; and then, as a brother

of much promise, he was sent to the *studium Generale* at Cologne for a further period of four years. It is interesting to note that, during those early years at Strasburg, the nave of the Cathedral, as we now see it, was fresh and white from the mason's chisel, while the great western facade was in process of erection. There he would have heard the sermons of his master, Eckhart, usually reckoned the most intellectual of the German mystics and the founder of German philosophy. He would have heard him again at Cologne, where Eckhart had the misfortune to be accused of Pantheism, but was acquitted after trial by the Inquisition. At Strasburg Tauler would also have known the mystic, John of Sternengassen, and the theologian, John of Dambach; and he would have studied the authors he most frequently quotes, Augustine, Gregory, Bernard, Hugo and Richard of St Victor, Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus. Logic, Scripture, and the Sentences of Peter Lombard formed part of the regular curriculum of his preliminary training; and it is supposed that, when he proceeded to Cologne at the age of twenty-five, he had already been ordained priest, and had definitely adopted that mystical standpoint in religion by which he will always be distinguished.

[4] At this date the Dominican order occupied a position similar to that of the Jesuits two or three centuries later. It was the nursery of great preachers and theologians, and royal confessors were usually chosen from it. At Cologne Tauler would come to know several of the more learned men of his order; and it was there that his training was probably completed. From a passage in one of his sermons: it has been inferred that he proceeded to Paris; but there is no certain trace of him in the *Acta* of that University; and it is more likely that he returned direct from Cologne to Strasburg. Neither is there any evidence that at Cologne he took the

degree of “Master in holy Scripture,” (a degree equivalent to that of “Doctor in Theology”); and this he could only have done either at Paris or Cologne. In all the MSS. previous to the fifteenth century he is described simply as “Brother John Tauler”; and this is evidence against his being the anonymous “Master of Holy Scripture” whom the lay “Friend of God” converted. Only in virtue of that indification has he been described as “Dr. John Tauler.”

[5] He would have returned to Strasburg about the year 1329, when the city was laid under an interdict by John XXII. The validity of the interdict was disputed among the city clergy, great pressure being put upon them by the municipal authorities not to observe it. Even among the regulars (Dominicans and Franciscans) there was a party that contended for its non-observance. The General Chapter of the Dominicans admitted its validity; but, according to Preger, not all the German houses—there were about 100—accepted the decision. The Strasburg convent, he maintains, did not submit to it until 1339; and the friars were thereupon expelled for three years by the City Council. But before this date Tauler appears to have been sent to Basle, where, though the city was imperialist, the clergy were not called upon by the civil authorities to defy the interdict, and where, moreover, the Pope relaxed its observance from time to time. Here Tauler made a considerable stay, and presumably delivered some, at least, of those sermons which were included in the Basle edition of 1521. Here, too, he met Henry of Nordingen, a secular priest who had come to Basle from Constance for the same reason that Tauler had come there from Strasburg. He was a man of much piety and influence, and he numbered many regulars among his spiritual children, one of them being Margaret Ebner, a Dominican nun and an *ecstatica,* with whom Tauler had later

some correspondence, now lost. [7] He returned to Strasburg not much later than 1346; and it was in the years following that his sermons there attracted general attention and admiration. In 1357 he again visited Cologne, and addressed a series of discourses to the nuns at St Gertrude's in that city. Some of these were presumably the originals of the sermons added to the Cologne edition of 1543. Four years later he died in Strasburg (the date on his tomb is June 16, 1361), and was buried in the convent of his order. He had died, however, outside the convent, in the guest-house of an adjoining nunnery, over which his sister presided. A manuscript at Colmar, giving an account of Tauler by one who had known him personally, describes him as "a gifted and holy Friend of God"; but adds that he was detained six years in purgatory for sundry faults, one of these being that on his death-bed he allowed himself to receive too much attention from his sister, "in whose guest-house he died." Other faults ascribed to him are that he was irritable, that he was wanting in submission to his superiors, and that he extolled too highly the "Friends of God," while towards others he was harsh. According to the legend already referred to, the lay "Friend of God," to whom he had owed his conversion, was with him again at his death-bed, and received from "the Master" the notes of his conversion, to be published after his death, describing him as "the Master," without any other name.

[6] I have failed to obtain any portrait of Tauler, and I am doubtful whether any *vera effigies* of him exists. But I have heard of a conventional likeness, in which he is represented in the Dominican habit, holding in his left hand the Holy Bible, stamped with the *Agnus Dei,* while he points to it with his right. On his breast are the letters I H S and beneath them a T, an allusion perhaps to his name or to his preaching of the Cross.

Introduction III · Notes on Tauler's Teaching

[1] Only to Tauler's Sermons must recourse be had to ascertain his teaching; and even of these, as has been noted, a critical edition is desirable. The other works once attributed to him, and printed as his in the Latin version of Surius, are now accounted doubtful, if not certainly spurious. These works are: 1. "The Following of the Poor Life of Christ"; 2. "Exercises on the Life and Passion of our Saviour Jesus Christ"; and 3. "Divine Institutions," also called "The Marrow of the Soul." All these are spiritual works of high value, and they deserve a place in any library of devotion; but, as attributed to Tauler, they are not authentic. Such at least is the present verdict of the critics.

[2] Judged then solely by his Sermons, Tauler is described by Von Loe, his latest biographer, as "one of the foremost among the medieval German mystics and preachers, uniting the intellectual depth of Eckhart with the interior spirituality of Suso and the fervour of Berthold of Ratisbon." The first-named was mystical; the last-named was practical; Suso was both; but he was rather a director than a preacher. Tauler also was both, and, like Berthold, he preached for his times. Herder criticizes him, saying that to have read two of his sermons is to have read them all; but this is hardly a verdict to be accepted; for his method varies largely, and the Sermon numbered xi. in this volume, for the most part so dull and in places barely intelligible, would strike a critic as not the work of the same author as the Sermon numbered xv. which the German editors have described as "a most precious and thoughtful exhortation," and perhaps the best example of Tauler's method. Sometimes moreover he expounds a text

like a homilist; sometimes his text is barely referred to, and becomes a mere peg on which to hang a discourse on a subject of which he was full. No doubt there are readers to whom his allegorical interpretation of Scripture will be distasteful. Kingsley admits that it is “fantastic and arbitrary”; and the method is, of course, one that can easily be abused, especially when the interpretation of numbers is in question. But it has its justification, both in the fact that it is in accordance with Christian tradition—it is found in St Paul, in the early Fathers (as Keble’s Tract lxxxix. made abundantly clear), and in the offices of the Church, whether those for the choir or those for the altar, and traces of it are left in the Anglican Prayer Book—and also in the experience of sympathetic souls, who find light and consolation in its use. But Tauler’s mysticism (of which more is said below) by no means exhausted itself in the allegorical interpretation of Scripture. To him, as to Keble and to Kingsley, the book of Nature was full of parables of things spiritual; and, beyond that again, he clearly enjoyed (for he was no hypocrite) an intuition of things divine, wherein he found more light and certitude than in mere submission to the dogmatic *magisterium* of the Church.

[3] Further, as to his manner, he is eager and earnest in his presentation of his subject; he uses homely illustrations from daily life, yet without loss of dignity, and when he disparages, as he often does, “outward works,” he is saying nothing against the performance of the duties, even the humblest, of ordinary life; he is merely protesting against reliance on ecclesiastical routine, such as fasting, self-discipline, long prayers, and such-like; and this protest is of course quite compatible with Catholic orthodoxy; nor is it unnecessary for these times any more than for his own. But the manner of his sermons, as they have come down to us, is sometimes hard

and even menacing; and readers may not always find it easy to reconcile his frequent use of the words “dear children” with such an apparent lack of tenderness and sympathy. But, likely enough, this defect of manner was less noticeable in the discourses as delivered, than it is in the reports as now read.

[4] Readers will also find it necessary to bear in mind that the mystical standpoint in religion does not by itself free a man from contemporary views and prepossessions. The mystic is of his own age and race; and it is amply evident that the articles of Tauler’s creed were just those of any other Catholic believer of his time. There is throughout a spiritual element in his teaching; but it does not exclude the use of what we should now account popular and conventional language about the fall of man, the pains of hell, and so forth. True, he says in one place, what indeed any Catholic preacher may say, that the chief pain of hell is the consciousness of being excluded from the Presence of God; but he does not go on to suggest, as a spiritually-minded teacher might now, that all other language about the pains of hell, “the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched,” is merely figurative of that one pain, and that such language was and is necessary to bring home men,—to all men in different degrees,—the exceeding greatness of that pain or penalty, as it will hereafter be realised. He is liberal indeed in extending to the spiritually-minded heathen a sufficient knowledge of things divine. He holds that in the “inner ground”[8] Plato and Proclus apprehended the Holy Trinity; he things that in Plato can be found the whole meaning of the opening verses of St John’s Gospel, though in veiled words. He teaches that a king, remaining such, may yet rise to the height of “interior poverty,” if there is nothing that he is not ready cheerfully to resign to God’s Fatherly

love. He extols the “evangelical counsels”; but teaches also that the highest perfection is attainable by a married cobbler working to maintain his family. His doctrine of Purgatory does not differ from that usually held by Catholics; but he regards it more as a place for the purging away of self-will than for the expiation of sin. In his sermon for the second Sunday in Lent there is a passage somewhat in disparagement of the invocation of Saints. A good soul, he says, once prayed to the Saints; but they were so lost in God that they did not heed her. Then she betook herself humbly to God direct, and straightway she was lifted far about all media into the loving abyss of the Godhead. But perhaps he comes nearest to the Protestant position in his language about the “Friends of God.” They are, he teaches, the true pillars of the Church, and without them the world could not stand. In his sermon for *Laetare* Sunday he bids his hearers “beg the dear Friends of God to help them (in the way of perfection), and to attach themselves simply and solely to God and to his chosen Friends.” And there is a similar passage in the sermon for All Saints (see pp. 218-222, and cf. pp. 93 and 174). But, in his teaching, the “Friends of God” do not form, as they would have formed for the later Puritans, “the Church invisible”; they constitute rather a second visible Church, to which the hierarchical Church is in some respects inferior. Some thirty years after Tauler’s death the Inquisition at Cologne condemned as heretical certain propositions of Martin of Mayence; one of which was that these “Friends of God” (who were laymen) understood the Gospel better than some of the Apostles, even better than St Paul; and another was that submission to their teaching was necessary to perfection. But Tauler never went so far as this.

[5] It may be added that, from the modern Christian social point of view, Tauler’s limitations are obvious. True, that in

his sermon for Septuagesima he exhorts his hearers to use “natural gifts” for God. But his conception of “nature” is a very narrow one. Rightly it should include, besides those natural gifts which constitute personal character, such social virtues as patriotism, love for the community and for the family, a desire to master the earth and to make it the seat of a well-ordered Christian society, a realization of the Kingdom of God on earth. But Tauler manifests no conception of anything of this. For the social elevation of mankind, here and now, he has nothing whatever to say.

[6] Nevertheless, whatever were our author’s limitations, Preger’s judgment on the value of Tauler’s sermons is one to command general assent:—“Their strength lies in the fact that Tauler knew how to put into them his whole heart, the fulness of his moral being. So utterly and completely is he penetrated by love of God and of Christ, so happily is the sublime and unworldly zeal of the orator blended with gentleness and freedom, that he masters the will unawares, and lays the heart open to the demands he makes upon it ...His sermons will never cease to hold their place among the most perfect examples of pure German speech, of fervid German faith, and of German spirituality in all its depths.

Introduction IV · Tauler and Mysticism

[1] It may be convenient to some of those into whose hands this little volume will come, if a brief account is here given of that "Mysticism" to which repeated reference has been made, and to which reference must be made, when the significance of Tauler's teaching is under consideration. Although the subject is now much better understood than it was in 1856, when Robert Vaughan published his "Hours with the Mystics," a notable book, queerly put together, interesting in its facts, but irritating in its manner, and one that was sympathetically reviewed by Kingsley in "Fraser's Magazine,"[9] there is still need to point out what mystics are not, more perhaps than what they are. Mystics are not dreamers; they are not fanatics; they are not fools; they are not a sect; and mysticism is not a religion. As a rule, mystics are so termed by others; they do not use the term of themselves. But thousands and millions of Christian believers have been and are mystics, without themselves knowing the word. In fact, as Dr. Bigg says, "mysticism is an element in all religion that is not mere formalism"; and it is confined to no one form of Christianity. A Carthusian hermit, prostrate on the floor of his cell in meditation, may or may not be a mystic; but so may also be a grocer's assistant who occasionally attends a Methodist chapel. When Cardinal Newman taught that in the act of faith the conclusion is more certain than the premises, he (perhaps inadvertently) proclaimed himself a mystic; and so, I think, did Ritschl, in spite of himself, when he affirmed the certitude of the "value-judgment" by which a man lays hold on the historic Christ; for mysticism is such a way of apprehending spiritual truth; it is a way that is neither

purely intellectual, nor purely emotional; but one that employs, in one act, all the powers of a man's soul. The mystical attitude towards truth is thus in harmony with Matthew Arnold's lines:—

[2] "Affections, Instincts, Principles and Powers,

[3] Impulse and Reason, Freedom and Control -

[4] So men, unraveling God's harmonious whole,

[5] Rend in a thousand shreds this life of ours.

[6] Vain labour! Deep and broad, where none may see,

[7] Spring the foundations of that shadowy throne,

[8] Where man's One Nature, queen-like, sits alone,

[9] Centered in a majestic unity."

[10] It is true that mysticism has to do with mystery; and that is why the term is popularly held in disrepute. But the mysteries with which mysticism chiefly has to do are neither numerous nor fantastic: they are God, and the Soul, and Revelation; the last being the making known of the One to the other: and, beyond this, Christian mysticism views the Eternal as approached through Jesus Christ, the Door; a few texts from St Paul and St John sufficing to state the whole case. Individual mystical writers have, no doubt, gone far beyond this, and have said extravagant things; but the essence of the whole lies herein; and (again to quote Dr. Bigg), "the Church can never get rid of the mystic spirit; nor should she attempt to do so, for it is, in fact, her life. It is another name for conscience, for freedom, for the rights of the individual soul, for the grace and privilege of direct

access to the Redeemer, for the presence of the Divine Spirit in the heart." [10]

[11] And further, most people are now familiar with the distinction between the dreamy, unpractical mysticism of the East and the vigorous variety of the same mode of thought in the West. In both cases it produces the same consciousness of certitude and of interior peace; but in the one case that tends to mere contemplation and self-introspection, while in the other it inspires a Tauler of a Cromwell or a Coleridge; and from the latter's mysticism, movements that are vigorous to-day have derived their spiritual energy, though but few of those whom the movements affect may be aware of the fact. It is also necessary to distinguish between mysticism as a way of holding spiritual truth, and mysticism as an interpretation, sometimes fantastic, of the world and of man; and again between this interpretation and the mystical interpretation of Scripture, already referred to, which is apt, indeed, to allegorise wantonly, though its fancies are almost always of service in securing a broader and more edifying interpretation for texts which, if regarded as mere history or legon, would lack religious significance. The evolution of these other aspects of the subject from that first mysticism, which is the apprehension of spiritual things by the soul, a few moments reflection will make clear. The mystic, who sees God in all things and all things in God, recognises more in nature than mere natural phenomena, and more in the Word of God than its first literal significance. To him every thing, every event, every person, is a vision from the Unseen, a voice from the Inaudible. He lives in a world of parables, full of spiritual significance; and, while for him there is a Real Presence everywhere, he finds it also most truly and effectively where it is most clearly discerned by faith. Nothing that might be accounted magical is required to

produce it, for it is there and everywhere already. So too, in his interpretation of the Book, which contains, with whatever admixture, the fullest record of that which has been revealed to man as necessary for the salvation of his soul, he sees more than the mere student of the letter. In God's dealings with man from first to last he perceives a harmony that implies a foreshadowing of the last in the first, of the whole in the part; and in this way he can find an interpretation of spiritual value even in the thoughts of good men, who have pictured to themselves, inaccurately, it may be, as to matters of fact, God's earlier work in the creation of the world and of man. And, thus broadly understood, mysticism is now "in the air," and is becoming recognised as a force that makes for unity among Christians, who differ somewhat as to dogma, and more as to their methods of external expression. Happily however, its interior and reserved character will always hinder mysticism from being degraded, as external religion can be and is, to the position of a mere badge or cry of an ecclesiastical party. [11]

[12] Not to know anything about mysticism is, according to Professor Royce, not to know anything about a large part of human nature; for mysticism is the philosophy of experience; the mystics are the only thorough-going empiricists in the whole history of philosophy; and the realm of experience is that which is decisive of truth. A complete history of mysticism would cover a very large field in the history of the world; and that not only of the world of thought; for, in the West at any rate, the mystics have repeatedly built the platform on which great dramas have been played; and in this sense (but in this sense only) Tauler and the "Friends of God" were "precursors of the Reformation," much as the Puritans were the precursors of the modern Revolution. It may be quite possible to show that Tauler was an orthodox

Catholic friar, and that his obedience to the Church was throughout irreproachable; but, none the less, his mystical doctrine of the inner and outer, of the letter and the spirit, tended irresistibly towards the overthrow of Catholicism, so far as in his day is consisted in mere formalism and obedience to external rule. The same doctrine in the teaching of St Paul made short work of the Jewish Law; and again in our own day (for there are symptoms of its revival) it will either destroy or will newly inspire modern Catholicism, whether Roman or Anglican, which, without the mystic spirit, must inevitably degenerate into mere Byzantinism, the religion of credulity and of ceremonial routine.

[13] The earliest home of mysticism was in the East; but before the Christian era it had passed over into Europe, or had an independent origin there. So at least is the alternative stated by Professor Royce. But its independent origin in the West, in the mystical teaching of Jesus Christ, as we recognize it in the language used by St Paul and St John, must surely be acknowledged as beyond question, save by those who hold that the Prophet of Nazareth acquired mystical doctrines in the farther East, perhaps by residence there; and of this there is at present absolutely no evidence that can be termed historical. According to Professor Seth, it is a mode of thought or of feeling, from its very nature insusceptible of exact definition, in which reliance is placed on spiritual intuition or illumination, believed to transcend the ordinary powers of the human understanding. In this sense Plato (whom Eckhart quaintly describes as “the great Parson”—*der grosse Pfaffe),* was a mystic. It is the endeavour of the human soul (in its own judgment successful) to grasp the Divine Essence, or the ultimate Reality of things, and to enjoy the blessedness of actual communion with the Highest. Thus, mystical theology is that knowledge of God and of things

divine, which is derived, not from observation or from argument, but from conscious spiritual experience; and, being thus based, it possesses, for the individual who holds it, an irrefragable certainty.

[14] From Plato and from Aristotle's account of God's inner life, the Greek mysticism, as a stream distinct from the mysticism of the New Testament (i.e. of St Paul, and of the writings attributed to St John), passed into Plotinus, and so, through Philo and the neo-Platonists, it became an element in Christian theology; and the writer known as "pseudo-Dionysius" was its chief prophet in the early Church. It would take long to trace, so far as it can be traced, the filiation of the doctrine from the age of the neo-Platonists to the fourteenth century; and it must suffice to say that there existed in Tauler's day at least four Latin versions of the works of Dionysius, that of Scotus Erigena being the one with which he was most likely to be familiar. Dionysius was also commented on by the greatest scholastics, incidentally even by St Thomas Aquinas, who sought to deal justly with the mystics without endangering orthodoxy. Eckhart, whose disciple Tauler in some sense way, had been trained in the school of St Thomas; but he gradually emancipated himself from the scholastic yoke; and he is commonly reckoned the spiritual ancestor of Kant and Hegel. Indeed, in other ways and by a more direct descent, mysticism at this day largely affects multitudes to whom its very name is unknown. The favourite devotional books of all the churches, and many of our most popular hymns, are essentially mystical. It has been defined above as philosophical empiricism; but it is more than that, and much more than mere sentimentality. Again to quote Professor Royce:—"It is the conception of men whose piety has been won after long conflict, whose thoughts have been dissected by a very keen inner scepticism, whose

single-minded devotion to an abstraction has resulted from a vast experience of painful complications of life…It has been the ferment of the faiths, the forerunner of spiritual liberty, the inaccessible refuge of the nobler heretics, the inspirer, through poetry, of countless youth who know no metaphysics, the teacher, through the devotional books, of the despairing, the comforter of those who are weary of finitude; it has determined directly or indirectly, more than half of the technical theology of the Church."

[15] With the above eloquent passage, written only the other day, may be compared Kingsley's lament, written in 1856, that mysticism was a form of thought and feeling then all but extinct in England. The Anglican divines, he said, looked on it with utter disfavour; they used the word always as a term of reproach; and they interpreted the mystical expressions in the Prayer-book (chiefly to be found in the collects) in accordance with the philosophy of Locke, being ignorant that these collects were really the work of Platonist mystics. But meanwhile, he pointed out, it was the mysticism of Coleridge "the fakir of Highgate," that had originated both the Oxford Movement and Emersonian free-thought; while Carlyle, "the only contemporary mystic of any real genius," was exercising more practical influence, and was infusing more vigorous life into the minds of thousands of men and women, than all the other teachers of England put together. If he had also mentioned Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning and Ruskin, he would have made still clearer how immense has been the power of our latter-day mysticism; while the names of Neale and of Keble, of Faber and of Newman, can speak for the same potent influence among those who were ecclesiastics by profession.

[16] This perhaps may suffice, if any need there was to secure or those who read Tauler's sermons now for the first time, sympathy with him instead of suspicion on account of his reputation as a mystic. There is no need to follow him when he becomes subtle or extravagant; but of his generally broad and spiritual teaching no one can doubt the wholesome influence. Ritschl, in his zeal for his new rational Lutheranism, is bitter against the mystics; yet even he admits that Tauler did good service in inculcating interior as compared with mere ceremonial religion, and in lessening the great medieval distinction between clergy and laity. There was in Tauler's day a great need for a revival of the religion of the heart—when is there not such a need?—but it was also necessary that the established methods of religion should be respected and remain intact; for there existed no other social bond equally fitted to hold men together. And this was the secret of Tauler's influence. He was able to fill the old bottles with new wine from an ancient vineyard without bursting them. Recent historical criticism may have destroyed some of the romance with which his name was associated. But if, as it now appears—and Harnack as well as Ritschl agree with Denifle in this—he was not a "Reformer before the Reformation," and was not the subject of a singular conversion in the midst of his successful career as preacher, he still remains, and will always remain, a striking and venerable figure in the medieval Church, a reformer at any rate of practical abuses, and a prophet of righteousness in days that were corrupt as well as stormy.

Introduction V. · The Versions of Tauler’s Sermons

[1] That the editors and translators of Tauler have also been perforce to some extent his interpreters, may conveniently be illustrated by the following passage from his first Sermon for the Fourth Sunday after Easter, on the words *Espedit vobis ut ego vadam,*etc. I give the passage, first as it stands in the archaic German of the original edition (1498); then in the Latin version of Surius (1548); then in the modernised German of Hamberger’s edition (1872); then in the French translation of Sainte-Foi (1855); and finally in the English translation of Archdeacon Hare, in his notes to “The Mission of the Comforter,” reproduced in Miss Winkworth’s volume (1857).

[2] *In the edition of 1498; Sermon XX. fol. 60*

[3] “Kinder yr sollet nicht fragen nach grossen hoen Kunsten. dan ghet einfeldiglichenn in eweren grunt inwendig. ufi lernet euch selber erkenne. im geist un in natur. Und fraget nicht nach der verborgeheit gotes. von seinenn aussflussen un einfliessen un dem icht in dem nicht ufi funcke der sele in der istikeit. Wa xps iesus gesprochen hat Euch ist nicht zu wissen vo der heimlikeit gotes un darub so solle wir halde einen ware ganzen einfeldigen glaube in einem got in dreyfeldikeit detr Pson un nicht manigfel digliche sundern einfeldiglichen und leuterliche.”

[4] *From the Latin Version of Surius (1548).*

[5] “Et vos, charissimi, non ad subtilium sublimiumque artium et scientiarum cognitionem aspiretis: sed in ipsum interiorem fundum vestrum simpliciter ingredientes, illic vosipsos

cognoscre discite: nihil vobis magnopere curae sit scire secreta Dei, influxus et effluxus illius, de esse et non esse, et quid sit animae scintilla in sua existentia. Non vobis commissum est scire arcana Dei. Nihil plane utilius est quam ut veram integram et simplicem fidem de uno Deo in personarum Trinitate, non multipliciter sed simpliciter et pure retineamus."

[6] *From Hamberger's edition, "in die jetzige Schriftsprache ubertragen" (1872).*

[7] "Kinder, ihr sollet nicht fragen nach hohen grossen Kunsten. Gehet einfaltig in euern Grund inwendig, und lernet euch selber erkennen in Geist und in Natur, und fraget nicht nach der Verborgenheit Gottes, von seinem Ausfliessen, und Einfliessen, und von dem Icht (Etwas) in dem Night (Nichts), und von dem Funken der Seele in der Istigkeit (dem Wesen der Seele in ihrem Seyn): denn Christus hat gesprochen: "Euch ist nicht noth zu wissen von der Heimlichkeit Gottes." Darum sollen wir halten dem wahren, ganzen, einfaltigen Glauben, an den einem Gott, in Dreifaltigkeit der Person, und nicht mannigfaltighich (nicht mit verwirrender Spitzfindigkeit), sondern einfaltiglich."

[8] *From the French translation of Sainte-Foi (1855).*

[9] "Il ne s'agit point, mes enfants, d'affecter de grands airs. Entrez simplement dans votre fond; apprenez a vous connatre tels que vous etes, et spirituellement et naturellement: ne cherchez point a connaitre les secrets de Dieu, tels que le flux et le reflux de I'etre au non-etre, l'essence de l'ame. Car le Christ a dit que vous n'avez pas besoin de connaitre les secrets de Dieu. Ayons une foi simple, vraie et entiere en un seul Dieu en trois personnes, en un Dieu parfaitement simple, exempt de toute multiplicite."

[10] *From Archdeacon Hare's "Mission of the Comforter," apud Winkworth (1857).*

[11] "Children, ye shall not seek after great science. Simply enter into your own inward principle, and learn to know what you yourselves are, spiritually and naturally, and do not dive into the secret things of God, asking questions about the efflux and reflux of the Aught into the Naught, or the essence of the soul's spark; for Christ has said: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power." Therefore, let us maintain a true, entire, simple faith in one God in a Trinity of Persons, and yet not as manifold but as one and simple."

The Inner Way

1 THE INNER WAY

SERMON I · ON THE FEAST OF ST ANDREW THE APOSTLE

[1] Of Christ as our Master, and of the good things He will teach us in a few words, such as will lead us on to the highest Perfection. Then, of where His Dwelling is, how and where we may find Him, Who calls and invites us all to come and see; as is clearly shown in what follows.

[2] *Rabbi (quod est interpretatum Magister) ubi habitas? dixit eis: Venite et videte.*

[3] *Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Master), where dwellest thou? He saith to them, Come and see.* [33]

[4] We read in St John's Gospel that St John the Baptist was standing, and two of his disciples, (one of them being Andrew, Simon Peter's brother), and, when he saw Jesus pass by, he said: "Behold the Lamb of God." The two disciples heard that, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said unto them: "What seek ye?" They said unto Him, "Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Master), where dwellest thou?" He saith unto them; "Come and see."

[5] These words teach us three things, first, the overflowing Wisdom of Christ in the words of the Master, secondly, the Dwelling-place of His inscrutable Being, the stronghold of all beings, for they said: "Where dwellest thou?" and thirdly, the Comfort given to us by the invitation of God to seek Him in spirit, in the resting-place of His Godhead, and to learn at the Source of wisdom, that is, in the school of the Holy Trinity. He thus speaks of it: "Come, O soul, abide with Me and in Me; and look that thou mayest learn; I will open unto thee the

depths of My Divine Heart, that thou mayest learn and see all that is for thine eternal good."

6 Now listen first to the Master: O Master, teach these daughters for me, that not one of them may remain amongst the five foolish virgins. Then He answered and said: Daughter,*learn of Me* that thou mayest be *meek and lowly of heart,* as He also said to St Andrew and the other disciples. Now, if thou bethinkest thyself again, this teaching is too hard for me; for sloth, care, anger, cowardice and such-like resist me and afflict my heart, so that I lose all meekness of spirit. Christ our Master replied: "How much will it help thee, O man, if in thy service thou *gainest the whole world and losest thine own soul?"* For from thence will many sorrows come upon thee, agitation of mind, anguish and bitterness of heart, vexation in all good works, indolence of mind, whereby the soul loses all meekness of temper. Thus it comes to pass that the overflowing Spirit of Christ cannot pour joy or consolation into the soul; for His tenderness cannot suffer the bitterness of thy soul; for He is sweeter than honey. Therefore he that will have nought to do with the deceitful comfort of man must receive the sweetness of this Spirit. And therefore, dear child, begin manfully, follow this Master, and cast thyself down before Him in the depths of humility, and say in thine heart: "Lord, I am the least of all the creatures that Thou hast made," and compose thyself in meekness of spirit; and then shalt thou know that God is a short word which has a long meaning. Exercise thyself diligently therein, grow not weary; and then shalt thou perceive that which before was hidden from thee.

7 At another time the soul will be attracted by the Dwelling-place of the Divine Nature of our Master. Now, know that this question is one sought out by all creatures;

and therefore they long for the same nature themselves, that they may find out the Nature of God; for all natural works are but a seeking after and a questioning after the Dwelling-place of God. If it were not so, the heavens and the elements could no longer exist. Dear child, what askest thou outside thyself, and why seekest thou God in the strange lands of mortal things? Thou canst not truly find Him; they all deny Him, and point thee away from themselves. “We are not God,” they say. But Augustine writes: “Exalt thyself above us to the things eternal: for there is God.”

[8] Now, mark that God may be found in many ways in which the soul receives instruction. First, the soul finds God her Creator on the heights of penance or penitence. Therefore the soul must, above all things, exert all her strength to subdue her own free will, ready, for God’s sake, to learn to give up all things both great and small, to do hard penance, and to punish herself for following the will she had forsaken. The more the soul exercises herself in these works, the more will she find God in her, and herself in God. This is shown in the Book of Love; for the Well-beloved says: “I will get me up to the mountain of myrrh, and will speak unto my love.” The mountain of bitter myrrh is the height of the exalted spirit, which transforms into bitterness the desire for all personal gratification and deceitful delights in all things that are not according to God’s Will. Thus God speaks in spirit to the soul: “Thou art all fair my love, pure and undefiled, there is no spot in thee.” But he who lives according to his own will, for his own pleasure, cannot thus find God, but will find Him as his adversary in all his works. Thus man will spoil all that he begins; for the works of the flesh will help but little, if the will and the affections of the heart are not first subdued. A Psalm, said by one who has subdued his will, is worth many Psalms: that is, the least work done by such a man is more pleasing to

God than the greatest work done by a man who follows his own way.

9 At another time man finds God in the wilderness, in the burning bush, as Moses found Him. The bush in the wilderness signifies such a temper or spirit that, withdrawn and estranged from all creatures, puts forth leaves or blossoms on the heights of the Eternal Godhead. As the Divine Being comprises within Himself three Persons, so also this spirit has laid hold of God in His threefold powers, as the bush laid hold of the flames in its blossoming branches; and this is of grace. This putting forth of leaves causes the soul to grow steadily in light, in godlike virtues, day by day without ceasing, until she, with the vision of angels, beholds God in Zion. Now, mark, in the measure that thou hast found God, in that measure also wilt thou find in thyself the divine training and virtues—more to-day than yesterday. But he who will thus find God here, must cast off all carnal desires, and, with Moses, he must come under the dominion of self-restraint and the light of reason; for *flesh and blood cannot posses the Kingdom of God*.I believe, dear children, that nearly all your daily shortcomings proceed therefrom; that ye follow by word or deed the sudden impulses that thrust themselves into the heart from without, before the light of self-restraint can shine therein.

10 Thirdly, God may be found on the mountain, in the cloud; for the union (Testament) of Divine Light and of the commandment was written on the stone by the finger of God. The mountain is like a high-minded, large-hearted man, who has no pleasure in any of his works, neither can he find any rest in them, unless, like St Paul, he is confirmed in all his works by an express sign of the Will of God; so that the will of the soul does not even carry on human actions according to

his own will, but after the manner appointed by the Divine Will, divinely. Thus the soul by her works sanctifies the body, so that when the body does the soul does also; and again, on the other hand, the works of the Divine Will and the works of the soul are at one; so that the soul can say: *I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;* I work, yet not I, but the power of Divine Being worketh in me. This takes place in the cloud, in the eternal splendour of the Divine Light, for the light of all creatures is as night compared with the Divine Light.

11 Then God may be found in the cave with the prophet Elias. We read that the prophet came into the wilderness, and that in his soul he longed that he might die, for he had become weary in spirit with the turmoil of this world. While he slept, an angel came, and placed at his head a cake baken on the coals and a pitcher of water, and bade him arise and eat, because he had still a long way before him that he must go. *And he went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights,* until he came to the place where he found God.

12 Then a strong wind came rushing by, which rent the rocks and the stones; but God was not in the wind; for God shows the spirit which is moved by stormy winds to be like those which Daniel saw contending in the sea of this world; that is in a worldly heart, in inordinate fear, hope, joy and scorn; for all these things blind the light of the spirit with which a man ought to seek after God. The stormy wind also signifies to us the restless heart of a man, who in all things, both in his words and works, behaves so unkindly and impatiently towards his fellow Christians, that it might grind the stones to powder; that is, that large-minded men are often robbed of their soul’s peace thereby. Dear children, with God’s help, beware of such violence. Keep watch over yourselves; subdue your unmortified nature, that it may not break out as

violently as that of the wild, untamed beasts. It is indeed a dreadful thing to see such a man, endowed with reason, to whom God of His goodness has given so much light, and in whose nature He has implanted that kind of courage which enables him even to tame the wild beasts, if he chooses to exert his will, and follow the promptings of his own integrity. Alas! sometimes we are even wilder than the bears and lions, and a disgrace in the sight of God our Creator; living contrary to the nature He gave us, as though the light of His countenance had never shone upon us. I tell you in truth that we shall have to give an account to God for all that we ruin by such storms. It may be that we shall ruin ourselves (as often happens with the wrathful) or our neighbour, who is not only disturbed thereby, but also angered, and hindered in much that is good—and of this we are guilty. Then, when we say it grieves us, but it is our nature, and we are obliged to do it, we are excusing ourselves falsely, and we never learn to die unto ourselves. Verily, if we turned to God in earnest fervent prayer and humble submission, these infirmities of our nature would not overpower us, nor, as we say, oblige or force us to commit such faults.

13 Then came a fire, and God was not in the fire. Fire is a thing which can never say “Enough;” and it represents the heart of a man who is never satisfied, either with his goods or with the gifts of God; but is always burning to increase without measure those things which are neither divine nor pure; desiring to receive comfort or other temporal things, and to find love and pleasure in them. All this is a sign that the Spirit of God is not there. I mean also all those people who make light of and belittle all the gifts of God, as though God had never done them any good, and who say: “Why did God make me? since I am so empty and barren of all that is good;” and who do not perceive that God has preserved them

from many a fall, and protected them from many sins into which they would have fallen, if He had not so carefully watched over them, and called them away from the world to a spiritual state, in which they might have been pillars of all Christendom, if only they had lived in accordance with that state.

14 I tell thee, dear child, that such unthankfulness might well have dried up the springs of love, of Divine Grace. Therefore, I beseech you, by the Eternal Love of God, that ye be not quickly moved by the desire for these things, as I have taught you all, with heartfelt earnestness, and as God knows; and if any other spirit teach you otherwise, it is at the peril of your salvation in the sight of God; as St Paul says to the Galatians: "If any man preach to you a gospel beside that which we have preached to you, even though it were an Angel from heaven, let him be anathema."

15 There came a *still small voice,* like unto the sweet breezes of May; and *in that voice came God;* for so saith the Scripture. This signifies to us one who walks with God, in the eternal words of God, and whose thoughts and words are holy according to the Word of God, and whose longing spirit communes with God. Then it is that God comes; for in such spiritual sunbeams a steady blessed light is borne in upon the soul from God. They are not worthy of this blessedness, who, by strange forms of man's words (or even of an Angel, As St Paul says) are drawn away from the good desires they had received from God. This it is that the soul longeth after in the Book of Songs, when she says to God that the north wind should depart and go away; meaning thereby all that entereth into the spirit from the flesh, from whence all evil comes. So saith also the prophet Jeremias; for he saw that in the seething-pot all the budding spiritual gifts of God boiled

and withered away when it was turned towards the north wind. Then his spirit was troubled within him, and he could no longer hold fast to the inner savour of the north wind. Therefore, when the soul longs for God, she says: *Come, O south wind,*(for it is sweet)*blow through my garden, and let the aromatical spices thereof flow;* that is, that my works may have a godly savour.

16 Fourthly, God is found above the Angels; for the soul must be exalted above all Angels (though by nature below the Angels) if she would find God. Therefore she finds Him in the Father; for thus the soul must bring all her works, free from all self-seeking, as the Eternal Word uplifts Himself eternally to God, if she would find Him, as he was found by the soaring Seer of God, John the Evangelist, when he said: “In the beginning was the Word.” Then Andrew, and the loving souls that were with him, ask with earnest longing: “Master, where dwellest Thou?” John answers: “In the Beginning was the Word;” for in words we shall not find God, if we do not lift up our souls in the Beginning. Therefore we must pierce through all things that are beneath God and are not God, and the Beginning (from which we have our being) seek earnestly again; for therein alone is our dwelling and the future resting place of our eternal bliss. This must be done by turning quickly away from the creature, and turning earnestly to the vision of the Divine Being and union with Him. As He said to those two disciples: “Come and see;” as though He had said: Come, that is turn away from the things by which ye are inordinately troubled and absorbed, that hinder your eternal peace; for ye must be emptied of all works, understanding and carnal desires. And see that ye come to the knowledge that God the Lord is empty and bare of all; so that your spirits may be guided to that pure and holy Being. For of necessity the soul must be empty and bare of all, that would enter into

the secret Presence. Therefore man must divest himself of all those things of which he is conscious. Dionysius said to Timothy: “O dear friend, we must no longer listen with our outward ears to the sweet and loving words of our dear master, Paul; but we must go to God, emptied of all things.” This we can only do when our eyes are blinded and our inmost desires are raised on high, in order that we may learn to know His hidden Unity. May God help us all to this. Amen.

SERMON II · ON ST BARBARA'S DAY, OR THAT OF ANY OTHER HOLY VIRGIN

1 Of some ways by which man may with certainty attain to Union with God, and may also have unceasing Communion with Him. How he may have peace with the world, the evil enemy and his own flesh.

2 *Dilectus meus loquitur mibi, surge, propera, amica mea.*

3 "My beloved speaketh to me: arise, make haste, my love." [34]

4 Thus spake the Bride in the Book of Love. Now, he who wishes to be the friend, and to know whether he be the spouse of our Lord, must take note of the following marks, and see whether he possesses them. If he possesses them, then he is, undoubtedly, a chosen spouse.

5 The first is that he must have peace with our Lord, so that no created being can disturb his inner peace. Thus saith the prophet: "He will give you true peace in this place."[12] The spouse of our Lord must so comport herself, that she readily renounces all things in humble confidence, retaining her divine peace unimpaired within, and renouncing all things in Him and by Him. Now wouldest thou ask, with whom thou shalt have peace? With the world, the enemy, and thine own flesh. But how? With the world, by not heeding what the world may do unto thee, either taking thee or leaving thee; to this thou mayest attain with patience.

6 Secondly, that thou mayest be at peace with the enemy; but man can scarcely ever attain to this. The enemy is constantly striving with him, and is always interfering in all man's works

and actions in order to hinder him. There is nothing by which man can so completely *quench the fiery darts of the enemy*as by fervent and devout prayer; for it burneth and chaseth him away, and forceth him to flee with all his lusts. Therefore, when man is conscious of the fiery arrows which are shot at him, and which would deprive him of his spiritual peace, let him at once betake himself to secret prayer with all his might, and take no heed of hindrances; and thus he will be rid of all hindrances, while nothing more grievous can happen to the enemy. Thus we read of St Bartholomew, that he prayed, and then the devil cried our: “Oh, thou burnest me with thy prayers, and thou hast bound me with fiery bands.”

7 Thirdly, thou must have peace with thyself. But how? Thou must in all things subject thy body to thy spirit, that in all things thou mayest have dominion over it, that it may not hinder the in any work that God requires of thee. Thus did the holy saints: for they had dominion over their own bodies, and trained them so well, that that which the spirit desired, the body sprang forward to do, as though it would say: “Here I am before thee.” We read that it was so with the humble Francis. There are four things that a man must do, in order to acquire this dominion over his own body. First, thou must deprive thy body of all that pleases it, whether eating, drinking, sleeping or waking, and of all comfort. When thou seest that it is ready to rebel, bridle it with a discipling that is still more severe. Secondly, thou must renounce all thirst for and all the consolation of the world, and all worldly things and cares. Let the dead bury their dead; follow thou God. If thy friend dies; or joy, grief, honour or riches, or whatever it may be, is thy portion or comes to thee, bear all patiently in God. A saint once said: “With whomsoever thou rejoicest, and with whomsoever thou sorrowest, with him wilt thou also be judged.” St Paul says: *“Reckon yourselves to be dead unto*

the world." The dead man careth not whether he be praised or blamed, whether goods are given him or withheld. A dead or a dying man careth nothing for gold or jewels, for honour, friends, joy or consolation. Thou must do as one of the old Fathers did, who dwelt in a wood. His own brother came to him and said: "Dear brother, I am in great distress; a cart of mine, laden with goods, has fallen into the water, help me to drag it out;" and he cried and wept and besought him urgently. The old Father replied: "Go, and ask that brother, who still dwells in the world, for help. Why comest thou to me?" Then the man, who was a merchant, said: "That brother has been dead a whole year." Then said the old man. "So have I been dead for twenty years;" and thus he dismissed him, and troubled himself no more.

[8] Thirdly, thy mind must be always fixed on God. Thou must be always in the Presence of God. Verily, if thou desirest to have the Creator of all creatures, thou must renounce all creatures; for it cannot be otherwise, but only insomuch as thy soul is emptied and bared; the less of the creature, the more of God: this is but a bargain. St Augustine says: "That man is far too covetous who is not satisfied with God; for what canst thou desire that thou canst not find in Him? Remember that whatever such a heart can desire is to be found a thousandfold in Him. Desirest thou love or faithfulness, or truth, or consolation, or His constant Presence?—all, all can be found without measure in Him. Desirest thou beauty? He is of all the most beautiful; desirest thou riches? He is of all the richest; desirest thou power? He is of all the most powerful. Whatever thy heart can desire, may be found a thousandfold in Him; for in God alone canst thou find the best blessings." Therefore drive out all creatures with all their consolations. Say: "Get thee away: thou art not He Whom I seek; Whom I desire, Whom I love."

Whether it be honour, or riches, or joy, or friendship, say: “Get thee away, flee from me, let me alone, let me be, I heed thee not.”

9 Whence comes it that God is so strange to thee, and that His loving Presence is so often lost or withheld? There is but one reason; that thy mind is not emptied and bared, and that thou troublest thyself about the creature, and art corrupted thereby. St Bernard says contemplation is nothing else than a cleaving to God, a forgetfulness of all earthly things. St Augustine says: “He can contemplate who is free from all earthly thoughts, and thinks of the things that are of God.” and he also says: “O good Jesus, my soul longs unspeakably for Thy love. I beseech Thee that I may be enraptured with the vision, the Cross, and the most holy sweetness of Thy Humanity. May I be able to withstand the vanity and the temptations of the world, and long to be caught up into heaven, to fathom the mystery of the Sacraments of God. May I so increase in spiritual things that I may be caught up, as it were, to gaze on Thy Divine and Holy Trinity, so that in all my works I may acknowledge Thy Divine Will, and be united with Thee. And, though I sometimes let down to the first or second stage, may I have no difficulty in rising up again; so that, when I see or hear of earthly things, I may not heed them, but die unto them and live alone unto Thee. There is one thing that thou must know; wert thou only freed from the likeness of the creature thou mightest have God unceasingly; for He could not refuse thee, either in heaven or in earth. He must come to thee. Had He sworn, He must change His word, and come to thee, and completely fill thy soul, if He found it empty; for, do what thou wilt, as long as the creature reigns in thee, thou must do without God and remain in vanity. If thou withholdest the least part of thyself from Him, assuredly

He will take much from thee of that which He is, an immense portion.

10 There was once a fair and beautiful woman, who bare a child, that was as black as a Moor. Master Albertus was told of this great trouble. He found a picture of a Moor that the woman had seen and he said to her: “Woman, I have found the father of your child.” And he compared the matter to a hen that was set in sight of a sparrow hawk, and all her young were fashioned after the likeness of sparrow hawks. Thus all who are born after the Divine Likeness are divine; and all that are born after the flesh are carnal.

11 Fourthly, thou must subdue thy natural senses, and at all times hold the mastery over them; thou must see, and yet not see, and never raise thine eyes, nor listen with thine ears, nor open thy mouth, without good cause. Thy hands, thy feet and all thy members must never be allowed their own way. Thou must guard them carefully and keep them securely, that nothing may suggest itself to them, or be heard or seen by them that is not divine. For, St Augustine says: “We must die and yet not die, we must keep under our nature and our senses by force.” Then God will rule over us, and without doubt we shall also rule over ourselves. Amen.

SERMON III · On the Conception of Our Lady, also on Her Birth

1 How men, when they are advancing, may learn to know their infirmities and secret evil inclinations; how they may die unto them and be freed from them; whether it be from the delights of things pertaining to the senses or the mind, or to the powers of the soul, or whatever else it may be. How the likeness of past habits must be driven out by the Likeness of the Life of Jesus Christ, so that men may come to understand with all the saints, the Height, the Depth, the Breadth and the Length of God.

2 *Transite ad me, omnes qui concupiscitis me.*

3 “Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits. For my spirit is sweet above honey and the honeycomb.” [35]

4 Dear children, in the last sermon on these words, which were spoken (of the Virgin Mary) by the Eternal Wisdom, I told you that these words referred to our Lady, whose dignity and honour can in nowise be expressed by man in words, for they surpass all knowledge in value. I described the works and ways which were necessary to the man who, rising up, desired to enter into the way of truth; then, what was necessary to him during his progress; and then, how the perfect man might arrive at the goal, and what his end would be.

5 I told you how man must first put away all crying sins, such as pride, impurity, covetousness, anger, and all the evil growths of the world, with all foolish desires; and, above all, everything that pertaineth to the flesh, whether of things

animate or inanimate. In short, the man who does not turn bravely to God with all his heart and with all his mind, who does not love God from the bottom of his heart, and intend above all things to serve Him, and to be found at his death in Him, will never come to God; even though, as St Paul says, he were to do so as many good works as all men now living, and were so wise that he spake with the tongue of Angels, and allowed his body to be burned, and gave all his goods to feed the poor. Now, how have they turned to God with all their love and with all their minds, who give their hearts, of their own free will, to created beings, although they know that they are thus occupying the places where God should dwell, and of which they are consciously depriving Him? God careth not for works, when He is deprived of the heart and of love. Of what use is the chaff to Him, if another has the wheat?

6 Now when these grosses sins are cut off in the growing man with a diligence which is like unto a sharp steel, and of which I have already spoken, he will be sharpened like a sharp knife, and whetted by the great righteousness of God, which lets no word nor deed, however small they may be, pass by unpunished. He must remember the secret and terrible judgments of God; for no one knows how it will be with him; for no one knows whether he is the subject of God’s anger, or of His favour. Now, when this man has begun be cutting off all wicked vices, he must then take heed of that which is left in the bottom of his heart, namely the inclination thereto, which is the result of old habits. For these old habits make excuses for themselves, and strive to appear as though they were virtues; and yet they are only counterfeits; when pride, which a man fondly imagines he had overcome, lies hidden in his heart. For instance, care about dress and such-like matters remains, and it is called cleanliness; or pleasure is found in things pertaining to the senses, such as food or

drink; and it is called necessity. Then some men are so angry and wrathful, longing to inform against every man and to judge him; and they are so suspicious and impatient; and then they call it justice; while pure laziness is called illness.

7 Children, if you insist on any of these things, and glory in your own kindness and in your own judgment, and in your own lofty and wise works and ways—when the end comes, the Devil will come and take away those with him who fondly imagine that all is well with them. This will be the case, especially, with those who conceal their pride beneath the appearance of humility, and who, wise in their own conceit, should of right stand under Lucifer's banner; for the higher they stand in their own esteem, the deeper will they fall into the abyss.

8 Children, look to yourselves. This is not a question of small things. If ye were to be kept in a hot room a night and a day, ye would think it very hard; I say nothing of burning heat for many a year, or perhaps for all eternity. Therefore commune with your own selves, for *the kingdom of God is within you*. See with whom ye associate, with whom ye readily stay; and examine the reasons and the tendency to all evil habits. For if a man gives way to a fault for a year or two, that fault takes such deep root in his heart, that he can scarcely overcome it with all his might. Therefore young men should guard themselves carefully, so that no evil tendencies may take root in them. They must root out all infirmities at the beginning, when it is far more easy to do so than later. Now there are four things, especially, which man must guard against, four powers which are so injurious and evil that they are like jagged teeth.

9 The first is the love of visible things; and in this lies the strength of desire. It is scarcely possible to imaging or

describe the harm men do to themselves thereby. Men who desire to be good, begin with this or that, with one thing or another, and are so occupied with the seed-sowing, that they do not keep to the full truth. They do not look into their own hearts, which are closed up, like some unknown thing a thousand miles off; there outward and visible things are of more importance to them. Thus they go on avoiding themselves, so that they do not know where they are.

10 The second power is anger. This is used inordinately; for it should never be used outwardly, except in those things which are displeasing to God. In itself it is a noble power; but in many men it produces very evil growths. They suddenly fall with vehemence on anything whatsoever; and in false righteousness desire to censure it, to judge of all works and ways; and thus they deceive themselves and other men with their violence, their unrestrained and bitter anger, and their loud, harsh, unkind and angry words.

11 The third evil is to be found in the power of the light of reason, to which many men trust to their own hurt. They trust in their own reason and glory in it, and they compare themselves with the all-wise and living and essential Truth; for he, who says he possesses it, possesses it not. Thus many a man deceives himself and imagines he possesses all things, because he sees them in his own imagination, while they are hundreds of miles away; and thus he misses that noble treasure, deep humility; and accepts the counterfeit before him and also before other men.

12 The fourth evil is the secret delight which is often taken in talent. This holds sway in many men; they are deceived by its good appearance, and pleasure attracts them more than divine love; they take pleasure for God, and that which they imagine God is only pleasure. Thus, if their pleasure were to

vanish, so also would their diligence. Look well to yourselves; for many a thing which seems as though it came from divine love, has so many additions, that the enjoyment, the taste and the circumstances excite us more than we imagine. Sometimes this arises from new emotions, from inclination, or from fear of hell, or from the desire to be blessed; and this is man's natural desire. Know, children, that those who do not seek God from the heart, God will neither be their end nor their reward. All these things of which ye have heard must be diligently cut off, as with a sharp knife, which must be whetted on the severe judgments of God, and on His unchangeable righteousness, which lets nothing escape.

13 Now, when these outward infirmities have been cut off, there still remains beneath the tendency to sin, the likeness of past habits; and this must be driven out by the Likeness of Jesus Christ. As one nail must be driven out by another, so must man imprint this Likeness devoutly and firmly on the ground of his heart, so that all inequalities in him may be done away and extinguished. Now, as God has given great power to minerals and herbs, to drive out disease, by what power do ye believe that the Son of God will drive out all the diseases of the soul, but by His holy Sufferings, His Death, and His sacred Likeness. Now, because man can do nothing by himself, he must exercise himself in holy suffering by means of prayer; he must cast himself down secretly at the feet of the heavenly Father, and beseech Him for the sake of His well-beloved Son, and by all His sufferings, to help him; for without Him he cannot attempt or succeed in anything. He must train himself never to allow the sacred Sufferings, nor the Likeness of his Lord to forsake his heart; and he must allow no strange likeness to find a place there. In order to do this, he must lift up his heart and mind to the heights of the glory of the Godhead, on which he must gaze with holy fear

and longing desire. When he lays his dark and miserable ignorance before God, he will understand what Job said: *"A Spirit went before me."*[13] This leading of the Spirit causes a great disturbance in the heart of the man. The clearer, the truer, the plainer this leading is, the stronger, the quicker, the truer and the plainer will be the work, the strength and the conversion of the man; and he will more plainly recognise his place of abode. Then the Lord comes in a quick glance, and lights up the heart of the man, and will be Lord of all his work. When the man becomes conscious of the Lord's Presence, he must let his work alone and worship Him; all his powers must be still, and there must be calm. Otherwise the works of man would be but a hindrance, and his good works also; for he must do nothing but submit himself to God. But when man is again left to himself, and he is no longer conscious that God is working in him in any way that he can clearly recognize, then he must begin again to work diligently, and to discipline himself in holiness. Thus the man will sometimes work, and sometimes rest, as he is moved of God and entreated; everyone must do as seems best to him, either working or resting, so that he may be drawn to God. But he who cannot rest alone must make use of sacred pictures, and of discipline, so that he may be *rooted and grounded in holy love, and may comprehend with all saints the height, the length, the depth and the breath.*

[14] To understand all this is impossible; but it is possible to cling to it with love and pure intentions. The mind must lift itself up above all visible things, and above all the lower things of sense, and realise that God, Who can do all things, did not choose to make a creature so noble, that with the help of his natural understanding he could attain to the knowledge of the very essence of the Being of God. For the depth of the divine abyss cannot be fathomed by reason; but the depth

may be fathomed by deep humility. Therefore our Lady, taking no heed of all the great blessings that God had poured out upon her, spake only of her lowliness, for which all generations should call her blessed, because God had regarded her only.

15 The breadth of God must be understood as the universal love which He manifests in all places, in all lands, and in all the works and ways that are good. There is nothing so broad or so universal as God, nor so near to the inmost heart of man; he who will seek Him there, shall find Him. Thus every day we find Him in the Blessed Sacrament, in all the Friends of God, and in all creatures. This breadth must be sought with an earnest, fervent mind, that is, a mind that is empty and untroubled by all other things, and that has secretly yielded itself up with all its powers in the Presence of God. To that man will be given freedom of spirit and supernatural grace; he will be exalted in mind above all forms and fashions, and will soar above all created things. St Gregory speaks of it thus: “If we would come to the knowledge of invisible things, we must look beyond all things that are visible.”

16 The length is eternity, where there is no before and no after; but where all is still and unchanging, and in which all things exist, in a steady unchanging vision of Him, in whom all things exist. This length must be sought by man in a steady, unchanging and humble spirit; unchanging in God, and renouncing all love, all sorrow and all creatures, that he man be satisfied in God, may rest in peace, and may leave all things to God. Thus the noble word: *Transite,* will be accomplished; for man will overcome all things, and will be filled with the divine Birth of this lovely, noble Virgin, to whom all men should pay great honour. However highly they

may be exalted, they should give time and trouble to honour and serve her. May we also follow her, that we may also come to that Birth by the help of God. Amen.

SERMON IV · On the Feast of St Stephen or of St Lawrence

1 Of the three Grades of those who learn here to die to themselves in Nature and Spirit, that they may (like the Grain of Wheat) bring forth much fruit; viz. of those who are beginning, of those who are advancing, and of those who are perfect.

2 *Nisi granum frumenti cadens in terram mortuum fuerit, ipsum solum manet.*

3 "Unless the grain of wheat, falling into the ground, dieth, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." [36]

4 By the Wheat we understand our Lord Jesus Christ, Who by His Death has brought forth much fruit for all men, if they are but willing, not only to reign with Him, but also, and in the first place, desire to follow Him in a dying life. For this may be called a dying life, when a man for the love of God refuses to gratify his senses and take his natural pleasure, and follow his own will; and as many lusts as he dies to, so many deaths does he offer to God, and so many fruits of life will he receive in return. For in what measure a man dies to himself, and grows out of himself, in the same measure does God, Who is our Life, enter into him.

5 Now mark, dear children, that the path of a man thus dying may be divided into three stages. Those who have entered on the lowest stage do acts of self-denial from fear of hell and for the hope of heaven, with some love to God mingled therewith, which leads them to shun the most flagrant sins; but the love of God seldom works strongly in them, except it

be stirred up by the contemplation of hell or heaven: for by reason of their blind self-love these men are terribly afraid of death, and are by no means eager to set their hand to the work of mortifying their undisciplined nature which shrinks therefrom; and they have little faith, which is the cause of this timorous weakness, that leads them to be ever fearing for their own safety; thus, just as formerly they sought and loved themselves in all kinds of carnal enjoyments and worldly vanities, and avoided bodily pain and inconvenience out of self-love, so now is the same motive at work, leading them to shun sin on account of punishment, in order to escape hell and obtain the rewards of heaven. And when they are still young in the love of God, they are apt to taste little sweetness in loving God, save when they hope to enjoy something from His love; as, for instance to escape hell and get to heaven; and if sometimes they meditate on the Sufferings of our Lord, and weep over them with strong emotion, it is because they think how He was willing to suffer so much for their sakes, and to redeem them by His bitter Death, still (because their love is small) they are much more inclined to dwell upon the bodily sufferings that He endured in His human nature, than to reflect how He manifested by His death the highest perfection of all virtue, as humility, love and patience, and therein so greatly glorified His Heavenly Father. For this sort of persons set out and begin to die while as yet they love themselves far too well; hence they are not yet able to see truly what it is to resign themselves to God, and to maintain a spirit of submission; and, although God does all things for the best, yet this they will never believe, and it is a perpetual stumbling-block to them. Thus they often ask and wonder why our Lord chose to suffer so much and why He leads his friends and followers to himself along such a path of suffering. And when they are at the beginning of a

dying life, and only half-way inclined towards true perfection, nor perceive as yet wherein this consists, they oft-times torment themselves with watching and fasting and an austere way of life; for whatever is outwardly painful to the flesh they fancy to be greatly and mightily regarded and prized by God. So, when they eagerly take upon themselves all the hardships they can, then they think they have reached the summit of perfection, and judge all other men, nay, even those who are much more perfect then themselves, and think meanly of all who do not practice outward austerities, calling them low-minded and ignorant in spiritual things; and those who do not feel as they do they think to have gone astray altogether from a spiritual course and desire that all men should be as they are: and whatever methods of avoiding sin they have practised and still make use of by reason of their infirmity, they desire, nay, demand that everyone else should observe; and, if any do not do so, they judge them and murmur at them, and say that they pay no regard to religion.

6 Now, while they thus keep themselves and all that belongs to them as it were working in their own service, and in this self-love unduly regard themselves as their own property, they cut themselves off from our Lord, and from the universal charity. For they ought to cherish continually a general love toward all men, both good and bad; but they remain absorbed in their partial and separate affections, whereby they bring upon themselves much disquiet, and remain a prey to their besetting sin of always seeking and studying themselves. And they are very niggardly of their spiritual blessings towards their fellow Christians; for they devote all their prayers and religious exercises to their own behalf; and, if they pray or do any other kind act for others, they think it a great thing, and fancy they have done them a great service thereby. In short, as they look little within, and are so little enlightened in the

knowledge of themselves, so also they make little increase in the love of God and their neighbour; for they are so entangled with unregulated affections that they live alone in heart, not thoroughly commingling their soul with any in the right sort of thorough love. For the love of God, which ought to unite them to God and all mankind, is wanting in them; and, although they appear to keep the ordinances of God and of Holy Church, they do not keep the law of Love. What they do is more out of constraint and fear than from hearty love; and, because they are inwardly unfaithful to God, they dare not trust Him; for the imperfection which they find in themselves makes a flaw in their love to God. Hence their whole life is full of care, full of toil and ignoble misery; for they see eternal life on the one side, and fear to lose it, and they see hell on the other, and fear to fall into it; and all their prayers and religious exercises cannot chase away their fear of hell, so long as they do not die unto themselves. For the more they love themselves and take counsel for their own welfare, the more the fear of hell grows upon them; insomuch that, when God does not help them forward as much as they wish, they complain; and they weep and sigh at every little difficulty they encounter, however small, such as being tempted to vanity, wandering thoughts, and the like. They make long stories of what is of no consequence, and talk about their great difficulties and sufferings, as if they were grievously wronged; for they esteem their works, although small, to be highly meritorious, and that God Almighty owes them great honour and blessings in return. But our Lord will tell them (as He does in fact afterwards, when He has enlightened them with His grace) a poor fool loves his own wooden stick, or any other little worthless article, as much as a rich and wise man loves his sword, or any other great and precious thing.

7 All such are standing on the lowest steps of a mortified life; and, if they do not die to themselves more, and come to experience more of what a mortified life is, it is to be feared that they will fall back from that little whereunto they have attained, and may plunge into depths of folly and wickedness, from which God keep us all! But before a man comes to such a fall, God gives him great spiritual delight; and upon this he is so greatly rejoiced that he cheerfully endures all sorts of austerities and penances; and then he weeneth that he hath arrived at perfection, and begins to judge his neighbours, and wants to shape all men after his own model, so greatly does he esteem himself in his own conceits.

8 Then God comes in His mercy to teach him what he is, and shows him into what error he has fallen and permits the Enemy to set before him and make him taste the sweetness of sin; and then, when he has thus tasted, he conceives an inclination to one sin after another, and he cannot rid himself of these inclinations. Then he wishes to flee sin that he may escape hell, and begins to do outward good works; and yet it is a dreadful toil to perform these good works as a mere labour, and to put himself to pain; thus he is brought into an agonizing struggle with himself, and does not know which way to turn; for he dimly sees that he has gone astray. Then must God of His mercy come and raise him up, and he shall cry earnestly to God for help; and his chief meditation shall be on the Life and Works and especially the Sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 The second degree in which the grain of wheat dies is when a man is called upon to endure insult, contempt, and such-like deaths; and, so long as his grace lasts, he would fain continue to suffer; for by the sense of undeserved injury all his powers are but quickened and raised into a higher

state of activity. But when he is bereft of this gracious sense of the Divine Presence, forasmuch as he is still far from perfection, he cannot bear up under this spiritual destitution, and, through his infirmity, falls a prey to mistrust of God, and fancies that God has forsaken him, and is not willing to help him towards perfection. Often he is in a hundred minds what to do or not do; and, if our Lord show him some kindness, then he feels as if all were well between his soul and God, and he feels himself so rich, as if he could never more be poor, and thinks to enjoy the Presence and Savour of God (though s yet he is quite untried); just as if the Almighty were his own personal, special Friend; and he is ready to believe that our Lord is, so to speak, at his disposal, will comfort him in adversity, and enrich him with all virtues. But, forasmuch as our gracious Lord sees that such a man will be very apt to rely upon his imagined powers, and thus to fall grievously, and sees also that the best and ripest fruit is being lost, inasmuch as the man has not yet attained to that perfection to which our Lord desires to lead him, therefore in due tine He withdraws from him all that He had revealed to him, because the man was too much occupied with himself, with thinking about his own perfection, wisdom, holiness and virtues; He thus brings him through poverty to dissatisfaction with himself, and a humble acknowledgement that he has neither wisdom nor worthiness; then does he begin to reflect within himself how justly Almighty God has stayed His hand from bestowing any sensible tokens of His mercy, because he fancied that he was something; now he sees clearly that he is nothing. He was wont to care for his good name and honour in the world, and to defend them as a man stands up for his wedded wife, and to count them who spoke evil of him as enemies to the common good. He was wont to desire and thirst after the reputation of holiness, like a meadow after the

dew of heaven. He weaned that men's praises of him and proceeded altogether from real goodness and sympathy of heart, and by God's ordination, and had wandered so far from self-knowledge as not to see that he was in himself unsound from head to foot; he fancied that he was really as he stood in man's opinion, and knew nothing to the contrary.

10 Here we must mark that he who wishes to heal himself of such-like grievous mistakes, and subdue such an unmortified nature, must take note of three points in himself. First, how much he has striven to endure cheerfully, for the sake of goodness, all the rebuke, slander and shame that has come upon him, patiently enduring it in his heart without outward complaint. Secondly, how much in the time of his rebuke, shame and distress he has praised and glorified God and his fellow-men, and shown kindness to his neighbour in all ways, in spite of all contradiction against himself. Thirdly, let him examine himself whether he have loved with cheerful and willing heart the men or creatures who have thus persecuted him, and sincerely prayed for them; and, if he finds that he has not done so, and is unwilling to do so, but is hard and bitter in his grief, then he may surely know, and ought to feel certain, that there is something false in him, and some resting in the praise of men and in his own spiritual pride, and that he is not dead. He has not yet come to the second step in a dying life.

11 But our kind Lord, like a tender mother who is full of love, or a wise physician who desires to restore a sick man to perfect health by his powerful remedies, suffers him to fall many times that he may learn to know himself; and thus he falls into fleshly unspiritual temptations, such as he never experienced in those past days, in which he fancied himself very good and spiritual-minded. Our of mercy God deprives

him of all understanding, and overclouds all the light in which he walked aforetime, and so hedges him in with thorns of an anguished conscience, that he thinks nothing else but that he is cast off from the light of God's countenance; and he moans greatly, and often with many tears exclaims: "O my God, why hast thou cast me off, and why go I thus mourning all the days of my pilgrimage?"

12 And when he finds himself thus, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, unlike God and at variance with Him, he is filled with the sense of his own unworthiness, and with displeasure at himself, insomuch that he can hardly abide himself; and then he thinks many miserable things about himself from passages of Holy Scripture, and sheds many tears in the sense of his sinfulness, till he is weighed down to the earth with the pressure of God's hand, and exclaims with the prophet: "My sins are more in number than the sands of the sea; they have taken hold upon me that I am not able to look up; for I have stirred up God's anger against me, and done much evil in His sight." These things he saith, and more the like. And at times he is not even able thus to weep and lament, and then he is still more tormented with tribulation and assaults; for on the one hand he feels a strong desire to cast himself down humbly, and die to himself, and on the other he is conscious of great pride and arrogance about himself, till he is so exasperated at himself that, but for the dishonour to God, he would fain kill himself. I believe that all such conflict greatly wears out the intellectual and natural powers for it is so excessive, that one would rather suffer oneself to be put to death than endure it. Yet one grace is left him, namely, that he looks on it all as of no moment, whatever may be poured out over him, if only he may not knowingly offend God. After a while the grace of tears comes back to him, and he cried to God and says: "O Lord, rise, why

sleepest thou?" and asks Him why He hath sealed up the fountains of His mercy; he calls upon the holy Angels and blessed spirits to have pity on him. He asks the heavens why they have become as brass, and the earth wherefore she is as iron, and beseeches the very stones to have compassion on his woes. He exclaims: "Am I become as the blasted hill of Gilboa, which was cursed of David that no rain or dew should fall on it? And how should my wickedness alone vanquish the invisible God, and force Him to shut up His mercies, Whose property it is to have mercy and to help?"

13 In the second stage of the dying life God leads the soul through these exercises and operations of His hand, as through fire and water by turns, until the workings of self-sufficiency are driven out from all the secret corners of the spirit, and the man henceforward is so utterly ashamed of himself, and so casts himself off, that he can never more ascribe any greatness to himself, but thoroughly perceives all his own weakness, in which he now is and always has been; and whatever he does or desires to do, or whatever good thing may be said of him, he does not take it to his own credit, for he knows not how to say anything of himself but that he is full of all manner of infirmity. Then he has reached the end of this stage; and he who has arrived at this point is not far from the threshold of great mercies, by which he shall enter into the Bride-chamber of Christ. Then, when the day of his death shall come, he shall be brought in by the Bridegroom with great rejoicing.

14 It is hard to die. We know that little trees do not strike their roots deep into the earth, and therefore they cannot stand long; so it is with all humble hearts, who do not take deep root in earth, but in heaven. But the great trees which have waxed high, and are intended to endure long upon the

earth, these strike their roots deep, and spread them out wide into the soil. So it is with the men who in old times and now at this present have been great upon earth; they must needs through many a struggle and death die unto themselves, before all the self-sufficiency of their heart can be broken down, and they can be surely and firmly rooted for ever in humility. It does however happen sometimes that the Holy Spirit finds easier ways than those of which we have spoken, whereby He brings such souls to Himself.

15 The third degree in which the grain of wheat dies belongs only to the perfect, who with unflagging diligence and ceaseless desire are ever striving to approach perfection. These men's state is one of mingled joy and sorrow, whereby they are tossed up and down; for the Holy Spirit is trying and sifting them, and preparing them for perfection with two kinds of grief and two kinds of joy and happiness which they have ever in their sight. The first grief is an inward pain and an overwhelming sorrow of heart, in the sense of the unspeakable wrong done to the Holy Trinity by all creatures, and specially by the bad Christians, who are living in mortal sin. The second grief consists in their fellow-feeling for and experience of all the grief and pain which the Human Nature of Christ has undergone.

16 The first of the two joys lies in this dying; it is clear intuition and a perfect fruition to which they are raised in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, that they may enjoy the fruition of Him, and triumph in all the joys which they hope and believe after this life to behold in all their perfect fullness. The second triumph is that they are fulfilled in all the joys which the Human Nature of Christ possessed. This joy such a man hopes to share as a member of Christ; and, even if he cannot fathom the Abyss of God, he rejoices

therein, for he sees that the overflowings of God's mercy are unspeakable, and feels that it is good for him that he is vanquished in the effort to comprehend God's power, and bends down beneath God in his self-dying.

[17] To this state a man cannot attain except he unite his will with God, with an entire renunciation and perfect denial of himself and all selfish love of himself; and all delight in having his own will be over-mastered and quenched by the shedding abroad in his heart of the Holy Spirit in the Love of God; so that it seems as if the Holy Spirit Himself were the man's will and love, and he were nothing and willed nothing on his own account. Yea, even the Kingdom of Heaven he shall desire for God's sake and God's glory, because Christ hath earned it in order to supply his needs, and chooseth to bestow it on him as one of His sons. When in this stage, a man loveth all things in their right order, God above all things—next the blessed (Human) Nature of Christ, and after that the blessed Mother of Christ, and the Saints of all degrees, each according to the rank which God hath enabled him to attain. When his affections are thus regulated, he sets himself in the lowest place at the wedding-feast of the Bridegroom. And when the Bridegroom comes Who has bidden him to the feast, He saith unto him: "Friend, go up higher." Then is is endowed with a new life, and illuminated with a new light, in the which he clearly perceives and sees that he alone is the cause of his own evil, that he cannot with truth throw the blame either on nature, the world, or the devil. Yea, he confesses that God has appointed him all these exercises and assaults out of His great love, in order that he may glorify God in overcoming these, and deserve a higher crown. Further, he perceives and sees that it is God alone Who has upheld him and stayed his steps, so that he has no longer an inclination to sin, and Who has removed the

occasion to sin that he might not fall. Yea, what is still worse, he is forced to confess that he has often been dissatisfied that he was not able to derive more enjoyment from his sins. Thus all his being is swallowed up in sorrow and remorse for that he is still laden with his boundless infirmity.

18 But he hath delight and joy in that he seeth that the goodness of God is as great as his necessities, so that his life may well be called a dying life, by reason of such his griefs and joys which are conformable and like unto the Life of our Lord Jesus Christ, which from beginning to end was always made up of mingled grief and joy. Grief, in that he left His heavenly throne and came down into this world; joy, in that He was not severed from the glory and honour of the Father. Grief, in that He was a Son of Man; joy, in that He nevertheless was and remained the Son of God. Grief, because He took upon Him the office of servant; joy, in that He was nevertheless a great Lord. Grief, because in human nature He was mortal, and died upon the Cross; joy, because He was immortal according to His Godhead. Grief, in His birth, in that He was once born of His Mother; joy, in that He is the only-begotten of God's Heart from everlasting to everlasting. Grief, because He became in time subject to time; joy, because He was eternal before all time, and shall be so for ever. Grief, in that the Word was born into the flesh, and hath dwelt in us; joy, in that the Word was in the beginning with God, and God Himself was the Word. Grief, in that it behooved Him to be baptized like any human sinner by St John the Baptist in the Jordan; joy, in that the voice of His Heavenly Father said of Him: "This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." Grief, in that like others, sinners, He was tempted of the Enemy; joy, in that the Angels came and ministered unto Him. Grief, in that He oftentimes endured hunger and thirst; joy, because He Himself the Lord

of men and Angels. Grief, in that He was often wearied with His labours; joy, because He is the rest of all loving hearts and blessed spirits. Grief, forasmuch as His holy life and sufferings should remain in vain for so many human beings; joy, because He should thereby save His friends. Grief, in that He must needs ask to drink water of the heathen woman at the well; joy, in that He gave to that same woman to drink of living water, so that she should never thirst again. Grief, in that He was wont to sail in ships over the sea; joy, because He was wont to walk dry-shod over the waves. Grief, in that He wept with Martha and Mary over Lazarus; joy, in that He raised their brother Lazarus from the dead. Grief, in that He was nailed to the Cross with nails; joy, in that He promised Paradise to the thief by His side. Grief, in that He thirsted when hanging on the Cross; joy, in that He should thereby redeem His elect from eternal thirst. Grief, when He said: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” joy, in that He would with these words comfort all sad hearts. Grief, in that His soul was parted from His body; and He died and was buried; joy, because on the third day He rose again from the dead with a glorified body.

19 Thus was all His life, from the Manger to the Cross, a mingled web of grief and joy. Which life He hath left as a sacred testament to His followers in this present time, who are converted unto His dying life, that they may remember Him when they drink of His cup, and walk as He hath walked. May God help us so to do! Amen.

SERMON V · On St John the Evangelist’s day

[1] How men must receive all that God gives, and ordains for those who truly seek him in all things, as from His Hand, and as for the best. How willingly God gives great gifts, when, in lowliness of mind, we esteem ourselves of small repute; and how all things are as nothing without God.

[2] *Hic est discipulus ille, quem diligebat Jesus.*

[3] “This is that disciple whom Jesus loved.” [37]

[4] Dear children, though God is no respecter of persons, and loves all the things that He has made, still He has His Friends (those who are most conscious of His favour, and turn to Him with all their might) who are especially dear to Him; and it is not His fault that all men do not turn to Him of their own free will. He is always ready to receive us; and He lets the sun of His grace shine on the good and on the evil.

[5] Now St John especially was conscious of the grace of God from his youth, and was always the dearly loved disciple of our Lord, on account of his virginal purity, his perfect love, his keen vision, and all his other virtues. If therefore we would be the dear disciples of God, we must first follow St John by dying wholly to ourselves, by resigning ourselves and all our affections to God; and by receiving all things from His hand; we must deny ourselves all pleasure in the love of created things apart from God. Those men who thus resign themselves, and submit entirely to God, seek earnestly all that God gives them; for it is, and it seems to them the best. Thou mayest (as truly as God lives) be certain that it must of necessity be the very best, and that no other way could be

better than it is, though another might appear so; yet it would not be so good for thee, for God has chosen this and no other way; therefore it must needs be the best. It may be sickness, poverty, hunger or thirst; whatever it may be that God ordains or does not ordain, it is still the best for thee. It may be devotion or fervour, or that thou art to possess neither, as long as it is not caused by thine own neglect; only make up thy mind to seek God's honour in all things, in all that thou hast or hast not, then all that He sendeth thee will be for the best.

6 Now thou mightest say perhaps: "How do I know whether it is the will of God or not?" Know this, that if it were not the will of God, it could not happen. Thou hast neither days of sickness, nor anything else, except it be the will of God. Now, if thou knowest it is God's will, thou oughtest to have so much pleasure and delight therein, that thou wouldest not heed pain as pain, even though it were extreme. It would be wrong for thee to be sensible of pain or suffering; for thou oughtest to accept it from God as the very best for thee. It is His very life, to desire only the best; therefore I ought to desire it, and nothing ought to please me better. Now, if there were a man whom I was most desirous to please, and I knew for certain that I should please him better in a gray garb than in any other, however good it might be, that gray garb would seem to be more desirable than any other though it were ever so good. Oh! take heed to yourselves, see how your love is fashioned! If ye truly loved God, nothing would delight you more than doing that which pleased Him best, and desiring that His will should be fully accomplished in us. However severe pain and discomfort may seem, if thou hast not as great delight in them as in comfort and pleasure, all is not well with thee.

7 There is one thing which I am wont to say constantly, and which is also true, that we cry out every day and say in the Lord's Prayer: "Lord, Thy Will be done!" but then we feel angry, and are not so content with His will as that all He does should seem for the best. They who do accept it as the best, are kept in perfect peace in all things. Now, sometimes ye say: "Oh! if it had only been otherwise it would have been better," or, "if it had not happened thus it might have happened better." As long as thou art of this mind, thou wilt never attain to peace; thou must accept all as the very best.

8 Now, mark, God is the Giver of all gifts, and all things that are best and highest are His real and most peculiar gifts. God gives nothing so willingly as great gifts, for it is natural to Him to give great things; therefore, the better things are, the more of them there are, the noblest creatures, the Angels, are especially wise; they have no bodily nature, and there are more of them in number than of all other created beings. Great things are really great gifts; and they are what I can best make my own and most desire.

9 I speak also of that which may actually be expressed in word, and which must come out from within quite freely; it must not come from without into the heart; but that must come out from within, which really dwells in the inmost heart. There all things are present unto thee, and live and move and have their being, in Him, who is the Holy and Sovereign God. Why dost thou not find it thus? Because thou are not at home there. The nobler a thing is, the commoner it is. I have my natural sense in common with animals; and life in common with trees; and my being, which is still more to me, in common with all creatures. Heaven is more than all that is thereby; therefore it is also nobler. The nobler things are, the commoner they are. Love is noble, because it is

universal. It seems hard to do that which our Lord has commanded, and to love our neighbours as ourselves. Common people say, “We ought to love them as we love God; for we love ourselves too well.” But no, it should be otherwise. We must therefore love them very much, just as we love ourselves; and this is not hard; for, if ye would only see it, this command is more of a reward than a command. A command seems hard, but a reward is desirable. He, who loves God as he ought to love Him, yea, and as he must love Him, whether he will or no, and as all creatures love Him, must love his neighbour as himself. He must joy in his joys, as though they were his own; he must be as desirous for his honour as though it were his own; and he must treat a stranger as though he were dear unto him. Then that man will be always rejoicing, always useful, and always honourable. It will seem like heaven to him; and he will have far more joy, that if he rejoiced only in his own good.

10 Now, know of a truth, that if thine own honour is of more importance to thee, and dearer than that of another man, thou doest wrongfully. Know this, that if thou seekest something that is thine own, thou seekest not God only; and thou wilt never find Him. Thou art acting as though thou madest a candle of God to seek for something; and, when thou hast found it, thou castest the candle away. Therefore, when thou doest this, that which thou seekest with God, whatever it may be, it is nothing; gain, reward, fervour, or whatever it may be, thou seekest nothing, therefore wilt thou find nothing. There is no other cause for finding nothing, but that thou seekest nothing. All creatures are absolutely nothing. That which has no being is nothing. And creatures have no being, because they have their being in God; if God turned away for a moment, they would cease to exist. He who desired to have all the world with God, would have nothing

more than if he had God alone. All creatures have, without God, nothing more than a man has, who has a mite, or absolutely nothing, without Him; neither more nor less.

11 Listen, I beseech you, to a true saying. A man might give a thousand marks to build churches and monasteries, and it would be a great gift; but he who careth nought for a thousand marks has done more and given more. When God created all creatures, they were so vile and mean that He could not live and move in them. Then He made the soul of man, like unto and in harmony with Himself, that unto him He might give Himself; for all else that He gave him, man heeded not. God must give Himself to me as my own, as He is in Himself, or I have nothing and care for nothing. He, who would receive God in full measure, must give himself wholly to God; he must go our of himself. He will receive the like from God, all that He has as his own, as God Himself has it, and as He has given it to our Lady and to all that are in heaven. Those who have thus gone forth, and have given themselves, shall also, all alike, receive all in all and nothing less.

12 Now know, that of ourselves, we have nothing; for this and all other gifts are from above. Therefore he who would receive from above, must of necessity place himself beneath, in true humility. And know of a truth, that if he leave anything out, so that all is not beneath, he will have nothing and receive nothing. Dost thou trust to thyself, or to anything else, or anybody else? thou art not beneath, and wilt receive nothing; but if thou hast placed thyself beneath, then Thou wilt receive all things fully. It is God’s nature to give; and He lives and moves that He may give unto us when we are humble. If we are not lowly, and yet desire to receive, we do Him violence, and kill Him, so to speak; and, though we may

not wish to do this, yet we do it, as far as in us lies. That thou mayest truly give Him all things, see to it, that thou castest thyself in deep humility at the Feet of God, and beneath all created beings; that thou exaltest God in thy heart, and that thou confessest Him. The Lord our God sent His only-begotten Son into the world. God sent His Son in the fulness of time, for the sake of our souls, and that we might be filled with Him. When a soul is freed from place and time, the Father sends His Son into that soul to be born there. Nothing can hinder God in us, or us in God, if in our hearts we neither hang on to, nor cleave to time and place, nor exalt ourselves above time and place in Eternity, which is God Himself. Amen.

SERMON VI · Of the Feast of the Holy Virgin St Agnes

[1] How outward purity of body, and inner chastity of mind, may be attained and preserved. Especially, how purity of mind may be preserved, in spite of the outward attacks of human love and imaginations; and that no man, however spiritually minded he may be, can ever be sure, while he is still here in the body, that his frail nature has been completely killed, so that he can never be tempted to impurity. Of three snares that are laid for those who are spiritually minded, into which they may fall and against which they must guard themselves, be they never so perfect.

[2] *Virgo cogitat, quae Domini sunt, ut sit sancta et corpore et spiritu.*

[3] "A virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit." [38]

[4] A virgin, says St Paul, thinks and meditates on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy in body and soul. Four things are needful for virgins, that they may be pure in body and pure in spirit. To purity of body pertain spotlessness of the flesh, and moderation in the use of all bodily necessaries, in eating or drinking, sleeping or waking. A virgin must refrain from talking; she must be modest in all her ways; she must abstain from mixing in dissolute society or amusements, and be lowly and simple in her daily life; industrious in good and seemly work, or in works of penance and such-like; for all these things tend to external chastity. He who seeks to perfect or preserve his chastity in any other way, will find he has been deceived; for that which is visible must be visibly overcome; or else the impurity of the flesh will overcome the

purity of the spirit. It is plain that he who tries to tame the flesh by the flesh will not effect much. And now we will say no more of this, but say a little about the chastity of the spirit, how it may be lost or preserved; and this is a useful subject, which all those who are spiritually minded will do well to consider and remember.

5 Purity of spirit consists in a clean, pure and humble conscience; for a humble conscience is a pure mind and a clean heart. A pure mind is to be gained by exercise in the Holy Scriptures. From thence come holy meditations which fill the heart of man; and therefore it is the sooner freed from all vain and wicked thoughts. Be sure, nothing doubting, that the man, who devotes himself to diligent study of the Holy Scriptures, will be preserved and guarded from the grosser temptations to impurity. This is shown by St Jerome, when he says: “Love to search the Scriptures, and then ye will not care for the lusts of the flesh, nor delight in them.” But a clean heart must be gained by driving out all desire for the creature, and especially for man; for a good and holy man is so easily grieved and disturbed in his heart by the inordinate love of man, that it often takes him a long time to drive out that love from his heart, which had entered in a moment. Therefore, unless man shuns the causes which minister to the flesh, he can get no further, and he must receive a hurt that will grieve him. It is here that man is most easily wounded, on account of his natural short-sightedness, which is so deeply rooted in inordinate desire, that he will be kept occupied all the days of his life; though many a man, who does not realize it, is as bold and joyful as though he had conquered in every strife and had overcome.

6 Now, dear children, though ye had conquered in a thousand fights, and had gained the victory, ye must not trust to it; for

as long as body and soul are joined together, to none is freedom assured on earth. That which may not happen in a hundred years, often comes in one moment; so that many a good and pure man has been tempted and led astray in such a manner that he hardly knew how it came about. Not that such men are spotted by outward deeds, or fall into open carnal sins, though sometimes even this occurs; but then they are molested by the charm of evil desire, dangerous, transitory and carnal love, which darkens their understanding and judgment, and the fervour which they had before experienced; and they are cast into a hell of distress and scorn, and feel the gnawings of conscience. Thus man seems to be going to the gates of hell and of external darkness, just like one who is about to be killed, and, who in great fear and horror of death, loses his senses and reason. This comes from lack of watchfulness; but it is at times also ordained by God, that the man may ground himself in true humility, and may learn to know his own infirmity, and may be able to feel for other men in theirs. This is especially the case with those who afflict themselves, in order to overcome and to kill the inner, reasoning and upright man, because they long to attain to absolute poverty of spirit. It is necessary that they, more than all men, should guard themselves in the presence of those who are unlike them. For the Tempter, who never rests, does not forget his cunning when he finds a good opportunity. Now if such men strive diligently to destroy the inner man absolutely, and to walk in all singleness of heart, they will exert themselves to overcome all inner troubles, so that they may uncomplainingly and unresistingly submit themselves to God in all things, whenever and however it may please Him. They must not endeavour to get their own way in His work, but must desire that His will may be done, without any choosing

on their part. See, by this means, man will attain to such simplicity of heart, and such peace, both outwardly and inwardly, and also in his nature, that he will be scarcely conscious of any resistance in himself. Neither is he conscious of any shame, nor yet of the burden of a guilty conscience; and, to use a simile, it seems as though he had returned to his original ignorance and innocence, and were like a young child who follows the dictates of nature without shame. In the same way a child might thus naturally go his own way, and grow up, according to nature, taking no care or pains to tame his unruly passions. Thus it would come to pass that his passions would grow stronger and stronger; and, as understanding and desire increased, sin also would increase. This might also happen to a pure and spiritually-minded man, however child-like his innocence might be, who had long lived a life of seclusion, and who seemed to have so conquered his outer and lower nature that he was scarcely conscious at any time of temptation, either sleeping or waking; and who, were the occasion to arise, or where he incited to it, would take no pleasure in it, but would imagine he could easily withstand all these attacks and temptations. Yea, it would even seem to him as though there were no more attraction or pleasure for him in such things, than there would be for a man who was dead; in seeing, hearing, speaking, or in anything else possible. Now see, nature seems quite dead; and yet none should put their trust in it, either men or women, however sure of themselves they may be, and even satisfied as to their condition. Now, however perfect and holy the man in truth may be, however dead he may seem to all these things, if he will not flee from temptations, his heart will of necessity be wounded by sensual desires; and it will be agitated and tempted by the love of a friend, more for one than for another.

7 Now mark, dear children, how this takes place, and how by degrees man falls into such snares. First of all, love is felt for people on account of their grace, their piety and their spirituality; and this is all-sufficing to the heart, and seems to be all spiritual, and is accepted with great thankfulness to God and to these men. If man does not continue to strive to chase away these emotions, the longing creeps in to show these people outwardly a little kindness out of pure friendliness. He recognises them by pleasant words and gestures, by laughing and bowing, by touching their clothes, or taking them by the hand, or embracing them, or by bowing the head to them, and by many such like things. These are all signs of natural human love, and show that the heart has been wounded by unregulated love. It may be, if the man does not shun it, that he will be still more deeply wounded; and it may go so far, that spiritual pleasure is turned into carnal pleasure; and the man, thus entangled in this net of the devil's and of carnal desires, cannot easily escape from it without great injury and danger of sin in his heart. Yea, it may even go so far that he dallies with such pleasure till at last he consents to it; and that would be a sin unto death; and, if even then he did not become conscious of it, he might fall into great spiritual sin without any opposition on his part.

8 See, dear children, a good man may thus fall into all kinds of sin, if he does not at once resist the temptation. Yea, and even though he had attained to the highest and most perfect state of virtue, if he does not flee from these sins, he may stand in great danger from them, greater danger than he was ever in before. Never was it more necessary for him to shun them than it would be now; for no one is free from these temptations and incitements, as long as his breath is in his body; and, however holy he may be, it is possible for him to

fall into sin and to endanger his salvation, unless he keeps watch over himself.

9 As all teachers point out to us, three snares are laid for the spiritually-minded, into which they may fall. The first is a man's holiness. The second is when people are of one family, and belong to each other by birth and nature, or are related, that as being brothers and sisters, and so forth. The third snare is personal holiness, and that in the long practice of virtue, so that the occasion of sin is not shunned. This carnal affection sometimes exists between persons of different sex, between a man and a woman. They fall in love with each other, and seek distraction and diversion together, asking each other how they are, and about their station and place in life. Ye will see that this must in the end bring trouble and come to a bad end, and cause sorrow and heaviness of heart. This is especially the case when people of unequal rank start such a friendship together. This cannot be tolerated by anyone with a good conscience; for thence arise contempt, suspicion, irritation and the destruction of inner spiritual peace. Therefore all those who are obliged by necessity, or their office, to speak to people who are not of the same rank as themselves, must do so as little as possible, and go away as soon as possible; and this will be good for their own consciences, and also for their inferiors or equals, who will be the less angered or tempted thereby. Whoever, therefore, wishes to be preserved in such a case, or from other sins, must, as Bonaventura says, seat himself and speak openly, as though he wished everyone to see how he treats such persons, and that he no more desires to carry on improper relations with them than with anyone else. Neither must he set his heart on any other person, to such a degree that he is absorbed in that person. He must never be outwardly too friendly to anyone, especially to people of different sex,

either in kindly or spiritual intercourse; but he must behave gravely towards them, and hurry straight away, exchanging only short words with them.

10 Now ye see, dear children, that if even a good and pious man can thus fall into unchastity from such causes as I have mentioned, how it will be with those who, either in thought, or will, or deed, do not tear themselves away from all such temptations, and who are not ready to die to all superfluity, pleasure, effeminacy, fastidiousness and unruly mirth, and to all the other causes of sin that are evident. Oh! if even a good man is thus tempted to impurity, how will it be with a man who is dilatory, wilful, fastidious, lazy and idle, dull and dead to all spiritual things? Will he not revel in them and be corrupted? This is known alone to the Lord God, Who trieth the reins and the hearts. But may God have mercy upon us, poor sinners, and preserve us from those troublesome snares of unchasity; that we may be found pure and clean in His sight, in body and soul; pure in conscience; from from all vain thoughts and from all evil desires; resting not in the creature, but in God only, and loving Him alone and above all things. May God help us thereto. Amen.

SERMON VII · Our Lady’s Candle-Mass

1 How we may offer ourselves, night and day, unto God in holy discipline; in prayer, in meditation, in beholding God, and by thanking God and praising Him; thereby following the example of the blessed Mother of God.

2 *Ecce ego mitto angelum meum ante faciem meam.*

3 “Behold I send My Angel, and he shall prepare the way before My Face. And presently the Lord, Whom ye seek, and the Angel of the Testament, Whom ye desire, shall come to His temple.” [39]

4 To-day we would commemorate the fact, that the Lord, to Whom all time belongs, and by Whom the Law was made, subjected Himself to time and law, and offered Himself for us in the temple of His heavenly Father. It was not necessary that He, like any other firstborn son, should be sanctified; for all holy seasons and festivals, places and temples, are made holy by Him. Neither was it necessary for His blessed Mother to be purified, like other women, for she was shielded from all sin, and conceived and bare the Son of God by the operation of the Holy Ghost, remaining ever a virgin and adorned with all purity. Her purity was much greater than that of all Angels; for it is impossible to imagine greater purity apart from God. And yet she also subjected herself to the austere law, and offered her dear Child to the heavenly Father at the hands of the priest, and herself, not her Son, as a living sacrifice and to the praise of God, for the salvation of all men.

5 Now, by this we are taught that we must, at all times, repress ourselves and become absorbed in deep humility, as those who have nothing and can do nothing of themselves, but that which is evil; and that in the inner temples of our souls we must offer up ourselves, our own wills, and all that we have and are, in complete resignation to God at all times, with the Son in the Father, as an eternal sacrifice of praise. All that the Father has He gives to His Son; so dear is the Son, that the Father loves nothing but the Son; and those whom He finds united with the Son, He loves in the Son. Therefore, we must exert all the powers of our souls, and offer them to the Father in the Son, that they may be loved by Him in the Son, after the perfect pattern of Mary, the most holy Virgin and Mother of God. Now, to-day, I will tell you something about her, how we may copy her holy life; because she was full of grace and virtue, and the mirror and exact reflection of all holiness.

6 This gentle Virgin spent the whole of her life in such perfect love to God, in the inner temple of her heart, that she never loved any other creature beside God. Neither did any image ever come into her mind that interposed between her and her love of God. Her love to God was undivided, and she loved all creatures in Him. With all her powers she communed with herself in the depths of her heart, wherein the Divine Image lay hidden; there she dwelt in the innermost temple of her soul, and turned all her powers within, and prayed there to the one God in spirit and in truth. She confessed that she could not worthily praise God; therefore she desired that He would praise and magnify Himself in her. She was so conformed to God from the very bottom of her heart, that if any one could have looked into it, he would have seen God in all His glory, and would have actually seen the procession of

the Son and of the Holy Ghost; for her heart never turned away from God.

7 Now, shall I tell you something about the devotional exercises of this Holy Virgin? They are, however, so divine and superhuman, so high and unfathomable, that they surpass the understanding of men and of Angels. But of her lesser devotions ye shall know that she always got up at midnight, and lifted up her heart to the heavenly Father, in such rapt devotion, that it forced its way through heaven, and rested only in the Father's Heart; and thus she stood absorbed in prayer till break of day. Oh! how blessed is he with whom she shares her gentle prayers, and for whom, with especially motherly love, she intercedes with her Son.

8 Now, learn, that she knew that she was beloved and endowed above all other creatures by God; therefore, when she got up at midnight, she fell on her knees in lowliness, and thanked God for His rich bounty, which He had poured out upon her. Then she offered herself and all that she had to God in prayer, and gave herself into God's gentle keeping, that He might begin and accomplish His will in her, and in all that was hers. Thirdly, she prayed for all the members of the Holy Church, that all things might be ordered therein for the best in all godly honour; and for all sinners, that they might truly turn again unto salvation. And then she turned in her prayer to all the poor souls in purgatory, for whom she had especial love, and besought God to set them free. Fourthly, she talked with God as a child might talk with his father, or one dearly loved to her beloved; and then often, by the eye of faith she beheld the Divine Being, unveiled, in all His glory and beauty, and God spake with her as with His dear and chosen spouse. Fifthly, she began to praise God in her prayer with such lively praise, that it seemed to come forth from a

divine and blossoming garden that had been tended by God. Her praise was sweeter and purer, and more pleasing to God, than when He had created heaven and earth, the morning stars and the children of God praised Him. Sixthly, she sank down in her prayer into her own nothingness, and confessed that she could not worship the great God, nor praise Him according to His worthiness; and she desired of Him that He would be magnified in her; and then she let all her powers sink down to the lowest depths, whence alone the Eternal God receives the prayer and praise that He loves best.

9 Know also that, when she thus prayed, she withdrew her mind from all that was external, from all forms and figures, and continued thus, her whole mind being absorbed. Afterwards she meditated on the greatness and glory of the Lord, with Whom she desired to hold converse, though in her own sight she was a worthless creature. Then she fell down at the Feet of the glorious God, and prayed in deep humility, and in earnest, fervent love and desire, and with heartfelt trust in the boundless love of God, that He would hear her, not according to her own will, but according to His. And she continued in prayer from midnight till dawn, and from that time till Prime she devoted herself to holy meditations, in the best way that any creature ever did. First of all she meditated on the greatness and almightiness of the great God, whom she confessed as above all Angels. Then she sank down in her own littleness, in deep humility. Secondly, she meditated on the mysterious and unfathomable judgments of God, and on His wisdom, which is hidden from all creatures. Thirdly, on the fathomless goodness of God in His eternal love, which is the loving source of all that is good and gracious. Fourthly, she meditated on the overflowing sweetness of God, from whom she had received so much sweetness; for, had she not been overshadowed by the Holy Ghost, her divine heart must

have burst with love. Fifthly, she meditated with tearful eyes on the humility of her Child, Who had humbled Himself, and had so trodden the path of humiliation that it was impossible for Him to humble Himself any more.

10 Sixthly, she meditated on the sufferings of her Child, how great and manifold they were; and this she did with great compassion, for the meditation smote like a sword through her virgin heart and soul. Therefore hers was a martyr's reward, as much as that of any other martyr. Then she meditated on the sufferings of her Child, desiring to imitate Him; for she bethought herself how, at all times, her Child had been despised and had suffered; therefore she devoted all her life to suffering and to bearing oppression. She so entirely submitted herself, that she never prayed to God that her suffering might be shortened or lessened. She spent her life in suffering, and bore it to the end with willing submission, willing even to suffer throughout eternity, if such were the will of God. Then she meditated again on the sufferings of her Child; how He had borne His suffering with great patience, without murmuring, rejoicing in spirit, because of His burning love and desire for us. Thus she also bore her suffering without murmuring and with burning love and joy.

11 At the hour of Prime she went into the Temple, and betook herself to a corner with downcast eyes, and stayed there till mid-day. Mentally reaching out into eternity, she meditated on the commands and discourses of the Lord; then her soul was exalted, as in a divine vision, above all knowledge, and she was transfigured in spirit above all powers. Her memory shed a pure light, and remained in the unity of the spirit above all carnal suggestions. Her mind was transfused with clearness, so that she understood and discerned all the

virtues, the ways, the discipline and the mysteries of Scripture with judgment. Her will was set alight with fervent heat, in silent love, passing beyond all created things. In this state of exaltation she was above all wisdom and all judgment. Here she received the outpouring of Divine Love, in silence, her spirit was steeped in the immaterial Spring, without any exercise of her own power. Here, above all things, she reposed in God, and, surrounded by Love unfathomable, she lost herself in the obscurity of the Godhead. She was united, without any intervention, and made one Spirit with God, above all created gifts, graces and lights, in one single light that renewed itself unceasingly in the depths of her heart, in the highest exaltation of spirit. In this she had some conception of future blessedness, and she loved God with eternal, uncreated love. All created gifts, virtues, works and discipline, with all that pertained to the creature, must here remain without, for she was moulded herein with divine brightness above all sense and imagination. She saw the eternal lights and scenes, as they were beholden in eternity, with unspeakable and divine joy and pleasure. Know that, were all the delights and joys of the world melted down altogether, they would be nothing but bitterness, compared with the least divine joy such as that ever received by the Mother of God.

[12] Now, know, that the Blessed Virgin possessed one grace above all other human beings; to whatever heights she might be caught up and entranced, beholding God in the light of God, she saw, none the less, all other things, and attended to them. Thus she could even order her outer life in calm and holy conduct, without disturbing her inner life; for her highest powers communed directly with their Source, and were united thereto, so that the lowest were obedient to the highest, as those of Adam had been in Paradise. This grace

was hers, because she never inherited original sin; for she had been preserved from this by her Child; so that never for an instant had she been the child of wrath, or an unclean vessel, under the power of the Devil, like the rest of mankind. The Eternal Wisdom prevented and would not allow this chosen Temple to be thus defiled. Therefore, during this inner vision and absorption in God, she could listen with her outward ears, with diligence and devotion and deep humility of heart, to Divine Service; it gave her no trouble, but was delightful and desirable above all things to her at this time. Then, when towards mid-day she went home, she was often fed by the Angels.

13 In the afternoon, if it was not a Holy day, she worked, till Vespers, with her blessed hands, and did everything, however small it might be, with especial intention to the glory of God. But, if it was a Holy day, after she had praised God, she went to hear the Word of God, and listened to it with great humility, however plainly it might be spoken, and though she understood it better herself; and she stamped it earnestly in her pure heart, earnestly desiring to experience the least as well as the greatest. When the Word of God was not preached, she spoke or listened to others, speaking of God and of the Divine Life; or she read the Scriptures till Vespers. Then she sang her Psalms and said her prayers till Compline.

14 Then, when night came on, she communed with herself in holy meditation, and meditated on the perfect Life of her Child and her Lord, and on this sweet doctrine; and her heart was filled with joyful and eternal sweetness. Afterwards she would thank God on her knees that He had so graciously looked upon her on that and every day; and then, in meekness and thankfulness, the blessed Virgin Mary laid

herself to rest. Hosts of Angels surrounded her holy bed, so that no evil spirits might torment her; therefore she had no vain fancies or evil dreams, nor any other vision that that which God Himself gave to her; for the Holy Trinity was ever her defense and shield. The blessed Virgin never lay down without first dedicating her sleep with her whole heart to the glory of God; and, thus united with God, she bowed her blessed head on the Heavenly Father's Breast, and rested in peace. At midnight she began to pass the day again, as she had passed it before, in all holiness and virtue.

15 This is related of a portion of her holy life, as in a mirror, that we may place it before us as our example, and, following it, may also remain faithful to God, and offer up ourselves wholly in the inner temples of our souls, according to our power. But that we may be able to do this, we must call on God unceasingly for His divine grace and help, and also on His dear Mother, to whom we should, at least once every day, give especial honour and service. She will then, on her part, help us faithfully in our need, and especially in our last trial; for she is a mother of mercy and cannot reject any sinner who desires her help. Therefore St Bernard says: "He alone can keep silence about thy mercy, O blessed Virgin, who has called upon thee in his distress and has been forsaken by thee. For we, thy unworthy servants, rejoice with thee in thy other virtues, but in this virtue we rejoice for ourselves. We praise thy virginity, we marvel at thy lowliness, but we embrace thy mercy more willingly; the oftener we think of it, the oftener we appeal to it. Thou upholdest us, and forsakest not the miserable sinner, until thou seest that the terrible Judge is propitiated." May we thus honour and follow this blessed Virgin and her Child, that we may attain to a portion with them in eternity. May God help us thereto. Amen.

SERMON VIII · On the Feast of St Agatha, or the Holy Virgins

1 That which is needful for a true virgin, that she may be pleasing unto God, for Whose sake she has despised the kingdom of the world; that which may be sung of every holy virgin.

2 *Regnum mundi, et omnem ornatum saecus contempsi, propter*

3 amorem Domini mei, Jesu Christi. [40]

4 “The kingdom of this world and all secular adornments have I held in contempt, for the love of my Master Jesus Christ.”

5 These words are sung by the Holy Church in the person of every spiritual spouse of Christ, who has given herself to Him that she may be ever faithful in doing His will and service. Now mark, dear children, what qualifications such a bride and virgin of God must possess, who desires to be pleasing and acceptable unto God; so that, at last, He may espouse her unto Himself for ever; when her soul will be so completely united with Him, that she will never again be parted from Him throughout eternity, nor He from her.

6 The first qualification is, that a virgin cannot please God, unless she despises the kingdom of this world and all its pomp. She must diligently guard against pride, vain-glory, the desire to please people outwardly, either in her person with the adornment of clothes, or with any fleeting things. She must leave all these for God’s sake; and not only the things pertaining to the body, but also to the mind; the spiritual world and all its adornments, which consist of pride, vain-glory, a good outward appearance, and spiritual words

out of a worldly heart; in excessive joys of the heart in spiritual gifts or virtues, or satisfaction in personal goodness. These things happen to and befall the virgins of Christ in so many ways, that it is not easy to say how the Enemy dares to deceive these pure hearts.

7 The second qualification is, that she must guard herself diligently against worldly customs and conduct, and against all harmful habits, both outwardly and inwardly. She must not be proud in heart of haughty in bearing before other people; she must not boast nor hold herself in high esteem because she is wise or prudent, nor try to defend herself when she is despised or oppressed; but with modest and soft words and demeanour, and in all lowliness, she must set herself to acknowledge and cure her faults.

8 The third qualification is, that it is not enough for her to know that she must suffer; she must also resign herself completely in all that vexes her and brings her trouble. She must help to work in God’s vineyard with patience, in the pure ground of a humble heart, in which God only dwells; for God only dwells in the heart of a virgin who abases herself, from the ground of her heart, in humility, beneath God and all men, and, if it must be, even unto death. By this complete self-annihilation a human being may win from and obtain from God all that he needs; and more still; for God comes to meet such with all His grace, and exalts them with all the honour with which He has honoured His Saints.

9 The fourth qualification. It is necessary for a good virgin, in this life, to be chastened, despised, rejected, ill-used and rebuked, even as the Canaanitish woman was treated by Christ. And thus He treats, even now, all His chosen ones, who are especially dear to Him, and on whom He will lavish His especial grace. Inwardly He will chastise them severely,

and treat them hardly; and outwardly also He ordains that they shall be trodden under foot by everyone; men shall speak evil of them; and they shall be despised in their own eyes with wanton falsehood. Then will the virgin of Christ despise herself utterly, and suppress herself in true humility, and rejoice in it for the sake of God, and think of herself as unworthy of all this suffering, thanking God that He has thus especially endowed her as His own.

10 The fifth qualification. It also appertains to such a virgin, that she would not only be despised here of men, but that she should also despise herself, and suffer patiently all that happens to her, concealing it in her heart and complaining to no one. We often see virgins ready in words to despise themselves before men, saying: “We are all sinners,” who would nevertheless take it very ill, if anyone else said it of them; and thus we discover that it is all pride. A virgin who is not humble at heart may be known, when anything happens to her untowardly, though it were only a word; for she is indignant at once, she is offended with what is said to her, and begins to excuse herself immediately. She cannot bear anyone to say anything that is insulting to her honour, or that would cause her to be despised; and yet she wishes to be considered humble. No, dear child, all the contempt and scorn that a man is ready to pour out upon himself has no real ground in humility; but, when he is despised and scorned by another who is his equal, or still more, by one who is his inferior, he is cut to the quick; and then a man will learn to know how little humble and patient he really is.

11 The sixth qualification. A good virgin never wastes her time by any neglect or carelessness; but, her heart filled with longing and devotion, she meditates on the Sufferings of her beloved Lord Jesus, and His Five Wounds; she knows of

nothing better that she can do; for nothing can be more useful to her than to spend her time in meditation on the Life and Sufferings of our Lord, for Whom she has forsaken all things. It is the nature of all good virgins to spend the whole of their lives in work, both outwardly and inwardly, for the glory of God; to pray for the salvation of all men; and to offer themselves up for the infirmities of the common people, both the evil and the good. If the virgin of Christ be left to herself, all love and devotion to God being withdrawn from her; if thus, bare, poor and miserable, she still serves God; then God is honoured by her, and has peculiar delight in her.

12 The seventh qualification. She must look to God, and think only of Him in all her occupations; and she must be indifferent to all outward things; and she must do what is right, as though she did nothing, while she looks upon all real afflictions as though they did not concern her. Such an handmaid of the Lord desires to suffer shame and scorn from all men, to the glory of God, and desires neither power nor honour. She cannot exempt herself from anything, for the Holy Ghost directs her. At times such people are obliged to take precedence of others; but then they do it with great courtesy and great humility, and carry out that which Christ said: “Let him that is the greater among you become as he that serveth.”

13 The eighth qualification. This virgin of Christ must fight against all earthly transitory things, honour and desires. As soon as these desires begin to lose their strength in her heart, she will be attacked by spiritual pride; that is by self-satisfaction, and the desire for temporal honour, which can really be driven out by none other but by God. For, however holy a man may be, he will have to fight to the end, and chiefly against spiritual pride. Although in these truly

humble virgins neither pride nor covetousness, nor hatred can find a resting-place, yet they are nevertheless much tempted at times by idleness, appetite and unholy thoughts, which arise from their nature, and are the temptations of the flesh, which have not as yet been overcome; and this temptation is very useful to them. For, because these lovers of God care for nothing but suffering, shame, and all that is painful, both outwardly and inwardly, for the sake of the love of Christ, and seek only visions of God and inner delight, finding therein more joy and satisfaction than in all the eternal consolation that all created things could give them, therefore no temptation can be hurtful to them. Neither will any impulse to sin from lower motives affect them, for their will and their desire is that they may always have something to suffer, and that in true humility they may be found well-pleasing unto God, Who loves them. That we may thus preserve this state of virginity, may God help us. Amen.

SERMON IX · On The Annunciation of our Lady

[1] How we must commune with God and commit ourselves to Him; that we may conceive God and bear Him in our spirits, souls, and bodies, after the example of the blessed Mother of God.

[2] *Ave, gratia plena, Dominus tecum, Benedicta tu in mulieribus.*

[3] “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women.” [41]

[4] This festival is one of great dignity, and shows the eternal fervent love whereby the God of Gods and Lord of Lords, the Son of God had compassion on us poor sinful and accursed brands of hell. When He was in His Divine Glory, He “thought it not robbery,” as St Paul says, “to be equal with God; but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross.”[14] None can speak enough of this love, nor praise God, nor thank Him enough for it; for it is beyond the understanding of men and of Angels that our Lord, our God and Supreme Judge, should become our Father, our Brother, and our Husband. He has taken our guilt and condemnation upon Himself, and has redeemed us by His bitter Death, and has made us the children of everlasting life, and has brought us back to our first glory. Yea, and beyond, for we have become like unto the Angels; and we now posses more righteousness and are nearer akin unto God than the Archangels.

5 O, the goodness of God! Who can so withstand this great love, that he does not love and praise Thee with all his powers? This work of our redemption makes Thee dear to us above all things. It is a work which has no like; humility unbounded, grace undeserved, a gift without return. This work claims our love, draws our wills gently, and unites our desires firmly and justly to Thee. But what can we give to Thee, dear Lord Jesus, in return for all the great goodness that Thou hast shown to us? In return for my destruction of the soul Thou gavest me by creation, Thou hast given it back to me by redemption; so that I am doubly indebted to Thee, to give it wholly again to Thee. But what can I return to Thee, dear Lord Jesus, for that Thou hast given Thy Soul for mine? For, if I could give my soul again to Thee a thousand times, how should I thereby be any the more like unto my Lord, Who gave Himself even unto death for me?

6 Dear children, this great love can never be repaid by us; but we must do our best, and give to Him again, on our own account, all that we are, all that we have, and all that we can do; like His dear Mother, the blessed Virgin, who did this most faithfully and most perfectly. I will tell you something about this in a figure, that ye also may become the mothers of our Lord in spirit, and that ye may commit yourselves unto God, that he may be conceived and born in your souls.

7 Now, learn, how the blessed Virgin was prepared when she should conceive the Son of God, though her holiness cannot be perfectly comprehended even by the understanding of Angels. According to the meaning of the letters of her name, Mary, she was raised up in the three highest powers of her soul unto God, she became one spirit with God, and she was taught by Him; for she resigned herself as a fitting instrument to His dear Will, in fervent love for His glory. She

was poor in spirit, and always bore herself in God with deep humility and self-annihilation; for she had no desires, no will, and was as passive, as though she were uncreated. And thus an entrance was made for God into her spirit, soul and body. She was pure in spirit, for she never clung with delight to the gifts of God, and did not use them for her own pleasure. She was pure in soul, for she never delighted in any creature, but her soul was adorned with all virtues. She was pure in heart and body, for she was never moved to sin; and thus she was like unto the bright and shining Angels. Although she was the most beautiful of all women, yet none could look upon her with evil desires, because of her angelic purity. She was fervent in spirit, for her sweet ecstasy and longing so moved the Divine Godhead that the fervent love of the Holy Trinity welled forth and was poured out upon her. She was fervent in soul, for all the powers of her soul were always lifted up in the praise of God. She was fervent in heart, for her heart was opened unto the Lord, and it penetrated with fervent longings the incomprehensible depths of the Godhead; for she found there that which she most loved; and, by her inner sweetness, she was well-pleasing unto the Almighty, clinging to the Eternal Goodness by her love to fill her with all things and to give her power over all that he had; for she lived not to herself but to Him alone, Who is the Life of all living. From first to last all that she did was done in God, and was full of a pure and godlike intention; for she was at all times united with God, and never turned away for an instant from His Presence. Therefore the likeness of no creature was ever found in her or had access to her; for, with the Angels, she looked on all things simply in God; and found God alone at all times in the depths and very being of her soul, in the innermost parts of her spirit. Therefore she did not go forth with all her powers to seek for greatness and variety, but at

all times she abode simply outside herself in God and God in her. Most perfectly and with all her powers she meditated on the Source from Which she came. Poor, pure, fervent and divine, she was more like a heavenly creature than an earthly one; in spirit she was the Heaven of God; in her soul the Paradise of God; in her body the Palace of God; and she was filled with the Divine Brightness, so that she needed no mediator with God.

8 Now, ye shall know, further, that God desired to be conceived and born of this Holy Virgin in three ways; that is in her spirit, soul and body. She would not have been so blessed by the birth of the body only, as St Augustine says, and as our Lord also implies in the Gospel, when He answered: “Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it.”[15] Therefore she first conceived and bare God in her spirit; for by her purity she was well-pleasing unto God; by her lowliness she made a place for God; and by her love she constrained God, so that He took up His abode in the depths of her spirit, in calm and absolute freedom and silence. God united Himself with her spirit, and spake to her His secret Word, and bare His only Son in her spirit with unspeakable love and joy. This is the Eternal Birth in Mary; and the darkness of night in her spirit, where the understanding is darkened. Where the uncreated light arises, no created light can abide; for night is turned into day; that is, the created light of the soul is transformed into the Light of Eternity. Thus Mary yielded up her spirit to the uncreated Being of the Godhead, and her soul sank down in deep humility.

9 Thereby she drew down the sweet stream and light of Eternal Wisdom into her soul; and the Father begat His only Son in her soul, and fashioned her anew in Himself. The

Father required of her that she should consent thereto that His only Son should take His Human Nature upon Himself in her, and should be born of her in body, by the working of the Holy Ghost. She was afraid in true humility, and answered Him in spirit with fear: “I am not worthy, for I would gladly be the handmaid of such a mother.” But God willed that she herself should be the Mother; then she sank down in utter self-abasement, and it was made known unto her that she had been chosen thereto; God required this of her and not anything else. Then the Holy Trinity shone upon her with a supernatural light and transparent clearness, and with a ray or dart of Divine Love she was transfixed in the inmost parts, so that she humbly and lovingly consented to be the Mother of God.

10 At the same instant the angel Gabriel stood by her and found her exalted in spirit. He greeted her reverently, saying: “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.”[16] She was troubled by this lofty greeting, because of her deep humility, and also because she was entirely absorbed in God. Then, when she spake: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord,”[17] the Holy Ghost took of the purest blood of her virgin heart, that had been set alight by the powerful flame of love, and created therewith a pure and perfect little Body, with all its members, and a pure and holy Soul, and united them together. This, the Person of the Son of God, who is the Eternal Word, and the Brightness of the Glory of the Father, took unto Himself and united it with Himself in Unity of Persons, and out of true love and mercy for our salvation. Thus, “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”

11 This is the third birth that took place in the virgin body of Mary, without hurt to her virginal purity; and thus she became the Daughter of the Father; the Mother of the Son;

the Bride of the Holy Ghost; the Queen of Heaven; the Mistress of the world and of all creatures; the Mother of all men who desire her help; the Temple of God, wherein God has rested as a Bridegroom in His chamber in great bliss; for the Virgin's body was as a garden full of sweet-smelling herbs and of all kinds of virtues and graces. With these virtues she caused the Heaven of the Holy Trinity to flow with honey for us poor sinners. She has brought forth the Sun of Righteousness, she has chased away the curse of Eve, and bruised the head of the wicked serpent. This second Eve, with her Child, has restored all that the first Eve had lost and destroyed; she has, besides, brought much more grace and wealth. This is the noble Star which arose out of Jacob, which was prophesied in a Book of Moses, whose light shall lighten the whole world. "Therefore," says Bernard, "in all thy need, fix thine eyes on this Star, call on Mary, and then thou wilt not despair, follow Mary and thou canst not go astray. She will hold thee up, by the power of her Child, so that thou will not fall; she will protect thee, so that thou wilt not despond; she will lead thee to her Child, so that thou mayest overcome." She has the power, indeed; for the Almighty God is her Child; she is indeed willing to do this, for she is merciful. For who can doubt that a child would honour his mother, or that she overflows with love, in whom God Himself has dwelt.

[12] He, therefore, who desires to commune more and more with himself; and to find himself in his Source, in God, and to be conscious of God in his heart (which is conformed to God and inclines to Him, and cleaves to God, as a ray to the sun) he must copy the likeness and the bright mirror of our Lady, and comport himself as she did, both outwardly and inwardly; then he will become conscious in himself of great help from her, both in spirit and in nature. First, he must turn away

from all transitory things, and gather up the powers of his mind, and commune with himself, and pass over out of self into God, Who is present within him, in the innermost parts of his spirit, wherein are the three highest powers of the soul, that there he may be united with and become one spirit with God; and there God will work in him. His memory will be made fruitful, his understanding will be transfigured, his will inflamed and inebriated with Divine Love. God Himself becomes the Food of his spirit, the Life of his soul, and the Preserver and Guardian of his body. Therefore at all times we ought to commune with the image or the ground of our souls, where the three powers of our souls are one with God, that we may be united with God, poor in spirit, soul and body, fervent, and communing with God with all our powers, so that we may begin and end all our works with a pure intention to the glory of God; for thus it was written beforetimes of the blessed Mother of God. Thus we must remain empty, bare and dead to all around us, that all the powers of our souls may continue in the place appointed for them, and our wills, desires and intentions may be obedient to God in all things, that God may work with us according to His dear will. Then man will be lifted up in himself by God above all powers into the wilderness of the Godhead, his spirit will sink deep in the Divine Union, and his whole being will be saturated with the Divine Being, so that the Divine Birth will take place without let or hindrance in our spirits, in our souls, and also spiritually in our bodies, from the gifts which break forth and overflow from soul and spirit into the body.

[13] That we may now and later, receive blessings through the intercession of the dear Mother of God, let us call on her with St Bernard, who says: “Through thee must we find an entrance to thy Son, O blessed finder of grace, bearer of life,

mother of holiness, that He may receive us through thee, Who was given to us through thee. Thy purity must exonerate the guilt of our uncleanness in His sight, and thy humility, so pleasing unto God, must win pardon for our vanity, thy overflowing love must cover the multitude of our sins. Thy honourable fruitfulness gains for us the fruitfulness of they merits. O, elect Lady, our mediator and intercessor, commend us to thy Son, intercede for us with thy Son. Do thou see to it, O blessed one, by the grace that thou hast found, the election that thou hast earned, and the mercy that thou hast borne, that He Who condescended through thee to take our sicknesses and our misery upon Him, may also by His intercession enable us to participate in His glory and blessedness," Jesus Christ, Who with Father and the Holy Ghost is blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON X · On the Nativity of John the Baptist the First Sermon

[1] Of the spiritual Birth of Divine Grace in man from the ground of humility and the acknowledgment of his own frailty. How man may ever attain more and more to a Birth so full of Grace.

[2] *Johannes est nomen ejus.*

[3] “John is his name.” [42]

[4] To-day we read of and celebrate the birthday of Saint John the Baptist. The birthday of no other saint is kept in this way, only that of this holy Baptiser of God. The name of John means one in the state of grace. This must always precede the birth of grace.

[5] I spoke yesterday of two kinds of affliction. The first is in our nature, and results from the first Fall of man; the second is an affliction of blindness. Man is prone to sin from the beginning; it is rooted in his nature. This affliction ought always to be repugnant to man; and he should turn away from it with all his might, because it is hateful to God. The second kind of affliction is the result of the first; it is pain and misery. When this kind of affliction falls upon man, it ought to be acceptable and pleasing unto him, so that he may be able to follow therein the Example of our Lord, Who throughout His whole life always endured great and grievous sufferings.

[6] Now God often allows the affliction of frailty to come upon men, that in their downfall they may learn to know themselves better, and to love and remain willingly in the way of blindness, in them. Children, it were good for them to resolve to remain in this way. Man must always learn to

abase himself in this most blessed way of blindness, in disease, in doing nothing and in being nothing. Oh! he who would thus exercise himself in this way and understand it, disciplining himself only by despising unceasingly his own want of power; in this man, verily, would the grace of God be born. Man possesses nothing of himself; all comes from God only, without any intervention; all things both great and small come from Him; not from man himself; for he corrupts all that is good, both outwardly and inwardly; and, if there be anything good, it is none of his. Man must never forget this; he must look into his own nothingness and see how inclined he is to all that is evil, whenever nature is allowed her own way. He must be very diligent in learning to know himself; on what foundation he rests, his opinions, his love, his diligence; whether, perchance, ill weeds have grown up in his heart. The heart must be pure, only revealing itself to God; and it must have no thoughts but of Him. Also, thou must examine thine outer walk, thy words and works, thy customs and position, thy clothes and thy companions, from all sides. Wherever thou findest that something or other has gone wrong in thy life, thou must in sorrow bewail it unto God, and acknowledge thy guilt, and send up a sigh to God; and thus it is immediately condemned. This inner groaning from the depths of the heart is very useful and good. The Apostles did not experience it on account of their sins, but on account of all the evil that remained in man; and they exercised it unceasingly, because of the many ways by which they came to God. Thus, when a glimpse and taste of unity)with God) is made known unto man, an inner groaning is born in him, which passes out through his outer senses. This is truly the altar which stands outside, before the Holy of Holies, where the goats and oxen are offered to God. Thus man also offers his flesh and blood to Jesus Christ. By this contemplation of

his own frailty, man must humble himself, casting himself down at the Feet of God, that He may have mercy on him. He must hope that God will pass over his guilt; and thus John, that is grace, is born out of the ground of humility; for the lower we get the higher we shall be. St Bernard says: “All acts of discipline that are done outwardly are in no wise to be compared to those which man does in the valley of humiliation.” In this valley grow meekness, goodness, calmness and patience; and this is truly the right way. Those who do not walk in this way must assuredly go astray. And, however much they may do in outward discipline, it will not really help them at all; they will anger God much more than they will appease Him.

7 Now we will proceed with the Gospel. Here is a portion of it. Zacharias was the high priest. He and his wife were barren; and this was a great disgrace to him. Zacharias went into the Holy of Holies, and the people remained without, standing, while he executed the priestly function. Then the angel Gabriel stood by the altar and announced to him that a child should be born unto him who should be called John, which means that he was given grace. Zacharias did not fully believe this; therefore he became dumb till all had been fulfilled.

8 The word Zacharias means “thinking of God,” or “the remembrance of God.” This godly man, that is a spiritual man, must be a priest, and must go into the Holy of Holies while the people remain without. Now, mark, what his nature is, what his office is, and whose priest he is. The office of the priest is to offer God’s only-begotten Son to His heavenly Father for the people. Now I fear, and it is most probable, that all priests are not perfect; and, if some priests were to represent Christianity in their own persons, they would be

more likely to hinder and lead others astray than to help them; and they would anger rather than appease God. But they execute their holy office in the person and in the place of the Holy Catholic Church; therefore they execute their office sacramentally; and in this way it can be done by men only. They, and no others, as clergy, may consecrate and bless the sacred Body of our Lord; inasmuch as they are priests in all that belongs to their office, that is to the sacrifice. In a spiritual sense it may be done as well by a woman as by a man. If a woman does it in this way, she enters into the Holy of Holies, and the common people remain without. She must enter in alone; she must collect her thoughts, and commune with her own heart; and she must leave all things pertaining to the senses without, and offer to the Heavenly Father, the Sacrifice of Love; namely, His dear Son, with all His Words, His Works, His Suffering and Holy Life, that she may obtain all that she desires and all that is her intention. This she must do in deep devotion, including all men, all poor sinners, the good, and those who are imprisoned in the fires of purgatory; for by this means she will have great power.

[9] Albertus Magnus writes that the custom of the high priest was as follows: “He went into the Holy of Holies, and took with Him the blood of a red heifer, and fire that was burning. When he entered in, he put the blood on all the golden vessels, and made a heap of the finest herbs, and lighted it; and a sweet smelling savour arose therefrom, like unto a mist; then God came and spake with him.”

[10] This high priest is the inner man, who thus enters into his inmost soul, bearing with him the Sacred Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fire of devotion and love, and all the golden vessels which are marked with this Blood, even all those who have received the grace of God, and all those who

shall yet receive it, and the poor souls who still wait in purgatory. All shall be comforted and uplifted by this priestly office. Children, ye know not how sweet this is. This man shall also raise himself up thereby, even unto the Heart of the Father, and His Fatherly Will; and in Him he shall do whatever pleases Him in time and eternity.

11 Some say: “If we commune with our hearts after this inward fashion, we shall allow the image of our Lord’s Sufferings to escape us.” No, children, ye must look into your own hearts, where grace only can be born in truth; and there the Life and Sufferings of our Lord will gleam and shine in upon you, in sweet love and simplicity, in a single vision. It will seem as though all stood before you; not in its own many-sidedness, as I might see you all in one glance, but as though each one stood alone before me. This vision will be more useful to thee, than standing for five months in thought, striving to understand. During this sacred priestly office, when the man has entered alone, and is standing in silence, with all his powers on the alert, Gabriel, the Angel of God, is standing by the altar, where the divine and holy office is to be performed. Gabriel means the divine power that will be given to this priest, that he may be able to do all things in our Lord. This priest makes a heap of herbs, and sets it alight; and a smoke arises therefrom in which God speaks to him. This heap represents a collection of holy virtues, such as humility, meekness, and many other virtues of that description; for the life of a man who has no virtues, and does not strive to get them, either in the lowest, the middle, or the highest grade, is all false and worthless. A fire is kindled in this collection by the flame of love; and a mist and darkness arise, in which thy spirit will be caught away, perhaps for the space of half an “Ave Maria,” and thou wilt be robbed of thy senses and of thy reason. In this darkness God will speak to thee in truth, as it

is written: *Dum medium silentium,*etc. For, when silence reigned over all things, and the night of darkness had run its course, these words were sent from above from the kingly Throne. Here a secret word was spoken, and the ears caught the sound thereof. Here was foretold the birth of him, who was to be great and at whose birth many should rejoice. He was to be born of Elizabeth; which means that there would be a divine fulfilment; for thus it had been prophesied, that this joyful birth should take place. But all this took place in the lowest powers. Now come those who are wise in their own eyes, and whose empty, bare, uncultured hearts are lighted only by the light of nature; for they have nothing but the light of nature, and that which pertains thereto; it is to them as God, and yet it is nothing but their nature. There is however, more delight therein than in all sensual delights; and when they act thus themselves, and are endowed with these qualities, they become the worst and the most harmful of men. They may be known by the following signs. They do not walk in the paths of virtue and the discipline which belongs to a holy life. They give no heed to the destruction of vice; for they love their own false poverty, which has never been tested by real love, either from within or from without; and they have long ago parted with its likeness. Then the Devil comes, and lures them with false sweetness and false light; and thus he leads them astray, that they may be lost eternally. He leads them into whatsoever he finds them most inclined to by nature: unchastity, or covetousness, or pride; and they speak of their inner experiences and the lights which the Devil holds before them, as though they were of God; and they will not allow themselves to be separated from that which they have made their own. Thus, seeking those things to which they are inclined by nature, they fall into unholy license. These men must be shunned even more than

the Enemy; for, as far as man can see, in their outward appearance they are so like righteous men, that it is hard to distinguish them. But the righteous differ from them by walking in the paths of virtue—humility, fear, resignation and meekness. They are full of fear, and dare not allow themselves any liberty. They never trust in themselves; they are in much perplexity and difficulty, and long for the help of God. But those who think themselves to be free are bold, wilful, contentious and impatient; and any one who approaches them soon finds that they are in difficulties, full of bitterness, angry words, and pride, and will neither be despised nor disparaged. Oh! what marvellings and lamentations there will be over that which now looks so beautiful, in another world, where they will not be able to turn either one way or the other, where they must burn for ever. I counsel you in all faithfulness to guard yourselves from this.

12 Oh! dear children, turn your eyes inwardly, where this birth must really be born, which will cause great joy throughout Christendom. Now, ye need no longer be anxious whether ye are right or wrong. Ye have had the difference clearly placed before you, if ye will consider whether ye have chosen the right or the crooked path; whether ye have taken it in the lowest, the middle, or the highest grade. When this birth takes place, there is such great joy of heart, that none can express it. May God preserve all, so that none may be led astray; and be drawn away and diverted. Our Lord says in the Book of Love: “I adjure you, by the roes and the harts of the fields, that ye make not My beloved to awake till she please.”[18] Again, they must not question unwise teachers, who might prove so misleading, that some might be tempted away, and never return for forty or fifty years. These men must give heed to themselves; for this joy is so great that it

wells up like wine fermenting in the barrel. It is better that it should burst forth, than that nature should be too weak, and blood should pour from nose and mouth. But this is still far removed from the highest grade, still remaining below in the senses.

13 But the Angel said that he who should be born, must "drink no wine nor strong drink;" which means that the man in whom this birth was to be born would be led by the upper way, in the highest grade; for he should be good, better and the very best. These men must not drink anything that can intoxicate, like those, of whom we have already spoken, who were intoxicated by pleasure, which was poured out for them, either in a real or imaginary way, either by sight or by use; but they are placed in and led along a narrow way, which is also dark and dreary. There they find themselves unbearably oppressed, so that they cannot get out; and, whichever way they turn, they find fathomless misery, and all is desert, dark and dreary. They must face it, and in all their ways trust in the Lord, as long as it pleases Him; and, lastly, the Lord makes as though He knew nothing of their pain and torment; all seems unbearable need and great longing; but still they are resigned. This is a thorough cleansing, which corresponds to the highest reward; for other men there are corresponding rewards.

14 St Thomas says of this: "Great external works, however great they may be, inasmuch as they are works, have their own reward. But when the Spirit looks within, to the Spirit of God, from the ground of the heart, where man, empty and bare of all works, seeks God only, far above all thoughts, works and reason, it is truly a thorough conversion, which will ever meet with a corresponding reward, and God will be with him." Another conversion may take place in an ordinary

external way, whenever man turns to God, thinking wholly and entirely of Him, and of nothing else but of God for Himself and in Himself. But the first turning is in an inner, undefined, unknown presence, in an immaterial entrance of the created spirit into the uncreated Spirit of God. If a man could only once in his life thus turn to God, it would be well for him. Those men whose God is so powerful, and Who has been so faithful to them in all their distress, will be answered by God with Himself. He draws them so mysteriously unto Himself and His own blessedness; their spirits are so lovingly attracted, while they are at the same time so filled and transfused with the Godhead, that they lose all their diversity in the Unity of the Godhead. These are they to whom God makes their work here on earth a delight; so that they have a real foretaste of that which they will enjoy for ever. These are they on whom the Holy Christian Church rests; and, if they did not form part of Christianity, Christianity could no longer exist; for their mere existence, what they are, is infinitely worthier and more useful than all the doings of the world. These are they of whom our Lord has said: “He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of Mine eye.” Therefore, take heed that ye do them no wrong. May God help us. Amen. [43]

SERMON XI · On the Feast of the Nativity of St John the Baptist · The Second Sermon

1 How man must prepare himself and hold himself in readiness to bear witness to the true Divine Light which shines into his heart, in the lowest and highest powers, and on which depend his Salvation and Blessedness.

2 *Hic venit in testimonium, ut testimonium perhiberet de lumine*

3 “This man came for a witness to give testimony of the light.” [44]

4 To-day the Church celebrates the Feast of St John the Baptist. To bless and to praise him in words only would be but a little thing for us to do, because our Lord Himself has praised him worthily, and has said of him: “There hath not risen among them that are born of woman a greater than John the Baptist.”[19] He also said of him: “But what went ye out to see? a man clothed in soft garments? or did ye go out into the desert to see a reed shaken with the wind?” No, he was none of these things. Jesus said of him: “He is a voice of one crying in the desert, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths!”[20] We sing of him that he was a burning lamp. St John the Evangelist, who is likened unto a soaring eagle, wrote of him that “he bore witness to the light.”

5 Dear children, how could we praise this exalted prince of Heaven better, or more worthily, than with these words, “that he was a witness to the true Light?” This true Divine Light shines into the very depths of man’s heart; and when

this Divine Light and witness comes to man and commends itself inwardly unto him, he turns quite away from the pure ground.[Grund] He ought verily to await it; but he does just the reverse, running first one way and then another, so that he cannot receive the true witness because of his shallowness. “He came unto His own, and His own received him not.” Such men are opposed to the true Divine Light. Their hearts are worldly; and, as the Baptist said to the hypocrites: “They are a generation of vipers.” These men are opposed to all those who love the true Divine Light, and they give good cause for alarm, for they seem, as it were, scarcely to hang by a thread to light and faith. [45]

6 Now, we must show here, how shortsighted and diseased nature is, and how of itself it can do nothing that is good. God has therefore given it supernatural help and strength, even the light of grace, which lifts nature far up above itself, and supplies it with all it needs in this way. The uncreated Light of Glory shines above, even the Divine Light; and this Light is God Himself. Therefore, if we would truly know God, it must be by God and with God, in God and by God. As the prophet says: “Lord, in thy light we shall see light,” that is a supernatural light. The same Divine Light, “lightens every man who comes into the world,” and shines on all men, both on the evil and on the good, as the bright sun shines on all creatures. It is their own fault if they are blind. For in the same way that a man in a dark room could get light, if he found a window open, by putting his head outside, so may men also come to this light, and bear witness to it. [46] [47]

7 Now, we must mark diligently how a man shall first bear himself towards this witness, so that he may truly receive it. He must flee and separate himself from all that is temporal and transitory; for the true witness is given both to the lowest

and highest powers of the soul. The lowest power is that of passion and desire. Desire is the love of pleasure, which this witness must take away. This power must first separate itself from the lusts of the flesh, whatever they may be, in which the man finds satisfaction; either in human beings or clothing; in short, in whatever his senses find delight. God does not grudge man the necessaries of life; but this is verily a wilderness in which the voice of God cries; and it is called a life of seclusion. It is a separation from all the spiritual and natural pleasures, both outwardly and inwardly.

[8] Second, this witness is given in the power of passion in the soul, that man may learn true steadfastness and strength; that he may become, if he has received this witness aright, immovable as a mountain of iron. As Christ testified of St John, man must not allow himself to be shaken to and fro like a reed; neither must he be like unto one who wears soft clothing; by which we may understand one who loves, desires and seeks his bodily ease. Now, many a man may be found who despises all this for the sake of God, but who is so like a bending reed that it is quite pitiful. Such a man is as much moved and disturbed by some absurd mockery, or by a hard word, as the reed is in the water. Now, dear friend, how can a word harm thee, which can in nowise hurt thy soul? But then comes the Evil One and suggests first one thing and then another to thee, till thou art sore troubled; but all this ought not so to be, if otherwise thou wert firm in the faith. Later, this witness is given in the highest power of all, in the reason, the will and the love of man; for it is a prophet to the reason of man’s soul; a prophet means one who sees far off. Reason, in fact, sees so far that it is a perfect marvel. If an enlightened man existed, who yet was not standing on this ground, who heard secret, divine things, his heart would bear him witness thereof, and it would speak to him within.

9 Now, Jesus Christ said that John was more than a prophet, even in that ground where reason cannot come. For there truly man sees light in light, in the inner light of the soul; for there the Divine Light may be seen and understood by the light of grace. First, in a hidden way. The powers of the soul cannot attain to this divine ground; and the great wastes to be found in this divine ground have neither image, nor form, nor condition; for they are neither here nor there. They are like unto a fathomless abyss, bottomless and floating in itself. Even as water ebbs and flows, up and down, now sinking into a hollow, so that it looks as if there was no water there, and then again, in a little while, rushing forth as though it would engulf everything, so does it come to pass in this Abyss. This, truly, is much more God's Dwelling-place than heaven or man. A man, who verily desires to enter in, will surely find God here, and himself simply in God, for God never separates Himself from this ground. God will be present with him, and he will find and enjoy eternity here. There is no past or present here; and no created light can reach unto or shine into this divine ground; for here only is the Dwelling-place of God and His sanctuary. Now this Divine Abyss can be fathomed by no creatures; it can be filled by none, and it satisfies none; God only can fill it in His Infinity. For this abyss belongs only to the Divine Abyss, of which it is written: *Abyssus abyssum invocat.*

10 He who is truly conscious of this ground, which shone into the powers of his soul, and lighted and inclined its lowest and highest powers to turn to their pure Source and true Origin, must diligently examine himself, and remain alone, listening to the voice which cries in the wilderness of this ground.

11 This ground is so desert and bare, that no thought has ever entered there. None of all the thoughts of men, which, with

the help of reason, have been devoted to meditation on the Holy Trinity, (and some men have occupied themselves much with these thoughts), have ever entered this ground. For it is so close, and yet so far off, and so far beyond all things, that it has neither time nor place. It is a simple and unchanging condition. A man, who really and truly enters, feels as though he had been here throughout eternity, and as though he were one therewith; whereas it is only for an instant, and the same glance is found and reveals itself in eternity. It shines forth; and God thus bears witness that man existed in God from all eternity, before his creation; that is, he was in God, and thus man was God in God. For St John says: “All things were made by Him,” that means one life in Him. That which man was in himself when created, that he was eternally in God. As long as a man does not attain to the purity with which he came forth, when first created out of nothing, he will never truly come to God. For all inclinations, propensities, and self-esteem, all that can defile the ground in our own possession, must assuredly be cast out; and also, all that we have ever possessed with delight and our own consent in soul and body; all that we have ever received by knowledge or inclination, all, all must first be rooted out, so that we may be as we were when we first came forth from God. Because we do not act thus, we never return to the Source from which we sprang; neither is purity enough, unless our spirits are transformed by the Light of Grace. Now, if we willingly sought after this transformation, and communed with ourselves in our inmost hearts, ordering our conversation aright, at such a time our souls and spirits might well experience a bright glimpse of the highest transformation; although no one can come to God, nor know God, except in Uncreated Light, which is God Himself. The holy prophet says: Lord, “in Thy light we shall see light.” Therefore, if a

holy man communes often in his inmost heart in secret, many a glimpse will be vouchsafed to him in his inmost heart; and what God is will be made much clearer and plainer to him, than the natural sun is to his bodily eyes. [48] [49]

[12] This pure ground was hidden from the heathen; therefore they despised all temporal and transitory things, and went in search of it. But afterwards the great masters, such as Proclus and Plato, arose, and they gave a clear description of it, to those men who could not find it of themselves. Therefore St Augustine said that Plato had fully taught the holy Gospel, *"in principio erat verbum,"* even unto the words: *"Fuit homo missus a Deo;"* but this was in veiled words. These same heathen masters discerned also the Holy Trinity; and all this came from the inmost ground, for which they lived and waited. It is a great disgrace and shame, a miserable and pitiful thing, that we, poor blinded people, who are left, should go on through long years, even unto death, like blind creatures, not knowing ourselves, nor what is concealed in us, knowing nothing about ourselves. Yet we are Christians, and are so called, and have great and exceeding help from the Grace of God, besides possessing the holy faith and the Blessed Sacrament, and many other great and divine helps. Now this is caused entirely by the great fickleness and superficiality, which pervert and trouble us. We are always anxious to occupy ourselves with outward things; our own efforts, our many prayers, readings, studies and so on, which are all of our own self-seeking, with which we occupy ourselves, and which keep us back, so that we cannot commune with ourselves, bare and empty in the inmost depths of our hearts. And yet, he who does not fill the noble vessel of his soul with fine balsam, will fill it with bad wine. Truly, if man would do this, it would be much pleasing unto

God, Who desires to receive from him his best and noblest works.

13 There is yet another witness in the highest powers, the power of love, which is in the will. Have we not this week sung of St John the Baptist: *Lucerna lucens et arden, etc.* "He was a burning and shining light." A lamp gives heat and light; thou canst feel the heat with thy hand; and yet thou canst not see the fire, unless thou lookest at it from above; and thou seest not the light, unless thou seest it through the shade. He who marked this meaning well, and was then conscious of the light and heat, would know that this is wounded love, which shall truly guide thee into this ground. Therefore, when thou comest into this ground, thou must wrestle and struggle with love, and set thy bow upon the Most Highest. [50]

14 But if thou comest into imprisoned love, into that secret, deep abyss, thou must yield thyself in the depths of love entirely; thou hast lost all power over thyself; for there thou wilt find neither thought, nor exercise of power, nor the works of virtue. But, if thou findest there so much space, and thou art so bare that a thought comes to thee, and thou fallest again into imprisoned love, then thou must brace thyself at once, and raise thyself up, and wrestle vehemently with love; and desire, beseech and importune love. If thou canst not speak, think and long; and then speak as St Augustine spoke: "Lord, Thou commandest me to love Thee with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my strength and with all my mind; therefore, grant, O Lord, that I may love Thee above all things." If thou feelest so dull that thou canst not think thus, open thy mouth and say so. Those men, who make no effort, but sit down, as though all were accomplished, never attain to this exalted love. After this comes the love which wells forth.

15 Fourthly comes stormy, raging love. Love has perished quite, and reason has taken its place. Man is never so reasonable as he now generally becomes; for stormy, raging love may be compared to a lamp; man becomes conscious of the heat of that love, for it causes a disturbance in all his powers. Man always longs for this love; and when he has it he does not know it himself; for it consumes the blood and marrow in his bones. Therefore, heed thyself diligently, that thou mayest not destroy thy natural powers with all thy efforts. If love is to do her work, so that thou canst not withdraw thyself from her, thou must follow her through all her storms, and in all her external works. Some men say they will guard themselves from all these storms, that they may not be disgraced; for such doings are not in keeping with their position. Therefore, when irrational love comes, all human work is swallowed up, and God comes and speaks to those men. This word is more useful than hundreds of thousands of words that could be spoken by any man. St Dionysius says: “When the external word has been uttered in the depths of the soul, and the ground has been so prepared and made ready, that it can receive the word in all its dignity and entirety, and can bring it forth, not only partially but completely, that ground becomes one with the word; and yet it retains its own essential being, even in that union.” Our Lord Jesus Christ bore witness to this when He said: “That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee.” As He also said to St Augustine: “Thou shalt be changed into Me, and not I into thee.” Dear children, I tell you of a truth, that none can attain to this but by the path of love. [51] [52]

16 Now St John the Baptist said, that he was “a voice in the wilderness, to prepare the way of the Lord;” that is, the path of virtue; that path is very plain. He said also: “Make straight

His paths." Paths are often more even than ways. Therefore, whoever can really find the right path, which leads to the true ground of God, while at the same time he is conscious of his own ground, he must, before all things, remain alone, and diligently seek the footpath, which is very wild, dark, rough, unknown, distant and strange to him. For the man who diligently gives heed to all these things, no calamity or perplexity, either external or internal, is too great or too small; neither any infirmity which may befall him; for they will guide, allure and urge him on to the right ground.

17 The paths must also be made straight from within; we must seek them diligently; our spirits in God and God in us; for the paths are dark and unknown. Many men go astray, running after external works and discipline. They act like one who, in going to Rome, ought to ascend; whereas, if the road diverged, the further he went, the further he would go astray. It is thus that these men act; for often, when they come back from external exercises, they have become old and ill, and their heads ache; and there is not enough of this love in their works, because of their passions.

18 Therefore, when a man finds himself in this storm of love, he must not think of his senses, or of humility, or of anything else, but only, whether in his works he has enough love. Man struggles also in love against coldness, indifference and harshness. Man should devote himself entirely to love, and render full allegiance, being poor and miserable in all that is not love. Herein must thou have a steady ardent desire and full trust in God; and thou must keep thy heart pure for the Love of God; then thou wilt find such great and noble things in the Love of God, that thou wilt not be able to give utterance to them. Therefore, all men, whose faith and trust in God are not quite pure, will sink lower; love will be

extinguished in their hearts, and their lives will be fruitless. I say unto thee, if thou hadst all the marks thou couldest possess here below, and this witness to the Love of God was wanting, all would be lost. Therefore the Evil One readily leaves all other virtues to man, as long as he does not posses the witness of true love. He will allow thee to have deceitful love, so that thou mayest imagine thou hast true love; but, if thou couldest see into the depths of thy heart, thou wouldest soon find out how it stood with thy love. Therefore, know, that all that is lacking in you, is nothing else but that you have not entered into the right ground; for, if ye truly entered there, ye would find the Grace of God, and it would exhort you unceasingly to lift up your minds above yourselves. This divine exhortation is constantly resisted by many men, and that so often, that they become unworthy of Divine Grace thereby; so that perhaps they will never become partakers of it; for they spoil it altogether with their lives which seem to them so good. Were they obedient to the glance of the Grace of God, they would be led thereby, and be brought into such Divine Union, that even in this life they would experience that which they will enjoy everlastingly in the life to come. This has been the experience of many holy men, who have been led by God along this lofty way; and He still leads others by it, who open their hearts to Him. God grant that this also may be our experience. Amen.

SERMON XII · On the Feast of St Timothy, or the Memorial of St Peter

[1] Of brotherly rebuke and admonition, how far it is advisable and seemly or not; and especially how Prelates and Governors ought to demean themselves towards their subjects.

[2] *Argue, obsecra, increpa, in omni patientia et doctrina.*

[3] “Reprove, entreat, rebuke, in all patience and doctrine.” [53]

[4] This is the lesson which St Paul gives to his beloved disciple Timothy, whom he set to rule over men; and it equally behoves Father-confessors and all Magistrates to possess these two things, patience and doctrine. First, it is their office to rebuke all open sinners whom they may possibly bring to a better way, and especially those over whom they are set in authority, that they may reveal the truth unto them; for this is needful, and in many places Scripture doth tell us how we ought to teach, entreat and rebuke those who are committed to our charge, each according to the office which he holds; as St Gregory has sufficiently shown and set forth in his book on “Pastoral Care;” wherefore we will refrain for the present from saying more on that point.

[5] But we will rather turn to the second point, which is more spiritual; teaching a man to look within and judge himself; seeing that he who desires to become a spiritual man must not be ever taking note of others, and above all of their sins, lest he fall into wrath and bitterness, and a judging spirit towards his neighbours. My children, this works such great

mischief in a man's soul as it is miserable to think of; wherefore, as you love God, shun this evil temper, and turn your eyes full upon yourselves, and see if you cannot discover the same fault in yourselves, either in times past or now-a-days. And, if you find it, remember how that it is God's appointing that you shall now behold this sin in another, in order that you may be brought to acknowledge and repent of it; and amend your ways and pray for your brother, that God may grant him repentance and amendment according to His Divine Will. Thus a good heart draws amendment from the sins of others, and is guarded from all harsh judgment and wrath, and preserves an even temper; while an evil heart puts the worst interpretation on all that it sees, and turns it to its own hurt. Thus is a good man able to maintain inviolate a due love and loyalty towards his fellow-men.

6 Further, this generous love makes him hold others innocent in his heart; even when he sees infirmity or fault in his neighbour, he reflects that very likely all is not as it seems on the outside, but the act may have been done with a good intention; or else he thinks that God may have permitted it to take place for an admonition and lesson to himself; or again, as an opportunity for him to exercise self-control, and to learn to die unto himself by the patient endurance of and forbearance towards the faults of his neighbours, even as God has often borne many wrongs from him and had patience with his sins. And this would often tend more to his neighbour's improvement than all the efforts he could make for it in the way of reproofs or chastisements, even if they were done in love, (though indeed we often imagine that our reproofs are given in love, when it is in truth far otherwise). For I tell thee, dear child, if thou couldst conquer thyself by long-suffering and gentleness and the pureness of thy heart, thou wouldst have vanquished all thine enemies. It would be

better for thee than if thou hadst won the hearts of all the world by thy writings and wisdom, and hadst miserably destroyed thine own soul by passing judgment on thy neighbours; for the Lord says, “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?”

7 In thus speaking, I except those who are bound by their office in the Holy Christian Church to rebuke others. Let them wisely beware how they reprove, and for what causes, so that they rebuke none with an irritable demeanour, or with harsh and angry words, from which much trouble and toil do spring; for that they have no right to do; but it is permitted to them to reprove those who are under them for their own amendment. But, alas! it happens for the most part now-a-days that those who occupy the highest places do often and greatly forget themselves in these respects; and hence their rebukes do not produce any amendment, but only anger and alienation of heart. For, if they were to instruct those who are under their care in the fear of God, in such wise that the people could mark and be sure that it was done solely for the saving of their souls, they would be much the more ready to set themselves to amend, and would be content. But now, alas! they see that their superiors are only seeking their own glory and profit, and are taking upon themselves wrongfully to keep them down and defraud them of their just rights; and therefore reproof only makes them the more refractory and indignant. And there are many in authority who do really believe that they rebuke those under them from a reverence for righteousness; and yet are doing it from a wrathful, domineering and arrogant spirit; and what they think they are doing from hatred to sin, they are doing from hatred to men.

[8] But I beseech you examine yourselves, whether you do in truth love those whom you are punishing so bitterly, out of reverence and zeal for righteousness, as you suppose. For when we see men punishing and oppressing with such vehemence those who are under them, or treating them so harshly, with sharp words and sour looks, it is to be feared that there is more reproof given out of crabbed impatience than for the sake of righteousness from the true ground of charity and kindness, especially by those who have not yet experienced the inward joy of hearty sweetness and godly love; for the soul that has not yet experienced inward love and divine sweetness, does not know how to hold a discreet mien and just language in rebuking; but genuine love teaches us how we ought to treat those who are worthy of punishment.

[9] Now, let him who has to punish, in virtue of his office, first take account of God’s dishonour and the injury done to the soul of his flock; and then rebuke with sweet, loving words, and patient demeanour and gestures; so that the weak shall be able to mark that he is seeking and purposing their welfare alone and nothing else. And, if in the dispensations of God’s Providence it should happen that those who are subject should at times rise up and offend by license and presumptuous irreverence against their superiors, the latter ought not in any wise to regard or revenge it, so far as that may be without scandal to the rest of their subjects; for, if they revenge themselves, they fall under suspicion of selfish motives; and it is likely that God will not be able to work any fruit through them; but they must rather treat such offenders with more patience, kinder words and acts, than they do others. For this is commonly the greatest temptation which befalls those in authority, by which they for the most either win or lose the greatest reward of their labours; wherefore

they should ever be on their guard; for gentleness and a readiness to forgive injuries is the best virtue that a ruler can possess.

10 They shall show no partiality in their affections; neither for their own glory, nor yet towards particular persons; but they shall embrace all their flock in the arms of a common love, as a mother does her children. To the weak they should ever show the greatest love and care, and without ceasing lift up their hearts unto God in prayer, earnestly beseeching Him to guard and defend the people committed to their charge, and not indulge in any self-glorification. Likewise, so far as it rests with them, let them be the first to do such works as they would wish to see their people do; for so it stands, that, with the help of God, all may be accomplished to a good end, when those in authority are inclined to virtue; for then their subjects must needs follow as they lead, even though they have been beforehand inclined to all evil and vice, and hostile to their superiors.

11 But for those who have received no commission to govern other men, but stand in a private character without office; it is needful that they secretly judge themselves inwardly, and beware of judging all things without, for in such judgments we do commonly err; and the true position of things is generally very far otherwise from that which appears to us, as we often come to discover afterwards. On this point remember the proverb: “He is a wise man who can turn all things to the best.”

12 May God help us so to do! Amen.

SERMON XIII · On the Feast of St Paul the Apostle

1 Of an absolute dying unto self and to all things. Of the use of suffering; of the Love, the Suffering and the Blood of Christ.

2 *Vivo autem, jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus.*

3 “And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me.” [54]

4 St Paul had so completely died unto himself and to all things, and was so transformed into true love for God and for all men, that he would willingly have died a thousand deaths for the salvation of men; and had even so forgotten self, that he knew nothing save Christ crucified; and desired nothing, but to win all men to Christ, as though he had begotten all men, and were their earthly father. There are four things besides other virtues which will be especially useful to us, if we desire to imitate this exalted Apostle in true love and resignation, and to please God. First, we must absolutely banish and separate ourselves from all created things outside God. Secondly, we must forget and ignore all creatures. Thirdly, we must be constantly looking back to our origin, which means that, in God, we must long after and desire God with strong crying. Fourthly, we must labour that we may be more deeply impressed with, and fashioned in the Likeness of Christ.

5 Absolute poverty is thine when thou canst not remember whether anybody has ever owed thee or been indebted to thee for anything; just as all things will be forgotten by thee in the last journey of death. If thou desirest in time to live above time, and to be separated from all creatures, thou must

learn to forget thy own powers, and all that nature can accomplish. A constant return to thy origin means, that the presence of all things, in which thou canst not find God, will seem like a wound to thee. The labour, by which Christ is more deeply imprinted and formed in thee, takes place within, where Christ ever receives the Person, Nature and Being of His Father. The more Christ sees man thus choosing Him, the more clearly will Christ be found in him. All, who are like unto Christ in pain, bitterness and patience, will also be elected and chosen to be with Him, where He at all times partakes of the Being and Nature of His Heavenly Father. He who can kill and destroy his infirmities will also receive new strength from God; therefore in him, who devotes all the powers of his human nature unto Christ, Christ will pour the power of His Divine Nature. The loving Heart of God will be satisfied if thou diest to thy very self.

6 A holy soul, which has become barren and empty of all created things, and which cannot form nor mould in itself anything that is of the creature, moves God to draw it to Himself, to the very centre of His Divine Being. The exit of all created things out of thy heart, brings about the entering in, and pouring in of all the riches of His Almighty Power. No one can enjoy the Presence of God, and His Likeness, like the man who is dead to all things, and who is as dead in heart and will as a thing that never possessed any being.

7 The next way is to die to all things and to live to God alone. He who always dies to self, is always beginning to live unto God, and that without ceasing. In the truest death of all created things, the sweetest and most natural life lies hidden. There is no more natural or more real way of procuring Eternal Life, than by killing and dying in heart to all created

things, and by the subjection, the submission and destruction of self, as beneath all creatures.

8 A man once thought that God drew some men even by pleasant paths, while others were drawn by the path of pain. Our Lord answered him thus: “What think ye can be pleasanter or nobler than to be made most like unto Me? that is by suffering. Mark, to whom was ever offered such a painful and troubled life as to Me? And in whom can I better work, in accordance with My true nobility, than in those who are most like Me? They are the men who suffer. No man ever suffered so bitterly as I; and yet no man was ever so pure as I. When was I more mocked than when I was most glorifying My Heavenly Father? Learn that My Divine Nature never worked so nobly in human nature as by suffering; and because suffering is so efficacious it is sent out of great love. I understand the weakness of human nature at all times, and, out of love and righteousness, I lay no heavier burden on man than he can bear. The crown must be firmly pressed down that is to bud and blossom in the Eternal Presence of My Heavenly Father. He who desires to be wholly immersed in the fathomless sea of My Godhead, must also be deeply immersed in the deep sea of bitter sorrow. I am exalted far above all things, and work supernatural and wonderful works in Myself; the deeper and the more supernaturally a man crushes himself beneath all things, the more supernaturally will he be drawn far above all things.

9 A man desired to know when man’s nature became absolutely dead. Our Lord replied: “When all sins are as impossible and as hateful to thee, as they are to the high estate of My Divine Nature.” Then the man said: “Ah! dear Lord, but what can cause this death?” Answer: “The presence of My death and of My Dying Life, during which I was always

working out the salvation of the human race. My Death was always present to Me, and a consuming thirst that I might suffer for the sake of man the very bitterest sufferings that had been ordained for Me. It was not sufficient for Me to be rejected by all men; those, also, who acknowledged and confessed Me, must be hated and tormented as well. The burning thirst I felt for all men, caused the welling up of My precious streaming Blood; for it would have been far more bitter to Me than the death I suffered, had one drop of blood or water remained in my Heart, that I should not have poured forth for the salvation of man. As the seal impresses its form on the wax, so the love, with which I have loved man, has power to impress his form on My Hands, My Feet and My Divine Heart, so that I can never forget him. Even so My wounds were pierced with the sharp nails and pointed spear, so have I filled them up again with the sweet balsam of My Divine Nature, so that it may always freely flow forth into the weakness of human nature. My Blood is always a bath, boiling over in the flame of My Divine Nature, in which man may wash away his sins.

10 “What can be sweeter and more satisfying than to work the like in him for whom I have suffered, and to bring forth fruit and increase in My dear members? Nothing is more pleasing to Me than that it should be made manifest how supernaturally in the power of My Love, I have worked and suffered for man.”

11 A holy man once bethought himself how painful it must have been to God to have been seen by his enemies when he was taken prisoner. Our Lord answered him: “My enemies appeared unto Me in my presence as friends, who wished to help me in carrying out the sweetest and most desirable work that I ever worked in my life.” God appeared most miserable

unto man, when, exhausted and overwhelmed, He was taken away from the column or pillar, and said: “Behold, how love for man has exhausted Me, ought it not to be sweet to Me to drink at his hand the recompense of My Martyrdom? See how many precious signs man may see in Me, if he looks upon the numberless wounds of love in Me and meditates upon my Sacred Passion.”

[12] The soul is so nobly united to God, and, at first, in such a supernatural way, that man might justly shun, like death, every thought that could interfere with this union. The thought, which is to receive God into itself, can endure nothing strange. Therefore desire only invisible and inexpressible things. All will be forgotten by thee that can be spoken in words. “Keep silence on all that I work in thee; for I am precious to all creatures, because I am absolutely hidden from all creatures. It is natural to Me to dwell in the Heart of my Father; so also is it natural and dear to Me to dwell in the soul, in which I find rest and the likeness of my bleeding Wounds, and which I have won by the eternal tokens of my Fatherly Heart; and these Wounds shall flourish eternally in that soul before my Divine Eyes. For him for whom I have ordained a painful life in this world, I have also ordained the enjoyment in eternity of the sweetest honey of My Divine Nature. I cannot really enter into a man’s soul until he resigns himself, and yields himself up in all humility, and until the old man be driven out.” May God grant that we may follow St Paul perfectly in this, and in all other good exercises. Amen.

SERMON XIV · On the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin, or on the Octave of Her Nativity

[1] Of two ways in which men come to the Blessed Virgin. Of the temptations that attack men living in seclusion. Of that which they must learn by experience, and make their own, before they can attain to the highest degree of real perfection.

[2] *Transite ad me, omnes qui concupiscitis me.*

[3] “Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits.” [55]

[4] To-day we celebrate the eighth day after the Birth of our Lady. St Bernard and other Saints confess that they cannot praise her enough, and that they must perforce be silent on all the riches of her praise. St Bernard says: “Dear Lady, although thou hast been exalted to the kinship of the Godhead, forget not thy kinship with our poor human nature. Be not so entirely lost in the Abyss of the Godhead, that thou canst not also remember that human weakness by which thou also hast been tempted, and the many holy prayers which have been offered unto thee by me and by many holy Saints.”

[5] There are two ways in which she has been treated by men. Some will not, and say that they cannot pray, because they desire and also must needs trust themselves to God’s keeping, that He may do as He sees fit with them and all theirs. Others pray fervently to our Lady and to other Saints about all their affairs. There may be defects in both of these ways. The first err by not realising that the Holy Church has ordained that all men should pray. Our dear Lord taught us

this Himself, and gave us an example and a model of prayer; for He Himself prayed to His Heavenly Father. These men justify their foolish notion, by saying that they need not worship, and that they will yet be heard, if their intentions are not evil. But there are some things which the Lord will only do in answer to prayer. Now, mark, God often allows man to fall into trouble, that he may be provoked unto prayer. Then God helps him, and hears his prayer, in order that his love may be stirred up yet more, and that by means of the answer he may receive comfort.

6 The others also err who pray because they are impatient, and expect that all the things for which they pray must come to pass. They ought indeed to pray, but with true resignation, that in all ways and in all things they may gladly accept the Will of God. Now, we have lately said much of the way in which men, who are beginning to do better, must cut off all gross, coarse sins and all growing evil inclinations, while those men who have in some measure attained to perfection must root out their inner besetting sins.

7 Now, those men, who have gone into retirement, fixing their hearts on God alone, desiring only to love God, and to think only of Him, are brought into such great temptations by the Evil One, that a man in the world would be terrified thereby. Temptation is common to all these men; and yet in each case the origin is very different. Temptation comes to a worldly man from an unmortified heart, from his nature, from flesh and blood. The temptation overpowers him, his work is destroyed; therefore there is nothing left for the Enemy to do, and he blazes it abroad. But a good man holds fast in his integrity, temptation comes to him from without and but little from his own heart. Thus the Enemy finds out some tendency in a man, even though he be pure. For instance, a man may

naturally be inclined to anger; the Enemy discovers this, and attacks him with all his cunning, full of wicked deceit. He need not give himself so much trouble with a worldly man, for such an one follows immediately. He can entangle him in his toils at once, winding them round and round him till he is quite helpless. This is the way in which the Enemy treats a man whom he finds inclined to anger. He first of all suggests one image to him, and then another, which will rouse him, so that at last the man becomes angry, and he cries and clamours, as though he desired to beat and stab every one. But if he then comes to himself, and casts himself down before God in the very depths of humility, desiring no confessor, but making peace with man and giving due satisfaction, he can then cast himself down in his unworthiness and great sin, and then his sin will vanish from the sight of God like snow before the sun; all will be atoned, and the Enemy will depart thence in sorrow. If a man desire to act wisely in this, he must be very sincere and ready to get free.

[8] Now we must notice one sense in which this does not affect all men; and we poor, weak, feeble creatures, who have not experienced them, may well fear to speak and hear of such exalted things. For it is just those, who know about them, who find it is so utterly impossible to speak of them. Job said: “A Spirit passed before my face, when I was trembling; it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof.”[21] St Gregory understood this to mean the Sacred Humanity of our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ. The Form, which he saw, and did not recognise, was the unknown Godhead which is concealed from all creatures and is unknown to them. To this he added that which is written in the third of Kings. The Angel told Elias to go forth and stand upon the mount till the Lord came. When he went up, an awful tempest came, which was so

strong that it overturned the mountain, the hard rocks were broken and the mountains were rent asunder; but in that the Lord did not come. Then there was a great and terrible earthquake; but in that the Lord did not come. Then there was a fierce fire; but neither in that did the Lord come. After all these things there was a still small Voice, a soft rustling like a gentle breeze; and in that came the Lord. Elias stood at the door of the cave, and wrapped his face in his mantle. In none of these ways—neither in the wind, nor the earthquake, nor the fire, did the Lord come; but, as St Gregory says, they were all a preparation and the road therein. These high mountains are like lofty, great minds; and the hard rocks and the earthquake are like minds wanting in self-control; and men who think well of themselves, who hold fast to their own devices, and are self-willed and uncontrolled, they make great plans and do great deeds, but all in their own way. When the Lord comes to such men, He must first send a great earthquake, which will upset all that is in them.

9 But, alas, there are not many such men. The reason is that men content themselves with the things of this life, and cleave to their evil nature; and thus they remain, given up to the pleasures of sense. But those who are rightly stirred up, either more or less (and I have seen many such men), have feared over and over again, that in that hour they must lay down their lives. A man asked our Lord what he ought to do, because it seemed to him, day and night, as if he must lose his life in this way, and whether he ought thus to endanger it. Our Lord answered him: “Canst thou not risk and suffer that internally, which I suffered without measure in My body, in My Hands and Feet and in all My Body?”

10 Children, some men cannot bear this; so they seek here, there and everywhere for rest; and find it not, till they cast

themselves down into the depths of suffering. How, think ye, should death be met? Children, if a man were as pure as when first baptized, and had never fallen into sin, still, if he desired to attain to the next truth, he must pass through this earthquake, and by this way into true resignation, or he will get no further.

11 After this earthquake came the fire; and in that the Lord came not. This means fiery love, which consumes the bones and the marrow, and by means of which a man is brought outside himself. A man was once so greatly inflamed by this fire that he never trusted himself to go near straw, thinking that his very heat must set it alight. Another man, because of this heat, could only sleep in winter when it had been snowing; he then lay down in the snow and slept, and the snow immediately melted around him, far and near. See, children, fiery love penetrates by the spirit into the body, and yet in this the Lord comes not.

12 After this came a sweet, gentle breeze, a soft wind like a murmur; and in that came the Lord. How was it, think ye, that must be, when the Lord comes to man in all these ways which are sudden and violent, and which cause such great disturbances that all that there is in his poor nature and in his spirit is consumed, so that then the Lord Himself comes? Know this, that if God did not preserve man’s nature in a supernatural manner, he would be unable, even if he had the strength of a hundred men, to bear the joy and the wonder; and yet it is only a glimpse. This glimpse was so excessively sudden that Elias stood in the door of the cave, and wrapped his face in his mantle. This cave is human weakness; but the entrance is nothing less than the vision of the Godhead by man. Elias wrapped his face in his mantle; which means that, however short and swift the vision was, still it was a glimpse

that transcended nature, and was insupportable and incomprehensible to the natural man. Children, it was verily God the Lord Who was here. His sweetness is far above that of honey and the honey-comb, which are the sweetest things known to the world. But this reaches far beyond all powers, even unto a fathomless abyss. As weak eyes cannot bear the brightness of the sun, so a thousand times less can nature endure this condition in her weakness. All that we can say of this is that however well and fully we may be able to comprehend it with our minds, express it in words, or grasp it with the understanding, still it is all as utterly unlike the reality as it would be were I to say of a piece of black coal: “Look, here is the bright sun which lightens all the world.” Here true peace is brought forth; that peace which passeth all understanding; and thus a man may here be established in that true peace, which no man taketh from him.

13 Now the Form which Job saw and did not recognise, was the second Person of the Godhead, the Son of God; the soft, gentle Breeze in which the Lord came was the Holy Ghost. St Gregory says that this means that He came in this gentle breeze, and at Whitsuntide in a rushing wind. The reason was that He came to the outward man in a visible way, that he might carry on the work for the benefit of Christendom. Job needed it not after this fashion, therefore the Spirit came to him. Blessed are the sons of men who can attain to this great good for an instant even before death. But know that, however great and good this may be, it is as unlike all the sweetness that will be ours in Eternal Life, as the least drop of water is to the fathomless sea.

14 Now, what becomes of all those men before whom this joy is held forth and made known? They sink down in their absolute nothingness, in an inscrutable manner, as though

they desired to be annihilated for a hundred hours out of love and praise to Him. It would be joy to them in the Presence and in awe of that great Being, out of very love, to attain to a state of non-existence; and they would gladly cast themselves down into the deepest abyss; for the more they acknowledge His Majesty, the more they acknowledge their own littleness and worthlessness. By this annihilation they have so absolutely separated themselves from themselves, that even if God wished to give none of this consolation and this experience they would not desire it, but would flee from it. And, if of their own free will they desired none, it would not be good for them, and it might easily lead them into sin, for which they would afterwards have to suffer in purgatory; and it would also be a sign that all was not well with them. Therefore the power of love must ever be thirsting; while moderation and discretion flee away.

15 These men have a most consuming thirst for suffering. They look upon it as their consolation and joy, given to them by God, that they may follow the blessed example of Christ. They desire it may come to them in the most ignominious and painful manner in which it can be borne. They thirst for the Cross; and, with love and fervent longings, they bend beneath the Cross of their beloved Lord. Here the Holy Cross is exalted indeed on the sacred Day of the Cross. The sufferings and the example of our Lord are followed here with true dignity. St Paul, who was exalted even unto the third heaven, said: “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”[22] Job said: “My soul rather chooseth hanging, and my bones death.”[23] This he chose as the best that God had given him. This hanging on the Cross is pain to most men, because their God hung on the Cross for their sakes, therefore God ordains that man should experience horrible darkness, and be forsaken in his great

misery. How can the power of love, which was kindled by the flame of love, sustain itself when thus cut off from all consolation in such a perceptible way? Integrity and moderation come and speak to the power of love: “See, beloved one, this is the inheritance that He has left to those who love Him; a soul full of God and a body or nature full of suffering.” As love burns more or less brightly, so this inheritance is ever more valued, and is sweeter than any other consolation could be. This is the longed-for inheritance that our Lord promised to His Friends by the Prophets. The more nobly they posses this inheritance and love it, the more they will also posses that blessed and heavenly inheritance that our Lord extolled to His friends. They will posses it ever in fuller measure throughout eternity. The holy Martyrs have attained to this inheritance by their great love. They think they are only just beginning life; they feel like men who are beginning to grow. May God have mercy on those who neglect this ever increasing, true and holy blessing for vile, corrupt things, and may we ever confess this to Him. Amen.

SERMON XV · On the Feast of St Mary Magdalene

[1] A most precious Sermon and thoughtful Exhortation, which covers the whole ground of the Teaching and Preaching of the celebrated Doctor Tauler. Of the true resignation and seclusion by which we may come to real peace and to the highest state of perfection. It is founded on the words of Christ which he spake, in praise of Mary Magdalene, to her sister Martha.

[2] “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary; Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

[3] In our dear Lord Jesus Christ, and in His holy and fruitful Coming, I greet you, faithful children of God, who are assembled here to learn of the Divine Word, and of the best way to eternal salvation. Amen. [56]

[4] Dearly beloved and elect, listen to the Voice of God in your hearts, earnestly and diligently, that ye may not be led astray and blinded by transitory things and your own natural tendencies. If ye heartily desire to become the dearest Friends and Disciples of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ, ye must rid yourselves of all that pertains to the creature, and especially free yourselves, as much as possible, of all that can be rightly and honestly called necessary. Ye must look to Him alone as the Source of all things, for He needs the help of none. Ye must keep yourselves cut off and freed from all superfluous and unnecessary conversation and outward delight in human beings, and from all images, both external and internal, that are pleasing in any way to the natural man, or of which ye are conscious. This ye must do, like the

beloved Mary Magdalene; so that God may work His wonderful works in you, according to His dear Will, and may pour out upon you His fervent, ardent Love and Divine Grace, that ye may acknowledge, as ye fall at His Sacred Feet, that all that may befall you is needful and His Divine Decree.

5 Now mark, if we were inwardly conscious of it, we should well understand, how very often we may be blinded, to our own hurt, by unnecessary and external works of love, which prevent our perceiving the divine inspiration and our own infirmities. Although such works may have been done in love, both great and godlike, and may not be really evil in themselves, still they are not that which is best and most perfect. Our Lord Jesus Christ praised Mary Magdalene for her absolute separation from all things, when He said: “She hath chosen the best part,”[24] and He rebuked Martha, because she was too careful in her anxiety and great and loving service, for she loved Him and His chosen disciples, with ardent, fervent love; and that in itself was right and proper. Therefore, if we especially desire to receive from God consolation and teaching that will be useful to us and bear fruit in us, and a true and perfect separation from all needful things, both bodily and spiritual, it is very necessary that we should decide at once to cut ourselves off from all unnecessary works and ways, in our words, works and all things that are more than absolutely necessary, either in bodily or spiritual matters, following therein the teachings of God and of our own consciences. It is especially necessary that we should shun and flee from all those persons who desire to lead us astray, and suggest thoughts to us of outward things, however holy those persons may be, or may seem to be; for they are not our true friends in sincerity and truth, whether they be Father Confessors or whosoever they may be, either spiritually or worldly-minded people. We shall

never find God anywhere so perfectly, so fruitfully and so truly as in retirement and in the wilderness; like the Blessed Mother of God, St John the Baptist, and Mary Magdalene, and other saints and patriarchs. They all fled from the world, from society, and all the cares and anxieties of the creature, and went into the forests and into the desert, or wherever they could find the greatest solitude. Oh! verily, much intercourse with society, and much outward conversation and necessary business lead up to an evil old age, and drive out God, however good the intentions may have been. For, when we fill our hearts with the creature, and with strange, useless images, God must of necessity remain outside, neither desires He to enter there. A barrel that has been filled with refuse or with decaying matter, cannot hereafter be used for good, generous wine or any other pure drink. Oh! verily, we may turn where and to whomsoever we will in this life, and, in all outward things, we shall find nothing but falsity, unfaithfulness and dissension. Where we imagine we shall be able to seek and to find great consolations and delight, we lose entirely all inward consolation, and are robbed entirely of that peace of mind which it had taken us a long time to attain in solitude. We cannot regain it, and we become greatly discontented, offending by unnecessary, superfluous and untrue words; we waste our time, and do many other things which cause our hearts to grow cold and extinguish our love. Conscience pricks us, and we are easily stirred up and urged on to impatience and anger. Woe be to us! could we only realise this, we should find that in God only can we have peace or consolation, or truly perfect joy and delight.

6 Let us turn to God with all our hearts, and wait upon Him in meekness and patience, as did the holy Prophets and Patriarchs, aforetime, in the old Covenant (Testament); for they indeed waited patiently for His coming in Hades, for

many thousand years before they were redeemed. Oh! surely, we ought to be more ready to wait for Him, when, for a time, He withdraws His consolation and sweetness, of which we are quite unworthy, and hides Himself from us. He thinks only of what is best and most useful for us, that He may kindle and stir up our love and our longing for Him, ever more and more. For in His love and great mercy He neither wills nor desires to refuse, or to take from us, anything that is useful and necessary either in body or spirit; He knows surely what is best for us.

7 O God, how greatly we need Thy mercy! for we are so foolish and senseless, that we often allow little things to keep us back, imagining that we are pleasing God, when we sing His praise with many high-sounding words; though the words used by the Saviour and His dear disciples were short and simple. Or again, we think we are pleasing God and helping our neighbour by an unjustifiable waste of time and much outward sorrow. Or again, we think it is good and useful for us to carry on much unnecessary business and to delight in our fellow creatures (however holy they may be or appear to be). Thus even the blessed Form of our dear Lord Jesus Christ, and His faithful, fatherly and fruit-bringing Presence became harmful to His dear disciples and hindered them and led them astray, as He Himself said: “It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.” Or again, we think we may have and hold many things with delight, and as our own, without spiritual harm; either temporal goods, company, familiar intercourse with relations or spiritual friends, while at the same time we are pleasing our dear Lord and continuing in His love; though He was despised, He was sorrowful and poor, and said Himself: “There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands

for My sake, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, and in the world to come eternal life." [57] [58] [59]

8 He says also in another place: "He who hateth not his father and mother and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."

9 O God! could we but see into the depths of the loving teaching of our dear Lord, we should surely acknowledge at once that all our life is unholy, and that it is not at all that which we imagine it to be.

10 If we ever are to attain to true Divine Peace, and be completely united to God, all that is not absolutely necessary, either bodily or spiritually, must be cast off; everything that could interpose itself to an unlawful extent between us and Him, and lead us astray; for He alone will be Lord in our hearts, and none other; for Divine Love can admit of no rival.

11 Oh! let us praise the Death of our dear Lord Jesus Christ and his inestimable merit, and ponder on the short transitory nature of this miserable life, and the delusions of this faithless, treacherous and deceitful world. Remember how dangerous it is to hold intercourse with any, whether clergy or laity, and how short our time is here, and that we must be preparing for the day of our death which is ever drawing nearer. If ye keep watch over your hearts, and listen for the Voice of God and learn of Him, in one short hour ye can learn more from Him than ye could learn from man in a thousand years. Dear children, use this short but most precious time wisely and profitably; and let none cause you to err, neither deceive you, that ye may not, to your own hurt, neglect your own salvation. We may lose much of our worldly goods, but we may also recover them again, though they will be of no further use to us when this short fleeting life is over. But if

we lose but one little hour of this precious time, or vainly waste it, we can never recover it again; and we shall be in need of it throughout eternity, and be deprived of the exceeding great and eternal joy and reward, which we might otherwise have earned.

12 I fear, indeed, that there is great cause for anxiety, both on my account and on that of all those who cling too much to their fellow-creatures, and who are led astray and needlessly troubled by asking, hearing and talking too much about strange and useless tales. It comes to pass, too, that when, through His great and endless mercy, God preserves us from great and coarse sins, He nevertheless allows us to persist in fruitless outward imaginings, in a cold, thoughtless, foolish state of blindness, so that we neither can make, nor desire to make any progress towards a state of perfection, and shall have in consequence, to endure the fires of purgatory. We are like unto foolish asses, which never learn any form of speech than their own braying, or seek any other comfort or sweetness, but only rough, tasteless thistles, while they have to endure scorn and many a hard and cruel blow, which they really do not deserve. Surely, if we are not willing to give up outward attachments and distractions, simply for the sake of God and our own eternal salvation, yet we ought to be able to do so readily for the sake of that great peace of heart, which, even in this world, would be ours; and because we should be freed from much painful and unmerited oppression and perplexity. Verily, the man who wishes to prove himself always in the right, in everything that he does, sees, hears and discusses, and who will not give way and be silenced, will never be at peace in himself, and will have a barren, sullen and wandering mind; he will prey upon himself, even though he be left in peace by all, and is tried by no outward pressure. We must commend all that we posses both in body and spirit

in full confidence to God, and allow Him to work in us according to His Will; and then we shall attain to perfect peace. He can guide and prepare us far better in all things, both bodily and spiritual, and for our own good both in body and spirit, if He finds that we have desired and sought honestly His praise and glory alone in all things. This indeed should suffice us; we need no longer be careful or troubled about anything, either without or within, but must seek only to give ourselves into His keeping entirely, in all humility. If it seem good to Him, He can show us in many ways what we ought to do and what we ought to leave undone; for He only knows what is really needful for us, and He only desires that which is best for us, would we but trust ourselves entirely to Him.

13 But we want to order our own ways, and to do that which we think best, just as we fancy and it pleases us, perhaps solely in the light of nature. We want to be wiser than God, Who is the Source of all Wisdom, and we imagine that, could we but rid ourselves of this sorrow or of that person, or could we be at such and such a court or society, it would be to our profit and advantage. Truly, if we could but see it, we should find that the Evil Spirit willingly deceives us and leads our hearts astray, making us restless and discontented. Steadfastness is not only one of the sources, but also shares in all other virtues; therefore the Evil One always endeavours, whenever he gets a chance, to prevent men from holding fast to this virtue. But if we strove more diligently to find him out, we should realise that we are seeking secretly and ignorantly by the light of nature. We imagine things, and lie to ourselves and are ready to flee from the Cross, and to cast it away, before God sees fit to remove it. Verily, this should not and ought not so to be; for our dear Lord, in His great love and mercy towards His chosen ones, afflicts and

crucifies them unceasingly in this world, in many secret, strange ways, often unknown to them. He would not have them love anything too well in this life, that evil spirits may never gain any power over them. Our dear Lord afflicts and crucifies one man in one way, and another man in another way; one more, another less, according to the needs of each, and of the power of each to receive the Grace of God, and to draw nearer to His own Will in all things. Therefore we must be ready to suffer and submit, as much in one kind of suffering and need as in another, just as God sees fit to afflict us. We must not think at once that if we could have some really divine witness or testimony from God, or from His Friends, that we then should be more at peace; for often, when we strive to avoid some slight suffering or discipline, we only fall into it all the more deeply.

14 Woe be unto us! Were we only not so foolish, but recognised instead how very much the smallest suffering or affliction purifies us and unites us to God, and in God; how great our eternal reward will be; and how quickly it drives and chases away the Evil Spirit from us, so that he can have no power over us, surely, we should be ready to run miles to the Cross, and should earnestly thank all those who in any way afflicted or tried us. We should turn towards the road that they take from real joy and thankfulness, and we should be glad, beyond all measure, that we had been able to find and to carry so heavy a Cross. So did the holy Apostle, St Andrew; he rejoiced exceedingly in the Cross, and longed for it with fervent love and desire; because he craved in some measure to be like unto his God and Lord Who was crucified for our sakes. Oh! even in this life how great and enduring is the reward that we might gain, if we only yielded ourselves wholly and joyfully to the Will of God. Suffering and all kinds of affliction are indeed most precious and fruitful and make

men so like Him, that our Lord will not leave any of His Friends without suffering. For, rather than that His chosen ones should be undisciplined and unprepared, He is ready to create suffering out of nothing, and allows them to be tried by all sorts of irrational and dishonest things that by means of them they may be prepared.

15 But, alas! in these times, we are altogether unworthy of these fruitful gifts of God; we are careless and unreceptive. We protect ourselves from them, and struggle against them as much as lies in our power; for we will not suffer anyone to try us or to afflict us either by word or deed. When anyone attacks us, we fly at him at once, like angry dogs; we assert ourselves, and excuse ourselves in words, or in our own minds, by thinking that we were right or wrong, and that we ought not to allow ourselves to be oppressed in any way. Alas! why is our nature so untamed, so wild and unmortified; and why are we so foolish? We ought to think of suffering and affliction as necessary for us, though we are unworthy of them, and we should at all times thankfully and humbly receive the good gifts of God in silence, humility, meekness and patience, like that upright and steadfast Job. We should always feel that we are guilty and suffer justly, however unjustly we may have been treated according to our own view; neither ought we to justify ourselves. Thus we may attain to true Divine Peace and stir up our fellowmen to all virtues. This would be more praiseworthy and well-pleasing unto God, than any outward discipline that we could devise or carry out for ourselves.

16 Know this, dear children, that if all our teachers were buried, and all our books were burned, we should still find enough teaching and contrast to ourselves in the Life and Example of our Lord Jesus Christ, wherever we might need it,

if we only diligently and earnestly learn how He went before, in silent patience, in gentleness, in adversity, in temptations of the Evil One, in resignation, in scorn, in poverty, and in all manner of bitter suffering and pain. Surely, if we oftener examined ourselves in this most useful and salutary Mirror, we should more readily and joyfully suffer affliction and adversity, and be better able to overcome and resist temptations and evil suggestions, in whatever way they attacked us or encountered us. All suffering and all work would be much lighter and easier to suffer and to bear, and then all the things that we see and hear would tend only to our good.

17 For, if we wish to attain to great and fruitful peace in God, in nature, but not of this world, we must first diligently and earnestly learn to make the best of all things, and to endure, kindly and meekly, the behaviour of all kinds of men, their ways and customs; for they will often try and afflict us. The behaviour of other men and their ways will often vex and displease us; it will seem to us as though one person talked too much, another too little; one was too indolent, another too energetic; one erring in one way, another in another. Customs and fashions are so many and so various, that they assail us in many secret and unsuspected ways. We must learn to withstand them all vigorously, that they may take no root in us. By reason of weakness we cannot always keep our hearts free; yet we can at least vigorously check any outbreak in words, so that we shall neither condemn nor judge others, nor talk much of the lives and doings of others, either openly or in secret, however much we may be tempted. By acting thus we shall be great gainers; we shall be much less likely to break out; for we shall be more inclined to peace and kindliness, and be better able to endure. Our dear Lord Jesus Christ set us an example by so gently and meekly

suffering the traitor Judas, and all those who hated Him, to remain near Him, although He knew all the hatred and unfaithfulness that they bore towards Him, and for which He, Who was Himself without guilt and sin, might justly have punished them. No one in this world is so perfect that if he were to examine his own heart, he would not find sin enough of which to rid himself, so that he would not be able justly to reprove others.

18 Therefore, dear children, learn from my weaknesses to know your own, and rid yourselves of them. Take all my words, not my works, as from God; for I have studied them all in the book of my transgressions; take them earnestly to heart as a gentle warning and exhortation, not as an instruction; for I know that I need really to be taught by you and all men. He who does not occupy himself at home with a collected mind and pure heart in true humility cannot withstand temptation vigorously, nor acknowledge truth in all sincerity. Voluntary poverty is better than all the goods of this world, and union with God than heaven and earth full of blessings given by the command of God. May the everlasting peace of God be with you throughout all time and eternity. Amen.

SERMON XVI · On the Feast of the Holy Martyr, St Laurence

[1] Who, the true Servants of God are, who serve Him in truth, and follow Him, however, and wherever, He may lead them. Of the causes of wandering thoughts and a discontented mind on account of outward things. How a man in the service of God ought to be assured of his entrance into Eternal Life, and not only to presume it. How he should train himself in this life, that he may gain more knowledge and draw ever nearer.

[2] *Qui mihi ministrat, me sequatur.*

[3] "If any man minister to me, let him follow me." [60]

[4] These words are full of truth and instruction. They make known to us simply who the true servants of God are, who serve God and follow Him in truth, and how and whither He leads them. God does not lead all His servants by one road, nor in one way, nor at one time; for God is in all things; and that man is not serving God aright, who can only serve Him in his own self-chosen way. If such men do not follow their usual course, they can do nothing properly; and when God would lead them by another way, they turn back, and waste their affections on the things which surround them. They are not the servants of God, for they turn away from God, Whom alone they ought to serve, at all times, in all places, and by all their actions. Because God is in all things, and they do not in all things serve Him solely and entirely, and do not set Him truly and sincerely before them, they fritter away their opportunities, and are discontented with all their works and ways, with all men and with all places.

5 What is the cause of this distraction and discontent? The first cause is that God has not entered into thy heart, and is not rooted there; and thou hast, instead, thought out for thyself and made thee a God, whom thou desirest to have in thy being, but who does not exist. Therefore, when thy imagination departs, the presence of God fails thee. The second cause is that man devotes himself and clings to things which are apparent to the senses. He who desires to keep himself unspotted, must let all outward visible things pass by, and must force his way on, as through things that he heeds not, while he makes use of nothing that is not absolutely needful for the present time. But, if even then he finds there is anything that he does not need, he must keep away from it, and give neither time nor place to any being that is not in God. He does rightly, who acts as though he said: “I think of, I seek for, and I follow after, God only.” He should greet all those whom he meets, and bless God, going on his own way; for what could be more like hell or the Devil to him, than want of love for Him Whom all creatures long for? Man should press onwards, with all his might, through all obstacles, overcoming them in God. He must not trouble himself too much about anything that detains him, either love or sorrow; and he must not repeat what does not concern him; that God may manifest Himself to him in all things, and that he may remain undisturbed in his own mind. Man can only do this by setting his affections on God alone, and on nothing else.

6 But if, against thy will, anything which is not solely of God should be mixed up with thy work, as soon as thou art aware of it, bestir thyself, and turn thy ship round with the rudder of discretion. When the servant of God acts in this way, however much that is distracting may enter into his works and ways, most certainly he will neither be confused nor led astray.

Even if he be not conscious of the Presence of God within him, yet God is undoubtedly there; so that, if neither sin nor the creature banish Him, the man will not be disturbed by any works or unexpected events. But if his works and ways rob him of his peace, he will, of a truth, find out for himself, or from others, that the true foundation is wanting, or has been destroyed; his works have not been done aright, and all his actions have not been truly centred in God. But if the man finds that God is not within him, he must feel after Him with all his might, that he may find Him; and he must put away all that might cause him to err, whatever it may be, or however it may be called. He will be, otherwise, like a man who has a dart in his body which he cannot pull out without giving himself pain; and who, if he does not pull it out, will have to suffer still greater pain and distress.

7 Verily, if anything else is clearer to thee than God alone, or of which He is not the true Source, it must find no place in thee. If thou canst not bear the first suffering, whatever it may be, then greater suffering will follow; and then woe after woe will come, even more than man can conceive. Thy mind must be empty of all else, pure and seeking God only, filled only with Him, and with nothing else, as though thou wert ready to say: “Dear Lord, could I but only show Thee some measure of love in all places, and in the sight of all men, I would set myself to do it in all humility.” But, if man is inclined to choose that which is next to God, let him strive to gain love, choose flight from all distractions, and, diligently and with all his might, turn his thoughts within. Man must serve God in all things, both outwardly and inwardly, and in all his actions, not according to his own will, but according to God’s dear Will. For if a man has not God in his heart, he walks uncertainly and insecurely; as the Holy Scriptures say: “Woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth, he hath none

to lift him up."[25] That man is indeed alone who has not God always within him, in his heart and in all his ways. But if he were first of all to take refuge with our Lord, then his castle, that is, his heart and soul, would be well garrisoned and protected, and his enemies would be unable to prevail against him. The man who lays hold on God, and desires Him only, will find that He is all-sufficient. All things will be but the road to God for him; and, content with whatever may come, he will attain to peace with himself and all mankind.

[8] Thus those men, to whom in truth God is present everywhere, will make greater progress, and attain all virtues more quickly than when there is greater equality. For when men stand on the same level, they must keep diligent watch over their own minds, and must examine closely how they respond in all their actions, their love and sorrow. But, when men are unequal, it is not so; them it comes to pass of itself, through man's depravity and subjection; and, in this response of inequality, man will surely become conscious whether he be really the faithful servant of God. If it should come to pass that the man himself should fail, he would not remain long in that condition; but, laying the blame on his own littleness and worthlessness, he would quickly turn gain in all humility to God, his true Foundation. Should he linger long in his failing, and want to find out how he came to give way, and whether he ought to have done this or that, he would only be held back the longer by unrighteousness. If thou desirest to be safe, turn at once in thy emptiness to God. If thou hast been inconsistent, how canst thou better become consistent again than in God only? How canst thou better escape death than by the true, real Life, which is God Himself? Where can a man warm himself better than by the fire? So it is in God. Man must bring all that concerns him to God, and leave all with Him. God will provide for him in the best of ways. He

must trust all things to God; and, in that trust, he must be ready to accept all things, as for the best, and rest in peace.

9 But if man will not fully cast himself on God, and trust in Him, but wants to busy himself about everything and is full of care, God often lets him fall into misery and distress, that he may see how far he can get in his own strength. But if he trusts himself to God in all things in full confidence, then most certainly God will provide for him, both outwardly and inwardly, far better than any creature could. For God is full of grace and truth; and whatever we ask of Him, in full confidence, we shall assuredly receive; for just as it is impossible for us to love God too well, so also it is impossible for us to trust Him too much, if otherwise our intentions are right and good. This true peace is found by man in the depths of his own heart, which is the true Dwelling-place of God. When he first turns to God, he must needs be empty, he must have leisure, time and place for Him. There, in the innermost heart of man, this tree will grow up, with all its branches and fruits. For within, emptied of all else, ways and means of coming to God will be revealed to man; and he will also learn to understand God's dealings with him; the more he yields himself to this knowledge, the more clearly will God's ways be made known unto him.

10 When a man finds that in himself, or in other men, this is wanting, he must understand that the way thereto has been destroyed, so that neither time, place nor leisure has been given to God, and that assuredly he has not sought this knowledge from within.

11 Know, that such men depend all their lives long on the appearance of spirituality in their own actions; while all the time they know not themselves, and never find themselves in God; they let that alone. They make themselves believe that

they are resigned, whereas they are showing criminal heedlessness; then other things come to pass which rob God of His rightful place; they fill it with themselves, or else with something belonging to them. It is just as impossible for man to posses God without love, as it is impossible that a man can exist without a soul, whether he be conscious of it or not. Thus a man goes on blindly and fearlessly, trusting to his appearance of spirituality, or to the good works that he does, avoiding self-examination, and imagining that he has taken the right road. When such a man comes to his end, he finds that it is eternal death; for he did not go by that Way which is Christ Himself, who has said: “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.” He who goeth not by that Way, goeth astray. It is indeed a disgrace, and a great crime, that a man learns and knows about so many other things while he neither knows, nor wishes to know himself. [61]

12 Dear children, no one ought to allow himself to be in doubt of his own eternal life; he ought to be sure of it, and not only imagine it. That is, he ought to know whether he has God within him, in his heart; and, on the other hand, whether he really longs for God. If he does not posses this true knowledge, then let him seek it of wise and holy men, that he may know, for certain, and not only imagine how things are with him. All the Saints, as well as the Virgin Mary, and all creatures, could not win for such a man, even with tears of blood, one moment more from God than he had deserved in this present life. Those who were ready went in joyfully to the marriage with the Bridegroom; while to those who were not ready, but who wanted to prepare themselves, He said with an oath: “Amen, I say to you, I know you not.” Where was it that He knew them not? Amongst those whom He knew as His own in the Kingdom of Heaven, and who stand in His Presence before His Face; He knew them not amongst those

heavenly hosts; for they came too late. However loudly they knocked, yet the Lord opened not the door unto them. [62]

13 St Augustine says: “Nothing is so certain as death, and nothing is so uncertain as the hour of death.” For, wherever and however it may come, of the time and the hour knoweth no man. Therefore nothing can be more necessary than that we should be ready at all times, and that we should know that we are, and not only hope so. We have been placed in this life, not only to do the works, but also that we may know, so that our works may grow out of knowledge, as fruit grows out of the tree. Therefore our work in this life is to gain more knowledge, and so to come nearer to God. He who has forced his way through, and who, according to the Will of God, can lift up his mind above this world, and who has ordered his life and his secret thoughts aright, will not be confused, distracted or hindered by the things that pertain to this life; but they will only serve to drive him to God. Therefore, if a man’s mind and inward inclinations are steadfastly fixed on God with pure intentions, and his ways are ordered in peace, while he remains undisturbed in all good works, it is a sure sign that he is a righteous man, and that all his works are pure and true. This he seems to desire earnestly at all times; for he is like a corpse buried in the ground, that his soul may be buried in the depths of the Godhead. We have been placed in this world for this reason, and for none other. Whatever we neglect here will be lost to us for all eternity. To him whose superscription is on the penny, will the penny most certainly be given. Therefore every man should often search out his own heart, and seek diligently till he find whose superscription is there; what it is that he most loves and thinks of, whether it is God, or himself, or created beings, either living or dead. That which most fills his mind, his heart and his soul; that to which he most joyfully responds,

whether from without or from within, will claim the penny with the superscription, and will receive it without any questioning. The man who searches out these things with real care, will assuredly learn to whom he belongs; it will not only be guess-work. For, if in thy heart thou thinkest of and lovest something which is not truly and only of God, and of which He is not the Source, but thou thyself; whatever it is, and however small, if thou knowingly and intentionally allowest it to remain in thee, God will never truly dwell in thee. Even thou wert to weep as many tears as there are drops in the ocean, it would be of no avail; thou wilt lack His Presence as long as eternity lasts.

14 O, children! what are poor men about, when, having eyes that see, they allow themselves to be blinded by the creature, and will not guard against their own deceitful nature, which is so secretly absorbed with itself and with other things. Therefore examine your own minds, both outwardly and inwardly; desire God only; give Him free, empty and untroubled hearts, in which ye truly have no place yourselves, that He may work His noble work in you, and that He and none other may find a place there. May God help us to keep ourselves thus empty and free. Amen.

SERMON XVII · Of the Assumption of our Lady

1 That we ought not to rest with delight in any earthly or spiritual things, but only in our unknown God. How we ought to dwell in the Divine Inheritance, so that we may attain to that which is Eternal; or how we ought to share, with love and thankfulness, in the sufferings and life of our Lord in this life, that we may attain to the Glorified Inheritance of His precious Godhead.

2 *In omnibus requiem quaesivi, et in haereditate Domini morabor.*

3 “In all these I sought rest, and I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord.” [63]

4 The wise man spake these words, and we interpret them of our dear Lady, who well might say: “In all these I sought rest, and I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord.”

5 These words may be most suitably used of our dear Lady, for in mind she soared above the heavens, into the very depths of hell, into the deep sea and over the whole surface of the globe, and yet found no rest. No one in this life should strive to soar so high, but every one should fix an hour every day, at which he should offer unto our Lady special service and praise, and beseech her earnestly to guide us, draw us and help us in coming to her dearly-beloved Child; for her worth transcends all estimation and measure.

6 What a marvel it is that she should have laid her Creator and her God in her bosom; loving Him intensely above all imagining; and yet that she should never have doubted, but was always certain, that He was her God. She could behave

to Him as His Mother, and He walked with her as her Child; and yet, never for one moment in all her life was she content with this; but in mind she soared ever above, and was lost in the Divine Abyss, in which alone she found her rest, her inheritance and her dwelling-place.

7 Children, the poison of the first Fall has sunk into the very depths of our nature. We have been made and placed between the two ends; time and Eternity. Time for us ought to be nothing more than a passage to the end; and Eternity should be our aim and our dwelling place. Now poor man, unhappily, because of his fallen nature and his blindness, is attacked by everything on his weakest side; he rests himself by the way and forgets his true destiny. His nature clings to everything with which it comes into contact; it clutches at whatever it may be, and seeks rest therein, either bodily or spiritual, internal or external. It is quite apparent how worldly men seek their rest and pleasure; and they will surely find out hereafter how things stand with them. But those who hide worldly hearts under a spiritual appearance, and find rest in temporal things, whoever they may be, and whatever may be the cares which oppress them, would find, if they only knew it, what would make their hearts shrivel up in terror. God made all things that are needful, not for our satisfaction or pleasure, but for Himself alone.

8 Children, I should be quite misunderstood were I to be supposed to have said: “I will not hear anyone’s confession unless he promises to do what I want.” It would be very wrong to say, “what I want.” I require nothing from any one beyond that which is written; and I beg that no one will make me this promise. I can absolve no one that is not sorry for his sins, neither can the Pope himself, unless the man desires to amend his life and to guard against sin, and also against the

causes of sin, as much as lies in his power. Some men cling willingly and consciously to the causes of sin, and then go to confession and receive the Lord’s Body, while they will not acknowledge their sin. Because they do not steal and are not unchaste they go on as they are. They must judge for themselves how they an be absolved; they must find out, indeed, what repentance and sorrow there can be, when they thus look for rest and peace, while seeking for satisfaction, apart from God, either in their fellow-creatures, in clothes, in food or in creature comforts. Such men also seek for peace in spiritual matters and in things which look good; when such men have done anything wrong, they hurry off to make an outward confession, before they have confessed to God in their hearts, and have humbly pleaded guilty. They seek for natural repose in this outward confession, that they may get peace, and that the blame and reproofs of their own consciences may be stilled and silenced; for, when men have confessed, their minds are at ease and they are content. Confession and rebuke are like a fresh wound; they rub and scrub away the blight of sin.

9 Now, nature also seeks for rest in spiritual exercises. Some men hold so fast to their inner works and ways, to their exercises and secret discipline, that these good things lead them to wander from the Lord to lesser truths. In short, all in which man seeks for rest, and which is not wholly in God, is corrupt, however good it may be or seem to be, whether without form, or void, or senseless, or endowed with sense and usefulness. All that man rests in with delight, and possesses, is corrupt. Seek only for simple immersion in that bare, single, unknown, unnamed secret Good, which is God, denying self and all that may be found in self. As St Dionysius says: “God is not only that which thou canst receive of Him. He is above all wisdom, above all beings, above all goodness,

above all that thou canst receive or know of Him. He is more than and higher than anything that man's understanding can conceive; higher and yet lower, more and yet more, and far above all things." Seek thy rest in this unknown God, but expect neither taste nor sight. Act like a dog, which comes and finds a good piece of meat; though he dares not touch it, and flees; for he is so used to hard blows. Hereafter thou wilt find that thus it really is; only bear thyself humbly in thy absolute nothingness, which is verily thy true condition. If anything is there, it is His, not thine; and turn not aside to all that seems plain to thee; though it be without form or sense, and is supernatural. Men say: "It is all real to me; and this proves that it is God." Dear child, turn not there for rest; let it alone, whatever it may be; ask no more, but keep thyself under; sink beneath thine ignorance, neither desire to know. Keep thyself poor in thy hidden unknown God; and believe that thou art not the man who could in any way understand the great, unknown and hidden God. Rest in Him, and dwell in Him, and not in tasting and seeing.

[10] It is written in the prophet Ezekiel: "The men that go into the sanctuary…shall have no inheritance; I am their inheritance." Although this refers primarily to the priesthood, yet in a spiritual sense it refers to all men who desire to enter into the Holy of Holies, that is unto the secret Mystery of God. They are to have no inheritance, because the Divine, unknown, nameless, secret Being of God shall be their inheritance. They shall not bow their heads before anything else, either external or internal, or it will become corrupt. Turn not to it as though all were bad. Take that which is rough and uneven, rather than tasting and feeling. My dear child, rest not, seek not that which is thine own. As God chose to create and to make all things, before Him there was nothing but nothing. He did not make all things out of

something, but out of nothing. When God chooses to work alone, He needs nothing but nothing. That which is nothing is more receptive of His works than that which is something. If thou desirest to be unceasingly susceptible of all that God may give, may work in and desire to see in the life and being of His most chosen Friends; and if thou desirest, especially, that He may pour out upon thee all His gifts; see to it, above all things, that in truth, in the very depths of thy heart, thou art nothing; for our self-assertion and self-pleasing hinder the work of God in us. The holy Job was praised by our Lord, Who said that he was upright, and perfect, and that his equal was not to be found, and that he had never spoken a foolish word; and yet Job said: “All that I have shall go down into the deepest pit.” [64] [65]

11 This holy man did not mean by this to refer to himself, and all that belonged to him, as created out of nothing, because man has no part in this; but he referred to himself, and all who belonged to him, who had come to nought, through their sins. This righteous man desired on account of his guilt to descend into the very lowest depths of the abyss, into the greatest suffering and deepest darkness of hell, as though he were speaking wisely either of his sins, or of the guilt that he had incurred, as though it were possible to do enough; he desired to suffer the severest and sharpest pain, and never to escape from it, till he had given satisfaction for this load of guilt.

12 One of our brethren, named Wigmann, spake in like manner. He was so conscious of his own nothingness that he could find no place for himself but in the lowest depths of hell, in the domains of Lucifer. As he lay there, he heard a voice calling from the highest heavens, which said: “Wigmann, come up to the highest Throne, the Father’s

Heart." Gregory says, that these men seek death and find it not. This love in fathomless annihilation answers to the life in truth, unsought, undesired, unintended; for the lower, the higher, and the less, the more.

13 Now let us take these words of our dear Lady. "I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord." There are two inheritances in which we ought to live. One is temporal, a worthy life with suffering in the Likeness of our Lord. The other inheritance, that for which we wait, is the glorified inheritance of the Blessed Godhead; the promise is made unto us that we shall be joint-heirs with Him, and members of His household throughout eternity. If we possess this temporal inheritance in faith, love, and thankfulness (even the Sufferings and Life of our Lord), in the same measure, in which we have disciplined ourselves, shall we also possess the Eternal Inheritance,—only more richly and blessedly.

14 The wounds of our Lord are all healed, except the Five Wounds, which will remain open until the Judgment Day; the Brightness of the Godhead which shines forth from them, and the blessedness which the Saints and Angels receive from them, is inexpressible. These five Doors should be our inheritance here; and we must enter through them into our Eternal Inheritance, our Fatherland. The Holy Ghost is the Porter, the Door-keeper of these doors. His dear love is ever ready to open unto us when we knock, and to let us in, that we may enter through them into the Inheritance of the Father; and, assuredly, no man can go astray who enters thereby.

15 These Five Wounds should teach us five lessons, which will guide us to all remedies; they are Suffering, Silence, Abstinence, Contempt and Self-denial in true resignation. Fall down before the left Foot, and draw from it strength to

avoid all the pleasures and gratifications that thou hast, or desirest to have, apart from Him. Then immerse thyself with all thy power in the wound in the right Foot, and learn to suffer whatever may come upon thee, either from within or from without, and from whatever cause. Then draw sweetness from the right Hand, and beseech God to enable thee to keep silence, both outwardly and inwardly. No evil can ever befall him who possess these virtues, and keeps silence about all things. Then draw from the left Hand strength to despise all temporal things, both outwardly and inwardly, and all the changes and chances that thou lovest and carest for in spite of Him. Then flee, with all that thou hast, to His dear Heart that He has opened for His own, who willingly give Him their hearts. He will embrace them therein with the arms of His great Love; and then shall they receive of His eternally. Then man must learn to be ever denying himself in all ways; in love and sorrow, in possession and in want, in time and in eternity, as the Lord wills, and as it pleases Him that it shall come to pass in thee and in all creatures.

16 Thus, and in many holy meditations, ye must exercise yourselves in this blissful inheritance, and enter into this Eternal Inheritance by this safe Gate. Offer His guiltless Suffering to the Heavenly Father for your guilty suffering, His guiltless Thoughts for your guilty ones, and His Holy Word for your guilty words; and in like manner all His Actions, His Humility, His Patience, His Meekness and His Love, for all that is wanting in you, both without and within. If you thus possess this inheritance here with Him, the future inheritance is assured to you, that ye may dwell and rest for ever in the Inheritance of the Lord. Amen.

SERMON XVIII · On the Feast of St Augustine

1 How man should keep strict watch and guard over all his life and his discipline. How wonderfully God exalts those who truly wait for Him, far above all temporal things; and then, for their good, smites and humbles them with all manner of troubles and temptations, that they may be driven and helped along the safest road to everlasting Salvation.

2 *Vigilate, quia nescitis, qua hora Dominus vester venturus sit.*

3 *"Watch ye therefore, because you know not what hour your Lord will come."* [66]

4 St Augustine says: "Ye must be watching, for ye know not when the Lord will be coming to the marriage.

5 The Enemy exerts all his cunning and dexterity unceasingly that he may destroy us everlastingly. He is always looking out to find an hour or a moment, when we are not diligent in our meditations, and have forgotten a window open in our imaginations, and are not standing on our guard; then he creeps in at once and steals all our goods. Therefore guard your windows, and watch, that he may not undermine your house like a thief; therefore watch unceasingly with all thy strength and with a collected mind. For as soon as a man gives place to pride, and is well-pleased with himself, and becomes presumptuous and self-willed, the Enemy is immediately on the spot, and robs him of his purse of good works. Children, what will ye see and find after this life in those who have been famed for austerity and good works, and who have had great names, and have made a great show,

but whose self-satisfaction and love of ease have deprived them so entirely of all, that they will be thankful to be placed amongst the peasants, amongst unlearned and inexperienced men. And some poor, simple men, held in esteem by none, will, on account of their humble and oppressed condition, stand so high above them, that they will scarcely be visible to them. Therefore, watch with brave hearts and open eyes, and see the plain truth, without any distinctions in thought, words, works, and deeds, in all actions, in virtuous deeds, in patient suffering; and examine yourselves both outwardly and inwardly.

6 Children, ye know not in what danger ye stand, on account of your natural weakness, your terribly wicked sins, and on account of the great and unsurpassable good that we might receive unceasingly from God. Ye know not how His clear Divine Eyes search us through and through; while man, so full of impurity, stands before Him, and all that is not purified of that which is not of God in truth, is spread out before the Face of God.

7 How deeply we shall feel our shame! and how surely all will be judged! It is written: “And if the just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” St Augustine says: “Woe be to all in unrighteousness, if God will not judge them according unto mercy.” Therefore, if ye could only know in what danger all stand, who desire something else than God, your human minds would be unable to bear it. The holy Job said: “How long wilt Thou not spare me, nor suffer me to swallow down my spittle? I have sinned; what shall I do to Thee, O Keeper of men? why hast Thou set me opposite to Thee?” [67] [68]

8 Then in the Gospel we read: “Watch therefore; let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands, and you yourselves

like to men who wait for their Lord, when he shall return from the wedding."[26] Ye have heard of this watching.

9 Now ye must notice three points here. First, your loins must be girded and bound round as with a cord, so that ye can be drawn and guided against your will, like a horse which is bridled, and can be held up when about to fall. The loins are sensual pleasures, which must be bound, and tamed, and girded up, and never allowed their liberty. The second point is, that ye must have burning torches in your hands; that is, the sweet reality of true, fervent love, both within and without. Ye must, as far as possible, never let it pass out of your hands; and ye must especially meditate on it, one with another, according to your power. The third point is, that ye must wait for your Lord till He comes from the wedding. "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching." He will set them over all His goods, and gird Himself and serve them. [69]

10 This marriage, from which the Lord comes, is in the very innermost parts of the soul, where the Image of God is. The nearness of the soul to God, and of God to the soul, the wonderful works God does there, and the joy and delight which God does there, are beyond all reason and understanding; although man himself knows nothing and feels nothing thereof. But the men, in whom God thus rejoices, and with whom He thus unites Himself, are the men who have turned with all their hearts and all their desires to God, away from the world and all creatures, and who ever desire to live only unto Him. But He will have nothing to do with the men who devote themselves with all their hearts to their own concerns, whether living or dead.

11 Now, if the Lord tarries too long, these men who are waiting are seen by the Enemy, and he comes and suggests

some desire to them, either from without or from within, so that they may rest therein. Give no heed to him; remain on thy guard. Blessed are those servants who wait, for they know not when the Lord will come, whether it will be in the first, the second or the third watch of the night. Then He will wait on them, and serve them, and allow them to be conscious of a foretaste of the hidden Union; and thus He will strengthen them that waiting may not be too hard for them. He gives them, in that which they experience, the sweetness of His Love, that their love may be strangthened thereby. Now St Gregory takes up the words of the Psalter and says: "I have gone far away in flight; and I abode in the wilderness." When the inner man has thus waited and waited, he must go away, fly from all things, and remain in solitude. This solitude if formed not only by a man giving up all the external distractions of his outward faculties, but also the inner distractions of his inner powers. These are the powers of imagination, in pictures and phantasies, and in thoughts, so that man turns away from all forms and fancies, and dwells in solitude; and, when he has overcome this affliction and has endured, then the Lord, for Whom he has been waiting, comes in a moment, and with one glance exalts him above all things, and delights him after his long waiting. Then He strikes him down again, and oppresses him, that he may not be overmuch exalted by his experience. [70]

12 Jeremias, the prophet, says of such an one: "I sat not in the assembly of jesters, nor did I make a boast of the Presence of Thy Hand; I sat alone, because Thou hast filled me with threats;" as though he had been threatened with both fists. [71]

13 The first fist, with which he is threatened, is a darkness which comes over him from within, while he is led by a dark

and miserable road. He knows nothing, and he has nothing, and he is attached, besides, by all kinds of misfortunes, sins and temptations; by pride, uncleanness, unbelief and many other temptations, of which he thought he had long been freed, and which he imagines he had overcome; they threaten him and cause him great fear. The other fist which threatens him is, that God holds up His terrible judgments before him, so that the man feels that his only rightful place is in the lowest depths of hell. There two fists keep him down wonderfully, and God desires by all these threatenings to root out the evil, poisonous growth of pride. All desires are more quickly extinguished in those who rightly understand these fists, than they could be by much external discipline lasting for many years.

14 Now, when man goes in with the prophet, and wishes to dwell with him, and he finds that all storms, thoughts, imaginations and figures are stilled within him, then God and the holy Angels come, and suddenly, in a moment, real love is given to him, so that he perceives something that he is to do for Holy Christendom, or for the dead or the living; it flashes upon him in an instant. Then the Enemy also comes, and looks about to see whether he also can find his own here. He makes an attack, and, adding thereto suffering and thoughts, casts them before the man. But he must not heed them, he must let them pass by him; for if he does not love nor desire them, the Enemy will have to go his own way, ashamed and empty-handed, and the man will be greatly furthered by this attack.

15 In some lands men may be found who cultivate false poverty, lay aside all work, and protect themselves from all good thoughts, saying they have attained to peace; they will not exercise themselves in deeds of virtue, for they say they

have got beyond them. These men have a devil by their side who hinders all that can destroy their peace, either from without or from within, either in thought or in other ways of that kind, that they may remain at peace, so that hereafter he may take them with him into the eternal dissensions of his hell; and, for this he preserves them in their false peace. The righteous do not take this false method, but exercise themselves both outwardly and inwardly, and endure in all the ways by which the Lord leads them, which He predestined, and in darkness; and they do not presume that they have attained unto peace. They are not disquieted, because they walk in a narrow path, between peace and disquiet, between hope and unrighteous fear, between safety and doubt. And, when true peace, liberty of mind and safety, reveal themselves to them, they at once cast them down to the ground, and do not cling to them. Men who desire to walk in this narrow path must see above all things that they plant their feet firmly in the Footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ; the firmer they stand therein, the purer will they become. Then these threatening fists are transformed into good and loving hands; our Lord receives them tenderly in His Fatherly Arms, and leads them up far above all things. Then all natural things fall away from them, and only those things trouble them which are not of God. And now the Lord shows them the dark, difficult ways, and the narrow paths over which they have come; none can harm them any more, and they rejoice over all their sufferings.

16 This is spoken, in truth, against those free spirits who glory in their false liberty, and who, in false poverty boast of their false peace, taking their stand on their own works and ways of forty years and more, and on the great deeds that they have done. Such men will not walk in the narrow path. In a great community there may be scarcely one or two men

who desire to walk in this way. All the others who are there hem them in and attack them, and cause them trouble; and then, when they act wrongly, they speak hardly to them and say: “Thou must suffer for it!” but if a severe answer or unkind words escape thee, come to thyself at once, and acknowledge thy transgression and be sorry for thy sin. Be silent, endure, and accept all as from God, that thou mayest learn to know thyself thereby. If thou hadst shown more patience, thou mightest have attained to a noble mind. Therefore humble thyself and go forwards. All will be prepared for thee, whether crooked or straight; all will be for thy good, if only thou wilt realise it and be valiant. Therefore, he who thus waits on the Lord with watchful eyes, as St Augustine did, him will the Lord serve, and to him will He impart perfect joy, as He did to St Augustine. May God help us thereto. Amen.

SERMON XIX · On the Nativity of Our Lady

[1] How the strange birth of temporal things, such as delight in the creature, hinders the Divine Birth in man; and how, if God is to be born in us, the clinging to old, evil habits must be broken off.

[2] *Transite ad me omnes, qui concupiscitis me.*

[3] “Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits.” [72]

[4] To-day we celebrate the nuptial day on which the Holy Virgin, spotless, pure and holy, was born of her mother. That which was lost in Paradise was brought back again by her, that noble likeness which the Father had fashioned like unto Himself, and which had been spoiled. Through her the Father regenerated all His members, that they might be brought back again to their original Source; and of His unfathomable mercy God desired to raise us up again, through her, from the eternal death into which we had fallen, in as far as it was possible for us. Now we read these words of her in the Book of Wisdom: “Come over to me, all ye that desire me, that ye may be filled with my fruits.” These are the words of the Heavenly Father Who guides and entices us to this birth. These words also were spoken by God, the Eternal Wisdom, of the Virgin; for this birth is also her birth. That which the Heavenly Father brought forth throughout eternity, she also brought forth; and this teaches us that we must and shall be filled to overflowing with this birth. She said: “To all those who desire to be satisfied in me, to all those who, in truth, desire and are satisfied by this birth, to them a glimpse will be given, sometimes, so that their longing may be excited and

drawn forth to desire more and more." Say with St Augustine: "Lord, thou hast made us for Thyself, and therefore our hearts are always restless till we find rest in Thee." This restlessness, which should always and unceasingly be ours, is delayed and hindered by the strange births that are born of man. These are temporal, transitory, sensual, harmful things; delight and satisfaction in the creature, whether animate or inanimate; friendship and society; clothes, food, and all the things in which man delights. These things create restlessness in thee; and they beget such births in thee, so that God, as long as these births find place in thee with thy knowledge and consent, can never bring forth His birth in thee, in the joyful possession of thy heart. Some trifle, however small and mean it may be, takes from thee and robs thee of thy greatest good, and of the blissful birth that God desires to bring forth in thee; and it also takes away from thee all desire for it, and the consolation that thou oughtest to have after this birth; all this is kept back by this thing of pleasure. [73]

5 Now men often complain and say: "I have neither love nor desire;" that is just the hindrance which prevents thee and keeps thee back from love and desire, whatever it may be; no one knows so well as thou. Ask not me, but ask thyself, why thou hast no love or desire. Ye desire to posses both God and the creature; but that is impossible. Delight in God and delight in the creature cannot exist side by side. By this, I do not mean things which are necessary for man, and of which we cannot deprive nature, such as a hungry longing for food, and a thirsty craving for drink, the longing of the weary for rest and quiet, of the sleepy for sleep—as long as they do not become inordinate desires. But when man gives way to them, not for the needs or uses of nature, but for the pleasure of gratification, this birth is hindered; though less than in the

enjoyment of other things; for the needs of nature require that pleasure in these things shall not be separated from them, as long as nature is at work.

6 But the man who does not wish to hinder the Eternal Birth, but would make an entrance for it by means of the desire, must remember that the pleasures of the senses in nature, and in the creature, are hindrances; for the less of them, the more of the other; for the more cold goes out, the more warmth will come in; neither must man remain in his chamber idle and careless, and in gloomy weakness. Some men go about blindly, and all that they do is done blindly and foolishly in unfruitfulness. Thy confessor has no power over all these infirmities, which possess and deprave thee, if thou art willing to give way to them; though thou wert to confess ten times a day, it would not help thee at all, unless thou wert ready to give up thy sins. Thou must also know that, if thou art found thus wantonly possessed, loving the creature more than thou lovest God, thou wilt never appear before the Face of God. This is said everywhere in Scripture, and in all parts of the Gospel. There is the command in the Old and New Testaments, that man should love God above all things. And again: “He that doth not renounce all that he possesseth” is not worthy of Me. Again, elsewhere; “Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: but he that doeth the Will of my Father Which is in heaven, he shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” [74] [75]

7 Do ye imagine that God would give the Kingdom of Heaven to unholy beings, and that He shed His Precious Blood and gave up His Life for them? Look to yourselves; do not imagine that He would allow this to come to pass; and, if ye knew how severely God will judge them, ye would wither away in terror. God has given all things that they may be the way to Him; He

only will be the Goal; nothing else can be, neither this nor that.

8 Do ye imagine that I say this in derision? No, indeed! Thy Order can neither make thee holy nor blessed. My cowl, my tonsure, my cloister, my holy community—none of these things can make me holy. If I am to become holy, it must be in a holy, poor, uninhabited place. If I often cry: “Lord! Lord!” if I pray often, read much, say many beautiful things, understand much, and appear good?—no, no, it is something quite different that is needed. If thou deceivest thyself, it will hurt thee, not me.

9 Your worldly hearts and minds, your vanity in the appearance of spirituality—all these things in thee will be tested, just as when a bud is set in a stock, all the fruit which the stock will bear will be like the bud and not after its own kind. Therefore all these strange external births with which ye are possessed, and all your fruit, will be tested by the bud. Also all your good works which ought to be divine, will be of the creature and nothing worth, because of the evil ground out of which they spring; for this birth takes place in all your powers, both within and without. Job said of this: “In the horror of a vision by night …fear seized upon me and trembling, and all my bones were affrighted; and when a spirit passed before me, the hair of my flesh stood up.” The horror of the vision in the night was the dark possession, which followed the incomprehensible horror and fearful trembling, so that all his bones were affrighted. The Spirit passing before him was God passing before him. [76]

10 Now the Gospel speaks here of two processions. One procession is that of the Spirit, that is of God to us; and the other procession is of ourselves to God; this must have an exit, as ye have heard, and as the Schoolmen say: “Two forms

cannot exist together; if fire is kindled, the wood will be consumed; if the tree grows, the germ will disappear." If God is to enter into us, by the fulfillment of His Birth, then the creature will cease to exist. St Gregory says of this, that the hair of his head stood up when the Spirit passed before him,—these are the Levites whose hair must be cut off. They grow in the flesh like hair; and so also the tendency to old habits clings to the highest and lowest powers; they must be cut off with the sharp shears of holy diligence, which must be whetted and sharpened on the mighty and terrible judgments of God, and on the speedy justice of God, who will not leave the least thought unjudged. Even the least imagination, willingly received, must be cast off in the unsufferable fires of purgatory, before man can appear before God. Now, when these evil, unclean hairs have been cut off with sharp shears, then the hair grows again, and man must show renewed diligence. Some men are so diligent that, as soon as they are conscious of a thought, they cut it off at once with stern decision. At first it is rather hard to be always examining oneself; but afterwards, when man has accustomed himself thereto, it becomes quite easy; and he can blow away that for which at first he needed stern determination.

11 Man must also be filled with active love, which must be universal; for he must not think particularly of this or that person, but of all men; not only of the good, but also of the common poor. Our Lady's father and mother, Joachim and Anne, were such good people. They divided all their goods into three parts. One part was for the service of God and for the Temple; another was for the common poor; and they lives on the third part themselves. Wherever parsimony exists, an unclean spot will be found which is very evil; man should be generous with these contemptible, transitory things. To him who gives will be given, and he who forgives will also be

forgiven. As thou measurest, so will it be measured to thee again.

12 Now, some men cleave to things within, on which also there is an evil growth which they do not perceive; and thus it might even come to pass that they might never come before God; and yet these men may have lived sincerely before God, and have given themselves up to severe discipline. But this is usually hidden in the lowest depths of their hearts; and they have not known it themselves, because they were wanting in self-control. Therefore it would be as well for such men, who wish to live to the truth, to have a Friend of God, to whom they could submit themselves, and who would direct them according to the Spirit of God; for, without some personal intercourse, it is not possible to prove the men who have these inner tendencies. Such men ought to seek an experienced Friend of God, even twenty miles round, who would know the right way and guide them aright. And, if no especially suitable man were to be found, then an ordinary confessor would do; for the Holy Spirit often speaks through such an one, on account of his office; though he be ever so rough, and is neither conscious of it, nor understands it himself; still men should submit themselves to him, and be in subjection, and not be their own guides.

13 We have a perfect picture of this in the Blessed Virgin Mary. When she was a child, she was obedient to her father and mother; later she was under the care of the priest in the Temple; later she was under the care of St Joseph, later under that of our Lord Jesus Christ; later under that of St John, to whose care she was committed by our Lord, and who was to take His place. Now we pray earnestly that she will take us under her own care; and, as she was born on this day, so also she will bear us again in the true Source. Amen.

SERMON XX · On the Exaltation of the Holy Cross · The first Sermon

[1] On the health-giving Cross, which is Christ Himself in His Humanity; how He must be exalted and raised up in us; and how all our powers must be drawn up after Him; the lowest and the highest, although, alas, this is neglected by many men. Also, many wise exhortations and incitements to members of Religious Orders to receive the Holy Sacrament, and to keep their other rules. How the crucified Christ must be born in us and of us through the three powers of the soul; and how we again must be born in Him, in the Fruit of His Spirit.

[2] *Ego si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia ad me traham.*

[3] "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things unto Myself."

[4] To-day we celebrate the Festival of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, on which hung, out of love, the Salvation of the World. We must be born again, through the Cross, into the true nobility which was ours in eternity. We must be born and revived there again by love for this Cross. Words cannot describe the merits of the Cross. Our Lord said: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things unto Me." By this He signifies that He wishes to draw to Himself our worldly hearts, and our love for and gratification in worldly things, which we had gladly possessed in the creature, and our haughty minds, which were well satisfied with ourselves, and with our worldly-mindedness and love, in the temporal gratification of our senses. All this He will draw unto Himself, that He may be thus exalted, and that He may become great in us and in our hearts; for to the man to whom God has ever

been great, all creatures seem small, and fleeting pleasures are as nothing. [77]

5 This health-giving Cross signifies the Noble Man, Christ, Who is exalted far above our imagination, above Saints and Angels, and above all the joy, bliss and blessedness that they enjoy together; and, as His true place is in the Highest, He desires to dwell also in our highest places, that is in our uppermost and innermost love and desires. He will draw up the lowest powers to the highest, and lead the lowest with the highest unto Himself. If we do this, He will draw us after Himself into His highest and most secret place. For thus it must needs be; if I am to come to Him, I must receive Him into myself. So much of mine, so much of His; it is an equal bargain.

6 Oh! how often this Holy Cross is quite forgotten, so that this ground and secret place is quite closed up and refused to God, while favour and love are shown to the creature; which, sad to say, in these dangerous times, reigns supreme both in worldly and religious people, so that their hearts are lost in the creature. This is the most grievous pity that man’s heart and mind can conceive; and, if he only knew how it would end, he would wither up in terror of the vengeance of God. But it is as much unheeded as though it were all mockery. It has, also, become the custom, and men approve of it, and call it an honour, and it is all as though it were a play. The Saints, if they could, would cry aloud and weep tears of blood, and the Wounds of our Lord would be torn open again by this misery; that a heart, for which He gave His beautiful Life and His loving Holy Spirit, should be so shamelessly taken from Him, while He is driven forth. Children, do not thing that these are my words only; all Scripture teaches you this: “No man can serve two masters. For he will hate the one and love

the other." Jesus says: "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee;" and elsewhere: "Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also." Now, find out how much God has of thy heart; whether He is thy Treasure. St Augustine says: "Lovest thou the earth, thou art also of the earth; for the soul is more with that which she loveth, than where she gives life to the body." St Paul says: "If I should deliver my body to be burned, and should speak with the tongues of men and of Angels, and should give all my goods to feed the poor, and yet not have charity, it profiteth me nothing." [78] [79] [80] [81]

7 Now, dear sisters, ye ought, with great and adoring thankfulness and active love, to accept the grace which God has given to your Order through the Sacrament of the Body of the Lord. I desire, also, with all my heart and soul, that this practice should not be allowed to grow slack nor fall asleep in these anxious times; for nature will not long endure; ye must cleave firmly to God, or ye will fall away. Mark, it was not thus in days gone by; therefore, these people ought to exercise great and powerful self-restraint, that they may be preserved from this dangerous state. Do not imagine that this only need be done to attain to a state of great perfection: "They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill." It is necessary, on account of man's human weakness, that he should be protected by God's help, and preserved from the sad state of things which prevails widely amongst religious people. Therefore, none should speak as though they had attained to great perfection or did great deeds. It is sufficient, if they keep the rules of their Order, as far as they can, and mean to do so, and that they have permission to leave undone that which they cannot do. No great powers of reason are necessary for this. It will suffice, if they desire to do willingly that which is right, and if their eyes are so far opened that they will be able to guard

themselves against this grievous wrong, and if they keep their eyes open. For this reason, our young sisters should go often and willingly to receive the Lord’s Body. I excuse and also answer for our dear elder sisters, for they went very reverently in days gone by, when the flesh was not so weak as now; and they kept their Order very strictly, and loved and obeyed the rules. They also readily kept up the good old custom of communicating every fortnight. Their great sanctity and perfection were sufficient; for in those days things were better than now, and less harmful to the fallen nature to be found in young people, whose inclinations are stronger now than they were then. Therefore much more help is needed now than then; and without great sefl-restraint it is impossible to endure in the highest state. Now everything sinks down to the level of animal pleasures, and the desires of the senses. Therefore, dear sisters, I require of you no great perfection and sanctity, only that ye should feel joy in and love for our Holy Order, and that ye should intend to keep the rules as far as ye can, and that ye should willingly keep silence in all places where it is ordained—at table and in the choir, and that ye should withdraw yourselves willingly from all human intimacies that estrange you from God. The old are impelled to do so by holiness, and the young by modesty. For if ye do this devoutly, God will reveal Himself to you, while ye flee from all the causes that could bring this hurt to your souls. Learn, that intolerable sufferings have fallen upon some convents; and, if they had not exercised themselves very diligently in this discipline, they might have been brought to nought. If ye experience no sweetness, do not let this terrify you. If man does his part, and yet feels forsaken in his heart, it is far better for him, that any feelings or experiences would be that he could have. This bitter grief brings him nearer to the Source of Living Truth than any

feelings. Our Lord said: “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” and on Mount Olivet: “Not as I will, but as Thou wilt.” [82] [84]

8 Children, fear not, for our Lord says: “If any man will come after Me….let him take up his Cross and follow Me.” This Cross signifies the crucified Jesus, Who ought to be and must be born. St Paul says: “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with all its lusts.” These lusts must be tamed and restrained. [85] [86]

9 The second power is the power of anger, which man should be able to control in all things. He should always think that another is more likely to be right than he, and thus avoid strife. He must learn forbearance, and how to be quiet and kindly wherever he may be. One man may be sitting alone, or in an assembly, while others are sitting there, who are noisy and seldom silent. Ye must learn to be forbearing and to endure, and to commune with your own hearts. A man cannot work at a trade without having learnt it. If any one wanted to be an umbrella-maker, and would not learn his trade, he might do great harm to the work if he tried to carry it on before he had learned it; thus it is in all adversities, we must learn how to struggle. [83]

10 The two other powers, by which this noble Cross must be borne, are not so evident; they are the powers of reason, and of inwardly spiritual desires. Thus, in short, Christ must be born in us and of us, in the inner and outer man; and thus we shall be born again in Him, in the Fruit of His Spirit. As it is written: “Ye must be as new-born babes.” Dear children, if ye live thus, every day will be consecrated; and all your sins will be forgiven you in this birth of the Holy Cross. Amen.

SERMON XXI · On the Exaltation of the Holy Cross · The Second Sermon

[1] How Christ draws all things unto Himself; how He prepares man according to his powers, both outwardly and inwardly, by many changes and chances, that he may come at last with his whole heart to the secret place of the Divine Abyss; and how some men scarcely succeed in understanding how they an follow this drawing.

[2] *Ego si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia ad me traham.*

[3] "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things unto Myself." [87]

[4] To-day we celebrate the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, whose worth it is impossible to describe, and to which all the honour that we can conceive is due, because we give it to Him, Who died thereon. Therefore religious people take up the Cross, and begin to fast according to their rule; and this is a thing worth doing by all who have it in their power.

[5] Now, we are told how a Christian king once took the Holy Cross to a Pagan king, with all the honour and dignity that his dominions could produce, in accordance with his rank, though not in accordance with the honour due to the Holy Cross; and he wanted to go to Jerusalem. When he arrived before the gates, they closed themselves by means of a strong, thick wall; and an Angel, who was standing on the wall, said: "Thou comest here with the Cross, riding in great pomp; and yet He, Who died thereon, was driven forth in great sorrow and shame, barefoot, and carrying the Cross on His back." Then the king threw himself from his horse, tore

off all his clothes, save his shirt, and bore the Holy Cross on his back. Then the gates opened of themselves, and he bore it into the city, where many wonderful signs were done, on the sick, the lame and the blind.

6 Our Lord said: “I, if I be lifted up…will draw all things unto Me.”[27] As St Gregory says: “Man is all things, for he has a likeness with all things.” Many men may be found, who find the Cross, and are drawn to it by manifold sufferings and much discipline, that God may thus draw them to Himself; but this suffering must be lifted up; as we to-day celebrate the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, so it must not only be found but also lifted up. If man would only examine himself, and commune with his own heart, he would find the Cross twenty times a day in many a painful suggestion and fall, whereby, were he alone, he would be crucified; but he does not lift it up, and thus he wrongs it. All the burdens of the Cross should be lifted up in God, and willingly accepted by man as his Cross, both without and within, in the body and in the spirit. Thus man should be drawn to God, Who desires to draw all things unto Himself, as He said when He was about to be lifted up.

7 Now, men may be found, who outwardly bear this Cross, disciplining themselves well externally, and bearing the burden of their Order. They sing, they read, they go to the choir, or to the refectory; and thus, with the outer man, carry on small services for our Lord. Do ye imagine that ye were created and made for that only by God? He desires also to have you for His especial Friends. Now such men bear the Cross externally, but they carefully protect themselves from its entrance into themselves, and seek distraction wherever they can. They do not carry the Cross with our Lord, but with Simon Rufus who was compelled to carry it. But even bearing

it thus is very good; for it protects them indeed from many vices and from levity, and it saves them from the terrible fires of purgatory, and possibly from an eternity in hell.

8 Now, our dear Lord says that He “will draw all things unto Himself.” He who desires to draw things, must first collect them and then draw them. This our Lord does also; He first gathers up all man’s wanderings, the dissipation of his senses, his powers, his words and works, and inwardly, all his thoughts and intentions, his imaginations, his desires and pleasures and his understanding. Then, when all are collected, God draws the man to Himself. For, first of all ye must cast off all to which ye cling externally and internally in your gratifications. This casting off is a weary Cross, and the heavier and stronger the clinging is, the heavier the Cross will also be. For all the pleasure and delight that ye have in the creature, however holy and divine it may appear to be, or is called, or as it may seem to thee—all must be cast off, if thou desirest to be truly lifted up and drawn to God. This is the first and lowest grade in the outer man.

9 If ye desire to raise the Cross in the inner man, it is necessary that all inner delights should be withdrawn from him, all clinging to spiritual pleasures, and even from those which arise out of virtue. The Schoolmen dispute as to whether man should make use of any virtue; it ought to be used fruitfully and only in God’s service. These things cannot, indeed, exist without pleasure; but it should be without any addition of self. What do ye imagine that pleasure and satisfaction consist of? That a man willingly fasts, watches, prays and carries out the rules of his Order? This pleasure our Lord would have nothing to do with; He desired that I should act rightly towards my Order. Why do ye imagine that God seldom allows a day or a night to pass by like that which

preceded it, and that what helped you in meditation yesterday, does not help you at all to-day or to-morrow, and that many imaginations and ideas come to you with no results? Take thy Cross from God and suffer, and then it will become a blissful Cross. How couldest thou otherwise carry it to God, and receive it from Him in true resignation, and thank God for it, and say with our dear Lady: “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour;” for thou must thus praise and glorify God in every thing. [88]

10 Man must always have a Cross; it was necessary that Christ should suffer before He entered into His glory. Whatever thou mayest encounter in thy inmost heart, either in seeing or tasting, let it alone, do not meddle with it, ask not what it is, but fall back upon thy nothingness. Our Lord said: “If any man will come after Me...let him take up his Cross and follow Me.” It is not in comfort, but with the Cross that we must follow God. The Holy Apostle, St Andrew, said: “I welcome thee, thou much-to-be-desired Cross, for I have longed for thee with all my heart. Take me from amongst men, and give me again to my Master.” This must not take place one day and not on the next; but it must go on at all times, unceasingly; thou must ever be examining thyself in all things. Yes, though the number of thy sins and transgressions be great; if thou fallest seventy times a day, yet turn and come again to God, and pass on so quickly to God that thy sin will escape thy memory, and when thou comest to confession thou wilt not be able to say what it was. This should not terrify thee; it did not come to pass for thy hurt, but to show thee thy nothingness, and to make thee feel contempt for thyself. Ye should do all calmly, and not dejectedly, if ye feel that in your hearts ye are ready and prepared to do the Will of God. Man is not sinless, as our dear Lady was, therefore he

must be content to bear all this suffering and this Cross. St Paul says: “We know that to them that love God, all things work together unto good;” the gloss adds “and sin also.” Hold thy peace, flee unto God, and look upon thy nothingness; stay at home, do not run at once to thy confessor. St Matthew followed God at once, and leaving all his affairs unsettled; and, if thou findest that thou hast sinned, do not make thy Cross too heavy outwardly. Leave it to truth, and be faithful and at rest; for none will be condemned except those who wantonly turn to temporal things; while to those who delight in the love of God, and think only of Him, everything will prove a discipline. [89] [90]

11 Yet, I must warn you in all faithfulness that, if ye willingly allow yourselves to be possessed by the creature, and give it place, it will most assuredly cause your condemnation; and, even if God gives you true repentance, though this is uncertain, yet ye will have to suffer in the awful fires of purgatory. If ye realised it, ye might shrivel up in great fear and anxiety; and if ye went thus to receive the Lord’s Body, ye would be acting just as if thou wert to take a young and tender child and tread it underfoot in a miry path. And yet this is done to the living Son of God, Who, out of love, has given Himself for us. Thus ye go to confession, and do not guard yourselves against the cause of your sin. The Pope with all his Cardinals could not absolve you; for yours is no true repentance, and ye are guilty of the Holy Body of our Lord.

12 Our Lord said: “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his Cross and follow Me.” This self-denial and this Cross are held before many a Friend of God, who is driven towards it, so that we cannot say how a man ought to forget himself and deny himself in all the circumstances that may arise. That which costs nothing is

worthless. “He who soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly” and “with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.” but no one should think of this, but solely of God. What will become of all those of whom ye might be told, who will not leave their old ways and customs, but who cleave externally to that which is real to their senses? Thou must forsake thyself and die utterly to thyself. He said: “Follow thou Me.” The servant does not go before his master; he follows after him. Not according to the servant’s will, but according to the will of the master. No other teaching is necessary for us, if we only take heed how little, in this world, servants can follow their own will; but how they must use all their diligence and all their strength in carrying out in all ways their master’s will and service. A grain of wheat must die before it can bring forth fruit, and so must thou also die absolutely to thy own will. Man ought therefore to give up himself and his own will entirely to God; and, when he thus gives himself from his heart to God, he ought to be as though he possessed no will. A virgin stood in the choir and sang: and said: “Lord, this time is mine and Thine, but, if I commune with my own heart, my time is Thine not mine.” [91] [92] [93]

[13] If man is to give himself to God, he must first of all give up his own will entirely, for man is just as though he were formed of three men: his animal nature, in which he is guided by his senses; his powers of reason; and his highest nature, which is in the Image and Likeness of God. In his highest and innermost nature man should turn and lie down in the fire of the Divine Abyss, and come out of himself, and allow himself to be taken prisoner. He should suppress and pass over the two lowest ways and natures, as St Bernard says: “Man must draw away his animal nature, with the lusts of the flesh, from all the things that he possessed with delight.” Ye know what

a hard Cross that is, and how heavy it is! And he says, that it is no less hard for the outer man to enter into the inner man, and to pass, from things that are figurative and visible, to the invisible, that is to their very Source, as St Augustine understands it. All the attacks and the crosses, that, coming to the two lower natures of man, seem to him as though they would draw him away and hinder him from entering, should be taken up by him as his Cross, while he commends all to God. Whether they come from the senses or from reason, he should leave them all alone, and commend them to the lower powers. And he should raise himself above them in the highest power with all his might; just s Abraham left the ass and the servant below, when he went up the mountain to offer his sacrifice unto God; he went up alone with his son into the mountain. Therefore, leave your animal nature which is indeed an ass, and your servant, which is natural reason, which is here surely a servant, for it has served, and guide man up the ascent of this mountain; for there he must stay. Leave the two below, and go up alone with the son, that is with thy mind, into the secret place, the Holy of Holies. Offer up thy sacrifice, and especially offer up thyself, and enter in, and hide there thy secret mind in the mystery of the Divine Abyss. As the prophet said in the Psalter: “Lord, Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy Face.” In that secret place the created spirit is brought back again to its uncreatedness, where it had been from everlasting before it was created, and where it recognises itself as God in God, and yet in itself as of the creature, and created. But in God all things are God, who rest on this foundation. Proclus says: “When man once enters here, whatever may befall the outer man, sorrow, poverty or whatever it may be, he heeds it not.” As the Prophet says: “Thou shalt hide them...from the disturbance of men.” These follow our Lord, as our Lord says elsewhere: “I am in the

Father, and He is in Me, and I in you and ye in Me.” That we may be drawn with all our hearts, as He desired to draw all things after Him, and that we may thus inherit the Cross, that by the Holy Cross we may enter into the true Source, may God help us. Amen. [94] [95]

SERMON XXII · On the Exaltation of the Holy Cross · The Third Sermon

[1] Describe a Cross of Spiritual Suffering formed by four virtues. Divine Love is the upper part, Patient Love is on the left side, Inner Purity is on the right, and Willing Obedience forms the lower part. Also much good advice and many instructions for those who look upon themselves as sick and guilty sinners; for the Cross must be borne.

[2] *Quasi cedrus exaltata sum in Libano, et quasi cypressus in monte Sion.*

[3] "I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus, and as a cypress-tree on Mount Sion." [96]

[4] We celebrate to-day the Exaltation of the Holy Cross; but it is impossible to say how it was raised up; neither can we fully describe or imagine its value. We can say of it that which we find written in the Book of Ecclesiasticus: "I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus, and as a cypress-tree on Mount Sion."

[5] Frankincense grows on Mount Lebanon; it signifies a spiritual sacrifice, for it should at all times be the desire of our hearts to be peculiar sacrifice unto God. The smoke of the cedar tree drives away all the poison of the serpent. Still more the poison of the Devil and all his wicked cunning is chased away by the power of the Holy Cross; that is by the bitter Sorrow and sharp Suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ; for He says of Himself: "I was exalted like a cypress-tree on Mount Sion." The cypress is of such a nature, that if a man partakes of the wood, when unable to retain his food, it enables him to retain it. In the same way, the man who draws

unto himself the Lord's Holy Cross, and embraces it, namely, His painful and bitter Suffering, will be enabled to retain that most precious and noble Food, the Holy Word of God. The holy saints and prophets have said that the Word of God only becomes fruitful in those men, who at all times draw it earnestly and diligently unto themselves, that all things may become fruitful unto them. The precious Sufferings of our Lord have also a sweet scent, tasting sweeter than any sweetness; for they draw man's heart to Him; as our Lord Himself has said: "And I, if I be lifted up...will draw all things to Myself." It is indeed true, that the man in whom the bitter Suffering of our Lord is always found, will at all times be drawn unto our Lord, in true humility, and patience, and with fervent and Divine Love. For in the same way that Christ suffered willingly, so must we also at all times, as far as lies in our power, follow after Him earnestly, in patience and suffering, that we may always be imprisoned, bound and condemned with Him in spirit. [97]

6 Our Lord Jesus Christ, before He was nailed to the Holy Cross, was bereft of all His garments, so that not a thread was left on His Body; and lots were cast for His garments before His eyes. Now, know of a truth, that if thou desirest ever to come to true perfection, thou must be destitute of all that is not of God, so that thou hast not a thread left; and thou must see lots cast for thy things before thine eyes; while other men look upon it all, and esteem it as mockery, folly and heresy. Our Lord said: "If any man will come after Me, let him...take up his Cross, and follow Me." As he said also to the young man: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor...and come, follow Me." For it is written in the Apocalypse that great and unutterable plagues must come, which will be scarcely less terrible than the Judgment Day; though that will not come yet, for we are still

living in historic time, days years and hours. And when these plagues which are prophesied, come upon us, those only will recover who bear the Cross. And because this was true, God gave the Angel leave to hurt and to destroy all that was upon the earth. Then God said to the Angel: “Thou shalt spare none, save those who have the banner, the mark, the sign on their foreheads,” signifying the Holy Cross. Every man who has not the Cross of Jesus Christ in him and before him, undoubtedly, will not be spared. By the Cross we understand pain. God did not tell the Angel to spare men with great powers, nor the sects, nor those who worked in their own way, but only the suffering. He did not say: “He, who will follow Me, or come after Me, must follow Me, gazing at Me,” but he said, “by leaving all and suffering.” [98] [99]

7 Now I wish to say a few words about the Cross. Know then, that every man who takes up the Cross will be made thereby the very best man to be found in these days; and no plagues can harm him. Neither can he ever enter into purgatory. But also there is no greater pain than daily and hourly carrying a Cross on our backs for the sake of God, in humble resignation. It is, alas! no longer the fashion to suffer for the sake of God, and to bear the Cross for Him; for the diligence and real earnestness, that perchance were found in man, have been extinguished and have grown cold; and now no one is willing any longer to suffer distress for the sake of God. Could we find out any way in which no one would have to suffer, that is what we should choose for our life. Alas! one and all think only of self, in all their works and ways.

8 It is not outward exercises, such as fasting, watching, lying of hard beds, and making long pilgrimages, that please God. All these things serve thereto; fasting, watching, prayer, and all the other things already mentioned; therefore, do all these

things, as far as they will help thee to take up thy Cross truly. No one is too old, too ill and too deaf to take up the Cross, and to carry it after our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 Learn that the Holy Cross is made of four pieces of wood, one above, one below, and two in the middle. The upper part is divine, fervent love. The left arm, which is deep humility, is nailed on with the heedlessness of men, and all the things that may befall him then; it is more than scorn, for in that there is a tinge of pride; the other arm of the Cross must be real, true, inner purity, this must be nailed to the Cross with a willing lack of all, whatever it may be, that could defile its purity, either outwardly or inwardly. The feet signify true and perfect obedience; they are nailed on with true and willing resignation of all that thou and thine possess. Whatever it may be that thou possessest, leave all at once for the sake of God, however hard it may be, that thou mayest not possess thyself in any way, either in deed or in word. The four parts of the Cross were fastened together in the middle with *fiat voluntas tua,* which means that the pieces of wood were fitted into each other, signifying the true and perfect renunciation of thy free will, and a yielding up of all for the sake of God.

10 Now notice, first, the left hand, which signifies humility. By this we must understand, as St Augustine says, that the man who walks in true humility will most certainly have to suffer. Know, that man must be brought to nought in his own esteem, and in the eyes of all men. He must also be raised up, bare, and having no resting place, and lots must be cast before his eyes for all that he has or is; as was done with the garments of our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, thou must be mocked, destroyed and spurned. Thy life also must be regarded as unworthy of notice, as folly, so that those who are with thee or pass thee by, will scorn and condemn thee,

will estimate and judge thy life before thy face, as full of error and heresy; and hate thee and all thy works and ways. Now, when thou knowest and seest all this, thou must neither reject it, nor receive it unthankfully, so that thou speakest evil, or shouldest say of it: “Such a man as he is unfair to me.” Dear friend, guard thyself both outwardly and inwardly against such opposition. Thou oughtest to think: “Alas! I, poor man, am unworthy that such a noble man should scorn and ignore me;” and then thou shouldest bow to it and look upon it as nothing. Thus thou wilt be bearing the Cross with our Lord. The right hand is true purity; it is nailed on with a willing lack of all things that are not of God, and that could stain that purity. The feet are true obedience, and signify that man should be obedient to his Superiors and the Holy Church. They are nailed on with true resignation, so that man will willingly in all things resign himself to the Will of God. The middle part is the free going out and giving up of thy will to the Will of God; which means, however great the suffering may be which is laid upon thee by God or man, thou wilt yet willingly suffer all for love of God, and rejoice, and bend willingly to the Cross of suffering, whether guilty or innocent. Now, thou mightest say: “Lord, I cannot do it, I am too weak.” Learn then, that thou hast two wills, an upper and a lower will, as Christ also had two wills. The natural and lower will desires at all times to be freed from the Cross; but the higher says with Christ: “Not as I will but as Thou wilt in all things.” The top of the Cross is the Love of God; it has no resting place, for at all times it is a pure, bare going forth, forsaken of God and all creatures, so that thou canst truly say with Christ: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” The Sacred Head of our Lord Jesus Christ had no resting place; if a man experienced Divine Love and a sweet consciousness of God’s Presence in his absolute resignation, what would it

matter to him though the whole world were against him? [100]

11 A good and holy man asked our Lord why He allowed His dear Friends to suffer so terribly. Then our Lord said: “Man is naturally inclined to the pleasures of the senses and harmful delights; therefore I hedge him in, in all his ways, so that I alone may be his delight.” The Head of Divine, sweet Love hung inclined on the stem of the Holy Cross. Learn, children, it cannot be otherwise; though we try to turn it as we may, we must always bear a Cross, if we desire to be good men and to come to Eternal Life. We must suffer sharply and keenly, and bear a Cross of some kind, for, if we flee from one, another will fall upon us. No man has ever been born, who was such a good talker that he could prove that this was not true. Thou canst flee where thou wilt, and do what thou wilt, yet it must be borne. God may take it on His shoulder for a little while, and bear the burden over the most difficult places; and then man feels so light and free, that he cannot believe that he ever had anything to suffer, especially because he feels no suffering; but, as soon as God lays down the burden, the burden of suffering rests heavily on him again, in all its bitterness and insupportability. The Eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, has borne all this before, in the heaviest way possible; and all those who have been His dearest Friends have borne it after Him. This Cross is the fiery chariot in which Elias went up to heaven.

12 There was a thoughtful daughter of our Order who had longed much and often to see our Lord as a Babe. Suddenly, during her devotions, our Lord appeared to her as a Babe, lying swathed in a bed of sharp thorns, so that she could not get to the Babe till she had laboured much, and had used force, in grasping the thorns. When she came to herself again

she realised that those who truly desire Him must boldly face pain, sharpness and suffering.

13 Some men say: “Yea, and were I so pure and innocent, that I had not deserved it from God on account of my sins, still I would gladly and joyfully bear suffering for the Will of God, so that it might be useful and profitable to me.” Now, know, that a guilty and sinful man may suffer, in such a way, that it may be more useful and profitable to him than to an innocent man. But how? In the same way, that a man, who wants to make a great jump, will go back that he may have a good run; for the further he goes back, the further he will jump. Every man should act in this way. He must always look upon himself as sinful and heedless, and must judge of himself as unworthy in the sight of God and of all creatures. Thus he will be drawn nearer and more powerfully to God, and by this means he will get closer to the Eternal Goodness of Divine Truth.

14 Children, the more thoroughly a man knows himself from the bottom of his heart, truly despising and condemning himself, not glossing over his sins, but deeming himself utterly unworthy, the nearer will he draw to God in truth, and the more perfect will be his converse with God.

15 That we may all draw this precious Cross of our Lord after us, in steadfast patience and with loving hearts, with happy countenances, cheerfully, joyfully and willingly suffering all things for God, giving up all things for Him, and accepting all things that are disagreeable to us as from the open, loving Hand of God and not from the creature; that we may be lifted up in our hearts in steadfast patience even unto the end, may He help us, Who for our sakes was lifted up upon the Cross that He might draw all things unto Himself. Amen.

SERMON XXIII · On the Feast of St Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist

1 Of two ways in which man may follow after God in true resignation. One way is in a figure; the other has no form; it consists of a calm, inner silence in a tranquil mind.

2 *Sequere Me.*

3 “Follow me.” Our Lord spake to St Matthew saying: “Follow Me.” And he rose up, and forsook all, and followed Him. [101]

4 This holy Matthew has become an example to all men; and yet he was, to begin with, a great sinner, as the Scripture tells us; but afterwards he became one of the greatest Friends of God; for, when our Lord spake secretly to him in his heart, he left all things and followed Him. Everything depends upon man’s following God in truth; and this involves an absolute forsaking of all things, whatever they may be, which have taken possession of man’s heart, and which are not of God. For God is a Lover of hearts, and communes not with anything that is external. He desires an inner, living, love, which is ever ready to turn to all things that are divine and virtuous, where and in whomsoever they may be found; for there is more truth in such an once than in a man who prays as much as all the rest of the world, and sings so lustily that his song reaches to heaven; or in anything that he can do by fasting, watching, or anything else externally.

5 Now our Lord said: “Follow Me.” There are six ways in which men can follow our Lord; three are in our lower, and three in our higher powers. In the lower there are humility, gentleness and patience. The other three are higher than all other powers; they are faith, hope and love. Our Lord said:

“Follow.” This following, in one way, is to be, after the example of our Lord, in praise and thanksgiving; while sometimes it comes to pass in a still closer way; that is, without any conditions of thought or of anything else, but only in an inner silence, in a mind that communes with itself, simply waiting on God, that He may work in it as it pleases Him.

6 It is easy to find men who get on well with their outward exercises. They glide through them, whether these be fasting, watching, prayer or anything else; and they take so much delight in them, that God has a very small part in them. The pleasure sometimes seems to be so great that God is not there at all, and has turned away; which means, that such men do their work as of themselves, adding thereto, and finding pleasure therein; though all good is of God, and not a shred belongs to man.

7 Now, we might ask: “How can we separate pleasure from that which is good? Let us take an example. In the Old Testament the priests were forbidden to eat the fat of the sacrifices; they were to burn it and offer all to God. But they might eat the fat of the flesh which was their allotted portion. Thus all the delight that we have in all the exercise of virtue and in works must be cast into the fire of love, from whence it proceeds. But the natural pleasure or satisfaction which clings to natural actions, in as far as they are good, may be engaged by man in a simple way, if he does not add thereto.

8 Now, we must notice in these words: “Follow Me,” that St Matthew left all things and followed God. Man, when he leaves all things and himself in all things, must follow God more than all; in the outer man, in all exercises of virtue, in universal love; and, in the inner man, by real resignation of himself in all ways, both outwardly and inwardly. Now,

understand that when I speak of myself, I am speaking of all men. By God’s Grace and from Holy Christendom, I have received both my order and my cowl, this habit and my priesthood, that I might become a teacher and hear confessions. Now, if it came to pass that the Pope and also the Holy Church, from whom I have received them, wished to take them all away from me, if I were a temperate man, I should let them go, and I should not ask why they did so. If I might, I should put on a gray garb, and I should not remain any longer in the monastery with the brethren, nor be a priest and hear confessions and preach. I should also say that in God’s name all was at an end; for they gave all to me, and may therefore take all from me. Why, it would not be for me to ask. Why? because I do not wish to be called a heretic, or to be excommunicated; and thus I should be truly resigned. But if any one else wanted to take these things from me, I would rather die than allow them to be taken from me.

9 Again, if the Holy Church were to refuse us the Holy Sacrament externally, we must submit; but in a spiritual sense no one an take it from us. We must be ready to give up all without murmuring or answering again; but all this is external. Thus it ought to be, and even still more so in things that are within. What have we that was not given us by God? Therefore, all that He gave us must be given to Him again; we must give up all in true resignation, as though we had never obtained it.

10 You, dear children, who occupy yourselves with sacred pictures, holy thoughts, and works and ways, are not referred to here. I am not speaking to you; ye need not take this address to yourselves. But I mean those especially who have to go along the dark road, and to pass through the narrow way, which is not the road for all men. These men must take a

very different road from those of whom we have just spoken; and we will now speak of them; of what things they must have, and how some things are to be done and others left undone. Man should have all these things in his powers, without anything of self and beyond all powers; and he must posses them without any qualifications. Now, it is according to man's nature to desire to have, to know and to will. These are all the works of men's powers. Now, there are six things of which we must now take note. There are three in the lower, and three in the higher powers. In the lower, are humility, gentleness and patience, which answer to these three. Humility sinks at once and for ever into an abyss, and loses its name and rests in absolute nothingness, and knows nothing but humility. Gentleness has robbed love of the qualification of will; so that all things are alike, nothing is antagonistic; therefore there is no consciousness of any virtue, and all things are possessed in an even peace; virtue has lost its name and has become simply a condition. So also is it with patience. These men love and thirst after suffering and know nothing of patience.

11 Now, after all this resignation, it may happen that a hard word is spoken to thee; but do not let it affright thee; God has decreed it for thy good, that thou mayest sink yet deeper into thy nothingness. Then anger arises, and points to still greater renunciation, and shows thee thy nothingness, that thou mayest even think thyself unworthy that God should implant in thee one good thought. Everything depends upon this; a fathomless sinking in a fathomless nothingness. The doings of these men do not depend upon external works, or customs, or pictures; but, if they do well, their existence will be blessed beyond all measure; but in its way it is as full of care as that of the most savage men on earth. For this way is a dark way; and, as I said of Job: "A man whose way is hidden, and God

hath surrounded him with darkness." Man must bear all the reproaches heaped upon him on this rough road, in a self-denying way; even all the reproaches that can be imagined. Our Lord says everywhere: "Follow Me, go through all things. I am He; go not further; follow Me." If a man were to say: "Lord, who art Thou, that I must follow Thee through such deep, gloomy, miserable paths?" The Lord would reply, "I am God and Man, and far more God." If a man could answer then, really and consciously from the bottom of his heart: "Then I am nothing, and less than nothing;" all would be accomplished; for the Godhead has really no place to work in, but ground where all has been annihilated. As the Schoolmen say, when a new form is to come into existence, the old must of necessity be destroyed. They say: "When a child is conceived in the mother's womb, it is at first simply matter; later it takes an animal form; it lives as an animal; and then, at the appointed time, God creates a reasoning soul and casts it into the matter." Then the first form disappears in blessedness; that which is created, form, size and colour must all disappear, so that nothing is left save simple matter. And so I say: "If man is to be thus clothed upon with this being; all the forms must of necessity be done away, that were ever received by him in all his powers—of perception, knowledge, will, work, of subjection, sensibility and self-seeking." When St Paul saw nothing, he saw God. So also, when Elias wrapped his face in his mantle, God came. All strong rocks are broken here; all on which the spirit can rest be done away. Then, when all forms have ceased to exist, in the twinkling of an eye, the man is transformed. Therefore thou must make an entrance. Thereupon speaks the Heavenly Father to him: "Thou shalt call Me Father, and shalt never cease to enter in; entering ever further in, ever nearer, so as to sink the deeper in an unknown and unnamed abyss; and,

above all ways, images and forms, and above all powers, to lose thyself, deny thyself and even unform thyself." In this lost condition, nothing is to be seen but a ground which rests upon itself, everywhere one being, one life. It is thus, man may say, that he becomes, unknowing, unloving and senseless. This is not the result of natural qualities, but of the transformation, wrought by the Spirit of God in the created spirit, in the fathomless lost condition of the created spirit, and in his fathomless resignation. We may say of this, that God knows, loves and gives Himself thus; for man is nothing but a life, a being and action. Those who see in this way, with undue liberty and with false light, are in the most perilous state in which it is possible to be in this life. [102]

12 The way by which we must arrive at the goal, is through the precious Life and Sufferings of our dear Lord; for He is the Way by which we must go, and He is the Truth which lightens all in this way. He is the Life and the End to which men must come; and He is the Door; and whosoever entereth in by another door is a murderer. We must enter by this Door, by breaking through nature, and by the exercise of virtue and humility, in meekness and patience. Know of a truth that he who entereth not in by this way goeth astray, and God goes before him and in him, and yet he remains blind. But none have power over those who enter by this way; for God Himself hath set them free. St Paul says, that those who are driven or led by the Spirit are under no law. Time is never too long for such men; nothing troubles them. It can never be said of any of the lovers of this world, that nothing troubles them, and that time is never too long. But they, who are in this world, but whose higher life is above, are freed from all things and patient in their lower life. Whatever comes, theirs is an essential peace. They take all things from God, and desire to lay all things again on Him; and thus they rest in

peace. Still in the outer man they may have to suffer terribly and may be much troubled. But wherever they are, they are blessed; and we ought to praise them; but I fear they are rather sparsely sown. God help us that we may be like them. Amen.

SERMON XXIV · On the Feast of St Michael and All Angels

[1] On the various and especial works of the nine choirs of Holy Angels in man, in his threefold state and being; that is in the outer man, his powers of reason, and in his being, formed in the image of God. How, by their care and supervision, he may be enabled to attain to the very highest degree of Perfection in a spiritual life.

[2] *Angeli corum semper vident faciem Patris mei, qui in coelis est*

[3] "Their angels always see the Face of My Father Who is in heaven." [103]

[4] To-day is the Feast of St Michael and all Angels. We have already read to-day how this festival first arose, in consequence of the revelation on the mountain; therefore we will not refer to that now. The Gospel says: "Their Angels do always behold the Face of My Father Who is in heaven." I know not with what words I can, or ought, to speak of these pure spirits, for they have neither hands nor feet, neither image, nor form, nor substance; neither can we understand the nature of their being; so how can we speak of them? We know not what they are; and that is not surprising, for we do not know ourselves, nor our souls by which we are made men, and from which we receive all that is good in us. How then can we understand these transcendent spirits, whose nobility far surpasses all the nobility that the world can show? Therefore let us discuss their behaviour towards us, and not the nature of their being. Their work is always to behold us, and to look upon us in the mirror of the Godhead regularly, effectually and truly, with discrimination; and they

have a special and definite work to do in us; but God works unceasingly in us, much more truly and nobly; and they work with God in us, in the same way that the sun exercises a constant influence over the earth, while the stars co-operate with the sun in that influence on the earth, and on every creature in it. The stars always look at the sun and reflect his rays, while the sun turns his face to them; and thus their works become indivisible; so that, were it possible for the least star to be removed from the heavens, all creatures, men and cattle would be destroyed.

5 Now, there are nine choirs of Angels, forming three hierarchies, in each of which there are three choirs. Now, these three hierarchies have each their own peculiar and different effect on the three parts of man. The first is the outer man, the second is his reason, and the third is his likeness to God; and yet all these three form one man. In all three the Angels have their work to do. And, besides this, every man has an Angel, who at his baptism was especially appointed to watch over him, into whose care he was committed, who stands by him, and helps him unceasingly, guarding him when sleeping and waking, in all places and in all his works and ways, whether evil or good. Were there nothing else for which we ought to love God dearly, and thank Him, surely this would be enough; that God has so closely united these exalted and invisible beings with us, that they may discipline us unceasingly. But, on the other hand, every man has also to deal with a peculiarly wicked angel, the Devil, who works against him unceasingly, and tries him as constantly as the good Angel. If we were wise and industrious, the Devil’s opposition and his discipline would be more useful to us than those of the good Angels; for, were there no conflict, there could be no victory.

6 Now we must speak of the hierarchies. The lowest of the hierarchies are called Angels; one with another they serve the outer man; they exhort and warn him, they help him and guide him towards that which is good; they watch over him with steady and constant discipline. If they did not thus watch over us, what innumerable evils do ye imagine, might not befall us? for numberless devils follow us perpetually, desiring to destroy us, either sleeping or waking. But these noble Angels anticipate them and prevent them.

7 The Archangels form the second choir. They are represented as priest, whose active employment is to serve at the Holy Sacrament; they thus serve, counsel, and help man in the efficacious reception of the Holy Sacrament of our Lord’s Body.

8 The third choir consists of Virtues. They serve, counsel and admonish us to seek after natural and moral virtues, and they win for us the divine virtues of faith, hope and love. The men who follow them and commune much with them, are so virtuous that virtue becomes as easy and pleasant to them, as though it were part of their very nature and being. All the enemies, who have fallen from this choir, set themselves with all imaginable cunning against these men, desiring to entice them away, so that they may not reach that place, from which they themselves have been cast out. The stratagems to which they constantly have recourse, are incredible. Man ought to be very diligent in keeping guard against the hostile wickedness, which so marvellously surrounds him; for these enemies often make use of much secret dexterity in things which seem good; and, for the most part, they strive to lead men into all kinds of diversions; and, when they find they are not succeeding, they place him in a position which seems good, that he may be content therewith, and may not strive to

advance. Now, this is a most perilous condition in which to find ourselves, and now more than it ever was. As St Bernard says: “To stand still in the way of God, is to go backwards.” All are in this condition who have worldly and self-satisfied hearts, and who say, “We do as many good works as other men, and we are well-pleased with ourselves; we shall fare better than they, and we will go on with our own ways and customs, as those did who were before us.” But when great plagues come, those who imagine now that they are doing well will seem to be in great misery. Then the wicked angels, whom they have followed, will wonder and lament with them, and finally lead them away unopposed. Cases such as these are taking place even now. But when these horrible downfalls and plagues have passed away, then the holy Angels will make themselves known to men who have been purified, and will walk with them and commune with them openly.

9 Now we come to the second hierarchy. The Angels of which it is composed here an active supervision over the second division of man’s nature; his reasoning powers, which place him far above all other creatures with animal nature, and make him like unto the Angels. The first choir is called *Potestates,* the second *Principatus,* and the third *Dominationes,* signifying the mighty, the princes and the rulers. All these work in men, who, they find, have progressed in virtue, so that they can control, both outwardly and inwardly, their senses and the outward expression of them, in all things; and in the inner man, their thoughts and intentions. These men are free and reign supreme over vice. Thus, we read of St Francis, that he had such power over the outer man, that directly he thought of some discipline, his body sprang forward, and said, “See, here am I.” Such men are truly like the princes of the world, who are free and have none to control them. Thus these men are enabled in spirit to

rule over all the actions of the outer and inner man. When the wicked angels see this, they are filled with vehement hatred against them, because they fear that these men will take their places. So they exercise all their ingenuity to bring them into the most awful temptations that can be conceived, and of which those who serve the world and the Evil One never heard nor imagined. Of these ways there are many, for they so earnestly desire to drag down the good. When they become so importunate that the poor man imagines he must lose either his life or his senses, then the noble Angels come, the Principatus, and drive them away, and the man has gained the victory. When they have been thus overcome, they never dare to attack the same man again; for they are too proud to do it; and they are terrified and give way before these powerful people, and before those who rule over this hierarchy. Then the rulers, Dominationes, come and enable these men to become so wise and prudent, that they can see through the stratagems of the enemy. At St Paul says, that neither the devil, the world, the flesh, nor any creature could gain a victory over him.

10 We now come to the third hierarchy; these Angels work and look into the innermost part of man; into that which was formed in the Image of God. The first choir of these is formed by the Thrones, the second by the Cherubim, and the third by the Seraphim.

11 The Thrones work in the innermost heart of man, so that he becomes like unto a kingly throne, where God delights to dwell, to reign and to judge, to reward and to work all His works in him and through him. These men’s hearts are so irrevocably rooted in Divine Peace, that neither love nor sorrow, severity nor tenderness, can disturb them; as St Paul has said: “Neither death nor life.” A hundred deaths would

not move or terrify such men. In the same way that a dying man cares nothing for all the honour or shame that could be heaped upon him, because his thoughts are elsewhere, so also, when a man in his innermost heart is turned to God, he is a strong Throne of God, nothing can affright him, neither love nor sorrow, for he rests in that essential peace, which is the Dwelling-place of God; as David says: *"In pace factus est locus ejus."* Preserve and guard peace, dear children, that no man take it from thee, and that the Dwelling-place of God may not be destroyed. O, dear child, preserve this, be silent, suffer, abstain from evil and rest in peace. Rest and trust and keep to thyself; do not run about too much; be not agitated, preoccupied or impulsive; but realise the Presence of thy Lord of Lords in thy heart, where He sits on His throne glorious and powerful, so that He may not be disturbed and His peace diminished. [104]

12 Now, when men are resting in this peace, then the Cherubim come in all their brightness, and lighten up men's hearts with their godlike light as with a sudden glance. This glance pierces the men through and through; and their hearts are so filled with light, that, were it necessary, they could judge all men; and yet this illumination is but a glance; the quicker it is, the truer, the nobler and the surer.

13 Then come the burning Seraphim, with their flaming love, and they kindle love in the hearts of men; and this, too, is done in a moment, so that the love of man becomes so broad and wide that it embraces within itself the love of all things. It seems to him as though he would set all men alight; and all is so sudden and quick, that it seems to him as though he would be consumed himself. This flame is kindled in the innermost thoughts of the glorified man; and yet it lights up also the other two parts of man, his soul and the outer man.

Such men become so godlike and so well-regulated, so truly resigned, virtuous, peaceful and calm, that no one is ever conscious of any infirmity in them, either i words or deeds; and yet they look upon themselves as nothing, and heed all as little as if it had taken place in some one a thousand miles away. They look upon all that God may work by them, or in them, as apart from themselves, taking no credit for it; for they think of nothing but their own absolute nothingness, and regard themselves as lower than all men. These verily are the heavens in which the Father dwells, as the Gospel says: “Their Angels always see the Face of My Father Who is in heaven.” May God help us all thus to attain. Amen. [105]

SERMON XXV · All Saints' Day

[1] A very useful exposition of the Gospel, of the eight Beatitudes. How we can attain to the grades or steps of these most blessed Virtues, and learn to know ourselves thereby. How we ought to honour the Saints and their various degrees of merit in the Eternal Fatherland.

[2] *Videns Jesus turbas, ascendit in montem, et secuti sunt cum discipuli, etc.*

[3] "And seeing the multitudes Jesus went up into a mountain, and when He was set down, His disciples came unto Him. And opening His mouth, he taught them saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit," and thus He spake the eight Beatitudes. [106]

[4] The mountain that Jesus went up was His own holiness and His Being, for He is one with His Father; and He was followed by a great company of those dear Saints whose day we are celebrating. They have all followed Him, each one in his own vocation, as God has called him. We must follow after them, endeavouring above all things to discover what the calling is, to which God has called us, and to follow it.

[5] Now, we must honour these Saints with all diligence. What is the greatest honour that we can do them? To sink down with them in absolute seclusion, in that good ground in which they have lost themselves, and in which their great blessedness is to be found. Therefore, immerse thyself with them, for thou canst not show them any greater honour, or do anything that would please them better.

[6] Now let us consider the company of Saints who followed Him up the mountain, and how each one was led. Now, He

was first followed by the holy Patriarchs of the Old Covenant with overflowing longings; for they believed that He would come. They were filled by God with holy love and hope; and, not outwardly but inwardly, they were bare and empty of all that was not God. Their love was so great, that they divided all they had with the chosen people; and they used all diligence, that nothing should be wanting whence this Birth should proceed. They offered themselves up entirely to the service of that generation, into which He was to be born. We read to-day of those who followed Him, that, of every generation, twelve thousand were marked; eleven generations followed Him and the rest were numberless.

7 Next came the second company, the dear and holy Apostles. They came after the Birth of our Lord; and they were led by Him by a much higher way, and to a state of greater perfection. They forsook all things, not only inwardly, but also outwardly, in true poverty of body and soul, and that in the highest degree possible.

8 Then came the holy Martyrs, and of these a great company followed Him. They not only forsook all things, but they also laid down their lives when God required it of them, and in whatever way He chose.

9 Then He was followed by a great company of holy Confessors, who followed their call in divers ways. Some lived alone unto God in seclusion, and received the truth within, in silence, and listening to what God, the Eternal Word, spake unto them. Such men fled to the woods and caves. Others joined religious Orders, and lived in Holy Christendom, preaching and writing, hearing confessions, teaching and admonishing, doing all things heartily, as unto God, and giving up self and all that was not of God.

10 Then followed the blessed company of pure and modest Virgins, undefiled in body and soul. Oh! what a holy and blessed thing it is to be found undefiled in body like an Angel, and to whom God has granted the honour of being found in the garb which He and His Blessed Mother wore with such grace. The joy is so great that no one in this world ought to be able to trouble such a man; neither should sorrow or any trouble go to his heart, if he has only preserved this treasure. He, who desires to preserve it in all its nobility, must struggle and suffer; and his heart will often be wounded by his natural desires and his evil nature, the flesh and the devil. Now mark, children, every attack, made by temptations of this nature only brings forth purity; he, who thus learns to know himself therein, will find that this is his reward. O, children, who gives heed to the rewards thus brought forth! Then comes the company of the common people, who give heed to such things; they are also upheld by the faith and prayer of the Friends of God. They must be purified in purgatory, or else they cannot enter into the Kingdom of the Father; and, as we keep to-day as the day of the souls that are purified, so we shall keep to-morrow, as the day of the souls that are not, that they also may be purified. Thus, for one earthly delight, and one daily sin, we shall have to suffer more pain in purgatory than the pain of all the martyrs, could it be heaped together, whose day we are keeping. This must needs be for the slightest opposing of our will to God in sin, and for despising His call and His mediation.

11 Now these are the companies who followed Christ up the mountain of His Blessedness. Then He opened His Divine Mouth and spake the eight Beatitudes. We will say a little about each one. He said first: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” This virtue is placed first, because it is the chief part, and the beginning of all

perfection. Children, turn it which way ye will, the heart of man must be bare, empty, free, poor, and undisturbed, if God is really to work therein. It must be quite empty, and then God may and will dwell therein.

12 Now this poverty may be accepted and exercised in four different ways. The first are those who are poor against their own will and wish. No one ought to judge harshly of these poor; for the Lord overlook their faults all the more graciously on account of their poverty.

13 St Thomas says of the second kind of poverty, that it is to be desired and accepted to the same extent in which we find it a help to us, and a furtherance of the freedom and emptiness of our minds; for many a man's mind is freer and less preoccupied what is needful, then when he is obliged to provide it every day. He, who is allowed to possess what is needful, and uses it with thankfulness, is often less anxious than he who has to seek it. But, if such a man should find that it has taken possession of his heart, or that it disturbs him, so that he is not exercising the virtues of charity, moderation, humility and absolute purity, he ought to give all up, and become poor outwardly, like the poor.

14 The third kind of poverty is that of one who so dearly loves God, that nothing can hinder him, and everything becomes a help to him. As St Paul says, all things are a help to the good; so this man remains unaffected by everything that is not absolutely of God, by everything that touches his heart, so that he may become poor, bare and free. These can say with St. Paul: "As having nothing and yet possessing all things." so the inner man is unharmed. [107]

15 The fourth kind of this absolute poverty is that of a man who desires to be poor, both outwardly and inwardly, after

the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who imitates His absolute poverty out of real love, neither troubled by it nor concealing it, either outwardly or inwardly. Such only have a bare, pure, direct and unceasing intercourse with their Source and Beginning, so that there cannot be a sudden falling away without the heart being aware of it and returning speedily. This is the most absolute poverty; for the most noble form of poverty is a turning to God, bare, free and unhindered, now and for ever, like that of the poor Saints.

16 Now we come to the second: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall posses the land.” Here we come a degree nearer in blessedness; for all difficulties are solved by true poverty; for by this meekness we get closer to the Source of all things, and all bitterness, anger and untruthfulness are driven out; for it is written: “All things are clean to the clean,” to the meek all things are pure. All this comes out of a pure, good heart, so that to the good all things are good. In days gone by the Friends of God were martyred, prepared (tortured) and tormented by the heathen; but now it is done by people who appear to be good Christians; they cut us to the heart, and yet they are our neighbours. If thou turnest to God, they say: “Thou art mad; thou hast lost thy head; thou hast strange customs, and thou art a deceiver.” Then comes meekness, and leads and guides thee to thyself in thine own heart, that thou mayest receive all as from God, and not from man. Thus thou remainest in perfect peace, and sayest: “What can man do to harm thee, if thou hast God for thy Friend?” and thus the meek possess the land, and remain in perfect peace, in spite of all that may befall them. But if thou dost not act thus, thou wilt lose all thy virtue and thy peace as well; and thou wilt be called a snarler, as though thou wert a fierce dog. [108]

17 Thirdly, our Lord said: “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” In one sense He means those who suffer; in another sense, those who mourn for their sins, always excepting the blessed Friends of God, who are the most blessed of all here; for they have done with weeping for their own sins, and may not mourn for them any more; and yet they have not ceased weeping, for they weep for the sins and infirmities of their neighbours. We read that St Dominic asked one of his companions, who was weeping bitterly, why he wept. He replied: “Dear father, because of my sins.” Then said the Saint: “No, dear son, they have been sufficiently mourned for; but I beseech thee, dear son, to weep for those who will not weep for themselves.” Thus the true Friends of God weep for all the blindness and misery of the sins of the world, and for all its wickedness. For when God allows His anger and His judgments to fall upon us, and we say so many dreadful things about the fire, the floods, the great darkness, strong winds and bad times, then the Saints mourn over all before the Lord, day and night; and He regardeth them and ceaseth, waiting to see if we will do better. If we do not improve, we must expect yet heavier and severer plagues. The clouds hang over us; but they are held up by the weeping of the Friends of God. But, be sure of this, if we do not improve, they will soon fall; and then there will be such tumults and turmoils that we shall be put in mind of the Judgment Day. Those who are now at peace will suffer from great oppression, and the Word of God and Divine Service will become almost unknown. There will only be a service here or there, and no one will know where to go. But our faithful God will find a place of refuge, where He can preserve His own.[28]

18 Fourthly: “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for justice.” This, in truth, is a virtue which has been possessed

by very few men. Very few hunger and desire, in thought, sight and taste, for righteousness only. There would be neither favour nor disfavour, either for my benefit or for that of my friends, nor for my honour, praise, or blame; there would be neither false judgment, favour or disfavour, where this ground was found; but he who finds it may well be praised. For he to whom nothing is delightful, and who cares for nothing but justice, has ascended to a very high degree. We may well say to such an one that he is blessed.

19 Fifthly: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” It is said that mercy is the attribute that God shows forth in all His works: therefore a merciful man is a truly godlike man. For mercy is brought forth by love and kindness. Therefore the true Friends of God are much more merciful, and more ready to believe in the sinful and suffering, than those who are not loving. Mercy is born of that love which we ought to exercise towards each other. If we do not, God will require it of us at the Judgment Day; and, where He findeth not the requisite mercy, He will refuse mercy, as He Himself has said. He says nothing of perfection, and censures only those who have not been merciful. This mercy is not concerned only with gifts, but it ought to extend to all the suffering that falls, or may fall, on a man when tried. He who does not look on his neighbour with true love and pity, mercifully overlooking all his weakness and infirmity, may well fear for himself, that God will refuse him His mercy. “With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.” Therefore let every one look to himself, that he may himself be uncondemned throughout Eternity. [109]

20 Sixthly: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the Children of God.” Men, who possess true peace,

are lovable men indeed, and their peace no man taketh from them. Their own will is lost in the Will of God, in love and sorrow, weal or woe, in time and in Eternity. Their works and all their life are in God, not after a human fashion, but in a divine and supernatural way. They are baptized in the Power of the Father, the Wisdom of the Son, and the precious love of the Holy Ghost, and they are so saturated therewith, that no man can mar their peace. These three Divine Persons has so filled them, that, were it needful, they could make their peace known throughout the land; for they are filled with the light of the Divine Wisdom which has passed through them. Thus, full of love also themselves, they overflow, both within and without, in true love to their neighbours. Thus overflowing, nothing else can be found in them, however they may be approached, but love and peace. These are they who at heart are peace-makers. The peace which passeth all understanding has taken such hold of them, that none can drive away; and they are rightly called the Children of God; for that which the Only-Begotten Son has by nature, is given to them of grace. The peaceful are in very truth begotten to God and of His Heart; for this peace cannot otherwise be brought forth, either by discipline or by any outward means. Still, those in whom this peace is to be found, may have to suffer many offenses, in the outer man, in many ways.

21 Seventhly: “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.” What is a clean heart? A heart bare, free and untroubled by any creature, where God finds the ground bare, free and untroubled. The pure shall indeed see God. This purity of heart is defiled by man, when he wantonly turns with heart and desire to the creature, and rests therein; and, the more he rests and seeks and finds in that which is not God, the more he separates himself from God. Thus his eyes are blinded and he cannot rest in the Vision of God. The

external purity of the flesh is very helpful to the purity of the heart; as St Paul says: “Virgins think day and night, unceasingly, of the things of God, but they that have husbands cannot do this.” As bodily purity is lost by the outward neglect of the body, so also the noble integrity of the spirit in the Likeness of God is lost and spoiled by the willing addition of things that are not in His Likeness; so that by this means man’s spirit is darkened, and he cannot see his Source nor his true Abode, nor that for which he was created and sent forth; namely, that he should unceasingly return to his Source and there see God with the eyes of his spirit and his understanding. Therefore, purity is much to be praised, because it ever provides an open pathway to God; for the spouse of God should so keep herself that she should desire to please none but God only; that is, if she desires to be, or to be called His spouse.

[22] It is impossible to express in words the eighth Beatitude, that those are blessed who suffer persecution for righteousness’ sake. The faithful and true God, who has chosen that His Friends should be very near to Him in His own blessedness, sends speedy and great suffering, when He sees that they are not living as befits them; so that they may follow after blessedness whether they will or no. This is immeasurable faithfulness on the part of God, and it ought to be the cause of immeasurable thankfulness on the part of man, that he is thus obliged to suffer. He ought to acknowledge that he is unworthy of it; and it should fill him with hope that God has granted him this honour and grace, that he may be made like unto God and follow after Him. St Bernard says: “a little suffering borne patiently is far and away of greater worth than long discipline is good works.” St Thomas says: “All suffering, however slight, that can be

suffered either outwardly or inwardly, is a copy of the most precious Suffering of our Lord.”

23 But a still more worthy suffering, and closer to that of our Lord, is an inner suffering with God; for though all suffering is incredibly useful and fruitful, yet this is still more desirable and noble. As high and far above all creatures as God is, so is this suffering high and far above all the works that man can do. Therefore we ought to love God very dearly, when He leads us to eternal salvation by means of suffering with Him. The work must be God’s and not man’s, and we must see God in it. Man ought by nature to suffer rather than to work; to receive rather than give; for every such gift increases and ennobles the desire for more gifts a thousand times. He who empties himself and makes himself bare, and holds himself in inner peace, looking for the work of God in his soul, will give place to God, and desire to bear all that God may work in him, in His noble and divine work. For God is always working, and His Spirit is always suffering. What a marvellous blessing it would be, if man would only hold fast to his nobility, and, under God, keep himself bare and pure; so that God, if it pleased Him, might see His work in man. God grant that we may attain to this blessedness. Amen.

SERMON XXVI · All Saints' Day · The Second Sermon

[1] Of two kinds of Poverty; the lack of worldly goods, and Poverty of Spirit. How Poverty of Spirit is the much more perfect kind; more painful and also more pleasing to God. Of what Poverty of Spirit consists, and how man can attain to it. [31]

[2] *Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum ist regnum coelorum.*

[3] "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." [110]

[4] There are two kinds of poverty; one is external, affecting the outer man, and consists of giving up all temporal things for the sake of God, and this is an Evangelical Counsel. The other kind of poverty is that of the spirit and humility of heart. This is required of all men: of each man according to his vocation; and now we will say something of both kinds.

[5] The first kind of poverty is not binding on every man, but only on those who are called thereto by God, and to whose spirit the desire is given to imitate, in the highest degree, the outward Humanity of Christ. To do this they must forsake all things, and must give even themselves in alms; begging their bread day by day, like St Francis and all his brethren. Thus to follow after Christ outwardly is the highest grade. No man can attain to this in his own strength; for he will have to give up all temporal advantages absolutely, to deny himself outwardly all temporal goods. Nature does not willingly act thus, for it is hard; but the more difficult it is to nature, the more acceptable it is to God. It is a peculiarly holy life to

those who walk therein, with pure hearts and good intentions; and by means of their good example, God often brings about the conversion of many worldly people, especially amongst the poor who are living in great sin. Therefore this poverty is greatly rewarded by God. But, if this outward poverty is to work for their real good, it must also take place inwardly. For this reason outward poverty is most useful when it becomes a help to inner poverty.

6 The second kind of poverty is that of the spirit, and real humility of heart. It consists of the resignation of all comforts and pleasures; and, as outward poverty requires that all temporal comfort should be forsaken, so this points to the forsaking of all inner consolation, in virtue, fervour, and all the pleasures of inward cheerfulness and joy.

7 Now, dear children, try to understand me aright, how ye ought to attain to this. May God grant that ye will desire this poverty, and also that which is external. He will not succeed who sets himself to acquire it without any inner inclination; or takes it on himself, because he has read of it in the Scriptures, or heard of it, or lays hold of it out of anxiety. He who is not driven thereto by divine inspiration, will stand still, and will not attain to true virtue. He thinks only of externals, of the state of willing poverty, but he does not look upon it as Christ did, and as He calls some men thereto, who fill the highest place in the Holy Church, and who, for God’s sake, first became outwardly poor, that they might become inwardly poor also. Some think only of the state of outward poverty, and do not look within. They are quite content with outward poverty; for they think everything depends upon that; if at times inner fervour and a sweet foretaste are theirs, they call it contemplation, or the contemplative life. Now all this is still taking place in the lowest grade of their

nature, according to the integrity and spirituality of their lowest powers; and so they do not look any further within, but they imagine there is no higher way. Thus they become only a little like unto Christ in His Humanity; but they ought to go further, and learn to be like unto Christ in spirit and in truth. As He was united in spirit with the Father, so also must they strive to be, as far as possible, in this life.

[8] Inner poverty is a much higher state than outward poverty, because it is in the Likeness of God, while the latter only resembles His Humanity. It is also much safer. He who possesses both is the most exalted. But there are not many such men to be found; for people are much diseased by nature; and, therefore, if one or the other must be lacking, it is better to lack outward poverty, and to seek inward poverty, according to the power of each man, in whatever state he may be. A poor and humble heart is needful for all men; but every man is not bound to be outwardly poor, but only those who are called by God thereto. This inner way and poverty are hard to follow; and if a man could have as much strength as the strongest man who ever lived, he would need it all to enable him to endure to the end of his life. Is it not then quite right that such men should have outward comforts and proper attention when they are ill, especially those who have long tormented the outer man? It is, however, so difficult to carry this out, that they will not be able to succeed well by casting off all necessaries, by watchings, by hard external labour; for they are rather hindered by severe and external abstinence. When they are suffering, oppressed, in terror, or in severe pain, their hearts are so full, that they can scarcely bear all; and, if then they were to do severe outward penance, they would destroy their natural powers, and would be unable to attend to God’s inner admonitations; therefore, when they are in this condition, proper attention should be

allowed them, that they may get better. Be sure of this, that they will have to do penance for the comforts allowed to nature, with fear and trembling, though outwardly they may hold high positions in the world, having goods and possessions in accordance with their rank, and yet still possessing this inner poverty. The more these people have of external honour, goods and ease, in accordance with their rank, the heavier is the load they bear within; while outwardly they are obliged to do their utmost to foster this poverty of spirit. When they cannot accomplish this without natural comforts, they make use of them in fear and bitterness, as secretly as they can, so that they may offend none. Thus any one might possess a kingdom without injury to himself; or any other position, and yet be poor in spirit and miserable. Very few are ready to believe that such great benefits may thus be gained, yea, in every state of life, if man be only ready to die to his natural lusts, and to turn will all his heart to this poverty. None are too rich, or too great, or too poor, to attain to this way, to choose it and to walk therein; all who earnestly seek it can find it. Therefore, the man who is unable to accept both kinds of poverty should turn to this one, stay in his calling, and learn to be poor in spirit, that is of a humble heart.

9 The best way to train ourselves in this, is to call upon God for help, beseeching Him to preserve us from sin, and to grant us endurance in suffering; for poverty of spirit consists of inward suffering, oppression and misery. It may not be driven out by any pleasure. Man must exercise himself in all virtues, in as much as it lies in his power; and, if he is not pleased, but more suffering comes from other people, and he is chastised by God, and afflicted in his body, while all men, both clergy and laity, disconcert, scorn and despise him; while in all this, he suffers and does not give way, but waits

till God sends him relief; see, this is being poor in spirit. Now mark, how much harder it is to choose this inner poverty than lack of goods. It is truly much more pleasing to God and much nobler. Those who preach and teach this inner poverty, are doing God much more service than those who teach external poverty only. This life is far more like unto God than the other; and many hundred times more labour is required in it. It would also be better to induce a hundred men to follow after poverty of spirit, than one to endure outward poverty. It does not need much proof to show that this is a far higher life than the first; for it is so much harder to choose it. That men are more easily moved by outward poverty arises from the fact that they believe more readily what they see, than what they hear of, and have not tried. God wills that some men should choose external poverty, because the life is well-pleasing to Him, and that they may have much fruit amongst the common people, who cannot understand poverty of spirit, because they are so full of care, and who regard outward poverty as the most excellent state. It teaches and moves them to turn from their own most sinful life and to repent.

10 Those who love external poverty, and exercise themselves therein, are sometimes richly endowed by God with spiritual riches within. No suffering vexes them outwardly, because they are so joyful in spirit. Some think it almost an impossibility, when they hear that they ought to turn from these delights. They consider that external poverty is of small account; they think more of inner poverty, because they really love themselves too well, and act thus that they may be able to follow the dictates of nature, while they think or imagine that they wish to serve God in pure joyfulness. This is verily and indeed true of those who, not having been compelled and urged from within, flee from outward poverty;

thus they are constantly deceived and become very dangerous people. But those who have tasted it, and who strive to live in pain and who go straight on in their course, in true resignation, will find it much more painful than the other course could ever have been; and, had they the strength of ten men, they would find it useful. It is necessary that they should eat and drink well, so that they may not suffer from headache; for our nature is not so strong and powerful as it used to be; and they cannot follow, both in the outer and inner way, without especial grace from God. But let him who is admonished by God to take the first way, walk in it with the help of God; and then, doubtless, help will be given him for the other, so that he can turn to it with all his might, and thus follow on in both. But if he cannot follow on in both, let him keep to the second for the present, and let him destroy and kill his sins only, and not his nature. He, who is not called to the first, should turn and pray for the second, that he may fear God in his own state of life; for with God there is no respect of persons, but He loves and is well-pleased with all who fear Him and are pious.

[11] Now, may the merciful God help us to serve Him in such a righteous life, forsaking our sins and all the lusts of the flesh, and the sweetness of spirituality, that we may attain to true poverty of spirit. All sorts and conditions of men are called hereto. First and foremost the clergy, and especially the priests, as is shown by the life of John the Baptist, who led a hard and strict life, and deprived himself outwardly of all that he could possibly give up. He also possessed true poverty of spirit, that is deep and true humility, despising the body, and holding himself of no repute in comparison with the Lord Jesus; for he said: “The latchet of Whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose.” He also said: “I ought to be baptized by Thee, and comest Thou to me?” Thus it was quite evident that

he was despised and rejected of men; for Christ tells us that, because he ate and drank so little, some of them said: “He hath a devil.” And at last it came to pass, that for the truth’s sake he was beheaded in the dungeon, and thus murdered secretly, just as though he did not belong to God; for he had no visible spiritual consolations, but he suffered death patiently. This is also shown in the life of the holy Pope Gregory, who has less comfort in the inner and outer man from all his riches and honour, than a hermit has in his cell. This is also proved to all women and laymen by the example of our Blessed Lady, who had no temporal consolations. And Christ is our Example above all, for He was outwardly poor, and still poorer in spirit; and, from the Manger to the Cross, He never experienced any comfort. Thus all His disciples and Saints have followed after Him, each one in his hard and suffering life, according to his power, and as God has decreed. God grant that we also may attain to this, and may come to a perfect life. Amen. [111] [112] [113]

SERMON XXVII · All Saints' Day, or St Ursula's Day · The Third Sermon

[1] How man can attain to the Purity of Heart which will enable him to see God in this life, to be sensible of His Divine Inspiration, and hereafter to possess and enjoy Him for ever. [32]

[2] *Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt*

[3] "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God." [114]

[4] Mark well, dear children, how all those who desire to be pleasing unto God, must be cleansed from all outer and inner stains and blemishes, for otherwise God will not accept them, but will let them perish in many outer and inner errors.

[5] He who would gladly be freed from sin, and who desires to possess a pure and empty heart, free from anxiety, with which, even in this life, in spirit he may see God, must seek the Grace of God; and must, before all things, examine his conscience diligently, that he may learn to cleanse it, by dying to all the vices of which he was ever guilty, either outwardly or inwardly. Now what is a good conscience? It is a quiet, peaceful, pure heart, humble and lowly, which desires God's Will and Honour, and is ready to give or receive all things, without making any choice; he who has such a heart will be blessed, and the Will of God will be done by him. But before a man can attain to this, so that his conscience is pure, empty and quiet, he will have to go through great suffering; and his conscience will be constantly pricking and gnawing him. First, he acknowledges the greatness of his sins, which he mourns and repents. Then he begins to shun and avoid

evil, and to resist sin and all that causes it; so that he may learn to die unto it, that he may be clean and no longer consent to it. After this he begins to do good, and to set his face against all wanton desires of the senses, even giving up things which are allowed (as David did), in eating and drinking, walking and standing, seeing and hearing, walking and resting in many things that are permissible, in order that he may grow better, and follow the teaching of the Gospel. Therefore, those things in which he has taken great delight, and in which he has indulged, he must subdue and repress. By this means conscience learns how to purify the desires, as before it had striven to guard against gross sins.

6 After this the outer man suffers great discomfort which the body can ill bear. When man has succeeded, by the Grace of God, in cutting off gross sins, and has begun to get the mastery over his spirit, by cutting himself off from all his accustomed pleasures, it seems strange to his animal nature, which begins to struggle. Then, whether he take it amiss, or simply, plainly and patiently, yet he will find that he is ill at ease, and full of infirmity, and that his ill-ordered mind will not submit to guidance. He cannot keep his senses outwardly under control; he cannot keep silence, but must talk, either to complain of his wants, or to boast of his good works. He finds fault with all that he does not like, and casts aside everything to which he is averse. He complains of all that harms him, while anything, which is advantageous, pleases him. That which is sweet is also pleasant; while he is unwilling to accept any task that is hard and difficult. All that he praises must be praised; while no one may praise, in his presence, anything with which he finds fault. See, dear children, how a man thus begins to fathom and to probe his own heart, and to realise what he is, and what he can do of himself. He earnestly desires to drive some evil things out of his heart,

and to purify it; but it is sour and hard to him. His nature can as yet scarcely bear suffering, mortification and oppression and shame, though on account of many things he is conscience-stricken and repentant, and acknowledges before God and man that he has not done right in these things. Because he does not yet know what it is to die to all evil desires, he may easily fall a prey to them; and not without cause; for evil desires lie hidden at the bottom of his heart, to which he is outwardly so much inclined, that it is most needful he should exercise himself, in the outer man, in the virtues shown forth by our Lord Jesus Christ, while he shares those things to which he is inclined.

7 After this the man begins to be more spiritually-minded, in a fruitful and virtuous life; he must begin with a fervent prayer, which must arise from his conflict with sin, as has already been said. Further, true penitence and sorrow for sin arise from such prayers; then contempt of self and his sinful life, and then the man begins with good will to yield himself up to suffer pain, mortification, oppression, contradiction and ignominy and all kinds of trouble in which he may find himself, while in all he gives and offers himself up to God. He begins out of love to learn true resignation and patience in the faith and hope of Christ. He will have nothing more of self, that the purity of his conscience may in no way be stained. He then begins to hate himself, and despise himself, while he endeavours to guard against all judging of others, and strives to shut out all sin when he becomes aware of temptation. He diligently guards against all incitements to sin, so that he may not give place to the Devil. He hangs on God with all his heart, and cleaves to nothing else. He patiently suffers to the end all the suffering that comes to him, till God releases him. He will not seek for ease by means of any comfort, either bodily or spiritual. The consequence of

all this is, that he is willing to be guided by his superiors, desiring to subject himself wholly unto God. He first notices what is present to him, and then exercises himself therein. If it is good, he is thankful; if he is tempted, he fights against it. Further, he learns that he must bewail his need to none, save God, to Whom he prays for perseverance. He is never uplifted by anything on earth, and has no pleasure in self; but he delights only in God, in all things, and above all things. He is thankful and good tempered, whether things go well or ill with him. He loves his neighbours, feeling pity for their weakness, and shuns all external things and all sudden outbursts, especially in mirth. He avoids all lukewarmness in discipline and excess of pleasure. All that belongs to God is good; therefore man should be careful in keeping watch over himself, not high-minded but thinking little of self. Everything that he advises another to shun, he must shun himself, such as self-will, of which especially he must rid himself. He must strive to build on his imperfection and littleness, offering himself in all his suffering to God, and bearing always the Life and Sufferings of Christ in his heart. He will cling to no creature, that God alone may be his Love and his Lover. He purifies his heart that he may learn to see God here in truth, and that he may see Him yet more purely and more clearly in eternal salvation. God grant that this may be our portion. Amen.

SERMON XXVIII · On the Feast of the Holy Virgin, St Catherine

1 Of the great advantage and fruitfulness to which we may attain, if we diligently meditate on, and exercise ourselves in, the Sufferings of Christ. This may well be compared to a costly Pearl, which devout virgins ought to seek everywhere diligently, to buy and to possess.

2 *Inventa una preciosa margarita, abiit et vendidit universa quae habuit, et emit eam.*

3 "And when he had found one pearl of great price, he went his way and sold all that he had and bought it." [115]

4 She found a costly pearl, and therefore forsook everything, and parted with all her goods that she might buy it. We may understand by this that the virgin of God has forsaken all things for the sake of her purity, which she prizes like a precious stone, and that she has preserved that only. Secondly, the virgin of Christ has found the Sufferings of Christ, and has copied them, withdrawing from all earthly pleasures, to thank Him for this suffering.

5 The simplest way in which we can serve God consists of two things. The first is the ordinary discipline of the Holy Church, and a life spent in subjection, in poverty, in purity and in other good practices, such as were undertaken by the holy and gifted dwellers in monasteries. This is a safe and good thing to do, in order to subdue the outer man, and to turn to virtue.

6 The second point is, that we should exercise ourselves in imitating the Sufferings of our Lord; endeavouring once every day to consider them fully, and, as far as possible, to

compare, in all points, our lives with His, noticing, especially, all that God sends us, to which we must submit, following after God. If we watch carefully, we shall find that God, in His great and loving mercy, will unceasingly send us so much trouble, that we shall not be able to exalt ourselves, or make ourselves equal with God. We must meditate on all this suffering, learning and working with all our hearts, and in all our work, striving to do all things to the glory of God. We must also strive to gain such control over our senses, that, in a short time, the love of the world will be quite extinguished in us. Thus the suffering of Christ may well be compared to the precious stone or pearl, which a virgin of Christ preserves, that she may adorn herself therewith. She must meditate every day on the Sufferings of Christ, from the Last Supper to the Resurrection, and she must buy that pearl with all that she has and can gather together, in all her works, her thankfulness and longings. Herewith we ought to be able easily to overcome all the evil inclinations of our nature and our evil thoughts; herewith we ought soon to arrive at a heartfelt acknowledgement of our own weakness and infirmities, and to attain to deep humility; and thus go on to an inner, perfect sympathy with our Lord, and all men, in true love. He who does not turn to this, can never really learn to know himself, but he will probably remain outside, content with outward observances. Even though he forced himself onwards through outward things and work, yet all cannot sweeten him within unless he earnestly repents.

7 Good fruits proceed from these pearls of the Sufferings of Christ, when men are enabled by grace to offer themselves to God in all their sufferings, and to trust God in simplicity and not in wicked cunning. God ordains all and bears the burden Himself, and thus men learn true resignation, and God is able to help them in their infirmity. Thus God begins to draw man

by His love from the love of the creature, and they begin to learn discrimination in all their actions, to trust God in all things, and to understand that they must not think anything of themselves, nor trust to self, nor rest in anything, but only in the Grace of God. Therefore they believe fully that they will not be deceived; but he who trusts in himself will be deceived. Now this results in yet more grace; and such men begin to distinguish between Divine Grace and emotional feelings; for notice how many a man leads a seemingly good life, and is outwardly humble and simple, and who yet thinks much of himself in his heart.

[8] Good virgins keep, both outwardly and inwardly, and with all their might, all the ordinary, good and regular ordinances of the Holy Church and the Holy Scripture. They commune with their own hearts, and cleave to God, to Whom they may best pour out all their wants, and not to man. When they thus turn away from man, they will have to suffer much oppression and shame from him; and yet they will hold their peace in all their difficulties, laying all before God and not before man, accustoming themselves to meditate constantly on the Sufferings and Life of Christ. God gives them strength through the Sufferings of Christ, so that they dare to stand alone, although they are despised for it, and they dare to carry on their own meditations. But this they do in fear and trembling before God, because it is counted wrong and foolish by man. But God bears witness to their consciences, and that makes them very thankful, so that they rejoice out of love to God. The Enemy cannot easily ensnare such people by means of sorrow, because they have constant communion, and hope for nothing from the light of nature, human wisdom, or things that seem good. They do not depend only upon sweet communion and fervour; just as though all must be well with them, and they must be united with God,

because things do go well with them. Those who imagine thus are the most deceived by the Devil; but they must leave all to God, discipline themselves and examine themselves, both outwardly and inwardly, and flee to God with all their might without any delay. Though the body must sometimes rest outwardly from discipline, the heart ceases not to give God thanks, to honour Him, and to resist all that is inconsistent with the needs of the body. These people pray that God will forgive them their sins, because they displease Him, and not in order to escape the pains of hell, or to attain to everlasting life. They pray that God will do what He wills with them and as He wills, till they come to their End, and that here and hereafter God may be glorified in them. They pray that they may not displease God by their sins, but that He will forgive them; that they may not be prevented from receiving grace, so that they may learn to continue in virtue. They pray for remission of sins, not for remission of pain; that they leave to God. Mark, this it is to which man comes, if he exercises himself in the Sufferings of Christ for this object, and if he perseveres to the end.

9 Alas! how few men attain to this; and all because of their superficiality, so that they do not turn simply to God in their hearts. Therefore one man is very unlike another in this life; and this arises solely from this reason, that the one cannot be content without external work and internal discipline, while the other is quite content with external work: this pearl is not therefore given alike to all. Thus it comes to pass that men cannot understand one another; and at times they cause each other pain; but when it is understood that it was done in ignorance, man should bear patiently with them, while their blindness must also be borne patiently. By such goodhearted men God desires to teach many other people, and to call them into the right way, as they have well known in their

hearts. For they who did not give up self, before they entered in, or they who have not truly entered in, are likely to fall into many errors, before they are aware of it; for they easily find that which appeals to nature and which pleases their senses; and thus they make no spiritual progress. If God suffers this carnal service, still He is not pleased with it; for all the great fruitfulness, of which we have already spoken, is checked in them, and in all those who might have been helped by them, if they had taken the first course, and had cast off their carnal desires and had then looked into their own hearts. But now they have remained in this carnal service, which yields but little; but it would indeed be well if those men were to turn, to submit, to the best of their power, to the blessed Will of God, and thus to glorify God, and to be of use to those people with whom God is angry, and who have brought many people into sin.

10 Now, as I have already shown, this pearl may, perchance, become very fruitful, which was found first in sweetness, in confession, in love and all kinds of discipline. But then man will have to come down again from sweetness to bitterness, in resignation and suffering out of love, and thus to die to self. The freer man is from self-pleasing, the freer he will be from the snares of the Devil, from the temptations and misery of these times, from hell and purgatory; neither will he be likely to fall again into sin, unless he turns again with all his heart and soul thereto; and that is not likely to happen. As the first state of fervour demands deeds of virtue, done in sweetness, so this grade demands deeds of virtue, done in hard labour, with gnawings of conscience and severe discipline; which must all be borne in simple faith and trust in God, that He will not forsake him, either now or hereafter. It it seems to him as though God would forsake him, he must stand firm in hope, and trust in God in all that He may see fit

to do with him, in time and in eternity. See what comes of meditating on the Sufferings of God. These men bear the pain of suffering according to their power; and it is to such an end that the man comes, who first simply turns with all his thoughts to the Sufferings and Life of Christ, so that at last he will even come to choose bitterness. God grant that we also may find this precious pearl, and that it may bring us to all the goodness of God. Amen.

SERMON XXIX · On the Feast of the Twelve Apostles

[1] On the life of men who serve God, and desire to please Him in Perfect Love. How it comes to pass that so few men are really spiritual.

[2] *Si dilegitis me, mandata mea servate.*

[3] "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." [116]

[4] St John tells us in his Gospel, and also proves to us, that as our dear Lord had loved His own that were in the world, so He loved them unto the very end, giving them many proofs of His consoling love, which He showed to them, especially in word and deed, at the Last Supper, of which He so earnestly desired to partake with them. He exhorted them also to that love which they justly owed to Him; and because they could only truly show it by keeping His commandments, He would pray to His Heavenly Father to send and give them another Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth, Who would abide with them for ever, and Whom the world could not receive because it hath neither seen Him (Jesus) nor known Him.

[5] Therefore, dear children, I will once more speak of love, because it is always most sweet and pleasant to speak of it; but much sweeter is it to taste and experience it. Now God commands all those who are dear to Him, to show their love to Him by keeping His commandments: therefore he who openly breaks them, or does not keep them, cannot love Him. It is plain to all that God hates those who live in sin; therefore I will not say any more about them; but I will speak, as well as I can, of the life of those who serve God in the highest love.

6 Those who wish to love God must keep His commandments; that is, they must be ready to do the Will of God, and to have no will of their own; but must be able to say in truth, “Not my will but Thine be done.” God’s Will is true love; and true love has no love for self, but loves self only for the sake of those who are loved. Three things are needed for this. First, we must diligently keep guard over our outer senses, so that we may learn to close and to keep careful watch over the gates of our five senses, resisting all irregular desires, overcoming them at once, always watching them closely, and never giving way to them. [117]

7 The second thing we have to do is to learn to die to all inner delights, our own ways and modes of living, not consenting to them in any way, and especially guarding ourselves against these five spiritual gates of hell: our own free will or love, satisfaction or presumption, our own spiritual delights, our own judgment, and our own wisdom.

8 Thirdly, a loving soul must have its daily work and discipline towards God and towards self, that it may offer itself, out of pure love, as a living sacrifice unto God, in perfect fear, before all men. This takes place in such marvellous love, that it cannot well be expressed in words; but we ought rather to try it and to taste it, for it surpasses all the powers of nature and sense. For the soul overflows with the freedom of the spirit with which it is endowed, and goes to the Heavenly Father, and unites itself with Him, as far as it can, by the absolute annihilation of self, to His high and blessed praise. It yields itself wholly to Him, in a fathomless Nothingness, in the Abyss of His Godhead, and beseeches Him to make it fruitful in His service; and, as He has loved and chosen it from all eternity, that He will bring to pass in it, and in all creatures, that for which He has created

them, according to His most precious and sweet Will, whatever it may be, without any self-choosing. Thus the soul desires to be an example and pattern of righteousness and mercy, if so it pleases Him, and not that it should earn condemnation by its works. It therefore lifts itself up in prayer to God for strength to carry out His Blessed Will.

9 From the Father it goes to the Eternal Wisdom, and yields itself up in true simplicity, ready to be nothing, to know nothing, to see nothing, to taste nothing, of self, but that all it does, or leaves undone, may be to His praise and in accordance with His dear Will. It beeches Him to perfect in it and in all creatures, according to His Divine Wisdom, all that He sees right and is most praiseworthy in His sight and is the most fruitful for all men. It does not regard self, but is content with all things in true simplicity, and waits for the working of God. It believes and expects, nothing doubting, that He will do it, hoping that all comes from God. Then, whatever happens to the soul to the praise of God, it accepts as from the Hand of God. It neither strives to prove or experience anything, but simply does all that it believes to be His Will; not sure of it but believing it. If the soul were to follow its own ideas, things might often seem opposed to its integrity; but it must not do thus, but must rest in faith and in perfect confidence on God. Thus God is exalted in it according to His Wisdom, and its understanding is abased. This discipline is also cherished and used by the loving soul in small and insignificant things. Thus it is purified by the Wisdom of God in true simplicity, and comes thus to the unscrutable Divinity in the Darkness of His Obscurity, wherein He is exalted and incomprehensible to all creatures. For He is a pure Being, to Whom the created powers of man cannot attain, though they may be united with Him by faith, hope and love.

[10] Now, when all this has been completed, the loving soul goes to the Holy Ghost, Which proceeds both from the Father and the Son, and submits itself to Him, uniting itself so completely with Him, that it is exalted above all created things, and rises above faith, hope and love in God. It is united with this love, far above all gifts in the Abyss of His Uncreatedness, so deeply and so closely, that but few created beings can attain to it by the understanding. For the union and the freedom which exist are incomprehensible to all creatures; and thus man attains a little of the Humanity of Christ, if we may so speak, and is not ashamed, but has fellowship and union with Christ; so that, when he desires to ask anything of the Father, he takes Christ with him to pray the Father. This takes place especially in the Blessed Sacrament; and thus they offer themselves together to the Eternal Father, in the same power and fruitfulness of the Holy Church, in which Christ offered Himself upon the Cross saying: “Into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit.” Then the man says again in different love: “O Lord, be merciful unto me, as Thy Father was merciful unto Thee, and help me to pray that the Will of the Holy Trinity may be done in me, according to the measure of my miserable imperfections, as perfectly as it was done in Thee; and let me be one with Thee in the fear of the Holy Church. O Lord, Thou hast suffered once, and hast redeemed the world; Thou canst not therefore suffer any more; but I desire to suffer in Thy place. Therefore spare me not, as Thy Father spared Thee not; for my heart is ready for all that may seem good to Thee in time and in eternity. O Lord, Thou knowest how I can most praiseworthily thank Thee and be helpful to all men. Therefore, O Lord, command Thou me.” Thus we trust all to God, that all shall be to the glory of God; but, before his soul is able to offer itself up, it

must travel by many an unknown, painful and desert way. [118]

11 God comes to those who have passed along these two ways, and leads in the loving soul Himself and instructs it in the third way of love; and thus it becomes truly united with God; of which something has already been said. Alas! alas! that so few men are truly spiritual. This arises from the fact that men will not walk in this way and others like it, and therefore they are not fruitful before all men. a man who wished thus to devote himself to the commands of love ought to be more fruitful and more useful than ten other men who also wished to serve God, but in unguarded outbursts of impatience; not in simplicity, but in outward active service; not in contemplative love, as has been said.

12 It is thus that men come from the sleep of darkness into the True Light. For now fresh grace is offered to us; and, if we do not lay hold of it, it will flee from us and vanish away, how we shall not know. Therefore let us all unite in calling upon God for real simplicity and humility, that from the bottom of our hearts we may humble and despise ourselves, and that we may look upon ourselves as the most despised, the most rejected and the most unworthy of men to be found in this world; so that all who see us will shake their heads at us and mock us, and we are so unworthy that all creatures will lift themselves up against us. Thus we may truly learn to die to our own wills, and also learn to keep ourselves free from self, both outwardly and inwardly, and learn further to offer up ourselves to the glory of God, doing the Will of God, not drawing back again, or choosing for ourselves, either in time or eternity. That we may do thus, not to please ourselves, but from the desire to be well-pleasing unto God, as I have attempted to show, may God grant. Amen.

SERMON XXX · On the Feast of Martyrs

[1] Of the two kinds of suffering; in a dying and spiritual life, in true resignation. How God points out the way to His Friends, and teaches them to be truly resigned, in the highest sense; after the Example set them by Christ the Lord, Who has tasted this cup. Not only the twelve Apostles and Martyrs have, like Him, drunk of this cup, but all truly resigned men, of whom the Church of Christ sings: “They have drunk the cup of the Lord and have become the Friends of God.”

[2] *Calicem Domini biberunt, et amici Dei facti sunt.*

[3] “They have drunk of the Lord’s chalice and have become the Friends of God.” [119]

[4] We celebrate to-day the Feast of the Holy Martyrs, whom God, the Heavenly Father, has vouchsafed to endow with the especial honour of being formed in the Likeness of His Only begotten Son, by the bitterness and pain of the precious and beautiful cup of which they have drunk, like the Son of God; which means that they have willingly suffered martyrdom for the confession of His Name. It is their peculiar honour that, by grace, they have been able to attain to the dignity to which He was exalted by the Cup of bitter suffering, and by the Death which He suffered for us and for all men. Therefore, we sing of those fearless knights and dearest Friends of God, that they have drunk the cup of the Lord, and have become the Friends of God.

[5] Now mark, dear children, that, when we speak of martyrs there are two kinds of martyrdom. Martyrs outwardly by the sword, and martyrs inwardly by dying love. We read of St

Martin, that he was not robbed of the honour of a martyr although he was not taken hence by the sword. Now, ye must notice here that we can experience the Suffering of God, and test it, by worthy contrition in a dying life; and can thus become the Friends of God. He who desires this must submit to suffering—but suffering takes place in two ways.

6 The first kind of suffering, in a dying life, is external, when men struggle against their pleasure-loving, sinful life; of whom St Paul says: “They that are Christ’s have crucified their flesh; with the vices and concupiscences.” [120]

7 The second kind of suffering consists of spiritual perplexity, barrenness, or the deprivation of visible grace. Here man is often most at a loss, and he is thus sometimes driven to turn all the more to God. Then some men think all is lost, if they do not posses wisdom, understanding and keen insight; if they are not greatly tempted and are not full of fervour. It is true that this is all very necessary for the beginner, but not for those who long for the noblest virtue, love; but it is accounted of little value by the others. It is true, indeed, that it is a good preparation for the next stage; but in itself it is of little value. Very few can be found who truly love. All want to follow Christ in sweetness; and, when they can taste nothing sweet, and are drawn on by wounded love, they will not follow God in any other way. Now, when God sees that by sweetness only, and in no other way, can He lead them, He entices them on by wounded love, and then by imprisoned love, so that they cannot escape Him. After this they come to burning love, and they become so strong that all things comfort them, and they are ready, for the glory of God, to cast themselves into any suffering or sorrow, which God may see fit to inflict on them. Then they offer themselves up in the secret Abyss of the Godhead, and say in full confidence: “O

Lord, if Thou wilt preserve or condemn us; Thou art all powerful, Thy Will be done in us." Now, when a man arrives at this, he has gained that which he sought; and it is the same to God, by which road he has arrived at it, and in what way.

[8] God freely pours forth His gifts, that He may draw all souls unto Himself; and supplies us so bountifully with His Grace that we may offer up our souls to Him, in true resignation, without any hesitation or demur. Now when, as we have said before, God gives great grace to a soul, and tempts it with sweetness, He desires to draw it away from self. When this has taken place, and He has then drawn the soul away from sweetness to barrenness, He then places it in a higher grade. For He will take away from it again all that He ever gave it, and allows the man to be poor and distressed, so that he may begin to learn to be resigned, and to rest in nothing save in God only.

[9] There are two ways by which we may attain to the true Love of God: The first is delight in the Grace of God. It is pleasant to man to carry out good practices; and God allows it, so that casual lusts may be all the more speedily extinguished in him. The man is ready to sell himself for love; that is, he feels such keen contempt for all temporal pleasures, which he no longer heeds because of his great love, that all who see him marvel. Thus we read of many Saints, that they so speedily withdrew from the joys of the world and all its delights, and turned their backs on all so bravely, that all men wondered. This is done undoubtedly by the Holy Ghost, in His mighty Love, which is as strong as death.

[10] The second way is by endurance and suffering; and, as we have already said, in this way man is robbed of all spiritual comfort. It is thus that the spiritual strength of martyrs is brought forth in the barrenness and dryness of their

meditations and fervour; and, although these spiritual martyrs are filled with many sorrows, yet they love God and long for true virtue as much as the others. Such men are much troubled in this life, so that they do not know which way to turn because of their affliction. They rest, however, on faith, hope and love, alone, in great darkness; for they will not sin whatever befalls them, because at all times they bear about with them a clean and humble heart; while they are much afflicted by seeing the grace enjoyed by other men, always imagining that it is their own fault that they have not the same grace, and that they do not strive enough to gain it. However, when they seek it more diligently, they only become more and more barren and hard within, like stone, and sometimes they lose all patience, and become all the more inconsolable and miserable. Then they fear that they are jealous of the grace given to others, or envy them; and thus they add to their sufferings, so that, with all these troubles or others like them, they weary themselves so much that they do not know what to do. They would not willingly be faithless to God in virtue, while they do not know how to gain it; or they imagine that they will make God angry with their impatience, despair or moroseness; and it cuts them to the heart. They hate all sin, because sin is displeasing and abhorrent to God; and they know his so well that they would not willingly anger God. At last they make up their minds to be patient, although it is hard to them; and they suffer and wait till God sends relief, for they see that they can make no progress. Thus God teaches them to be resigned and to submit, leaving all things in His hands; and thus they become like unto the others, who flourish in more grace; while in one sense they are much nobler; for, in this grade, men are more like Christ, whose Life was full of suffering.

11 These spiritual martyrs are the poorest in their own esteem, but, in the sight of God, they are the richest; according to their own ideas they are the farthest off from God, and yet they are the nearest. They imagine that of all they are the castaways, and yet they are the very elect. According to their own feelings they are the most unfaithful to God; though they are the most faithful and the most earnest in furthering His glory, and in preventing His dishonour; for it is for this that they suffer. They find that they are attacked by many temptations on account of their poverty, to which they will not consent; but these cause them greater suffering than dying a natural death, and, especially if in any way, as they imagine, they have been overcome. They are anxious to overcome their infirmities, and to practice virtue, and they cannot do it. This and such-like things cause them, at times, great inner suffering and trouble, as though they were suffering pains of hell; but all is the result of the great faithfulness and love that they bear to God in their hearts, though they are not conscious of it themselves. They think themselves of all men the most wicked in all the world, while they are the purest in the sight of God. They often anger God thereby, because they cause themselves so much sorrow, so that God sometimes allows them to fall into impatience, and other infirmities, which are not in accordance with pure love, and to which they would never have given way, had they been truly resigned in all things; for then they would have been at peace and would have advanced more quickly than other men. They thus rob themselves by their despondency and immoderate sadness. This arises from their knowledge of the real fruit which proceeds from thence or from their self-surrender, so that they are not content to suffer; or it seems so long for them to suffer to the end; but they should know that they only

prolong their suffering and make it all the harder. Thus they also rob themselves of the real fruit which might be quickly produced, if only they would suffer innocently and willingly, and resign themselves in love. The more simply they do this, the more nobly will they gain it, and the more nobly will they be transformed. For, verily, if man walks uprightly, after the dark night a bright light will arise, which will lighten up all his heart with Eternal Truth. Then in his own heart, and in the sight of God, but not in the sight of the world, he will be sure that he can attain to the highest and purest Love, in which a man loses and forsakes himself, and all that is his, for the sake of God, that none can disturb or destroy his peace. God rests in him with all His elect, and there will and anger are lost. God help us that all this may take place in us.

[12] Further, we must remember this about salvation: “O, my soul, meditate and meditate, again and again, how great and inexpressible the joy, the blessedness, the glory and the honour will be of those who will see clearly, and face to face the joyful and loving Face of God. How they will enjoy the best and highest blessing, even God Himself; for in Him, and in Him alone, are all pleasures, power, joy and all that is most beautiful.” They will possess all in God; all that is good and to be desired, in safety and eternal joy, so that they will be transformed into God, never to be separated from Him again. Oh! how surpassingly great the joy will be, with which they will see the Holy Trinity, Mary, the Mother of Christ; our dear Lord, all the hosts of Angels in their orders; all the Patriarchs and Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors and Virgins, with all the Saints, who are so united, that, were it possible, the foremost and greatest Saint in heaven would willingly share his joy with the least of all Saints, while the least of all the Saints would not grudge him the joy that he shares with his own. Neither can we imagine or describe the

overwhelming Love of God, which will be kindled in them: Oh! how foolish those men are, who, for a little carnal delight, and for temporal goods and honour, can so far forget, lose and drive away eternal salvation. Therefore, recollect thyself, O my soul, earnestly and diligently, while thy day of grace is not yet over; do good works, that thou mayest not lose thy eternal salvation. Set to work, lose no time to perfect thyself in virtue; let nothing disconcert thee, but work faithfully in this short life to attain eternal blessings and eternal joy. Nothing in this world should be so dear to thee that for the sake of it thou wouldest be ready to lose eternal glory and joy. Thou must mark diligently how all suffering, sorrow, adversity and misery in this world, are not to be compared with the joy of eternal life. In imagination thou must place before thee, as thine example, all the dear Saints who have entered in, because of their good and righteous lives, that thou mayest follow them, and that with them thou mayest be a partaker of the exceeding great reward. Oh my soul, meditate on the great honour, joy and dignity in the Heavenly City of Jerusalem, on all the dear Saints who are assembled there, and who found a safe path by which they passed over from this transient vale of sorrow to eternal life.

13 Further, the Lord tells us in the Gospel that there are five things which faithful men must do. First, they must cast out the devil in the Name of Jesus; all men can do this who confess their sins with true penitence and sorrow. Secondly, they must speak with new tongues. All do this who give up sinful useless talk, and who only use good words, such as are to be found in the Word of God, the Holy Gospels and in fervent prayers; who rebuke sinners and teach the foolish. The third is that they tread on serpents without being harmed. This is done by those who resist and diligently root out all evil thoughts. The fourth sign is that they can eat and

drink poison without harm. This is done by all who suffer contempt and persecution for righteousness' sake. Those who are sorrowful and despised, and yet are patient, cannot be hurt by the poison of persecution. The fifth and last sign is, that the truly faithful lay their hands on the sick and they recover. All men do this, who from loving-kindness freely forgive their enemies all that they ever wrought against them, and who also give alms to the poor and needy. We may truly say of all men who show these five signs of the Holy Gospel, that they are truly faithful men and will be received by Christ into eternal life. May God help us all thereto. Amen.

SERMON XXXI · On a Holy Martyr’s Day

[1] Of three roots of spiritual temptation by which holy men are secretly assailed; spiritual unchastity, covetousness and pride.

[2] *Beatus vir gui suffert tentationem.*

[3] “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.” [121]

[4] All our life, says Job, so long as we are upon earth, is full of struggle and temptation, insomuch that this life is not called a life by the Saints, but a temptation. When one temptation is over, straightway others are awaiting us; and the cause is that our Lord will have us to go and bring forth fruit; and the fruit is to walk in the ways of God and go forward; for the fruit consists in the very overcoming of temptation, from which we may draw out a hidden spiritual sweetness, as the bees suck honey from the thorn bushes as well as from all other flowers. He who has not yet been tempted knows nothing, nor lives as yet, say the wise man Solomon and the holy teacher St Bernard. We find more than t thousand testimonies in Scripture to the great profit of temptation; for it is the special sign of the Love of God towards a man for him to be tempted and yet kept from falling; for thus he must and shall of a certainty receive the crown, like the Martyr whose death the Christian Church commemorates this day, singing of him that he is blessed because he hath endured temptation, and has been tried and proved therein, that he might receive the Crown of Life, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him.

5 Now observe, dear children, that there are two kinds of temptation. The one is carnal, and has its sphere in the kingdom of sense in this present life, as when a man is tempted through his outward senses to seek his happiness in other men, be they friends or relations or any others, or to undue fondness for the outward show of life, such as dress, jewels, books, instruments, a pleasant abode, and other transitory creatures; and wilfully cleaves there unto with manifold affections, and they stick to him like burrs. At times our outward senses are left in peace, and are quite of all assaults; yet is the man strangely assaulted inwardly in his flesh and blood by unseemly thoughts; but, however impure may be these temptations, and however horrible they may look, they cannot of themselves defile a man's purity. St Gregory says: "Temptations do not defile a man except through his own slackness and want of diligence in turning aside from them."

6 The other sort of temptation is inward and spiritual, and has its seat in the realm of the intellect. The workings of the Spirit and of nature are so mingled together and interwoven as long as we are in this present life, that all our inward exercises and converse with God are carried on at the same time with all the motions and workings of nature. Moreover, our Lord has so ordained it for our good, that the evil angel, Satan, has power to transform himself before the inward eye of the mind into an angel of light; and he does it most of all at those times when a man gathers up all his powers to enter into communion with God. Observe, dear children, that St John divides sin into three kings, when he says all that is of the world is "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." As these three sins that reign in the world exist together in the flesh, so do they also reign inwardly in the mind under a spiritual guide. Outward sins

are very clear and easy to see, if a man have a mind to watch himself; but these mental sins are in many ways more covert, and can be put on such a good face that we are often hardly aware of the grievous fall that is close at hand.

7 Now mark, it is to be counted as spiritual unchastity or wantonness, when a man seeks himself too much, and with eager desire strives after warmth and sensible devoutness, to the end that he may always be in a state of contentment, and none may have a right to reprove him, though he shall give himself to his own special prayers and religious exercises, while leaving unfulfilled the work that is his duty. When such an one has none of these sweet emotions, he is quite troubled, and becomes peevish and very impatient in the trifling mishaps that befall him, though they are really of no importance whatever; and when he cannot obtain joy or inward peace according to his desire, he complains of the great grievances and temptations which he has to endure. St Bernard says, that our Lord bestows these graces of sensible emotion upon such as have done nothing to deserve them nor are worthy of them; but He does this in mercy, that He may draw such to His love; and He withholds these gifts from some who have undergone long and painful exercises, and were well fit to receive them; yea, from some He withholds them all their life long; but He will give them a great recompense for it in the next life. The reason of His thus withholding sensible delight is, that our spiritual fruitfulness and highest blessedness do not lie therein, but in our inward trusting and clinging to God, in our not seeking ourselves either in sorrow or joy, but through joy and sorrow devoting ourselves to God, and, like poor unworthy servants, offering ourselves to Him at our own costs, though we should have to serve Him thus for ever. Yet it may indeed be permitted to a young weak Christian, at the outset of his course, to pray for

such graces or gifts from our good God, in order to be able to glorify Him with the greater activity, and to be grounded the more firmly to His love. But when we desire such inward fervours and sweet peace (which are His gifts and not our deserts) more for their own sake than for the Giver Himself, we fall into spiritual wantonness and black disloyalty, which our good God has not deserved at our hands, with His utter renunciation of Himself outwardly and inwardly.

[8] Spiritual covetousness is when a man is always coveting to have more than bare necessities, while pursuing this earthly pilgrimage. For what more should a pilgrim take with him by the way, than such things as are needful to sustain him till he come safely to his home? Believe me, it is a great blemish in true outward poverty to desire aught beyond necessaries; so likewise, it is a still greater blemish in the inward poverty of the spirit. Ah! who has ever been so poor as He, Who, in utter poorness of spirit stood forsaken by Heaven and by the creatures, cast out alone in utter exile, when He sent forth that bitter cry: “My God, My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?” And this was all that He might be an Ensample unto us, to comfort our poverty and bereavement by teaching us true submission. I hear thee saying: “Yes, if it were not my own fault, and if I had not failed to receive the blessing through my own heedlessness, or thrown it away by mine own guilty folly, I could bear it all the better; what should I then have to mourn over? But now it is all my own doing; I have brought the mischief upon myself.” I answer, do not let this lead thee astray; dost thou not know how that it is written: “The just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again;” and dost thou think to stand always? Yes, I assert and confess with thee that it is thine own fault, that thou hast brought it upon thyself and well deserved it; yet, nevertheless, it is better that thou shouldst with firm trust pray our kind God for His

peace (Who knows thy weakness, and is ready to forgive thy trespasses seventy times seven in a day), than that thou shouldst thus drive thyself back in thy course with such faintheartedness. O child, hast thou fallen? arise, and go with childlike trust to thy Father, like the prodigal son, and humbly say with heart and mouth: “Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son, make me as one of Thy hired servants.” And what will thy Heavenly Father do, but what that father did in the parable? Assuredly He will not change His Essence, which is Love, for the sake of thy misdoings. Is it not His own precious treasure, and a small thing with Him, to forgive thee thy trespasses, if thou believe in Him? for His Hand is not shortened that it cannot make thee fit to be saved. Therefore, beware of spiritual covetousness, for the poorer thou art in thine own eyes when thou comest to Him, the more acceptable art thou in His sight, and the more richly He will endow thee and clothe thee out of His treasures.

9 Spiritual pride is when a man is not willing to be put to shame in his own eyes on account of his transgressions, but is ever trying to excuse and gloss over his faults, and is ever willing to spare himself, even in small matters. And this often leads people to make many useless and wrong speeches in order to excuse themselves and to justify themselves in every respect; as much as to say, “I am not the man to be accused of this and that”; and they are unwilling to remember or consider that he who cannot clear himself with the simple truth, will not be helped by the untruths by which he often adds to his guilt; and that a man who humbles himself before God is more in His eyes than an arrogant, self-righteous man, who deems himself able to answer for all his deeds with his own righteousness. Hearken, dear child, what does all our righteousness come to at last? Esaias saith: “All our

righteousnesses are as filthy rags;" and, however great our righteousness is or might become, yet, if the Lord should sit in judgment on us, without doubt we should have to confess ourselves His debtors, and place all our hopes in His mercy. Our Lord often disciplines a man by his own failings, if he is humble under them and throws himself at God's Feet; for God will have every knee to bend before Him, and will have the praise and glory of all goodness. Hence we may observe that there is often a secret pride within us, from which many unseemly points do grow. But he who gives diligence to beware of spiritual wantonness, covetousness and pride, shall be kept from straying out of God's ways, or falling into error in his inward exercises.

10 But, in order to keep yourselves from these sins, and to withstand this kind of temptation, you must observe these rules of which I will tell you. The first is: None of the inward difficulties that rise up from within, or the adverse circumstances that stay our hands from working, by which we are drawn or pressed into the likeness and conformity to the humble Image of Christ and His Saints (not alone outwardly, but that of their inward condition), can be the work either of evil spirits or of nature, but without a doubt come from God. For He is the Highest Good, and from the Highest Good nought but what is good can flow; and all the goodness that God gives us of His stores, and that we render back again to Him, has proceeded from Him as its Source; just as all streams flow back again to their source, the ocean, whence they have arisen; and all things do rejoice in their return. But all that draws us and leads us aside from such conformity and likeness, proceeds without doubt from the Spirit of Evil, who is ever on the watch to disturb and draw us down; as our Lord said: "He who is not with Me is against

Me, and he who gathereth not with Me scattereth." This rule is against the first spiritual vice, that of wantonness.

11 The second rule is: Whatever befalls a man inwardly, whereby he is brought to a closer and more sensible gathering up of all his affections and impulses in singleness of heart into a steadfast trust in and love of the Father's lovingkindness, and not his own works and experiences; this is from God. And he who at all times sees himself to be a poor beggar, however fair his works may seem, the more narrowly he looks into his own heart, and the more mastery he gains over himself, the more does he discover his own nakedness of all virtue. He becomes aware in himself that he is nothing but an empty worthless vessel, fitted, not unto honour but unto eternal destruction, which vessel God alone must and will fill with His grace. When we cling to Him, suffer Him to have access to our spirits, and do not defend ourselves with ourselves, that work is no doubt of God, by which a man is driven into himself to learn his own poverty. But the suggestions of the Enemy and of nature rob and despoil a man of all the benefits of his virtues; and this is the case wherever a man does not know his own real state, and thinks to possess what he never had, and says (as it is written): "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," and knows not that he is "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." This is the rule against spiritual covetousness.

12 The third rule is: Whatever befalls a man by which he is lessened and humbled in his own inmost emotions, and which makes him bend under the Almighty Hand of God, under all creatures, abasing and annihilating himself in true humility; this comes no doubt from God. For as Lucifer and his followers desired to be great and lofty, and were therefore

thrust down from Heaven, so are we led back again to Heaven by self-abasement; as it is said of the Kings of the East, that they travelled back into their own land again by another way.

13 Thus does every being do and teach according to that which is his essence, drawing into his own likeness all whom there are to draw, so far as in him lies. The Evil Spirit is puffed up in his own obstinate conceit, and in the loftiness of his pride is so hardened and unbending in his own stiff-necked will and purpose, that neither to win Heaven nor for anything else will he humble himself for one moment, so fixed is he in his evil mind. So likewise is it with all the proud, who have learnt of him to trust in their own understandings, above all other men's opinion and reason; wherefore they fall into strife and variance with their neighbours, which begets much trouble and disquiet of heart; and hence arise many breaches of brotherly love. They will take reproof from none, and grow so hardened in their own obstinate, evil will, and set upon their purposes, that they rashly dare to withstand all the admonitions of God and His Friends; as the Jewish scribes and priests withstood our Blessed Lord; and of such the prophet Esaias, speaking in the person of Christ, complains: "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts."

14 But our blessed Lord, on the contrary, is meek and humble; yea, He is Himself the essence of humility, whereunto He is unceasingly drawing all men whom there are to draw, and who are willing to be drawn. His Being is the cause, the essence and the origin of all things. He is the Life of the living, the Resurrection of the dead, the Restorer of all deformity and unfitness, and of those who have

corrupted and despoiled themselves through sin. He calleth back those who have fallen away and have wandered from His fold. He raised up and confirmeth those who are in temptation. He is the Bulwark of those who stand, the Awakener and Guide of all who are looking and striving upwards towards Him, the Source of all light, the Lamp of all who walk in light, the Revealer of mysteries, in so far as it is fitting for us to know, and the Beginning of all beginnings. His Essence is incomprehensible, unspeakable and without a name. Therefore should we honour and glorify His unspeakable Mystery with holy reverence and silence, and nevermore covet to fathom or to taste aught except in so far as is to His honour and to our profit; but ever, with fit reverence and devoutness, turn with all our might in shamefaced awe to contemplate the radiance of His bright and spotless Mirror. It behoves man to be ever in fear, and to bethink him of the word that God, our Lord, spake by the mouth of Moses: “If a man or a beast touch the mountain, he shall be stoned”; which signifies that our animal senses must not presume to clime the Mount of the Divine Essence, but must rather keep themselves below and take the nearest place, until the time come when it shall be said unto the man: “Friend, come up higher.” And then he shall not go up of himself, but he shall suffer himself to be led upwards; and his sensual nature shall be purified and endowed with the Light of God, whereby he shall receive more light than he could ever win by all his great and strenuous labour. For the Divine Nature of Christ is a magnet that draws unto itself all spirits and hearts that bear its likeness, and daily unites them to itself through love.

[15] Now Richard of St Victor says: “I receive Christ not alone on the Cross, but also in His Transfiguration on Mount Tabor. But I may not receive Him there except I find James, Peter

and John, Moses and Elias with Him, who bear witness to me that it is truly Christ." That is to say: in all our distresses, in all our painful inward destitution, we may boldly believe that Christ is present with us; but, if He appears to us on the mount of inward contemplation, we need these witnesses, that we may not enjoy the fruitation of His gifts in a wanton spirit, for the satisfaction of our own desires, nor too ardently covet more of His good gifts than we can put to a good use; but may ever abase ourselves so thoroughly that we fall not into any spiritual pride. These are the true witnesses, that we may freely receive Christ in His Glory on the heights of Mount Tabor, without hindrance or error; for where these witnesses are of a truth, there we cannot be deceived by the spirit of falsehood. May Almighty God help us so to do! Amen.

SERMON XXXII · On the Feast of a Holy Bishop

1 How man should exalt and honour God's Holy Name alone, and despise, shun and flee from his own in true humility and real resignation. That young men, growing in grace, must first be directed thereto, and then be drawn by all kinds of easy exercises and rebukes, that they may become still more resigned in all things hereafter.

2 *In nomine meo exaltabitur cornu ejus.*

3 "In My Name shall his horn be exalted." [122]

4 You know, dear children, that no sins are so displeasing to the God of Gods, as the haughty arrogance and the proud boasting of man in his own name; because man is thus ascribing the honour to himself, which belongs only to God, while he cannot bear his own name to be despised. God lent him that name and the honour, that other men might be improved by seeing such a dignitary or prelate, using his authority or rule solely to the Glory of God, neither seeking nor desiring his own, everywhere. This we can recognise and see plainly in the holy life, which the Bishop, whose feast we are keeping to-day, led on earth; and therefore we sing of him from the Psalter: "In My Name shall his honour be exalted"; as though God said of him: "Not in his name, because he neither seeks nor desires that, but in My Name shall his horn be exalted and lifted up." [123]

5 Now, in another place, the prophet says of God: "His name alone is exalted." Nothing is more displeasing or abhorrent to God than the longing for a great name. This infirmity, in many men, is often so much hidden and concealed that they

are scarcely conscious of the great danger in which they stand. It often comes to pass that they even despise it, and imagine that they have a right that people should hold them in high esteem; they cannot endure that anyone should say anything or do anything that affects or touches their honour, or slights them in any way. David says of such secret sins: “From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord.” that means, cleanse me from the desire to have a great name. He says also: “Let not the foot of (that is the desire and longing for) pride come to me, let not the hand move me. There the workers of iniquity have fallen.” God will not regard anything of thine, however good it may be. St Chrysostom says: “Forsake thy great name and then thou wilt easily overcome torture and suffering.” If by some means God could induce man to feel as great, bitter and ignominious a contempt for himself, as the haughty, self-satisfied pride in which he had previously indulged, God would have obtained that which He desired; for all the things by which God corrects men inwardly take place that man may be humbled and abased in himself. If God does not succeed in bringing this to pass by such correction and abasement, He often allows these, His Friends, to fall into open shame and trouble, that they will be pitied by all men and thus be abased in their own eyes. [124] [125] [126] [127]

6 Now, know, that when a man is too highly exalted by other men, and more virtue or holiness is ascribed to him, and his name is held in greater repute than it ought in truth to be in the sight of God, on account of some secret sin which is known only to him and to God; see, this great and good repute can only cause him injury, shame and pain, either here or in another world. For this undeserved spiritual gift of honour offered to him, must necessarily be changed in this life into shame and mockery, if he is to preserve it otherwise

in eternity. If a man neither glories in his good name, nor is well-pleased with himself (for if he be, it will be very harmful to him, and will avenge itself on him), his name will be very useful, and a blessing and help to him; for then it is pure and beneficial. Even though he have a great name, he may be preserved by the Grace of God, in fear and humility, while he acknowledges his own vileness, weakness and sinfulness. If he thinks nothing of himself on account of all these virtues, but only that he is a messenger and an unworthy servant and guardian of these gifts of God, then he looks upon himself as no better or worthier than he was before, but carries on his office simply to the glory of God and of the Holy Church, and that he may advance the salvation of his fellow men. See, how very fruitful this is in the sight of God, and what great blessings it brings to other men. Even when he is called great before worldly men, yet he is none the less nothing in the sight of God; and he feels in his heart, that he is one who desires the lowest place and possesses it at all times; and if he were deposed from his position or his honours, it would not trouble him, because to him all things are alike.

7 Dear children, for this reason the great repute of the superior clergy is very dangerous, and should be shunned or at least despised; because, when a man does not live up to that which he is anxious to be considered, and glories or rejoices unworthily in his name and honour, hereafter, either here or in another world, he will have to pay or atone for it with shame and sorrow, because his name was greater than his life in the sight of God.

8 But when some men are faint-hearted, desponding at times, on account of their great reputation, fearing that their intentions are not quite pure, and that they often think more of the dignity of their name than of the command of

obedience, yet, none the less, they ought to do good, because at all times men ought to do good, and even if their intentions are not quite pure, yet they ought to strive to amend; and then their virtues will become deserving. But, if a great name is blazed abroad, and a man does good work to please others, or from evil motives, then he will become proud and arrogant, and be led astray by the desire to do anything more, unless he is called great; for in all his works he will desire the praise of men, and to be seen of them. He thus devotes himself in good earnest to show his ecclesiastical ability and his moral conduct, chiefly in the presence of other people, so that he may be seen of them. He will do nothing unless he can do it far better than all others, that he may deserve the prize.

9 Now, we can recognize the men who stand in this evil ground of man-pleasing, and not in faith, hope and the love of God, by noticing that they do not trust in the Love of God; they do not believe in Him, and they dare not believe that He is the faithful Helper of His true servants. Therefore they soon begin to doubt and mistrust God, and are in great danger of the very worst that can happen to them. These people may be discovered by telling them to do something for which they are unfit or are incapable. They cannot be induced to do it, for they fear that other people will notice their incapacity or unskilfulness, and will therefore think less of them, and consider them as small as they really are. All the Scriptures do not suffice to prove to them the great faithfulness of God, which He vouchsafes to those who trust in Him, so that they may be ready to leave all to God and to trust in Him, and, for His sake, to allow their unskilfulness to be made manifest. No, ten preachers would not be able to prove this to them; and therefore they continue in their hard hartedness and pride, and are unable to win any true love

from right-minded men. If they would only forsake this, they might be at once enlightened with a new, peculiar, divine and joyful Light, which would cause their old wicked sadness to vanish quite away, and would gain a satisfying love for them from all the men with whom they have to deal and with whom they dwell. But, because they do not act thus, they must remain in a state of bitterness and malice towards their neighbours, so that all brotherly love is pain to them, and all good and loving deeds torment and trouble them. Therefore they are forced to seek for solitude, to separate themselves from mankind, that they may neither see nor hear anything from which trouble or sorrow could arise. They also take care not to trouble themselves about anyone, and imagine that they will thus attain to peace. Now, dear children, this is not the path of peace; for such men have much more unrest, and wicked, envious disquiet, malice and condemnation, the more they withdraw themselves and keep away from other men, hoping to be at peace in secret. For the wicked Enemy dwells in these evil, proud hearts, and never allows peace to enter there.

10 But if these men are ever to attain to true peace and joy, they must learn to know their own hearts, and to cleanse them from all pride and self-righteousness; and, in so far as it is seemly, to make known their weaknesses, vileness and uselessness to others, desiring to be accounted vile, useless and weak, exercising themselves therein as long and as much as they feel in their hearts that they have an evil desire for human praise. If they practice this, they will attain to true peace and love, and gain a taste for the skill in their occupations; but otherwise never. If I were to allow them to confess for three hours every day, it would not help them at all; they would still remain in a state of disquiet and sadness, hating their neighbours. The more they confessed, the more

the Evil Spirit would find cause for their anger, hatred, envy, sorrow and gloom, in themselves and towards others. He even sometimes seeks out things, and brings up what was said or done ten, twenty or thirty years ago; and, by the thought of them, leads such men further astray than he had succeeded in doing by the very things themselves. They will have to endure this as long as they will not acknowledge their weakness, but desire the praise of men on account of their outward deeds and customs.

11 Now, people say that they must set others a good example and anger none. I say unto you, that if ye wish to set a good example to the people with whom ye consort, and to anger none, ye must show yourselves to be what ye are in truth, and let yourselves be known in truth, as far as is needful. Be pure, long-suffering and decorous, and, in kindly love, desire to be scorned and rejected, and then all will be well with you.

12 Oh! children, these men have been neglected in their youth; they have never been well disciplined by scorn and much opposition, but they have been allowed, at times, to see how pleased people were with what they did or seemed to be. Thus they became hardened, so that afterwards they could neither do nor wish to do anything for which they would not receive praise or fame; while nothing could be got out of them except by prayers and entreaties.

13 Oh! all this is most evil and pitiful; for these are they of whom the Lord says: “They have received their reward.” Those who praise them are accounted murderers before God; for they deceive and lead astray foolish men, who were good-hearted, inclined to give glory to God, and well able to do so, but who become hard-hearted, desiring human praise, thinking well of themselves and full of self-satisfaction, which causes the eternal death of the soul, its rejection and

banishment from true eternal life and from all the Saints. These betrayers act thus, that by fame and praise they may bring round these foolish hearts to their will, that they may become all the more diligent in subduing temporal things to themselves, and thus to contrive that all may tend to their own advantage, for which they are hoping. [128]

14 Oh! children, the desire for temporal things causes a real alienation from eternal things. If we sought first those things that would be useful to us in eternity, and which would further our salvation, undoubtedly God would not only abstain from withdrawing temporal things from us, but He would also give them back to us with increase. But, as it is, for the sake of a small advantage, we lose and betray these simple hearts, in the evil desire for human praise and our own gratification, which is the evil source of pride, and which God always resists. He never receives such men into favour, but He allows them to be driven by the Evil One into all kinds of wickedness; for there is scarcely a sin which is so inhuman that they are not tempted by it; and all arises from this devilish root of inner, proud self-satisfaction, which was not checked at first. Therefore, from youth up it has taken such deep root, that, in old age, it is hard work striving to cast out this infirmity.

15 Therefore, simple men who are striving to advance, must be well guarded, and instructed that they must do nothing in order to gain praise, but must do all to the glory of God, Who needeth not our praise, but Who humbled Himself, even unto Death, to gain us strength, knowledge, prudence, and many other gifts and graces, that we may work out our own salvation. Children, it would be far better and more charitable to rebuke these men, and to teach them to regard themselves as little or nothing in their own eyes, training

them in the humility they rejected; for then they might become great and holy men. But by praise and fame they are spoilt; so that, later, when they are old, and we shall be anxious to teach them, they will have become so established in this evil, wicked state, that no instruction for their good can turn them. They think those who do not praise them, hateful; and they are often discontented and insubordinate to their superiors and father confessors, and remain in a state of sadness, gloom, and false suspicion. They imagine they are not sufficiently considered; no one asks after them; and they constantly refer to the great deeds that they have done, to their industry and so on. They say they have been very useful, and they tell this to other people, and complain and almost murmur if no one asks after them.

16 See, dear children, how all this misery is brought upon these foolish people by praise and flattery, so that their salvation even is placed in great jeopardy. He, who in this life cannot bring himself to feel peaceful, friendly, brotherly love for his neighbour, and who cannot be truly resigned and obedient to his superiors, is in great danger of losing eternal salvation. He, who is not acting thus, will not be helped by all his fastings, vigils, his singing and reading, his prostrations, mortification of the flesh, or anything else, however important it may seem. It would be far better and more useful for men to set aside all visible and outward works and discipline, till they had learnt the true and real virtues of love and resignation, and had a real desire to do all only for the love of God and of their neighbours.

17 Now, mark further, as soon as a man realizes that he does not care for a grand name and position, but wishes to remain always concealed, and longs for humiliation and simplicity, and to be cast off and left unnoticed among other men, then

God will do great things in his name. If the man seeks for no honour, and does not desire a great name and position, and, when no one is willing to show him any honour, he is ready to accept it all and desires to take the lowest place always, then all will be well with him. See, then his great name amongst men is no longer harmful to him; but he must learn also to conquer himself in this, and be ready to hear it, so that he may gain his neighbour. For this also is a step in that inner death, that he may be able to endure this position, and learn to give up his own will even in this. He will most certainly find that he is greater in God; and God will enlighten him and fill him with Divine Light. Thus it will be found that all this is quite incomprehensible to the human understanding of those who have not walked in this way before.

18 But, because it is a great thing to stand upright in this way, so also is it very dangerous to fall in it and to take pleasure in one's own name. Therefore, every man should flee from it as long as he can or may, that he may not be exalted in this life; for he whom God calls to it in this life, must pass through many a dark way that is unknown to him. He rests only in the hope of God and in confident faith, and says: "Lord, I will serve Thee; therefore I trust that there is no deception in all that is placed before me in this wonderful way, and I will bear it ever." At times faith, hope and love fail him, and he is only sustained by his intention in all things. At times he is still conscious of, and loves in the two lowest grades, in nature and in intelligent converse, for then love lies quite concealed in the lowest grade. For as long as he is still faithful to God in some degree in the resignation of nature and speech, and is content to be resigned, while he falls into no ill-placed comfort in vice or sensuality, by which he could rid himself of suffering, all will be well. But if he seeks for gratification in the things of sense, or gives way to

outward troubles, even though they be good and religious, that he may be freed from the pressure, he will bind and tear love; and then from time to time he will fall away from love, though he does not know it himself. But, most assuredly, if he stands firm in this, and is true to God in this mysterious resignation, see, he has gained the highest stage of love, though he knows it not. When he has passed through this, his heart is quite freed from self; he brings forth much fruit even in the sight of other people, and he finds that God is dwelling lovingly in him and he in God in all things.

19 It would be better for us to try this than to talk about it. He who does not taste it and try it, can never understand what it really is to possess God in truth. May God help us to honour and extol His Name only, and not our own, while we truly depreciate ourselves in this world in true resignation. Amen.

SERMON XXXIII · On the Feast of a Holy Confessor

1 That no one should trust to outward deeds done in the body, to customs and ceremonies; that is religious customs and gestures, in the hope that he can reform himself by them alone; but, that before all things, man should use all diligence in learning to know the very ground of his heart, and to die to all evil inclinations and infirmities.

2 *Lucerna corporis tui est oculus tuus.*

3 "The light of thy body is thine eye." [129]

4 To-day, dear children, we commemorate the memory of N., that holy Servant of God, who, by his Christian life, showed forth, confessed and spread abroad, the praise and glory of Jesus Christ; not only by the good example and pattern which he set by his virtuous life and character, but also within; for his heart, mind and spirit, rested in true resignation and in the pure ground of his mortified senses, willing always to serve God diligently, and to please Him only. This, verily, was a truly religious and holy life.

5 Now, ye must notice that there are many, in these days, who are called religious and appear to be so, but who exert themselves to the utmost with wrong things. They submit to severe discipline, by means of which they hope, through grace, to become different from that which they are by nature. They fast, they watch, they pray and confess often; they receive the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, meditating on the highly exalted Sufferings of Christ, they do works of mercy, and often seek for absolution; or other exercises of that kind, whatever they may be. Yet, by means of all this

discipline they are not changed, they waste their strength and power away from God, gaining no praise nor any benefit for their souls, but rather bringing themselves down thereby to hell. For they do not look into themselves, and do not learn to know their own hearts; and, when they ought to be advancing, they are losing ground. They think much of themselves, and yet they are nothing and are serving God heedlessly. They think they are seeking God, but they are not; and when they thus go on, living carelessly according to their undisciplined desires, allowing their imagination to be excited by their senses, none of their actions can make them any better. The older they grow and the longer they live thus, the more impatient they will be and unguarded against sin in word and deed; and this will be the case, too, with those who look for high places in the monasteries. This is the result of serving God after their own pleasure, and with ill-regulated desires. When they feel inclined to do good works, they devote themselves thereto, often beyond their power; at one time they will do one thing, at another time another; and then they imagine that the one helps them and the other hinders them. Thus they go carelessly from one exercise to another, imagining that all will be helpful to them inwardly, because all gratifies their natural desires; they are well pleased; but when they are not satisfied inwardly, they imagine that nothing is helpful to them. Thus they become inconstant, no discipline pleases them for long; for, however they may live, they will never reach their true ground; for, to whatever they may devote themselves in such an unskillful way, and however good their intentions may be, they will yet be deceived, although they allow themselves to imagine that God only is in all their thoughts. Who is there who wishes to serve the Evil Spirit? This is surely desired by none. It is not our wish; we will not have him for our master; and yet we do

his will. For, as long as we serve God only in outward works, we have not begun to serve Him really in truth and with real devotion; for the right foundation of a perfect Christian life does not consist only of external works, though they are a help, but much more of good work in the heart, by which sin is avoided and virtue brought forth.

6 Again, I say, ye may find men in monasteries, who keep the strict rules of their Order by external deeds done in the body. There are men, too, in the world, who torment their bodies by watchings, fastings and other kinds of discipline; who give alms with open hands, but who do not keep the ground of their hearts, cleansing it from all sin. While they are doing all these great external works, they are angry, envious and proud. They slander their neighbours while they strive to gain a good report for themselves; and they do other such-like things, which show that they are in the bonds of the Evil Spirit. These men deceive themselves one with another. They imagine that they will be justified and saved by their outward works only; but this will never be the case in eternity. Such men may well be compared to images, which look like gold outside, but which are stone or wood within. Our Lord compares them in the Gospel to the sepulchers of the dead, which are beautiful outwardly, but within are full of dead men’s bones. Therefore, I say: It is of no use for a man to fast, to pray and to do other religious works, unless his mind is cleansed and purified from all wickedness. It is seldom, alas, that man lives uprightly; and yet it is not so impossible, if he would only use a little care. That on which everything depends he will not attend to, while he hopes to obtain great blessedness from that on which nothing depends; so he has great difficulty and hard work, and seeks long for God, and yet seldom finds Him aright, and as He ought to be found. These are the sins which cause men so

often to fail; they strive after impossibilities; and that which they might do, and which no one could hinder them from doing, that they will not do; for they have neither love nor liking for it, while they would gladly have that which is impossible. They set themselves to do that which they like or fancy, with uncontrolled love and desire, following the guidance of the outer man, and saying they act thus, because they do not know what they ought to do or to leave undone. They might soon find out, why they spoke thus, if they would only strive to walk uprightly in the way of truth and righteousness. It does not arise from anything that they do not know; for then their consciences would not punish them for any neglect; they would be doing right, as far as they knew, whether it were much or little, and God would not require anything more of them; for, if He did, He would give them more knowledge.

7 Lastly, give heed to this, dear children. A man, who by grace desires to be other than he is by nature, must strive after that spirituality, which contains within itself the righteousness which must be the portion of every Christian man; for true righteousness demands true devotion. Now what is true devotion? Some people imagine that true devotion consists of sweet longings; and at times it may, but not always; for sometimes men naturally experience such sweetness, and thus many men err and are deceived. True devotion is a willing submission to the service of God; and a truly spiritual man will carefully examine his own heart, and search out all his thoughts, words and works, and all his life, learning thus to know his own faults. He can scarcely fail to discover something, whatever it may be; and if he desires to be freed from his fault, he must learn to acknowledge it; then follows repentance for the fault that he has acknowledged. Man must search diligently in order to find out how he can

best free himself from his old life, destroy all vice in himself, and devote himself earnestly to the keeping of God’s commands. These are not ordered alike for the clergy and for simple laymen; but more is required of the clergy than of the laity, and they must also be more strict. They must also take their part in ordinary life with the Holy Christian Church, and according to the observance of their Order or religious life. These things are more necessary than any amount of severe discipline and hardship, in fastings, vigils, labours, and so on, which are all like a sign-post pointing to progress in spirituality, but which are not in themselves true and real religion. Many men may, indeed, be found who exercise themselves therein, but who are, nevertheless, full of evil, self-willed, disobedient, proud, angry, and so on. God grant that we may all give ourselves to true devotion. Amen.

SERMON XXXIV · On the Feast of a Holy Virgin

[1] How wise and prudent virgins should adorn themselves, both outwardly and inwardly, that they may be received at the Eternal Marriage of Christ and may enter in. Of the noble and precious virtue of true and lowly Love, to which we can attain only by resignation, suffering and love.

[2] *Quinque ex eis erant fatuae, et quinque prudentes*

[3] "Five of them were foolish and five wise." [130]

[4] Our dear Lord likens the Kingdom of Heaven to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom and the bride. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. They are very unlike each other; for the foolish live after the flesh, in the world and in temptation. The wise look upon all these things, and live after the spirit. The wise virgins control themselves in all things, to which the foolish give no heed, both outwardly and inwardly.

[5] There are five things which are necessary to all for the control of the outer man, if they desire to be like the five wise virgins. The first is moderation in eating and drinking, in clothes, in vigils, in fasting, and in all the other things that nature needs, and that must be partaken of to supply the needs of nature, but not for the furtherance of sin. The second is simplicity in all things. They should wear rough, plain clothes; be simple in their coming and going; firm and simple in their behaviour; and modest in all things.

[6] Thirdly, they should avoid all foolish company, especially the company of those who speak vain words, and who are scrupulous about many things.

7 Fourthly, they must live by the labour of their own hands, and must not be idle, even though they be rich; for idleness is the door to all uncleanness.

8 Fifthly, they must be industrious and always at work. They must keep control over their senses and all their members, keeping aloof and turning away from all the temptations that may befall them, but which they must earnestly withstand, and to which they must never consent. There is nothing that will help them better in this, than making known their temptations, humbly and fully, to some holy man, taking counsel with him, and submitting themselves earnestly and discreetly to bodily penance, with fervent prayer to God. All men are accounted foolish virgins before God, who do not thus govern the outer man.

9 Now, it becomes wise virgins to adorn themselves in the inner man. The foundation of this is lowliness of mind, for they are to become the Sisters of God by doing the Will of God; therefore they must not condemn others by saying that those who live in wedlock are wicked. They must not desire to please any one by their spiritual virtues, but God only; otherwise they will be like unto the Pharisees. They are not commanded to keep their virginity, but they are commanded to be humble. A proud virgin, in the sight of God, is a thousand times worse and more impure than a humble married woman. A virgin does not hate any one, but must love all people; she must not think much of self, but she must always keep herself in fear and trembling. When sins begin to grow and give pleasure, love and all other virtues grow cold. A virgin can only follow the Lamb of God in all places whithersoever He goeth, if she is truly pure and humble; for, if she is spotted by pride or any other gross sin, religious married people stand far above her.

10 Virginity has its origin in God Himself. The Angels have learnt it from God; for it is found in Heaven, and will remain there for ever, after the Judgment Day. When these virgins have risen again from the dead, they will not be given in marriage, but will be like unto the Angels of God and eternally united with God. They are loosed from all men, and are united only with God, that they may bring forth eternal fruit. They have great power over the Devil; they alone sing the new song that no one else can sing. God has set His Throne in these daughters who have thus been trained. It is a joy to Him to be with them, if they live after the inner man in humility, chastity and resignation, and with hearts subdued to the Love of God.

11 No one can attain to the Love of God without humility; and that is a gift of God above all temporal gifts. Humility brings true peace to the heart of man; for no one is quarrelsome or sinful, but he who lacks peace. If a man were truly humble he would never sin again. Mary could not sin because she was truly humble; and wherever God finds humility, there He does great things. Augustine says: “The lowliest on earth is also the holiest.”

12 These are the marks of a humble man. He always learns first to know himself, and acknowledges himself unworthy of all gifts. He counts himself unworthy to have been thought of by God, and to have been made a man. He confesses that he is unworthy that God should constantly feed and preserve him, therefore he thanks God unceasingly, and in great humility, for all these gifts. He neither exalts, nor extols, nor praises himself in anything, whatever it may be; but acknowledges that he is ever more and more indebted to God for all his gifts, while in all things God is his first and last thought. No wise virgin will have two aims or intentions in

anything, so as to be thinking of God and also of something temporal at the same time; but that which she loves as well as God, must be a help to her, and be ordained to the Glory of God, under God; and it must be a help to her in coming to God. See, this is a wise virgin and none else. Man must love God more than all His messengers whom He sends forth and whom we call His gifts.

13 A wise virgin thinks no more of herself on account of her gifts, than of what she was before she was born. Whatever may be the gifts given her by God, He gives Himself to her with them, for here especially He is unhindered by man, and therefore He can work as He will. Therefore God perfects her in the very best way; God, of His Goodness, cannot help doing this, when He finds that she is faithful to Him, and that she gives Him a dwelling-place, suffers Him, follows Him and works with Him without any self love. A humble man thinks himself unworthy to fill the place he is in, and, with whomsoever he may be, he always takes the lowest place; he desires the most miserable part of everything, even in necessary things. He complains to no one of his suffering; neither does he complain to God, even of his suffering or of anything; but, in fear and trembling, when the suffering is very great, he takes all things as from the Hand of God. Therefore he does not know how to complain of any creatures, however unworthily they may treat him. Neither does he find fault with any one who does him harm, for he takes all things as from God, and as therefore right; for God does not inflict anything upon any one that is not for his good. Thus these virgins live and die without offense.

14 Mark, this is the shortest way to come to God and to the company of the wise virgins; and they who do not take it are among the number of the foolish virgins, although they do not

believe it. All who desire, truly, to be in God, must be foolish in their own sight and in the sight of other people; for he who desires to save his soul must lose and forsake vain glory in this life; and he who desires to attain to true and humble love must learn to hold fast three things—resignation, suffering and love. He who would learn resignation must not only forsake great sins, both outwardly and inwardly, but also, in inner spiritual things, he must not seek to please himself by his own good things, such as fasting, watching, praying, reading, thinking, or by consolation, sweetness, experience, knowledge, hunger and desire for reward after the Holy Sacrament. He must be self-controlled in exaltation, in visions, in contemplation, and so on. Then he ought to think that there is not a more miserable, unpleasing, cold and careless man than himself, and yet he must not consciously omit anything, or seek for freedom from any of his duties. See, a man thus becomes nothing in himself; for his self-will, wisdom, good opinion of self, and self-pleasing, and enjoyment in good works are all lost. The more thoroughly this takes place, the truer it is; and this casting down of self brings him to God; for God is an Abyss of humility; and in deep humility his soul lays hold on God, and God unites Himself with his soul. Therefore this man is transformed in God, and is just as though he had become another man. This is the work of the Holy Ghost, Who indwells and governs him.

15 The second point is suffering; and in order to be humble, ye must suffer all scoffing patiently and calmly, as far as ye can, both in love and scorn, with others, or in opposition, equally or unequally. Ye must endure contempt, disparagement, and such-like, in gain or in loss, outwardly or inwardly, as it may happen, and whoever may cause it. Though, at times, it may seem to you, as far as ye can judge, that it is neither the best nor the worst course, or that

according to your ideas it may hinder your virtue or salvation, yet suffer simply and willingly as well as you can. Trust in God; and, though ye do not understand why all things have happened, yet bear all patiently; and then ye will bring forth the fruits of humility. Your own good opinion of self and your wisdom will wither away, and all things will happen to you for the best, if ye will only endure. And, though at times, it may seem to you that ye will be injured thereby, both in the temporal and spiritual things that ye have undertaken yourselves, yet by this humble and enduring resignation ye will be a hundred times further advanced in God in real and true virtue.

16 The third point is love, which waits on humility; for love is nowhere so nobly exercised as in patient suffering. Though it is true that by love man may rise so high that he can embrace God by union of will, yet it is true that God descends to the resigned and suffering man with all that He is; and there He is embraced by the loving soul, and He embraces it again and absorbs it into Himself. Thus the soul loses itself, and returns again to the Source from whence it came, and knows assuredly here, even in this life, as far as it possible, that hereafter it will enjoy Him for ever. He, whose portion this is, needs real humility, that he may learn to see God here also, as far as it is permitted.

17 Then, three things are necessary. First, man’s intentions must be pure and clear; he must desire nothing else but God only; love nothing else but God only; seeking only to please and love Him aright. See, such as these have a true vision in this life.

18 The second thing is, that those who desire to see the blessings of God, must be ready to bear all and endure all in love; they must humble themselves from the very bottom of

their hearts; they must not exalt themselves, however much God may reveal to them, and however secret these things may be.

19 The third thing is earnestness and diligence in spiritual exercises, that man may lift up his soul to God, in whatever way or whatever form is most pleasing and helpful to him, either in dwelling in the Humanity of God, His Divinity, or the Holy Trinity; the Hidden Life of our Lord Jesus Christ, or of our dear Lady, or of other Saints, and how they led their daily lives; for every syllable of Holy Scripture has a divine meaning which can be drawn from it. If a man does these three things, he ought to be able to obtain from God all that he needs—if his intentions are pure, and he is ready to suffer and endure in love and humility, and is earnest in his religious exercises. A good disposition, a strong head, and a yielding, subtle mind are very helpful. A man who can succeed in this, and who receives grace from God, will make great progress in his spiritual life.

20 All virtue and all virtuous deeds depend on these six points. The first is true humility; the second patient suffering; the third perfect resignation in all things; the fourth real love; the fifth a divine intention in all things; the sixth earnestness in religious exercises. That thus we may all be wise virgins, may God help us. Amen.

SERMON XXXV · At the Dedication of a Church · The First Sermon

[1] Points to a renewal of the outer and inner man, and shows how man must deny himself and die to all to which he cleaves and is attached by nature; and how God will then make His dwelling-place in him. A Parable of the three kinds of Wings on which God flies and hovers over us; and of the wish to see God in the most noble way, both in time and in Eternity.

[2] *In domu tua oportet me manere.*

[3] “This day I must abide in thy house.” [131]

[4] Dear children, this is the consecration-day of this House of God; and all the ceremonial of the Holy Christian Church directs us all, spiritually, to the inner man, in whom, verily, consecration and a true godly reconciliation should always find place. Therefore this outward ceremonial should call and admonish us to prepare ourselves in sincerity and truth, that God may truly and perfectly take up His abode with us. The consecration of a church means much the same as a renewal; and this renewal ought always to be taking place in the inner man. The man who truly receives it must renounce all his natural tendencies, and repress and give up all to whom he may cleave, whether friends or relations. All must be given up, whatever it may be, that comes to him naturally from without, and also all in which nature finds joy, comfort or delight, in thought, word, or deed. Bodily discipline is also helpful and good, such as fasting and watching, if man’s nature is able to bear it. But this I say unto you, the wickedness of our nature is so concealed, and is always seeking its own so secretly, that we often take pleasure, in that which we imagine we are only doing because it is

absolutely necessary. Therefore man must always seek most diligently to be master of his outer animal nature. He must do this with the utmost diligence, though it is very hard to nature to die to all excessive delight in eating and drinking, in seeing and hearing, in coming and going, in words and works. I say unto you that if all these animal pleasures were verily killed in us, in all their excesses, we should be as sweet-smelling incense unto God, as it is written: “We are the good odour of Christ.” When all these natural hindrances are quite done away, then that which is written in the Psalter takes place in man: “Who makest the clouds thy chariot: who walkest upon the wings of the wind.” This means, that when man has quite killed all earthly desires in himself, then the Eternal God makes His abode in him. What then do we find written of the three kinds of wings on which our Lord walks? The first is on the wings of a dove; the second on eagle’s wings; the third on the wings of the wind. [132] [133]

5 The wings of a dove are those upright men, who walk in holy innocence, without any gall, bitterness, jealousy, or intercourse with other men; therefore these simple-minded men are quiet, gentle, and good, and follow the meek and gentle Lamb, Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, our Lord. Therefore our Lord is with them in all their ascents, in their desires, their love and their intentions. Secondly, our Lord walks on the wings of the eagle; for the eagle flies so high that none can see him. The eagle is the pure man, formed in the Image of God, who flies up with all his strength, both outwardly and inwardly, to the secret places of God. When man strives with all his might and main, in the inner and outer man, he flies up so high in knowledge and love, that no merely human sensual power can attain to him. Our dear Lord also soars on these noble wings. Thirdly, our Lord walks on the wings of the wind; for the wind is so swift and fast that

ye know not whence it cometh nor whither it goeth. Children, this wind is the most interior and sublime man, moulded and formed in the Image of God. This pure man is so far above all knowledge, that all man's reason and all his works cannot attain nor reach up to Him, because He is so far above the mind of man. This interior God-man, formed in the Image of God, flies back to His Divine Source and to His first condition before the Creation; and there the pure spirit becomes the Light of Lights. To some extent all other lights are extinguished in this Light, for all natural and all imparted light that ever lighted man becomes darkness. The sun obscures the light of all the stars in heaven when it is shining most brightly; and so, when the Divine Light shines into the depths of the soul, it obscures all the created lights that have ever shone in man. Then the Spirit, which is in the Form of God, shines so brightly into man's soul, that He is like darkness unto the spirit into which He shines, from the excessive brightness of the Divine Light. For the understanding of all creatures, as compared with this Divine Light, is like the eyes of swallows compared with the pure, bright sunshine. For, if thou desirest, with weak eyes, to gaze on the disk of the sun, the sun will seem like darkness to thy gaze because of the surpassing brightness of the sun, and also because of the weakness of thine eyes. Therefore a heathen teacher has said: "After other lights God seems like darkness to the soul, because we acknowledge Him in the ignorance of our minds." It is a great disgrace to us Christian men, that a heathen should have understood this! What are we poor men about?

6 We read about consecration in the Gospel account of Zacharias (Zacchaeus). He would gladly have seen our Lord, only he was too little of stature. But what did he do? He climbed up a barren fig tree. This is what a devout man does

who desires to see Him, Who has done all these wonders in him; but he is too short and too small. What must he do then? He must climb up into the high and barren fig tree; and that is all that is written for us. It is a constant dying to the outward parts of man's nature, and living wholly in the inner man in which God the Lord walks, as ye have already heard. Therefore this is looked upon as the greatest folly by the wise men of the world; and it even comes to pass that famous priests may be found who have two hundred florins worth of books, and are so pleased with them, that they read them most diligently; and yet these wise men of the world imagine that the life and being of these whole men is nothing but mockery and folly. No, I say unto you, the life of these good men is a noble and blessed folly; for they are the chosen of our merciful God, as the Eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ has said: "I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones." [134]

[7] Amongst many other things, these secret hidden things were revealed to St Hildegarde; and therefore two little pictures were painted in her book. One figure is clad in a blue dress; and it has no eyes; but its blue dress is full of eyes, which signify the holy fear of God. This is not the fear that ye call fear, but it is that uncertain, diligent examination of self, which the noble, pure spirit of the man, formed in the Image of God, should carry on in all places, and in all his ways, words and deeds. Therefore this noble image, formed like unto God, is without a face, and without eyes; for it wholly forgets itself, and knows not whether it is loved or hated, praised or blamed. Then it has no hands; for it stands there bare and empty of all kinds of delight, in true and humble resignation.

8 The other image, placed by the side of this one, is in a light dress and has uplifted hands; both are barefoot. This image has no head; and the Godhead, in pure bright gold, is above this image. It has no face; all is pure gold; and this signifies the unknown pure Godhead, which is poured forth over the image in the place of the head; for the pure Godhead is its head. This picture signifies poverty of spirit. The head of this picture is God Himself; and the whiteness of the clothing signifies innocency of conduct, insusceptibility, and pure bare resignation. These figures are both barefoot; and this signifies an absolute imitation of the true likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ. The blue dress signifies constancy; which means that man must not discipline himself to-day and sleep to-morrow; but that he must persevere unto the end, and with outstretched hands be ready always to do the Will of God in working and suffering.[29]

9 I say unto you, this is the withered fig tree that all men must climb who wish to serve God, both in time and eternity, in the noblest way. For our Lord said to Zacchaeus: “Make haste to come down, for of all that thou hast thou mayest keep nothing, but thou must return again empty and bare into thine own nothingness; which means that thou must do nothing and be nothing; and then God will come into thine own house, and this must need be.” When, however, thou hast got up into the fig tree, and Eternal Truth has enlightened thee in some measure, but thou hast not yet quite laid hold of it, nor it of thee, because thou still cleavest to something, then nature and the Grace of God are still contending within thee; and thou hast not yet attained to real and true resignation. Therefore, learn, that whatever nature does has always some flaws, and is therefore not quite perfect and pure, so that human nature in the man in the tree cries unto God; this is absolute self-surrender, and a constant

casting off of nature, in all the ways in which man still clings to some possession of self. For *hodie,* which means “to-day,” God must needs enter into thy house. Children, to-day salvation is come to this noble and holy house of God. That it may also come to us, may the eternal and blessed God grant. Amen.

SERMON XXXVI · At the Dedication of a Church · The Second Sermon

[1] How the inner man may become a pure and holy House of Prayer. Of the tradesfolk, that is the wicked thoughts and infirmities, which carry on their business in this temple, and which may, peradventure, be of great use and service to man. What Prayer and Meditation are; also, of the three things by which man can enter into the Inner Kingdom: true Faith, a right Confession of God, and inner fervent Prayer.

[2] *Domus mea, domus orationis vocabitur.*

[3] "My house shall be called the house of prayer." [135]

[4] Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God has faithfully taught us here, what we must do that our hearts may be clean and pure houses of prayer; for man is really and truly a Holy Temple of God. But all traders must first be driven out of this Temple of God; that is all the fancies and imaginations which are not really of God; and also all delight in the creature and in our own will; therefore this temple must first be cleansed with tears of repentance and the Love of God, that it may be made clean and pure. For all temples are not made holy by being simply called the houses of God; but God only can make them holy. Therefore this Temple of God is a pure clean heart; and it is truly a Temple of God, where the Eternal God ever dwelleth in truth, when all that is unlike Him has been driven out and cast forth. Therefore I say unto you that God will not take up His abode in a temple which has not thus been cleared. Before a man has one pure thought of God in his heart, a thousand other thoughts enter in, about temporal things, which lead astray these pure thoughts of God and drive them away. It is in this sense that tradesfolk

are referred to, and that we are told what they are. Therefore all men, who, of their own free will, live in pleasure, and in the gratification of the creature, are these traders. There is no doubt that the man, who desires that God Himself should dwell in him with His grace, and work His works in him, must especially, and of necessity, avoid all conformity to things that produce love, gratification and delight in the creature, and of which God is not the true Source. Therefore the man who says that ten chances of evil would not be more harmful than one; that is, that the secret love and friendship of ten men would be no more harmful to him than of one, would be saying a foolish thing; for it is easier to overcome and drive out one thing than ten. But there is one thing, especially, that ye ought to know; ten sins which a man looks upon as sins and confesses, are not so serious or so harmful to him as one single sin, of which he makes no account and does not look upon as sin, and in which he wickedly continues. Therefore man should always have a truly humble fear before God the Lord, on account of his unknown sins, and should humbly crave the mercy and goodness of God, and look upon himself as full of sin at all times; and then he will assuredly be helped by God’s lovingkindness and grace. But the man who excuses himself, and goes on sinning deliberately, is in great danger of never coming to the Truth. Therefore guard yourselves from this as from eternal death; for the man who always thinks that all is right and well with him, is in a dangerous and terrible state. If ye were to ask the holiest man on earth if he had wept as much as he ought, he would say: “No, I have not wept a thousandth part of the tears that I ought to have wept. But I will now really begin to weep because of my sins and infirmities.”

5 Now, when the inner temple of man has been cleansed, and the traders have been driven out, that is, when thou hast

driven out all that belongs to the creature with all its delights, and which thou hast formerly possessed with comfort, joy and pleasure; and if thou art not ready of thy own free will to take all back again, nor to possess it with pleasure; then thou art standing firm in truth and righteousness, and the traders have been driven out of thy temple.

6 But when wicked traders come into thy temple again, drive them out at once. If they remain there for a time, against thy will and without thy permission, know, that it will not harm thee at all in the sight of God. For, if they stay there as long as they like, yet they will have to go out again, by the same door by which they entered. And, yet again, if they find any wickedness there, they will have to take it away with them, and purify this noble temple, if they entered it against man's will and without his permission. It cannot harm him, but it purifies, cleanses and prepares him for our Lord, like fine gold, which, the more it is heated by fire, the more precious and the purer it becomes. Thus it happens to the noble man in the reaction after his sufferings, his temptations and the assaults made upon him; for the impurer, the more wicked and the more terrible they are, the better will he be cleansed and purified. That which takes place in opposition to man's will can never cause sin unto death, but it prepares man for the great reward and enjoyment of eternal life. St Paul says: "For he that striveth is not crowned except he strive lawfully." He that endureth to the end shall be received with glory and honour. I say unto you, children, that anything done gainst my own free will, however wicked and impure it may be, cannot stain me, but will rather cleanse and purify me, and prepare me for our Lord and for especial grace. Therefore be of good courage, joyful, and not sad and gloomy, if, at times, wicked unclean thoughts befall you;

however bad they may be, heed them not. For, if they come to you, in spite of your will and desire, let them go again. And if this happens especially in your prayers to God and communion with Him, leave them alone in the name of God, and bear these attacks and all this impurity right joyfully, humbly and resignedly as the Will of God. Know, children, that ye should bear all this humbly as the Will of God; for it may even happen that some things may be made known and revealed to you therein, which ye would never have known, had ye not passed along this way. But in this reaction and suffering man must not strive to help himself, either with words or deeds, but must rest only in God. He must bear all with a good heart, and must not trouble about it, either outwardly or inwardly. For, when it pleases our Heavenly Father, He can assuredly relieve thee and delight thee a thousandfold with Himself, after all these painful temptations. Therefore suffer cheerfully; do all things simply and in truth; and then, whatever comes, do not strive to help thyself. He who strives too much to help himself will assuredly lack help from God and from truth; for to the good man all things come from God without anything of his own, or a striving after his own salvation. [136]

7 Now, dear children, if the inner mind of man is to be God's holy House of Prayer, devotion must form part of prayer. What is devotion? It is *devotio,* that is, *se vovere Deo,* that is, inner communion with God and a longing after Eternity. When thou thus unitest thyself with God, or praisest Him, thou art devout; that is that wherever thou art, or whatever thou doest, thou must set thy thoughts on God Whose works they are. For it is not very terrible if thou art not always rejoicing and enjoying sweet intercourse, (for this is only as God pleases), so long as thou still hast the essence of

devotion. This communion of man with God; this is higher and of more importance than all other works.

8 Saint Hilary writes of three things by which man must enter into the Inner Kingdom. The first is true faith; the second is a right confession of God; and the third is devout and fervent prayer.

9 Now, what is the faith meant here? for all Christians are not faithful. In the same way that there are many dead men in the churchyard, there are many and very different kinds of men, who seemed to be men who had living faith, and who yet in truth did not die, and are not dead in God. Now what is a pure and living faith? It is nothing less than a living desire for God, which springs forth from within, to God the Lord and to all that is of faith. Thus, when a man sees or hears of anything that pertains to the holy faith, either of the Eternal Godhead or the noble Manhood of our Lord, or of the highly-exalted, noble and glorious Trinity of God, he will find within himself a true and living faith therein, which clearly points out to him what God is, and at the same time makes everything plainer to him that it could by any teachers. Such a man lives and moves in the Inner Kingdom, where life verily wells up from its own spring.

10 Now, unhappily, there are many men who cling, it is true, to the life of faith, but who may be troubled and may lose sight of it by a very small and insignificant cloud. It is just as though the light of the stars were a living and moving thing, which vanished away when a cloud passed over. Thus, in the same way, the cloud of sins may be very small and insignificant, which drives out of man the true light of faith, hiding it and depriving him of it. But, when a cloud of sins passes even over the chosen people of God (for all men are sinful), the Eternal and Divine Sun will force His way through

to the lives of these men, so that they will speedily and immediately turn again to their original Source. Because they are rooted in the true garden of God they are quickly brought back; with good courage they force their way through all the things in which they cannot truly and clearly find God, and they always shun everything through which God could not find an entry into the very ground of their hearts. Therefore, however feebly and faintly man may cling to the life of faith, yet he will be preserved, if he be otherwise found faithful at the last, and would enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; and, even though he were long delayed, yet he would be on the road to Eternal Life. Still, it is quite possible for such men to fall away into great and grievous sin, because they use ways and means of coming to themselves, that are very dangerous and unsafe; and therefore they are constantly dwelling in outward things, and become vain, empty, dry, cold, lukewarm, and so strange and unlike themselves, that they are much to be pitied in the sight of God. But living men, who truly live the life of truth, are conscious of this life within; they know the Inner Life and Truth of God, so that all that is divine which can befall these Friends of God, awakens this Inner Life, with earnest longings, and fervent Divine Love and delight, in the dearly loved Will of God. Now all this means simply, that these men are dwelling in the Inner Kingdom of God; they are partakers of the hidden Sweetness of God, which is concealed, and must be concealed, from all those who have never truly entered into this Inner Kingdom.

11 Therefore, the second thing is the true and right confession of God which is found in this Kingdom. It need not be sought afar; it is to be found in this Kingdom, and reveals itself there. This Light shines therein, and there man truly comes into the Inner Kingdom, through Jesus Christ, Who is the true and rightful Door of entrance, through which men

must enter if they are to come to perfection. Thus the saying may truly be used of them: “The Kingdom of God is within you.” Here that pure and real Truth is to be found, which is unknown to all men who do not rest on this foundation, and who do not keep themselves free and apart from all creatures in whom God is not all in all. Here they find with their understanding that of which St Dionysius wrote and spoke: “What is there that is above all reason, and all thought and all understanding? The finding of light in Light.” [137]

12 Now, dear children, the Masters in Paris read their big books diligently, and turn over the leaves; and all this is very good; but these other men read the true and living Book, wherein all things live. They turn over the Heaven and earth and read therein the surpassing wonders of God. They are before the holy, dear and exalted Angels of God in judgment; and therefore they first apprehend the highest Mission of the Holy and Exalted Trinity: How God the Father begat and is begetting His Son Jesus Christ throughout eternity; and how the Eternal Word, in God the Father, eternally reflects His Father’s Heart; and how God the Holy Ghost proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son; and how the Holy Blessed Trinity pour Themselves forth on all Their chosen ones through time and eternity; and how again They enjoy in Themselves real and eternal blessedness. This is that blessedness of which Jesus Christ, the Son of God has said: “Now this is Eternal Life: that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent.” Children, this is the true Life in the Inner Temple of God; and it is the noble, pure and true prize which is set before all the elect Friends of God. There is the High-Priest in his holy blessed Temple, there is the true, pure Presence of God, in Whom all things live and move, and there all suffering is done away. [138]

[13] The man who truly experiences all this, knows well that there can be no doubt about it. All knowledge of it is quite unknown and concealed from the learned teachers of this world; but the chosen men of God have a full and clear knowledge and understanding of it. Therefore the man who learns most about it in this life, and who comes closest to this foundation, will be nearest to God in eternal life, and there will chiefly be found; while all such men will be the most blessed. The third thing mentioned by this holy man is devout prayer. This is the uplifting of the mind to God in eternal life, but in another sense. This prayer is the entrance into union of the created spirit with the uncreated Spirit of God, and is the result of a design formed by the Holy Godhead throughout eternity. These men are the true worshippers of God, who worship God the Father in spirit and in truth. This true worship is unceasingly demanded of all men by the Heavenly Father, as Jesus Christ said: “These are the true worshippers. They also receive that which they ask of the Heavenly Father, and they always find that which they seek and desire in their prayers, for their prayers are found and lost.” The temple is lost here and the spirit, and all that of which we have been speaking. Now, how has all this been brought about? All has been poured forth into God and has become one spirit with God; as St Paul says: “He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” What that is and how it comes to pass, it is easier to experience than to describe. All that has been said of it is as poor and unlike it as the point of a needle is to the heavens above. That we may all follow after this in a life of humility, may God help us. Amen. [139]

Instruction 1

[1] The first instruction teaches us to confess, simply and sincerely, and to search out the very depths of our hearts.

[2] Dear children, I counsel, admonish and beseech you, that ye learn to confess all your sins, simply and sincerely unto God, and that ye learn to acknowledge that ye are verily and indeed guilty before Him, and that ye ponder over your sins in deep sorrow. Do not set yourselves to make a long outward confession; for that is of little use, and takes up the valuable time of the Confessors, causing them much trouble and vexation. Children, much talking does not do away with sin; and, as I have often said before, Confessors have no power over sin. Commune with your own hearts, and there confess your sins; for external, without internal confession, is of little avail in those things which are not sins unto death; and it is a sign that he who thus confesses neglects that which is within. For, where truth is to be found within, events may even be so far forgotten, that it often becomes impossible to say anything very definite about them; and we shall be best helped by leaving all to God. I am now referring to daily sins; from sins unto death may God preserve us!

[3] Now, children, it is very necessary that we should thus practice self-examination; for man has many a little nook within, which covers up the ground of the heart, and is so overgrown, that it hides the truth from the man himself; so that, though he knows many other things, he does not really know himself. These sins surely resemble thirty or forty skins or hides, like those of an ox, which cover up the ground, lying one upon another, and so thick and hard that ye can neither confess them nor rid yourselves of them as ye imagine. What are these skins? They are all those things that thou hast in

thyself, that thou thinkest of, and that thou usest, but of which God is neither the true beginning nor the end. They are all idols, images of things, such as self-will, self-pleasing, and the enjoyment of things pertaining to the senses. Man clings to these, as Rachel did to her idols when she sat upon them. Presumption, heedlessness, want of resignation in divine things, all these sins help to form the skins. They should not be all confessed outwardly, but man should examine his own heart about them, and acknowledge them humbly before God, meekly falling down in self-abasement at His Feet. If man will only thus fully acknowledge that he is guilty, all will be well with him; that is, if he seeks diligently to turn away from them, as far as he is able, with help of Almighty God.

Instruction 2

[1] The Second Instruction gives a short Form for the common Confession of Monks or Nuns, and shows how they may be absolved.

[2] Now we may generally confess our daily sins in these words:

[3] “I am guilty, for I have sinned by foolish thoughts during the seven Hours and in my prayers, when I ought to have occupied myself with good thoughts, but which have been spoilt by my indolence. I have broken the silence with useless words, at times and in places where talking is forbidden. I am guilty of scornful, hasty, unwise words and deeds, of untrue and unkind words, of indolence towards myself and towards God, my Order, my Choir, my Rules, and of disobedience and unthankfulness. I do not love and praise God as I ought; I do not attend to His warnings; I do not set my Brother a good example as I ought, in poverty, chastity and obedience. I have not kept all the vows I made to God and to my Order. Of these and many other things I confess I am guilty.”

[4] Then ye may ask for absolution, and may think and say:

[5] “Dear Lord, if I could do it and were free, I would seek for absolution, and fetch it, even through frost and snow, through cold and wet. Dear Lord, because I can do nothing more, I beseech thee to give me absolution as thy gift of charity, and to make me a partaker in all the good exercises that have taken place in the House of God, and in all the earth; and that Thou wilt absolve me from all my sins, through thy Divine and Sacred Wounds, whence all grace flows.”

6 This thou mayest ask for in firm and strong faith and trust in God; and this will be such a blessing to thee that hereafter thou wilt be able to judge all the world. May we all thus learn to know God, and diligently search out our own hearts by the help of God. Amen.

Instruction 3

[1] The third Instruction shows man how he must take as his Example, the peculiar Attributes and Names assigned to God, and to His Divine Being; and how, on the other hand, he must bear his own nothingness, and then contemplate the unknown wastes and deserts of the Divine Attributes in quiet seclusion.

[2] Because God is a Pure Being and a Waste of calm seclusion, as Moses said: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One Lord,” yea One God, even One God Only, still, some of the special Attributes and divers Names that we assign to Him may serve as an example to us, while we compare our nothingness with Him. For, as I have often said, man is apt to think of all things in an earthly way, of our dear Lord’s Birth, His Life, His Works and Ways. Therefore we must lift up our minds, and learn to soar far above time, in the Eternal Works of the Divine Being. Now man may reflect on these attributes in his mind in a very real way, so that he will be able to see that God is a Pure Being, that all beings are one, and yet that He is none of all these things. In all things that exist, in all that is and has any being, there is God. St Augustine says: “If thou seest a good man, a good Angel, a good Heaven, take away the man, take away the Angel, and take away the Heaven, and then that which remains is the Essence of Goodness, that is God; for He is in all things and yet far above all things.” All creatures, indeed, have some goodness and love; but they are neither goodness nor love, but God only is the Essence of Goodness, of Love and of all that can be named. Man must compare himself with God, and then sink down with all his powers, with an intense and earnest gaze, that he may receive and renew his own nothingness, and be

united with the Divine Being, Who only is the Life, the Soul and the Essence of all things. [140]

3 Man must consider the attributes of this Oneness of being; for God is the End of all unity, and in Him all diversities are united, and become one in the One Only Being. His Being is His work, His knowledge, His love, His reward, His mercy and His righteousness, all are one; therefore go, and carry thereto all thy diversities which are so great and so incomprehensible, that all may be made one in the Oneness of His Being.

4 Man should also consider God as one who hides Himself; for He is known in all things, as Isaiah saith: “Verily, thou art a hidden God.” He is much nearer than anything is to itself in the depths of the heart, hidden from all our senses and unknown in that heart, into which He forces all thy outward thoughts, which are as far from themselves and from thy inner life, as a beast which lives according to its nature, neither knowing, tasting or experiencing anything. Hide thyself in this secret place from all creatures, and from all that is strange to and unlike that Being. This must not be done in a figurative or imaginary way, but in very deed, with all our strength and desire, in a way which we cannot understand with our natural senses. [141]

5 Then man must look upon the desire of the Divine attributes in a quiet solitude, where no word is really spoken. All there is so still and mysterious and so desolate; for there is nothing there but God only, and nothing strange. Neither creature, nor image, nor fancy has ever entered there. This Wilderness was referred to by our Lord, when He spake by the prophet Joel (Hosea): “I will allure her and lead her into the Wilderness, and I will speak to her heart.” This Wilderness is the quiet Desert of the Godhead, into which He leads all who

are to receive this inspiration of God, now or in eternity. Bear thy foolish and barren heart into the Wilderness of the calm and living Godhead, thy heart which is so full of overgrown weeds, bare of all things good, and full of the wild beasts of thy animal nature. Then look upon the Divine Darkness, which is dark from its surpassing brightness to the comprehension of men and of Angels, as the shining of the sun on his course is as darkness to weak eyes. For all created minds compared with the brightness of nature are like the eyes of nightingales or swallows, in the bright sunlight. Men must cast down their eyes in their ignorance and blindness, because they are created beings. Bear thereto thine own deep darkness, robbed of all true light, and let the Abyss of the Divine Darkness only be acknowledged, while all other things remain unknown. The Abyss, which is unknown and has no name, is Salvation; and it is more beloved and entices more souls than all that they can know of Eternal Salvation in the Divine Being. May God bring us all to this Salvation! Amen. [142]

[6] TURNBULL AND SPEARS, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH

Notes

1. “The History and Life of the Reverend Doctor John Tauler of Strasbourg; with Twenty-five of his Sermons (temp. 1340) translated from the German with additional Notices of Tauler’s Life and Times, by Susanna Winkworth.” London, 1857. ↑

2. D. Joannis Thauleri preaclarissimi viri sublimisque theologi tam de tempore quam de sanctis conciones plane pilassimae...eaeteraque opera omnia...nune primum ex Germanico idiomate in Latinum transfusa sermonem, interprete Laurentio Surio, Lubecensi, Carthusiae Coloniensis alumno, Coloniae, 1548. ↑

3. Luther’s commendation is as follows: - “Si te dilectat puram, solidam, antiquae simillimam theologiam legere in Germanica lingua effusam, sermones Johannis Tauleri, praedictoriae professionis, tibi comparare potes, cujus totius velut epitomen ecce hic tibi mitto. Neque enim in Latina neque in nostra lingua theologiam vidi salubriorem et cum Evangelio consonantiorem.” On this Weiss, in the Biographic universelle (edition of 1826) comments as follows: - “Les eloges donnes a ses i.e. Tauler’s ouvrages par Luther, Melanchthon, et la plupart des chefs de la reforme religieuse, avaient fait soupconner ia purete des principes de Tauler; mais d’illustres ecrivian catholiques ont pris soin de justifier sa menoire; et Bossuet dit (“Instruction sur les etats d’oraison”) qu’il le regarde comme un des plus solides et des plus corrects des mystiques.” ↑

4. With reference to the singularly detailed account of the way in which the Blessed Virgin occupied her time, given by Tauler in the Sermon here numbered vii., the Rev. Andrew Burn, rector of Kynnersley, Salop has called my attention to similar language in the gnomes of the Nicene Synod, quoted by Professor Achelis (Journal of Theological Studies, II., 128) which certainly suggests that the two have a common source in traditions contained in some now lost Apocryphal Gospel. The Gnomes are at present only available in two Coptic MSS.; the supposed date of the treatise is c.400. ↑

5. Tom I. p. 677. Paris 1719. ↑

6. See his article in the Hist. Pol. Blatter, lxxv., 18 sq. (1875), and Tauler’s Bekehrung kritisch untersucht, forming Pt. 36 of Quellen und Forschungen zur Sprach und Culturgeschichte der Germanischen Volker (Strasburg, 1879). ↑

7. Margaret Ebner believed that in her ecstasies she received special revelations about our Lord's life and especially about His childhood. She followed with the deepest attention the strife betwen the Pope and the Emperor Louis, having great loyalty and affection for the latter, as her own countryman. In 1346, Clement VI. renewed the excommunication of Louis - Dei ira is hoc et in futuro saeculo exardescat in ipsum - and in the year following the Emperor died suddenly out hunting. But, none the less, Margaret (who died in 1351, aged sixty) believed that in one of her visions the Child Jesus assured her of his predestination to eternal life. Her diary and her correspondence with Henry of Nordlingen were edited by Strauch in 1882. ↑

8. See the note on this word Grund, on p. 94 ↑

9. The review was reprinted in Kingsley's "Miscellanies," Vol. I.; and with it should be read his Prefaces to Miss Winkworth's edition of the Theologia Germanica (1854, and now reprinted in the "Golden Treasury" series) and of Tauler (1857). ↑

10. "Unity in Diversity," p.93 ↑

11. Those who are interested in this subject may be referred to Bigg's "Christian Platonists of Alexandria" (1886), and to Inge's Bampton Lectures on "Christian Mysticism" (1899), as also to Professor Royce's Gifford Lectures on "The World and the Individual," whence are taken some of the thoughts and phrases in the paragraphs which follow. ↑

12. Jer. xiv. 13 ↑

13. Job iv. 15. ↑

14. Plil. ii. 7,8. ↑

15. Luke xi. 28. ↑

16. Luke i. 28. ↑

17. Luke i. 38. ↑

18. Cant. ii. 7 ↑

19. Matt. xi. II. ↑

20. Matt. iii. 3. ↑

21. Job iv. 14-16. ↑

22. Eph. vi. 14. ↑

23. Job vii. 15. ↑

24. Luke x. 42. ↑

25. Eccles. iv. 10. ↑

26. Luke xii. 35, 36. ↑

27. John xii. 32. ↑

28. This appears to be a reference to the interdict under which Strasburg lay in Tauler's time, and a proof that this sermon was preached there. ↑

29. These pictures can scarcely have been taken from any other Codex but the smaller one, now in the Ducal Library at Wiesbaden. It was brought from the monastery at Eybingen, where St Hildegarde lived. ↑

30. I am indebted for the following to the Rev. C. Bigg, D.D., of Christ Church, Oxford: 'We must translate Grund whenever it occurs by "ground." Indeed there is no choice. "Ground" became a recognised term among mystics who held for the German school. It occurs, I think, in Behmen, in George Fox and in Juliana of Norwich. Of course it means the essence of the soul, or its unity. I should think Grund is meant to represent "hypostasis;" but who first used it in this sense I do not know. The idea comes from Plotinus through the Areopagite.' ↑

31. In some editions this is given as the first sermon for All Saints' Day. ↑

32. In some editions this is given as the second sermon for All Saints' Day. ↑

33. John i. 38, 39. [Printed p. 1, note 1.] ↑

34. Cant. ii. 10. [Printed p. 11, note 1.] ↑

35. Ecclus. xxiv. 26, 27. [Printed p. 17, note 1.] ↑

36. John xii. 24. [Printed p. 26, note 1.] ↑

37. John xxi. 20. [Printed p. 42, note 1.] ↑

38. 1 Cor. vii. 34. [Printed p. 49, note 1.] ↑

39. Malach. iii. 1. [Printed p. 57, note 1.] ↑

40. Responsory in 3rd Nocturn of the Commune non virginum. [Printed p. 67, note 1.] ↑

41. Luke i. 28. [Printed p. 73, note 1.] ↑

42. Luke i. 63. [Printed p. 82, note 1.] ↑

43. Zach. ii. 8. [Printed p. 93, note 1.] ↑

44. John i. 7. [Printed p. 93, note 2.] ↑

45. John i. 11. [Printed p. 95, note 1.] ↑

46. Matt. iii. 7. [Printed p. 95, note 2.] ↑

47. Psalm xxxv. 10. [Printed p. 95, note 3.] ↑

48. John i. 3. [Printed p. 99, note 1.] ↑

49. Psalm xxxvi. 9. [Printed p. 100, note 1.] ↑

50. John v. 35. [Printed p. 101, note 1.] ↑

51. John xvii. 21. [Printed p. 103, note 1.] ↑

52. Matt. iii. 3. [Printed p. 103, note 2.] ↑

53. 2 Tim. iv. 2. [Printed p. 106, note 1.] ↑

54. Gal. ii. 20. [Printed p. 112, note 1.] ↑

55. Ecclus. xxiv. 26. [Printed p. 118, note 1.] ↑

56. Luke x. 41, 42. [Printed p. 128, note 1.] ↑

57. John xvi. 7. [Printed p. 132, note 1.] ↑

58. Mark x. 29, 30. [Printed p. 132, note 2.] ↑

59. Luke xiv. 26. [Printed p. 132, note 3.] ↑

60. John xii. 26. [Printed p. 141, note 1.] ↑

61. John xiv. 6. [Printed p. 147, note 1.] ↑

62. Matt. xxv. 12. [Printed p. 148, note 1.] ↑

63. Ecclus. xxiv. 11. [Printed p. 151, note 1.] ↑

64. Ezekiel xliv. 28. [Printed p. 155, note 1.] ↑

65. Job xvii. 26. [Printed p. 156, note 1.] ↑

66. Matt. xxiv. 42. [Printed p. 159, note 1.] ↑

67. 1 Peter iv. 18. [Printed p. 161, note 1.] ↑

68. Job vii. 19, 20. [Printed p. 161, note 2.] ↑

69. Luke xii. 37. [Printed p. 162, note 1.] ↑

70. Ps. liv. 8. [Printed p. 163, note 1.] ↑

71. Jer. xv. 17. [Printed p. 164, note 1.] ↑

72. Ecclus. xxiv. 26. [Printed p. 167, note 1.] ↑

73. Ecclus. xxiv. 26. [Printed p. 168, note 1.] ↑

74. Luke xiv. 33. [Printed p. 170, note 1.] ↑

75. Matt. vii. 21. [Printed p. 171, note 1.] ↑

76. Job iv. 13–15. [Printed p. 172, note 1.] ↑

77. John xii. 32. [Printed p. 175, note 1.] ↑

78. Matt. vi. 24. [Printed p. 177, note 1.] ↑

79. Matt. xviii. 9. [Printed p. 177, note 2.] ↑

80. Matt. vi. 21. [Printed p. 177, note 3.] ↑

81. 1 Cor. xiii. [Printed p. 177, note 4.] ↑

82. Matt. ix. 12. [Printed p. 178, note 1.] ↑

83. Matt. xxvii. 46. [Printed p. 180, note 1.] ↑

84. Matt. xxvii. 39. [Printed p. 180, note 2.] ↑

85. Matt. xvi. 24. [Printed p. 180, note 3.] ↑

86. Gal. iv. 24. [Printed p. 180, note 4.] ↑

87. John xii. 32. [Printed p. 181, note 1.] ↑

88. Luke i. 46, 47. [Printed p. 185, note 1.] ↑

89. Matt. xvi. 24. [Printed p. 185, note 2.] ↑

90. Rom. viii. 28. [Printed p. 186, note 1.] ↑

91. Matt. xvi. 24. [Printed p. 187, note 1.] ↑

92. 2 Cor. ix. 6. [Printed p. 187, note 2.] ↑

93. Matt. vii. 2. [Printed p. 187, note 3.] ↑

94. Ps. xxx. 21. [Printed p. 189, note 1.] ↑

95. Psalm xxx. 21. [Printed p. 190, note 1.] ↑

96. Ecclus. xxiv. 14. [Printed p. 190, note 2.] ↑

97. John xii. 32. [Printed p. 192, note 1.] ↑

98. Matt. xvi. 24. [Printed p. 192, note 2.] ↑

99. Matt. xix. 21. [Printed p. 192, note 3.] ↑

100. Matt. xxvii. 46. [Printed p. 196, note 1.] ↑

101. Matt. ix. 9. [Printed p. 199, note 1.] ↑

102. Job iii. 23. [Printed p. 204, note 1.] ↑

103. Matt. xviii. 10. [Printed p. 207, note 1.] ↑

104. Rom. viii. 38. [Printed p. 213, note 1.] ↑

105. Matt. xviii. 10. [Printed p. 215, note 1.] ↑

106. Matt. v. 1, sq. [Printed p. 215, note 2.] ↑

107. 2 Cor. vi. 10. [Printed p. 220, note 1.] ↑

108. Titus i. 15. [Printed p. 220, note 2.] ↑

109. Matt. vii. 2. [Printed p. 223, note 1.] ↑

110. Matt. v. 3. [Printed p. 227, note 2.] ↑

111. John i. 27. [Printed p. 235, note 1.] ↑

112. Matt. iii. 14. [Printed p. 235, note 2.] ↑

113. Matt. xi. 18. [Printed p. 235, note 3.] ↑

114. Matt. v. 8. [Printed p. 236, note 2.] ↑

115. Matt. xiii. 46. [Printed p. 241, note 1.] ↑

116. John xiv. 15. [Printed p. 247, note 1.] ↑

117. Luke xxii. 42. [Printed p. 248, note 1.] ↑

118. Luke xxiii. 46. [Printed p. 252, note 1.] ↑

119. Responsory in 3rd Nocturn. Commune Apostolorum. [Printed p. 254, note 1.] ↑

120. Gal. v. 24. [Printed p. 255, note 1.] ↑

121. James i. 12. [Printed p. 263, note 1.] ↑

122. Psalm lxxxviii. 25. [Printed p. 275, note 1.] ↑

123. Psalm lxxv. 12. [Printed p. 276, note 1.] ↑

124. Psalm lxxxviii. 25. [Printed p. 276, note 2.] ↑

125. Psalm cxlviii. 13. [Printed p. 276, note 3.] ↑

126. Psalm xviii. 13. [Printed p. 276, note 4.] ↑

127. Psalm xxxv. 12, 13. [Printed p. 276, note 5.] ↑

128. Matt. vi. 2. [Printed p. 282, note 1.] ↑

129. Luke xi. 34. [Printed p. 287, note 1.] ↑

130. Matt. xxv. 2. [Printed p. 293, note 1.] ↑

131. Luke xix. 5. [Printed p. 301, note 1.] ↑

132. 2 Cor. ii. 15. [Printed p. 302, note 1.] ↑

133. Ps. ciii. 3. [Printed p. 303, note 1.] ↑

134. Matt. xi. 25. [Printed p. 305, note 1.] ↑

135. Matt. xvi. 13. [Printed p. 308, note 1.] ↑

136. 2 Tim. ii. 5. [Printed p. 311, note 1.] ↑

137. Luke xvii. 21. [Printed p. 315, note 1.] ↑

138. John xvii. 3. [Printed p. 316, note 1.] ↑

139. 1 Cor. v. 17. [Printed p. 318, note 1.] ↑

140. Deut. vi. 4. [Printed p. 321, note 1.] ↑

141. Is. xiv. 15. [Printed p. 323, note 1.] ↑

142. Hosea ii. 14. [Printed p. 323, note 2.] ↑

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