

but in Hebrew, Golgotha: where they crucified Him, and with Him two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the midst. And Pilate wrote a title also, and he put it upon the cross, and the writing was: 'JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.' This title, therefore, many of the Jews did read, because the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin. Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate: 'Write not, "The King of the Jews," but that He said: "I am the King of the Jews."' Pilate answered: 'What I have written, I have written.' Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Him, took His garments (and they made four parts, to every soldier a part), and also His coat. Now, the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said then one to another: 'Let us not cut it, but let us cast lots for it, whose it shall be;' that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saying: 'They have parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture they have cast lots.' And the soldiers indeed did these things.

Now, there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother and His mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus, therefore, had seen His mother and the disciple standing, whom He loved, He saith to His mother: 'Woman, behold thy son.' After that, He saith to the disciple: 'Behold thy mother.' And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own. Afterwards, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said: 'I thirst.' Now there was a vessel set there full of vinegar, and they, putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, put it to His mouth. Jesus therefore, when He had taken the vinegar, said: 'It is consummated.' And, bowing His head, He gave up the ghost. (**Here all kneel and pause.**) Then the Jews, because it was parascave, that the bodies might not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath-day (for that was a great Sabbath-day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. The soldiers therefore came, and they broke the legs of the first and of the other that was crucified with Him. But after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs, but one of the soldiers opened His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he that saw it gave testimony, and his testimony is true, that you also may believe. For these things were done that the Scripture might be fulfilled: 'You shall not break a bone of Him.' And

again another Scripture sayeth: 'They shall look on Him they pierced.' And after these things, Joseph of Arimathea (because he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews) besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus also came, he who at first came to Jesus by night, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. They took, therefore, the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths, with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now there was a garden in the place where He was crucified, and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein no man yet had been laid. There, therefore, because of the parascave of the Jews, they laid Jesus, because the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

HOMILY BY ST. AUGUSTINE

Tract 118, 119 etc.

I. WHEN PILATE HAD JUDGED AND CONDEMNED the Lord Jesus Christ at his judgment seat, *they took Him* about the sixth hour, and *led Him forth; and bearing His own cross, He went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha, where they crucified Him.* He was going, therefore, to the place where He was to be crucified. *Jesus bearing His own cross.* A great spectacle! But then to impiety a great sport to look upon, to piety an exceedingly great mystery! Impiety sees in it a great display of ignominy, piety a great strengthening of faith. Impiety looks on, and laughs at a king bearing, instead of the sceptre of sovereignty, the wood of king bearing; piety looks on, and sees the King bearing that cross for Himself, to be fixed thereon, which He would thereafter fix even on the brows of kings. An object of contempt in the eyes of the impious, yet the same thing in which later on the hearts of the Saints will glory. Thus to St. Paul, who one day will say, *God forbid that I should glory but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Gal. 6: 14), the Lord commanded that very cross by bearing it on His shoulders; and for that candle, which was to be lighted and not to be put under a bushel, the Lord bore the candlestick.

II. The human race was lost by sin; for all men, coming from

Adam, had sinned in him. One alone was born without sin, and He delivered from the yoke of sin. He was made man in order to heal our wounds inflicted by sin. The Jews were as sick as all other men in the world, yet their pride made them believe that they were not in need of the physician; and their disease was so much the more incurable, as their pride, by which it was caused, led them to despise Him who had come to cure it. But they were not contented with despising Him; they even put Him to death. Yet at the very time they took His life He fulfilled for them the duties of a Physician. They struck Him, and He cured them. He felt the effects of their madness, but He abandoned not the sick. The Jews surrounded Jesus Christ; they bound Him with ropes, buffeted Him, struck Him with a reed, overwhelmed Him with insults and blasphemies; lastly, they asked Him juridical questions, condemned Him, and nailed Him to the cross; yet He still remained their Physician. You have seen the character of the Jews in their madness, now consider the character of their Physician. *Father*, He cried out, *forgive them, for they know not what they do* (Luke 23: 34). Blinded by their rage and envy, they shed the blood of their Physician, and the Physician shed His own blood to cure them of their blindness and fury; and in that intention that His blood might flow for them, He cried out: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*.

III. And Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said: *I thirst*. The Divinity of Jesus Christ was hidden under the veil of His humanity. This humanity suffered all the insults and mockery of the Jews, whilst His Divinity allowed free scope to their fury. He saw, then, that all things were finished; that no more required to be done before He should receive the vinegar and give up the ghost; and that this also might be accomplished what was foretold in the Scripture: *And in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink* (Ps. 68: 22). He said, *I thirst*, as if it were, One thing you have left undone; give what you are. For the Jews were themselves the vinegar, degenerated as they were from the wine of the Patriarchs and Prophets, and filled like a full vessel with the wickedness of this world. This godless people did

all these things, and a compassionate Christ suffered them. This blinded people knew not what they were doing; but Jesus knew what was done, and why it was done; and He wrought what was good through those who were doing what was evil. *When Jesus, therefore, had taken the vinegar, He said: It is consummated*. What was finished, save all that the prophecies had foretold so long before? Then, because nothing remained that yet was to be done before He died, as He had the power to lay down His life, and the power to take it up again; now that all was accomplished, for the accomplishment of which He was waiting, *He bowed His head and gave up the ghost*. Who so sleeps when he will, as Jesus died when He pleased? Who so lays aside his garment when he will, as He put off His flesh when He would? What traveller departs from a place when he pleases, as He departed this life when He pleased? Therefore, what must we hope or fear to find His power as a Judge, if it was so great when He died?

HOMILY BY POPE ST. GREGORY,
PREACHED IN THE CHURCH
OF ST. JOHN LATERAN ON THE
FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Twenty-Sixth Homily on the Gospels

I. WHEN WE HEAR THIS GOSPEL, OUR HUMAN mind can hardly understand how it was that the Body of the risen Lord, being a real Body, could pass through closed doors into the room where the disciples were assembled. But this will not surprise us when we consider that the works of God would no longer be wonderful, were they understood by man's reason, and that our faith would be destitute of all merit, were the human intellect able to demonstrate how these works of God are done. However, these very works of our Redeemer, which we are unable to understand, must be taken in connection with some others of His works, so that we may be led to believe in wonderful things by means of others still more wonderful. For that Body of our Lord, which came into the assembly of the disciples, the doors being shut, was the same which at His birth was manifested to the eyes of men, by passing out of the Virgin's womb without breaking the seal of her virginity. What wonder, then, is it that Jesus Christ, after His Resurrection, enjoyed a glorious and immortal life, showed Himself to His disciples, the doors being shut, since as a weak and mortal child He came out of a Virgin's womb in an incomprehensible manner? But since the Body of our Lord, after His resurrection, though real and visible, could raise doubts in the minds of the beholders, *He showed them His hands and His side*, and allowed them to touch that same flesh which had just passed through closed doors. In this event two strange things which, according to our understanding, are contrary the one to the other, were manifested, namely, that His Body was incorruptible and yet palpable. For, whatsoever can be touched must needs be corruptible; and whatsoever is not subject to corruption cannot be

touched. But, in a way altogether wonderful and incomprehensible, our Redeemer appeared after His resurrection in a Body at the same time palpable and incorruptible. He appeared in an incorruptible Body, inviting us to seek the same glorification; and in a palpable Body to strengthen our faith. He showed Himself both incorruptible and palpable, to make manifest this fact, that His risen Body was the same in nature, though transfigured in glory.

II. *He said therefore to them again: Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you.* The Father, Who is God, sent Me Who am God; and I Who am also man, send you who are men. The Father sent the Son, Whom He appointed to be made man for the redemption of man. He willed to send the Son into the world to suffer, though He loved that Son Who was sent to suffer. And our Lord sent His chosen Apostles into the world, not to be happy in the world, but to suffer, as He Himself had been sent. For, as the Father loves the Son, and yet sent Him to suffer, so does the Lord love His Apostles, though sending them into the world to suffer therein. Therefore it is well said: *As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you*; meaning, while I send you into storms and persecutions, I love you all the same with a love like that wherewith My Father loves Me, Who yet sent me into the world to suffer. This sending of the Son may also be understood of His Eternal and Divine generation, for the Holy Ghost, equal to the Father and to the Son, and Who has not assumed our human nature, was to be sent according to the promise of our Redeemer: *When the Paraclete cometh, Whom I will send you, from the Father* (John 15: 26). For should the word *send* only mean to become man, then the Holy Ghost could not be said to have been sent, since He did not become man. We call Him, therefore, *sent*, in that sense that He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and, as His sending refers to His Divine procession, so may the sending of the Son be referred to His Divine generation.

III. When Jesus, standing in the midst of His disciples, had said: *Peace be to you*, He breathed on them and said: *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*. Let me remark that Holy Scripture speaks of two occasions only on which the Holy Ghost was given by our Redeemer:

the first, when He was still on earth, and the second when He was already reigning in heaven. On the first occasion, as it is seen in this Gospel, He breathed on His disciples, and on the second the Holy Ghost came down from heaven upon them in the form of fiery tongues. Now, should we wish to know the reason why the Holy Ghost was imparted at two different times, and under different circumstances, we must consider that charity contains two commandments, namely, the love of God and the love of our neighbour. It seems, therefore, that the Holy Ghost was given on earth to move us to fulfil the duty of loving our neighbour; whereas He was sent from heaven to inflame our hearts with true love for God. But, since the two commandments spring forth from charity, which is one and the same, so was the one and the same Holy Ghost given by our Redeemer on two occasions to wit, the first time when He was still on earth, and the second after His Ascension into heaven, giving us to understand that the love for our neighbour serves like steps leading us up to the love for God, according to the words of His beloved disciple: *If anyone say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, Whom he seeth not* (1 John 4: 20). Yet let us not conclude that the Apostles had not received the Holy Ghost before, since they possessed Him by faith. But after the Resurrection the Holy Ghost was given to them in a special and visible manner; and we understand in this sense the words, *As yet the Holy Ghost was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified* (John 7: 39). Hence Moses said: *He set him that he might suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the hardest stone* (Deut. 32: 13). For, perusing the Books of the Old Testament, we find that these words cannot be applied to the Israelites, since we do not see anywhere that they ever sucked honey and oil out of stones. We conclude, therefore, according to the testimony of St. Paul, that this rock was Christ. Indeed, seeing the acts and wonders of Jesus, the disciples sucked honey out of this Stone, and oil out of this Rock; for, after His Resurrection, they received the anointing of the Holy Ghost. We may also compare our Saviour with a soft stone, that, through the sweetness of His miracles, in His earthly

life, He offered honey to the disciples. But since, after His Resurrection He cannot suffer any more, and has become like a hard rock, He sent them the anointing of the Holy Ghost.

I V. This is the supernatural oil spoken of by the prophets: *The yoke shall putrefy at the presence of the oil* (Isa. 10: 27). We were under the yoke of the cruel slavery of Satan; but having received the anointing of the Holy Ghost, and the grace to be set at liberty, the tyrannical yoke, under which we were groaning, has disappeared. This truth is confirmed by St. Paul, saying *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty* (2 Cor. 3: 17). However, take notice that these very disciples, who had already received the Holy Ghost, so as to lead a holy life with His assistance, and by their preaching to be useful to others, again received the Holy Ghost after the Resurrection, and in a most striking manner, for the benefit of the nations they were to instruct in the course of time. Hence our Lord, giving them the Holy Ghost, says: *Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained*. Let us wonder at the high degree of honour to which the disciples were raised at a time when destined to suffer the deepest humiliations. They were promised that not only their own sins were forgiven, but that they had power to absolve others from their sins that is, power to sit on God's judgment-seat, and, like God Himself, to forgive or retain sins committed against His Divine justice. It was meet that those who, for the love of God, were ready to accept every humiliation and contempt, should be honoured in this way, and that their fear of being condemned by the severe Judge Whom they adored should be the motive prompting God to set them up as judges of souls, which were to be condemned or to be absolved.

V. Consider again, beloved brethren, this important truth, and carefully endeavour to be preserved from the eternal perdition. These Easter-days are celebrated with great pomp and magnificence; yet our duty is to make ourselves worthy of arriving at the eternal Festivals. You endeavour to be present at these feast-days, which pass and disappear; try, then, your utmost to be one day present, all together, at the never-ending celebration

in heaven. What would it profit you to assist at our festivals now, were you never to be admitted to the festivities of the angels in heaven? Our present feast-days are only the shadow of those we are expecting, and, though year after year we are celebrating them, we are longing for those never-ending days in the kingdom of God. Renew in your hearts the desire of the eternal festivities by the celebration of the annual earthly festivals. Let the happiness granted to us in the present time penetrate us in such a way that we continue sighing for the eternal happiness prepared for us in heaven, and ardently desired by us on earth. Prepare yourselves for that eternal rest by amending your lives and practising virtue and holiness. Never forget that He Who in His Resurrection was meekness itself, will be terrible when coming to judge the world. On this awful day He will appear surrounded by Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Principalities and Powers. On that day heaven and earth and all the elements, being the ministers of His wrath, will be in a general conflagration. May this terrible Judge be ever present to the eyes of your mind, that, penetrated by a salutary fear of His severe judgment, that is to be held, you may confidently expect His coming. Let us fear now, that we may be without fear then, and this fear will help us to avoid sin and work out our salvation. For I tell you that the more we are now afraid to rouse the anger of our Judge against us, the greater will be our confidence when we appear before Him at the end of the world.

31. SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

GOSPEL: John 10: 11-16. *At that time:* Jesus said to the Pharisees: I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But the hireling, and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and the hireling flieth; and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep, and the hireling flieth, because he is a hireling, and he hath no care for the sheep. I am the Good Shepherd: and I know Mine and Mine know Me. As the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father, and I lay down My life for My sheep. And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd.

HOMILY BY POPE ST. GREGORY, PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF ST. PETER ON THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Fourteenth Homily on the Gospel

I. THIS GOSPEL WHICH YOU HAVE HEARD, BELOVED brethren, is to you, both an instruction and a warning against danger. For our Lord, Who is infinitely good, not by an accidental gift of nature, but by the very essence of His being, says to us: *I am the Good Shepherd*. Then He tells us what is the character of His goodness, even of that goodness which we must endeavor to imitate. *The Good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep*. This truth was proved by our Redeemer's own example; for both the instruction and the command were literally fulfilled in His life. The Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep, and made His

33. FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

GOSPEL: John 16: 5-14. *At that time:* Jesus said to His disciples: I go to Him that sent Me; and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou? But because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart. But I tell you the truth; it is expedient to you that I go: for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And when He is come, He will convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment. Of sin; because they believed not in Me. And of justice; because I go to the Father; and you shall see Me no longer; and of judgment, because the prince of this world is already judged. I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will teach you all truth. For He shall not speak of Himself, but what things soever He shall hear, He shall speak; and the things that are to come He shall show you. He shall glorify Me, because He shall receive of Mine, and shall declare it to you.

HOMILY BY ST. AUGUSTINE

Tract 94 on St. John

I. THE LORD JESUS, AFTER FORETELLING HIS DIS-
ciples the persecutions they would have to suffer after His departure, went on to say: *But I told you not these things from the beginning, because I was with you. And now I go to Him that sent Me.* Let us first inquire whether He had before this moment foretold them their future sufferings. That He had done so before the night of the Last Supper is testified by the three first Evangelists; but it was at the end of that supper that, according to St. John, He spoke these words: *But I told you not these things from the beginning, because I was with you.* Are we, then, to try and find the solution of this difficulty

by asserting that, according to those three Evangelists, it was on the eve of the Passion, though before the supper, that He had said these things to them? That, therefore, not from the beginning of His being with them, but when He was about to leave them, and to go to the Father, He said these things? And so, even according to those Evangelists, this also is true what He said by the other: *But I told you not these things from the beginning*. But then, what credit shall we attach to the Gospel according to St. Matthew, who tells us that our Lord spoke to His Apostles of these things concerning their sufferings, not only when He was on the point of eating the Paschal Supper with them, immediately before His Passion, but also at the very beginning, when the names of the twelve were for the first time mentioned, and they were sent forth to do the Divine works? (Matt. 10). It seems, then, that when He said, *But I told you not these things from the beginning, because I was with you*, He meant by 'these things' not the sufferings they were to bear for His sake, but His promise of the Holy Ghost, Who should come to them and bear witness while they suffered. And these things He did not say from the beginning, because He was with them.

II. This Comforter, then, or Advocate (for both terms render the Greek word *Paracletos*), would be necessary to them when they saw Christ no more; and this is the reason why He had not spoken of Him to them at the beginning of His public life, while He was with them, since His visible presence was then their sufficient comfort. But now that He was about to depart from them, it behoved Him to tell them of the coming of that Spirit, through Whom it would come to pass that, by the love infused into their hearts, they should preach the word of God with boldness. And while the Holy Ghost inwardly that is, within them bore testimony of Christ, they also should bear witness, and feel no cause of stumbling when their enemies, the Jews, should put them out of the synagogues and kill them, imagining that they were doing a service to God; for 'charity endureth all things' (1 Cor. 13: 7), and that charity of God was poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given to them (Rom. v. 5). This, then, is the whole meaning of His discourse, namely, that He would make them His

martyrs — that is, witnesses — through the Holy Ghost; so that by His working they should endure any amount of persecutions, and not grow cold in their preaching, being then inflamed by that Divine fire. *But these things*, He said, *I have told you that, when the hour shall come, you may remember that I told you of them*. These things, therefore, I have told you, not only that you suffer them, but also that, when the Paraclete is come, He shall bear testimony that you may not keep silence through fear, when you ought to speak, but you also shall bear testimony to Me.

III. And when our Lord said, *Now I go to Him that sent Me, and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou?* He wished to intimate that He was about to go in their presence, and in such a manner, that it would be useless to ask to what place He was going. For previously to this they *had* asked Him whither He was going, and He had answered that He was going whither they *At that time* could not come. But now He declared that His going will be in such a manner, that none of them shall ask whither He goes. For when He ascended into heaven, a cloud received Him; and as He went, they asked not in words *whither*, but with their eyes they escorted Him *thither*.

IV. Jesus saw what effect these words about His going produced in the hearts of His disciples, and He said: *Because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart*. Indeed, they had not yet the spiritual consolation which they were to receive through the Holy Ghost, who would fill them with His gifts. They feared, therefore, to lose the visible presence of their Master; and, because they could not doubt that He spoke the truth, their human affection was saddened, being convinced that their carnal sight of Him would be left desolate. However, He knew that was most expedient to them, because that inner sight, wherewith the Holy Spirit should console them, was assuredly superior. This Spirit would not present a human body before the bodies of men, that they should see Him, but He would infuse Himself into the hearts of men who believed. And Jesus goes on to say: *But I tell you the truth; it is expedient to you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you*. As though He

said: It is expedient to you that this human form of a servant be taken from you. I am indeed the Word made flesh dwelling among you; but I do not wish you to love only My corporeal and carnal presence, and, content with this milk, desire to be always infants. If you suffer not the tender aliments, wherewith I have fed you, to be withdrawn from you, you will never be longing for solid meat. If in a carnal way you cleave only to the flesh you see in Me, you will never be worthy to receive the communications of the Holy Spirit. But what is the meaning of these words: *if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you?* Who would say that our Lord, whilst on earth with His disciples, had not the power to send them the Holy Ghost? For it must not be imagined that He had left the place where that Spirit was, and that He had been sent by His Father in such a way as not to abide with the Father any longer. Who will believe that Jesus Christ had not the power, even when still on earth, to send the Holy Ghost, Who, as we know, came upon Him at His baptism in the Jordan, and remained upon Him, and from Whom, indeed, we know that He was never separable? Then the meaning of, *if I go not, the Comforter will not come to you*, will be: You cannot receive the Spirit, as you persist in knowing Christ after the flesh and loving Him in the flesh. Whence St. Paul, who also had received the Spirit, says: *if we have known Christ according to the flesh, but now we know Him so no longer* (2 Cor. 5: 16). For, even now he did not know the flesh of Christ in a carnal way, until brought to a spiritual knowledge of the Word that has been made flesh. And surely our good Master wished to intimate this, when He said: *if I go not, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.*

V. Let us also believe that, when Christ bodily withdrew from the presence of His disciples, not only the Holy Ghost, but both the Father and the Son were present to them spiritually. For if Christ departed from them in such a manner that the Holy Ghost was in them, instead of Him and without Him, what becomes of His promise: *Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world?* And how can we explain these other words of our Redeemer: *We will come to him, I and the Father, and will make Our*

abode with him, seeing that He had promised to send the Holy Ghost in such a way as to be Himself with them to the end of the world? In this way it was, on the other hand, that seeing they were out of their carnal or animal condition to become spiritual, they were also, with undoubted certainty, to have both the Father and the Son, with the Holy Ghost, in a more comprehensive way. But we are not to believe that the Father is present in any man without the Son and the Holy Ghost, or the Father and the Son without the Holy Ghost, or the Son without the Father and the Holy Ghost, or the Holy Ghost without the Father and the Son, or the Father and the Holy Ghost without the Son. But wherever any one of them is, there also is the Trinity, one God. Here, however, the notion of the Trinity had to be suggested in such a manner that, though there was no diversity of substance, yet, by the several mentioning of each Person, we should be informed of the distinction of the Persons, of Whom, to them that rightly understand, there can never be a separation of Natures.

VI. Our Lord, when promising that He would send the Holy Ghost, said: *When He is come, He will convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment.* What does this mean? Did not the Lord Jesus convince the world of sin when He said: *if I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sins* (John 15: 22). And, that no one may take it into his head to say that this applied properly to the Jews, and not to the world in general, He said in another place: *if you had been of the world, the world would love its own* (15: 22). Did He not convince the world of justice, saying: *O just Father, the world hath not known Thee?* (17: 23). Again, did He not convince the world of judgment, when He declared that He would say to those on the left hand: *Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and Us angels?* (Matt. 25: 41). And many other passages are found in the holy Gospel, where Christ convinced the world of these things. How is it, then, that He attributes this to the Holy Ghost, as if it properly belonged to Him? Is it, perhaps, that, because Christ spoke only among the nation of the Jews, He does not appear to have reproved the world, so that he only be understood to be

reproved, who actually hears the reprover? Yet the Holy Ghost, Who was in His disciples when scattered through the world, is understood as having reproved not one nation, but the whole world. For, notice what He said to them when about to ascend into heaven: *It is not for you to know the times or moments, which the Father hath put in His own power; but you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth* (Acts 1: 7, 8). Surely this is to reprove or convince the whole world. But who would venture to say that through the disciples of Christ the Holy Ghost reproves the world, and that Christ Himself does not, when the Apostle exclaims: *Do you seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me?* (2 Cor. 13: 3). When, therefore, the Holy Ghost reproves, assuredly Christ also reproves. But, in my opinion, because there was to be *poured forth in their heart that charity* (Rom. 5: 5), *which casteth out fear* (1 John 4: 1, 8), by which fear they might have been hindered from daring to reprove the world, roaring at them with persecutions, He said: *He shall convince (reprove) the world.* Being then strengthened by the Holy Ghost, they reprov'd the world without fearing either torture or death. We have often mentioned that the operations of the Trinity are not separable, yet there was need to set forth the Persons one by one, that, without separating Them nor confounding Them together, we may have a clear understanding of Their Unity and Trinity.

34. FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

GOSPEL: John 16: 23-30. *At that time:* Jesus said to His disciples: Amen, amen, I say to you; if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name. Ask, and you shall receive; that your joy may be full. These things I have spoken to you in proverbs. The hour cometh when I will no more speak to you in proverbs, but will show you plainly of the Father. In that day you shall ask in My name, and I say not to you, that I will ask the Father for you. For the Father Himself loveth you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and I go to the Father. His disciples say to Him: Behold, now Thou speakest plainly, and speakest no proverbs. Now we know that Thou knowest all things, and Thou needest not that any man should ask Thee. By this we believe that Thou comest forth from God.

HOMILY BY ST. AUGUSTINE

Tract 102 on St. John

I. THE WORDS OF OUR LORD, WHICH YOU ARE NOW to consider, are these: *Amen, amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you.* It has already been said in the earlier part of this discourse of the Lord, with regard to those who ask some things of the Father in Christ's name, and receive them not, that whatsoever is asked and tends not to salvation, is not asked in the name of the Redeemer. For, not the sounds of letters and syllables, but what the sound signifies, and what by that sound is honestly and truly understood, that He is regarded to declare, when saying: *In My name.* Hence, he that has such ideas of

say to you, He added, *that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.* Since the God of Abraham is the Creator of heaven, and the Father of Jesus Christ, it follows that Abraham and all the nations which with him believe in Jesus, the Son of the Creator, will sit in the kingdom of heaven. In this also is contained the meaning of what we have said, namely, that the faith of the centurion represented the Gentiles, who would believe with him were the Gospel preached to those who dwell in the east and the west. *But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness.* The Jews, who, until the conversion of the Gentiles, had God for their King, were the children of the kingdom. Their darkness was interior; yet we may say that, since they left the true Light and were rejected by God, they were also surrounded by exterior darkness.

14. FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

GOSPEL: Matt. 8: 23-27. *At that time: When Jesus entered into a ship His disciples followed Him, and behold a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the ship was covered with waves; but He was asleep. And His disciples came to Him, and awakened Him, saying: Lord, save us; we perish. And Jesus saith to them Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith? Then rising up, He commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm. But the men wondered, saying: What manner of man is this? for the winds and the sea obey Him.*

I. HOMILY BY ST. JEROME

Commentary on St. Matthew 8, Bk. I

I. OUR LORD WORKED THE FIFTH MIRACLE WHEN He took ship at Capharnaum, and commanded the winds and the sea; the sixth, when, in the country of the Gerasens, He suffered the devils to enter into the swine; the seventh, when, coming into His own city, He cured the man sick of the palsy lying on a bed. The first man sick of the palsy, whom He cured, was the centurion's servant. *But He was asleep, and His disciples came to Him, and awakened Him, saying: Lord, save us; we perish.* A type of this is found in the history of Jonas, who was fast asleep when the storm arose, and whom the sailors woke up to help them. He saved the sailors by commanding them to throw him into the sea; this casting of Jonas into the sea being, as we know, a figure of Christ's Passion.

II. *Then, rising up, He commanded the winds and the sea.* The words give us to understand that all things, which have been made, recognise their Master; all things, which He rebukes or commands, hear His voice. This is not the error of the heretics, who pretend that everything is alive, but part of the majesty of the Creator, Who

makes things to feel Him, which we cannot make to feel us. *But the men wondered, saying: What manner of man is this? for the winds and the sea obey Him.* It was not His disciples who wondered, but the sailors and others who were in the ship. If, however, anyone be willing to oppose this our interpretation, and to maintain that it was the disciples who wondered, we answer that those who knew not before the power of the Saviour deserve to be stripped of the title of disciples, and to be called simply *the men*.

II. HOMILY BY ST. AUGUSTINE

Commentary on Psalm 25

THIS SHIP, IN WHICH JESUS WAS ASLEEP, AND which was on the point of being swallowed up by the waves, is a figure of the dangers threatening man's life, compared to a sea continually agitated by winds and storms. The waves rising in the sea are the daily temptations of our life, assailing our fragile ship and threatening it with dismal wreck and destruction. And whence comes such impending danger, but because Jesus is asleep? Were not Jesus asleep within you, you would not be exposed to all these storms; but interior peace and perfect calm would be your happy lot, through Jesus watching with you. For what is the meaning of *Jesus is asleep*? Your faith in Jesus has fallen asleep. The tempests of the sea arise; you see evil men flourishing, good and just men in trouble and misery; your faith is shaken and tossed about as by furious waves. And in this temptation your soul says: 'Is this Thy justice, O God, that the wicked should flourish, whilst the just are in trouble and misery?' You say to God: 'Is this Thy justice?' And God says to you: 'Is this your faith? Have I promised you the perishable things of the world? Have I called you to be My followers, that is, Christians, that you should flourish in this life? Are you grieving because you see the wicked enjoying all earthly pleasures, who shall hereafter be tormented with the devil? But why all these complaints? Why are you disturbed by

the waves of the sea and the storm? Because Jesus is asleep; that is, because your faith in Jesus has been laid asleep in your hearts. How will you be delivered from this great danger? Awaken Jesus, and say to Him: *Lord, save us, we perish*; the waves of temptation rise against us and threaten our souls with impending death. And Jesus will awake, that is, your faith will return to you. And with His help you will recognise that the happiness the wicked enjoy will not abide with them. For, either it will be taken from them while they live, or they will be forced to leave it when they die. But the happiness promised to you will abide for ever and ever. What is granted to the wicked for a time, will soon be taken away; for they flourish like the flower of the grass. *All flesh is as grass; the grass is withered, and the flower thereof is fallen away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever* (1 Pet. 1: 24, 25). Turn, therefore, your back upon that which falls and is perishable, and your face to that which abides to the end. Now that Jesus is awake, the storm shall no more shake your hearts, the waves shall not fill your barque. Your faith commands the winds and the waves, and the danger shall pass away, when a great calm will follow the storm. To all this, beloved brethren, belongs what the Apostle says about *putting off the old man. Be angry and sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your anger. Give not place to the devil* (Eph. 4: 26, 27). The old man did give place; let not the new man do the same. *He that stole, let him now steal no more* (ver. 28). The old man, then, did steal; not so the new. It is the same man, it is one man. It was Adam, let it be Christ; it was the old man, let it be the new man.

name. When, lastly, He tells the Jews that their house would be left desolate, He only confirms what He had already announced to the prevaricating people by the prophet Jeremiah, saying: *I have forsaken my house; I have left my inheritance* (12: 7). Indeed, we see in our time that the house of the Jews, that is, the magnificent temple, considered as one of the wonders of the world, is a forsaken and desolate place, since Jesus Christ abandoned it, and since the Heir was killed by the perfidious nation, which endeavoured to seize upon the inheritance.

IV. In the same manner our Lord addressed Jerusalem and the whole Jewish nation, when He said: *I say to you, you shall not see Me henceforth until you say: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord*. These last words, which the children used when expressing their joy at the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, are taken from the 117th Psalm, in which the royal prophet speaks of Jesus. By these words our Lord wished to tell the Jews, that they would never see Him unless they did penance, and openly confessed that He was the Son of God the Almighty, announced by the prophets. Time was given to the Jews to be converted. Their only duty was to acknowledge and adore Him, Who was sent by the Father to be their King; then they would see Jesus Christ and reign with Him.

7. SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS

GOSPEL: Luke 2: 33-40. *At that time: Joseph and Mary, the mother of Jesus, were wondering at these things which were spoken concerning Him. And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother: Behold, the Child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser. She was far advanced in years, and had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow until fourscore and four years; who departed not from the temple, by fastings and prayers serving night and day. Now, she at the same hour coming in, confessed to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all that looked for the redemption of Israel. And after they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, into their city Nazareth. And the Child grew, and waxed strong, full of wisdom; and the grace of God was in Him.*

HOMILY BY THE VENERABLE BEDE

Bk. I, On St. Luke 2

I. IN THE GOSPEL WE SEE THAT JOSEPH WAS called the father of our Saviour; but we know that he was not, according to the erroneous interpretation of the Photinians, the real father of Jesus, but only His reputed father, in order to save the honour of Mary his spouse. The Evangelist knew that the Virgin, though a mother, had conceived by the operation of the Holy Ghost. However, to follow the common expressions used by historians, he made no scruple at calling St. Joseph the father of Jesus. Moreover, we may apply to him the qualifications of a

father in the same sense and for the same reasons as we call him the spouse of Mary, though she remained a Virgin in spite of the conjugal bond. Indeed, on account of this bond, uniting Joseph with his spouse, he deserved the title of father of Jesus more justly than if he had adopted Him; and he would have possessed the rights of a father over Jesus, even though not born of his spouse, had he adopted Him according to the law.

II. It was in very truth that Simeon, when speaking of the Redeemer, could say to Mary: *Behold, the Child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel.* Indeed, many will rise through Jesus Christ, the light and the glory of Israel. He Himself teaches us this truth, when He says: *I am the resurrection and the life. And everyone that liveth, and believeth in Me, shall not die for ever* (John 11: 25, 26). And He will be an occasion of fall for many, because He is the stone which, rejected by the builders, has become the head of the corner, and will grind to dust those on whom it falls, those who do not believe in Him. It was of them that He spoke, saying: *If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin* (John 15: 22). But Jesus is also an occasion of fall for many, not only in His own person, but also in the person of His ministers. Thus we hear St. Paul say: *We are the good odour of Christ unto God, in them that are saved, and in them that perish* (2 Cor. 2: 15). If, therefore, we willingly accept the doctrine of salvation, preached by God through His ministers sent to us, then it will be a good odour sanctifying our soul; whereas the same doctrine will be an odour of death and an occasion of fall for those who neglect or despise it. When the prophecy again tells us that this Child shall be contradicted, we know that by these words is meant the faith in the death of our Lord on the cross preached to the world. St. Paul tells us that the Jews, speaking of the Christians, said: *We know that this sect — those believing and teaching this doctrine — is everywhere spoken against* (Acts 28: 22). And the same Apostle says: *We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and unto the Gentiles, foolishness* (1 Cor. 1: 23).

III. Holy Simeon again said to our Blessed Lady that a sword would pierce her own soul. We easily understand that a sword

of sorrow, grief and suffering, resulting from the great sufferings of her Son, was meant by these words; for no tradition relates that Mary died by the sword, which after all has power over the body only and not over the soul. Holy Scripture speaks of this spiritual sword: *Their tongue is a sharp sword* (Ps. 56: 5). Though the Blessed Virgin Mary was fully convinced that her Son Jesus, the eternally Begotten of the Father, could avoid death, though about to accept it willingly, yet, being His Mother, she could not but suffer the most acute pain on seeing His crucifixion. The sword which, according to the prophet, pierced the soul of Mary, clearly indicates the terrible anguish suffered by this sorrowful mother in her own soul. Before the Redeemer appeared in this world, no one could recognise with certitude those Jews who, either received the grace of Jesus Christ, or refused to accept the grace that was offered them. But when the tidings of His birth were spread abroad, then the hidden thoughts of many hearts were revealed. King Herod, hearing this news, was troubled, and *all Jerusalem with him*; whereas the shepherds rejoiced when the angel said: *I bring you good tidings of great joy; for this day is born to you a Saviour* (Luke 2: 10, 11); and they returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen (verse 20). The splendour of the miracles and Divine doctrine of the Saviour attracted many to Him, and they listened to His words; whereas others called Him a deceiver, and despised Him. And when they saw Him hanging on the Cross, they even blasphemed Him, and esteemed Him worthy of that cruel punishment; whilst the former showed deep sympathy and grief on seeing the Author of life condemned to death. The Church of Jesus has until now felt this sword of suffering, and will be pierced by it till the end of the world; for, as a mark of faith and salvation, she will be continually contradicted. It is with grief and sorrow that the Church sees great multitudes persevering in infidelity and rushing on to perdition, though very many, hearing and obeying the word of God, will rise with Jesus Christ. Her sorrow increases when the thoughts of many hearts are revealed, and when she perceives in the field, in which she has been continually sowing the seed of the Gospel,

cockle growing up. Indeed, the knowledge that the cockle of sin and vice is eminently more fertile, that it takes deep root and shoots forth luxuriantly, choking much of the wheat of virtue and innocence, causes her tears to flow in abundance.

IV. Anna, the prophetess, who by her long and holy life was accounted worthy to see the Redeemer of Israel, and to give testimony to the truth that she perceived in her prophetic mind, is the type of the Church, who sees herself deprived of the visible presence of her Bridegroom and Lord, since He left this mortal life. The number of years mentioned by the Gospel as being the age of this widow, represents the time of the exile of the Church in a foreign land. She cannot, on account of this present life in the world, be united with her Lord and Master, Whose coming, like Anna the prophetess, she impatiently awaits at the entrance of the temple, for she trusts in His promise: *We will come to him, and make our abode with him* (John 14: 23). After the testimony given by Simeon to the Redeemer of the world, and given also about herself by a Virgin in the conjugal state, it seems quite natural, in order not to exclude any kind of conditions, that a widow, venerable both by her position and holy life, should appear in the person of Anna and testify to the coming of the Redeemer of Israel, and confirm this by her praises.

V. St. Luke speaks here of the return of Jesus and His parents to Galilee, after they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord. He does not mention the flight into Egypt, already recorded by St. Matthew, and which he did not think it necessary to repeat, to the interruption of his narrative. At all events, we know that St. Luke, like the other Evangelists, was enlightened by the Holy Ghost; and we know that, had the things he omitted not been committed to writing, the omission would have been supplied later on by the inspiration of God, so that the reader could place them in their proper position in the Gospel story. As to the words added by St. Luke that *the Child grew and waxed strong, full of wisdom, and the grace of God was in Him*, we remark that Jesus Christ, having taken a human nature, was subjected to all its weaknesses and infirmities, and could as man grow and wax

strong. But, considering Him only as the Word of God and God Himself, we know that He could not increase in wisdom. However, in all truth it may be said that He was full of wisdom and grace, since He was filled with grace as the Mediator between God and man, and from His birth was overflowing with grace, on account of the perfect union between God and man in one Divine Person. St. John confirms all this when, speaking of the Son of God made man, he calls Him *full of grace and truth* (John 1: 14), meaning by this expression the fulness of His Divinity, expressed by St. Luke under the name of wisdom.

of Jesus, without the help of the Holy Ghost) — how many, I ask, will there be found fainting on the way? How many will leave the right road, and walk in the paths of infidels? Ah, would to God that one only might suffer such misfortune, and that the greater part of Christians be not included in that number! But Jesus is not the cause of this perdition; for He gives the necessary and strengthening bread to all who follow Him, and is as generous to every single one, as to the five thousand and the seven thousand in the desert.

47. SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

GOSPEL: Matt. 7: 15-21. *At that time:* Jesus said to His disciples: Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them. Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of My Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

HOMILY BY ST. HILARY *Commentary on St. Matthew, Chapter 6*

I. WE ARE HERE WARNED BY THE AUTHOR OF ALL truth to value the worth of soft words and seeming meekness by the fruits brought forth in their works by those who show such things. He teaches us, in order to find out what a man is, to look not at his professions, but at his deeds, since there are many in whom sheep's clothing is but a mask hiding their wolfish ravening. *Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit.* Thus it is with men; evil men do not bring forth good fruits, and we are to know them hereby. Words alone do not win the kingdom of heaven; and those who say to Christ, *Lord, Lord*, cannot expect to enter into that kingdom. Indeed, what merit is there in these words, *Lord, Lord*? Would He not be Lord all the same, whether or

not we call Him so? Do we imagine that we have already attained perfection and holiness by calling the name of the Lord, since the true way of entering into the kingdom of God is to do the will of our Father who is in heaven? *Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in Thy name, cast out devils in Thy name, and done many miracles in Thy name?* (7: 22). Yet the Lord rebukes the deceit of false prophets, and the feigning of hypocrites, who take glory to themselves on account of the power of their words, their prophesying in doctrine, their casting out of devils and similar mighty works.

II. Those hypocrites flatter themselves that they will enter into the kingdom of heaven, as though their preaching to nations, and the power of the holy office they are endowed with, were the work of their own, and not the almighty working of God helping them. Meanwhile it is an undoubted truth that the constant reading of Scripture gives to the ministers of Christ the true knowledge of doctrine, and that their power of driving out devils is derived from the Divine power of the Name of Jesus. Therefore, if we wish to win the blessed eternity in heaven, we must do something of our own; we must be willing to do right, to turn away from sin, to obey with our whole heart the commandments laid on us from heaven, and thus to become the friends of God. It should be our duty to do the will of God rather than to boast of God's power in us; for God forgets and thrusts away such as are already by their wicked works estranged from His friendship.

III. And our Lord adds these words: *Everyone therefore that heareth these My words, and doth them, shall be likened to a wise man that build his house upon a rock.* The meaning of these words is intimately connected with the preceding discourse. For, after showing us the conceited and useless merit of the false prophets and their cunning hypocrisy, He places before our eyes a man animated by a perfect and truthful belief in God, thus making known to us the difference between this one and the false prophets. The believing man, spoken of by Jesus, is placed upon an immovable foundation. It is in vain that the most violent storms rage against him, for the strong Rock, upon which the building of the wise man is founded,

is no other but Jesus Christ Himself, Who by His invincible power preserves every building erected upon Him from the fury of the winds, from the violent showers of rain, and from the devastating inundations. By these torrents of rain, mentioned by our Lord, are meant the tempting attractions of lust, penetrating our soul by little and little, and rendering our faith weak and faint. After the first attack made against us by the love of lust, the raging storms of the passions take possession of our heart, and the violent winds storming from all sides — that is, the whole fury of the devils are ready to overthrow and even to destroy us. But the wise man, who built his house upon the strongest foundation, cannot be removed from his place; whereas the foolish man, who despised this precaution, and built his house upon the sand, cannot be sure of the solidity of his building; for the falling rain, and the floods, and the blowing winds will *beat upon that house, and it will fall, and great will be the fall thereof.*

IV. Our Redeemer, giving us the parable of the wise man building his house upon a rock, and of the foolish man building upon the sand, teaches us that true merits consist in the obeying His commandments, and in a strong and lively faith in all He has done and promised. And the Gospel adds these beautiful words: *And it came to pass when Jesus had fully ended these words, the people were in admiration at His doctrine; for He was teaching them as One having power, and not as their Scribes and Pharisees.*

and interiorly sorry for his sinful and scandalous actions, and let him be careful not to be thrown into the grave, where his unfortunate habit would become the stone closing his sepulchre.

VIII. However, I am perhaps speaking to one groaning under the burden of his sins, who has become a slave of the sins habitually committed; to one, perhaps, who is already feeling the terrors of the tomb, being buried in his grievous sins. Doubtless, such a poor sinner feels wretched and miserable. Yet the arm of the Redeemer is strong enough to take him out of the deepest abyss into which death has precipitated him. God the Almighty knows how to make His voice resound into the most hardened heart, to break the most indissoluble bonds, and to overcome all obstacles opposed to the salvation of sinners. The Lord of all mercy not only knows how to restore to life the most wicked and reprobate sinner, but He also gives to His ministers the power to forgive all sins: *Whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven* (Matt. 18: 18). Let such sinners do penance, and they will feel as well and pure as Lazarus, who, after his resurrection, had not a spot of corruption on his body, and came full of life out of the tomb where death had kept him for a time. Behold the useful lesson contained in this mystery. You who are in the happy state of sanctifying grace, persevere therein; but you, unhappy sinners, endeavour to shake off the heavy burden of sins by which you are now oppressed. Amen.

56. SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

GOSPEL: Luke 14: 1-11. *At that time:* When Jesus went into the house of one of the chief of the Pharisees on the Sabbath day to eat bread, they watched Him. And behold there was a certain man before Him that had the dropsy. And Jesus answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying: Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day? But they held their peace. But He, taking him, healed him, and sent him away. And answering them, He said: Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a pit, and will not immediately draw him out on the Sabbath day? And they could not answer Him to these things. And He spoke a parable also to them that were invited, marking how they chose the first seats at the table, saying to them: When thou art invited to a wedding, sit not down in the first place, lest perhaps one more honourable than thou be invited by him; and he that invited thee and him come and say to thee: Give this man place; and then thou begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when thou art invited, go, sit down in the lowest place, that when he who invited thee cometh, he may say to thee: Friend, go up higher. Then shalt thou have glory before them that sit at table with thee; because every one that exalteth himself, shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.

HOMILY BY ST. AMBROSE

On St. Luke 14, Bk. VII

I. THIS MAN, SICK OF THE DROPSY, WHOSE DISEASE—that is, the swelling of the body—was cured by our Lord, is a figure of a soul so heavy as not to be able to rise above the senses, nor to feel the impression and fire of the Holy Ghost. And our Lord continued giving an important lesson of humility, saying: *When*

thou art invited to a wedding, sit not down in the first place. However, He spoke so gently that His rebuke, far from irritating the guests, convinced them of the truth of His teaching. Indeed, there was so much wisdom in the words of Jesus that the reason was convinced, whilst self-love was overcome by His arguments. There we see how the host, by whom our Lord had been invited, was taught by Him to be kind to the poor. It was not without a special motive that the poor and weak were mentioned by our Lord, since they are to be preferred in our acts of hospitality. For is it not a movement of *self-interest* to show courtesy to those—the rich—from whom we expect to receive some thing?

II. The Son of God also fixes the reward of one that has fought generously, and this reward is the kingdom of heaven promised by God to those who make good use of the things of this world. But those, purchasing to themselves earthly possessions, cannot expect to possess that kingdom. We hear our Lord say: *Go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and follow Me* (Matt. xix. 21). It is evident that those, invited to the supper of the rich man, and making excuse, as he who had bought some yoke of oxen and wanted to try them, were shut out of the eternal kingdom. Eliseus did not act in that manner; *he killed the yoke of oxen, boiled the flesh with the plough, and gave to the people, and they ate* (3 Kings 19: 21). Neither can he win that kingdom, who married a wife, and therefore could not come, for *he that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife* (1 Cor. 7: 32, 33). This is not to be taken as blaming marriage, but only to say that virginity is the more honourable way, since *the unmarried woman and the virgin*—and the widow—*thinketh of the things of the Lord; that she may be holy both in body and in spirit* (ver. 34).

III. But in all fairness, having thus spoken about widows and unmarried women, let us again return to the married, and with them entertain the opinion held by so many, that there are only three classes of men excluded from the great supper mentioned in the Gospel, and that these three classes are Heathens, Jews, and Heretics. This is the reason why we are warned by the Apostle,

saying: *Walk not as also the Gentiles walk, in malice and uncleanness and covetousness, and so have no entry into the kingdom of Christ; for no unclean, or covetous person (which is a serving of idols), hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God* (Eph. 4: 17; 5).

IV. The Jews imposed upon themselves a heavy and useless yoke through the manifold ceremonies by which they are still oppressed. Yet the Prophet said: *Let us break their bonds asunder; and let us cast away their yoke from us* (Ps. 2: 3). As for us, we have accepted Jesus Christ, and bowed our heads under the light and gentle yoke prepared by His goodness. We may also say that the Jews were figured by the man who, having bought five yoke of oxen, excused himself; for the Books of Moses containing the Old Testament are five in number. Our Lord alluded, perhaps, to these five Books, when He said to the Samaritan woman: *Thou hast had five husbands* (John 4: 18).

V. As for heresy, by which the gates of heaven are shut to all its adherents, it tries, like a second Eve, to allure and deceive us by its attractions. For by it our faith is weakened, since faith cannot accommodate itself to our concupiscence. Thus we are dragged into the abyss; for the road to it seems easy and agreeable. The false glitter of error is often preferred to the real and unchangeable beauty of the truth. All those who were invited to the supper by the master of the house, but refused the invitation and made excuse, were justly shut out of the banquet, and this by their own fault. All men are invited by our Lord to the eternal happiness; but by their carelessness or their errors many are made unworthy of it.