

Cromacio de Aquileya

HOMILÍAS

SERMON 1

On the Passage in the Acts of the Apostles Where the Apostles Healed the Lame Man

1. The law and the prophets not only predicted the coming of our Lord and Savior in humility by their words but they showed it by mystical examples. After all, among the other mysteries of the truth to come, it is even said in the law that if a traveler making a journey finds a bird with her chicks, he could take the chicks but leave the bird [see Deut 22:6]. It seems that this was justly observed for a time even according to the letter, so that when the chicks were taken, the mother was left to be able again to bear other chicks. But in this kind of precept according to the allegorical meaning, a future mystery was instead being shown, which we plainly recognize as having been fulfilled in the coming of Christ.

2. For in that traveler of whom the law spoke, the Lord was signified because, in order to enter upon the journey of human life, he assumed a body from a virgin. This noble traveler then, when he had undertaken this journey of the world in the body of our flesh, and had found a bird with the chicks in the nest, that is, the synagogue with its children sitting in the nest of the law, he took the chicks and left the mother. For he separated the apostles from the synagogue, so that he might bring them from the nest of the law to the home of his church. This is why we read the statement in the Psalm: “For indeed the sparrow has found itself a home, and the turtle-dove a nest, where she may lay her chicks” [Ps 84:3]. The home refers to the church; the nest is the synagogue, since a nest is a temporary thing, just as the synagogue had grace for a time, as long as it also had chicks with it in the nest, that is, the prophets and apostles. But when they were removed from it by Christ and given to their own master, that is, to his church, the synagogue remained like an abandoned nest.

3. Now the reason we have said this is because, though the multitude of Jewish people was countless, when Christ came in the flesh, very few believed. That this very thing would happen, Isaiah also clearly showed when he said, “And though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant is saved” [Isa 10:22]. He was indicating the remnant of the apostles themselves, and the others who believed during the time of the apostles from the Jewish people. Your love has heard about them in today’s reading. For when saints Peter and John had demonstrated the manifest sign of divine power on that lame

man, it says, “On that day five thousand men believed” [Acts 4:4]. Through the prophet the Lord himself had predicted these miraculous signs, these five thousand men, when he said, “Behold I, and my children that God has given me. And they shall be [for] wonders in the house of Israel from the Lord Sabaoth on mount Zion” [Isa 8:18]. And this same prophet showed in what follows that these were the signs that would occur, when he said, “Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall hear, and the lame man will leap as a deer” [Isa 35:5–6]. We recognize that this was fulfilled in this very lame man, who had never walked from his mother’s womb [see Acts 3:2].

4. If we reflect, we can recognize in the lame man hidden mysteries as well that are shown forth in advance. For when this lame man was at the beautiful gate of the temple [see Acts 3:2], he looked up at Peter and John and received healing [see Acts 3:7]. For a long time before we came to the knowledge of Christ, we were truly lame as well, for we limped on the way of justice. But we limped not in our physical steps but in the gait of our internal mind. For the one who is estranged from the way of justice, from the way of truth, even if he has straight feet, is completely lame because he limps in mind and soul. For he enters upon the journey of faith and truth not with physical steps but with the steps of the internal mind. Hence doubtless we limped for a long time on the way of justice, when we did not know Christ the Lord, the true way of salvation and life [see John 14:6]. But after we came to the beautiful gate of the temple and looked at the apostles of Christ with faith, then the steps of our mind were made strong so that we no longer limped upon the way of iniquity, but with straight steps we walk down the road of justice. For we came, or rather, were brought by Christ to the beautiful gate of the temple, where lame people were accustomed to be healed. The beautiful gate of the temple is the gospel preaching, by which the temple of God, that is, the church, is adorned with spiritual beauty, in which those who are weak in mind and lame in spirit receive the healing of salvation. Finally, that beautiful gate of the temple received the lame man, but it returned him whole, just as the gospel preaching has received lame people and the weak who are brought to it, but it has restored them whole and healthy.

5. Do you want to know what kind of beautiful gate it is? Listen to David speaking in the psalm, as he says, “Open to me the gates of justice, and I will go into them, and give praise to the Lord” [Ps 118:19]. And he added, saying, “This is the gate of the Lord, the just shall enter through it” [Ps 118:20]. Many are the gates, he says, in the law and prophets; but these different gates lead to the one gate, that is, to the gospel preaching, which truly is the gate of Christ, because one arrives through the law and the prophets to the <gospel> preaching, which

for that reason is properly called “the gate of the Lord,” because through it there is an entrance for us to the kingdom of heaven. Listen to the patriarch Jacob pointing to this very thing in Genesis. For when Jacob saw the ladder fixed from the earth to the heaven, and God leaning upon it, he said, “This is the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven” [Gen 28:17; cf. 28:12–13]. For the gospel preaching is the gate of heaven, since through it there is an ascent for us to the kingdom of heaven. Our Lord and Savior first opened this gate for us by the key of his resurrection. For the reason he arose in his body, and with his body he ascended to heaven, was so that by <his own> ascent he might open the gate of heaven, which was indeed closed and bolted shut for everyone up to the time of the Lord’s resurrection.

6. Therefore the way is opened by Christ’s resurrection. Hence it is not without reason that the patriarch Jacob related that he saw a ladder in that place [see Gen 28:16] whose top reached to heaven, and the Lord was leaning upon it. The ladder fixed from earth to the heaven [see Gen 28:13 LXX] is the cross of Christ by which there is a place for us in heaven that truly reaches up to heaven. On this ladder many steps of virtues have been inserted by means of which the stages of our ascent to heaven consist: faith, justice, modesty, holiness, patience, piety, and the other goods of the virtues [see Gal 5:22–23]—these are the rungs of this ladder. If we faithfully ascend by means of them, doubtless we shall reach heaven. Now it is right for us to recognize that the ladder signifies the cross of Christ, since just as a ladder is held together by two beams, so too the cross of Christ is held together by the two testaments, containing between them the rungs of the heavenly precepts by which ascent is made to heaven.

7. But in the present reading, your love has heard how great was the love and unanimity of the believers during the time of the apostles. It says, “And there was one heart and one soul of the believers. No one called anything his own, but they held everything in common” [Acts 4:32]. This is what it means truly to believe in God; this is what it means to live faithfully in the sight of the Lord. For why should those for whom heavenly goods are undivided have held their earthly goods divided up? So when we see people in need [see 1 John 3:17], especially Christians, we should freely share as if it were in common [see Gal 6:10; 1 Tim 4:10], as a sharing with the saints and elect of God, of whom the divine scripture testifies and says <...> , so that we may be able to have a share in the heavenly kingdom.

SERMON 2

Here Begins the Reading from the Acts of the Apostles Where It Speaks of Simon the Magician

1. In the gospel our Savior says many things to instruct us in our faith. Among other things he says the following: “The kingdom of heaven is like a householder (*paterfamilias*) who sowed good seed in his field. But when the men slept, someone came and over sowed weeds and went away” [Matt 13:24–25], and so on. And so, here our Lord and Savior calls himself a householder. But by this term he shows the great affection of his pious devotion toward us, when he shows that he is not only lord but father (*patrem*) of his family (*familiae*). For by this name of householder (*patremfamiliae*), he is referring to himself. In the name Lord there is the emotion of fear; but in the name of father there is the feeling of love. The Lord clearly shows this very thing through the prophet when he says, “If I am Lord, where is my fear? If I am father, where is my honor?” [Mal 1:6]. He calls himself Lord in order to be feared; but father, in order to be loved.

2. This householder then sows good seed in us, that is, the word of faith and truth, which he pours into the furrows of our soul with the plow of his cross, so that when justice takes root within us, we may bear fruit worthy of faith. But on the other hand, the enemy over sows weeds, that is, the seed of faithlessness and iniquity. But it is clearly shown how the enemy can over sow seed of this sort. “When the men slept,” it says, that is when the enemy over sows the weeds, those whom he finds sleeping, that is, overcome by the sleep of infidelity. But he cannot pilfer from those who are awake in faith. After all, if Adam long ago, in whose heart the Lord first sowed good seed, had stayed awake in respect to the precepts of the Lord, that enemy would never have been able to <overcome> him. But when he found him asleep, that is, <overcome> with the slumber of negligence, at once he over sowed his weeds, so that instead of the fruit of life, he brought forth the fruit of death.

3. Now we have brought forth this comparison on account of the present reading because, when the Lord through his apostles was sowing the word of truth and faith everywhere, the devil, in opposition, over sows weeds upon the vessels that are worthy of him. Finally, your love has heard in the present reading how Simon the magician, after the word of God <was> sown in him, received the devil’s seed [see Acts 8:9–18]. Indeed, as the text of today’s reading has shown, through the preaching of Philip he believed and was baptized in the name of Christ [see Acts 8:4–13]; but at once, the devil made him a vessel of

destruction [see Rom 9:22]. For as you have heard, dearly beloved, when he saw the Holy Spirit being given to those who had been baptized through the laying on of the apostles' hands, it says, "He brought a lot of money and said, Give me this ability so that anyone I lay my hands on may receive the Holy Spirit. Then Peter said to him, Your money perish with you, for you thought you could obtain grace by means of money" [Acts 8:19–20].

4. For the apostles were not carrying the grace of God to sell it, men who were buying back the entire world by the blood of Christ. Nor was it allowed to the apostles to receive earthly money for the grace of Christ, by means of which grace they freely gave heavenly treasures to those who believed. To them it had been said in the gospel, "Freely you have received, freely give" [Matt 10:8]. For if those who seek worldly honors and offices become distinguished [...], how could the apostles sell the honor of heavenly grace, which they themselves had received freely? Therefore it is not undeservedly that he says to Simon, "May your money perish with you since you thought you could obtain the grace of God by means of money. You have no share or lot in this word" [Acts 8:20–21]. And although this same Simon had become [unworthy] of heavenly grace, and guilty of a most serious sin, saint Peter still showed him the way to be restored to salvation. For he went on to say, "Repent from this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord, in the hope that the recollection of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the bond of iniquity and the bitterness of gall" [Acts 8:22–23]. For indeed as far as it pertained to the holy apostle, who wanted no one to perish [see 2 Pet 3:9], he showed him the path to salvation. But that man was so blinded by the mindset of his faithlessness that he not only did not repent for such a terrible crime, but even committed many other sins later against the apostles and the church of Christ, as his actions show clearly.

5. As a type of this Simon we clearly recognize the raven of long ago that was let out from Noah's ark into the ruin [see Gen 8:7]. The former, to be sure, had been received into Noah's ark, that is, into the church of Christ, when he believed and was baptized [see Acts 8:13]. But since, <after> he was baptized, he was unwilling to be changed by the grace of Christ, as one who was unworthy, he was cast out to ruin. For this Noah's ark, that is, the church, is not able to keep people of this sort within it. In fact, this ark had received even Judas Iscariot into it; but because he did not deserve to be changed, or rather, because he remained like a raven in the blackness of his sins, he was cast out of the boat (*cymba*) of the apostles, as if from Noah's ark, and met with the deluge of eternal death.

Therefore let us ask the Lord Jesus that none of us be found to be a raven in

the Lord's church, and utterly perish when cast outside. For the raven is every unclean person, every profane person, every heretic, who does not deserve to be in the church of Christ. Surely, if any of us is still a raven in his mind, which I do not think to be the case, let him pray to the Lord, that he may be changed from a raven into a dove, that is, go from being unclean to clean, from profane to faithful, from unchaste to chaste, from heretic to catholic. For God can make a dove out of a raven, who turned water into wine [see John 2:1–11], and who, as it is written, raised up sons to Abraham from stones [see Matt 3:9]. For only by becoming a spiritual dove and in no other way can we remain in the church of Christ. In fact, long ago, the dove that was sent out from the ark immediately returned <to> the same ark [see Gen 8:10–11]. For the one who is a spiritual dove does not withdraw from the church of Christ.

6. Would you like to know a raven whom the Lord turned into a dove? Consider that thief who was crucified with the Lord [see Luke 23:39–43]. He was a raven in the blackness of his sins. But after he confessed Christ on the very cross [he was changed from a raven into a dove], that is, from unclean to clean, from a blasphemer to a confessor, from the devil's thief to a martyr of the church. Therefore, do you want to be a dove, O human? Be in the Lord's church without the gall of wickedness [see Acts 8:23]. Be without the bitterness of sin, and you will rightly be called the Lord's dove. For by nature a dove has no gall or bitterness. But if like a raven you abide in the uncleanness of the flesh and in the blackness of sins, even if you lie hidden within the church, you are outside of it. You may indeed seem to be within, according to humanity, but according to God, from whom nothing lies hidden, you are found to be outside. Therefore let us cast off all blackness of sin from our hearts, all uncleanness of the flesh, all bitterness of wickedness, so that we may truly deserve to be ever in Noah's ark, that is, in the church of Christ, and the following might be said of us that is written: "Who are these that fly like the clouds and come to me <as> doves with their chicks?" [Isa 60:8].

7. Finally, that eunuch too was found to be one of these doves of whom your love has heard in the present reading [see Acts 8:26–40]. For when he had come to Jerusalem <and> was on the return journey, he sat in his chariot reading the prophet Isaiah, and "the Spirit spoke to Philip and said, Go up and join yourself to that chariot" [Acts 8:29]. And he went up and stood there, and Philip said to him, "Do you think you understand what you are reading?" [Acts 8:30]. And he said to him, "How can I understand if no one explains these scriptures to me?" [Acts 8:31]. And when Philip sat down with him, he explained to him the prophetic Scripture that he was reading, showing and indicating the Lord Jesus

Christ. And when Philip explained it to him, at once that eunuch believed and said to Philip, “Behold, water; what is there to hinder me from being baptized?” [Acts 8:37]. Philip said to him, “If you believe, it is permitted. And he said, I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the two of them went down into the water and Philip baptized him” [Acts 8:37–38].

8. Therefore this eunuch was chosen as a dove; but Simon the magician is rejected as a raven, since the former believed with his whole heart and with complete faith, whereas the latter approached with a doubting mind that was completely full of treachery. And therefore the former was received, the latter cast out; the former approved, the latter condemned. Since then we have been called to the divine knowledge too, to the grace of Christ, we ought to believe with our whole heart and with complete faith, so that we may not be rejected with doubt-ridden and profane minds [see Rev 21:8], but may merit to be received with the saints and chosen ones of God into the future glory by Christ the Lord. Amen.

SERMON 3

Concerning the Centurion Cornelius and Concerning Simon Peter

1. Your love has heard how great was the pious devotion of Cornelius the centurion toward God. For although he was still a pagan he applied himself to fasting and prayers [see Acts 10:1–2]. For that reason it was not undeservedly that he merited to see an angel of the Lord in his home, who said to him, as <the present> reading reported, “Cornelius, your prayers have been heard, and your alms have ascended in remembrance before God” [Acts 10:4]. But I do not know whether any of us deserves to hear this from the angel, we who are devoted neither to fasting, prayers, nor almsgiving. Recently, a fast was publicly announced, but few fasted. People come to church and pass the time telling stories or conducting worldly business rather than saying prayers. Poor people complain about their lack and their need, but no one gives alms. And we are surprised if we endure various trials, though we have minds so hardened in every respect. Therefore let us correct our negligence, and let us return to the Lord with our whole heart. Let us devote ourselves to fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, so that we also may deserve to hear what was said to Cornelius by the angel: “Your prayers have been heard, and your alms have ascended in remembrance before God” [Acts 10:4].

2. But perhaps some say that they cannot fast because of their stomachs [see 1 Tim 5:23]. Is it because of your stomach that you don't give alms? Give alms, and you will make up for the fasting. Devote yourself to prayer, purify your mind, this will be the equivalent of your fasting. But if you do none of these things, how do you think that you will be without sin, or how do you believe that you will be commended by the Lord, when you yourself do not listen to the Lord's command? Therefore it is said to Cornelius by the angel, "Your prayers have been heard, and your alms have ascended in remembrance before God" [Acts 10:4]. If then we want our prayers to be heard by the Lord, we ought to commend them by good works and alms, just as saint Cornelius did, who deserved to be heard by the Lord. And actually saint Cornelius was still a pagan when he devoted himself to his prayers; for he had not yet believed in Christ. Truly this Cornelius is shown to be blessed in all things who fulfilled Christ's precepts even before he believed in Christ! For it was fitting that such a man as he was <the first> to believe from the Gentiles.

3. Yet already in the gospel the Lord had shown a type of this Cornelius to saint Peter when he says to him, "Go to the sea, and cast in a hook, and take the fish which comes up first, and when you open its mouth you will find a stater there" [see Matt 17:6]. We recognize that this was clearly fulfilled in this Cornelius. For on the hook of Peter he came up from the sea as the first fish; for he was the first to believe from the Gentiles at the preaching of Peter. For in the hook the preaching of the divine word is signified. Saint Peter is ordered to cast it among the people of the Gentiles as it were into the sea, from which this Cornelius happily was the first one caught. For as I have said, he was the first to believe from the Gentiles as Peter was catechizing. Finally, a stater was found in his mouth, before he was caught by Peter. For he was keeping the justice of God in the natural law even before he believed, and was serving God with fasting, prayers, and alms.

4. Well then, this saint Cornelius was serving God so faithfully even before he came to the knowledge of faith. Peter, it says, was in Joppa, staying with Simon the tanner [see Acts 10:5–6]. "And about the sixth hour, he went up to the higher parts to pray. And while he was praying, suddenly he began to be hungry" [Acts 10:9–10]. It says, "Fear came down upon him. And he saw a certain vessel descending from heaven, as it were a bright linen sheet tied at the four corners, wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts, reptiles, wild beasts, and birds of the sky" [Acts 10:10–12]. It says, "And there came a voice to him: Arise, Peter; kill and eat. And he said, By no means, Lord; for never has anything that is common and unclean entered my mouth. And the voice came to him saying,

That which God has cleansed, you shall not call common” [Acts 10:13–15]. It says, “This happened three times; and the vessel was taken back into heaven” [Acts 10:16]. It says, “And behold the men who were sent from Cornelius stood before Simon’s house asking if Peter was lodging there. But the Spirit said to Peter, Go down and go with these men, doubting nothing, for I have sent them” [see Acts 10:17–20]. Now the reason this revelation was shown by the Lord to Peter was because Christ was about to invite all the Gentiles to his grace, <and to keep> him [Peter] from regarding believing Gentiles as unclean and unworthy. For there were more Jews who, though they had the law, stood forth as transgressors, than there were diverse nations who had sinned without the law [see Rom 2:12–14]. For it was plainly not right that the coming of Christ should benefit the Jews alone with salvation, since the reason he willed to suffer, he who was Creator of the world and Lord of the universe, was to save the whole human race leading to life, since the death of Christ became the redemption of the entire world.

5. But now let us consider both the timing and mystery of this revelation. Not without reason is Peter related to have gone up on the roof to pray at the sixth hour [see Acts 10:9]. Was there nowhere in the house where saint Peter could pray? Or was he who kept constant fasts impatient for a meal, so that he grew hungry at the sixth hour of prayer? There is a mystical and spiritual meaning in actions of this sort. But let us look at the details. For the sake of prayer, saint Peter went up to the higher parts of the house. The higher parts, clearly, because by his faith he was seeking the things above [see Col 3:1]. He whose conversation was in heaven could not stay in the lower places, since the apostle says, “But our conversation is in heaven” [Phil 3:20]. Listen to the Lord showing this same thing in the gospel when he says, “And let him who is on the roof not come down to take anything from his house” [Matt 24:17]. He is on the roof whose life is situated high up, and who is far removed from earthly conversation. The Lord says to one like this then not to go down from the roof to the house; that is, do not forsake the higher life and go back to an earthly manner of life, that is, to the desires of the earthly house, to the lust of the flesh, to the desire of the world.

6. While Peter was in the higher places, at the sixth hour he began to be hungry [see Acts 10:10]. Obviously Peter, as the reading itself makes clear, was not hungry for earthly food (*cibum*), but for the food of human salvation. For the salvation of believers is the food (*esca*) of the saints [see John 4:31–38]. Finally, it was the sixth hour when he was hungry, and Peter obviously could not have been hungry at another time but at the sixth hour. For at the sixth hour, the

Lord was crucified [see Matt 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44; John 19:14]. By means of him the apostles began to hunger for human salvation. For Peter hungered not in order to set his thoughts on earthly food, but he was hungry to save the souls of those who believe in Christ. The arrangement of the reading itself makes clear that this is the case. For he “immediately sees a vessel being let down from heaven, like bright linen, tied at its four corners, in which were all kinds of four-footed creatures, reptiles, wild beasts <and birds>” [Acts 10:11–12]. Then it is said to him, “Arise, Peter, kill and eat” [Acts 10:13]. In the vessel that he saw let down from heaven, a figure of the church was shown, which in fact comes down from heaven, as John says in Revelation: “And I saw the new Jerusalem descending from heaven” [Rev 21:2]. The reason a vessel of this sort is being held together by its four corners is because the preaching of the gospel on which the church relies is fourfold. Its outward form is shown to be like a bright linen because the church of Christ is gleaming and bright, having the radiance of heavenly life and the whiteness of saving baptism. He reported that he saw within such a vessel different kinds of animals, namely four-footed creatures, wild beasts, serpents, and birds of the sky, [for] Christ’s church receives into itself people who believe from every race of men. For a short time ago we were four-footed creatures, since we lived in this world as four-footed creatures without any notion of our salvation, and we looked forward not to heaven but to the earth. We were wild beasts, since we seized the property of others and raged against the blood of the innocent like wild beasts, biting with evil and injurious teeth. And we were serpents, when we brought forth deceit and venom with our tongue. And we were birds, when we ranged in different directions with a fickle mind.

7. But what was said to Peter? “Rise, kill and eat” [Acts 10:14]. Therefore we cannot be allotted the food of salvation unless we die to our former life. Otherwise, it is folly and completely pointless to believe that the Lord commanded Peter to eat serpents and wild beasts. Or did Peter actually have an earthly sword with him at the time of prayer? [see Luke 22:38; John 18:10]. Clearly saint Peter had a sword with him, but it was a divine one, that is, the Holy Spirit [see Eph 6:17], with which we are commanded to kill. For this sword, that is, the Holy Spirit, will kill with its sharp edge the ferocity of evil within us, the desires of the flesh and of blood [see Gal 5:16–17; 1 Cor 15:50; Matt 16:17], but only if we deserve to be killed to the world by such a great sword, so that we may be able to live to God!

8. Finally, when Peter said, “May it not be, Lord, for never has a common or unclean thing entered my mouth” [Acts 10:14], a voice from heaven says to him,

“What God has cleansed, you should not call common” [Acts 10:15]. For we are cleansed from all uncleanness when we come to the church of Christ by faith through his grace, through his mercy. And he has related that this vessel was let down from heaven <three times> and then was taken back [see Acts 10:16]. For we cannot be cleansed or purified from sins except through the mystery of the Trinity. The grace of baptism is given in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit [see Matt 28:19–20], so that we may be made clean from every defilement of sin. Since therefore we recognize such great mercy toward us, that we who are unworthy have been called to his grace that is so great, we ought to live and behave devoutly and justly in his sight, so that at the advent of his glory we may obtain not the punishments, with the unclean and the impious [see Rev 21:27], but the promises of the heavenly kingdom and the remuneration of everlasting life, with his saints and elect [see Titus 2:12–13]. Amen.

SERMON 4

On the Merchants Expelled from the Temple

1. When our Lord and Savior entered into the temple of the Jews and saw the illicit business being carried out, namely the selling of sheep, oxen, and doves, and money changers sitting there, as your love has heard in today’s reading [see Matt 21:12–13; John 2:13–15], he made a whip out of cords and expelled them all, and he overturned the chairs of those selling, saying to them, “My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you have made it a house of merchandise” [Matt 21:13; John 2:16]. The Jews were unmindful of the divine religion and faith. They made the temple of God a house of merchandise, and that is why they were all expelled. But they were expelled with a whip made of cords. Solomon plainly shows what is signified in the whip made of cords when he says, “And a threefold rope is not easily broken” [Eccl 4:12]. Doubtless in the threefold rope the Trinity is shown, which cannot be broken apart, since faith in the Trinity is incorruptible. Frequently the heretics have attempted to corrupt this faith, as far as lies within them; but they have corrupted only themselves. But the faith in the Trinity necessarily should abide incorrupt. And on that account Solomon says well, “A threefold rope will not be corrupted” [Eccl 4:12].

2. All then who act contrary to law are expelled from the temple with a whip of this sort made of cords because all who conduct themselves illicitly are condemned by no other judgment than that of the Trinity. And this is why the

chairs of those selling doves are overturned, who seemed to be teaching the people while sitting on chairs, as if occupying the priestly rank. The chairs of the synagogue were overturned so that the chairs of the church would be sanctified in Christ. For the priestly office was taken away from the synagogue and given to the church. For the synagogue no longer deserved to possess the priestly office because it did not receive the chief priest himself, Christ the Lord. But let us see, or rather, beware lest any among us be found to be like this, who distributes sheep or oxen or doves in the Lord's temple. He sells sheep, who judges innocent one who pays coin. He sells oxen, who disperses the grace of God for an accepted price, though it is written, "Freely you have received, freely give" [Matt 10:8]. Whence even now money changers, namely those who reckon that God's work must be done for a wage, are shown to be overturned in the temple.

3. The church indeed is called a "house of merchandise," but of spiritual merchandise, where not earthly but heavenly money is lent on interest; it is not the interest of earthly coin that is acquired but interest of the heavenly kingdom. After all, we read the statement of the Lord in the gospel: "And why did you not give the money to the table of the money changers and I would have come and surely collected it back with interest" [Matt 25:27]. Daily therefore the money of the divine word, heavenly doctrine, is lent to us on interest in the Lord's church, and we do business with it well if we return it to the Lord with the profit of salvation and faith. In fact the apostles traded solely with this money, so that they gained the entire world for God.

4. Therefore when our Lord and Savior had expelled from the temple all those who were acting illicitly, the Jews said to him, as your love has heard, "What sign do you show that you do these things? Answering them he said, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will rebuild it. And they said to him, This temple was built over the course of forty six years, and you shall raise it up in three days?" [John 2:18–20]. And the evangelist added, "But he was speaking of the temple of his body" [John 2:21]. What unbelief, or rather, faithlessness of the Jews! They saw heavenly signs and divine miracles being done, and they demanded a sign from the Lord. Was it a small sign that a virgin gave birth

than that a new star was shown from heaven [see Luke 2:8–10; Matt 2:1–11]? But still the Lord points to the sign of his own resurrection when he says, “Destroy this temple of God and I will raise it in three days” [John 2:19; Matt 26:61]. But though the Lord had said this about the temple of his body, the Jews thought that the statement pertained to the stone temple. It is not surprising of course if the Jews understood this statement of the Lord of the stone temple, who had a stony heart at all times. But the Lord said this not <of> the stone temple but of the temple of his body. For the proper temple of God is the body of Christ in which the Lord of majesty himself deigns to reside. In fact that temple is said to have been built over forty six years, since according to the Greek letters the name of Adam tallies up to the number forty-six. That temple was destroyed at the passion: the Lord arose on the third day, since on the third day the victor over death arose in his body.

SERMON 5

Concerning the Words of the Lord: Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit

1. In order to give his disciples a heavenly blessing, the Lord went up on the mountain with them. For today’s reading from the gospel has related this. It says, “And Jesus went up on the mountain with his disciples, and stretching forth his hand over them, he said, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” [Matt 5:3], and so on. Not without reason did our Lord and Savior give his disciples a blessing on the mountain. Surely it was not on earth, but on the mountain; not in the lower places, but in the higher places. And so, if you too want to receive heavenly blessings from the Lord, go up on the mountain, that is, seek the life above [see Col 3:1], and justly and deservedly you will obtain the desired blessing. But if you are involved in earthly actions, in earthly conversation, you will not be able to receive a blessing from the Lord; and therefore it is not without reason that it is written, “For he is the God of the mountains and not of the valleys” [1 Kgs 20:28].

2. To be sure God is the God of every location and of every created thing, since he is the Creator and Maker of all things [see Col 1:16]. But this is a profound and spiritual statement of the prophet, that “he is the God of the mountains and not of the valleys” [1 Kgs 20:28]. For God deigns to be the God

of those who like mountains, that is, like all the saints, are raised toward the heights and toward things situated high up, by the faith of their merits. The patriarchs are mountains, the prophets are mountains, the apostles too are mountains, and the martyrs are mountains. Our God is shown to be the God of all these saints. This is why we read the Lord's statement: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." And he added, "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living" [Matt 22:32]. But scarcely does he deign to be the God of the valleys, that is, of sinners and unbelieving men, who like valleys are submerged in the lowest places. For the impious and sinners do not deserve that our God be called their God, the faith and knowledge of whom they either despise or do not acknowledge. By the power of his divinity he is the God of all creation, since he is the Creator of all; but by his worthy regard and grace, he is shown to be the God of those who keep his precepts and faith.

3. Finally, that mountain on which the Lord gave blessings to his disciples presented a type of the church, which is compared with a mountain because its manner of life is on high [see Phil 3:20], and as a great mountain it will press down upon the earth, that is, the earthly way of life, not with the burden of a stone but with the weight of holiness. Do you want to know that the mountain properly signifies the church? Listen to the divine Scripture that says, "Who will ascend the mountain of the Lord, or who will stand on his holy place?" [Ps 24:3]. Surely this would not have been said of any earthly mountain: "Who will ascend the mountain of the Lord?" For not only people but also wild beasts customarily climb up such earthly mountains. But he is properly speaking of the Lord's mountain, of the heavenly mountain, namely holy church, to whose faith and supernal life none but the blessed ascend. But one climbs this kind of mountain not by the exertion of the body but with the faith of the inner mind.

4. And so let us always remain on this mountain with lofty faith, with spiritual actions, in order that we may deserve to receive these gospel blessings from the Lord, we to whom it is said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for yours is the kingdom of heaven" [Matt 5:3; cf. Luke 6:20.], and so forth. They are "poor in spirit" because they are not puffed up with the devil's pride nor with any swelling of evil, but they maintain humility of spirit with faith. And certainly they are "poor in spirit" because they keep themselves away from worldly riches, from the desire of the world, from all earthly flesh. The Lord shows that these people are blessed in this manner when he says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for yours is the kingdom of heaven." In respect to the world those who are like this seem poor, but they are rich in God. They do not have earthly means, but they have heavenly blessing. They do not enjoy the riches of this world, but

they receive the wealth of the heavenly kingdom and the treasures of eternal immortality. Finally, the Lord shows [that] theirs is the kingdom of heaven when he says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for yours is the kingdom of God.” It is a blessed poverty that accumulates a gift as great as this! The first apostles boasted in this poverty, they who possessed the riches of heaven [see 2 Cor 6:10].

5. Therefore, if we are poor in this world, we should not grieve, since even the holy apostles were poor in this world. Do you want to go from being poor to becoming rich, or rather, to be rich in your very <poverty>? Be just, be devout, be godly, be merciful, and in God <you will have> great wealth, which no imperial treasury, no thief, not death itself is able to snatch from you. Therefore we have much wealth stored up in heaven, if we keep the commands of the Lord, if we remain faithful to Christ. These are eternal riches. Finally, listen to what the prophet Tobit says to his son: “We endure a poor man’s life, son, to be sure; but you have great wealth if you fear God” [Tob 4:23]. Therefore let us fear God with our whole heart, that we may deserve to have great wealth.

SERMON 6

On the Gospel according to Matthew, Where It Says, Your Eye Is the Lamp of Your Body, and so on

1. After much heavenly doctrine, whereby our Lord and Savior instructed his disciples, in today’s reading, as your love has heard, he says, “Your eye is the lamp of your body; if your eye is simple, your whole body will be clear. If your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of wickedness” [Matt 6:22–23]. The lamp of the body is understood as the sense of the mind and the faith of the heart. If this is bright and clear in us, doubtless it illumines our whole body. But the reason the lamp is recorded as a symbol of faith is because as a lamp illuminates the steps of those who walk at night, lest those walking either fall into a ditch or strike against any stumbling stones, so in the night of this world, the brightness of faith lights up the steps of our life, as the light of truth goes before us, lest we fall into the ditches of sins or strike against the stumbling stones of the devil. After all, Judas Iscariot, who did not have the lamp of faith in his heart [see Luke 22:53; John 13:30], at once fell into the pit of eternal death, so that he received the reward of death for the Lord of life.

2. And that is why he went on to say, “If your eye is evil, your whole body is darkened” [Matt 6:23]. An evil eye belongs to those whose mind is depraved, or

whose faith is perverted—who walk not in the light but in darkness. John says of them in his epistle, “He who hates his brother is in darkness, and he walks in darkness, since darkness has blinded his eyes, and he does not know where he is walking. But he who loves his brother remains in the light, as he himself is in the light” [1 John 2:10–11; see 1:7]. But we can also apply the meaning of eye of the body, which is more precious among all the members, to the principal leader (*rectorem*) of the church. If his faith is clear and his manner of life bright, doubtless he illumines the entire body of the church. But if he is a perverse teacher and heretic, clearly a doctor of that sort can cause the whole body to become darkened by the example of his life and faithlessness. For the light of truth and faith cannot shine forth in such people, where the darkness of error has established a night of faithlessness.

3. And fittingly the Lord added in the present reading, “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stick to the one and despise the other.” And he went on to say, “You cannot serve both God and Mammon” [Matt 6:24]. Here he shows two masters, God and the devil. But God is the true Lord; the devil is a false lord. The distance between true and false equals the distance between the Lord and the lord. The true Lord is the Creator of nature; the false one, the devil, is the changer of nature. The former is the author of salvation; the latter the author of perdition. The former leads humankind to heaven; the latter plunges humans into hell. The one draws humans into death; the other redeems them unto life.

4. And indeed God, although he is Lord of all, since all things were created by him, and he himself has dominion over all things, by the right of authority and by the power of his nature, nevertheless deigns to be Lord especially over those who faithfully serve the precepts of the Lord and God, and keep them; but the devil is understood as the lord only of those whom he has seduced away from their God and father, and subjected to the most wicked service of sin, and to whom he will dominate by a perverse justice through the domination of his own iniquity.

For this reason, then, the devil is called lord in a perverse sense, whence not without reason he is also called a partridge in the prophet. For this is written: “The partridge will cry out, and gather things which were not its own; but in the last days they shall leave him, and at his end he will be a fool” [Jer 17:11]. But we ought to know why the devil is called a partridge. This partridge, that is, the earthly bird, entices the chicks of other birds with an alluring voice, and boasts over the chicks of others, as if they were its own chicks. But when these same seduced chicks have recognized the voice of the true parent, at once they leave

the false parent and follow the true parent. So too we a short time ago had been seduced by the devil as by a false parent, by his alluring voice. But when we recognized the voice of the true parent, God, through the gospel preaching, then we leave the false parent, the devil, in order to follow the true and eternal parent, God.

5. There is another reason why the devil is called a partridge. When a partridge sees a man from afar, it covers itself with leaves in order not to be seen. So too the devil conceals the cunning of his malice, as it were with leaves, lest his deceit be understood so easily by man. And this is why the apostle said the following: “For we are not unaware of his wickedness” [2 Cor 2:11]. Therefore just as the devil is shown to be a false parent, so too is he a false master, since in both respects he is recognized as one who leads astray. But wretched is that soul that follows such a parent, or such a master. But the one who follows such a master is not worthy of having God as its true Lord. And that is why the Lord says in the gospel, “You cannot serve God and mammon” [Matt 6:24]. Therefore if we serve works of justice, if we obey the divine precepts, doubtless we have God as our Lord, whose will we serve. But if we are enslaved to works of injustice, luxury, greed, impurity, and fornication [see Gal 5:19–21], we subject ourselves to diabolical domination, and we make disagreeable the passion of Christ, who delivered us from the unjust lordship of the devil. But may the Lord keep us from transferring from Christ’s dominion to the devil’s dominion. For the reason the Son of God deemed it fitting to suffer and be crucified for us was to rescue us from the profane dominion of the devil. This is why in all things we ought to serve the author of life and of our salvation faithfully, so that we may be able to reach that dominion of the heavenly kingdom. Amen.

SERMON 7

Here Begins a Sermon for the Feast Day of Saints Felix and Fortunatus

Today is the [heavenly] birthday of the holy martyrs Felix and Fortunatus, who adorned our city by their glorious martyrdom....

SERMON 8

On the Lord’s Ascension

1. The solemnity of this day bears no small festive grace. For on this fortieth day after the resurrection, as your love has heard in today's reading, our Lord and Savior ascended with his body to heaven in the presence of his onlooking disciples [see Acts 1:9–10]. He was received into a cloud, with the eyes of his disciples gazing, as the present reading has reported, and thus he ascended to heaven. A cloud comes to obey Christ, not to help him, but to offer its obedience to Christ and to display the service due to its Lord and Creator. But when Christ ascended to heaven, he could not have been in need of help from a cloud, he who had created the very clouds along with the world. Thus he speaks through Solomon under the persona of Wisdom, saying, "When he prepared the heavens, I was there, and when he made the clouds firm above, I was joining things together before him" [Prov 8:27–30].

2. Indeed the Son of God now ascends on a cloud into heaven, while the apostles stand in awe and amazement, as today's reading reported, but now is not the first time he ascended. For from the beginning of the world he himself had both come down often from heaven and ascended. But now is the first time he ascends to heaven with a body. And that is what the apostles marveled at, that Christ ascended to heaven with flesh, from where he had descended without flesh. But what is surprising if the apostles wonder at this, since the heavenly powers also marveled at this? For Isaiah makes this clear when he says the following under the persona of the heavenly citizens: "Who is this who comes out of Edom? The redness of his clothing [is] from Bosor. Beautiful [is] his robe, beautiful as a pool filled from a winepress" [Isa 63:1–2]. *Edom* means "earth," but *Bosor* means "flesh." This marvel then was seen by angels, that he who was born on earth from a virgin according to the flesh, this one who was seen to have suffered and been crucified in the flesh, ascended into heaven with the same flesh. Finally, mention is even made of the winepress, in order clearly to show the passion of the Lord's cross. For by the passion of the cross Christ was pressed as it were on the wood of a winepress, in order that he might shed his sacred blood for us. This is why there is talk of the "redness of his clothing from Bosor"; this is why his robe is shown to be beautiful. The "redness of his clothing" pertains to the shedding of his blood; but the outward beauty of his robe refers to the glory of his resurrection. For he arose glorious from the dead in the same flesh in which he shed his glorious blood for us. This is what is also said by the church about Christ in the Song of Songs: "My brother is resplendent and ruddy" [Song 5:10]. There is talk of his being "ruddy" because of the passion of the cross; "resplendent" is said because of the glory of his resurrection; because he who was seen as one rejected and humble in the passion

appeared resplendent and glorious in the resurrection. Jeremiah likewise showed this mystery of his divinity and flesh in Christ when he says, “The breasts will fail [to flow] from a rock, or snow from Libanus” [Jer 18:14]. Thus in the “breast of the rock” he showed his incarnation from a virgin, but in the “snow of Libanus” he showed the splendor of his divine brightness. Finally, when he was transfigured on the mountain, as we read in the gospel, his clothing became like snow, since it was resplendent with the glory of his brightness [see Matt 17:2; Mark 9:3; Luke 9:29]. Not without reason, however, is it said of Christ higher up, “The redness of his clothing [is] from Bosor.” Not cloth, but clothing. For Christ is the prince of the martyrs; and that is why it is said of him, “The redness of his clothing [is] from Bosor,” since he is surrounded by a crown of the martyrs like bright red clothing.

3. But let us return to the sequence. For the powers on high also marveled at the ascension of Christ to the heavens, when they said, “Who is this who comes from Edom? The redness of his clothing is from Bosor. Beautiful is his robe, beautiful as a pool full of the winepress.” For the powers on high saw a new thing: the Son of God ascending to heaven with flesh. And therefore they said, “Who is this who comes from Edom?” It was a marvel to the angels, a marvel to the powers on high, that that flesh of which it was said to Adam, “You are earth and to the earth you will go” [Gen 3:19], was no longer on earth but flesh was ascending to heaven. What profit did the devil’s own malice bring him? Our earthly flesh (which he did not want to reign in paradise) reigns in heaven. For the Lord’s ascension into heaven was indeed the wonder and exultation of angels, and the joy of the whole world; but it was the confounding of the devil and his true damnation. In the psalm, David also shows this admiration of the angels for the Lord’s ascension to heaven, when he speaks in wonder in this way under the persona of angels and says, “Lift up your gates, O princes, and be lifted up, O eternal gates, and the Lord the king of glory shall enter in, strong and mighty in battle” [Ps 24:7–8]. For the powers on high were in awe, the angels marveled who were present at the Lord’s resurrection, and therefore they cried out to one another to open the gate of heaven to Christ, the victor who was returning to heaven after the battle of his passion. For he had conquered the devil, he had conquered death, he had destroyed sin, he had waged war against legions of demons, and he had arisen victorious from death.

4. Christ therefore ascended with his body to heaven after the triumph of the cross, after the victory of his passion. Due service was rendered by angels. For some went before, others followed, when Christ ascended with his body to heaven. They exhibited fitting obedience to such a great king and such a great

victor. For if everyone meets a human king after a victory with praises, how much more would all the angels and powers on high have been obligated to meet Christ the eternal king, who ascended to heaven as a victor with his body, having triumphed over the devil and defeated death. And clearly it is not surprising if both angels and powers on high met Christ while he was returning to heaven, since even the Father himself is shown to have met him, just as the present psalm itself shows when it is said under the persona of the Son to the Father, “You have held my right hand, in your will you have guided me, and you have received me with glory” [Ps 73:23–24]. For with glory the Father received the Son returning to heaven, whom he placed at his right hand, as it says in another psalm: “The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand” [Ps 110:1]. For how could the Father’s love be greater, or the glory of the Son more powerful, than to sit at the right hand of the Father? And therefore in the present psalm he well added from the persona of the Son, “For what remains in heaven, and what have I willed upon the earth besides you?” [Ps 73:25]. He willed to suffer on earth, and therefore he accepted the suffering of death for the sake of the salvation of the human race. He willed to ascend to heaven with his body. He sits at the right hand of the Father. Therefore there is one throne of majesty of the Father and of the Son, since there is no difference in honor between the Father and Son [see John 5:23], no distinction in dignity, but only the godly devotion of love.

Since therefore on this day the flesh of our nature ascended to heaven in the body of Christ, we ought to celebrate justly and deservedly the solemnity of this day, and so conduct ourselves in the present life that we deserve to become sharers of the glory of the Lord’s body in the future life, in the heavenly kingdom [see Luke 20:35; Phil 3:21].

SERMON 9

Here Begins [the Sermon] on the Thirteenth Psalm, on Fools and the Unwise

1. In this psalm the prophet complains and says, “The fool said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt and have become abominable in their iniquities” [Ps 14:1]. We have found that there have been many fools in times past, people who either did not believe in God’s existence or said that they did not. But the prophet’s complaint applies especially to the folly and unbelief of the Jewish people. After all the very number of the thirteenth psalm clearly shows to us the persona of the same Jewish people; for Ishmael, son of Abraham, who prefigured the Jewish people in all ways [see Gal 4:21–31], when

he was thirteen years old received the sign of circumcision [see Gen 17:25]. Just as the persona of the people of the church is declared in the tenth psalm, because of the Decalogue of the law, since it fulfills the precepts of the law, so in this thirteenth psalm, a symbol of the Jewish people is shown, since Ishmael, as we said, received the sign of circumcision when he was thirteen years old.

Finally, since it is said in the tenth psalm, from the persona of the people of the church, “I trust in the Lord; how do you say to my soul, Move to the mountain like a sparrow” [Ps 11:1], in the sparrow the transgressor and apostate is signified, who has forsaken the house of God, the church, and moves to the mountains, that is, transfers to the worship of idols. This is just what the Jewish people did for a long time, who forsook God’s temple that was in Jerusalem and sacrificed on the mountains, as the prophetic Scriptures make clear. But the people of the church who trust in the Lord make clear that they are unable to move to the mountains like that for any reason, since they say, “I trust in the Lord, how do you say to my soul, Move to the mountain like a sparrow.” Moreover, for us there are the witnesses of so many martyrs who—during the times of persecution when they were compelled to move to mountains of this sort, that is, to the worship of idols—migrated more easily from their bodies than from their faith in Christ; they were more ready to move out of the world than from the church of God. For not even death itself can move martyrs from the church of Christ; or rather, the very reason they accept death on Christ’s behalf is so that they may remain forever in the church of Christ. For the death of martyrs is the beautiful adornment of the church, and the crown of virtue.

2. These words of the prophet, then, concern the people of the church. But in today’s reading your love has heard what he says about the Jewish people. “The fool said in his heart, There is no God” [Ps 14:1]. Let us see how this is so. As soon as the same Jewish people <came forth> from Egypt, they did not believe in the Lord in their hearts. And while Moses was delayed on the mountain, they made a calf for themselves that they worshiped, saying, “These <are> your gods, O Israel, which led you forth from the land of Egypt” [Exod 32:4]. Surely if they believed in God with their heart, after such great veneration of God, they never would have knelt down before things made by the hands of men. The Jewish people therefore is shown to be foolish and unwise by all things, while they abandon the living and true God and seek the gods of the nations; while they despise the heavenly manna and long for cucumbers, melons, and Egyptian meats [see Num 11:5]; while they make more of slavery in Egypt than the freedom of faith; more of the prodigies of demons than of divine miracles.

3. But the same Jewish people betrayed their folly in this especially when they

saw the wisdom of God, Christ [see 1 Cor 1:24], coming in the flesh [see 1 John 4:2; 2 John 7] <and> refused to recognize him; when they held in contempt his divine powers and unprecedented miracles. The blind were enlightened, the deaf heard, the lame were healed, paralytics were cured, lepers were cleansed, the dead were raised [see Matt 11:5; Luke 7:22], and the same Jewish people were in such great folly that they were not moved to faith in Christ even by these miracles, and not only were they <not> moved, but beyond that they rose up to condemn the Lord and Savior. Whence not undeservedly even in the sequence of this psalm <...> for he says this: “Their throat is an open grave; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips” [Ps 5:9; 140:3]. If we reflect, we observe why it is said that their throat is an open grave. A grave contains within it nothing but corpses of the dead. The Jews then are rightly compared to graves because just as a grave contains nothing but corpses of the dead within it, so too <the Jews> <...> dead works of the flesh and spirit [see Heb 6:1; 9:14], they have made themselves a grave of their own life, containing within themselves the defilement and filth of sins. Do you want to understand plainly that the Jews are called graves? Listen to the Lord speaking in the gospel to the scribes and Pharisees: “Woe to you, for you are like whited sepulchres, which indeed appear to people beautiful on the outside, but within they are full of dead men’s corpses and all filth. So too do you appear to people to be just, but within you are filled with greed and iniquity” [Matt 23:27].

4. And so it is manifest according to the Lord’s testimony that for these reasons the Jews are called foolish of heart and an open grave. But we ought to consider the following, that not only is it said “throat,” but “their throat is an open grave.” Surely we note that this phrase was not spoken without a reason. For an “open grave” is spoken of a man who is awaiting his death there. The throat of the Jews then is rightly called an open grave because they too open their mouth to receive the death of the Savior, saying to Pilate, “Crucify, crucify” [Luke 23:21; John 19:6]. Hence it is not without reason that the prophetic words have testified in the present psalm that they [are] likewise serpents: “with their tongues they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips.” Hence it is that John accuses them of such impiety in the gospel when he says, “Serpents, brood of vipers, who showed you how to flee from the coming wrath?” [Matt 3:7; cf. Matt 23:33]. They are not called serpents in a general way, but specifically “brood of vipers.” For among serpents, the viper is the only species that is not born from an egg, but it bursts forth so to speak from its mother’s womb. But when it is born, it immediately kills its own mother. And so, with this <designation> the Jews are now called progeny of vipers because they

destroyed their own mother, the synagogue, by the merit of their own impiety. Why do I speak of their mother? They have not even spared their own children, since they said, “His blood be upon us and our children” [Matt 27:25].

5. Since therefore the Jewish people was destined to commit such a great sacrilege, not without cause does the prophet cry out at the end of the psalm and say, “Who will bring the salvation of Israel out of Zion? The Lord, when he turns back the captivity of his people” [Ps 14:7]. In this he was clearly praying for the coming of our Lord and Savior. He knew that in no other way could the human race be delivered from the devil’s captivity, except through the incarnation of Christ; and therefore he says, “Who will bring the salvation of Israel out of Zion?” For that one who deigned to be born of a virgin for the sake of the salvation of the human race not only brought salvation; for he delivered our captivity from the hand of the devil, having cast down the enemy and conquered death, so that he made us sons of God and coheirs of his glory.

6. And this is why the prophet added something at the end of the psalm not without cause and said, “Let Jacob be glad and let Israel exult” [Ps 14:7]. Surely he does not mean that carnal Jacob or Israel who rose up against its own Lord and Savior rebellious and impious, but spiritual Jacob, that is, the people of the church, which we are. For Jacob the patriarch acquired both names long ago by the merit of his faith. For long ago, Jacob the patriarch, who supplanted his brother when coming forth from his mother’s womb, was called Jacob. But later on he was called Israel, since he received the rights of firstborn and the blessings [see Gen 25:26; 25:29–34; 27:1–41]. For reasons that are clear, we recognize that each name fits us. For when we first come to believe, and are born from the womb of our mother the church, we become a Jacob, that is, those who supplant. For we supplant by our faith the faithlessness of our older brother, that is, of the Jews, and thus from being the younger we are made the older. And so, after this if we shall believe, we receive the brother’s rights of firstborn, since we believe in the firstborn Son of God in whom the Jewish people was unwilling to believe; and so, later on we are called Israel, that is, those seeing God with the mind, because with the eyes of faith we gaze upon the only begotten God [see John 1:18], who was born for our salvation. To whom be the honor and glory and power forever and ever. Amen [see 1 Pet 4:11].

SERMON 10

Here Begins [the Sermon] on the Gospel of Matthew Where It Speaks of the

King Who Made a Marriage Feast for His Son

1. With many different parables our Lord and Savior convicted the Pharisees and the leaders of the Jews. Higher up he set forth the parable of the householder who rented out his vineyard to farmers [Matt 21:33–44]. But in today's reading it concerns a king who made a marriage feast for his son, as your love has heard. "And he sent his servants, to call them that were invited to the marriage. But they refused to come; but went away, some to their farm, others to their merchandise. But others laid hands on his servants, and having treated them contumeliously, put them to death" [Matt 22:3, 5–6].

2. In the present parable too, the king who made the marriage feast for his son is understood as signifying God the Father, who for the sake of human salvation celebrated the spiritual marriage feast of his only begotten Son. And how should this marriage feast be understood if not as when Christ the bridegroom joined the church to himself as his bride through the Holy Spirit? This marriage is spotless and inviolable because it consists not in fleshly love, but spiritual grace. After all the church is shown to be a married virgin when Paul says, "For I appointed you to one husband, to offer you as a chaste virgin to Christ" [2 Cor 11:2]. According to the worldly model, a married girl cannot be called a virgin. According to the heavenly mystery, the church is shown to be married in such a way that she is a virgin. She is called married because through the Holy Spirit she is united with Christ; a virgin, because she remains unwedded and incorrupt in respect to sin. The author of this marriage is God the Father. The Holy Spirit is the witness. The attendants are angels. The invitation bearers are the apostles. And if you are looking for the spiritual pomp of this marriage, you will find it: it is the heavenly chamber of which it is written, "And he comes forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber" [Ps 19:5]. The choir of holy virgins occupies the first place in this marriage, of whom we read in the Scripture, "Virgins will be brought to the king behind her" [Ps 45:14]. <This> marriage has its harp, it has its musical instruments and cymbals. It is the harp of the law, the instrument of the prophets, <...> of which we read in Scripture, "Praise him with strings and instrument; praise him with fine-sounding cymbals" [Ps 150:4–5].

3. And now let us look at the parable itself. The Father first invited the Jewish people to this marriage of his Son. For he sent just men to them, he sent prophets. But it says, "They refused to come" [Matt 22:3]. Again he sent other servants, more than before, namely the apostles and gospel preachers, saying to them, "Go, tell those who are invited, Behold, I have prepared my luncheon. The bulls and fatted beasts have been slaughtered. Come to the marriage" [Matt 22:9]. For in the luncheon <the mystery> of the Lord's passion is shown, in

which <Christ> is the true food of life and meal of eternal salvation. For he is the living bread who comes down from heaven and gives life to this world [see John 6:33]. It is good that mention of the luncheon has been made; not of a supper, but of a luncheon (for a luncheon is normally held at the sixth hour) since it was the sixth hour when Christ was crucified for the salvation of the human race [see Matt 27:45], in order to show forth to us the heavenly meal and spiritual feast of his passion. He indicates just men and the prophets in the bulls that were slaughtered because of his Son's marriage. They were slaughtered by the Jews, since they predicted that the Son of God would come and suffer in the flesh. The just and the prophets are rightly called bulls because they brandished the horns of justice against the iniquity of the Jewish people. But the fatted beasts that were slaughtered point to those infants in Bethlehem who were slaughtered by Herod because they merited to die for the sake of Christ's name [see Matt 2:16].

4. Since, then, the Jewish people refused to come to such a great marriage feast, that king sent his own servants to the exits of the roads, saying, "Go and invite whomever you find to the wedding. They went out and gathered whomever they found, and the wedding feast was filled with guests" [Matt 22:9–10]. Therefore, because the Jews refused to come to this marriage feast, all the Gentiles were invited, from which we are, who come to the grace of Christ. For when the Jewish people excused themselves, such great preparation for the marriage feast could not perish. On that account we ought to give thanks for his mercy, that he invited us to such a great marriage feast as those who were unworthy. But we ought to be careful or afraid of this, that when the king enters and begins to look over the guests who are reclining there at the marriage feast, he may say to one of us what has been read in today's reading: "Friend, how have you come without a wedding garment?" [Matt 22:12]. And he commanded him to be removed by his hands and feet [see Matt 22:13]. The wedding garment is the grace of saving baptism, which shines not with the gleam of wool but with the splendor of faith. <...> for we obtain a snow-white garment from Christ, which we receive by the grace of baptism, since the apostle says, "You who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" [Gal 3:27]. That man does not have a wedding robe of this sort, then, who either has not received the grace of baptism, or loses what he has received. When such a one is found, he is expelled from the wedding feast and is cast into the outer darkness [see Matt 22:13]. Therefore in every way we ought to preserve the wedding garment we have received through the grace of baptism, through the faith of Christ, whole and intact, so that we may be deemed worthy of the spiritual wedding feast in the church, and in the

future may deserve to take part in the heavenly kingdom, with the saints and elect of God. Amen.

SERMON 11

On the Woman Who Anointed the Lord's Feet

1. Today's gospel reading reported that when the Lord was reclining at a feast with Lazarus, whom he raised from the dead, "Mary," the sister of Lazarus and Martha, "took a pound of pure ointment and anointed the feet of Jesus, and she wiped them with her hair and the whole house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment" [John 12:3]. As we read in many passages in the gospel, this saint Mary pleased Christ by her great personal faith. Higher up when she was weeping for her dead brother, she even made the Lord weep [see John 11:33–35]; for she moved the author of piety to piety. And even though the Lord was about to raise Lazarus from death, nevertheless he wept as Mary wept, to show both his own piety and Mary's worthiness. But that the Lord wept for Lazarus shows his godliness; that he raised him from the dead shows his power. In the Lord's tears is shown a sign of the flesh he assumed; but in his raising of Lazarus is declared the power of his divinity. Higher up, then, Mary drew forth tears of piety from the Lord; but here she shows her emotion and devotion to the Lord. For she took a pound of pure ointment and anointed the Lord's feet and wiped them with her hair. Behold the religious devotion and faith of this holy woman. Others were reclining with the Lord; she anointed the Lord's feet. Others were exchanging conversation and words with the Lord; she with her silent faith wiped his feet with her hair. They seemed to be in the place of honor; she in that of obedient service. But Mary's obedience to Christ surpassed the honor of the reclining guests.

2. Finally, your love has heard in today's reading what the Lord said of her: "Truly I say to you, that wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, even what she has done will be told in her memory" [Matt 26:13]. What then was the obedient service of this holy woman that is preached in the whole world and is preached daily? Consider the humility of this saintly woman. She did not immediately anoint the Lord's head, but his feet, though it is related that she anointed the Lord's head later on. Thus she anointed his feet first, and then his head. But she began with his feet, in order to become worthy of reaching up to his head. For as it is written, "He who humbles himself will be exalted, and he who exalts himself shall be humbled" [Matt 23:12]. And so, she humbled herself

in order to be exalted. Finally, she wiped the Lord's anointed feet not with a towel but with her hair, to exhibit a greater service to the Lord. But in the fact that the woman wiped rather the Lord's feet with her hair, she sanctified her own head by his feet. For she sanctified the whole in herself of whatever was able to touch the body of Christ, who is the font of sanctity. For she rendered greater service in order to merit greater grace; just as one who is thirsty draws from a fountain's water that flows from on high, so this saintly woman took from the fount of sanctity the grace of delightfulness, in order to quench the thirst of her faith.

3. But according to the allegorical and mystical reckoning, this woman has prefigured the church, which truly offered to Christ the complete devotion of its faith. And so she took a pound of precious ointment. In a pound there are twelve ounces. The church then has a measure of this precious ointment of this sort, which has accepted the teaching of the twelve apostles as a precious ointment. For what is more precious than apostolic doctrine that contains the faith of Christ and the glory of the heavenly kingdom? Finally, with the fragrance of this ointment the whole house is reported to be filled, since the whole world is filled with apostolic doctrine. For as it is written, "Their sound has gone forth into the entire earth, and their words to the ends of the world" [Ps 19:4]. But rightly the precious ointment contains within it different kinds of aromatic spices that give it its smell, since the apostolic doctrine also contains diverse spiritual graces by means of which it displays the fragrance of its odor. It is of course not surprising if the precious ointment signifies apostolic doctrine, since we read that the name of our Lord and Savior is also designated by a term of this sort. For thus we read the saying about him from Solomon under the persona of the church, which says, "Your name is ointment emptied out" [Song 1:2]. But not without reason is the name of the Lord called "ointment emptied out." For ointment, as your love knows, as long as it is contained within the vessel, retains the virtue of its odor within itself. But when it begins to be diffused and "emptied out," then the fragrance of its odor spreads far and wide. So our Lord and Savior, when he was reigning with the Father in heaven, was ignored by the world; he was not known by the age. But when for the sake of our salvation he consented to "empty himself out" [see Phil 2:7] so that he came down from heaven and took a human body, at that time he diffused the sweetness and fragrance of his name into the whole world. This is the ointment of which the prophet speaks in the psalm: "As ointment on the head that comes down to the beard, to the beard of that Aaron, which comes down to the fringe of his garment" [Ps 133:2]. This ointment then comes down from the head to the beard of Aaron and from there

to the fringe of his garment, that is, to the entire body of the church.

4. But let us return to the subject. In that pound of ointment, then, that was pure or precious, the apostolic doctrine was shown that the church received. For the church had no other way of coming to Christ than by apostolic doctrine. But see the mystery of faith that is shown in advance in that woman. She did not immediately anoint the Lord's head, but his feet. In the feet of Christ is shown the mystery of his incarnation whereby at the end of time he consented to be born from a virgin. But in the head is shown the glory of his divinity in which before all time he proceeded from the Father. Therefore the church first comes to the Lord's feet, and then to the head, since it never would have been able to recognize the glory of his divinity, which is from the Father, unless it had learned of Christ's incarnation from a virgin. And therefore we read the Scripture about the lamb that was offered in the law as a mystery of Christ: "You shall eat his head together with his feet" [Exod 12:9], that is, we should believe both concerning Christ, that he is God and man. God from the Father, man from the virgin. For in the head, as we said, his divinity is signified, which is from the Father; but in the feet is signified his incarnation, which is from the virgin. In no other way can we be saved except by believing both of Christ. Whence some heretics, such as Photinus, who confess only that Christ is a man, denying his divinity, hold on to his feet to be sure, but they do not have his head, since they have lost the head of faith. But we rightly hold fast to both in Christ, since we confess both. We hold the feet, since we believe in his incarnation from a virgin. We also hold on to the head, since we confess his divinity from the Father.

5. Now in the hair with which the woman wiped the feet of the Lord is shown the people of the church, since they venerate the incarnation of Christ and apostolic doctrine. But these are the hairs of which we read that it is said to the church in the Song of Songs, "Your hair is as flocks of goats that have appeared from Gilead" [Song 6:4]. But rightly are the people of the church signified by hair, since just as hair is a great adornment for women, so the believing people adorn the church of Christ. But we can recognize likewise in the hair the soul's virtues being signified; but in the precious ointment, the works of mercy. If then there be a work of mercy and piety in us, it is as if we are anointing the Lord's feet with precious ointment. Thus when we give alms to the poor, we anoint the Lord's feet, who said, "When you did it to one of my least ones, you did it to me" [Matt 25:40]. If the virtues of the soul are also in us, it is just as if we are wiping the Lord's feet with our hair. For Christ is refreshed and renewed in every virtue of our soul, in every pursuit of our faith, in every work of justice, mercy, and piety, since he himself is the author and founder of every good

work.

SERMON 12

On the Epistle to the Romans

1. As your love has heard, in the epistle that he wrote to the Romans the blessed apostle Paul discusses and demonstrates that the Son of God became incarnate from a virgin not only for the sake of the Jews, but also for the sake of the Gentiles [see Rom 1:3; 3:21–31; 15:7–12]. <The law> had predicted this, the prophets had foretold it too. For it would not have been right for the Son of God to descend from heaven, he who created all nations, for the sake of saving only one nation. To be sure, it was first offered to the Jews due to the merit of the patriarchs [see Rom 15:8] from whose race they descended. But because they repudiated the gift of such a great grace when it was offered to them, this salvation was given to various races and nations, as the apostle Paul says to the Jews: “It was necessary first to announce the word of God to you, but because you have judged yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold we are turning to the Gentiles” [Acts 13:46].

2. Therefore the advent of Christ became the salvation of all nations, and the redemption of the whole human race. For it was the Creator who redeemed us. He who made us saved us. After all, it is not without a reason that are we said to have been redeemed by Christ rather than bought, since the apostle says of him, “Who redeemed us by his own blood” [see Rom 3:24; 5:9; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14]. He did not say “bought,” but “redeemed,” because what is redeemed is one’s own, but what is bought belongs to someone else. For instance: If someone purchases a field or a slave, which he did not have before, he is said to buy it. But if he purchases one whom he had and lost, he is not said to buy but to redeem, since he is redeeming his own, and he is redeeming one whom he had possessed. This is why Romans who are set free from their captivity among the barbarians upon the payment of a price are said to be “redeemed” [see Rom 3:24], not “bought.”

3. Therefore because humanity too was the work of Christ—for at the beginning of the world humanity was fashioned by him according to the will of the Father—humanity is rightly shown to be redeemed by Christ rather than bought, since he redeemed those who had been his own, and whom he himself had created. For long ago human beings had encountered the dominion of the

devil as a barbarian captivity, with the result that they withdrew from their original Lord and were captured by the enemy's deceit. But the reason we were redeemed by the blood of Christ, the reason we were liberated from the devil's captivity, was so that we might return to our original Lord. We should no longer withdraw from him, lest we again encounter the devil's captivity and by no means deserve to be liberated again [see Heb 6:6]. For the price was not small that the Son of God consented to offer for our redemption, namely his own sacred blood. If we make light of the grace of such a great redemption, we are deceiving ourselves. For the Son of God is not still to be crucified for us, that we might await another redemption. This then is the reason the apostle exhorts us by saying in today's reading that since we have the grace of such a great redemption before our eyes, we should faithfully obey the author of our redemption and salvation.

4. Now let us consider what the same apostle set forth with a profound spiritual meaning in the previous section, when he says, "There is one person who believes he can eat all things. But he who is weak eats vegetables" [Rom 14:2]. This is no trivial question among the apostle's statements. But let us see if with God's help we can give a partial explanation of it. The apostle is not speaking here of the weakness of the flesh and of bodily health, but of the weakness of the mind and the health of the soul. For true weakness is that kind when the mind is troubled by sins; and true health is that kind when the soul does not languish from any malady of sin. Desire, avarice: these <are> the illnesses of the soul. The lust of an illicit longing is a weakness of the mind. Fury, wrath, vanity, envy, and the other vices, these are illnesses of the soul and wounds to the mind, which lead the soul all the way to the endangerment of salvation and to the death of sin. And so, the one who lies sick in sins of this sort, even if he is sound in body, is sick all over. The one who is sick in his mind, is sick in his soul. But the one who is estranged from these vices, even if he is sick in body, is utterly healthy in mind, because God desires the health of the mind more than that of the body.

5. Do you want proof of this? That poor man Lazarus (*Eleazarus*), as we read in the gospel, was always weak in body until his death [see Luke 16:20–22]. For he was full of sores, but his mind was completely sound, since he was not sick with any malady of sin. After all, when he died he was taken by the angels and brought to Abraham's bosom. The rich man, on the other hand, at whose gate poor Lazarus was lying, was of sound body to be sure, but utterly infirm in his mind, since he suffered from the malady of grave sin. He also had a fever of lustful desire, a fever of greed, and many wounds of sins. And therefore, as soon

as he died, he was brought to the place of torments. O blessed sickness of Lazarus and wretched health of the rich man! The former is brought to the place of refreshment, the latter to punishment. The former to the eternal kingdom, the latter to everlasting punishment. Now the reason we have related these things is that we may know that the soul's health is more critical than the body's. For a bodily malady does not impede the soul's health; but a malady of soul, if it is not cured by good works, estranges it from salvation along with the body. Bodily health is good and desirable, but health of the mind is more potent, which procures salvation of the body as well; for health of the soul is the salvation of the body. The extent of the difference between the health of the body and the soul is shown in these matters. The body is cured by earthly medicine; the soul, by heavenly medicine. The body is cured by a compress of oil leading to health; the soul is restored by divine words leading to salvation.

6. But let us now return to the apostle's statement in which he says, "There is one person who believes he can eat all things; but the one who is weak eats vegetables" [Rom 14:2]. The one then who is sound in faith, sound <in> knowledge, sound in the heavenly precepts, sound in the works of justice, doubtless eats spiritually all things pertaining to the law and the faith. He hears the law, he eats the law, since the doctrine of the law is food to the soul. He hears the prophets, he eats from the prophets, since the preaching of the prophets is nourishment to the soul, and refreshment to the mind. He hears the gospel, he eats avidly from the gospel, since he hears Christ speaking there, the heavenly bread who came down to refresh the hearts of believers [see John 6:41]. He hears the apostle, he eats ravenously from the apostle, since he is rejuvenated by apostolic doctrine. And by this means the faithful soul eats from all things, since he is rejuvenated from every divine Scripture with the food of faith and the words of truth. Just as <if> someone eats according to the body <...> different foods at a great luxurious banquet, has received from all things, so the faithful soul that is rich in Christ feeds on all the words of God, and is refreshed and filled.

7. He says, "But let the one who is weak eat vegetables" [Rom 14:2]. Everyone who is worn down by the malady of sin is weak. He cannot eat all things because his soul does not receive the divine mysteries. But let him accept the right precepts of the commandments as vegetables, in order to be strengthened, and he can recover his health, and then he could be strong enough to eat all things. If then we are gripped by some malady of sin in the soul, we should hasten to the healing of salvation, that we may deserve to receive the more solid food of justice and faith, that having truly become spiritual athletes

we may be able to conquer <and> overcome the adversary, strengthened by the food of justice, by the food of truth, by the food of salvation, as those who will receive the crown of life and the prize of eternal immortality [see Jas 1:12; 1 Cor 9:24–25]. But let us consider this very thing in greater detail. Suppose for instance that someone suffers in his soul from the malady of the lust of the flesh. The precept of chastity and modesty is essential to him because the modesty of his mind is the healing of his body, so that he can be healed from the infirmity of sin from which he suffers; for chastity of the mind is the healing of the body. If on the other hand someone is sick with avaricious greed, which weighs more heavily than any sickness of the soul, since “greed is the root of all evils” [1 Tim 6:10], as the apostle says, to such a person the precept concerning the works of mercy is critical, that he may know that he cannot be healed in any other way than by going from being greedy to becoming charitable, generous from being covetous. If on the other hand someone labors under the malady of fury and wrath, the precept about patience is critically important, so that he can be cured from the sickness of rage. If someone again suffers from the infirmity of resentment and hatred, to this one too the precept of charity and fraternal love needs to be instilled, so that his soul can be healed. For a man of this sort cannot be healed in any other way than by banishing hatred from his heart and receiving fraternal charity. For just as love is from God [see 1 John 4:7], so hatred is from the devil [see 1 John 3:15; John 8:44], for God is the author of charity but the devil is the inventor of hatred.

8. Evil and each of the vices of sins are sicknesses of the soul, for which the divine precepts are necessary, as vegetables, that people may be able to recover the health of salvation. For spiritual vegetables of this sort restore sick souls until they confer upon them a very complete healing. And this is what the apostle says: “But let the one who is weak eat vegetables.” On that account perhaps we read this statement by the Lord: “All these things as vegetables <...>” [Gen 9:3]. For he fell into a serious malady of sin and would not have been able to be healed in any other way but by eating the precepts of salvation. Therefore if we are gripped by any sickness of this sort, we ought willingly to eat the precept of modesty, the precept of chastity, the precept of patience, the precept of love and charity, in order that we may be able to recover with complete health, and be capable of eating the more solid foods of justice and faith. For it pertains to the healthy and the strong to eat solid food; above all it pertains to spiritual athletes. If then we deserve to eat the more solid foods of justice and faith, doubtless we shall become spiritual athletes, so that we can conquer and overcome the adversary in this life. Amen.

SERMON 13

Here Begins [the Sermon] on the Gospel of Matthew Where It Says, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, You Who Kill the Prophets

1. As your love has heard in today's reading, after delivering many reproaches against the ungodliness of the scribes and Pharisees, our Lord and Savior says to Jerusalem, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who have been sent to you" [Matt 23:37]. Here they are convicted under the name of Jerusalem, not the walls of Jerusalem, <but the inhabitants> of the city, or rather, the synagogue of the Jews, which is very often called Jerusalem. For it is not the walls of the city that killed the prophets or stoned those sent to them, but the people of the synagogue. For they killed the prophets long ago, they stoned the just. But perhaps the Jews now say that they are clear of the blood of the prophets or from the killing of the just, since they were not in fact alive at that time. But since they do not believe in the statements of the just and of the prophets about Christ, it is just as if they are even now stoning the just and killing the prophets. For what greater violence can be committed against the just and the prophets than not to believe in Christ? Since the Jews do not believe in him, doubtless they stone the just, not with stones from the roads but with a blasphemous mouth; and they kill the prophets, not with an iron sword but with a faithless pen. For the blasphemy of the Jews against Christ <is> the stoning of the just and the killing of the prophets. But it pertains to a good soldier to accept death on behalf of one's own king. This ought to be understood of the just and the prophets, since they are both good soldiers and worthy servants of Christ. Hence, doubtless, the stoning of the prophets is an injury to Christ, and the death of the prophets is his death.

2. The reason we have said this is because even today we see the Jews persecuting the just and killing the prophets, since they do not believe in the statements of the just and the prophets about Christ. After all, it is not said to the synagogue of the Jews, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who *killed* the prophets," but "you who *kill* the prophets." And it is not said, "you who *stoned* those sent to you," but "you who *stone* those who have been sent to you." Thus all Jews should understand that they too are guilty of killing the just and for the blood of the prophets. Therefore it is said to the synagogue, "Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who have been sent to you; how often have I wanted to gather your children, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling" [Matt 23:37]. When he says, "How often have I wanted to gather

your children,” [he shows that] now is not the first time, but repeatedly....

SERMON 14

On the Healing of the Paralytic and on Baptism

1. When our Lord and Savior came to Jerusalem, as your love has heard in today's <reading>, there was a pool there that is called Bethesda in Hebrew, and it had five porticoes [see John 5:1–2]. And so in all respects that pool offered an image of the coming baptism. But the distance between the grace of that pool and the grace of saving baptism is as great as the distance between an image and the truth. That water was stirred once a year [see John 5:3–4], this water of the church's baptism is always ready to be stirred. That water was only stirred in one location, this water is stirred throughout the whole world. There an angel came down, here the Holy Spirit. There it was the grace of an angel, here the mystery of the Trinity. There the water healed only one person per year, here it saves people daily. That water cured only the body, this kind saves both soul and body. That [saves] from a malady, this delivers from sin. That delivered the body alone from a malady, this delivers body and soul from sin. Before that water a multitude of sick people were lying, since it healed only one person per year; but before this water no one lies but the one who refuses to come and be healed. It is always ready to heal, if only they come to be healed. After all the Gentiles came and were healed. The Jews refused to come, and therefore they have remained in a state of perpetual infirmity.

2. Through Solomon the Holy Spirit plainly shows how great the grace of the church's baptism is when he says the following to the church: “Your eyes are like doves washed with milk, sitting upon an abundance of waters” [Song 5:12]. Now the eyes of the church are understood as the apostles and the martyrs who are esteemed in the body of the church as eyes that are more precious, who are dipped with the milky baptism of the church, so that spiritually they have become as white as milk. Do you want to know how the apostles are washed with milk? Listen to Paul as he speaks: “I gave you milk to drink, not solid food” [1 Cor 3:2]. Fittingly he who has been washed with milk offers milk. However, we especially understand these eyes of the church washed with milk as those infants who were killed for the sake of Christ by Herod in Bethlehem [see Matt 2:16]. For they were truly washed in milk who, since they were still nursing, earned the right to die for Christ. They were washed in milk, then, who while sucking their mothers' breasts endured martyrdom on Christ's behalf. The Lord

himself clarifies that baptism signifies martyrdom when he says the following to his disciples: "I still have a baptism to be baptized with" [Luke 12:50]. Surely he did not say this about water baptism in which he had already been baptized by John, but concerning the baptism of his passion in which the one who deserves to be dipped is sufficiently blessed. To be sure baptism in water is a good thing, but better still and best is the baptism of martyrdom. In the former, there is forgiveness, in the latter there is a prize. In the former there is remission of sins, in the latter a crown of virtues is earned.

3. But well did Solomon relate that there is an "abundance of waters" in baptism, saying to the church, "Your eyes are like doves that are washed with milk, sitting upon an abundance of waters," since the grace of the church's baptism is abundant by the gift of which the entire world has been irrigated. The water of that pool of Bethsaida cured once a year, but the grace of the church's baptism flows daily, increases daily, overflows daily, throughout kingdoms, nations, countless peoples of nations who experience its gift. The Jewish people alone refused to recognize the gift of such great water. And therefore it is said by that infirm man, who was shown as a symbol of the Jewish people, "For while I am going, someone else goes down before me" [John 5:7]. For while the Jewish people seek and hesitate about the coming of Christ, the Gentile people go ahead of them. Having received healing before them, they have become first in faith, those who were prior in respect to salvation.

4. But now we ought to consider what the Lord said in today's reading to him who was healed after thirty-eight years: "Behold, you have now been healed. Do not sin, lest something worse happen to you" [John 5:14]. Whatever sins you had have been forgiven you. You have been healed of every infirmity of sin, of sickness of the soul, of malady of the body, of the disease of illicit lustful desire; you have arisen as a new man from the bath of regeneration [see Rom 6:4; Titus 3:5]. Watch out that you do not return to your former sins and run into the danger of death, since the grace of baptism is given [only] once. If someone loses it by his own negligence, or rather, by infidelity, he becomes guilty of his own death, since he was unwilling to guard such a great grace. That is why before you came to baptism, you were asked whether you renounce the world and its pomp and its works. And you answered that you renounce them. And thus did you come to the grace of eternal baptism. Your words are binding before God. Your response is written in heaven. You promised God your fidelity; you promised the angels who were present, since angels are at hand when faith is demanded of us. Consider what you are doing. If what is promised to a man is strong, what about what is promised to God? As it is written, "From your mouth" you will either

“be justified” or “condemned” [Matt 12:37]. You will be justified if you fulfill what you promised to Christ; you will be condemned if you are unwilling to maintain fidelity to what you promised. Listen to what Solomon says: “For a man’s own lips become a strong snare to him” [Prov 6:2].

5. Since therefore our affair is with a Strong One, we ought to keep faith with what we promised, to guard the grace that we received, lest we meet with very great confusion on the day of judgment, when it begins to be said to us, “Friend, how did you enter here without a wedding garment?” [Matt 22:12]. And we would begin to be taken away by our hands and feet, as it is written, and cast into the outer darkness. And that is why Solomon says to you, “At all times let your garments be white, and let not the oil be lacking on your head” [Eccl 9:8]. We have garments ever white, if we preserve the grace of baptism intact. And we always have oil on our head, if we guard the saving chrism that we received, and then we will not be confounded on the day of judgment, but rather we will deserve to rejoice together with all the saints and elect of God in the <heavenly> kingdom.

SERMON 15

On the Washing of the Feet

1. After receiving a body from a virgin, our Lord and Savior indeed showed many examples of humility. But the one that has been reported in today’s reading surpasses them all, that he deigned to wash the disciples’ feet. For it says this: “And getting up from dinner, he took off his tunic and girded himself, and began to wash the disciples’ feet” [John 13:4]. And why he did this he shows subsequently when he says, “You call me Master and Lord, and you say well, for indeed I am. If I have washed your feet, the Master and Lord, you too ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example that you yourselves should do” [John 13:13–15]. This humility of the Lord is astonishing and beyond compare. The Lord of eternal majesty washes the feet of his own slaves, and he to whom angels minister in heaven ministers to people on earth. He humbled himself on earth, to keep you from exalting yourself in anything. He washes the feet of his disciples, to prevent you from scorning to wash the feet of fellow slaves. You cannot flatter yourself about wealth, nor about birth, nor about rank, since it is the Lord of rank and authority who deigned to do this and carry it out. For he gave an example of humility that we ought to follow and imitate. Yet in that deed is contained a great mystery of our salvation. But one must speak of it

in its own passage.

2. For now let us speak according to the letter. Surely Abraham washed the Lord's feet when he appeared to him at the oak tree of Mamre [see Gen 18:1–4]. But a slave washed for a master, for it was fitting that a slave washed the Lord's feet. And when Abraham washed the Lord's feet, he performed this not for the Lord but for himself, in order to receive a blessing. After all, on the occasion of this obedient act of service, he received a son in his old age from a sterile wife. For at that time, when the Lord appeared to him at the oak tree of Mamre at midday, Abraham saw the future mystery prefigured. For in that oak tree of Mamre the cross of the Lord was being shown. But in the midday hour, the time of the passion was shown, since, as we read in the gospel, the Lord was crucified at the sixth hour for the salvation of the world [see Matt 27:45]. And the reason it relates that Abraham was resting under an oak tree was because the faith of the patriarchs did not rest except under the cross of Christ; at midday, when the heat was normally extreme, since nothing cools all the burning heat of sin in us but the cross of Christ, by the shade of his passion. It was not of course without reason that the Lord appeared at midday to Abraham at an oak tree, since at that time especially Christ was manifested, when he undertook the cross of the blessed passion, at midday, for the sake of our salvation. Therefore Abraham washed the Lord's feet, but he washed the Lord's feet indeed for his own sake. But in that washing of feet, he laid aside all the defilements of sins, since the washing of the feet of our Lord purifies from sins. Gideon also washed the Lord's feet, as we read in the Book of Judges, not in order to do a favor but to receive a gift. After all on the occasion of doing this duty, he both received all that he asked for and saw in advance the mysteries of the salvation that was coming. He offered a sacrifice upon a rock; the Lord touched the rock with a rod; fire went out from the rock and consumed the burnt offering [see Judg 6:21]. In that rock, the incarnation of Christ was shown, from which that divine spiritual fire proceeded, that is, the Holy Spirit, who burns up the vices of sins. For we cannot become a sacrifice worthy of God unless we are illumined by that divine fire, that is, by the Holy Spirit, who burns up the vices of the flesh within us, so that he washes us from every defilement of sin. Then, when he went into battle against his enemies, he was ordered to select only three hundred men, by whom he brought back a celebrated victory over the enemy [see Judg 7:6, 16]. Obviously he could not have emerged as victor by any other number than by that one in which the mystery of the cross was signified. For in the number three hundred, according to Greek methods of calculation, the letter *tau* is signified, in which an obvious figure of the cross is shown. But he divided these three

hundred into three parts, since the victory of the cross consists in faith in the Trinity.

3. But let us return to the subject. Abraham washed the Lord's feet, Gideon too washed, but as slaves to their lord. Beyond all admiration is what is related in today's reading, that the Lord deigned to wash the feet of his own disciples. And let us speak first according to the letter. Behold how piously devout was that recompense. The apostles descended according to the flesh from the race of Abraham and from Gideon. Since therefore Christ repays, as one who is piously devout and good, he washed the feet of his disciples in order to render to the children in exchange for the gracious favor he had received from their parents. They had washed their Lord's feet; he washed the feet of his disciples, and paid back, only much more powerfully, in exchange for the gracious gift. Back then they washed their Lord's feet in order to be sanctified; but the Lord washed the feet of his disciples, not in order to be sanctified but to sanctify them. They washed their Lord's feet in order to blot out their own sins; he washed the feet of his disciples in order to cleanse them from every defilement of sin. Back then Abraham offered to the Lord three ash-cakes [see Gen 18:6]; [the Lord] satisfied his children in the desert from five loaves [see Matt 14:17]. Back then Abraham made the Lord rest under an oak tree at midday; the Lord covered his children with the shade of his cross at midday, for it was at midday when the Lord was crucified [see Matt 27:45]. Back then Abraham killed a calf for the Lord; [the Lord] offered himself as a sacrifice for the salvation of his children.

4. But now let us look at the mystery of today's reading, although what we are speaking about is a mystery. Well then, the Lord took off his tunic and girded himself with a towel. He put water in a bowl and began to wash the feet of his own disciples and wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. For not without reason is it said that the Lord took off his tunic and thus washed the feet of his disciples. And clearly it is at no other time that the feet of our souls are washed, and the footprints of our mind are cleansed, than when the Lord takes off his tunic; at that time surely when on the cross he laid aside the tunic of the flesh he assumed, with which flesh he had clothed himself to be sure when he was born, but he took it off in his passion. But he took off the tunic of his flesh, in order to cover our nakedness. Ultimately, the one tunic of the body of Christ has clothed the entire world. And although the Lord took off the tunic of his flesh in the passion, yet he was not naked, since he had the clothing of the virtues. This then is what is understood by the tunic that was taken off.

5. But when he came to Peter to wash his feet, as today's reading has related, Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet. The Lord answered and said, If

I do not wash your feet, you will have no part with me. But he answered and said, Lord, not only [my] feet, but [my] hands and head as well” [John 13:8–9]. At first, saint Peter refused the Lord’s service, since he believed he was unworthy to have his feet washed by the Lord. But after the Lord said to him, “If I do not wash your feet, you will have no part with me,” he did not refuse Christ’s service, in order to have fellowship with Christ. And therefore, since he knew that there was a great mystery concealed in the washing of the feet, for that reason he said, “Not only [my] feet, but [my] hands and head as well.” He offered his feet, in order that the steps of his life that had been made dirty in the defilement of sin in Adam would be washed by baptism. He offered his hands so that, since Adam had defiled his hands, which he had illicitly extended to the tree, our hands might be cleansed by the sacred baptism of Christ. He offered his head to be washed, lest the senses of his soul that are in the head should remain in the defilements of sinning Adam. And in this way he offered his entire self for baptism, he desired to be washed completely, so that through the washing of the head he might possess a clean heart; in the washing of the hands, he would carry out works of justice; but in the washing of the feet, he would walk with clean steps down the way of truth.

6. The Lord therefore washed the feet of his disciples to keep any traces of sin from Adam’s defilement from remaining in us. For now the Lord is washing the feet of his servants whom he invites to the grace of saving baptism. And if it seems that this office is being carried out by humans, it is the work however of him who is the author of the gift, and he himself does what he himself has instituted. We exhibit the office, he bestows the gift. We do the duty, he the authoritative command. But the gift is his, even if the service belongs to us. The grace is his, even if the duty is ours. We wash the feet of the body; but he washes the steps of our souls. We dip the body in water; he remits sins. We dip; he sanctifies. We on earth lay on our hands; he from heaven freely gives the Holy Spirit. For that reason, you catechumens, my sons and daughters, ought to hasten to the grace of baptism, so that by laying aside the filth of sins you may become entirely clean in the presence of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ....

SERMON 16

First Sermon for the Great Night

1. All the vigils that are celebrated to the honor of the Lord are indeed pleasing and acceptable to God, but this is the vigil beyond all vigils. After all, this night

in particular is called “the vigil of the Lord.” For we read that this is written: “This is the Lord’s vigil for the watch to all the children of Israel” [Exod 12:42]. Now rightly this night is properly called the Lord’s vigil because to this end he kept a vigil in life, so that we should not sleep in death. He indeed underwent the sleep of death for us through the mystery of the passion; but that sleep of the Lord became a vigil (*vigilia*) for the whole world, since Christ’s death banished from us the sleep of eternal death. For this is what he declares through the prophet when he says, “After I slept and woke up (*vigilavi*) and my sleep became sweet to me” [see Ps 3:5; Jer 31:26]. Clearly that sleep of Christ became sweet, who called us back to sweet life from bitter death. This night then is called the Lord’s vigil because even in the very sleep of his passion he kept vigil, just as he himself demonstrates through Solomon when he says, “I sleep and my heart stays awake (*vigilat*)” [Song 5:2]; through which he clearly shows in himself the mystery of his divinity and of his flesh. For he slept in the flesh, he stayed awake in his divinity, because his divinity was not able to sleep. For we read this statement concerning the divinity of Christ: “Behold, he that guards Israel shall not slumber nor sleep” [Ps 121:4]. This is why he says, “I sleep and my heart stays awake,” because in the very slumber of his passion he slept in his flesh, but his divinity illuminated the lower world, so that he rescued man who was being held in the underworld. For our Lord and Savior willed to illuminate all places in order to have mercy on all. He came down from heaven to earth in order to visit the world. He went down further to the lower world in order to illumine those who were being held in the lower world, in accordance with the statement of the prophet who said, “You who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, a light has arisen for you” [Isa 9:2]. And so, fittingly, this night is called “the Lord’s vigil” in which he not only illumined this world, but he also illumined those who were below (*apud inferos*).

2. Consequently, both the angels in heaven and humans on earth and the souls of the faithful in the underworld celebrate this vigil of the Lord. Angels in heaven celebrate this vigil of the Lord because by his death Christ destroyed death, trampled upon the underworld, saved the world and liberated humanity. And they rightly celebrate because the world’s salvation is the joy of angels. But if, as we read in the gospel, the repentance of one sinner is the joy of angels in heaven [see Luke 15:7, 10], how much more is the redemption of the whole world? Human beings on earth also celebrate because Christ undertook death for the salvation of the human race in order to conquer death by dying. And the souls of the faithful in the underworld celebrate because the reason Christ descended to the underworld was to keep death from reigning over them in the

underworld. And what wonder is it if angels in heaven, humans on earth, souls below, celebrate this vigil of the Lord, seeing that he who thought it fitting to die for us is the Creator of heaven, earth, and the lower world? We ought to say still more, that the Father himself celebrates this vigil of the Lord with the Son and the Holy Spirit, because according to the will of the Father, the Son underwent death, in order to give us life by dying. This vigil then is a feast not only for humans and angels but also for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit because the world's salvation is joy to the Trinity. And therefore with all devotion we ought to celebrate the vigil of this great night, since on this night death was destroyed, the world was redeemed, the people were set free.

3. Rightly therefore this night is called “the Lord’s vigil,” since it is celebrated throughout the whole world to the honor of his name. The prayers of individual persons are as numerous as their longings; their lights are as numerous as the religious pledges springing from their merits. The darkness of the night is conquered by the light of devotion. The angels rejoice in heaven at the solemnity of this vigil. People on earth rejoice. The very powers of the lower world rejoice because the great solemnity of this night reached even to them. Although the Jews and Gentiles still seem to be alienated from this solemnity, yet they are not without joy, since they are overcome by a certain hidden grace and virtue of the name of Christ, who is lord over all. After all, a considerable number of pagans and Jews celebrate the solemnity of this vigil of ours as their own, even with glad hearts, if not through the religious ritual.

4. And since this is the night in which long ago the firstborn of the Egyptians were struck and the children of Israel were liberated [see Exod 12], let us pray to the Lord with our whole heart, with complete faith, that he may deem it fitting to deliver us from every attack of the enemy, from all fear of the enemy. May he not consider our merits but his own mercy, he who thought it fitting long ago to deliver even the children of Israel, not in view of their merits but in view of his mercy. May he protect us with his accustomed pity, may he drive back the barbarian nations, may he do among us what holy Moses said to the children of Israel: “The Lord will fight for you and you shall be silent” [Exod 14:14]. He fights, he conquers, if he shows pity, if he forgives sins, if he does not look at our merits but his own clemency, since he is accustomed to be merciful even to those who are unworthy. We ought to pray as much as we can that he may consent to do this. For he says through the prophet, “Call upon me in the day of tribulation; I will rescue you and you will glorify me” [Ps 50:15].

SERMON 17

Second Sermon for the Great Night

1. The world itself is witness to how great a solemnity the present night is, during which vigils all night long are being celebrated; but not without reason, for on this night death was defeated, life lives, Christ rose from death. Surely he is that life of which Moses long ago had spoken to the people: “You will see your life hanging on the tree day and night, and you will not believe your life” [Deut 28:66]. This life then, that is, Christ the Lord, hung on a tree, when he was suspended on the cross for the salvation of the world. The Jewish people refused to believe in this life, and therefore incurred death, since the one who flees from life necessarily incurs death.

2. But it was not without reason that Moses predicted that this life would hang on a tree “day and night.” As we read in the gospel, the body of the Lord was taken down from the cross on the very same day [see Matt 27:57; John 19:38]. But since it was still midday when the Lord was hanging on the cross, for three hours darkness came over the whole world [see Matt 27:45], and what is more, Christ hung on the cross throughout this day and night, seeing that night intervened in the middle of the day. For the sun could not bear the injury to its Creator, and therefore it was covered by darkness, lest it should be forced to take part in the crimes of the Jews. Even the sun shuddered at such a great crime of the Jews and that is why it received a veil of darkness, as a garment of mourning, to show that it was paying honor to the death of its Lord, as it were, with certain acts of obedient service. That “life” should be understood properly of Christ the Lord, he himself clarifies in the gospel, when he says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” [John 14:6]. He is called the way because he leads to the Father; the truth, because he condemns falsehood; life, because he has dominion over death. Consequently, it is not without reason that the prophet says the following against death: “Where, O death, is your sting, where, O death, is your victory?” [1 Cor 15:55; cf. Hos 13:14]. For death, which was used to winning, was defeated by the death of the victor. And so life went down to death in order to put death itself to flight. Just as darkness is extinguished at the coming of the light, so death was destroyed by the coming of the original life. Although this life was not subject to death, yet it undertook death in the flesh, so that it could destroy death itself by its hidden power. Just as if a lion should wear sheepskin in order to deceive the wolf, so Christ who is life took on flesh in order to deceive death, the devourer of human flesh. And so, since the Jews refused to believe in him, they incurred death, but we ought to believe in him, in order to be able to escape death.

3. This is the time of the Passover of which Moses long ago says to the people, “This will be the first month for you among the months of the year” [Exod 12:2]. So then, Moses declared the solemnity of this time the first month and the beginning of the year. For we ought to reckon this time as the beginning of the year. For it is befitting to call this month the first month, in which we have been saved from death. This is why the pagans are in great error when they consider January to be the first month. How then can January be understood as the first month of the year when in that month the whole world is found to be without grace as it were and arid? For at that time the earth has no grass, there are no flowers on trees, no buds on the vines. Therefore the first month is not January, when everything dies, but the season of Passover, when everything is made alive. For now the grass of the meadows rises from death, so to speak, now there are flowers on the trees, now there are buds on the vines, now the air itself is already joyous with the newness of the season, when sea captains undertake their voyages in safety. Therefore this time of the Passover is the first month and the New Year, when the very elements of the world are likewise being renewed. No wonder, of course, if the world is renewed at this time, since the human race itself has also been renewed today. After all, there are countless people throughout the whole world who have risen today in the newness of life through the water of baptism, having laid aside the oldness of sin [see Rom 6:4–6]. For at this time the sheep too are already safely bearing young, since they do not fear the cold of winter. In imitation of them, at this time the church of God produces for Christ as it were spiritual sheep, flocks of believers, as lambs, feeding them with the milk of life and with the drink of salvation. These are the spiritual sheep of which Solomon speaks: “Going up like sheep from the washing, all of them producing twins, and there is not a barren one among them” [Song 4:2; cf. 6:5]. These sheep then, that is, the sheep of the church, are shown to be bearing young by “the washing,” since they produce children for God through the grace of baptism. They produce twin sons since they come to belief from the two peoples.

4. Hence the pagans err greatly in reckoning January to be the first month and the New Year, but it is not surprising that they err in respect to seasons since they err in respect to religion. But we who truly believe that this time of Passover is the New Year, we ought to celebrate the holy day with all delight and exultation and eagerness of soul, in order that we may be able fittingly to say that which we responded in today’s psalm: “This is the day that the Lord has made, let us exult and be glad in it” [Ps 118:24]. We will be able to say this confidently, if we faithfully obey his commands in all things, so that we may be able to arrive at

eternal life and perpetual rejoicing in the kingdom of heaven.

SERMON 17A

On the Passover

1. When our Lord and Savior came to the time of his passion, in order to show beforehand what great Paschal blessedness was before him, he said, “With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you” [Luke 22:15]. We can recognize how great was the Feast of Passover from the fact that our Lord and Savior desired to fulfill it. The blessedness of this Passover was desired by angels, it was desired by the law, it was desired by the just, it was desired by the prophets, but its time had not yet arrived. And the Feast of this Passover had been contemplated long ago in the law, to be sure, but only in figure. What therefore the law contemplated in figure, Christ the Lord completed in truth. For Christ’s suffering (*passio*) is the true Passover (*Pascha*), whence came the name of Passover. The apostle’s words clearly point to the same thing when he says, “For Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. And so,” as the same apostle goes on to say, “let us celebrate the feast not with the old yeast nor with the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” [1 Cor 5:7–8]. Therefore, we must exclude from our hearts all yeast of malice and sin, so that we may become unleavened bread as it were, with a pure mind and upright conscience, in order that we may be able to celebrate Christ’s Passover worthily.

2. But if we retain the yeast of sin and malice in our heart, we do not deserve to celebrate the Lord’s Passover. And that is why the apostle says, “Purge out the old yeast in order that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened” [1 Cor 5:7]. We are unleavened if we remain without the yeast of malice. We are unleavened if we are estranged from all sprinkling of sin. For as the apostle says, “a little yeast corrupts the whole mass” [1 Cor 5:6]. And therefore we ought to purge out and throw away from us all the yeast of sin, in order that we may deserve to enjoy the Passover feast, of which the Lord says to his disciples, “With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you” [Luke 22:15]. Therefore we eat the Passover with Christ, since he feeds those whom he saves. For he is the author of the Passover, he is the author of the mystery, who fulfilled the Feast of this Passover for this reason, to refresh us with the food of his passion and restore us with his saving cup. Since therefore the Lord wanted to make us sharers in such a great feast, let us pray that we may receive his

sacraments worthily in order that we may justly deserve to attain to the Lord's blessing.

SERMON 18

On Nicodemus and on Baptism

1. When our Lord and Savior was showing forth the power of his divinity with various signs and miracles, it says, "Nicodemus came to him, a ruler of the Jews, at night time, and he said to him, We know that you have come as a teacher from God. For no one does these signs that you do unless God is with him" [John 3:1–2]. This Nicodemus, ruler of the Jews, longed indeed to come to the Lord, but he feared offending the Jews, and therefore he came to the Lord not in the day but at night, since he was still in the grip of the night of ignorance and of the unbelief of the Jews. For Christ the sun of justice [see Mal 4:2] had not yet illumined his heart, since he had not yet recognized the light of truth. This is why the Lord said the following in the gospel: "He who walks in the day does not stumble. But he who walks at night stumbles, since the light of the world is not in him" [John 11:9–10]. The one who follows Christ, the eternal light, always walks in the day. The coming of night does not hinder such a person, since the light of truth is always in his heart. But the one who does not know the true light, even if he walks in the day, is always in the night.

Since therefore Nicodemus was still in the grip of the ignorance of the Jews, it is rightly said of him that he came to the Lord at night. But the very sentiment that is expressed makes clear that Nicodemus was at that time in the night of ignorance. For he says to the Lord, "We know that you have come as a teacher from God. For no one can do such signs that you do unless God is with him" [John 3:2]. He thought that the one who is the author of heavenly doctrine was one of the teachers. He marveled at the miraculous signs in one whom he ought to have recognized as the Lord of glory based on those signs, since no one but God could have worked such great miraculous signs. Therefore although Nicodemus came to the Lord at night time, yet since he had come to God, who is the true light, he did not depart without the grace of light.

2. And so the Lord said to him, "You must be born again" [John 3:3], in order to pour the light of the new birth into his heart. But since Nicodemus could not yet fully recognize the grace of such a great birth, he answers and says, "How shall this be? Can a man who is old enter into his mother's womb and be born

again?” [John 3:4]. Then [Jesus] says plainly, “Unless someone is reborn from water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. For that which is born of flesh is flesh; but what is born of Spirit is spirit” [John 3:5–6]. Here manifestly and clearly the Lord shows Nicodemus that there are two births: one earthly, the other heavenly; one of flesh, the other spiritual. But he shows that the spiritual is much more powerful than the fleshly when he says, “That which is born of flesh is flesh; but that which is born of Spirit is spirit.”

3. Therefore the fleshly birth is from human beings; the spiritual birth is from God; the former is from humans, the latter from God; the former procreates a human being for the world; the latter gives birth for God. The former pours forth a birth for the earth; the latter transfers him to heaven. The former has temporary life, the latter eternal. Finally, the former makes children of humans; the latter children of God. For the latter spiritual birth is carried out completely invisibly, just as the former is carried out visibly. For the one who is baptized in the font is indeed seen to be dipped, he is indeed seen to come up out of the water; but what is accomplished in that bath is not seen, but the church of the faithful alone understand spiritually that a sinner goes down into the font, but one cleansed from all sin comes up. Blessed therefore and truly heavenly is that birth that makes children of God out of the children of human beings!

Since Nicodemus had not yet recognized this mystery, he says to the Lord, “Can someone, when he is old, enter again into his mother’s womb again and be born again?” [John 3:4]. Nicodemus was still fleshly, therefore he spoke in fleshly terms. But the Lord, in order to lead his fleshly senses to the spiritual understanding, says, “Unless someone is reborn from water and the Spirit he will not enter the kingdom of heaven” [John 3:5], in order to show him with what birth it was necessary for each person to be reborn. For this spiritual birth makes infants out of old people. For those who are reborn in baptism are reborn into innocence, having laid aside the oldness of error and the evil of sin. For it is the spiritual womb of the church that conceives and gives birth to children for God.

4. Since therefore, you candidates for baptism (*competentes*), my sons and daughters, you have to be reborn in innocence through the grace of God; having laid aside all the oldness of sin, you ought to preserve intact and untainted the grace of your birth, so that you can truly be called and indeed be children of God [see 1 John 3:1], and be deemed worthy of entrance into the heavenly kingdom.

SERMON 18A

On Baptism and on the Holy Spirit

For this birth makes us worthy of the heavenly kingdom, since, as your love has heard, the Lord says, “Unless someone is reborn from water and the Holy Spirit, he will not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” And he added, “That which is born of flesh is flesh,” since it is born of flesh. “But that which is born of Spirit is spirit, <for God is spirit>” [John 3:5–6]. And how is it that the heretics have dared to deny that the Holy Spirit is God, when they see clearly that the Holy Spirit is called God by the Son of God? Therefore our spiritual birth is not without the Holy Spirit, and not unfittingly, since just as our first creation (*figuratio*) was by the Trinity [see Gen 1:26], so the second creation is by the Trinity. For there is no work of the Father without the Son, nor without the Holy Spirit, since the work of the Father is the work of the Son; the work of the Son is the work of the Holy Spirit. For the grace of the Trinity is one and the same. We are saved therefore now by the Trinity, since at the beginning we were made only by the Trinity. In the creation of humanity there is one work of the Trinity; there has been one loss for the Trinity, now long ago, in the perishing of humanity....

SERMON 19

On the Lord’s Passion Where It Says, Then the Soldiers of the Governor Took Jesus into the Praetorium and Gathered an Entire Cohort around Him. They Stripped Him and Draped a Crimson Robe on Him [Matt 27:27–28]

1. Many readings have been introduced, to be sure, but from what source in particular ought we to speak than from the gospel, on which our salvation is uniquely based? The reading from the prophets is indeed good, but the gospel is better, since in the reading of the prophets there is prediction, but in the gospel, truth is revealed. The sayings of the prophets are obscured by the clouds of mysteries; but the sayings of the gospel are illumined by the brightness of the sun of justice [see Mal 4:2].

And so today’s reading of the gospel has made known the injustices our Lord and Savior experienced from the Jews and the Gentiles for the sake of human salvation. For when our Lord and Savior was taken by the soldiers to be led to the cross, “they clothed him with a purple tunic and draped a crimson robe on him. And they placed a crown of thorns upon his head, and a staff in his right hand. And falling to their knees before him they worshiped him, saying, Hail,

king of the Jews” [Matt 27:28–30]. Jews and Gentiles did these things indeed in mockery. But now, we recognize these very deeds as a heavenly mystery. Iniquity was at work in them; in the Gentiles the mystery of faith and the reckoning of truth [was at work]. As a king he is clothed with a purple tunic, but as the prince of martyrs with a crimson robe, since he shines as precious crimson with his sacred blood. But as a victor he received a crown, since a crown is conferred properly upon a victor. But as God he is adored on bended knee. Therefore as a king he is clothed with purple, as the prince of martyrs with crimson, as a victor he is crowned, as Lord he is greeted, as God he is adored.

2. But we can also recognize in the purple tunic the church being signified, which shines with royal splendor as it abides in Christ the king. And this is why it is called a “royal race” by John in Revelation [Rev 1:6; cf. 1 Pet 2:9]. This is the purple of which we read the words in the Songs: “Its entire bed purple” [Song 3:10]. For Christ rests in the bed in which he will be able to find purple, that is, royal faith and a precious mind. For purple is truly shown to be a precious and royal thing, since although it is a natural product of the earth, yet it changes its nature when it is dyed, and it changes its outward appearance. It is one thing in its nature, another in its outward appearance. The nature in it is without value, but its change is precious. So too our flesh by nature is indeed without value, but it is made precious by the transformation of grace, since in the [purple] spiritual crimson, like purple it is dipped in three ways into the mystery of the Trinity. Whence if we want to be reckoned to be <in> the precious purple, we need to preserve the grace of our transformation, so that we can be deemed worthy of such a great king.

We can likewise apply the crimson robe to the glory signified in the martyrs, who have been dipped in their own blood and adorned with the blood of martyrdom, as they reflect precious red dye in Christ. This is the red dye that was long ago commanded to be offered to adorn the tabernacle of God [see Exod 26:31]. For the martyrs adorn the church of Christ. But that red dye that was commanded to be offered for the adornment of the tabernacle was twofold. For the martyrs of Christ have a twofold grace, since they hand over both body and soul to suffering. On the outside their flesh is stained with the blood of martyrdom, on the inside their soul is embellished with the confession of faith. And through this, martyrs offer a twofold red dye for the adornment of the tabernacle, since they become precious to the Lord in both their body and soul.

3. Now in the crown of thorns that the Lord received on his head [see Matt 27:29], our gathering was being shown, we who come to belief from the Gentiles. Although we were once thorns, that is, sinners, yet by believing in

Christ, we have been made into a crown of justice, since we no longer pierce or wound the Savior, but we surround his head with the confession of faith, as we confess the Father in the Son, since God is the head of Christ, as the apostle makes clear [see 1 Cor 11:3]. This is the crown that David once predicted in the psalm: “You set a crown of precious stone upon his head” [Ps 21:3]. Long ago, to be sure, we were thorns, but after we began to be counted in the crown of Christ, we became precious stones. For he made precious stones out of thorns, he who raised up sons of Abraham from stones [see Matt 3:9].

4. And today’s reading did not superfluously report that a reed (*arundinem*) was placed in the Lord’s right hand [see Matt 27:29]. Listen to what David testifies about Christ in the psalm: “My tongue is a reed (*calamus*) of a swiftly writing scribe” [Ps 45:1]. Therefore, when he was about to undertake the passion, he took a reed (*calamum*) in his right hand, whether in order to grant pardon to our crimes with a heavenly annotation, or in order to inscribe his own law in our hearts with divine letters, as he himself says through the prophet: “I will write my laws in their hearts, and I will write them in their minds” [Jer 31:33]. But we can understand the reed (*arundine*) in another way, since the spiritual meanings are multiple. By reed, which is hollow and without marrow, the people of the Gentiles is demonstrably referred to, who long ago were without the marrow of divine law, empty of the faith, devoid of grace. A reed of this sort, then, that is, the Gentile people, is placed in the Lord’s right hand, since the Jewish people who persecuted Christ were now esteemed to be in his left hand. But Isaiah shows that the people of the Gentiles are signified in the reed when he said the following about the Lord: “A bruised reed he will not break” [Isa 42:3; cf. Matt 12:18–21]. Although they seemed bruised by the devil, yet they were not broken by Christ but made solid. But in the genuflecting of the worshipers [see Matt 27:29], the faith and salvation of the believing peoples was shown, who daily worship Christ the eternal king on bended knee.

5. Finally, today’s reading related that when the Lord was led to his passion, “they found a certain man Simon of Cyrene. They compelled this man to carry his cross” [Matt 27:32]. In the cross of Christ there is the triumph of virtue and the trophy of victory. Hence blessed is this Simon who merited so much as to be the first to carry the signs of such a great triumph! To be sure, the Lord carried this cross first [see John 19:17], and then Simon was compelled to carry it in order that in his cross the Lord would clearly show the grace of the heavenly mystery, since he was God and man, Word and flesh, Son of God and Son of man. As man, then, he was crucified, but as God he triumphed in the very mystery of the cross. The passion pertains to his flesh, the triumph of victory

pertains to his divinity. For through his cross Christ triumphed over death and the devil. By the cross Christ ascended as on a triumphal chariot. And this is why he chose four evangelists, as a choice heavenly four-horse chariot, to announce to all the world the champion of such a great victory. This Simon of Cyrene then carried on his shoulders the triumph of this victory; he became a companion of his passion in order to be a companion also of his resurrection, since the apostle says, “If we die together, we shall also live together. If we endure together, we shall also reign together” [2 Tim 2:11–12]. And therefore the Lord says in the gospel, “He who does not take up his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple” [Luke 14:27].

6. The cross of Christ is our victory, since the cross of Christ obtained the triumph of victory for us. Who of us is so blessed as to deserve to carry Christ’s cross in himself? He carries the cross of Christ in himself who dies to the world, who is nailed to Christ. Listen to the apostle showing this: “I have been crucified with Christ, but I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me” [Gal 2:19–20]. Therefore the one who is estranged from the vices of the flesh, as the apostle says, estranged from the desire of the world, is nailed together with Christ. But the one who lives in the vices of the flesh, in the lust of the age, cannot say, “I am nailed together with Christ,” for he does not live according to Christ, but according to the life of the world, according to the will of the devil.

Therefore the cross of Christ is the salvation of the world, and the triumph of heavenly victory. For even great kings long ago, when they won a celebrated victory over vanquished nations, made the trophy of victory in the shape of the cross, where they would hang the captured spoils of the enemy, as a sign for eternal remembrance. But the cross of Christ is a far different kind of victory. The victory of those kings came about by the destruction of nations, the overthrow of cities, the plundering of provinces. But in this victory of the cross there is redemption of nations, salvation of cities, freedom of provinces, security for the whole world. Perhaps for the devil alone is there destruction, and captivity of demons, since the cross of Christ redeemed the world and took demons captive. After all, the captured spoils of demons hang down from the triumph of the cross of Christ. Even today the demons hang on the sign of the cross, they are tortured and burned, since they are held captive by the faith of the cross and by the sign of the passion.

7. Then when they came to Golgotha, it says, “They gave him vinegar mixed with gall. And when he tasted it, he was unwilling to drink it” [Matt 27:34]. This is what he himself had predicted through David as coming in the future, when he said, “They gave [me] gall for my food and they gave me vinegar for my thirst”

[Ps 69:21]. Consider the mystery. Long ago Adam tasted sweet fruit and obtained the bitterness of death for the human race. The Lord, on the other hand, accepted the bitterness of gall, in order to call us back from bitter death to sweet life. He accepted therefore the bitterness of the gall to extinguish in us the bitterness of sin; he accepted the sourness of the vinegar, but poured out the precious wine of his blood for us. And so, he endured evils, but paid back good things; he received death, but freely gave life. Not without reason was he crucified in this location, where it is claimed that the body of Adam was buried. The reason Christ is crucified where Adam had been buried was so that life would work from that place where death had previously worked, so that life would rise out of death. Death through Adam, life through Christ, who thought it fitting even to be crucified for us, and to die, for this reason, to blot out the sin of the tree by the tree of the cross, and to absolve the penalty of death by the mystery of death.

SERMON 20

On the Passion

Since then for the sake of our salvation our Lord and Savior deigned to undertake the passion of the cross too, we ought to have the grace of such a great redemption always before our eyes, and faithfully obey his precepts in all things. For we fell in Adam, but we have resurrected in Christ; we were broken by Adam's sin, but we have been put back together through the grace of Christ

Therefore in a potter's field of this sort, as the evangelist says, that is, in the church of Christ, there is a burial place for foreigners [see Matt 27:7]. For when we believe in Christ, we become foreigners to the world, so that we may be deemed members of God's household. Foreigners to the earth, citizens of heaven [see Eph 2:19]; last in the world, neighbors of Christ. Listen to the apostle Peter showing this same thing when he says, "As strangers and foreigners, keep yourselves from fleshly desires" [1 Pet 2:11]. And hear Paul saying something more: "You are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory" [Col 3:3–4]. If then we are foreigners to the vices of the world, to the desires of the flesh, then we are buried in the potter's field, that is, in the church of Christ, but we are buried happily, because we are dead to this world in order that we may be alive to Christ. We are buried in respect to iniquity, we rise again to justice. We are buried to the vices so that we may rise again to the virtues. This is the very thing

that the apostle Paul makes clear when he says, “For you were buried together with him through baptism into death, in order that just as Christ resurrected in life, so we too may walk in the newness of life...” [Rom 6:4].

SERMON 21

The First Sermon on Saint John, Evangelist and Apostle

1. Saint John the apostle and evangelist, whose [heavenly] birthday we celebrate today, had a uniquely great grace before the Lord, as we read in the gospel that he was singled out by Christ with a special affection. As we read in Revelation, after the Lord’s passion, he was banished to the island of Patmos for the sake of Christ’s name, and was chained up in shackles [see Rev 1:9–10]. But to that apostle the shackles were not a punishment but an honor. For it is an honor to endure injustice for Christ, and the greatest honor, that every injustice and punishment by humans that are inflicted for Christ’s sake raise one up to glory. After all, John himself, when he was bound in shackles on the same island, was lifted up in spirit and testified that a door in heaven had been opened to him [see Rev 4:1]. Therefore to that holy man John, the shackles were not a heavy burden, but wings of virtue by which he was lifted up to heaven.

But in Revelation, he himself has reported how great the glory of heaven was that he saw, when the door to heaven was opened for that reason. For he saw the throne of God in heaven [see Rev 4:2]; he saw the Son of God sitting at the right hand of the Father [see Rev 4:2]; he saw choirs of angels [see Rev 5:11]; he saw twenty-four elders and four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind, shouting in praise of the Lord with unceasing voices and saying, “Holy, holy, holy Lord God Sabaoth” [Rev 4:8; Isa 6:3]. “Heaven and earth are full of your glory.” “Hosanna in the highest” [Matt 21:9; Mark 11:10]. In imitation of them the whole throng of the faithful call out daily in the church in praise of God. He saw as well many other secret mysteries he was commanded to keep silent about, as he himself attests [see Rev 10:4].

2. Indeed, when he was on the island, as he himself relates, “a book was given to me, and I was told to eat it. And I ate it. And it was sweet in my mouth like honey; but in my stomach it was bitter. Then it was said to me, You must prophesy still to the nations” [Rev 10:9–11]. And this is what happened. For that book that he took to eat was the book of the Gospel that he wrote later. For when Domitian Caesar, who had banished him, was slain, he was released from the

island, and then he wrote the Gospel book in his own name. He said that it was sweet in his mouth but bitter in his stomach: sweet because of the preaching, bitter because of the persecution, for while he preaches the sweetness of the faith, he experiences the bitterness of persecution. Yet this bitterness of persecution has great sweetness, since through persecution one attains to the sweet glory of martyrdom. For even trees have bitter roots, but the fruits they are accustomed to bring forth are sweet. So too persecution: it seems bitter indeed, but it brings forth the sweet fruit of salvation, while it renders those whom it persecutes either into confessors or martyrs.

3. But what he has said can also be understood in another way, that the book of the Gospel that he received to eat was sweet in his mouth but bitter in his stomach [see Rev 10:9–11]. Those who understand John's statements with a faithful understanding attribute sweetness to his mouth, that is, to his preaching, because they understand his words about faith piously. But those who understand the statements of the same man with a perverse meaning, such as the heretics, stir up bitterness because they turn the sweetness of faith into the bitterness of faithlessness. And that is why the former are shown to be in his mouth, and <the latter> in the stomach. In the mouth, [the organ] from which God is blessed, are the Catholics; in the stomach, whence things are expelled into the drain, are the heretics. Catholics then provide sweetness to the blessed John from his Gospel; but the heretics provide him with bitterness. Photinus embittered John, he who refused to believe that Christ was God, whom John clearly showed to be God when he said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" [John 1:1]. Arius embittered [John], who did not believe that the Son proceeded from the Father, though it is believed that the Word of the Father, the Son, proceeded from the Father in no other manner than properly from the Father's heart. All heretics embitter John, who either destroy or attack the faith of his preaching. Therefore saint John has sweetness from his preaching because of Catholics, bitterness because of heretics, and sweetness because of the church's faith, bitterness because of the faithlessness of the synagogue, which was unwilling to receive the preaching of John.

4. After he was sent from the island, then, saint John wrote the Gospel, which is proclaimed throughout the whole world. After many persecutions, which he endured for the name of Jesus, when he was already a very old man, he changed residence from this world to the Lord. Indeed the Lord had said about him, as we read in the Gospel, "Thus I want him to remain until I come" [John 21:22]. But the Lord had not said that because he was not going to die, but because he would experience a death without pain. For this is reported: "Jesus did not say that he

would not die, but, Thus I want him to remain until I come” [John 21:23]. For the Lord comes to each of the saints when he leaves his body. John, then, when he was already burdened by extreme old age, said to his disciples, as the writing that reports his falling asleep shows, that they made a grave for him. The Lord had told him on which day he would depart. And so his disciples made his grave that was big enough for his body. Saint John cast himself in there, and without any pain, without movement, without strain, departed from his body so that he seemed to go out rather than be shut out of his body. And the reason the Lord had said of him, “Thus I want him to remain, until I come,” is because he received a blessed sleep without pain. In this location such great miracles and wonders take place that even unbelievers scarcely can believe it. And it is no wonder of course if his grace is at work there, where his body is laid, since it is likewise at work where a small portion of his ashes are found. For since our church as well has merited to possess his remains, we ought to celebrate with all faith and devotion the [heavenly] birthday of his falling asleep, so that we can receive our portion with him and with all the saints.

SERMON 22

The Second Sermon on Saint John the Evangelist

1. Many great and illustrious things are indeed reported in the Gospel about saint John, whose [heavenly] birthday is today; but since we cannot recount all of them, let us speak of a few from the many. For to say something about the merits of the saints is the merit of sanctity. Among all the disciples he was the youngest; youngest in age indeed but eldest in faith, who in the Gospel is recorded among the first ones. After all, whenever the Lord wanted to choose some of the apostles, he chose John too with them.

2. When he was about to enter the house of the synagogue ruler to raise up his daughter from death, he chose John along with Peter and James [see Mark 5:37; Luke 8:51]. For he wanted these three men to be witnesses, when he raised the dead girl. The Lord did this for two reasons: either because the divine law had predicted that “every matter stands <by the mouth> of two or three witnesses” [Deut 19:15], or because no one could be raised from the death of sin apart from the grace and faith of the Trinity. Therefore the Lord called in three disciples when he raised up the dead girl, in order to show the mystery of the Trinity.

Also, when he wanted to reveal his glory to the disciples on the mountain, he

likewise took John with Peter and James [see Matt 17:1–8]. For he led these three disciples onto the mountain by themselves and was transfigured before them. And Moses and Elijah appeared to them: “And the Father’s voice was heard from heaven: This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him” [Matt 17:5]. See this mystery too: the way the Son of God is shown to be the God of heaven, of earth, and of the lower world. From heaven the Father bore testimony to the Son; from earth three apostles are chosen; from the lower world Moses is summoned as witness, since Moses tasted death. And lest there be any location exempt from providing testimony to Christ, Elijah too, who had not yet tasted death, was led from paradise as a witness; so that the God of heaven, earth, paradise and of the lower world, would have witnesses from every location and place. Likewise here then saint John is chosen among the first of the apostles.

3. Likewise at the time of the passion, when the Son of God had been hung on the cross for the world’s salvation, the Lord commended Mary, his mother according to the flesh, to no one but John, saying to him, “Behold your mother.” And to his mother: “Behold your son” [John 19:27, 26]; leaving his own holy mother Mary to John, not that he who protects everyone with his divine regard would abandon holy Mary, for he himself is the defender and protector of all, but in order to show the affection of his own piety toward Mary. For the Lord was obligated to show pious affection toward Mary, since he is the author of pious duty. Likewise here then John is preselected among the holy apostles, since he was loved by Christ with a unique affection in view of the merit of his grace [see John 13:23].

4. But after the passion, when the Lord was resurrected from death, Peter and John, hearing about the resurrection, ran to the tomb to see [see John 20:2–4]. And <John> reached the tomb first, though he was not the first to go in, since he reserved for Peter the right to enter first. Therefore, it was from the love that he had for Christ that John ran ahead to the tomb before saint Peter; but that he reserved the place for Peter shows his humility. That he ran ahead there stemmed from his love of Christ; that he kept back was derived from the dignity of his superior. And in this way he preserved humility <with respect to> Peter and faith with respect to Christ.

5. And the same saint John wrote the Gospel. There is no one who does not know how extraordinarily splendid it is. The Gospel according to John is particularly necessary to use against all heresies, since Christ’s divinity is declared clearly in it, and because he is shown to be God [see John 1:1, 14]. Since therefore today is the [heavenly] birthday of this great apostle, let us

celebrate his memory with appropriate honor, in order that aided by his prayers we may be able to reach that eternal glory that is prepared for the saints of God.

SERMON 23

Sermon on Cain and Abel

1. Divine Scripture has spoken of Cain and Abel, as your love has heard in today's reading. Abel was a shepherd of sheep, but Cain was a farmer. "And it came about that both offered gifts before the Lord. And Abel offered some of the firstborn of his sheep and his fatlings. And God looked upon Abel's gifts; but he did not show regard for Cain's gifts. And Cain was exceedingly sorrowful and his countenance fell" [Gen 4:3–5]. And what do we say? Is God an acceptor of persons [see Acts 10:34], so that he regarded the gifts of Abel, on the one hand, but did not regard the gifts of Cain? May no one ever believe that. But it is because nothing can lie hidden from God, who reveals the minds and hearts of all, since he is the judge of conscience. Therefore God regarded the gifts of Abel because he offered his gifts to the Lord with an honest heart and a pure mind. After all, the Lord tells the one who was thinking about murdering his brother, "For if you offer it rightly but do not divide it rightly, you have sinned, be still" [Gen 4:7]. Cain is being convicted by the Lord that he should not carry out in deed what he was thinking in his heart. But he was so blinded by hatred toward his brother in his mind that he thought neither of fraternal piety nor of the present judgment of God. Neither the pious duty toward his brother, nor brotherly love itself, nor the divine rebuke was able to call him back from his criminal purpose. And this is why not without reason the Lord says in the gospel, "If you offer your gift at the altar, and remember that you have something against your brother, leave your gift at the altar and go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then offer your gift" [Matt 5:23–24]. If then we want our gifts to be accepted by God, we ought to be reconciled with our sisters and brothers, after which, when hatred has been eradicated, <...> , lest we become like Cain.

2. With Cain and Abel then God saw the gifts of their sacrifices, but he took into consideration the conscience of their interior mind, so that the one who was pleasing in his heart would be pleasing in his gift; and the one who was displeasing in his heart would be displeasing in his gift. The gift of Abel pleased God because he offered the gift to the Lord with a pure heart; Cain's gift displeased God because he offered the gift to the Lord not with a pure heart but

with a wicked mind, since he was thinking about killing his brother. Indeed, according to the figurative reckoning, even the very gifts show the great difference between the offerers. Cain offered gifts from the fruits of the earth, since his thinking was earthly; but Abel offered gifts from the fruits of the sheep, to show a sign of his own innocence. And not only from the fruits of the sheep did Abel offer gifts, but the fatlings of the sheep, where the fat works of mercy are shown. Therefore the gift of our innocence is acceptable to God, when we add to it works of mercy, as it were the fatlings of the sheep.

Nor is the fact that Abel was a shepherd of sheep a superfluous point. For he prefigured in himself an example of the one who says in the gospel, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays his life down for his sheep” [John 10:11]. In Abel an image has gone <before> so that the truth may be manifested in Christ. The former was a shepherd from the earth, the latter a shepherd from heaven. The former a shepherd of animals, the latter of martyrs. The former a shepherd of irrational sheep, the latter of rational ones.

3. But let us notice the great mystery. Although our Savior is called a shepherd, yet he is also called sheep and lamb [see Isa 53:7; Jer 11:19]. Finally, not without a mysterious indication of the Lord’s passion was it read in today’s reading that Abel offered a gift to the Lord God from the offspring of his sheep. The holy patriarchs and prophets, deservedly innocent, are called sheep and rams. For we read a Scripture about them: “The rams of the sheep are clothed [with wool], and the valleys shall abound in corn” [Ps 65:13]. And again: “But we are your people and the sheep of your flock” [Ps 95:7]. From this flock of saints that untouched spotless sheep came forth, that is, saint Mary, who gave birth to that purple lamb contrary to nature, that is, Christ the king. Rightly is Christ the Lord understood as a purple lamb, since he was not made a king but born one. No king is born a king from the start; but after he is born he becomes king, or he receives the royal purple as his clothing, or the regal office. But our Lord and Savior came forth from the virgin’s womb with regal authority, since he was a king long before he was born of the virgin. For he stood forth as one born from God the Father as king and Son of God. Listen to the Lord declaring this very thing in the gospel. For when Pilate asked him, “Are you a king?” he responded, “For this I was born, and for this I have come into this world” [John 18:37]. Even those Magi in the east recognized the dignity of this king at the very moment of his bodily birth, when they said to the Jews, “Where is the one who has been born king of Jews? For we saw his star in the east, and have come to worship him” [Matt 2:2].

To the extent that Abel’s faith was better, since he offered gifts to the Lord

from the fruits of his sheep, so much the more religious is the devotion of the Christian people, which we are, who offer gifts of innocence and simplicity to the Lord, if only we merit <...> from the Lord. Therefore we offer a gift to the Lord from the fruit of our sheep, if we live simply and innocently in the sight of God. And we offer a gift to the Lord from the fatlings of the sheep, if we exhibit to God the works of mercy and piety, as the fat.

SERMON 24

Here Begins a Sermon on the Holy Patriarch Joseph

1. The divine Scripture impresses upon us a considerable number of things about the holy patriarch Joseph [see Gen 37—41]. And we too are attempting to say some things, as those who are offering crumbs from large loaves of bread. Hence we read that it is written in the gospel, “For even the little dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table” [Matt 15:27]. Even if the crumbs from a great feast do not satisfy, yet they do feed. After all, as soon as we come to belief, we are fed with crumbs as it were from the apostles’ precepts. But when we make progress in the faith, then an abundance of heavenly bread is brought in, that we may be satisfied with the heavenly bread of him assuredly who says in the gospel, “I am the living bread who came down from heaven” [John 6:51]. Let us not reject the crumbs of doctrine, then, since the crumbs come from the bread; and the reason we should not suppress the crumbs is so that we may merit being refreshed with the bread loaf. But let us now come to saint Joseph, that we may be fed by the example of his chastity and modesty, as it were with some heavenly bread.

2. This saint Joseph, then, of whom your love has heard in today’s reading, had a handsome body [see Gen 39:6], but he was more handsome in his mind, since he was both chaste in body and pure in mind. The outward beauty of his body shone in him, but the beauty of his soul shone more brightly. And though for many bodily beauty is often an obstacle to salvation, it was unable to harm the holy man, since the loveliness of his soul governed the outward beauty of his body. Therefore the soul ought to rule the flesh, not the flesh the soul, since the soul is lord of the flesh; but the flesh is handmaid of the soul. This is why that soul is wretched in which the flesh holds sway, and which from being lord becomes a handmaid, since it loses the dominion of faith and takes up service to sin.

But the soul of the patriarch Joseph faithfully held fast to its own dominion. In him the flesh was not able to rule in any respect. Indeed, when he was asked by his own mistress, who was an unchaste woman, to sleep with her, he refused to give in, since not even in the state of slavery had he lost the soul's rule [see Gen 39:7–8]. Whence when he was attacked with a slanderous falsehood, he was put in prison [see Gen 39:20]. But the holy man reckoned that prison to be a palace, or rather, he himself was a palace in the prison, since where there is faith, chastity, and modesty, there is Christ's palace, there is God's temple, there is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. If therefore any man is flattered by the outward beauty of his body, or if some woman boasts over the beauty of her flesh, let them follow the example of Joseph, let them follow the example of Susanna [see Dan 13]. Let them be chaste in body, let them be modest in mind; such people are beautiful not merely to humans but also to God. For there are three examples of chastity in the church that everyone ought to imitate: Joseph, Susanna, and Mary. Let men imitate Joseph; women, Susanna; and virgins, Mary.

3. But according to the mystical or allegorical reckoning, Joseph was a prefiguration and type of the Lord. After all, if we consider the deeds of Joseph, at least in some measure, we recognize a figure of the Lord in him, manifestly shown in advance. Joseph has a varied tunic [see Gen 37:3]; our Lord and Savior is known also to have had a varied tunic, since he received the church gathered from various nations as a garment of clothing. And there is another variety of this tunic, that is, of the church that Christ received. For the church has diverse and various graces: it has martyrs, it has confessors, it has priests, it has ministers, it has virgins, it has widows, it has workers of justice. But that variety of the church is not a variety of colors, but a variety of graces; for our Lord and Savior shines forth with this variety of his church, as with varied and precious clothing.

Joseph was forcibly separated from his brothers and was purchased by the Ishmaelites [see Gen 37:25–28]. Our Lord and Savior too was forcibly separated from the Jews and was purchased by the Gentiles. Finally, the Ishmaelites who purchased Joseph were carrying various kinds of perfumes with them, so that from that it could be shown that the nations that were coming to faith would fill the whole world with the fragrance of different odors of justice.

4. But let us consider the great mystery. Twenty gold pieces were given for Joseph [see Gen 37:28 LXX]; thirty silver pieces for the Lord [see Matt 26:15]. The slave is forcibly separated for a dearer price than the Lord. But human calculation is greatly deceived about the Lord because the one who was

sold is priceless. But let us consider this mystery more carefully. The Jews offered thirty silver pieces for the Lord; the Ishmaelites, twenty gold pieces for Joseph. The Ishmaelites purchased the slave for a dearer price than that for which the Jews purchased the Lord. In Joseph they venerated an image of Christ; in Christ they held in contempt the truth itself. The Jews offered for the Lord a cheaper price, since they reckoned the passion of the Lord to be of less worth. But how cheap can the Lord's passion be deemed to be, at the price of which the entire world was redeemed? For Christ's passion redeemed the whole world and the entire human race from death. Listen to the apostle himself showing this when he says, "You were bought at a great price" [1 Cor 6:20]. Listen to the apostle Peter likewise testifying, "Not with earthly gold nor with perishable gold were you redeemed from your vain way of life, but with the most precious blood of the immaculate Son of God" [1 Pet 1:18–19]. If we had been purchased from death with gold or silver, our redemption would have been cheap, since a person is worth more than gold or silver; but now we have been redeemed at an inestimable price, since the one who redeemed us by his passion is of inestimable worth.

5. If we should consider the other deeds of Joseph, too, we shall recognize in all of them an image of the Lord prefigured. Joseph suffers a slander from an unchaste woman, and the Lord was often attacked by slanders from the synagogue. Joseph experienced the punishment of prison, and the Lord accepted the passion of death. The former is thrown into prison; the latter descended to the underworld. For divine Scripture frequently is accustomed to call the realm below a prison; whence the following is said by the prophet, "Bring my soul out of prison" [Ps 142:7]. For the holy prophet longed to be delivered from the lower world. But consider the mystery in this. After Joseph went forth from prison, he became lord of Egypt [see Gen 41:37–46]. And after our Lord and Savior went forth from prison, he obtained dominion over the whole world through the knowledge of his faith. For the name of Christ rules everywhere, he is lord everywhere; he is believed in by the world, he is manifested by the age [see 1 Tim 3:16]; he is honored by the nations, he is worshiped by kings.

SERMON 25

Here Begins a Sermon on Saint Elijah

1. The reading introduced us to saint Elijah [see 1 Kgs 17—18]. And fittingly we read about saint Elijah during this time of fasting, since Elijah too fasted forty

days and forty nights [see 1 Kgs 19:8]. He did not seek the bread of the world, since he had the bread of life in himself, that is, the word of God, by whose food and power he was strengthened during those days. Thus he seemed stronger than he had been at any other time. Well then, many miracles are reported of this Elijah, as your love has heard in part in today's reading. But since it would take too long to explain each of them, since an hour's time, or even entire days, would not suffice to narrate them, so let us say a few things from the many, in order that we may understand many things in the few.

2. When saint Elijah was enduring the last persecution by King Ahab and by his wife Jezebel, the Lord said to him, "Go to the brook and I will command the ravens, and they will feed you there, and you will drink water from the brook. And daily they brought him loaves in the morning and meat in the evening" [1 Kgs 17:3, 6]. One understands the extent of the Lord's care for his saints from the fact that he deigns to feed <them> even by means of the ministry of ravens. David had already previously spoken well and truly in the psalm: "For God does not kill a just soul by famine" [Prov 10:3]. The prophet saint Elijah had a just soul that the Lord was unwilling to wear down with constant hunger, so that he fed him by the service of birds. And although for a just soul food is inner, that is, the word of God by which it is always refreshed, yet it is not deprived even of this bread by the mercy of God. And by the ministry of ravens it is supplied indeed to this saint Elijah in the desert. But to Daniel in the lions' den he commanded a meal to be brought by a ministering angel [see Dan 14:33–39]. For Daniel too had endured persecution for justice's sake at the hands of the Babylonian powers. But the injustice of persecutors does no harm to the souls of the just. Ravens feed Elijah, wild beasts do touch Daniel [see Dan 6:16–18; 14:31–32], and people lie in wait and pursue.

3. But let us return to the subject. God then feeds his servant Elijah in the desert by the ministry of ravens, who brought loaves to him in the morning and meat in the evening. What do the Jews say, who think that they are clean in this respect because they abstain from certain foods that are said mystically to be unclean in the law? Certainly a raven is an unclean animal according to the law [see Lev 11:15; Deut 14:14]. And in their interpretation, that which touches an unclean thing would necessarily be made unclean [see Lev 5:2; 7:19]. And how was saint Elijah able to have meat brought to him by ravens to use as food, if what a raven touches is unclean? But for Elijah, who possessed a clear conscience, not even food brought by ravens was able to be unclean. Clearly it is not food but conscience that defiles someone. And that is why the apostle rightly says, "To the clean all things are clean, but to the defiled nothing is clean" [Titus

1:15], even if they receive clean food. For clean food is defiled by an unclean conscience. After all, the Jews think that they are abstaining from unclean foods, but they are not clean because they are full of the uncleanness of sins [see Matt 23:25, 28]. Would that just as they think that they are abstaining from unclean foods, so they would abstain from the uncleanness of sins, so that they would become truly clean! But to eat clean food and not to have a clear conscience does not benefit at all for salvation. Therefore we ought always to have a clear conscience, so that all the food that we take in we may be able to have as clean; for food does not make someone unclean, but a bad conscience does [see Matt 15:17–20; Mark 7:19].

4. We have said this on account of the Jews, who think that no cleanness exists except in abstaining from certain foods, though saint Elijah, who was clean in all things, is shown to have received meat that unclean ravens carried to him; and he was never defiled by that meat, so that not only did he not offend, but he was transferred to paradise [see 2 Kgs 2:11]. But if we consider these deeds of Elijah in the spiritual sense and with the eyes of faith, we find mystical things and great mysteries. For in Elijah, who endured persecution from the very wicked woman Jezebel, a type of the Lord was shown, who endured persecution from the synagogue, a sacrilegious woman. But in the ravens that brought food to Elijah, our calling was shown, we who came to belief from the unclean Gentiles, carrying the food of our devotion and faith to Christ the Lord. For the devotion and faith of believers is Christ's food [see Matt 25:35]. But let us consider the mystery of these ravens more carefully. For "ravens brought" to Elijah "loaves in the morning and meat in the evening" [1 Kgs 17:6]. They have brought loaves to the Lord in the morning who believed in Christ with all their heart, who carried the true food of faith in their mouth. But the martyrs brought meat in the evening, who in the setting of their life handed over their own flesh in the evening, that is, their bodies for the sake of Christ's name; yet they carried this meat in their mouth, who for Christ's sake attracted martyrdom by the confession of their mouth.

5. Now let us consider the following point, that the same Elijah was sent to some widow woman who was in Zarephath of Sidon for her to feed him lest he die of famine [1 Kgs 17:8–16]. For as the reading has reported, she still had a small measure of meal and a small measure of oil. Elijah went to her and told her to make bread for him to eat. But she answered and said that she had nothing but a small measure of meal and a small measure of oil to make bread for herself and for her children, and then to die [see 1 Kgs 17:12]. Elijah said to her, "First make something to eat for me, for thus says the Lord: the flask (*capsaces*) of meal

shall not diminish, and the oil shall not diminish, nor will it fail from its vessel, until the day that the Lord gives rain upon the earth" [1 Kgs 17:13–14]. Great was the grace of the prophet, who promised so much to the woman; but the woman's faith helped the grace of the prophet. For she believed with complete faith, so that she offered to Elijah what he requested. The facts themselves make clear that this woman believed with complete faith. From a small measure of meal, which was all that she had left, she offered bread to the prophet, before giving any of it to her children. For the prophet's merit weighed more than her love for her children. And this is why it is not undeservedly that this woman represents a figure of the church in all respects. Already back then she was venerating an image of Christ in Elijah. Love and grace shown to him takes precedence not only over her children but also her own life. This woman had not yet heard the Lord speaking in the gospel: "Whoever does not hate parents or children for my sake is not worthy of me" [Luke 14:26; Matt 10:37], and yet she fulfilled the gospel precept before hearing it. For at that time she saw the mystery of Christ at work in Elijah. This woman was a widow who had not yet believed in the man Christ, of whom John the Baptist says, "After me comes a man who came before me, since he was prior to me" [John 1:30]. To be sure this man came after John, since according to the flesh he deigned to be born from a virgin after John; but he was prior to John, since he was begotten from God the Father before all things.

6. But let us consider how this woman perfectly prefigures an image of the church. Before Elijah came to her, she was weary with hunger along with her children, she was obviously weary and in the midst of an extremely severe famine, since Christ the bread of life had not yet descended from heaven [see John 6:41]; not yet had the Word of God been incarnated from the virgin. Listen to the prophet speaking: "I will send forth a famine on the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the word of God" [Amos 8:11]. For he is truly endangered by famine who is weary with a famine of the divine word. For a famine of earthly bread is far different than a famine of the divine word. A famine of earthly bread can only kill the body, but not the soul. But a famine of the divine word both kills the body and murders the soul. A famine of earthly bread shuts a man out from the present life; but the famine of the divine word casts a man out from eternal and perpetual life. The church was weary with danger of this sort before it received Christ; but after it received him, it escaped the danger of eternal death. This woman indeed had a small measure of meal and a small measure of oil before the coming of Christ, that is, the proclamation of the law and the prophets. But this was not able to suffice for life

for her, without the grace of Christ fulfilling the law and the prophets. That is why the following words of the Lord were spoken in the gospel: “I have not come to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfill [them]” [Matt 5:17]. For the salvation of human life could not be in the law and the prophets, but only in the passion of Christ. After all, this is the reason the church later received Christ, and meal, oil, and wood began to abound. In the meal, the food of the word was shown; but in the oil, the gift of divine mercy; but in the wood, the mystery of the venerable cross by which heavenly rain is granted to us. For that is what Elijah says to the woman: “Meal and oil will not fail you, until the Lord brings rain upon the land” [1 Kgs 17:14]. Our Lord and Savior brought rain from heaven to us, that is the gospel preaching, by which he invigorated with life-giving waters the arid hearts of the human race, like thirsty ground.

Since therefore we are fed with heavenly food of this sort, we should not complain about the difficulty of fasting; or rather, we ought to say to the Lord the words that the prophet spoke in the psalm: “How sweet to my throat are your words, O Lord, beyond honey and the honeycomb to my mouth!” [Ps 119:103]. Thus, when the Lord sees our faithful devotion toward himself, he may repay us with heavenly grace and with all spiritual goods.

SERMON 26

For the Dedication of the Church of Concordia

1. We ought to give unspeakable thanks to our God, who has deigned to adorn his church in all ways like this. The basilica has been completed to the honor of the saints, and it was completed quickly. Indeed, you were aroused by the example of other churches to an act of devotion of this sort; but we are pleased with your faith since you have surpassed their example. For you started later but finished earlier, since you previously earned the right to hold the relics of the saints. We have received the relics from you; you [have received] from us zealous devotion <and> emulation of faith. This sort of rivalry and religious competition is good, where one contends not from worldly greed but from the gift of thanks. With religious longing we have carried what had been brought to you from the gift of the saints; but based on this we stirred up your zeal, so that you even asked for a portion. It could not be denied, because what was being requested was just. The portion was given so that both you had the whole of it in the portion and we lost none of what had been given. <This agrees with> what is written: “The one with more did not overflow, and the one with little did not

suffer lack” [2 Cor 8:15]. And so, the church of Concordia has been adorned, by the gift of the saints, by the construction of the basilica, and by the ministry of the high priest. For the holy man, my brother and fellow bishop, has earned the right to be honored with the high priesthood, he who through the gifts of saints of this sort has honored the church of Christ, who is the eternal priest [see Heb 5:6; 6:20; 7:3, 17, 21].

2. Numerous indeed are the merits of the holy apostles <whose> relics are kept here. But let us say at least a few things of the many that could be mentioned. For it is fitting that we preach something about the merits of those whose faith and glory shines throughout the entire world, whose virtue and grace is at work everywhere. For <as> the prophet says in the psalm about them, “Their sound <has gone forth> into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world” [Ps 19:4]. Clearly the sound of the apostles has gone forth through every country, not only at that time when they physically preached Christ to the world, but even now it goes forth daily when <the virtue> of faith and spiritual grace works in relation to the diverse maladies of sins. But we do not even expect less grace from the apostles just because we seem not to have the relics of them all. Where there are two or three, all are there, since the faith is in common and the grace is the same. Hear how the Lord himself makes this known <when> he says, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst” [Matt 18:20]. If, then, Christ is with two or three, all the apostles are with Christ. It is necessary that where Christ is, there the whole choir of apostles is present. Whence we ought to believe and hold that all are there as it were in the few. But since we are not able to recount each of their merits, by treating these things somewhat briefly, we ought to tell whose relics we have in order that we may attain some progress in the faith.

3. The Gospels make clear how great saint John the Baptist was held by the Lord, how great likewise was John the evangelist, whose relics are kept here. The one John is the Baptist, the other the evangelist. The one recognized his Lord while he was still in his mother’s womb [see Luke 1:41, 44]; the other found Christ while he was on the shore [see Matt 4:21–22]. The one baptized the Lord [see Matt 3:13–17]; the other reclined upon his Lord’s breast [John 13:23]. The one is said to be the first among those born of women [see Matt 11:11; Luke 7:28]; the other is singled out with unique affection among the apostles [John 13:23]. The one is called an angel [see Matt 11:10; Mark 1:2]; the other is named a son of thunder [Luke 7:27; Mark 3:17]. The one showed Christ who was present to the people when he said, “Behold the lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sin of the world” [John 1:29]; the other made the Son of God

known to the entire world through the preaching of his Gospel, when he said, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made” [John 1:1–3]. Both men were eminent; both were very great. The one saw the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove upon the Lord [see Luke 3:22; John 1:32]; the other was seized in the Spirit and recognized the secrets of heaven [see Rev 4:1–2]. Finally, the one was cast in prison by King Herod on account of chastity [see Matt 14:3]; the other for the sake of Christ’s name was banished to an island by Domitian Caesar [see Rev 1:9].

4. What should we say about the apostles Andrew and Thomas? What of Luke the evangelist? For their relics are held here as well. Andrew is the brother of saint Peter, who even himself took up the cross for the sake of Christ, just as his brother Peter did. They were equals in suffering because they were equals in faith. For both were equal for Christ’s sake; they took up his cross. And it was obviously fitting that those who were related by blood stood forth as brothers in the glory of suffering.

Now Thomas was also one of the apostles. This is the Thomas who had doubts after the Lord’s resurrection. In order to strengthen his faith very fully, the Lord said to him, “Put your hand in my side and do not be unbelieving but believing” [John 20:27]. When he put it in and felt it, Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God” [John 20:28]. The Lord said to him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed” [John 20:29]. To be sure, saint Thomas had doubts after the Lord’s resurrection, but his doubting strengthened the faith of the church. And so Thomas touched the Lord’s hands in order to recognize the prints of the nails; and he touched the Lord’s side in order to feel signs of the body in the present wound. Otherwise enemies of the faith would claim that Christ had <not> resurrected from the dead in the same flesh. After all, <though> saint Thomas both by the sight of his eyes and by the touch of his hand had proved that Christ had resurrected in his body, yet not even then did Marcion and the Manicheans want to believe that the Lord resurrected in the flesh. But what does Thomas say after he touched the hands of the Lord? “My Lord and my God” [John 20:28]. He only recognized Christ as his Lord by the power of his resurrection, since to conquer death and to raise flesh from death by one’s own power pertains only to the divine power and the eternal majesty. And that is why he says to him, “My Lord and my God.” When he had reached India, in accordance with the statement of the Lord, to preach Christ the Lord even in India, after many miracles and

wonders that strengthened the faith of believers, he received his glorious death worthily. Since, therefore, his body was kept buried in India, some merchant, a Christian man who was very devout, reached as far as India for the sake of doing business, in order that from there he might bring precious stones or Indian wares to the Romans from the desire of earthly gain. But instead of being a merchant of the world, he was found to be a merchant of God. For when he came to India, through revelation it was shown to him just where the body of saint Thomas was being kept, and he was warned to bring back his body to Edessa with him. But that man in fact as a merchant of God showed contempt for worldly gain and began to think only about heavenly gain. For he discovered a better reward than Indian stones, which he had not sought....

SERMON 27

On the Resurrection of Lazarus

1. Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior, made known the power of his divinity by many signs and miracles indeed, but especially in the death of Lazarus, as your love has heard in today's reading, when he showed that he was the one of whom it had been written, "The Lord of powers is with us, the God of Jacob our helper" [Ps 46:7]. Our Lord and Savior worked these miracles in two ways, bodily and spiritually, that is, visibly and invisibly, so that he showed the invisible power by the visible work. Higher up by means of a visible work, he illumined the man blind from birth with eyesight, so that by that invisible power he illumined the blindness of the Jews with the light of his knowledge [see John 9]. But in today's reading he gave life to the dead Lazarus, so that from the death of sin he raised up unto life the unbelieving hearts of the Jews [see John 11:1–44]. After all, because of Lazarus many of the Jews believed in Christ the Lord [see John 11:45]. For they recognized in the resurrection of Lazarus the manifest power of the Son of God, since to command the dead by one's own power does not pertain to the human condition but to the divine nature.

We read indeed that the apostles also raised the dead, but in order to raise them, they prayed to the Lord [see Acts 9:40; 20:9–12]; they did not raise them by their own power or authority, but by the invocation of Christ's name, who is lord of death and life. But the Son of God raised Lazarus by his own power. After all, when the Lord says, "Lazarus, come forth" [John 11:43], immediately that man came forth from the tomb, and death was unable to hold the one whom life was calling. The stench of the tomb was in the nostrils when Lazarus stood

there alive. Death did not wait to hear the voice of the Savior repeat itself, since it could not bear the power of life, but solely at the Lord's voice, death released both the body of Lazarus from the tomb and his soul from the underworld; and the whole Lazarus proceeded alive from the tomb, who had not been entirely there. One wakes from sleep more slowly than Lazarus was roused from death. The stench of the corpse was still in the nostrils of the Jews, and Lazarus stood there alive. But let us now consider the beginning of the reading.

2. The Lord says therefore to his disciples, as your love has heard in today's reading, "Our friend Lazarus is asleep; but I am going to rouse him from sleep" [John 11:11]. The Lord said well, "Our friend Lazarus is asleep," since he was truly about to raise him from death as if from sleep. But the disciples do not know why the Lord said this and say to him, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better" [John 11:12]. Then he answered and said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead; but I am glad for your sake, so that you may believe, since I was not there" [John 11:14–15]. But if the Lord says here that he rejoices for the disciples' sake over the death of Lazarus, why is it that he is later reported to have wept over the death of Lazarus [John 11:35]? But let us consider the reason for the joy and the tears. The Lord rejoiced for the disciples' sake; he wept for the Jews' sake. For the disciples' sake he rejoiced, because through the resurrection of Lazarus their faith had the means of being strengthened in Christ. He wept because of the unbelief of the Jews, since not even by the raising of Lazarus would they believe in Christ the Lord. Or possibly the reason the Lord wept was so that by his tears he could blot out the sins of the world [see John 1:29]. If Peter could wipe away his own sins by the shedding of his tears [see Matt 26:75; Mark 14:72; Luke 22:62], why do we not believe that the sins of the world could be blotted out by the Lord's tears? Finally, after the Lord's tears, many from the Jewish people believed [see John 11:45]. The emotion of the Lord's piety partially overcame the unbelief of the Jews, and his pious outpouring of tears softened their discordant minds. And perhaps for that reason it is reported of the Lord in today's reading that he both rejoiced and wept, since as it is written, "He who sows in tears will reap in joy" [Ps 126:5]. Therefore the Lord's tears are the world's joys, since the reason he shed tears was so that we might merit the joys. But let us return to the subject.

He says therefore to his disciples, "Our friend Lazarus is dead; but I am glad for your sake, that you may know, for I was not there," [John 11:14–15]. Let us consider the mystery here as well. In what sense is the Lord saying that he was not there? For when he says plainly, "Lazarus is dead" [John 11:14], he clearly shows that he was present there. For the Lord could not have said this unless he

had been present, since no one brought him news of it. For how was the Lord not present in the place where Lazarus died, since he contained all places of the entire world by his divine majesty? But here too our Lord and Savior is showing in himself the mystery of his flesh and of his divinity. For he was not there in the flesh; but he was in his divinity, since God is everywhere.

3. So then, when the Lord came to Mary and Martha, the sister of Lazarus, upon seeing the crowd of Jews, he said, “Where have you laid him?” [John 11:34]. Was the Lord unaware of where Lazarus had been laid, who while absent had announced beforehand that Lazarus was dead, and who was everywhere by the majesty of his divinity? But the Lord did this according to ancient custom. For he likewise said to Adam, “Where are you, Adam?” [Gen 3:9]. It is not that he did not know where Adam was, but he asked in order that Adam would confess his sin with his own mouth, so that he could earn pardon for the sin. And he asks Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” [Gen 4:9]. And he said, “I do not know” [Gen 4:9]. It is not that he asked Cain because he was unaware of Abel’s whereabouts, but that although Cain denied it, he was convicting him of the crime of murder, which he had committed against his brother. Finally, Adam was paid back with a pardon, since in response to the Lord’s question, he confessed the sin he had committed; Cain, since he denied, was condemned with eternal punishment. So too here, when the Lord says, “Where have you laid him?” he is not asking because he does not know where Lazarus had been laid, but in order that the throng of Jews might follow him to the tomb of Lazarus, to see the divine power of Christ in the resurrection of Lazarus. They would then stand forth as witnesses against themselves, if they did not believe such a great miracle. For above the Lord had said to them, “If you do not believe me, at least believe the works, and know that the Father is in me and I am in him” [John 10:38].

Then when he came to the tomb, he said to the Jews who were standing around, “Take away the stone from here” [John 11:39]. What are we saying? Was the Lord unable to remove the stone from the tomb by a command, who removed the gates of the underworld by his own power? But he commanded men to do what could be done by men; but he showed by his own authority what pertained to the divine power. For it pertains to human power to recall a stone from a tomb; but to recall a soul from the underworld is of [divine] power. But it would have been easy, had he wanted to, to remove the stone from the tomb solely by the command of a word, since he created the world by a word.

4. Therefore when they removed the stone from the tomb, he said with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth” [John 11:43]. He was showing that he was the one

of whom it had been written: “The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is magnificent” [Ps 29:4]; and again: “Behold he will add to his power a voice of power” [Ps 68:33]. This is clearly the voice of power and magnificence that immediately recalled Lazarus from death to life, and his soul was returned to his body, before he had uttered the sound of his voice. Although his body was in one place, his soul in another, nevertheless this voice of the Lord at once both returned the soul to the body and made the body present to the soul. For death was terrified when the voice of such power was heard. And it is no wonder of course if Lazarus could rise at a single word of the Lord, when he himself has declared in the gospel that all who are in their tombs will be resurrected at a single word alone, when he says, “The hour is coming, when all who are in their tombs will hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall rise” [John 5:25]. This is why it is beyond doubt that at that time when death heard the voice of the Lord, it would have released all the dead from its possession, had it not recognized that Lazarus alone had been summoned. And so, as the Lord says, “Lazarus, come forth, immediately he came out with his hands and feet bound, and his face was covered by a napkin” [John 11:44]. And what shall we say here? Could the Lord not have burst the bands with which Lazarus had been buried, he who shattered the chains of death? But here our Lord and Savior shows in Lazarus a double miracle of his working, in order in this way to infuse the faith of belief into the unbelief of the Jews. For it is no smaller cause for astonishment that Lazarus was able to walk while his feet were bound, than to have risen from the dead.

SERMON 28

On the Words of the Apostle: Do You Not Know That Those Who Run in a Race

1. The blessed apostle Paul exhorts us to strive for the crown of heavenly glory not only by the teaching of the law but also by an example from this world. For as your love has heard, among other things he says the following: “Do you not know that those who run in a race indeed all run, but one receives the crown?” [1 Cor 9:24]. And he added, “Run in such a way that you take hold of it.” According to the earthly example, many indeed, as the apostle says, run in the race, but one receives the crown, that is, the one who runs better; so too in the race of the present life, many indeed run, but one receives the crown. The Jews run by means of the law, the philosophers by means of worthless wisdom [see Col 2:8]; the heretics too run by means of false preaching, Catholics run by

means of the true preaching of the faith. But of all these, one receives the crown, namely, the Catholic people who head toward Christ on the right course of faith, to reach the palm and crown of immortality.

2. And the reason the Jews, the philosophers, and the heretics run in vain is because they do not go on the right path of faith. For what benefit comes to the Jews to run by means of observance of the law, who do not know Christ, the Lord of the law? The philosophers also run by means of vain wisdom of the world, but their course is superfluous and vain, since they do not know the true wisdom of Christ. For Christ is the true wisdom of God [see 1 Cor 1:24], which is not decked out with words, nor with brilliant speech, but is known by the faith of the heart. And the heretics run by means of the poisonous claims of their faith, they run by means of fasts, they run by means of almsgiving, but they do not attain to the crown, since they do not believe in Christ faithfully. For their false faith does not deserve to receive the grace of true faith. The apostle makes this clear in another passage when he says, “And if I give away all my money to the poor and if I hand over my body to the fire to be burned, but have not love, it does not benefit me at all” [1 Cor 13:3]. For he who does not believe faithfully in Christ does not have the love of Christ. And therefore the apostle added rightly and said, “Run in such a way as to take hold.” Therefore we ought to run by a faithful course in the faith of Christ, in the commands of God, in the works of justice, in order to be able to attain to the crown of eternal life.

3. Finally, the same apostle shows us in what follows how we must run, when he says, “Everyone who competes in a contest is self-controlled in all things; and indeed they [do this] in order to receive a perishable crown” [1 Cor 9:25]. See with what examples the apostle invites us to the crown of the promised immortality. In that earthly contest, those who want to win abstain from certain foods, they abstain from excessive drink, they abstain from all uncleanness, they practice such a degree of chastity that they do not even demand conjugal relations with their own wives. And in no other way do they hope to be able to win except by preserving the purity and chastity of their bodies. And after such great effort, what else do they receive but a small, perishable, and insignificant crown? If then some people undertake such great effort for a perishable crown, how much more ought we to endure all effort, to whom a heavenly prize and crown of eternal glory is promised? It is therefore our task to strive in the contest with no light struggle, for we are contending against the spiritual forces of wickedness [see Eph 6:12], against the devil and his angels [see Matt 25:41]; we are contending against unrighteousness, against impiety, against evil, against unchastity, against the various enticements of sins. And if we struggle and win,

we receive as many crowns as the vices we conquered.

4. And so, this struggle is great in which we exhibit a spectacle to the Lord [see 1 Cor 4:9]. When we engage in this contest, the Lord watches us, his angels watch us; we conquer on earth, but we receive a prize of virtue in heaven. Finally, when the holy martyrs were placed in the struggle of this contest, they not only conquered the vices of sins but death itself, and they received the prize of immortality. Our Lord and Savior was the first to contend and win in this struggle, in order to show us an example of combat and of victory.

By discussing these things with you, then, we are planting the seeds of good combat in your hearts, as those who find your hearts furrowed with the plow of justice. Therefore, cultivate the word we have sown in you in order that what has been sown may be able to germinate. But may God pour into you the moisture of his piety by his visitation, and may he grant increase to our seeds in order that you may be able to attain to the hundredfold harvest in the bundles of merits that are gathered in [see Matt 13:23; Mark 4:20].

SERMON 29

On Saint Peter and His Deliverance from Prison

1. Your love has heard in order how saint Peter was put in prison, bound with two chains, and handed over to four squads of four soldiers, and how he was delivered from there by an angel of the Lord [see Acts 12:1–17]. Saint Peter was put in prison, then, for the sake of Christ's name, but he was not able to dread the penalty of prison because he himself, even in prison, was a temple of God. He was bound with two chains, but in that very prison he tore off the chains of crimes from believers. He was guarded by four squads of four soldiers, that is, by sixteen [for just as a centurion has a hundred soldiers under him, so a squad of four has four soldiers in it] but during that time of custody, he introduced the four Gospels to those who came to faith; and obviously he who was being kept under a divine guard would not have been able to be afraid of a human guard.

2. Therefore when Peter was being carefully guarded in prison by four squads of four soldiers, bound with two chains, an angel of the Lord came to him, as your love has heard, and it opened the prison gates for him and said to him, "Get up and take your garment and cover yourself, and put on your sandals, and come, follow me" [Acts 12:8]. And he got up and followed him. And when he

had come to the iron gate with the angel, at once the same gate by itself was opened for them. And it is not surprising, of course, if an iron gate was opened of its own accord for saint Peter, who had already received the gates of hell under his authority, when the Lord said to him, “You are Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And whatever you bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatever you loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven” [Matt 16:18–19]. Therefore, he opened the iron gate to saint Peter, who laid open the gates of hell; he rescued Peter from death who vanquished death itself.

3. But what was done with Peter then according to the letter, we also recognize is being done with us mystically, if we follow Peter’s faith. For we, too, are placed in this world as in a prison. If then we merit being visited by God, an angel of God is sent to us and says to each one of us, “Gird yourself and put on your sandals, and cover yourself with your garment, and follow me” [Acts 12:8]. For we gird ourselves if we surround the loins of our body with the belt of chastity, since the apostle says, “Let your loins be girded in chastity” [Luke 12:35; cf. Eph 6:14; Isa 11:5; 59:17]. And we put shoes on our feet if we fortify the steps of our life with the gospel precepts and with the virtue of faith, so that we may tread safely upon the thorns of sins and the thistles of iniquity. And we cover ourselves with our garment if we preserve that wedding garment, namely, the grace of baptism, unscathed within us. And so if we faithfully fulfill these things, at once the chains will fall from our hands, that is, the chains of sins with which we were held fast, bound up, and tied in our soul.

4. But the only way we can escape from prison, that is, from the error of this world, is by being visited by the Lord through his angel. The iron gate will be opened to us, that is, the gate of death and punishment, which the Son of God shattered by the power of his passion. And then we come to the home of Mary, to the church of Christ, where Mary the mother of the Lord dwells [see Acts 12:12]. And there a girl meets us by the name of Rhoda [see Acts 12:13]. But the name Rhoda is a fitting one as a mystery of our salvation. For in the Greek language, *Rhoda* spells *rose*. Therefore when we come to Mary’s house, no one but Rhoda meets us, that is, the congregation of the saints, which shines like a precious rose with the glorious blood of the martyrs.

On the Beginning of the Newborn Church

1. After our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus rose, having vanquished death, and ascended to heaven, his church gathered together in the number of a hundred men, as your love has heard in today's reading [see Acts 1:12–14]. Now it was gathered in the upper room with Mary, who was the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. Therefore one cannot speak of the church unless Mary the mother of the Lord is there together with his brothers. For the church of Christ is where Christ's incarnation from the virgin is proclaimed. And the gospel is heard where the apostles, the Lord's brothers, preach. One cannot speak of the church where the synagogue of the Jews is, since it refuses to believe in the incarnation of Christ from a virgin or to listen to those who preach spiritually.

2. And at first, after the Lord's ascension to heaven, the church numbered only 120 men, but later it grew so large that it filled the entire world with countless people. But that this is what would happen the Lord makes clear in the gospel when he says to the apostles, "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground, it remains alone. But when it dies, it bears much fruit" [John 12:24–25]. The resurrection of the Lord's passion plainly bore "much fruit" for human salvation. For in the grain of wheat our Lord and Savior signifies his own body. For when it was buried in the ground, it bore great and countless fruit, since by the Lord's resurrection a harvest of virtues arose in the whole world and crops of believing peoples. For the death of one became the life of all. Rightly when elsewhere in the gospel he compares the kingdom of heaven, he says the following: "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed cast into a garden which is the least of all seeds. But when it grows, it will become larger than all the garden plants, so that birds of the sky dwell in its branches" [Matt 13:31–32]. The Lord likened himself to a grain of mustard seed, and though he was the God of glory <and> eternal majesty, he became least, since he deigned to be born of a virgin with the body of an infant. Therefore he was sown into the ground when his body was handed over to burial. But after he rose from death through the glory of the resurrection, it grew on earth so that it became a tree, having branches on which the birds of the sky dwell. The tree was a representation of the church that rose in glory through the death of Christ. Its branches are understood as none other than the apostles, since just as branches naturally adorn a tree, so the apostles adorn Christ's church with the beauty of their grace. The birds of the sky are known to inhabit these branches. Birds of the sky allegorically signify us, who come to the church of Christ, and rest in the teaching of the apostles, as it were, on branches.

3. But let us return to the subject. At first, then, after the Lord's ascension, the

church was few in number. But later on it grew to such an extent that it filled the entire world, not only cities, but also the various nations. Faith is found among the Persians, among the Indians, in the entire world. It was not dread of the sword or fear of the emperor that rendered these nations obedient to Christ, but only faith in Christ made them peaceable. After all, when these nations were fighting against each other for earthly kingdoms, they laid claim to other countries and places, [but] when they came to faith and [confessed] the name of Christ, there is no more combat, since they all acknowledge one king of all, Jesus Christ. Among the nations there is no contention under this king; with equal consent they all worship him, adore him, and venerate him. For his sake they lay aside their savage dispositions and take pride in his grace and faith. And although diversity of kingdom causes them to quarrel over worldly empires, yet in terms of the kingdom of God and the unity of concord, they obey one emperor with the same faith, in terms of faith they all fight their campaign under Christ. From him they daily receive the soldier's pay of salvation and obtain the gifts of spiritual graces. And if necessity demands it, they are more readily prepared to lay down their lives for their king than to lose their faith; and <rightly> of course, since this king for whom we campaign offers his soldiers a reward even after death. A king of this world can provide nothing after death to a soldier who is killed in his service, since he himself is subject to death; but Christ the king offers to soldiers who die in his service the reward of eternal immortality. A soldier of this world, if he is killed for his king, is conquered; but Christ's soldier conquers more at that time if he merits to be killed for Christ.

SERMON 31

On the Apostles Healing the Sick

1. Your love has heard about the extent and diversity of the grace the apostles had before the Lord. Indeed first they spoke in different languages, so that they proclaimed to the whole world the only begotten Son of God as the Lord of all languages and Creator [see Acts 2:1–13]. For no language would have been able to believe the apostles while they were preaching in languages unless every language had heard them. For the apostles did not need men to interpret, since they had God and the Holy Spirit as their interpreter. For they did not need to be taught by men, since they had learned everything that they preached from Christ, the teacher of life. First, then, the apostles received this grace to speak in all languages; then they began to work these divine miracles: to restore sight to the

blind, hearing to the deaf, walking to the lame, health to the infirm, life to the dead [see Acts 3:1–10; 5:15–16; 9:31–43]. This does not pertain to human power but to divine power. For the apostles were doing these miraculous signs not by human nature but by divine power. Iron of its own nature subdues everything and reduces everything to bits. Yet when a craftsman casts it into fire and sets it aflame, the iron works not in accordance with its nature but according to the power of the fire. So the apostles, who were set aflame by the divine fire, that is, by the Holy Spirit, began to work divine miracles not in accordance with their mortal nature but according to the power of God. For to command death does not pertain to mortal nature but to the divine power.

2. Now upon the sick the apostles worked a twofold grace, bodily and spiritually. For to be sure, they delivered their bodies from physical ailments, but they freed their souls from the maladies of sins. For infirmity of the soul is more serious than that of the body. David shows this very thing clearly in the psalm when he says, “Bless the Lord, my soul, because he pardons all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases” [Ps 103:2–3]. “Your diseases” therefore are far more serious than the diseases of the body. Diseases of the body bring a person temporal death; but diseases of the soul obtain eternal death. In fact, long ago when Adam showed himself to be a transgressor of the divine command in paradise, he did not experience a bodily disease, but a sickness of the soul, through which he would have perished with eternal death had the grace of Christ not redeemed him from death. Finally, listen to the prophet showing this very thing when he says, “By his bruises we are all healed” [Isa 53:5]. For the wounds of the Lord’s passion have become the medicine of human salvation. But diseases of the soul are cured not by human medicine, but only by the grace of Christ. Diseases of the soul are the fevers of sins and the wounds of transgressions, which creep into the body not from the outside but from within the soul. Wounds of the soul of this sort are cured not by human beings but by God; not by the lance of an earthly blade, but by the lance of the divine word that penetrates inside the soul. Listen to the prophet saying this very thing: “For it was not a mollifying plaster that restored them to health, but your word, O Lord, which heals all things” [Wis 16:12]. And this is why the following words of David were spoken: “He sent his word and healed them” [Ps 107:20]. Fittingly, when the prophet was praying to the Lord for the iniquity of the Jewish people, he speaks as follows: “And is there no balm in Gilead, or is there no physician there? Why has not the healing of the people gone up in you?” [Jer 8:22]. Here the prophet is not speaking about balm but about heavenly medicine, nor about a human physician, but about God the physician.

3. But we ought to consider carefully the following: since there are diverse infirmities in the human race, and diverse maladies of sins, how can the prophet here promise healing for all infirmities by a single medicine of balm? In accordance with the worldly example, diverse maladies demand different medicines; according to the heavenly mystery, all infirmities of sins are cured by the single medicine of balm, and they are cured every day. We know that balm originates nowhere else but from a tree. Therefore, since the prophet promises a cure by means of balm, doubtless the medicine of the Lord’s cross is being proclaimed through which eternal healing has been given to the human race. This one medicine, then, has cured the diverse infirmities of the world and daily

cures them, since the preaching of the cross of Christ is the medicine for sins, as your love has heard. And it heals not only maladies of the body but also maladies of the soul. For when they believe in Christ, they are delivered from every infirmity of sin.

For those who were sick on their beds were carried before the apostles, as today's reading has reported, but also those who were being harassed by unclean spirits, and they were all healed. And whoever was touched even by Peter's shadow immediately recovered his health [see Acts 5:15–16]. A marvelous grace was in the apostles. Even their shadow could cure infirmities. But perhaps this seems unbelievable to those who doubt or have little faith that the shadow of the apostles could have brought benefit to human infirmities. Doubtful minds do not believe that the apostles could do this, if they do not see even now the same ones doing similar things. For the shadows of the apostles are at work upon the infirm and upon those in difficult straits, and upon those who are beset by unclean spirits, and they show forth a heavenly cure upon them by the merit of their faith. Therefore it cannot be doubted that long ago the shadow of the apostles could do so much, whose relics now we recognize as being capable of so much. And if they were doing this only in that location, where they seem to have suffered for Christ, it would have been miraculous; they bring this about now, even where they did not suffer, so that to the degree that works greater than these are demonstrated, to that extent merits greater than these are declared. The reason we have said this is because it was read in today's reading that the infirm were liberated from every malady in which they were held by Peter's shadow, or by that of the other apostles [see Acts 5:15–16].

4. Your love has heard about the extent of the love and unity of the believers during the time of the apostles. It says, "And there was [but] one heart for every soul, neither did anyone say that any of his goods was his own, but all things were common unto them" [Acts 4:32]. The reason they so pleased God was because they led a life like that. For why should they have possessed their <earthly> goods separately, whose heavenly goods are not separately divided up? Or why should they not have held all things in common, who were in common possession of the Lord of all things? What belonged to one belonged to all, and what belonged to all belonged to each individual. In this sharing they were already imitating the fellowship of the future glory, when the kingdom of the saints will be in common, when no one contends over property lines, possessions, houses. There everyone's joy will be shared, and gladness is shared, since what belongs to one belongs to all, and what is for all is for each.

But I am apprehensive that the well-known unity and charity that

characterized the believers in the apostolic era may spell our condemnation. In consideration of our avarice, it is clear that we preserve neither unity nor peace nor love. They reckoned their own things common, we want to make other people's property <our own>. We contend over property lines and possessions, as if we were never going to die. We expect everything from earth, nothing from heaven, everything from the present life, nothing from the future glory and uninterrupted immortality. We do not recall the words of our Lord and Savior: "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" [Matt 16:26; Mark 8:36]. And again: "See and be on guard. For a man's life is not in the abundance of his possessions" [Luke 12:15]. For this reason we ought to be strangers to avarice and cupidity, strangers to envy, discord, and dissension. But we should strive for peace, concord, unity, so that we may be able to have communion of eternal life with so many people of such quality, of whom this is said, "And there was one heart and one soul in all the believers and for them all things were in common" [Acts 4:32]. And the reason we ought to help brothers and the poor who experience need, as if we share this in common with them, is because in common with us we have one God the Father and one Lord, the only begotten Son of God, and one Holy Spirit, and one faith, and the grace of one baptism [see Eph 4:4–6], through which we are reborn to God into eternal life.

SERMON 32

On the Lord's Birth

1. "And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrollment was first made when Quirinius was the governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city" [Luke 2:1–3]. <If> we consider all these things in the spiritual sense, we find no small mysteries. Thus was the first complete census of the entire world set in motion at that time, when the Lord was born according to the flesh; for at no other time was it fitting that the first census of the entire world be set in motion, except when he was born to whom the human race had to be enrolled in a census; nor under another emperor except under him who first received the name Augustus, since the true and eternal Augustus was he who was born from a virgin. The former Augustus Caesar was a man, the latter God; the former was emperor of the earth, the latter emperor of heaven; the former a king of men, the latter king of angels.

For even the name of this governor, Quirinius, under whom the census was set

in motion, corresponds to the heavenly mystery. For *Quirinius* translates from Greek into Latin as “ruler,” a name that fits no one better than Christ the Lord, who is lord of human flesh and soul. For as we read it written about him, he is “Lord of lords” [Rev 17:14; 19:16; 1 Tim 6:15; Deut 10:17], who is lord not only of earth but of heaven. There are many dominions on earth and in heaven, to be sure, but he is the one Lord who is lord of them all. Fittingly, therefore, at the birth of the Lord a census of the entire world was set in motion, since he was the one for whom the whole world had to be enrolled in a census for salvation. Those who are enrolled by the earth’s emperor are enrolled for this purpose, to weigh out the tribute that is owed and to pay the necessary poll tax. And we are assessed by Christ the eternal king for this purpose, to weigh out the tribute of our poll tax and to pay the necessary poll tax of faith, which chiefly the martyrs have done, who offered their very <bodies> for the sake of Christ’s name.

At that time, then, when a census of the entire world was set in motion, the Lord was born according to the flesh. But he was born in Bethlehem [see Luke 2:4]. Clearly it was not fitting for the Lord to be born anywhere else than in Bethlehem. For *Bethlehem* means “house of bread.” This location received its name long ago as a prophecy, since the one who was born from a virgin in Bethlehem was “the bread from heaven” [John 6:41]. If one praises so many cities that produced the greatest kings, what is loftier than this place, where the Lord deemed it fitting to be born as the king of heaven, the king of the earth, and of the entire world?

2. So then, when Joseph and Mary came to be enrolled in Bethlehem, as today’s reading has related, “Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and placed him in a manger, since there was no room in the inn” [Luke 2:7]. Therefore he who <was> born from the virgin is shown to be the firstborn, and not only firstborn but only begotten; firstborn from the Father, firstborn from the virgin; firstborn from the Father because he was from the Father before all things; only begotten from the Father because he alone is from the Father. Likewise, he is declared to be both from the virgin and firstborn and only begotten: firstborn because he was first from the virgin; only begotten because he alone is from the virgin. See to what great humility the Son of God debased himself for our sake: he who reigns with the Father in heaven is placed in a manger; he who dispenses the robes of immortality is wrapped in swaddling bands; he who is lofty and powerful appears in the body of an infant.

3. Yet even these doings of the Lord contain sacred mysteries. He was wrapped in swaddling bands because he himself took up our sins upon himself

as cloth bands, as it is written, “He carries our sins and suffers pain for us” [Isa 53:4]. Therefore he was wrapped in swaddling bands in order to strip us of the cloth bands of our sins; he was wrapped in swaddling bands in order to weave together the precious tunic of his church with the Holy Spirit; or certainly the reason he was wrapped with swaddling bands was to invite the various peoples of those who believe in him. For we come to belief from diverse nations, and we surround Christ like cloth bands, we who once were cloth bands to be sure, but now we have already become Christ’s precious tunic. But that our Lord and Savior was laid in a manger showed the following, that he would become food for believers. For a manger is where animals come together to get food. Since then we too <are> rational animals, we have a heavenly manger where we come together. For our manger is Christ’s altar, where we daily gather to consume there the food of salvation from the body of Christ. Now the Lord was laid in the manger because “there was no room in the inn” [Luke 2:7]. In the inn the synagogue is signified, which did not deserve to receive Christ into itself, being preoccupied with the error of unbelief. But the inn is correctly understood as the synagogue, since just as different nations indeed drive to an inn, so the synagogue has become an inn of all unbelief and of total error, whence Christ was unable to find room there. And therefore he is found placed in a manger, that is, in the church of the Gentiles, which received our Lord and Savior unto itself with all faith and with complete devotion, since he is the true nourishment of all believers and the spiritual food of souls.

4. An angel declared this physical birth of the Lord at first to the shepherds watching over their flock. No one but shepherds ought to have been the first to know of the birth of the prince of shepherds. Spiritually the shepherds of flocks refer to the bishops of churches who guard the flocks entrusted to them by Christ, to prevent them from being attacked by wolves. It reported this: “But there were shepherds in that region keeping watch at night and each one watching over his flock” [Luke 2:8]. If, then, we always stay awake in the faith of Christ and in the precepts of the Lord, rightly do we preserve those flocks entrusted to us by Christ, rightly we are called shepherds of the church. But if we are weighed down with the slumber of negligence and infidelity, not only will we not be able to guard the flocks entrusted to us but not even ourselves, just as the teachers of the Jews did long ago, being evil and worthless shepherds, who destroyed both themselves and the Lord’s sheep. But may the Lord keep away from us destruction of this sort, so that we may never be overwhelmed by the slumber of infidelity; but may he grant his grace and mercy, so that we may always be able to stay awake in his faith. For our faith is able to stay awake in

Christ. And may your devotion always stay awake, since just as the teaching of the priest stirs up the people to the works of justice, so the devotion of the people stirs up the priests, and thus it happens that the flock rejoices over the shepherd and the shepherd over the flock.

5. Therefore, as your love has heard in today's reading, the angel says to the shepherds, "I bring to you news of great joy, for today a Savior has been born to you, Christ the Lord, in the city of David" [Luke 2:10–11]. Obviously it is a great joy for the shepherds. The prince of shepherds has been born both to guard their sheep and to put the demonic wolves to flight. Whence the birth of Christ according to the flesh is gladness for the shepherds, safety for the flocks, flight for the wolves. Thus an angel says to the shepherds, "I bring to you news of great joy, for today a Savior has been born to you, Christ <the Lord> in the city of David." For what could have been a greater joy than that an angel brought news to shepherds that the king of glory, the Christ and Lord of eternal majesty, willed to be born of a virgin for the sake of human salvation? Yet today's reading has made known that not only shepherds but also angels were made glad over this birth of the Lord. For it says, "And there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly host, saying, Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of good will" [Luke 2:13–14]. For it was fitting that at the birth of such a great king not only humans, but also angels rejoiced, since he was the Creator of humanity, Creator of angels, and God of all power. Since therefore on this day our Lord and Savior deigned to be born according to the flesh, let us too rejoice with the angels with a heavenly exultation, and let us be glad with a spiritual gladness with faith, with devotion, and with holiness of heart.

SERMON 33

On the Hallelujah

1. The very word *hallelujah* invites us to the praise of the Lord and to the whole confession of faith. For *hallelujah* translates from Hebrew into Latin in two ways, as "Sing to him who is," or surely, "Bless us O God together as one," both of which are necessary for our salvation and faith. For we ought to sing "to him who is," we who long ago sang to those who were not, namely, to the gods of the nations and to the images of idols. But we sang in vain then, since what we worshiped were vain things. Vainly did we sing, since we were speaking disgraceful things, when we praised the gods of the nations, when we constructed illicit and profane loves of the pagan gods of whom the prophet says,

“Let the gods that have not made heaven and earth perish from under the earth and from under this sky” [Jer 10:11]. Listen also to David speaking in the psalm: “All the gods of the nations are demons; but the Lord made the heavens” [Ps 96:5]. And so for a long time we sang in vain, but after we came to belief and to divine knowledge, we began to sing “to him who is,” namely, to God the Almighty Creator of heaven, the Founder of the earth, the Maker of the world, the very Maker of man, who says to Moses, “You shall say thus to the sons of Israel: He who is sent me to you” [Exod 3:14]. For he is the one who always was and who abides forever. We sing hallelujah to him fittingly and justly because the fact that we exist and that we are alive is not of our power nor of our capacity, but of his worthy regard and godliness. We ought to sing things that are worthy of such a great God who always existed and is, things that befit his praise and majesty, because he is eternal, omnipotent, immeasurable, the Creator of the ages and the Savior of the world, because he has such great love for human beings that he even gave up his own Son for the salvation of the world, since the Lord himself says in the gospel, “God so loved this world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that everyone who believes in him would not perish but have eternal life” [John 3:16].

2. So then, *hallelujah* means “Sing to him who is”; *hallelujah* means likewise “Bless us, O God, together as one.” Upon consideration, we note that this latter translation agrees with our faith and salvation. Therefore when we say, “Hallelujah,” we pray, “O God, bless us together as one.” If then we are together as one by faith, peace, concord, unanimity, we are worthy, so that we deserve to be blessed by the Lord together as one. For this is written: “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell as one” [Ps 133:1]. And again: “God who makes those with the same character dwell in a house” [Ps 68:6]. And so we are blessed by God if we are found together as one, that is, abiding in the unity of faith, in the concord of peace, in the affection of love, according to what the apostle exhorts and admonishes when he says, “But I implore you all to think the same thing, and let there not be schisms among you. But that you be perfect in the same mind and in the same knowledge” [1 Cor 1:10]. Whence if there is discord, if there is division and dissension among us, we are not worthy of God’s blessing. For how can we boldly answer with the paternal words “Hallelujah,” that is, “Bless us, God, together as one,” when we are not found as one? Therefore let us always be as one that we may deserve to be blessed together as one.

This response, “Hallelujah,” is not befitting for heretics, schismatics, nor for any enemies of the church’s unity. They are not together with the church as one,

who do not gather with us as one. For even the Lord himself makes this clear in the gospel when he says, “He who is not with me is against me. But he who does not gather with me scatters” [Matt 12:30; Luke 11:23]. For it pertains to Christ to gather into one; but it belongs to the devil to scatter into different directions. Therefore the one who loves the church’s unity follows Christ; but the one who delights in scattering follows the devil, since the devil is the author of scattering. And that is why we read the statement from Solomon: “There is a time to scatter stones, and a time to gather” [Eccl 3:5]. For a long time it was the time when the devil scattered us in different directions; but the time came again when Christ gathered us into one. It follows that we ought to flee discord and avoid it, since we recognize the devil as its author, but to follow the church’s peace and unity, so that we can worthily and deservedly respond “Hallelujah,” that is, “God bless us together as one.”

3. Consider how much grace is found in this interpretation of *hallelujah*. Each one of us responds, “Hallelujah,” and we ask for a common blessing so that each of us may be blessed as one. For we are one body in the church [see 1 Cor 10:17], and through what one prays for, he obtains for all, and what all pray for, it is given to all the people from which the church is gathered. We ought to understand that this is said to the people of the Gentiles and to the people of the Jews. After all, a distinction was made in what was said: “Who lifts up the helpless from the earth, and raises up the poor from the dung heap” [Ps 113:7]. A man is called “helpless” who has nothing; but he is “poor” who appears to have something. And so, in the “helpless,” the people of the Gentiles are signified, who had absolutely nothing, because they had received neither the law nor the prophets. But the “poor” are the Jewish people, who seemed to have something from the law and the prophets, based upon the merits of the patriarchs, the grace of the just, but they lay in a dung heap because they lay in bodily vices, in the filth of sins, in the error of pagans. But the people of the Gentiles who are signified in the “helpless,” lay on the earth because they worshiped earthly idols, because their hope was solely on earth, not in heaven. Both therefore are lifted up because both are saved. Both are raised up because both are set free: the former from the earth of vices, the latter from the dung heap of sins; the former from the worship of idols, the latter from transgression against justice. And they are lifted up in order to be placed “with princes” [Ps 113:8], that is, with the apostles and prophets who are the princes of God’s church.

4. Nor is it a superfluous point that though two are recorded, one is shown to be placed with the princes, since out of the two peoples one people of the church was made and placed in honor of the princes of the people and was associated

with the apostles and prophets. And so, from two callings one people was made, since the two began to be one, as the apostle says: “And he called those who are far off and those who are near; for he is our peace who made the two one” [Eph 2:17, 14]. Finally, in order to show that one church came from two callings, he made an addition at the end of the psalm and said, “Who places the barren woman in a house, a mother rejoicing over her sons” [Ps 113:9]. Before the coming of Christ, the church was barren, for it had not received the seed of justice, it had not given birth to any offspring of faith. It was barren with respect to faith, barren with respect to the production of justice. But after the coming of Christ, it received the seed of the divine word and was made fertile and fecund. Daily it bears and gives birth to countless children for God throughout the whole world, in all nations. Daily it conceives and daily it bears children, since all who come to belief are generated by its spiritual womb. This is why the prophet cries out to her and says, “Rejoice, O barren one, you who do not give birth, break forth and shout, you who do not bring forth, for many more are the children of the desolate than of her who has the husband” [Isa 54:1]. For a long time the synagogue had a husband, namely, the law that lorded over it, but it could not give birth to any fruit of justice, and so it generated useless children; it procreated them not for God but for the world; not for salvation in God but for dominion. But the church, which was barren and infertile for a long time, has now been made fruitful. For daily she conceives a fetus of justice, she bears offspring of salvation, she generates countless children for God, since daily for God children are generated by the church. We are conceived by the church when we come to belief; we are regenerated in fact by the bath of water; we are born in baptism unto God.

5. Since therefore believers are being saved every day, it is as if children are being generated daily for the Lord by the church. The church is shown to be the mother of these children, so many and so great, when it is said, “He places the barren woman in the house, a mother rejoicing over his children” [Ps 113:9]. And so these are the children of which it was said in Genesis as a type of the church that “she is the mother of all the living” [Gen 3:20]. It does not say of the dead, but of the living, because the church produces only living children. For those she gives birth to truly live through faith in God. They are estranged from dead works. But the church does not deem it fitting to be the mother of the dead, that is, of infidels and sinners, for all unbelievers and unfaithful are reckoned as dead before God, even if they are physically alive. Hence we read the Lord’s statement in the gospel: “Leave the dead to bury their own dead” [Matt 8:22]. But the just and the faithful, even if they depart from the body, are reckoned to

be alive to God. Hence we read the Lord's statement in the gospel: "I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." And he added, "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living" [Matt 22:32]. Assuredly, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are alive to him. According to the body, they had already died, and yet they are said to be living, since they were alive to God in view of the merit of their faith and justice.

And so, whoever lives in this world justly and faithfully is shown to be alive even after death, and to live with a better life, since in this life there is the opportunity to sin, in that one there is security in the kingdom. In this life there is death, in that one there is the immortality of the kingdom. In this one calamity, in that one happiness.

Therefore if we live justly and faithfully in the sight of the Lord, we are rightly called children of the church, for the church is shown to be the mother solely of the living. But if we behave unfaithfully and unjustly in this life, we do not deserve to be called children of the church. And therefore we ought to live and act in this world in such a way that we can be called children of the church, that we may deserve to reign rightly and justly with the church in future glory.

SERMON 34

On the Lord's Epiphany

1. On this day our Lord and Savior was baptized by John in the Jordan [as we have heard when the divine reading was read], and therefore this is no insignificant solemnity; on the contrary it is a great one, even very great. For when our Lord deigned to be baptized, the Holy Spirit came upon him in the form of a dove [see Luke 3:22], and the Father's voice was heard saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" [Matt 3:17; cf. 17:5].

2. O how great is the mystery in the heavenly baptism! The Father is heard from heaven, the Son was seen on earth, the Holy Spirit is shown in the form of a dove; since it is not a true baptism, and there is no true remission of sins, where the truth of the Trinity is not present, neither can the remission of sins be given when the perfect Trinity is not believed. But the church's baptism is one and true, which is granted once when someone is dipped once, and is made new and clean: clean since a person lays aside the filth of transgressions; new since he rises up into a new life and lays aside the oldness of sin. For this baptismal bath makes a person whiter than snow, not the skin of his body, but in

the brightness of his mind and in the purity of his soul.

Therefore the heavens were opened at the Lord's baptism, so that through the bath of regeneration [see Titus 3:5] the kingdom of heaven would be shown clearly to believers in accordance with that sentence of the Lord: "Unless someone is reborn from water and the Holy Spirit, he will not enter the kingdom of heaven" [John 3:5]. Therefore the one who is reborn has entered, and who does not neglect to guard his baptism; and thus likewise the one who has not entered who has not been reborn.

3. Since, therefore, our Lord had come to give a new baptism for the salvation of the human race and remission of all sins, he himself first deigned to be baptized, not that he who had not committed sin laid aside his sins, but so as to sanctify the waters of baptism in order to blot out the sins of all believers through the baptism of those reborn. He therefore was baptized in water in order that we through baptism would be washed from all sins.

SERMON 35

On Susanna

1. In today's reading that you have heard [dearly beloved], the story of the most noble woman Susanna was read to us, who has offered to us a model of chastity and an example of purity [see Dan 13]. To be sure, she was lovely in appearance, but lovelier in character. For with her the beauty of soul surpassed that of body; for the body's beauty is temporary, but the soul's beauty is eternal. For she was not adorned with bodily necklaces, nor did she have earrings on her body, nor rings, nor pearls, but she was filled within with every ornament of the virtues. For in place of earrings she had the divine words, in place of a ring she had comely faith, in place of pearls she had the precious works by which daily she beautified the appearance of her mind and soul.

2. Using this example among others, the blessed apostle Paul exhorts the women and says, "Finally, let women be holy, adorning themselves not with plaited hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly attire, but preserving chastity with good works" [1 Tim 2:9–10; cf. 1 Pet 3:3–5]. Whence refined women are wide of the mark who do not consider themselves to be beautiful unless they wear jewelry like this in contradiction to the apostle's statement. Truly such presumptuousness of theirs merits the Creator's indignation. Why do you cover your face with white and red, as if making corrections to the image of God in you, who made

your face the way he wanted? For the features you were born with are the work (*opus*) of the Creator God; but what you add on your own is evidence (*argumentum*) of the devil, who wants to defile the work of God in you. Why do you desire to adorn yourself with gold, or with costly raiment, when you ought to be adorned with faith and holy character? Therefore if you desire to please God, follow the example of Susanna: be chaste, be modest, be of virtuous character, be a worker of justice, and you will be sufficiently beautiful, and not only to God but also precious to men. For this beauty usually pleases faithful husbands as well, if he finds in his wife beautiful actions and comeliness of mind.

3. Susanna, then, for the sake of purity, even despised death. For she is denounced by two ruined elders, she is accused as if guilty and condemned as an adulteress [see Dan 13:41]. But the holy and admirable woman preferred to submit to death with her purity intact than to live with a bad conscience.

But when she was being led to death, God stirred up the holy spirit of the boy Daniel, who is called “desirable to God” [see Dan 9:23; 10:11], who both made known Susanna’s innocence and revealed the false accusation of her accusers [see Dan 13:44–59]. Whence it came about that the innocent Susanna was set free before the just judgment of God and the elderly falsely accusing adulterers perished by a deserved death. The king of Babylon roasted them in fire on account of the iniquity that they committed in Israel, and because they were committing adultery with the wives of their own citizens [see Dan 13:62].

4. Therefore Susanna has prefigured the church, namely by the example of purity and modesty, since she remained in the paradise of Christ by faith and by the manner of her life [see Dan 13:4, 7], just as all the faithful in the church strive to please Christ, their God and head, by the purity of their character, the holiness of good works, right faith, firm hope, and perfect love. Finally, chastity and modesty are aided by fasting. For we fast to this end, not merely to abstain from food, but to separate ourselves from all the vices of the flesh, namely, from bodily lust, from concupiscence of soul, from depraved thoughts, from hatred and ill will, from detraction and murmuring, from fury and wrath, from all vices and sins together. But merely to abstain from food is not fasting. That is why, when we fast, we ought especially to abstain from vices, lest it be said to us by the Lord through the prophet, “That is not the sort of fast I have chosen, says the Lord...” [Isa 58:5].

SERMON 36

On Praising God

And therefore it is proper that we all praise God with one voice, one mind, that is, with one concord, one faith, one hope, one love. And so God deems it fitting to be praised by the just, he does not deem it fitting from sinners. He consents to be praised by Catholics, he does not consent to it by heretics. He deems it fitting from the faithful, not from the unfaithful. For this reason we ought to act in such a way and to live in such a way that we are considered worthy of praising God, and may the prophetic words be fittingly applied to us: “Praise the Lord, ye servants (*pueri*), praise the name of the Lord” [Ps 113:1]. We do this justly and deservedly if we faithfully obey his will and commandments in all things....

SERMON 37

On the Storm That Was Stilled

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into a boat with his disciples, just as the gospel truth reports, to sail across the channel {see Matt 8:23–27}. And a great storm came upon the sea, so that the boat was covered by waves. This boat in which Christ ascended can be understood in two ways. For this boat is understood as the cross on which Christ ascended for our redemption. Our Lord and Savior who steers the entire world is contained in the small wood of the boat. He who created the entire world saved it by the wood of his cross. He who consented to die for us on the cross, who even guards his people with an everlasting watch, slept in the boat. He who thought it fitting to free us from the danger of eternal death endured danger at sea. He who through holy preachers daily in the holy church rouses us from the sleep of unbelief and ignorance was roused by his disciples.

In another way as well this boat is understood as the holy church. To be sure, at first it was few in terms of the number of believers, but later on it grew into such great numbers of believers that it filled the entire world. And therefore it is no longer called a boat but a great ship. Hence the sea signifies this world.

2. “And behold there came a great disturbance on the sea so that the boat was covered by waves” [Matt 8:24]. A great persecution arose against the church not long after the Lord’s passion; and the cruelty of irreligious men instigated by

demons fought against the church's faithful, so that the assembly of faithful people was nearly wiped out by the persecutions of the wicked [see Acts 8:1]. But as the disciples were sailing, Christ fell asleep [see Matt 8:24]. This means that for the sake of testing her faith he permits his church for a short time to be tested by afflictions and persecutions of this world.

“And the disciples went and woke him, saying, Lord, save us, we are perishing. Then he got up and commanded the winds and the sea, and a great calm occurred” [Matt 8:25–26]. When the faith of those who pray does not hesitate, however often the Lord is struck by the prayers of the faithful for their needs, he quickly gets up to show pity. But we ought to rouse our Lord and Savior to show his pity, with insistent prayers and with meritorious faith, however often we are overwhelmed by trials and distresses as by storms at sea, that he may deign to bring help and aid to those who hope for his mercy, as he himself says through the prophet: “Call upon me on the day of your affliction; I will rescue you and you will honor me” [Ps 50:15].

Therefore, let us call upon the Lord with all our heart, and with all our faith, that he may deign to set us free from all anguish, from famine, war, death, captivity, from every danger, that we may be able to glorify his name in everything, and laden with the worthy fruits of good works, we may be worthy to reach the port of our heavenly country.

SERMON 38

Here Begins a Sermon of Saint Augustine on the Passage, God Made Tunics of Skin for Adam and His Wife

When the divine reading was read, we heard of the extent of God's grace toward humanity, even after the violation of his command. It says, “And God made tunics of skin for Adam and his wife, and he clothed them” [Gen 3:21]. For they were both naked after sin, since they had lost the clothing of shame, in order to obey the devil speaking through the serpent rather than the Lord's command.

Therefore they were naked, despoiled of the tunic of God's grace and the clothing of his godliness. For one who is not clothed with God's grace is naked in respect to every good, even if he has many tunics. Thus it is not without reason that God made tunics of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them, in order to show the grace of Christ's passion. For in no other way could the human race have been clothed, since they had been stripped naked of the grace of God,

except by the passion of Christ the Lord, from which source the whole world is redeemed and liberated from eternal damnation and death.

2. Scripture has added the following as well: “For God let Adam go out of paradise, lest he stretch forth his hand toward the tree of life and eat of it and live forever” [Gen 3:23, 22]. Not without a mystery did God forbid the man from living forever, who had despised the precepts of eternal salvation entrusted to him; but the reason God prohibited him from touching the tree of life was to keep him from living for eternal punishment. For if the man had not been redeemed from sin and had tasted from the tree of life, he would indeed have lived forever, not indeed for glory but for eternal punishment. Thus it was necessary that the humans first be punished with the penalty of death for their transgression of the commandment, and then to be summoned back to grace. In fact, what the tree of life in paradise was unable to offer humanity at that time, the passion of Christ supplied; and he received the lost grace through the tree of the cross, which at that time he could not have recovered through the tree of life.

SERMON 39

On the Beatitudes

When our Lord and Savior was going around many cities and regions preaching and healing every sickness and every disease among the people, “seeing the crowds before him,” as today’s reading has related, “he went up on a mountain” [Matt 5:1]. Rightly the lofty God goes to a lofty place in order to preach lofty words to those who desire to ascend to the lofty heights of the virtues. And it is good that the new law is preached on a mountain, since the law of Moses was given on a mountain [see Exod 19, 20]. The latter consists in ten words, leading to education and instruction for the present life, the former in eight Beatitudes, since it leads those who follow them to eternal life and to the heavenly homeland.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth” [Matt 5:4]. The meek then ought to be peaceful in spirit, sincere in heart. The Lord clearly shows that their merit is not small when he says, “For they shall possess the earth.” Surely this refers to that land of which it is written, “I believe that I will see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living” [Ps 27:13]. Therefore the inheritance of that earth is the body’s immortality and the glory of the eternal

resurrection. <...> For meekness does not know arrogance, it does not know boasting, it does not know ambition. Whence not without cause does the Lord exhort his disciples elsewhere, saying, “Learn from me, for I am meek and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” [Matt 11:29]

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be consoled” [Matt 5:5]. Not those who mourn for the loss of dear ones, but who bewail their own sins, who wash away their transgressions with tears; or surely, those who mourn for the iniquity of this world, and who deplore the transgressions of others.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God” [Matt 5:9]. Behold how great the merit of peacemakers is, when they are no longer called slaves but sons of God. This is not without reason, for the one who loves peace loves Christ, the author of peace, whom the apostle Paul named peace when he said, “For he is our peace” [Eph 2:14]. But he who does not love peace follows discord, since he loves the devil, who is the author of discord. For indeed he first created discord between God and humanity, since he made humanity a transgressor of God’s command. But the reason the Son of God came down from heaven was to condemn the devil, the author of discord, and to make peace between God and humankind by reconciling humankind with God and by calling back God to humankind in grace. And the reason we ought to be peacemakers is to merit being called children of God. Since without peace not only do we lose the designation of sons and daughters, but even the very name of slaves, since the apostle says, “Love peace, with which none of us can please God” [see Heb 12:14; 11:6]

SERMON 40

Preface to the Lord’s Prayer

1. To his disciples who asked him how they ought to pray [see Luke 11:1], our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ gave to them, among his other salutary precepts, the same form of prayer that you as well know quite well even from today’s reading. Now let your love hear how he teaches his disciples to pray to God the Father Almighty: “But you, when you pray, enter into your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father” [Matt 6:6]. What he calls a room, he shows to be not a hidden house, but he is reminding us to reveal the secrets of our heart to no one but him. And to pray to God with the door closed means to close off our heart from evil thoughts with a mystical key and with closed lips to speak to God

with an uncorrupted mind. But our God is a hearer of faith, not of voice. Therefore our heart is closed with the key of faith against the plots of the adversary and lies open to God alone, whose temple it is known to be, so that when he dwells in our hearts, he himself may be the advocate in our prayers. Therefore the word of God and the wisdom of God, Christ our Lord [see 1 Cor 1:24], has taught us this prayer, so that we may pray as follows:

2. “Our Father who art in heaven” [Matt 6:9a]. This is the voice of freedom and complete confidence. Therefore you must live with this kind of character, that you may be able to be sons of God and brothers of Christ. For by what temerity does he presume to call God his own Father, who deviates from his will? Hence you, dearly beloved, show yourselves worthy of the divine adoption, since it is written, “As many as believed in him he gave them power to become children of God” [John 1:12].

“Hallowed be thy name” [Matt 6:9b]. That is, not that God be hallowed by our prayers, since he is always holy, but we ask that his name be kept holy in us, so that we who have been sanctified in his baptism may persevere in that which we are beginning to be.

“Thy kingdom come” [Matt 6:10a]. When indeed does our God not reign, especially when we consider that his kingdom is immortal? But when we say, “Thy kingdom come,” we are asking for our kingdom to come, promised to us from God, acquired by the blood and passion of Christ.

“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” [Matt 6:10b]. That is, in that place [heaven] let your will be done, so that what you want done in heaven, this we would do without reproach while we are placed on earth.

“Give us this day our daily bread” [Matt 6:11]. We ought to understand spiritual bread here. For Christ is our bread, who said, “I am the living bread, who came down from heaven” [John 6:51]. We call it “daily” because we ought to ask always to be free from sin, so that we may be worthy of heavenly nourishment.

“And forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors” [Matt 6:12]. With this precept he signifies that we can earn pardon for sins in no other way than by first pardoning others who transgress against us, just as the Lord says in the gospel: “If you do not forgive people their sins, neither will your Father forgive you your sins” [Matt 6:15].

“And lead us not into temptation” [Matt 6:13a]. That is, do not allow us to be led by the one who tempts, the author of depravity. For Scripture says, “For God does not tempt to evil” [Jas 1:13]. But the devil is the tempter. To conquer him,

the Lord says, “Watch and pray that you not enter into temptation” [Matt 26:41; Mark 14:38].

“But deliver us from evil” [Matt 6:13b]. The reason he says this is because the apostle said, “You do not know what you ought to pray for” [Rom 8:26]. Therefore we must pray to God Almighty in such a way that whatever human weakness is not able to be on guard against and avoid, this our Lord Jesus Christ may deign to grant to us mercifully, that we may be able. He lives and reigns as God in unity with the Holy Spirit through all the ages of ages.

SERMON 41

A Sermon (Declamatio) of the Roman Bishop Chromatius on the Fifth Chapter of Matthew, or a Sermon on the Eight Beatitudes

1. This assembly of people and the crowds that are here for the market day give us the opportunity, brothers and sisters, to set forth the words of the gospel. For worldly affairs customarily are examples of spiritual things, and earthly things offer an image of heavenly things. For even our Lord and Savior often admonishes us about heavenly things by means of earthly things when he says, “The kingdom of heaven is like a net cast into the sea” [Matt 13:47]. And surely, “The kingdom of heaven is like a man doing business, looking for a fine pearl” [Matt 13:45]. If then the market has this sort of meaning, that each person either sells what he no longer needs or buys what he lacks, for his own advantage, it is not out of order that I too set forth the merchandise that the Lord has entrusted to me, the preaching that is assuredly heavenly, since indeed he has chosen me as well, even if I am unworthy, indeed the least of those servants to whom the Lord distributed talents to do business with and to make a profit [see Matt 25:15–16]. Nor of course will merchants be lacking when by God’s grace there is an audience of this size and nature. But it is more necessary to strive after heavenly gain, where earthly profit is not being neglected. I desire, dearest brethren, to set forth for you these precious pearls of the Beatitudes from the holy gospel; and so open the treasuries of your hearts, make a purchase, take hold of them with eagerness, possess them with joy.

Our Lord and God, the only begotten of the Most High Father, who deigned to become man from being God, teacher from being Lord, when great crowds were gathering from different regions, took his disciples, that is, his apostles, “went up on a mountain, opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor

in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they will possess the land” [Matt 5:1–4]. Using precious stones, the Lord and Savior paves the path, so to speak, with a number of very solid steps by which holy and faithful souls can crawl and climb their way up to that highest good, that is, the kingdom of heaven. Briefly, then, dearest brothers and sisters, I long to show you what these steps are. Only let your minds and souls be completely attentive, for the things of God are not of trivial importance.

2. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” [Matt 5:3]. What a wonderful commencement to the heavenly doctrine, brothers and sisters! He begins not by inspiring fright but with a beatitude, not by causing terror but rather longing. For in the manner of a superintendent of the public games, or a referee at the gladiatorial exhibitions, he sets forth the great prize for the competitors in this spiritual stadium, so that when they see the prize, they would not be afraid of the effort required nor shrink back from the dangers involved. Therefore, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” He did not call the poor blessed without qualification nor without precision, but he added, “poor in spirit.” For not all poverty is happy, since it often arises out of necessity, sometimes it comes about through evil habits, even as a result of divine wrath. Therefore blessed is that spiritual poverty of those who for God’s sake make themselves poor in spirit and will by renouncing the goods of the world, by voluntarily dispersing their own money. He calls them blessed deservedly, since they are “poor in spirit, since theirs is the kingdom of heaven”; for by means of voluntary poverty, they pursue the wealth of the heavenly kingdom.

Then he says, “Blessed are the meek, for they will possess the land” [Matt 5:4]. Admirably, a second step is shown after the first: “Blessed are the meek, for they will possess the land.” But just as it is impossible to stand on a second step out of order, without climbing onto the first, so a man will not be able to be meek unless he has first become poor in spirit. Well then, how can a spirit that is set amid riches, amid the cares and anxieties of the world, from which arise deals, lawsuits, provocations, anger, troubles without end, how, I say, can a soul be meek and mild amid these things, unless it first cuts itself off from all causes of wrath and renounces every occasion for quarreling? A sea does not become tranquil unless the winds cease; fire is not put out unless you remove the material to burn and the thorny brushwood; so a soul will not be meek and quiet if it does not renounce those things that provoke and inflame it. It is good, then, that a step is joined to the step, since the poor in spirit are already beginning to be meek.

3. And a third approaches: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be consoled” [Matt 5:4]. How ought we to understand this salutary mourning? Surely not that which arises from damaged goods, nor that which arises from the loss of dear ones, nor that which arises from the loss of secular offices. Surely none of these things will cause grief to one who is already poor in spirit. Salutary mourning is that which is carried out because of sins, because of the recollection of divine judgment. For the soul formerly established amid countless occupations and bitter experiences in the world was not able to think of itself; it has already become secure and meek, and begins to look at itself more closely, to examine its actions day and night, and in this way the wounds of past crimes begin to appear, and then salutary mourning and tears follow, so salutary that soon a heavenly consolation takes place. For he is truthful who said, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be consoled.”

4. Let us approach the fourth [step], brethren: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied” [Matt 5:6]. For truly after repentance, after mourning and tears over our sins, what other form of hunger and thirst could arise than for justice? For just as the one who has traveled through the gloom of night is already eager for the approaching light, and the one who has digested bitter bile longs for food and drink, so too the mind of the Christian man, after he has digested his own sins by means of mourning and tears, now hungers and thirsts only for God’s justice. And fittingly he will rejoice in being sated with that for which he longs.

5. And let the fifth step present itself: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” [Matt 5:7]. No one will be able to give to another unless he first gives to himself. After procuring mercy for himself, then, and after being sated with justice, he now begins to feel pain for the wretched, he now begins to plead for other sinners. Having become merciful even to those who are his enemies, he will prepare a larger reserve of mercy for himself, through religious action of this sort, at the coming of the Lord. That is why it is said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will obtain mercy.”

6. Behold, the sixth step is at hand: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” [Matt 5:8]. Obviously they will already have a pure heart, obviously they will already be able to see God, who are poor in spirit and meek, who lament their sins, who have been reinvigorated by justice, who are merciful, and in adversities too the eye of their heart is so sincere and bright that without any inflammation of malice, they look upon the unapproachable brightness of God without obstruction. For cleanness of heart and purity of conscience will allow no cloud to block the view of the Lord.

7. Brothers and sisters, it then follows, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” [Matt 5:9]. Great is the worth of those who strive after peace, when they are registered with the name of children of God. And this kind of peacemaking is good indeed, which occurs between those who are quarreling over worldly property, or over vain glory, or grudges. But this reward is small, since the Lord had said as an example to us, “Who appointed me judge or divider over you?” [Luke 12:14]. For he had already said before, “Do not seek to get back things that have been taken from you” [Luke 6:30]. And in another place, “How can you believe when you accept glory from one another?” [John 5:44]. We should understand peacemaking in a more powerful and lofty sense, then, as that kind, I would say, by which pagan people who are God’s enemies are led to peace through constant instruction; that by which sinners are corrected and reconciled with God through repentance; that by which rebellious heretics are set straight; that by which those who are in discord with the church are made disposed to unity and peace. For truly those who are peacemakers in this fashion are not only blessed, but will be worthy and deserving to be called sons of God. For by imitating the Son of God himself, Christ, who is proclaimed by the apostle as our peace and reconciliation [see Eph 2:14–16; 2 Cor 5:18–19], they are allotted fellowship in his name.

8. “Blessed are those who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” [Matt 5:10]. There is no doubt, brothers and sisters, that envy is the constant companion of good deeds. For without speaking here of the cruelty of the persecutors, when you begin to hold to a strict justice, to strike back against insolence, to summon unbelievers to the Lord’s peace; finally, when you begin to disagree with men of the world who are in error, at once persecutions arise; inevitably hatred arises, jealousy tears apart. Ultimately, it is in this way that Christ brings his audience to this last step, to the top summit, not only that they may hold up in the midst of suffering, but even rejoice together in dying.

9. “Blessed are you when they persecute you and reproach you and falsely speak all evil against you because of justice: Rejoice and exult, for your reward is great in heaven. For thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you” [Matt 5:11–12]. It is the perfection of virtue, brothers and sisters, after so many administrations of justice, to endure reproaches from people for the sake of truth, to be afflicted with torments, finally to be put to death, and not to be terrified, holding forth the example of the prophets before us, who, when torn apart in different ways for the sake of justice, merited to be conformed to the sufferings and to the reward of Christ. This is the higher step on which Paul, looking at

Christ, said, “But there is one thing, forgetting what is behind and stretching out to what is before me, I follow after the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” [Phil 3:13–14]. And still more plainly to Timothy, “I have fought the good fight, I have completed the race” [2 Tim 4:7]. As one who had climbed all the steps, he added, “I have kept the faith. What remains is the crown of justice laid up for me” [2 Tim 4:8]. For truly this is what remained, once the whole race has been completed, for Paul to reach the higher step of martyrdom, rejoicing throughout his trials and sufferings. Therefore the Lord’s words are a fitting exhortation: “Rejoice, exult, for great is your reward in heaven.” And he plainly shows that the rewards increase corresponding to the increase of persecutions.

10. Brothers and sisters, the eight steps of the gospel that have been shown are constructed out of costly stones, as I said. Jacob’s ladder has been shown, whose top reached from the ground to heaven [Gen 28:12]. The one who climbs it finds the gate of heaven, and the one who enters through it shall stand rejoicing without end in the sight of the Lord, to praise the Lord forever with the holy angels.

This is our merchandise, this is our spiritual trade. Let us give what we have, O blessed ones, let us offer poverty of spirit, that we may receive the abundance of the heavenly kingdom according to his promise. Let us offer meekness, that we may possess the land and paradise. Let us weep over sins, both ours and those of others, that we may merit consolation from the goodness of the Lord. Let us hunger and thirst for justice, that we may be fattened up all the more abundantly; let us show mercy that we may obtain true mercy; let us live as peacemakers, that we may be called sons of God; let us offer a pure heart and a chaste body, that we may be able to see God with a lucid mind. Let us not fear persecutions for the sake of justice, that we may become heirs of the heavenly kingdom. With joy and gladness let us embrace reproaches, torture, finally death, if it comes about for the sake of God’s truth, that an abundant reward may be given to us in heaven, with the prophets and apostles.

But that the conclusion of our words may agree with the introduction, if there is joy for merchants because of present and fleeting profits, let us rejoice all the more and be glad together that today we have found such pearls of the Lord to which no worldly goods can be compared. For us to merit purchasing, obtaining, and possessing them, we must ask for the Lord’s help and grace, together with power, to whom be the glory in the ages of ages. Amen [see 1 Pet 4:11].

SERMON 42

On the Suffering of Saint Peter

Hence the Lord says to him, as you heard in today's reading, "Simon son of John, do you love me? He answered and said, You know, Lord, that I love you. Again the Lord said to him, Simon, son of John, do you love me? He answered and said, You know, Lord, that I love you" [John 21:15–16]. What are we saying? Did not the Lord, who knew the secrets of hearts, know that he was loved by Peter? Or was a single answer from Peter not sufficient for the Lord, who knows all things before they are said? But the Lord questions Peter three times, in order that a threefold confession would condemn a threefold denial.

Then the Lord says to Peter, "When you were younger, you girded yourself and went where you wanted. But when you are old, another shall gird you and lead you whither you wouldst not. And this he said, signifying by what death he should glorify God" [John 21:18–19]. In the old age of his life, saint Peter took up the cross for Christ. For the Lord had said elsewhere in the gospel, "He who does not take up his own cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" [Luke 14:27]. The disciple of truth fulfilled the master's command. He took up the cross for Christ in order to glorify the Lord's cross.

But when he was led to the cross, he thought that he should be affixed to the cross with his feet upside down. He did not shrink from suffering but preserved humility, lest a servant should be judged the equal of his Lord. The punishment of suffering was the same, but the grace was not the same, since Peter was crucified for himself, but Christ was crucified for the salvation of the world. Peter was crucified so that he might obtain the glory of his own suffering. Christ was crucified in order to crown the whole world with the glory of his passion. Peter was nailed with his feet upward, so that he might hasten with the swiftest of steps to heaven; Christ is raised on the cross with his hands nailed, so that he could cover the entire world with the outstretching of his hands.