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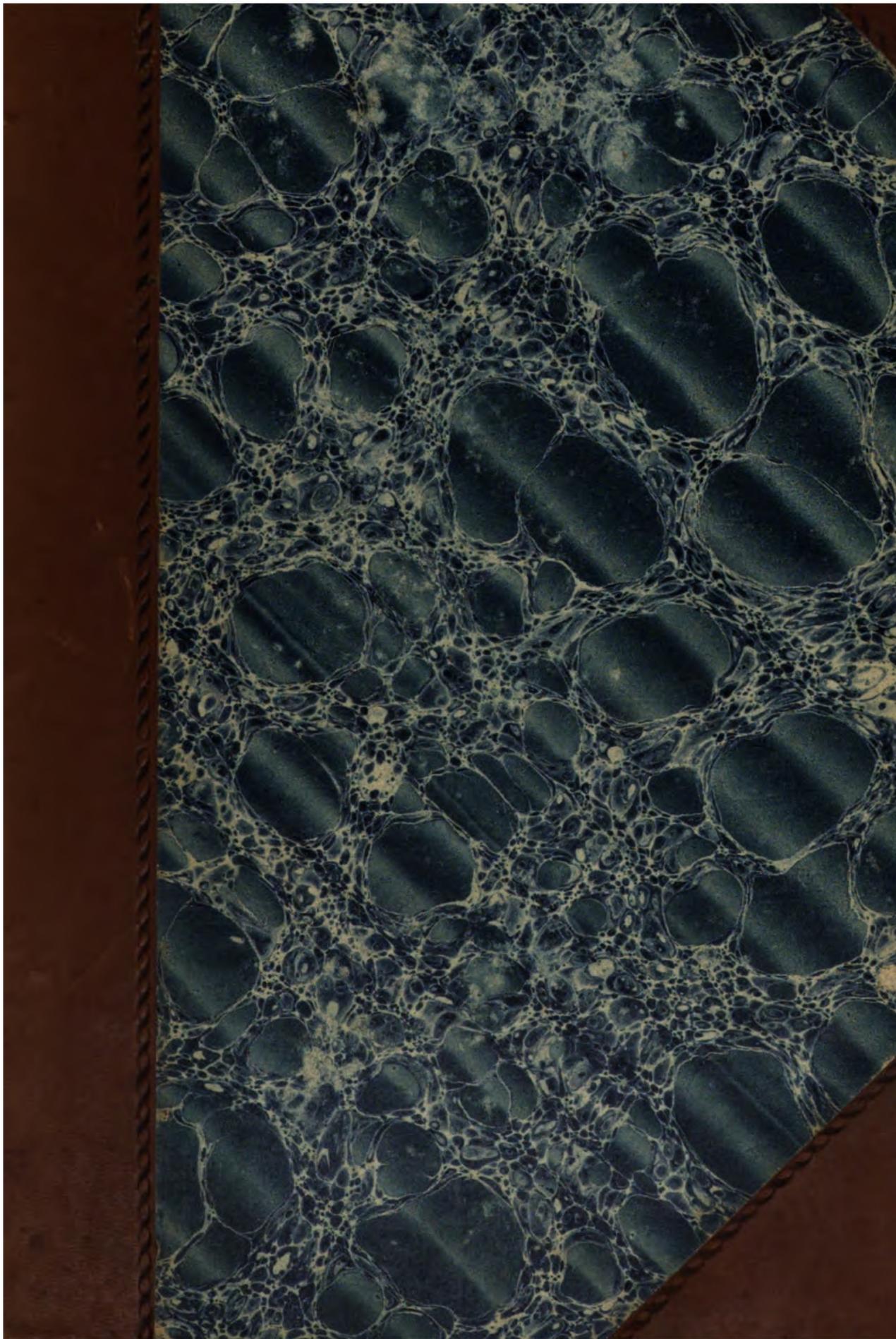
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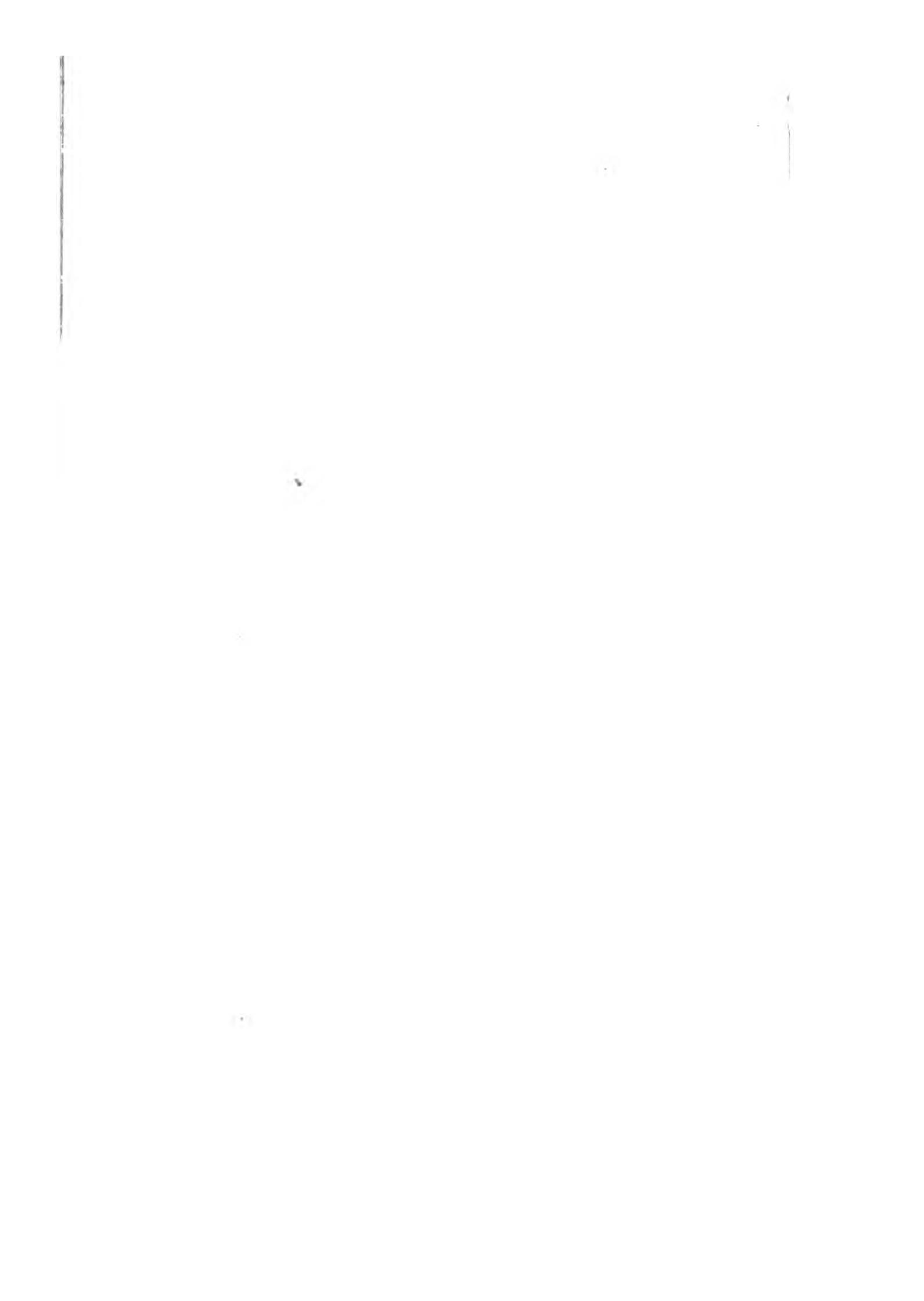
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**SERMONS**  
FOR THE DIFFERENT SUNDAYS,  
AND  
PRINCIPAL FESTIVALS OF THE YEAR;  
WITH A FEW  
**ADDITIONAL SERMONS**  
ON VARIOUS IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

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BY THE LATE  
**REV. THOMAS WHITE,**  
OF WINCHESTER.

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SELECTED AND ARRANGED FROM HIS MSS.

BY THE  
**REV. JOHN LINGARD, D.D.**

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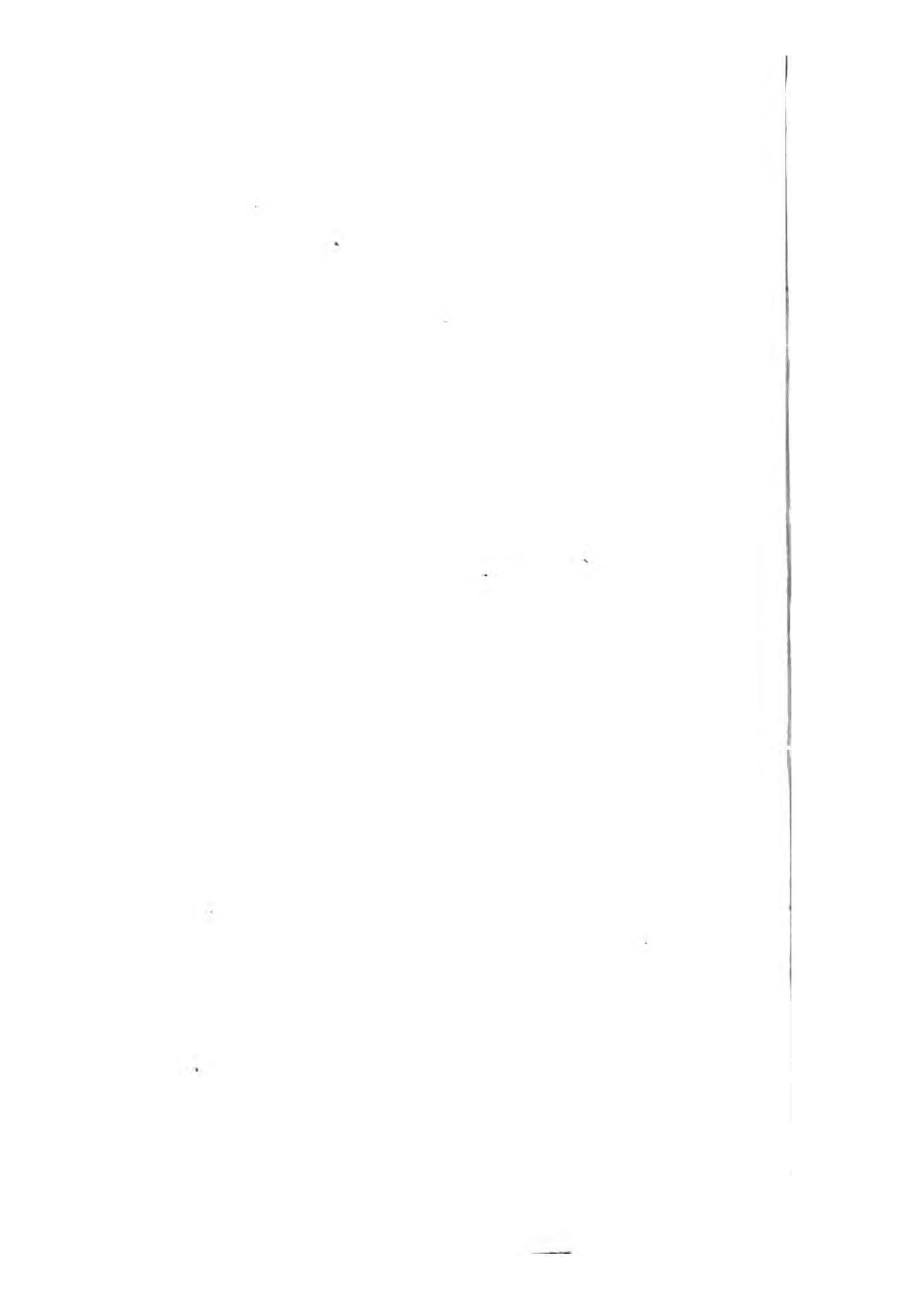
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## SERMON XXXIV.

### SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON THE FUTILITY OF THE EXCUSES ALLEGED FOR  
ABSENCE FROM COMMUNION.

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*A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. (Luke, xiv. 16.)*

THE parable, which our blessed Saviour addressed to the Pharisees admits of different explications. By some it is understood as referring to the great mystery of the Word incarnate, who came into this world for the salvation of man. By others it is interpreted, as expressive of that everlasting bliss and ineffable glory, which Jesus Christ has merited for mankind, by the effusion of his precious blood. By the church, who has chosen it for this Sunday, it is here applied to the sacrament of the altar ; to that banquet, which our Lord prepares for his servants, giving them his body and blood for the nourishment of their souls ; *for his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.*

(John, vi. 56.) Yes, my brethren, it is indeed a great supper, to which we are invited, whether we consider the dignity of him, who makes us his guests, or the excellence of the food which is offered to us in this banquet. A God made man for our sake, calls us to his sacred table, and gives himself for our food and nourishment. Great God! what must be the excess of thy love for us thy creatures—what thy condescension, thus to humble thyself for the love of man?

But what must be the guilt of those, who either spurn at this loving kindness to their God, by rejecting his invitation, or who come to his feast in such manner as to display the utmost contempt of the Lord of Glory! I shall endeavour to rouse the former from their fatal lethargy, by proving to them the futility of every pretext which they employ to justify their neglect, and to awaken in the latter a salutary dread and remorse, by shewing, at least in some degree, the enormity of their conduct, who presume to approach to this holy sacrament without suitable dispositions; who *eat and drink unworthily, not discerning the body of the Lord.*

Jesus, who on account of his great love for man, is often named in the Holy Scriptures, the Son of Man, has left in the church, which he established on earth, a great sacrament, a pledge

of his love for us ; a memorial of his sacred passion, and a source of grace and sanctification. This is the sacrament of the blessed Eucharist, in which he gives us himself for our food, who gave his life for our ransom. To this celestial banquet—to this true manna he invites his miserable creatures : he sends his servants to inform them, that their presence is expected ; to say to them that *they should come, for now all things are ready*. But, unaccountable obstinacy and blindness ! many reject the invitation, and invent excuses to justify, or palliate their neglect. *I have bought a farm, and must of necessity go out and see it ; I pray thee hold me excused*. This excuse, according to St. Augustine and St. Gregory, is the apology of the proud, who disdain to accept the invitation from a conceit of their fancied superiority or independence. Pride keeps too many from approaching to this holy sacrament. Some refuse to acknowledge the presence of their God in the humble exterior in which he comes to visit his creatures, not considering that his condescension in so doing does not prove his lowliness, but ours ; does not degrade him, but ought to humble us. For in this our weak and lowly condition, how could we receive the Lord of Glory, arrayed in all the splendours of infinite majesty ? How could we contemplate the

bright radiance of his countenance, and not be confounded by the glorious effulgence! He comes to us concealing the greatness of that power and majesty, which would overpower the weakness of human nature; he gives himself to us under humble veils, compassionating thus our feeble powers, yet enriching our souls with his inestimable gifts and graces. Let pride be humbled and confounded at the goodness and condescension of infinite power, in pity of our littleness and for our example.

The second excuse mentioned in the gospel is a sinful avarice, and how often does this sordid vice keep back unhappy men from approaching to this feast of charity? *I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them. I pray thee, &c.* Alas! mere terrestrial advantage, worldly interests, are continually preferred to the duties and benefits of religion. This faith which you profess, this Catholic faith, is not unfrequently acknowledged to be the faith of Jesus Christ; but it is said, if we embrace this faith, such is the prejudice that exists against it in this country, that our prospects, as to this world, will be obscured, our terrestrial success injured, and, at all events, we must live. But this will not justify their absenting themselves from the feast of God's table. Do they not know that they were created to love God, and to serve him, in spite

of difficulty? Did they not, in their baptism, renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, knowing that against their suggestions and assaults, they would have to struggle through life? *Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?* (Matt. viii. 26.) The Lord will not forsake those who trust in him. *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.* (Id. vi. 33.) But fearful of losing terrestrial goods, and improvidently regardless of future and eternal possessions, many neglect this blessed institution, and permit their souls to perish.

They cannot frequent the sacraments? Why not? The concerns of business—the hurry of situation—the cares of the world do not leave time for preparation. What is this, but to say that the concerns of the present life, present gain, and present emolument must have the preference of eternal salvation? The body, and its conveniences and enjoyments must first be studied and obtained, and then the soul may be considered. What is this but a sordid attachment to the earth, and the things of the earth? A miserable servitude, which, however, is embraced and cherished by many, who call themselves Christians; willing slaves to human respect, human interest, human motives, to which they sacrifice all their better prospects

for eternity. There is a third description of persons represented by the man, who, in consequence of matrimonial engagements, without using excuse or apology, positively refused his attendance. *I have married a wife, and therefore cannot come.* (v. 20.) The state of matrimony is a state of sanctity, without doubt: it leads to holiness, because its end is holy; it has God for its founder, and in the new law, has been raised to the dignity of a sacrament by the Son of God; but alas, this holy state is often profaned by those who enter it, and instead of being made by the united efforts, example and mutual encouragements of the parties, a help to sanctification, is very often made a source of perpetual discord, strife and misery here, and of eternal misery hereafter.

This state of life, though the state to which the generality of mankind are called, should be engaged in, not with that precipitate indeliberation which is so discernible for the most part; not with that motive of worldly advantage, profit, or convenience, which makes so many barter away their liberty, their happiness, their persons for gold, and makes the sacred engagement of matrimony a mere pecuniary transaction—a sordid traffic. Nor should it be embraced with that impetuosity of passion, which has no other object in view, but the low plea-

sures of sensual gratification, by which it is made not a remedy against concupiscence, but the occasion, and the means of indulging sinful lust. No, it should be sought from virtuous motives, embraced from a desire of facilitating the practice of virtue, by the mutual support of the sexes ; with a view of propagating the species ; of bringing up children who may perpetuate God's honor and service on earth, and people heaven ; and as a secondary motive, it may be embraced as a legitimate remedy against the assaults of concupiscence ; and when engaged in, all its comforts and enjoyments, all its occasional trials and crosses, should be made subservient to the great concern of salvation. By an opposite conduct, it is made a state of difficulty and danger, whence the Apostle St. Paul declares to us that *he that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of the world.* (1 Cor. vii. 33.) But he says, *I would have you to be without solicitude.* (ib. v. 32,) therefore he recommends to those who are enabled, by the grace of God, to lead a life of perpetual continency, to do so ; *I say to the unmarried and to the widows, it is good for them if they so continue, even as I.* (v. 8.) If however, they are not called to a state of perpetual continency, he then exhorts them to embrace the marriage state. *If they do not contain themselves, let*

*them marry ; for it is better to marry than to burn, that is, than to be consumed by unlawful desires, or to gratify unlawful passion.*

This however is not to be understood as protestants explain it, of those who are consecrated to Almighty God, either by entering upon his ministry, or by religious vows ; for if these employ the proper means God will enable them to preserve their first vows by which they became espoused to him. The fathers of the reformation, who began by a violation of religious vows, endeavoured to justify their defection from these solemn engagements previously made to God, by the authority of St. Paul in this passage, but they have corrupted the passage to serve their purpose, translating it in their testaments, *if they CANNOT contain themselves*, whereas in the original it is, *if they DO not contain themselves*, εἰδένονκ ἔγκρα τενοῦνται. The apostle does not here admit the impossibility of leading a life of continence, or he would contradict himself, having in the preceding verse recommended to the unmarried and to widows, to continue single ; exhorting to the same effect in a following verse, where he declares that the married are led to a solicitude for the things of the world, whereas, *the unmarried and the virgin*, he expressly asserts, *thinketh on the things of the Lord*,

*that she may be holy both in body and in spirit ;* v. 34 and 38 he says, *he that giveth his virgin,* &c. But in every lawful state of life it is possible to serve God, and the state of lawful matrimony affords no just excuse for neglecting this holy institution, for remaining at a distance from this great supper, which may be made the means of supporting the troubles of life with due resignation, and of drawing off the affections from what is terrestrial, to the things that are of God and to God himself. None of these excuses will be admitted, nor will they be heard, who attempt to justify their negligence, by a pretended respect for these august mysteries, by alleging their great unworthiness.

It is true our respect for this great sacrament cannot be too great, but it should be a respect conformable to the intentions of Jesus Christ. It is not by your absenting yourselves, that he will consider himself as honored, since he commands you to come, but by the dispositions which you bring with you ; and when you have endeavoured, according to your best ability, to acquire these dispositions, if you do not give him all the honor which is his due, you give him at least what is in your power ; you obey his law. It is a false respect which keeps you away, a respect, if it can be so called, which is displeas-

ing to God, which is injurious to yourselves, as you well know ; for, surely you do not flatter yourselves that you are practising humility, by keeping at a distance from your loving and condescending Saviour : the pretext of unworthiness should not satisfy your consciences, and withdraw you from the holy table. I do not mean that notwithstanding the state of sin in which you live, you should eat the body of the Lord and drink his blood. God forbid that I should seem to authorize such a profanation ! and wo to that man who should thus commit so criminal an abuse of this most sacred institution, this most august of our mysteries ! but my meaning is, that if under the color of your unworthiness, you resolve to abstain from the holy sacrament, because your lives are not sufficiently regular or exemplary, instead of resolving, as you ought to resolve, to reform your lives and renounce your evil habits ; that if because you sin, you conceive yourselves dispensed from the obligations of receiving the blessed Eucharist, instead of concluding that sin is to be forsaken and repented of, that you may not deprive yourselves of the inestimable advantages to be derived from it ; your pretext of unworthiness is fallacious and null. Say not, my life is such as to make me unfit to receive the God of holiness, therefore do I

bid adieu to the holy sacrament ; but since my present conduct debars me from this life-giving food, this heavenly feast, I will reform my conduct. The pretext that persons are unworthy to receive the holy communion, means no more than that they cannot prevail upon themselves to abandon sin, and that they are not yet so lost to faith as well as to virtue, as to presume to harbour the God of all sanctity in their polluted breasts : and this pretext, which begins with the sacrament of the altar, is gradually extended to all the several acts of religion. The word of God is not heard, because, say they, it is to no purpose to hear God's word, without a desire to profit by it ; the homage of praise and thanksgiving is not offered to the Almighty, because the praises of the Lord ought not to proceed from the lips of a sinner, who is hardened in iniquity ; the sacrament of penance, that source of grace and comfort to penitent sinners, is forsaken ; for why should we approach to a sacrament of which we are unworthy ; the duty of prayer, and even the assistance at the holy sacrifice, and attendance at the temple of the Most High, are resigned upon the plea of unworthiness ; and thus every exterior succour is cut off, and a kind of voluntary self-excommunication is submitted to upon a

false principle of respect and of pride, decorating itself with the vesture of humility.

I have dwelt longer on these false pretexts, which serve to keep persons from the fountain of life, than I either expected or intended : that which I had proposed to treat, in the subsequent part of my discourse, must be reserved for some other occasion. Let me conclude by earnestly exhorting you to know your own interest and happiness, to endeavour to obviate the obstacles which stand in your way and prevent your approach to Jesus Christ, not to adduce them as excuses for your neglect. Go then to your God with trembling step, conscious of your unworthiness, as sinful creatures ; but let a well founded confidence in his mercies bear you to the foot of his altar, and embolden you to receive him. Were we to deny support to our bodies, we should justly deem ourselves guilty of suicide ; Christ has declared that *except we eat*, &c. Shall we then acquit ourselves of equal, or even greater guilt, when we refuse to our souls that nourishment which is necessary to their life ? Without this food, our souls must perish ; and if it be a great crime to receive the Lord of heaven unworthily, it is no less certain death to stay away from these divine mysteries, in which we

may receive all grace and every necessary for our everlasting life. *Lord, to whom shall we go, but to thee? thou hast the words of eternal life.* (John vi. 69.) O come, dear Jesus, who wast born for us into this world, who sheddest thy blood for us, dying on a cross, who hast given us thyself here, under humble veils, that we might be brought to the clear sight, and possession of thee in eternal glory; take from us whatever is displeasing to thee; give us a hunger and thirst after thee; inflame our hearts with a love of thee, that we may be ready to renounce for ever all that can separate us from thee; that henceforward we may pant after thee, that we may be willing to make any sacrifice which may bring us nearer to thee and thy love; and that consecrating ourselves to thy service, we may receive forgiveness of our sins at thy feet, be nourished with this our daily supersubstantial bread, and at length pass from a life of grace to a life of glory; from a life in which we adore thee under humble mysterious veils, to a life in which we shall see and enjoy thee without shadow or change for all eternity.

## SERMON XXXV.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON THE MERCY OF JESUS TOWARDS SINNERS.

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*There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner doing penance, more than upon ninety-nine just, who need not penance. (Luke xv. 7.)*

OUR blessed Redeemer, who came down from heaven, and clothed himself with our nature, that he might bring back those who had gone astray, and save those who were perishing, permitted even sinners to approach his person and to converse with him, and sometimes he condescended even to sit at their tables, and eat with them. Filled with an idea of their superior virtue, and imaginary merit, the Pharisees and doctors of the law affected to be scandalized at this charity of Jesus Christ, and vented their rancour, sometimes in secret whispers, sometimes in open reproach. In us, my brethren, weak as we are, and prone to sin, it would generally be a guilty presumption to

join the societies of the wicked, even from the motive of reclaiming them from sin ; but in Our Saviour, in whom was all goodness and sanctity, it was the effect of his great love for sinners, and his zeal for the glory of his Father. In him his enemies could discern nothing that was not decorated with all the purity and sweetness of charity, both towards God and men : *sin in him there was none*. Yet did the Scribes and Pharisees murmur against him, saying—*This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them*. To confound their pride, refute their aspersions, and demonstrate to them the ineffable charity with which he was actuated, Jesus speaks to them the parable you have just heard, leaving to them to draw from it an easy and natural inference.

If to recover an animal of little value, men submit to such fatigue ; if they take so much pains to recover a sum of money, which, in its greatest abundance, is incompetent to bestow real happiness, and must at last be left behind, can you wonder, and what is more extraordinary, can you pretend to be scandalized, when you behold me seeking to draw sinners from their evil ways ? From the compassion which I shew towards those who have strayed from the pastures of grace and virtue, can you take occasion to censure my conduct, and rouse the pub-

lic reproach and resentment against me? *Know ye not that I came not to call, &c.* Cease then to entertain sentiments of malevolence against me, to murmur against my conduct, to traduce my character, and by unfounded surmises, and false insinuations, to blacken my reputation. *I say to you that there shall be, &c.* By this parable he instructs us that he considers sinners as the sheep which he has lost; that he omits nothing to bring them back to virtue and happiness; that he rejoices in their return, and invites the whole host of heaven, the sacred train of ministering spirits to join with him.

Let us this day contemplate the charity of Jesus towards sinners, by considering how much he does in order to bring them to himself; and on some future occasion we will examine what ought to be the behaviour of sinners in return for so much tenderness and love.

It is with the strictest justice that the Saviour of mankind has styled himself the *good shepherd*. He knows his sheep; he guards and protects them; he loves them, and loves them even unto death. But when any of us, who are the sheep of his pasture, have strayed from the fold, to wander in the by-paths of iniquity; when, disregarding his love, we have yielded to the bent of sinful passion, then it is that his loving tenderness, contrasted with our ingrati-

tude, appears in the most admirable light. Then it is that he seems, as it were, to forget those who have closely adhered to him. He leaves the ninety-nine in the desert, and goes in pursuit of the unhappy wanderer, and having found the lost sheep, invites, encourages, and presses it to return to the fold—to his love and friendship.

My brethren, admire the prompt solicitude with which Jesus hastens to rescue sinners from destruction. No sooner does the unhappy offender withdraw himself to a distance from his God, by mortal sin, than his loving Lord speaks to his soul by the voice of conscience, which upbraids him with his ingratitude, unfolds to view the wretchedness of sin, the boundless calamities which are its consequence, and inspires a dread of God's offended majesty. To these interior reproaches he joins a strong light, which exposes the enormity of the sinner's guilt, and urges him to repentance. No sooner had our first parents disobeyed the divine commands, than he *called to Adam, and said to him, where art thou?* (Gen. iii. 9.) and *the eyes of them both were opened*, and they beheld their guilt and misery. But, my brethren, you need no proof in confirmation of this his mercy. You, who have had the misfortune to lose the grace of God by sin, know the truth of what I assert. When you violated his command by injustice,

intemperance, or lust, what were then the feelings of your souls? Did not then the Deity speak to your souls in the secret, but powerful voice of conscience? When, at the sacred solemnity of the Christian passover, you refused to join in communion with the faithful, by partaking of the paschal lamb, when you kept away from that celestial banquet—from that bread of life, of which, if *a man eat, he shall live for ever*, did you feel no agitation of mind, no compunction of soul for your neglect? Did you behold your brethren in Christ approach to that altar, and there receive the Holy of Holies, without feeling the reproofs, the condemnation of your own conscience? Oh! your *Lord called aloud to you and said, where art thou?* Your eyes were opened, and you *saw that you were naked*; and if you refused to obey the voice of God, still it was heard by you, speaking in your inmost soul, and reproaching you with blindness and ingratitude. If, on the other hand, you have dared to approach with a soul defiled by guilt, with consciences polluted by iniquity, or affections fixed on objects displeasing to God; if, like Judas, you have betrayed the Son of Man with a kiss, even now do you feel the sting of reproach; your Saviour whom you have crucified, still calls you to benefit by that precious blood which your iniquities

have spilt. If, after renewing your allegiance to your God, you have relapsed into sin, and forfeited his grace, still he pursues you. The shepherd of your souls calls and invites you, though fleeing from him, to return to mercy; to seek peace for your souls. A voice is heard within you, crying out:—"Return from the ways of guilt and wretchedness, to the pastures of innocence and joy:" a secret disquietude preys upon your souls, and embitters all your pleasures. Should there be one amongst you, my dear friends, who is so hardened in guilt as to be insensible to the voice of God and the goads of conscience, as to imagine that he possesses tranquillity, while at variance with his God, oh! deplorable indeed is his situation, who, like to one in the delirium of a fever, attempts his own destruction, unconscious of his danger. Let him not, however, pretend that he is abandoned by God. O no! If he feel not now, as heretofore, the pungency of remorse, the agonies of a soul wounded by sin; if he experience not the solicitations of his much offended Lord, it is because he has barricaded his heart against the approaches of divine grace; he has shut his ears against the voice of God, and his gracious invitations; for he cannot say that he has not often felt the reproach of conscience, and the call of heaven, which he obstinately disregarded.

For the goodness of God waits not till the sinner has waded deep in the ocean of iniquity, but in the first moments of guilt admonishes him of his misfortune, and calls him to repentance. Instead of destroying the presumptuous wretch who has dared to rebel against his sovereign Lord, he makes the first advances towards reconciliation, and offers him grace and strength to surmount every obstacle ; but if the sinner reject these endeavours of a loving parent, adding repeated provocations to his first offence, the God of mercy does not abandon him. No : he repeats his invitations—he redoubles his entreaties ; he calls, presses, and conjures the strayed sheep to return to the fold, to experience the care of the true shepherd. He follows the deluded wanderer through all the windings of his guilt, meets him at every turn, and by every interior and exterior means—by every general and particular inducement, tries to win him to the acceptance of grace and mercy. O you who have to bewail the obstinacy of your conduct, have not you experienced this goodness of your God, through every scene of guilt with which your lives have been diversified ? When obstinately bent upon pursuing where passion has invited, has not the God, who made your hearts, wished to draw them from sin, by mixing an alloy of bitterness with your fondest

enjoyments, and forbidden you to indulge in sinful pleasures with unmingled gratification? Has he not said to you, " Turn to me, deluded wanderer ; turn from seducing pleasures, in which there is nothing but vanity, and affliction of spirit ; turn from criminal delights, which give death to your soul, and end in hell. *Behold, I stand at the gate and knock.* (Rev. iii. 20.)" Yes, my friends, even at this moment, he urges you to break the chains which hold you in confinement ; to tear yourselves away from every dangerous engagement, every fatal connection ; to extinguish the flame of unlawful passion, which consumes your soul ; to enter into yourselves, and once more enjoy true liberty, unshackled by every human respect, every earthly fear, and every earthly affection. He sweetly invites you to come to him, oppressed by the weight of sin, under which you groan ; with all your iniquities, by which you are broken down, even to despondence, promising that he will refresh you, and give rest to your wearied souls. As he did to Saul, he now cries to you—*Why dost thou persecute me ? I am Jesus whom thou persecutest ; it is hard for thee to kick against the goad.* (Act. ix. 5.) On you he calls, who, by your evil example and disedifying lives, oppose the work of God, and hinder the propagation of his faith, the diffu-

sion of his charity; on you, who proceed in a life of indolence and spiritual sloth, and though attending to every earthly concern, neglect or despise the concern of salvation. Upon you he calls, who, knowing what is your duty, refuse, from insensibility or pride, to practise it.

Say not that God has forsaken you; pretend not that he has consigned you to desperation and misery everlasting. If you perish, you fall by your own hand; *why then will you die, oh house of Israel?* The good shepherd, Jesus, the Father and Bishop of your souls, is still in pursuit of his lost sheep, nor will he cease his endeavours to recover you, and bring you back to the pastures of security and peace, till you are irrevocably fallen into the jaws of the infernal wolf; that is, till, rejecting his mercy, you die in your sins! Be then no longer callous, my brethren, to his repeated solicitations and endeavours; compel not the God of mercy, by your reiterated contempt and unrelenting malice, to cast you from his sight for ever, *into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* (Matt. viii. 12.)

The pleasures which first seduced you from your everlasting lover, and which still keep you away from him, do not afford that satisfaction you expected, nor even the delight which novelty might give them; your God has em-

bittered them : the objects which you still follow with unaccountable infatuation, have lost their attraction ; your pursuits are crossed with sorrow, shame, and disappointment : renounce them then for ever, exchange them for pure satisfactions and gladdening hopes of endless enjoyments ; turn to God, and he will receive you, though blackened with every foul offence, and odious with accumulated iniquities : turn to him with sincere humility and true contrition, and he will receive you, take you in his arms, press you to his forgiving bosom, and cleansing you from every spot and stain, restore you to beauty, loveliness, and peace. Despise not the patient forbearance of your God, turn to him now with eager gratitude, the blush of confusion reddening your cheek, the sigh of sincere sorrow heaving your heart ; nor ever more presume to provoke his just indignation. Remember that as every worldly joy will soon pass away, and life itself be shortly terminated, so must the patience of God, rejected and despised, at last consign you to the just punishment of your ingratitude. This may perhaps be the last invitation of your merciful Lord : though often provoked, he is still ready to pardon, but how long he may allow you to avail yourselves of his mercy, he only knows. There is yet time ; very soon there will be no

more time for you. *This day, then, if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts, but be converted to the Lord, with sincerity of heart, and serve him with perseverance. Remember the words of St. Peter, The Lord dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance...The day of the Lord shall come as a thief...wherefore dearly beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, be diligent that ye may be found undefiled and unspotted to him in peace; and account the long suffering of our Lord, salvation. (2 Pet. iii. 9. and seq.)*

## SERMON XXXVI.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON CORRESPONDING WITH DIVINE GRACE.

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*There shall be joy before the angels of God,  
upon one sinner doing penance.* Luke, xv. 10.

I ENDEAVOURED, last Sunday, to impress upon your minds a sense of God's unbounded mercy to the sinner, in soliciting, and pressing him to repentance, and represented to you, though in feeble colouring, what our loving Lord continually does, in order to save ungrateful man ; on this day I intend to shew you what it is necessary that man should do on his part, that he may co-operate with the benevolent designs of his Creator, and make his election sure. For great and astonishing as is the goodness of the Almighty, in regard of sinners, his goodness alone cannot effect their salvation : man must act in concert with God, by co-operating with his graces, or he must remain unalterably fixed

in sin. The Almighty must begin the work of the sinner's conversion : his grace prepares the way, enlightening him to see his duty and interest, to know the things that are for his peace, and urging and enabling him to embrace them : but unless the sinner correspond with the calls and helps of God, his conversion cannot be effected. *Turn ye to me, saith the Lord of Hosts, and I will turn to you ; (Zach. i. 3.)* which proves, according to the remark of the Council of Trent, that our conversion depends on our own free will, and that God cannot restore sinners to grace and virtue, unless they comply with his invitations, and co-operate with his graces. He who created us without our concurrence, will not save us without our concurrence. It is therefore absolutely and indispensably necessary, that whoever has forfeited the friendship of God by sin, should exert himself in correspondence with the aid of heaven, should *labour* for his conversion. As our true shepherd, Jesus Christ, seeks the lost sheep on its first departure from the fold, nor forsakes it in its lengthened wanderings ; so the sinner that is truly desirous of recovering the grace and love of Jesus, must answer his loving call, and correspond with his gracious helps, with promptitude, sincerity, and perseverance.

There are three general descriptions of sin-

ners: the first comprises those who have but recently fallen into the guilt of mortal sin; the second includes those whose crimes are multiplied, by repeated transgressions, and the abuse of many graces; the third comprehends those who, having persisted in a lengthened habit of sin, and the contempt of God's calls and mercies, are become hardened in iniquity, and, as it were, lost to God. But to whatever degree of guilt the sinner has arrived, if he desire the recovery of God's favor and love, he must shew a prompt obedience to the invitations of his injured Lord; he must, in good earnest, forsake his evil ways; and, never looking back, but with horror and detestation, upon what he has forsaken, press forward with steady zeal and unshaken perseverance.

O, my brethren, if your misfortune be of recent date, if you have but lately left the fold of the good shepherd, stay your steps at the first sound of his voice; hasten back to him, who calls you to himself, and solicits your return. If you have but just experienced the misfortune of having linked yourselves with vicious companions, if you have just found the fatal consequence of an imprudent connection, if the violence of sudden temptation has surprised you, if a fatal deference to the seducements, counsel, or authority of others has pre-

vailed on you to your misery, if any unexpected trial has proved superior to your virtue; hasten to retrieve your misfortune, imitate the sheep that has just strayed from the flock, and returns at the first call of the shepherd. Let not the state of sin become supportable to you, by continuing in it; never let custom make it familiar to you; but take advantage of the uneasiness which you now experience, before it wear off by length of time; hasten to exchange it for that true peace which you enjoyed before you lost the joy of a good conscience by sin. Go, cast yourselves, without delay, at the feet of God's minister, place yourselves at this tribunal of mercy, and there becoming your own accusers, and sincerely repenting of your guilt, suffer your souls to be washed in the blood of the Lamb, and restored to their original purity. The recent wound is healed with ease; but if it be long neglected, the cure becomes difficult. It is not a work of such great difficulty to recover the grace of God, after the first transgression; but if the sinner neglect to rise with immediate alacrity, he soon becomes entangled in sin; he sinks deeper in the mire of vice; his sins are daily multiplied, and with them are multiplied the obstacles to his conversion. Do you not experimentally know the truth of what I assert? Have you not found, that having

offended God, and neglected to return to him, your love, nay, your fear of him diminished every day, the dread of sin grew less, the eternal judgements of God made less impression, you repeated the sin at which you at first trembled with horror, each time with less remorse ; other sins, to which you were before strangers, were committed without terror, till, at last, you bowed down in willing subjection to sin, and became the passive slaves to the tyranny of your passions. Alas ! I fear that some of you, my brethren, too well know the truth of what I say. Like the prodigal son, have you not gone into a distant country, far from your father's house, and endeavoured to obliterate the remembrance of his goodness, by indulging in every species of excess and guilt ? But, oh ! far as you may be from your paternal roof, far from that tranquillity which you once enjoyed, when innocence and virtue decked your souls ; though you may have neglected and despised the riches of his grace, deprived yourselves of every spiritual and intellectual enjoyment, and bowed down your immortal souls to the indulgence of mere sensual and degrading pleasures ; yet, if you turn to your God, the true shepherd of your souls, he will again receive you, take you into his arms, vest you again with the robe of inheritance, lead you to

his table with joy, and there feed you with the bread of immortality. But let your conduct *exactly* resemble that of the prodigal, recovering from that dream of dissipation which necessarily excludes all sobriety of reflection, enter into yourselves, and compare the misery of your state with the happiness which is enjoyed by the least of God's servants ; arise without hesitation or delay ; let not the view of difficulties, that may be met with, induce you to a dangerous deliberation ; indecision will be fatal to you ; but at once resolve ; nor hearken to the voice of the passions, which will cry out, as the great St. Augustine tells us, they cried out to him ; “ will you then dismiss us for ever ? shall we never more be indulged ? ” (Conf. l. viii. c. 11.) Regard them not ; nor listen to the taunts, the railleries of the world, which will perhaps load you with ridicule and persecution, if you turn to God, while it was unconcerned at your guilty conduct. Yes ; it often happens that the slaves of folly and vice will only smile at the irregularities or grosser crimes of the sinner, but if he turn to God, and lead a life of retirement and piety, they will affect a regard for virtue, and treat him with insulting sneers, and pretended abhorrence, as an enemy to virtue, a mere hypocrite. But let neither the world, the flesh, nor the devil, prevail over you ; *pray and sigh be-*

*fore God*; make a generous effort in his cause, and your own; *follow the counsel of your* spiritual guide, who will disclose to you the will of heaven; and soon will the road of repentance be smoothed beneath your feet, you will find that the grace of God can sweeten every sorrow, and render easy and agreeable that which appeared the most difficult and discouraging. Your heavenly Father will receive you to favor; pleased with your return to virtue and peace, he will heap his mercies upon you, and seem to confer upon you a share of affection, even beyond what is enjoyed by those who have never separated themselves from him. *There shall be joy, &c.* (Luke, xv. 7.) But perhaps amongst you, my christian hearers, may be some who, long rebellious to the calls of their shepherd, and hardened against his loving mercy, flee from him with unfeeling obstinacy: who, fast bound in the chains of sin, either wholly reject the graces of God, persuading themselves that their conversion is impossible, or determine to trust to the doubtful and dangerous experiment of a death-bed repentance. If any such there be amongst you, who now hear me, melancholy indeed is your situation; but would to God that you could be convinced of your misery! Will you still resolve, unhappy christians (for still you bear that honorable denomination), will you still

resolve to remain in sin, enemies of God, and exposed to the continual danger of falling a prey to the infernal tyrant, and of being sunk in eternal torments? Is it that you deem it impossible to recover the friendship of God? While it is your fixed resolution to persist in your evil course, it is indeed impossible; because you refuse the friendship of your God: but remember that he sincerely wishes to draw you to himself, and if you correspond with his wishes and graces, you will be converted. Your conversion, therefore, is not impossible: the word of God is express, to assure you that, were you even the most abandoned sinner that ever existed on the face of the earth, still will he assist you to return to him, and will forgive you your sins, if you have recourse to him with sincere repentance; and this change of heart *he will give*, provided you seek it with an earnest wish to obtain it. Your spiritual enemies may cry out “difficulty and impossibility,” but believe them not; rather give credit to the express promises of God himself. When those, whom Moses sent to view the land of promise, informed the people that the country to which they were advancing, was a land that devoured its inhabitants, Joshua and Caleb encouraged them to intrepidity and enterprise, assuring them that those with whom they would have to

contend, would be found very different from the representation that had been given of them, and that the Lord would deliver them up an easy prey into their hands. *All aid is gone from them, said they ; the Lord is with us, fear not.* (Num. xiv. 9.)

The same I say to you, my brethren. Be not disheartened ; great as may be your sins, by the grace of God they may be renounced, by his mercy be forgiven. Numberless examples might be produced, from holy writ and from history, of sinners deeply immersed in every abomination and vice, who have, by the power and goodness of God, and through the merits of the blood of Jesus Christ, overcome their sinful habits, and become sincere penitents and illustrious saints. Manasses, king of Judah, had offended God by every enormous crime, bowing down before idols, the works of his hands, profaning the temple of the Lord, and making Judah also to sin, (4 Kings, xxi.) yet, *after that he was in distress, he prayed to the Lord his God, and did penance exceedingly before the God of his fathers, and entreated him and besought him earnestly ; and he heard his prayer.* (2 Paralip. xxxiii. 12.) With what strong fetters was the great St. Augustine captivated to sin ! With what affecting energy does he describe his deplorable situation ! Yet the power of the

Most High broke his chains, and freed him from the bondage of criminal habit, which had become so powerful, that the saint confesses it seemed impossible ever to relinquish it but with life. The same power of God preserved him from relapse ; enabled him to detest those vices to which he had been once so strongly attached ; and raised the ignoble slave of profaneness, excess, and lust, to an eminent state of piety, mortification, and divine charity. Let not, then, an impious despair prevent you from making a generous attempt to break asunder the bonds of evil habit, while your God encourages you, and offers his Almighty aid : on the other hand, let not a daring presumption of God's mercy fondly persuade you, that it will be easy hereafter to turn to him. Oh, if you think the work impossible now, will you let your deadly foe seduce you to a belief, that by deferring it, and by adding to your sins, you will make it less difficult ? This fallacious artifice has proved fatal to thousands who are now lamenting and cursing their folly and stupidity, in never-ending torments. God has, indeed, promised to shew mercy to the truly penitent, for *a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise,* (Ps. L.) but the hardened sinner, who presumes to reject the mercies, and insult the forbearance of a just God, will experience the severity of his

wrath. *Say not: the mercy of the Lord is great, he will have mercy on the multitude of my sins . . . . Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day; for his wrath shall come on a sudden, and, in the time of vengeance, he will destroy thee.* (Eccli. v. 6.) The Jews, assuming confidence from the favors they had experienced from the Almighty, vainly imagined that his mercy would for ever spare them; but they were deceived; his fury has fallen upon their guilty heads, and the presumptuous sinner will find that the mercy of the Lord will, at length, give way to justice; which will be exerted in the infliction of torments, that will never have an end. Heap not, then, upon your heads, deluded sinners, the treasures of God's indignation, by the hardness of your hearts, and your accumulated iniquities. He offers you his mercy; despise him not, lest he cast you off for ever. *Thinkest thou this, O man, says St. Paul, that thou shalt escape the punishment of God? or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and patience, and long-suffering? Knowest thou not, that the benignity of God leadeth to penance? But according to thy hardness, and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the just judgement of God, who will render to*

*every one according to his works.* (Rom. ii. 3.) Sinners, who yet believe in God, and the merits of your Redeemer, behold Jesus, your Saviour, on the cross which he has chosen for your sake, his arms extended to receive you, his head bowed down, to give you the kiss of peace. Hasten then to his embraces, throw yourselves with eager gratitude into his arms. Soon, alas ! very soon, may he appear your Judge, and an inexorable Judge, without compassion or pity for his enemies ; for the hour of mercy will then be over, justice without mercy will rule for ever. If you reject his mercy now in this your day, he will then reject you, a prey to the rage of insulting devils, and condemn you to be their associates for all eternity. Horrible association ! but you have chosen a curse instead of a blessing, and a dreadful irrevocable curse will be the portion of the impenitent ! Oh, you have experienced the divine goodness preserving you from sin, and you who have known his great mercy in receiving you after your crimes, be careful not to repay his bounties with ingratitude : and you, who are so unhappy as to be now at a distance from your loving Saviour, the Shepherd of your souls, who calls, invites, and presses you to return to the fold, obey his voice, nor at once provoke his anger, and work your eternal woe, by contempt and disobedience. May your

loving Lord, your careful and beneficent pastor, Christ Jesus, who came down from heaven, *to save that which was lost*, who, as he himself declares, *came not to call the just, but sinners to repentance*, (Matt. ix. 13.) have compassion on you : may he render you docile to his word, draw you effectually to himself, and preserve us all inviolably attached to his service, that partaking of his mercy here below, we may be admitted to the reward of his kingdom hereafter, and there, in the abodes of bliss and glory, and united in the fellowship of purest charity, rejoice together, and together glorify his name for endless ages.

## SERMON XXXVII.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON THE VICE OF SWEARING.

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*Whosoever shall say to his brother, "Raca," shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say "thou fool," shall be in danger of hell fire. (Matt. v. 22.)*

OUR divine Redeemer, in the admirable discourse which he made to the multitude in the early part of his mission, and which forms an excellent epitome of Christian morality, not satisfied with forbidding to attempt the life of our fellow-creature, by the shocking crime of voluntary homicide, forbids us to indulge in the vice of anger, pronounces it criminal to make use even of injurious or contemptuous words, in regard of our neighbour, and assures us that whoever is guilty of intemperate, insulting, or degrading language towards his fellow man, will receive a sentence of condemnation, more or less rigorous, as the injury done to him may be more or less grievous. My brethren, you are

sensible that these declarations of Jesus Christ, which will be verified to an iota, are but little attended to by mankind in general. On every side, and in every rank of life, amongst the higher as amongst the lower orders; amongst those who have received a liberal education, no less than amongst those who have been denied that singular felicity, every where are heard oaths, imprecations, and maledictions, either against fellow creatures, or against the animal part of the creation, or against inanimate beings, or against their own bodies and immortal souls, and this too, frequently without the smallest provocation or the slightest cause, from an impious habit, or wanton profaneness. To such an excess has this odious vice attained, that on the most trivial occasions, oaths and curses are employed, to the scandal and disgrace, if not of religion, which reprobates the practice, at least of those among the professors of religion, who seem to contemn the doctrines, and disregard the threats, which Christianity holds out against those who violate its sacred observances. Even reason and good sense are too frequently sacrificed to this absurd and wicked practice, so that in order to comprehend the language of some men, it is absolutely necessary to expunge, by a kind of mental obliteration, certain passages of every sentence that they utter, without

which the whole would degenerate into downright nonsense, and profane jargon. I feel a pleasing confidence that this too prevalent habit has not been contracted by many of those entrusted to my care ; yet if but one has been infected by the contagion, it would be a pleasing triumph to rescue him from destruction, and as the danger to which all are exposed is great and imminent, I shall be happy if I can influence you to detest and avoid this common, yet irreligious practice.

*Swearing* may be understood in two different significations, either in its proper theological sense, as an appeal to God, by which he is invoked in testimony to the truth of what is asserted, or in the common acceptation, by which oaths, curses, imprecations, and every profane expression is understood. In the first sense, it is strictly and primarily forbidden by the second commandment, which declares it to be displeasing to God to swear by his holy name, in violation of *truth*, or *justice*, or *judgement*. As to the second acceptation, it is unnecessary to say more, than that it comprises every malediction against ourselves, our fellow creatures, or against any thing that exists in nature. To specify or detail the forms of expression accustomed to be employed, there can be no necessity, respect for this sacred place, and the horror

which the pious Christian feels at the bare repetition, forbid me, while the perfect comprehension which you must have of them makes the mention of them superfluous. May I inspire you with a dread and detestation of all profaneness; may I prevent those who are at present guiltless of this crime, from contracting an odious habit, and prevail upon as many as may be any way addicted to it to forsake a practice so unbecoming and so criminal!

Let me conjure you, my brethren, to consider what the nature is of those expressions, from which it is my wish to deter you, and which are so often in the mouths of Christians, at least by profession. It is an article of faith, expressly notified to us by the word of truth, that every unprofitable word will be arraigned at the tribunal of sovereign justice; that to address our brother, that is, our fellow creature, in a language expressive of contempt, or injurious to his honor, is to offend the common father of all, and to deserve punishment. *Whosoever shall say, &c.* Of every idle word we must give an account before our supreme judge, the God of all sanctity, and every idle and profane word will be punished with greater or less severity, in proportion to the malice with which it is fraught. What excuse, then, will you offer for words, which are not barely idle or unprofitable?

for language that is not merely unnecessary and vain, but injurious—but contrary to charity—insulting to your neighbour, disrespectful to your God, often profane, and sometimes blasphemous? Pretend not that your expressions are not of the blackest enormity; that they are pronounced without the violence of outrageous fury and mad passion: you are convinced that they are displeasing to God, and is not that sufficient to make you avoid them? Can you consider it as a matter of small concern that the name of God's enemy, and of your own, is uttered on every occasion, not out of detestation for him, but perhaps with a wish that he would take yourself or your neighbour? Do you not know that by your engagements at the font of baptism, you renounced the devil and all his works, and all his pomps? Can you still say, even without meaning what you say, that you wish him to seize and carry away yourselves or your fellow creature? Our Redeemer says that *from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*; (Matt. xii. 34.) and though you do not, on these occasions, stop to weigh the signification of the words you use, yet does it not happen to you, from the force of habit, that in the violence of your passion, you really wish, as far as your disturbed mind can command or direct a wish, that the vengeance which you call

down upon yourselves or others may be accomplished?

You allege, that in the moments of cool reflection, you condemn the expressions which fell from your lips in the phrenzy of your rage; you say you are then sorry for the effusions of passion; very true: but do not imagine that what you blush at when past, is therefore innocent in the commission. Know and be persuaded that if the evil which you wish your neighbour be considerable, the sin which you commit, is grievous, and according to the dictates of sound theology, more or less aggravated, according to the relation which the person holds in your regard, and in proportion to his claim to your love, your gratitude, your respect, or the edification of your good example. What shall we say of those parents, who with irreligious and unnatural wish, consign their children to the devil? who, on the slightest offence, committed perhaps without the consciousness of guilt, from the ignorance or simplicity of infancy, burst into rage, and incur the guilt of damnation, while they wish the horrors of it to fall upon their harmless offspring. Oh monsters of barbarity, can you call down wo and endless calamity upon those, who by baptism have been made the adopted children of God. and whom it is your duty, and

ought to be your fondest wish to conduct to everlasting happiness! Such, however, is the inconceivable malice of men, that the parent is heard to call down everlasting perdition upon his own child, the child is heard to curse his parent; and as if christians had determined to offend God, by every possible insult, and had, in the language of the Psalmist, *set their mouth against heaven*, (Ps. lxxii. 9.) they often introduce the most horrid oaths and curses into their discourse, without connection of language or combination of sentiment, as it were for the express purpose of insulting God, and provoking his anger.

Persons, who profess to be the invariable votaries of honor, whose word, of course should be the word of honor, an undeniable pledge of truth, as if they had lost all claim to common credence, appeal to God on every trifling occurrence, and seal every the most unimportant assertion, with the solemn, sacred testimony of an oath. Often do we hear men calling their Maker to witness the vengeance which they are resolved to take for affronts received, proceeding to horrid imprecations, wishing that they may lose the use of the most precious organs of sense, of their limbs, their faculties, that they may be instantly struck blind or speechless, or may be for ever deprived of the joys of heaven,

if what they assert be not strictly true ; when, perhaps they know it to be clearly false ; if they do not perform such a deed, when, perhaps, to perform it would be a grievous outrage against the Lord of all, whom they presume to insult and defy. Oh ! it is indeed dreadful even to make allusion to curses so tremendous, and I feel that I ought almost to apologize to many of my hearers, for exciting in their minds, ideas of such alarming profaneness : for as the wise man says, (Eccli. xxvii. 15.) *the speech that sweareth much shall make the hair stand on end, and its irreverence shall make one stop his ears.* I hope however, and this has been my inducement, I hope by the representation in this holy place, of crimes which almost petrify the christian hearer, to bring those who may be guilty of them, to a sense of their crime, and a sorrow for their offences. I trust they will themselves be induced to shudder at the recollection of those shocking blasphemies which they have so often uttered ; of those imprecations which they have vomited out against themselves and others, daring to accuse the Deity of injustice and cruelty, and arraigning all his adorable attributes ; thus making themselves, by an alarming anticipation, co-partners and auxiliaries to the infernal spirits, and making their mouths infectious as the

opened tomb, which exhales nought but corruption. *Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness* (says holy David, Ps. xiii.) *their throat is as an open sepulchre.* (v. 3.)

Let those then who are unfortunately addicted to this vice, seriously reflect on their past lives, the frequency with which their curses and oaths have been introduced into their discourse on every occasion, and with such stubborn affection, as to make their language almost unintelligible, and their sins even of this kind alone, more numerous than the hairs of their head, or the sands on the sea-shore. Oh, my brethren, does not the society of men ringing with oaths, and curses, and shocking imprecations, resemble those horrid dungeons, where the reprobate, condemned to eternal torture and eternal rage, perpetually blaspheme their offended and despised Lord, and curse themselves with unavailing hatred, for never ending ages! *He loved cursing,* (says the royal prophet, cviii. 18.) *and it shall come unto him . . . he has put on cursing like a garment, and it has entered like water into his entrails, and like oil in his bones: may it be unto him like a garment which covereth him, and like a girdle with which he is girded continually.* Even in this world, if those who thus assail the majesty of heaven with insult and defiance, ex-

perience his anger by experiencing terrestrial calamity, is it to be wondered at? *A curse*, says the Almighty, by his prophet, Zachariah, (v. 4.) *shall come to the house of the swearer, and it shall dwell in the midst of his house, and it shall consume it, and its timbers, and its stones.* Unhappy man, let it not be alleged as excuse, that it is only in the moment of passion that you thus offend your God, or that the force of habit is irresistible. To overcome habit, is in regard of all sins, a matter of difficulty; but by diligent assiduity and the grace of God, it may be accomplished: and in respect of this sin, as it gratifies no sense, confers no satisfaction, promotes no interest, neither pleases the palate, nor fills the purse, it should be of all the easiest to conquer. St. Augustine found it so, since he declares in his book of confessions, that in three days he subdued it; *Triduo moritur pestis.* The provocations you may receive from others, may be sinful, but can never justify the person, who when provoked, has recourse to injurious or profane language; for it does not serve to remove the provocation, to silence or punish the offender, nor does it make him feel, in the smallest degree, the effect of resentment. It raises a hurricane within our own breasts, and in any dispute or contest, increases the violence of the external storm,

by increasing the anger of the contending parties: nothing, indeed, can justify or extenuate a shameful habit, wantonly contracted, and impiously indulged.

Stop then, unhappy christians, the course of a practice so pernicious to yourselves, so scandalous to your neighbour, so offensive to God. Consider the injury that is offered to the harmony of civil society, and the union of domestic life, by a vice which is at once the seed and the fruit of dissension, the parent and child of strife, and which makes the earth resemble that dreadful abode of misery, where resound continual curses, execrations, and blasphemies. Let the dread of the evils which await those who profane the name of the Lord, and with impious presumption and wild fury hurl the thunders of God's vengeance on themselves and their fellow creatures, make impression on you. Beware of the consequences of unrestrained anger, which often produces injuries, curses, blows, and murder. *Behold*, (says St. James iii. 5.) *how small a fire, yet how great a wood it kindleth; and the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. . . It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison: by it we bless God and the Father, and by it we curse men, who are made after the likeness of God. My brethren,* (continues the apostle) *these things ought not so to*

*be!* no, my friends, indeed, *things ought no so to be!* therefore if you have been so unfortunate as to yield to the slavery of this dreadful vice, think no exertion too great, no labour too difficult, which may emancipate you from its oppressive tyranny. Let the tongue which was given you to praise and bless the Lord, both here and for ever, be directed henceforth to that noble, that delightful end: let a constant vigilance guard your lips, that no profane, no licentious word escape from them: pray to God to inspire you with a due respect for his tremendous majesty, to inflame your hearts with his divine love, to fill your understanding with a just sense of his sacred presence, and to give you his gracious aid, without which all your endeavours must prove ineffectual; that humbling yourselves before him, and acknowledging your total dependance upon him, you may be grateful for all his mercies, and may bless and magnify his holy name for ever and ever.

## SERMON XXXVIII.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON THE OBLIGATIONS INCUMBENT ON CHRISTIANS.

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*Dead indeed to sin, but alive to God, in Christ  
Jesus our Lord. (Rom. vi. 11.)*

THE epistle which I have read to you from St. Paul's to the Romans, calls to your recollection, the obligations which you took on yourselves, when you received the grace of God, in the sacrament of baptism. It was written to the faithful of the Church of Rome; and having in the preceding chapters of the epistle, instructed them in the dogmata of faith, the apostle enters upon the subject of their moral conduct, endeavours to inspire them with a lively horror of sin, and strongly urges them to lead lives worthy of Jesus Christ, whose faith they had embraced, and in whose name they had been baptized. Having established on solid grounds the necessity of faith, by



which Abraham was justified, and his good works rendered meritorious; by which too the Gentiles were adopted children of God, and called to partake in the inheritance of his kingdom; he immediately informs them respecting the duties which their christian calling imposes upon them; that the old man must be crucified with Christ, that the body of sin must be destroyed, and that as Christ rose again from the dead, so they must walk in newness of life. If then, my brethren, we who have been baptized, were baptized in his death, we were buried with him in baptism, that we might die unto sin. It greatly imports us to consider well our obligations, incumbent upon us as Christians, if we have really embraced the faith of Christ, if we really entertain a hope of obtaining in him and through him, everlasting life. Let us make a few reflections on what the apostle has generally insisted upon in this short lesson: let us discover what is required of us in order that we may be *dead to sin*, and *alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord*.

My brethren, such is the grace received in baptism, so great, in a spiritual point of view are its consequences, so valuable the privileges which it confers, that we ought daily to pour out our souls in acts of thanksgiving to the Lord, who gave us this second birth, by cleans-

ing us from all defilement of sin. But we ought to remember that we then made the most solemn promises to God, before his holy altar, in the presence of the host of heaven, who witnessed our engagement: we then promised to die to sin, to hold it in everlasting horror, and to shun it more than death: we renounced every kind of sin, without exception of any; and we renounced it in every situation and circumstance of life: we promised to die to sin, *knowing that our old man is crucified with him that the body of sin may be destroyed, and that we may serve sin no longer.* (Rom. vi. 6.) Christ has died but once, *death hath no more dominion over him*; in like manner the body of sin should be wholly destroyed in us, and all iniquity be renounced for ever. For this did your sponsors in the sacrament of baptism, stand forward, and in your name declare that you embraced the faith and law of Christ; while the minister of God informed you that in order to enter into life, you must keep the commandments. Remember, says St. Ambrose, the answer you then made: you renounced the devil and his works, the world, its pomps, and pleasures; and heaven witnessed your promises. How have we fulfilled our engagements? Alas! have we not violated these baptismal vows? are we not, as if we had dedicated ourselves to the

service of Satan and the pursuits of this world only? still acting in direct opposition to the obligations we then took upon ourselves? Whence is this, my brethren? Do you consider this important action of your lives, as one in which you are not concerned? that what was then done in your name, was done without your concurrence, and do you now refuse to give it your approbation? having attained to years of reason and judgement, do you deliberately renounce the service of Christ, and enrol yourselves amongst the votaries, the slaves of Satan; and instead of turning away from the works of the devil, the pomps of the world, the concupiscence of the flesh, do you embrace the cause of the infernal deceiver? do you fondly embrace every folly and vanity that comes within your reach, and anxiously pant after those which come not within the sphere in which you move? or do you so far deceive yourselves as to imagine that this lively interest which you take in all that is *temporal*, with the most torpid indifference, and even aversion, for every thing that regards God and eternity, is really consistent with what God requires of you, and you have promised to perform? O let us not be deceived, we do not renounce what we so earnestly pursue and so violently covet; we do not renounce what we so warmly

love; nor do we renounce those pleasures, amusements, and vain follies in which we mix with so much avidity. The world calls out to you to follow where crowds are leading the way; your associates invite to join the giddy throng; the levity of youth is easily imposed upon by the tinsel glitter of show; while parents, whose age and experience should restrain the impetuosity, and undeceive the credulity of the young, often, too often, encourage, and even point out the way to perdition. Oh, let the consideration of a world to come, of a soul to save, and of a God to serve, withhold you from joining with his and your enemies; from joining in the fleeting pleasures of the world, in the guilt of sin, to the loss of your souls. But perhaps you are disposed to say, that the pleasures of which you partake, are innocent. This, my brethren, is the very delusion against which I am so anxious to guard you. Dissipation and frivolity are at all times so connected with guilt as to be inseparable from it, and generally speaking, they are greatly sinful themselves. You will allow that they are not quite irreprehensible; but, believe me, they are not admissible; and however inclination may favour your decision, it is wrong. Were you thoroughly penetrated with a sense of your duties as christians, and resolutely determined to dis-

charge them, you would not seek pretexts, nor endeavour to throw dust in your own eyes. To sin after baptism, is not only to violate the most sacred and solemn promises, but is to offer insult and outrage to the three divine Persons in whose name we were baptized: to the *Father*, whose children we became; to the *Son*, whose brethren and co-heirs we were made by baptism; and to the *Holy Ghost*, who then sanctified our souls and chose them for his temples. On this account it is that sins committed by christians, are much more injurious to God, and will be more severely punished, than the sins of infidels; not only because being more enlightened, we sin with fuller deliberation, but because we defile by sin, what was consecrated to God by baptism. These considerations are little attended to in a world that laughs at sobriety of thought, and serious reflection; but let them make due impression on you, that if you have sullied the white robe you put on in baptism, you may make atonement to God by works of penance; that you may abhor sin as an evil greater than the whole collection of other evils. In short, let it be always remembered, that your bodies and souls were sanctified by baptism, and fear nothing more than to offend him by voluntarily consenting to sin.

But satisfy not yourselves with being *dead to sin*; but comply with the other branch of your duty, in the full extent of the Apostle's meaning. *Be alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Jesus is the vine—we are the branches; on him are we engrafted—by him ought we to live—from him receive nourishment and support. Being dead with him to sin, we should rise again with him to grace, and walk in *newness of life*. This newness of life, and the spirit with which we were required to enter upon it, were expressed by various ceremonies used in baptism. For this did our sponsors pledge themselves, as it were, for our fidelity; for this were we anointed with the holy oil, signed with the sign of our redemption, and vested in a white garment; for this did we receive the burning taper into our hands, as an emblem of the faith of which we had made profession, and of the good works by which we were to adorn our souls, and enlighten our neighbours, directing their feet in the paths of rectitude and peace. By baptism you enter the religious order of Jesus Christ; to him you make your vows; the gospel is the rule, and to it you must conform. The abridgment, and the very essence of this rule is contained in those words of our founder:—"If any one will come after me," &c. The cross of Christ is to

be the standard that is to lead you on to conquest, in the incessant war which you will have to carry on against the Devil, the world, and your own flesh. We are called upon to renounce our own will—our natural humours and inclinations; for if they be indulged, they hurry us away into guilt and misery. That inordinate love of ourselves, of our own ease and convenience must be strenuously combated. In a word, we must take up our cross courageously, and looking at our patient leader bearing his cross, and marking the road with his blood, we must trace out the way he has taken by the marks of his sufferings, and tread in his footsteps, by patiently enduring our crosses and pains. This is the royal road that leads to future happiness and glory: we shall not obtain peace, but by a spirited warfare, nor can we expect to triumph without fighting; to enter into the regions of rest and security, without labour and perseverance. If this be true, and revelation every where proclaims it to be true, does it appear that there are many real Christians amongst the multitudes who bear the name? What shall we think of ourselves; for it behoves us to examine whether our lives are worthy the Christian name; whether our actions correspond with the purity and sanctity of our faith. Were we to take a view of the different

situations and conditions of life, filled with persons professing themselves Christians, how few should we discover, who, in our estimation, would be thought to act up to the spirit of the Christian institute! If, beginning with the young, we examine every age of life; if the different sexes be scrutinized, how very few would appear labouring for the salvation of their souls! Many would be found, who would appear to be *yielding their members as instruments of iniquity unto sin*; but few who would *present themselves to God as those that are alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of justice unto God.* (v. 13.) Pride and ostentation, profaneness and avarice, intemperance and lust; the mischief that walks by night, and the daring aggressions of the noon-day devil would on every side be seen; the signs of a worldly, sensual, and almost pagan depravity are, alas! too frequently exhibited; but that purity of morals—that command over the senses—that subjection of the will, and resignation to the appointments of God, which are required to please him and fulfil his law, are with difficulty discovered.

But let us turn our eyes towards ourselves, and if we find in ourselves that deficiency which our neighbour would discern in our conduct; if we find much more than is to be seen

by the keenest penetration of our neighbour ; if we find an artful but dangerous pride—a fatal sensuality—an immortification of our passions, and an indifferency with respect to God, and the observance of his law, let shame cover our faces—let us blush at that which is visible to his scrutiny, and throwing ourselves at the feet of Jesus Christ, seek mercy and salvation where alone they are to be found. Let us break through all delay, and without demur throw off our chains. Penetrated with a lively sense of our danger, and a sincere repentance, let us renew our baptismal engagements. Why should we proceed in false enjoyments, which the knowledge of our duty always embitters ; troubled with the fear of being snatched away in our sins, whenever any sudden death, or remarkable judgement of God causes a transient alarm, but again sinking into indolence and apathy. Let us now begin—let this be the work of the right hand of the Most High ; let us beg him to give a blessing to our endeavours, and to support our weakness, that, copying the example of our Saviour, in his death and resurrection, we may enter upon a new life, and participate in the joys of his kingdom for eternity.

## SERMON XXXIX.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON THE MARKS OF A TRUE CONVERSION.

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*As you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity; so now yield your members to serve justice unto sanctification.*  
(Rom. vi. 19.)

THE epistle of this Sunday, as well as of the last, is taken from a letter addressed by St. Paul to the christians of Rome, exhorting them to fervor in the service of God, and to a conduct directly the reverse of that which they had held before their conversion. This letter has appeared to the church of God to contain so much salutary instruction, and to be so appropriate to the general circumstances of the faithful, that from it she has selected many lessons during the course of the year. The portion appointed for this day is equally calculated to convey instruction to our understandings, and unction to our hearts: the counsels which the apostle gives, the expressions which he employs, evince

his ardent zeal and tender condescendence for these new converts to the faith of Christ. But, my brethren, what he writes to the christians of Rome, is not only applicable to them, or to the faithful of the primitive church, but to all those who, at any time, have been called from the darkness of ignorance and sin, to the admirable light of God's grace. It is addressed to all who have been mercifully extricated from the labyrinth of error, and delivered from the uncertainty of human doctrines, and the fluctuations of human opinions, to the stability and security of divine faith. For, to use the words of the same apostle, *Ye were once darkness, but ye are now light in the Lord.* (Eph. v. 8.) They are addressed to all who have sinned, and who seriously desire to turn from the paths of vice to the road which leads to eternal bliss. Let us, then, my friends, for I trust we are all desirous of turning to our loving God, let us consider the advice and instructions of the apostle, as directed personally and individually to us, and from them let us discover, first, the marks which distinguish a true conversion, and, secondly, the motives which ought to animate and support us, while walking in newness of life.

First. The apostle gives us two essential marks, by which a true conversion from sin to God may be known : the first is, that we make

the members which have been heretofore the instruments and agents of Satan, now subservient unto justice, and conducive to our sanctification; the second, that we preserve an unalterable detestation of all that can offend God. Observe that he speaks with a degree of indulgence, making allowance for the frailty of human nature. *I speak a human thing, says he, because of the infirmity of your flesh.* (19.) Knowing your weakness, I require nothing from you which can be objected to as unreasonably severe. I might exact from you an ardour of divine charity, a sorrow and repentance, far beyond your former attachment to iniquity: with the prophet Baruch, v. 28, I might say to you; *as it was your mind to go astray from God, so, when you return again, you shall seek him ten times as much;* but in compassion to your weakness, I only require that *as you have yielded, &c.* that your zeal for God's honor, and your own salvation, be equal to the intensity of exertion with which you have served the devil, and laboured to your own destruction. It is a remark of the celebrated Origen, that St. Paul seems willing to inspire a sentiment of virtuous ambition, and to make the sinner who professes to turn from Satan to his God, ashamed at the thought of doing less for him who made him, who redeemed, reclaimed, and preserves him,

than for his enemy and ruthless seducer. And indeed we ought to be confounded at the ungenerous idea of doing less in the practice of virtue, than in the commission of sin, of being less solicitous to make our election sure, than to gratify our passions, and involve ourselves in ruin. Your feet, continues this renowned doctor, your feet have trodden the ways of death, bearing you to seduce or injure your neighbour; let them henceforth bear you forward in the paths of sanctity, to the assistance of your unfortunate fellow-creatures. If your hands have been employed in seizing or purloining the property of another, let them now be extended to relieve the indigent; if your eyes have been turned on every side, or fixed on every object to which curiosity, or lust, or covetousness invited, let them now be employed in discovering the wants of suffering poverty, and every mean by which the glory of God may be promoted. In a word, let all your senses, all the powers of your soul, and all the members of your body, bear testimony to justice, and administer the same service to virtue, which they have afforded to uncleanness and iniquity. Well does St. Paul say, that he speaks *a human thing, because of the infirmity of our flesh*; for is it possible that less can be required of us, on our return to the God whom we have in-

jured by sin? And if the God of all goodness and love will be satisfied with this our offering, which indeed would be his due, even if we had never sinned against him, (for all that we can do in homage to his Deity is strictly his,) yet if this will satisfy him, is it not the extreme of injustice and baseness to give him a refusal? Yet how many, alas, refuse this small atonement, this indispensable mark of sincere repentance! Who profess themselves grieved for their past sins, yet do not zealously cultivate the opposite virtues; but entertaining a secret affection for what was once so fondly cherished, continue to commit in desire what they scarcely and reluctantly refrain from in effect; who waver in continual hesitation between duty and inclination, occasionally fall into their former crimes, and are never disgusted with them. This is not a sincere repentance: it has not the mark which St. Paul considers as the least that can be required to evince a genuine conversion. If strength enough can be found for pleasure; if, when called upon to partake in amusements beyond comparison more fatiguing than the exercise of rigorous penance, all is life and ardour; if, at the call of vanity, you spring with elastic speed, but when religion urges to turn from false joys to the pleasures of contemplation, and the practice of virtue; if, then, you are tepid,

and slow, and inactive, Oh! my brethren, you do not yield your members to serve justice unto sanctification, as you have yielded them to serve uncleanness and iniquity ; in other words, you are not converted. How many never want strength for mirth and pastime, for the pleasures of the table and midnight revelry, but to fast, to abstain, to practise mortification, is impossible. To gratify ambition, avarice, self-love, nothing is too difficult ; but to subdue the passions, to refrain from sinful pleasures, to exercise charity and mercy, to acquire the several christian virtues, is intolerable, is impracticable, is beyond the power of human ability. Be not deceived, my friends, never can you prudently persuade yourselves that you are converted to God, unless you do as much for him as you have done against him ; unless you do as much to save your souls, as you have done to lose them ; unless you consecrate to the service of God those members, senses, and faculties, which you have employed in offending him.

The second mark given by the apostle, is a sincere regret, and never-ceasing confusion for the guilt of sin. *What fruit had you in those things, of which you are now ashamed ? for the end of them is death.* (v. 21.) He therefore reminds them of the emptiness of every earthly gratification, the vanity of every worldly plea-

sure. What fruit have you reaped from your endeavours to gratify your passions? Alas! nothing now remains but confusion and remorse: and happy may you esteem yourselves, if, by repentance, you escape eternal death, which you have merited by your sins. Preserve and cherish this sorrow and this shame; by it you are to judge of the sincerity of your conversion. When memory recalls the scenes of past follies and guilt, do you review them with horror and shame? Do you lament your sins in the bitterness of your souls? Do you blush with virtuous confusion, on the recollection of your former scandals? and is your shame influenced by motives of love of God, so that you appear before him in the posture, and with the sentiments of criminals, ready to suffer the contempt of the world, which, by your sins, you have so justly merited? If so; give thanks to God, and entertain an humble hope that your conversion is sincere, that you are reconciled to your offended Lord, and your sins forgiven. But do you not rather experience the reverse of all this? You have confessed your sins; but, your confession over, have you not forgotten your sins, and even that you have been sinners? Instead of submitting to the confusion of your own hearts, and the confusion which your public scandal has excited, do you not revolt against humiliation,

and even try to exculpate yourselves before men, by a defence of your criminal conduct? Do you not rebel against the dispositions of the Almighty, by murmuring and repining, and even resisting the chastisements which his wisdom inflicts upon you? While perhaps you say, you resolve to do penance for your sins, does not the slightest contradiction disconcert you? the smallest affliction destroy your peace of mind? and though the cross be evidently sent by heaven for your good, is it not still received with impatience?

As this conduct does not argue a sincere repentance, and a true conversion, let me desire you to look into yourselves, my brethren, that you may discover whether you be still enslaved to sin, or delivered from the cruel thralldom of Satan. If, notwithstanding the violence of temptation, you still remain faithful to your divine Lord, if you still hear his word, and, struggling hard against flesh and blood, still observe his precepts, be not disheartened. The apostle exhorts you to perseverance:—let us attentively consider the motives which he proposes, as inducements and helps under the difficulties which we must expect to meet with.

Second. *Being now made free from sin, says St. Paul, and become servants unto God,*

*you have your fruit to sanctification, and the end everlasting life.* (v. 22.) Can stronger motives than these be proposed or imagined? Deliverance from the slavery of sin, an assurance of God's love and friendship, exemption from eternal death, and a life of never-ending felicity! These are inducements held out to those who shall persevere in the career of virtue.

These, my brethren, are the honors, this the end of your short labors! Compared with these inestimable blessings, what can be offered that shall induce you to violate your engagements with God? Be not deceived; galling is the yoke of sin; oppressive the tyranny of Satan. He promises, indeed, pleasure and joy to his followers; but once enlisted under his banners, he deprives them of the true liberty of the children of God, he overwhelms them with unspeakable sorrows, and finally precipitates them into the miseries of eternal death. Yes, *the wages of sin are death*, (v. 23.) death, even in this world, by the deprivation of the grace of God, and in the world to come death everlasting. But in the service of Jesus Christ, what happiness is enjoyed! Our divine leader delivers the poor captive from his wretched slavery, and breaks to pieces the fetters with which the tyrant had bound him. Then does

the sinner begin to experience tranquillity and comfort. In being delivered from sin, he becomes indeed a servant unto God, but *his yoke is sweet, and his burden is light!* He must offer violence to himself, becoming obedient to divine faith, and subjecting his passions to the law of God; but divine grace shall enable him to surmount every difficulty. Happy subjection! by which we become united to our sovereign good, and delivered from all evil! *If the Son of God shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.* (John, viii. 36.) But besides the deliverance of the soul from the captivity of sin, St. Paul mentions two other motives, which should have a powerful influence upon the repenting sinner, *sanctification and life everlasting*: Oh that men would consider them, and weigh their importance! The soul that is sanctified, enjoys the friendship of its God, becomes the abode of the adorable Trinity, and is abundantly enriched with the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Each day it may increase in the riches of divine grace, each moment it may produce new fruits of virtue; and as the sinner under the dominion of his infernal foe, grows in iniquity, and daily brings forth fresh fruits of sin; so the just man advances daily in grace and sanctity: and as *the wages of sin are death*, so is eternal glory the happy retribution

of grace and sanctity, *everlasting life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (v. 23.)

But, O! how impossible is it for language to describe, or the mind of man to conceive, that exquisite delight, that unbounded happiness, that immortal glory, reserved for those who persevere to the end in newness of life! Not confined, like the paltry joys of this world, to a few short years, nor limited to millions of ages, but lengthened out through the round of eternity, to a duration unlimited as the God who confers the high reward, and communicates the inconceivable happiness! O, eternity, eternity! happy eternity for the servants of God, and *happy they who die in the Lord, for precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.* O blessed eternity! happy state of invariable bliss in the possession of all good, even of God himself; if mankind knew thy real value, what would they not do, what would they not be ready to suffer, to merit and obtain thee! How will then appear the transient sufferings of mortality! how cheaply purchased will then be thought the glories of the heavenly Jerusalem! We cannot, with all our exertions, merit the rewards of heaven, without the grace of God, since it is by his grace that we are called to glory: yet it is his will that we should be made worthy of his heavenly kingdom, and deserve his enjoy-

ment by co-operating with his divine grace. And shall we be so blind and infatuated as to oppose the great and merciful designs which he has formed in our favor? Henceforth, and for ever, let us bid adieu to every forbidden pleasure, to every false and insidious allurements, to whatever can rob us of the treasure of his grace, and exclude us from life everlasting. By him, and for the enjoyment of him, were we created; we are consecrated to him; let us then dedicate to him every action of our lives, every thought, and every affection of our souls. Cheerfully let us submit to every trial, readily let us give our whole being to his service, that with all the members of our body, and all the faculties of our soul, we may *serve justice unto sanctification*. Let us without ceasing lament our past treasons and infidelities; it is all that we can, with respect to what is past; oh! that we could do more, that we could annihilate our misdeeds! but for the time to come, let us refrain from all evil, and by penance, and self-denial, atone for our ingratitude. Gladly let us receive every tribulation, prepared for us in this desert of the world, this vale of tears, this state of probation: knowing that it is in the furnace of tribulation that the just are purified, that the Lord chastiseth those whom he loveth, that he only shall

be crowned in heaven, who conquereth here on earth; and that the rewards of the victorious are immense and incomprehensible, the sight of God's stupendous majesty, and the secure possession of him for ever and ever.

## SERMON XL.

### EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON THE BENEFITS TO BE DERIVED FROM A  
FREQUENT MEDITATION ON DEATH.

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*Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer. (Luke, xvi. 2.*

THE Gospel which you have heard is fruitful in instruction, and is well calculated to draw the affections of the believing Christian from the things of this world, to the joys, the interests, the glories of eternity, and at the same time to free him from the deplorable servitude of sin, the source of every real calamity, both here and hereafter.

Amongst other subjects is presented to our meditation the conduct of an unjust steward, who, by a cautious, though criminal prudence, provided against the day of calamity. The goods of the earth, as they are called, are indeed employed more frequently and more industri-

ously to the purpose of establishing terrestrial, than eternal prosperity. We are all *stewards* of the supreme Lord of all things, and we are no more. We are each of us entrusted with the administration of his property, in the different situations of life in which he has pleased to place us; each has his respective duties to fulfil, and each is provided with proportionate means and abilities. Nor is it to be imagined that our conduct escapes his notice, and that nothing of any importance beyond the present shifting scene of life depends upon it. Oh! it is when the shew of this too delusive world has passed away that another world will open to our astonished view—another, and a far more important world, and according to our behaviour in this present state of existence, shall our doom of everlasting happiness or misery be decided for ever. *It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this, judgement.* (Heb. ix. 27.) *In the end of a man is the disclosing of his works.* (Eccles. xi. 29.) *God shall judge both the just and the wicked.* (ib. iii. 7.) *and all things that are done God will bring into judgement* (ib. xii. 14.) Both in the beginning and end of the ecclesiastical year, the church calls to our remembrance the great and general judgement of the world, and frequently proposes to our consideration the end

of man, that we may not forget the momentous concerns of futurity, in the subordinate pretensions of present existence; but may ever direct our views and exertions towards that life which will never have an end—a life of eternal bliss or interminable wretchedness. I mean to induce you to a frequent meditation upon this subject, which is often banished from men's minds, as too terrible and discouraging to be dwelt on, by shewing you that it is a subject of meditation, most beneficial in its effects, and then I shall briefly point out to you the means by which you may prepare yourselves against that day, when it shall be said to each of you—“*give an account,*” &c.

The meditation upon the account which we shall have one day to give to God, of the manner in which we have spent our lives, must necessarily fill the soul with dread, when it is considered that by sin we have offended a God, who abhors iniquity, and if unrepented of, will punish it with strict justice. Brought to the bar of God's justice, without friend or assistance, the poor soul will be placed before the sovereign judge; and oh! what hidden sins will be then disclosed!—what multitudes of crimes, which had been committed and long forgotten, will be recalled to recollection!—what treasures of iniquity shall then come to light! Sin will then be seen in its true colours: the veil shall

be withdrawn, and the splendours of God's countenance shall expose those many secret defilements, which are unseen by the world, and often hidden from our own eyes! Alas! unhappy soul! there is now no room for subterfuge, or palliation: neither eloquence nor patronage can avail thee aught; naked and forlorn, even separated from thy companion, the body, thy good works only can befriend thee. Even repentance is now too late, and one half hour, which in life had been so little considered, so often found tedious, and heavy upon thy hands, one half hour is in vain desired. A sentence will be soon pronounced, and when passed, will immediately take effect, irrevocable and eternal. Intreaty and humiliation are of no avail: in life we have a God of mercy and kind compassion; in judgement he is inexorable. Truly the judgement of God is a subject of meditation, awful, and tremendous! It has terrified even the greatest saints. At the thought of appearing before the judgement seat of the Most High, holy Job trembled; a David—a Jerome were appalled, and even an Hilarion, after three score and ten years spent in the service of his divine Master.

But, my brethren, the meditation on the account which we must give to God is most salutary in its effects. It withdraws from sin, and all affection to it; it is a strong inducement

to expiate our guilt by works of penance, and powerfully stimulates to the constant practice of all virtue. *I have kept the ways of the Lord, says holy David, and have not done wickedly against my God, for all his judgements are in my sight.* (Ps. xvii. 22.) In fact, while we have the severity of God's judgements, and the punishments reserved for sin in our thoughts, and before our eyes, how is it possible that we can dare to offend him? How can we presume to disobey, when we consider that in the very moment of transgression, he can summon us from this life, to appear at his dread tribunal, and punish our guilt with the infliction of sufferings of inconceivable rigour, and endless duration? If on the other hand we feel any desire of future bliss and endless glory, how can we refuse to follow virtue, when we reflect that our future Judge considers all our actions; observes all our virtuous deeds, and will reward our perseverance with everlasting happiness?

This reflection should animate us under difficulties, and support us with soothing consolation under the weight of sorrow; under calumny and persecution suffered for the sake of God. This should console us, when the iniquitous judgement of men falsely and unjustly condemns us, and the thought of God's just judgements gives joy to the soul of the Christian in the per-

formance of actions, known only to his Sovereign Judge, and performed with no other view than to please his God. *I was mindful of thy judgements of old*, says the royal prophet, *and I was comforted*. (Ps. cxviii. 52.) Let me then conjure you, my brethren, frequently to call to remembrance, and attentively to ruminare on the strict account you will shortly have to give of your stewardship, in temptation, in affliction, and every earthly misfortune; but in a particular manner when you are about to approach the holy tribunal of penance. The forgetfulness of God's judgements, and of the wrath to come, is the great cause of public and secret delinquency, therefore David, speaking of the sinner, says, *his ways are defiled at all times; thy judgements are removed from his sight*. (Ps. ix. 26.) And what the Scripture says of the two elders, who, forgetful of their age and rank, assailed the purity and traduced the virtue of the chaste Susannah, may be applied to all those who fall into crimes, from which we are astonished that mere reason, and a regard for exterior decency, and their own character did not preserve them. *They perverted their own mind, and turned away their eyes, that they might not look unto heaven, nor remember just judgements*. (Dan. xiii. 9.)

Second. The effects which the meditation

upon this important subject will necessarily produce on your conduct, will be the means of making you prepared against the day, when it shall be said to you, “ *Give an account of your stewardship.*” Its influence will be seen and felt in your conduct towards yourselves, towards your neighbour, but principally towards Almighty God. Towards ourselves we shall be impartially just, weighing and examining our actions, not according to the dictates of self-love, but according to the rules of the Gospel, and the maxims of true religion. With justice shall we scrutinize, and estimate our thoughts, our desires, and the motives by which we are actuated in all we do, or leave undone. *If we would judge ourselves,* says St. Paul, *we should not be judged.* (1 Cor. xi. 31.) By a reasonable severity towards ourselves, we shall disarm the anger of our offended God; by penance move him to mercy. In consequence of this unbiassed impartiality towards ourselves, our bad habits will be substituted by works of piety and religion; our evil inclinations will, by careful investigation, be traced to their source; our corrupt propensities will be detected; we shall no longer be affectedly blind to our greatest faults, because we shall be convinced that it is for our true interest to discover and correct them, and having come to a sense of our guilt,

we shall expiate it by penitential tears, and works of mortification. As to our good works, instead of seeking, or desiring to purchase by them the world's applause, we shall refer all the honor where it is due—to the grace of God; for *without him we can do nothing*, and instead of cherishing an absurd vanity, on account of our own supposed merit, we shall give thanks to him, who strengthens and supports us, acknowledging that, after all, so little is our own, we are still *unprofitable servants*. Towards our neighbour we shall be just and charitable; not unkindly judging, or interpreting his actions, motives, and intentions; but, in the Spirit of genuine charity, *bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things, thinking no evil*. (1 Cor. xiii. 7.) *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven*. (Luke, vi. 37.) We shall then be diligent in giving our neighbour every aid in our power, anxious to afford him every corporal and spiritual assistance, and this not with a view to our terrestrial emolument, or any earthly applause, but to please the Almighty, and merit his approbation. *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*. (Matt. v. 7.) *but judgement without mercy to him that hath not done mercy*. (Jac. ii.

13.) Towards God, we shall be studious to do nothing that can offend him; to omit nothing that can give him pleasure. We shall love him as our Father, our Friend, our Benefactor, and at the same time fear him as our Judge. Walking always in his presence with filial love and filial respect, we shall earnestly deprecate his anger, and implore his mercy; we shall look up to heaven as our true country; the land to which we are directing our steps; the ultimate object of all our desires. Contemplating the beauties of those happy regions, we shall see with comfort the thousands of our fellow-creatures who have reached the harbour of safety, and are now viewing our progress, anxious that we should escape all the dangers to which we are yet exposed, in our voyage through this life, and solicitous that we should partake of that happiness, the fullness of which they now experience. We shall animate ourselves by their example; beseech them to interest themselves in our behalf; and united with us, in the same communion, beg them to assist their yet contending brethren, and to obtain for us the same graces, which have rendered them triumphant over the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Let it be then your care and practice, my brethren, henceforth often and attentively to meditate on the judgements of God, *who will*

*render to every one according to his works. So speak and so do, as beginning to be judged.* This is the advice of St. James (ii. 12.) to which I shall add in conclusion, the excellent and instructive counsel of the author of the Following of Christ, L. 1. cxxiv. “ In all things regard thy end, and how thou shalt stand before a severe judge, from whom nothing is hidden : who is not appeased by bribes, nor receives excuses, but will judge that which is just. O most wretched and foolish sinner, what shalt thou answer to God, who knows all thy evil ; thou who sometimes darest the countenance of man in anger ! Why dost not thou provide for thyself against the day of judgement, when no one can be excused or defended by another, but every one will find sufficient concern and burden in himself. At present thy labour is profitable, thy tears are acceptable, thy sighs are heard, thy sorrow satisfactory, and may purge away thy sins.” Attend to this counsel, my brethren, frequently place yourselves in spirit, at the tribunal of your heavenly Judge, and judge yourselves now with such a just severity, that he may then judge you with mercy, and admit you into the abodes of everlasting bliss.

## SERMON XLI.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON IMPENITENCE AND HARDNESS OF HEART.

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*When he drew nigh, seeing the City, he wept over it. (Luke xix. 41.)*

A SPECTACLE the most affecting is here exhibited to our view. We behold Jesus Christ, the world's Redeemer, shedding tears over the unhappy City of Jerusalem, in which he foresaw that, in a few days, he should be put to death. Amidst the shouts and acclamations of the multitude, rending the air with hosannas to the Son of David, he casts his eyes upon their city : he yields to the impressions of sorrow, caused by the reflection on the many graces of heaven that had been showered upon it in vain, and weeps over the approaching guilt which was to complete the measure of its iniquities, and occasion its final reprobation. This it is that calls forth his tears, while all around would seem to

inspire gladness. It is not the near approach of his own sufferings that intimidates him ; no, *he is offered because he wills it* : no, he grieves for the wretched inhabitants of Jerusalem, who refused to recognize in him the Messiah, so strikingly depicted to them by their prophets ; he grieves at the thought of that train of terrestrial and eternal woes, which they were going to draw upon themselves, by crucifying the Son of God incarnate. Even this his triumphant entry ought to have opened their eyes to discern their Messiah ; for it had been distinctly foretold, long before, by the prophet Zacharias. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion, shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem : behold thy King will come to thee, the Just and Saviour : he is poor, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.* (ix. 9.) This prophecy alone, so minutely fulfilled, ought to have convinced them that Jesus was the expected Messiah. But they had hardened their hearts against the first motions of grace ; they had shut their eyes against the light of heaven, and the spirit of obstinacy had taken possession of their souls. O Christians, Jesus, your Saviour and your God, addresses you in the same terms in which he addressed the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He weeps over the multitudes of blinded and obdurate sinners, who resist his graces, re-

fuse his mercies, and defer from day to day the work of their conversion. This is the cause which draws tears from the eyes of Jesus, the fairest among the children of men, the beloved of his Father.

That we may guard against this worst of earthly calamities, a hardened and impenitent heart, we will consider by what steps men arrive at this state of insensibility and guilt, and on the first convenient occasion, we will take a view of the dreadful consequences which follow it in this world and in the next.

As in the practice of virtue none arrive at eminent sanctity but by degrees, so in the career of vice no one becomes wholly abandoned to iniquity on a sudden. The first steps which the sinner takes in the broad road that leads to death, are not without pain: he feels an uneasiness which embitters his pleasures; the enjoyment which he had represented to himself as so delightful, in the exercise of liberty without restraint, is interrupted by frequent checks of conscience. He stops as he proceeds, he is alarmed, looks back, like one who has lost his way; and while he is going farther from the paths of virtue, he wishes he had never ventured from the region of innocence. He sighs from time to time, yet proceeds; and hopes to stifle at last the painful remembrance of duty,

by despising its calls; and to find peace of mind in that insensibility, which is the greatest misfortune that can befall him. Yes, deluded man, when the pains arising from the reproaches of conscience are felt no more; when the fear of God's judgements, and the punishments awaiting impenitence alarm no longer; when you can surrender yourself to the commission of sin without concern, and behold the lightnings of divine wrath with undazzled eye and calm indifference; in a word, when the joys of heaven have no attraction, and the flames of hell no longer terrify, deplorable indeed is your condition; for you are far removed from God, far from his mercy and grace. To this state of wretchedness the sinner arrives by slow, by imperceptible advances: often at first, by the neglect of small faults, which a virtuous education had taught him to shun, perhaps a natural goodness of disposition had made him averse to. He observes that some of his acquaintance make no account of them, he persuades himself that they are only *venial* offences, and therefore not so scrupulously to be regarded. "I know," he will say, "that the company which I frequent, the conversation we indulge in, the life which I lead, are not such as to be called the company, the conversation, the life of a saint; but I aspire not to the per-

fection of the recluse ; I am in the world, and mean not to debar myself from its enjoyments.”

In the same way the deluded female, who once perhaps had sought her chief delight in the approbation of God, is inveigled into the slavery of sin, from the happy service of God. By degrees she becomes indifferent to the silent approbation of heaven, spends her time in self admiration, or in decking herself out to receive the fulsome praises of deceitful flattery, to excite admiration, if not a more guilty passion, in others. Hence, perhaps, many suspicious levities are tolerated, because the world thinks nothing of them ; certain thoughts and ideas are overlooked by conscience, because they are too seducing to be utterly renounced ; certain looks, and expressions, and actions, are permitted, which occasion at least, something of doubt, misgiving, and apprehension ; but these are repressed, because to hearken to their suggestions, would probably convince, that certain favorite practices must be discontinued, that certain societies must be forsaken, and that violence must be offered to nature and inclination. What then is to be done in order to gratify inclination, without entirely discarding conscience ? O then a pretext is set up which is the ruin of thousands ! they are decided to be no more than *venial* transgressions, and as

venial sin neither destroys the grace of God nor excludes from heaven, the victims throw a bandage over their eyes, and endeavour not to see what they are unwilling to fear. No advice is sought for with respect to these supposed venial offences; they are purposely kept from the knowledge of the director of their consciences, lest zeal for the honor of his Master, a sense of his duty, and a pastoral solicitude for the eternal welfare of those entrusted to his care, should compel him to speak out, disclose the guilt or danger in which they have lived, and require them to forsake it. Thus it is that many unfortunate christians, even while they exteriorly comply with the duties, and avail themselves of the aids of religion, lose all the advantages which they are calculated to afford, for want of proper dispositions; draw down upon themselves the wrath of God by abusing his sacred institutions, and are at last abandoned to all the horrors of obstinacy in sin, and final impenitence.

By slow, and sometimes by imperceptible degrees, do men proceed to this deplorable situation, and live in it, almost without suspicion of their misfortune, because they are afraid of reflection; and whenever the inspirations of heaven urge to serious investigation, they turn away from the undertaking, as too

troublesome. Prayer is then neglected, or performed with a vacant or distracted mind, an exercise of no profit, a mere lip-service ; mental prayer and serious meditation never attempted ; the reading of spiritual books omitted as a tedious, insipid occupation, and in their place, too often are the enervating fictions of romance perused with fatal avidity. When this is the case, when the exercises of devotion are made to give way to the love of the world, and of whatever in the world is criminal or dangerous, what wonder if the voice of God strike not the ear, or be disregarded ? The heart that is enamoured with the vanities and follies of the world, will soon be fascinated by its sinful pleasures, and enslaved by its crimes. Coldness and tepidity in the service of God, are followed by indifference, indifference by insensibility, and hardness of heart : God withdraws himself, and seeing that he is despised, abandons the sinner to his own wretchedness. The softness of water is hardened by degrees into ice ; *the cold north bloweth* says the wise man, *and the water is congealed into crystal.* (Ecclus. xl. 22.) My friends, look well to yourselves, let not your hearts be caught by wretched vanities, be not imposed upon, even while you suspect the imposition. You have heard the voice of the Lord ; let not him speak in vain.

If among my youthful hearers, in particular, there be any whose consciences plead guilty to this neglect of God's inspirations; who have been called upon, or perhaps are still urged by frequent interior admonitions; who nevertheless feel enamoured of this world, and already are yielding to its current: O do not withdraw yourselves from the grace and friendship of God; and though you were even sure of time and grace for repentance hereafter, do not prepare a mass of iniquity to be repented of in old age: let not the seducements of a deceitful world, the siren song of pleasure, or the slaves of Satan, delude you into misery, the heaviest that can befall you: let not the thoughtless enjoyment of this short day of your mortality make you renounce the enjoyment of endless ages. And you, whose lives are far spent, who have sported amidst the boasted but fallacious joys of the world, who remember well with what sprightly gaiety you met the companions of your age in the morn of life, when no misfortune had yet occurred to disgust you with a cheating world! O now that you have experienced more of its delights than you can ever expect to be renewed, and are descending the hill of life into the vale of years! open your eyes, now at least; learn wisdom from experience. Ere the possession

of life slip out of your hands, hearken to the voice of your Redeemer ; if, even in these your latter days, you would *know the things that are for your peace* ; if, even now, you will hear his voice, and turn to him, he will yet receive you. His power is acknowledged, his mercies are offered to you, he weeps over you ; and shall his tears, his cries, his invitations, be disregarded ? Long has he wished to cure your blindness, while you have obstinately shut your eyes against his admirable light. Your pride, your attachment to the things of this world, your neglect of all the means he has provided for your present peace, and future everlasting happiness, will force him to forsake you, to deliver you up to a reprobate sense, and number you among his declared enemies. Full of pity for his frail creatures, he has again and again urged you to prefer the consolations of religion to the false satisfactions of the world : you have hesitated, perhaps, and half resolved to *seek the things that were for your peace*, to give up the satisfactions of the moment for joys that shall never end, when dissipation of thought, your habits of giddy levity have banished the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, when they were beginning to be felt, the love of God has been superseded by the love of some earthly object or pursuit, the fear of eter-

nal misery has been kept under, if not banished, by calling in the joys of the present hour; and thus you have gone on to this moment, and are now perhaps either hesitating between the resolution of serving God without reserve, and the desire of continuing your former line of conduct; or else, for so it may be, you are palliating, by all the plausible pretexts which self-love can devise, some favourite practices or gratifications, which it would be painful to relinquish. Know, however, and be persuaded, that the Lord, who now *knocks at the gate* of your souls, and even supplicates admission, will at length be wearied out by your unrelenting obstinacy. Then shall his much injured mercy give place to long provoked justice; then shall the days of calamity and wo come upon you, *your enemies will cast a trench about you, and compass you round, and straiten you on every side*; your iniquities shall stand in array against you, the agonies of despair shall torture your soul, the sorrows of death shall weigh you down, and the terrors of hell oppress your guilty soul; *because you have not known the time of your visitation.*

The impious now laugh in unconcern, and treat the mercy of God as the defect of knowledge to observe, or defect of power to chas-

tise their contumacy. But, O my dearest friends, whom I now address in the name of God, my children in Jesus Christ, let me intreat you, if you have hitherto forgotten the *things that are for your peace*, and neglected your salvation, to weigh well the importance of eternity and the vanity of this short life : to consider the folly and absurdity of indulging in the pleasures, or anxiously pursuing the interests of this fallacious world. Intreat the Lord that he pour his light upon you, that you may clearly see both the present and the future, that he will teach you to know the things that are for your true and everlasting peace, and give you his powerful grace to enjoy that peace, which the world cannot give, but which he has prepared from the beginning for those who love him and keep his commandments.

## SERMON XLII.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON THE PUNISHMENT AWAITING OBSTINACY IN SIN.

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*O God, be merciful to me a sinner!* (Luke,  
xviii. 13.)

HAVING, in my discourse of last Sunday, endeavoured to convince you that, if there be no calamity on earth comparable to an impenitent and hardened heart, so the danger of experiencing this calamity is greatly to be apprehended, where the voice of God, inviting to repentance, is disregarded; that pride, an attachment to the things of this world, a love of vanity and sensual enjoyments, often lead imperceptibly to it. Having endeavoured to justify the ways of God towards men, in inflicting this severe chastisement upon the rebellious, I shall this day guard you against so great a misfortune, by representing to you some of the alarming consequences which follow this reprobation of the hardened

sinner. God is infinitely merciful, even in his justice; he never forsakes those who do not first forsake him; nor does he suffer the wretch whom he at last abandons, to be deserted by him, till he has tried, as it were, every expedient which love and compassion could suggest; till he has experienced, in return for his goodness, the utmost contempt and ingratitude. But heavy are the judgements, terrible is the vengeance of an omnipotent and offended Deity! and may we, my brethren, by a due consideration of the punishments attending hardened guilt, be deterred from pursuing the paths which lead to it, crowded as they are with deluded and blinded christians, who are running to their own destruction with fatal indifference, or obstinate madness!

Among the evils which wait upon obstinacy in sin, the first to be remarked is that deluge of earthly misfortunes, which the Almighty sometimes sends upon whole nations, and which our divine Lord foretold to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as the punishment awaiting their unhappy city and nation, for their blindness and ingratitude. Long had he favoured them with his special protection, making them his chosen people, dictating to them a law, and providing them with a religious ceremonial, by which their worship was to be conducted and regulated. To

them he sent his prophets to bear testimony of him, their Legislator, their Messiah, the Emanuel, the Prince of peace; and to them he came himself, being born in the midst of them, in the city, and at the time predicted, with every concomitant circumstance that had been foretold to them by the prophets. To them he preached, for them he performed wonders, *such as no other had performed*, and with the affection of the parent-hen, as he pathetically assures them, he had desired to *gather them under his wings*, and to shelter them beneath his fostering protection, *and they would not*. No: his prophets they persecuted and put to death; himself the king of the patriarchs, and inspirer of prophets, the Redeemer of Israel, and the desired of all nations, they nailed to an ignominious cross, and, with horrid imprecation, called down upon themselves and their posterity, the punishment of their barbarous guilt, the blood of this lamb of God. *His blood be upon us, and upon our children!* (Matt. xxvii. 25.) What a load of accumulated chastisement did they not draw down on themselves by this imprecation! The judgement, already prepared for them by heaven, was announced to them by Jesus Christ, and history has preserved to us the accomplishment of his prediction. But while history has informed us of the almost in-

credible circumstances attending the dispersion of this unhappy people; of pillage, treachery, and murder, of mothers feeding on their own children, of famine forcing open the sepulchres of the dead, and ravening on the putrid remains of human bodies, taken from graves and charnel houses: while we read, from unsuspected authorities, of thousands butchered with extreme cruelty, thousands sold as slaves, and placed on a level with beasts of burden, we ourselves behold with our own eyes the same people, at the distance of a thousand and eight hundred years, still bearing the weight of their own malediction, a vagrant race, distinct in face and feature, no less than in manners from the rest of mankind; every where dispersed, yet nowhere settled; without sacrifice, without king, or government, or priesthood! Their tribes are confounded, their families commixed, their whole nation scattered over the face of the earth; and, though frequently possessing that which gives to others dignity and honors, though frequently possessing immense riches, yet held in general disesteem throughout the universe! But of all the heavy judgements which the Almighty has inflicted upon them, none is to be compared with that spiritual blindness and obstinacy which, with the law and the prophets in their hands, and before their

eyes, still prevents them from seeing the accomplishment of the prophecies in the person of Jesus. This is the punishment of their protracted guilt, and even this is foretold to them. *They gave me gall for my meat, says the Royal Prophet, speaking in the person of Christ, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar for my drink.* (Ps. LXVIII. 21.) *Pour out thy anger upon them, and let the fury of thy anger seize upon them.* (24.) *Let their habitation be desolate, and let there be none to dwell in their tents.* (25.) *Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not,* (23.) *and let them not come into thy righteousness.* Yes, O God, thou hast bent their backs to the service of strange masters, the arrows of thy wrath have fallen upon them, their city is levelled with the dust, and become desolate, the tents of Israel are forsaken, their names are not numbered with the just! But, my christian friends, are the judgements of God confined to the race of Israel? Do not the children of the new covenant feel his wrath, in the terrestrial and spiritual calamities which he inflicts on them? We know that the Almighty Lord of earth and heaven, has frequently visited the sins of nations, by evident manifestations of his justice; by earthquakes, famine, war, and pestilence; for to ascribe these calamities to blind chance, would be the height of absurdity,

as well as blasphemy : from the faithful records of history, we know that he has laid a heavy yoke upon the children of men, in punishment of their crimes, and that while they suffered oppression from the injustice and cruelty of their rulers, they were paying a debt which they owed to heaven for their transgressions. If the horrors of war and anarchy have not involved the inhabitants of this land in wretchedness, if we have not been delivered up to pillage and bloodshed, if our granaries have not been plundered, and the plenty of the field trampled under foot by hostile armies ; if the sword has not reeked before your eyes with the blood of parents, children, and friends ; if your wives and daughters have not been given up to the lust of ruffians ; yet have you been near the scenes of irreligion, massacre, and wild confusion ; the flames of monasteries and castles, the ancient seats of religion and honor, have almost gleamed upon our coasts ; the din of war has almost sounded in our ears ; the mischief almost invaded our own doors. Even from the sister island, have been wafted over to us the cries and lamentations of murdered innocence, with the horrid yells of civil discord. Shall we consider this as no way concerning us ? or shall we shut our eyes, our ears, our hearts, against the warnings of heaven ? Can we pretend that such

is the integrity, morality, religion of our country, as to insure us against the miseries which have befallen surrounding nations? The evident increase of immorality, profligacy, and irreligion, will not justify the presumptuous hope. But is not the increase of corruption, the unblushing prevalence of vice, the triumphant exultation of iniquity, the severest chastisements that God can inflict upon us in this world? Is not the decay of true religion, and religious sentiment and genuine piety, the heaviest infliction that can befall a nation? a calamity involving not only ourselves, but our posterity in wretchedness on earth, and never-ending miseries in the life to come? My brethren, look well to yourselves. The evils which *occasionally* befall whole nations, are *continually* falling upon individuals. Though their misfortune is neither pointed out by prophecies, nor marked by public observation; yet often does the Almighty withdraw from them his grace and light, who have despised his mercies and inspirations. Accustom not yourselves to think with unconcern on these judgments of God. Be not of that unhappy number of men who, amidst all the various conceits of their imagination, and all the desires of their heart, think not on virtue, or the reward of virtue: who confine all their solicitude within

the space of earthly existence ; and, in the sincere wish of their hearts, say ; “ let me but enjoy a sufficiency of riches, pleasure, and health ; this world has enough to gratify my heart, and I desire no more.” Consider the real misfortune of those who are lost to a concern for their souls : who in their early years received instruction in the faith and law of Christ, who perhaps for a time continued to practise their religious duties with tolerable regularity ; who even now sin, not from ignorance and want of information, but who, first yielding to sloth and indifference, have gradually sunk into a neglect of religion, and of all its duties. Beware of the judgements of God upon you and yours, if you despise the graces he communicates to you : he who has punished whole nations for their ingratitude, will not spare you. The nations of Asia and Africa, where the degrading doctrines of Mahometanism, and the grossest ignorance now prevail, were once irradiated with the purest light of religion and science ; upon the sees of Constantinople, Cesarea, Carthage, Nazianzum, and Hippo, were once placed the Chrysostoms, Basils, Gregories, Cyprians, and Augustines, the ornaments and examples of learning and piety to their country, and to the world. Let each one, while he fears for his neighbour, tremble for

himself; let each be solicitous for the conduct and reformation of *one*. This, at least, is in every one's power. Despise not the calls of God, nor endeavour to form to yourselves false consciences, persuading yourselves, falsely, that ignorance will excuse you, where that ignorance is affected and voluntary. If you have doubts, consult those whom Christ has appointed your guides and counsellors, in the concerns of religion; in hearing *them*, you will hear *him*. (Luke, x. 16.) Be not your own casuists, your own judges in your own cause: if you be, you are sure of an iniquitous decision; for the judge has already taken a bribe, and is bought over by self-love. Oppose not the long-suffering and patient expectation of your God: if he has called repeatedly upon you, he will, at length, resent your contempt, and punish your obstinacy. *What is there that I ought to do to my vineyard, that I have not done? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath yielded wild fruit?* (Is. v. 4.) Unhappy sinner, for you I shed my blood; for you I died. In the commencement of your disorderly life, I spoke to your hearts; in the midst of your criminal career, I called aloud, I sent the torments of conscience into your soul. Did I not call you from the haunts of intemperance and sensuality? from the wanderings of for-

bidden pleasure, and the labyrinth of sin? But you would not hearken to my voice, you would not obey the calls of grace. Now will I punish your ingratitude: *now will I shew you what I will do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted; I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will make it desolate: it shall not be pruned, and it shall not be digged: but briars and thorns shall come up, and I will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it.* (ib.)

These are the judgements of God upon his ungrateful people; *for the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Juda,* (v. 7.) the vineyard of the Lord is the Church of Christ; the vineyard of the Lord is the christian soul. I will spread barrenness upon your fields; *you shall sow, and you shall not reap,* (Mich. vi. 15.) your labour shall be unproductive. But what is a far heavier calamity; I will call no longer, I will turn my back on you; I will suffer you to run on in iniquity, each day increasing your sins without remorse, or further remonstrance from conscience, without further dread of my judgements: I will consign you to impenitence and reprobation. I will permit you to run from one object to another, in love with vanity, and in pursuit

of lies ; you shall be allowed to entangle yourself in the thralldom of iniquity, to multiply your fetters ; and when, at last, you have despised the injunctions, the duties, and the consolations of religion ; when you have sacrificed honor, conscience, all that was sacred, dear, or valuable, I will then cut the thread of your life, and let you die, as you have lived, my enemy. For I called, and you would not hear ; I drew you to myself, and you would not come ; but by your obstinacy and impenitent heart, you have heaped upon yourself *treasures of wrath* against the day of wrath.

Knowing, then, my brethren, the origin, the progress, and the dangerous consequences of obstinacy in sin, resolve to shun whatever may involve you in so great a calamity. Be faithful and docile to the impressions and suggestions of divine grace ; let not God speak to your hearts and meet with contempt. Beg of God frequently, like the wisest of men, to bestow on you a tractable and obedient heart. If you have had the misfortune to offend your God by mortal sin ; if you are at this moment conscious that, by it, you are at variance with your God, be careful not to continue in that melancholy state, not to remain at a distance from his mercies, from a false shame ; but to turn to your Lord with instant haste. Wallow

not in the mire and filth of sin ; nor, having once obtained forgiveness, and repented of your guilt, ever return to it by a relapse. If you even begin to experience that indifference and apathy, which leads to obstinacy in sin and final impenitence ; let me conjure you by all your hopes and fears, by the bowels of the mercy of our God, who still preserves you that you may repent and be saved ; let me conjure you not to lose a moment in fatal indecision, for there is no room for deliberation, but at once resolve to *seek peace for your souls, to know the time of your visitation, to be converted and live.* Throw yourselves into the arms of Jesus Christ, or rather, like Magdalen, throw yourselves at his feet ; confess your sins with humility, contrition, and love ; and he will forgive you all your offences.

Do this, all you who have gone away from peace and happiness, far from your Father and your father's house : turn again ; seek comfort where alone it is to be found ; *it is hard to kick against the goad.* (Acts, ix. 5.) Be assured that what unerring truth has declared by the mouth of his prophet, (Isaiah, xlvi. ult.) *there is no peace to the wicked,* will hold good at all times, and is applicable to all persons. Let all devoutly implore the mercy of God, that

his holy grace may not perish within us, that the heavenly seed may not fall upon barren ground, that the enemy may not impede its growth, but that it may thrive and flourish, bringing forth in us fruit a hundred fold, fruit unto life everlasting.

## SERMON XLIII.

### ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON SPIRITUAL DEAFNESS.

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*They bring to him one that was deaf and dumb, and besought him to lay his hand upon him. (Mark vii. 32.)*

WHILE the transactions of the present life are attended to with unceasing toil and anxiety, how few are they who are actuated by an equal solicitude to save their souls. In the concern of salvation, men seem to act as if salvation was attainable without much exertion, and as if happiness in the life to come were best secured by being anxious only about the present. But, my brethren, so far are our interests from being confined within the narrow limits of present existence, that the best objects of man's ambition are placed beyond the grave; and if we be so infatuated as to fix our hearts upon the passing pleasures of this vain world, we sacrifice eternal happiness for the gratifica-

tion of a moment. Yet how many are there who are thus ungrateful to their God, and blind to their own welfare! How many, who speaking not to God, and despising his voice, are, by a much greater calamity than that mentioned in the gospel, spiritually deaf and dumb! By them God is forgotten, his menaces disregarded, his invitations rejected with contempt. Yes; the sinner is truly deaf and dumb, with respect to what concerns God and eternity; and happy should I esteem myself, if by any thing that I can say or do, I should be the means of extricating any one so circumstanced from his unfortunate situation; happy too, if I can even inspire you who are not so wretched, with a dread of the calamity, and induce you to shun it with suitable abhorrence; I shall endeavour to do it this day: but not to embrace a subject too copious to be confined within the usual limits of one instruction, I shall consider the principal affliction figured to us in the gospel, I mean spiritual deafness. In the deafness of the man whom our Saviour healed, we shall discover a representation of the sinner spiritually deaf to the voice of God; and may we all, terrified by the consideration of his misfortune, and moved by the efficacy of divine grace, be rescued or preserved from so unspeakable an evil.

Our souls, as well as our bodies, are liable to many infirmities, and the consequences of spiritual indisposition are much more fatal than of any malady with which our bodies can be affected. As any derangement of the humours or organs which compose the body affect our corporal health, so is the health of the soul impaired as soon as its union with God is interrupted, and it disowns its subordination to him. But amongst the various spiritual disorders to which man is subject, few, if any, can be conceived more alarming than that which is denominated spiritual deafness, which is always voluntary, because it cannot attack the soul without full consent, and without an obstinate resistance to the divine calls. That God vouchsafes to speak to his creatures cannot be doubted. Infinite and eternal, independent and happy in himself, he condescends to make known his will to miserable man : it is his delight to be with the children of men, to whom he communicates himself by innumerable ways, and by as many voices as there are created beings in the universe. Who, says the prophet, may not hear and understand their language? *Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.* Ps. xviii. 5. The sun, the moon, the stars, which display his glory in the firmament, by

diffusing light and heat received from him; the plants of the field, which, by their growth, attest his fostering care; the animals of the earth, fed by his bounteous providence; in a word, the whole universe proclaims the wonders of God's power, wisdom, and tenderness, and calls upon us to love, adore, and praise him.

Do we not incessantly hear the voice of reason speaking to our souls, and informing us that we were made for God? Do we not feel within us an ardent desire of happiness; at the same time that we are convinced by our own experience, as well as by the experience of others, that this desire is not to be satisfied by any, or by all the goods of the earth? And are we not forced to conclude from hence, that we were created for future and greater enjoyments? No man possessing understanding, above that of a mere idiot, is without this powerful, though silent testimony of reason, and if we reject its admonition, the fault is wholly our own. But besides the language of all creation, inanimate as well as animate; besides the testimony of reason, there is a more impressive and sublime voice, by means of which God communicates to us his sovereign will, and the knowledge of truths, to which mere reason could never attain. This is the voice of revelation. *God*, says the

Apostle (Heb. i. 1.) *who diversely and in many ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all, in these days, hath spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world.* By the death of Jesus we were delivered from the captivity of sin and Satan; grace and mercy were restored to us, nor did the great conqueror of death, when he ascended to his throne of glory, at the right hand of his Father, withdraw from men the communication of his doctrine. He still speaks by his church, which he established upon the firmest foundation, even *upon the rock of truth*, against which he declares *the gates of hell shall never prevail.* He still speaks, and will continue to speak to the end of time, by those whom he sent with the *same authority with which he himself was sent*; by those to whom he said—*go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature*, and with whom he has promised to abide *all days, even to the end of the world.* (Matt. xvi. 18.—John. xx. 21.—Mark xvi. 15.—Matt. c. ult. v. ult.) By the voice of his appointed ministers, he speaks to you continually, exhorting to seek the things that are for your everlasting peace and welfare; *to be wise unto sobriety*; (Rom. xii. 3.) *to mind the things that are above, not the things that*

*are on earth.* (Coloss. iii. 2.) and to the *external* word of his ministers he joins an *interior* word, representing to us our duty to him, and urging us to fulfil it. He speaks to all without exception: to the young, inviting them to prefer the sweets of innocence and unsullied purity, to all the varnished pleasures of vice; to the old, encouraging the virtuous to persevere, by the consoling hope, that they will soon receive the palm of victory, and stimulating sinners to forsake at last the ways of sin; to turn to him at least in the close of life, and to dedicate the short remaining days of their mortality to the service of their Creator, and the salvation of their souls.

My brethren, *blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it.* (Luke, xi. 28.) But alas! how many hearken only to the voice of their passions! to the suggestions of their infernal foe, and the treacherous solicitations of a deluded and deluding world! To what voice are the ambitious attentive and obedient; the proud, who endeavour to rise to notice and to power, while the voice of God has declared, *that every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled.* (Luke, xiv. 11.) What voice do the voluptuous hear and follow, who seem to live only to pamper the body, and to gratify the *desires of the flesh, which war against the soul?*

(1 Pet. ii. 11.) The voice of low sensuality, not the voice of God, which assures them that *their end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is their shame.* (Phil. iii. 19.) These are deaf to the voice of God, by shutting their ears to his word, and turning away from his merciful exhortations. The same spiritual deafness afflicts all sinners, the vindictive, the avaricious, the envious, and all who seek with fond attachment the pleasures of this short life, and love them more than God.

As to you, my brethren, whom God has entrusted to my care, let not what I have said pass unheeded by, as the relation of a dream, or as a reality, which by application you can perceive belongs to your neighbour, but in which you are not concerned; much less, I beseech you, presume to turn away from the voice of God, which speaks to you by the organ of my humble ministry; but examine with humility and candour, with a desire of making a correct discovery, and of profiting by the investigation, whether you hear the voice of God with docility, when conveyed to you by the medium of public instruction, and whether you correspond with the interior inspirations of heaven, when conscience advises, solicits, and impels to virtuous endeavour, or whether you rather lend an ear to the suggestions of sloth, passion, and a corrupt

generation. But be aware of the enormity of their guilt, who despise the divine admonitions, and consider the many and great dangers to which they expose themselves, by living in such a state of hardened obstinacy.

If any crime can be odious in the sight of God, ingratitude and contempt of his sovereign power and goodness must provoke his anger and abhorrence, and these are strongly marked in the vice of spiritual deafness. What! shall your Almighty Creator, who has no need of helpless man; the eternal God, before whom, neither you, in all the imaginary excellence which self-love too often persuades you to arrogate to yourselves, nor the greatest potentates of the earth are aught; shall the immense, supreme, incomprehensible Deity, speak to his lowly creature, and shall man—proud, yet helpless man, turn away with contempt from the voice of his Maker? While your ears are open to every flattering encomium offered to yourselves, gratified with every vain subject of conversation; perhaps best pleased with that which is displeasing to him; with that which is profane, indelicate, or murderous to the character of your neighbour, whom you calumniate, because you envy his superior merit; will you at the same time close your ears to the solicitations of a loving God, pressing you to seek

your best interests and everlasting happiness? Inconsistent beings that we are! When we speak, we are anxious to be attended to, and conceive an affront offered to our consequence, when we are disregarded; and nevertheless, to our Sovereign God, who speaks to us, we can be inattentive, even when our eternal welfare depends upon our conduct. For why does he address himself to us? Is it not purely for our good? To you he speaks, unthinking sinners, that he may deliver you from a most intolerable servitude. To you he speaks, my young friends, for whom I feel peculiar solicitude, who are yet free from vice, or but slightly tainted by its contagion, to call you to himself by purity of morals and early sanctity; to persuade you, while those who call themselves your friends, join with the avowed supporters of vanity, in representing the things of this life as true and solid goods, who instil into your tender minds the false notions that those are the winning graces, and the most valuable accomplishments, which owe their existence and display to deceitfulness and affectation; he speaks to persuade you that the highest ornaments are sincerity and virtue; the choicest pleasures, those which are intellectual and spiritual; and the best opulence, ignorance or contempt of wealth. To the more advanced he speaks, that they may

sanctify, at least, the last sad years of life, when its boasted pleasures have now lost their zest; when the world, no longer discovering in them that sprightliness which once enlivened society, and diffused delight, now begins to shun their company, to gaze on other stars, which are just beginning to appear above the horizon, and to attract attention; to these he calls, that convinced of the folly of all sublunary hopes, they may seek happiness where alone it is to be found, and may consecrate by repentance, the ruins of dissipation, licentiousness, and intemperance. He calls,—with unaccountable infatuation they fly from him, to catch at pleasures which no longer afford satisfaction, to mix in the circles of juvenile gaiety, where their presence is dreaded and ridiculed; they fly from God and bliss, to enjoy a world which is glad to elude their grasp, and will soon be torn from them for ever.

You see and condemn this absurdity in others; you have, perhaps, amused yourselves with the folly of their conduct, and now in your turn are guilty of the same. Our merciful God calls upon us in the days of our prosperity, and in those of adverse fortune; he never forgets his forgetful creatures, but continually seeks to bring them to himself. Bear witness to this all ye lovers of iniquity, by re-

viewing the years you have lived, and the different circumstances in which you have been placed, for you will discover, that he has repeatedly admonished you to turn to him. At the same time acknowledge your ingratitude, ask pardon, and if at this moment he speak to you in the whispers of a convicted conscience, harden not your hearts, defer not the work of reform to another day, nor expose yourselves to the terrible judgements reserved for final impenitence.

When a nation becomes greatly obstinate to the graces of heaven, the Almighty withdraws from them his favorable protection, sends forth against them the messengers of his anger, war, pestilence, and famine; or with more severe chastisements, darkens their understanding, that they discern not the light of his countenance; that having denied their faith by their actions, they renounce its salutary influence. In punishment of their unyielding obduracy, the Jews frequently experienced the wrath of heaven, and were at last rejected by God, a sad proof of his vengeance, and a powerful warning to all Christians: for their ingratitude to the Most High, the churches of Asia and Africa, enlightened and edified by the Basils, the Chrysostoms, the Cyprians and Augustines, are now sunk into the most degraded state of su-

perstition and ignorance : for this insensibility to the divine goodness, our forefathers were seduced from the faith of Jesus, and abandoned to the uncertainty of their own conceits. Hence at the present day, instead of unity of faith, and unity of doctrine, we grieve to behold the extensive dominion of novel conjecture, and the ever-varying speculations of human opinion, disseminated through the land, and daily rising up in new creeds, and new systems of belief. Beware then, you my friends, lest possessing the inestimable treasures of divine faith, you forfeit it by ingratitude. Remember that faith, as a supernatural virtue, cannot be obtained by the exertions of even the brightest intellect : it must be the gift of God, no less than hope, charity, and repentance. How many are there amongst those professing themselves christians, who are such in name only, in whom faith is extinct ! How many having long resisted the voice of God are now abandoned by him ! His word no longer penetrates to their hearts, which they have hardened against the impressions of his grace, and they proceed without remorse or feeling towards the abyss of misery : while others contented with forming occasional resolutions, which they never put in execution, are gradually moving towards the same melancholy state, and will, ere long, give

up the thoughts of repentance! Then shall God forget those who have forgotten him. *I called and you refused...you have despised all my counsel, and have neglected my reproofs. I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you, which you feared. (Prov. i. 24.) Depart from me...I will...repay into their bosom, your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together saith the Lord, I will number you in the sword, and you shall all fall by slaughter, because I called and you did not answer; I spoke, and you did not hear: and you did evil in my eyes, and have chosen the things that displease me. Therefore saith the Lord God...you shall be hungry...and you shall be thirsty...and you shall be confounded...you shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for grief of spirit. (Is. lxv. 5, 12, and seq.)*

Let me then conjure you, my brethren, nor let it be in vain, by all the hope you have of salvation, by all the interest which you ought to take in the preservation of your souls, hearken now to the voice of God, nor be so ungrateful, so insolent, as to despise his merciful invitations. Give an attentive ear to his continual calls; open your hearts to a sense of your situation, if, upon examination, you perceive

you have been guilty of this insult to your Father and your God. *Attend, O my people, to my law ; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.* (Ps. LXX. 1.) The same loving Redeemer who healed the man, deaf and dumb, as related in the gospel, compassionates your spiritual maladies, his power and mercy are still the same, and his blood which was shed for sinners, continually pleads with his heavenly Father, in their behalf. Pray to the Lord that you may be ever docile to his voice, and that all sinners may be converted to him. In an especial manner, when the tremendous sacrifice is offered up, when Jesus is truly and substantially immolated on this altar, through him present your petitions at the throne of grace. *My eyes...shall be open, and my ears attentive to the prayer of him that shall pray in this place : for I have chosen and sanctified this place, that my name may be there for ever.* (2 Paral. vii. 15.) Yes, my brethren, it is here that the God of mercy will attend to your supplications, for the sake of his beloved Son. Beseech him then frequently and fervently, and as often as you are here assembled, that he will shew compassion to you and yours : that he will cause his saving light to shine upon all who sit in darkness : that those in particular who are dearest to you may open their eyes to

see the beauty of his truth, and awake from the dream of sinful indulgence, to obey his voice : that being thus all of one heart and one mind, united in one fold, and under one Shepherd, we may serve him in sanctity and justice all our days, and be happy together with him in heaven.

## SERMON XLIV.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON THE DUTY OF THE LOVE OF GOD.

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*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself. (Luke x. 27.)*

IN considering the present gospel, two important objects present themselves to our view, on which (as our Lord and Legislator declares in another place) the law and the prophets wholly depend; the love of God and the love of our neighbour. It is my intention, in the discourse of this day, to confine myself to a consideration of the duty of divine charity, or the love of God; for *this is the greatest and first commandment*; (Matt. xxii. 38.) and if this be fulfilled, the second will not be neglected; because it is impossible not to love our neighbour, if we truly love God. We are required to love the Lord our God with all the

ardour of affection : on him ought we to think with gratitude and delight ; with love of him our hearts ought to be all on fire ; to him our souls should tend, as to their centre, and be preserved from every deviation by the irresistible attractions of his infinite perfections. O, my brethren, let us wish that we could love him as he has loved us ! O that we could say with the loving penitent St. Augustine, and with the same spirit : “ I love thee, my God, and I desire still to love thee more. O fire, ever burning and never decaying ! O love, always glowing and never cooling ! inflame me ; that being all on fire with thee, I may be all in love with thee ! ” (Solil. c. 8.) Let us love this loving God, by seeking him in all things ; in prosperity and in misfortune, in sickness as in health ; let us love him above all, preferably to all, and love no creature but in reference, and with subordination to him. If we do not thus love him, let us at least desire so to love him ; let us pray that we may so love him ; that the fire of divine love may consume our souls, and that we may die to the world for the love of him, who has died upon a cross for the love of us. To enkindle in our hearts this sacred flame, we will consider some of the motives which should induce us to love the God who made us, and commands us to love him.

To be convinced that God merits all our love, nothing more is required than to turn our eyes to ourselves, and to use that reason which he has bestowed upon us. Let him, who feels not a sentiment of love for his God, look back to his original state, and trace his progress to the present period of his existence. While yet lost in the abyss of his primitive non-existence, unconscious and unknown, the eye of God was upon him : only his Almighty hand could draw him into being ; of ourselves we could do nothing, for we were nothing ; existing beings, themselves created and dependent, could effect nothing in our regard ; nothing less than God, the self-existing, independent, supreme Being, eternal and omnipotent, could have called us into life. He alone can preserve his own work ; to him we are indebted for innumerable and ineffable favors bestowed upon us : *in him we live, and move, and exist.* (Acts, xvii. 28.) If from ourselves we direct our view to all that surrounds us ; the wisdom, the power, the love of a God towards his creatures are eminently conspicuous : and, while we observe his wonders in the vegetable and animal world, the prodigies that are discoverable in the elements, the mysteries of nature, all combining to promote our welfare ; we ought to remember that, constituted as we are, the lords of the creation, and,

as it were, presiding over the works of God on earth, and deriving advantage from them, we ought to love him with unbounded affection, as possessing superior dignity and merit, and created for an end infinitely superior to theirs. The heart of man is therefore made for love; love is the life of the heart, says St. Augustine, and if its love be directed to any object below God, so as to make it the principal object of its affections, it degrades the soul, that noble and immortal principle which cannot be satisfied with aught that is not God. For whom can you live with greater justice and propriety, than for him to whom you are indebted for life? Has he not, as St. John observes, *loved us first*? Has he not gone before us in affection? and without any need of our homage, affection, or life, has he not created a world where we may pass the short space of our earthly existence; a world, not devoid of beauty and splendour, because he wished not our misery for a moment; but a world, as much inferior to that which he has prepared for our eternal residence, as he is superior to every temporal good. He desires to unite himself with us; and when united with us, he will not withdraw himself from us, unless driven away by our ingratitude. His love is not to be subdued even by our ingratitude; even in our worst outrages he wishes our salva-

tion. His love is insatiable, inseparable, insuperable. Before we came into this world, he loved us, and gave us a being ; he redeemed us by the death of his only Son ; he cleansed us from iniquity in the laver of baptism ; he mercifully called us to his saving faith, making us members of his church ; instituted for us his sacraments, to preserve us from sin, and even to restore us to grace, if we will return to him ! Innumerable are his favors both as to soul and body ! He has gifted us with reason, that by it we might come to the knowledge of him, and adore his infinite attributes. To the brute animal he has given the wants of the body, as he has given them to man ; hunger and thirst, heat and cold, weariness and pain, are common to them with us. But he has given to us superior endowments. To think, to reason, to compare, to prefer, admire, and love. Shall we then, possessed of reason and intellect, seek delight and happiness in the indulgence of those appetites which the meanest animal possesses in common with ourselves ? Shall man, like the mere animal, seek enjoyment in the gratification of brutal desires and carnal propensities, while he has, within him, a principle superior to every earthly desire ? capable of rational, intellectual, spiritual delights, nor ever to be satisfied but in the possession of God himself. While men

extol the dignity of their nature, and value themselves for their qualifications and endowments, they will stoop to base pleasures, to satisfactions which last but for a moment, and, when past, rend the heart with unceasing sorrow.

O God, how admirable art thou in all thy works! The heavens and the earth alike proclaim the glory of the Lord, and invite us to love him. The firmament displays the majesty of his power; his immutability is manifested in the regular succession of day and night, and of the different seasons; his liberality, in the treasures of the earth; his providence, in the fields clothed with the riches of the harvest; his stupendous greatness, in the precipice, the torrent, and the volcano; in the wonders of earth, air, and water; in that globe of unextinguished fire, which diffuses light and heat, animation, and fertility: all that we feel or behold, or comprehend, tends to raise and cherish in us a sense of God's goodness towards us, and to fill our souls with gratitude and love.

But have we not from our ingratitude itself, had reason to throw ourselves at his feet, and in humble prostration, to thank him for his forbearance? Have none of us been so unhappy as to violate this law of nature itself, by resisting his attractions, and pursuing base and

filthy pleasures, objects unworthy of our regard? Ungrateful people, said Moses to the Israelites, has not God yet done sufficient to engage your love? Do you require new blessings, new prodigies in your favor? Have you forgotten the waters separated, and suspended to deliver you from the hands of your enemies? Have you forgotten the manna, which fell from heaven for your nourishment? Have you forgotten the numberless benefits of your God, supporting your steps, directing all your ways, and with a strong hand and extended arm protecting you from danger? Infatuated race! loaded with favors from him, witnesses of his miracles in your behalf, you set your hearts upon any other than your God! O my friends, are not the same reproaches due to us? That the Almighty should place his affection upon so insignificant a being as man, even in his purest state upon earth, is, in truth, astonishing; but that man possessed of sense and reason, capable of loving, and incapable of life without love, should nevertheless love, and not love God,—is an instance of ingratitude and perversity, which, if well considered, must make us despise our judgement, and abhor our own hearts! That a commandment should be requisite to make us love God, is wonderful; but that the commandment should be neglected, is truly in-

conceivable! You run after creatures, at best but faint representations of that assemblage of infinite perfections, which are the attributes and essence of the Creator, while his adorable and transcendent beauties, you despise! What is there that can captivate our hearts, and seduce them from the love of God? Is it that imaginary beauty, on which your thoughts are so frequently fixed? O paltry beauty, perishable charms! What are ye, when placed in competition with him who formed you, and who has decked out thousands with equal, or superior attractions, in never-ending variety of grace and excellence? What art thou, O gaudy fading flower, compared with that uncreated beauty, immortal and unchangeable! Can genius, wit, or talent captivate our admiration and love? But know ye not that man's best light is darkness, in comparison with that inaccessible light, which, at one glance pervades and scrutinizes all that exists on earth, in hell, in heaven, reaching at once from the beginning to the end of time, from eternity to eternity? Wisdom, power, justice, and goodness, with every quality and endowment, that can please the heart or captivate the understanding, are but the gifts, the eleemosynary dispensations, which he has been pleased to dole out to his indigent creatures.

O then, my beloved friends, since this is the first and greatest commandment of God, see that you fulfil it. Without it, though you were to speak in divers tongues, or see through the veil of futurity, or possess the knowledge of mysteries, you would be nothing. Were your faith strong enough to move mountains, you were nothing without charity. Were you to lower yourselves even to the abyss of your own nothingness, if it were not the love of God that bore you down in true humility, your degradation would effect nothing for heaven. Were you, like Zachæus, to give the half of your substance to the poor, if your heart were not united to God by charity, your liberality would be without effect. Like Stephen, were you to pray for your persecutors, or like Laurence to give your bodies to the flames, it would avail nothing without the love of God. All the outward show of splendid achievement, is as a statue of gold raised upon a base of earth, a magnificent edifice upon a hill of sand. But when divine charity once possesses the soul, every virtue follows in its train, every passion of the heart is directed towards the performance of God's will. When one passion predominates, the others are ever subservient to its mandates. The *jealousy* of Saul is gratified, though at the expence of justice and

humanity : the *ambition* of Jezebel, the *avarice* of Judas, impel their victims to the extremity of guilt. The avaricious resign every earthly as well as heavenly hope and expectation, that they may enlarge the idol of their adoration ; the voluptuous sacrifice honor, interest, and repose to pleasure, while the ambitious give all that others deem valuable, for a breath of air, for empty applause and honors. Health, reputation, friendship, and fortune, every law, human and divine, is trampled under foot, to gratify the passion which predominates in the heart.

A cruel servitude this, my brethren : but let the heart exchange its object, let it, (if I may be allowed the expression) make divine love its ruling passion ; soon will a pure, a sacred flame be enkindled, and consume whatever it encounters. Soon will the fury of criminal passions subside, and gradually die away ; the love of God, strong as death, will triumph over every inordinate passion and desire, will extinguish them all, or rather making them subservient to itself, bear them all away in its own course, give them all the same direction. As they had before been devoted to criminal objects, they will now be consecrated to God. The tender endearments of Magdalen, the headstrong impetuosity of Augustin, will be directed to God,

and employed in his service ; and having been the principle, the source, the instruments of sin, they will become the springs and energies of virtue. Behold the illustrious convert, St. Paul, from a fiery zealot, and an unrelenting persecutor of Jesus Christ, and of his followers, become at once an ardent lover of his Saviour. Hear him with firm faith, and glowing charity, bidding defiance to all creatures to seduce him from the love of Jesus. *Who shall separate us* (he exclaims Rom. viii. 35.) *from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword ?* But tribulation is nothing to the heart, where divine love predominates ; distress of no account where charity possesses the soul. Imprisonment and chains weigh not where love supports the burden. As to danger, what have I to fear ? If God is with me, who shall be against me ? Even death shall not intimidate me ; for *death is my gain*. (Phil. i. 21.) No, continues the apostle, *neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*. (Rom. viii. 38.)

This holy ardour of divine love, which the ignorant, the worldly, add the profane, villify

and deride as enthusiasm and insanity, glowed with constant fervor in the soul of the apostle, and made him long for the period which should dissolve the fabric of his body, and set his soul at liberty to seek its best beloved. But remember, my friends, that to you, also, it is given to fortify your souls against the powers of earth and hell, by this strong defence of divine charity. God himself will be your protector and defence; for *God is charity; and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him.* (1 John, iv. 16.) If you love the things of the earth, you are *earthly*; if the things that are in heaven, you become *heavenly*; seeking God in all things. Could each of us cry out, with St. Peter; *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee!* (John, ult.) happy indeed should we be. Let us at least desire to love him, and beseech him to give us the virtue of divine love. O God! O Father! thou knowest, though to us it is a secret, since nothing is more hidden from us, than the interior of our hearts, thou knowest the real tendency of our affections. We desire, at least, to love thee, though we are sensible that we love thee not enough. Thou seest our desires, since they come from thee. Thou inspirest us with a wish to love thee without measure; consider not the torrent of iniquity that overflows and lays waste our souls; teach

us, we beseech thee, now at last to begin to love thee, make us sensible of thy loveliness, that we may despise all other love, out of love for thee. Teach us to love thee daily more and more, that, allured by thy love, we may follow thee, and be brought, at length, to the mansions of life and love, and to the possession of thee, who art the true and never-ending object and reward of love.

## SERMON XLV.

### THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON THE DUTY OF GRATITUDE.

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*There is none found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger. (Luke, xvii. 18.)*

THERE is hardly a vice of which man is guilty, that is usually more severely condemned than the vice of ingratitude : and the instance presented to us in this gospel, exhibits it in a point of view that must excite our utmost abhorrence. The leprosy was a disorder of the most loathsome and humiliating nature. Those afflicted with it were, by the command of God, separated from the society of their fellow men, from the city and the camp ; had their *clothes hanging loose*, their *heads bare*, their *mou*th*s covered with a cloth*, and were to *proclaim* to all that they were *unclean*. Compelled to range the open country, abandoned by their relatives, their friends, and the

whole community, they received at a distance the relief of the charitable and humane, which was often barely sufficient to support nature. (Lev. xiii.) With this hideous calamity were the persons afflicted who presented themselves before our Lord. Exiled from the cheerful haunts of society, and conscious of their forlorn condition, they stood at a distance, and *lifted up their voice, saying; Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.* (v. 13.) Moved to compassion at their distress, and prevailed upon by the earnest entreaties which they poured out, our Redeemer orders them straitway to *shew themselves to the priests,* as enjoined by the law. *And it came to pass that, as they went, they were cleansed.* (v. 14.)

One would imagine that persons, freed from so shocking a disorder, restored to health and credit, to social life and social enjoyment, would have expressed their gratitude by the liveliest acknowledgments. But it was not so. While suffering under calamity, they approached with suppliant cries, invoking aid from Jesus Christ; but when, by his mercy, they were healed, they forgot the hand from which they had received the signal favor. One only of the ten, *when he saw that he was cleansed, went back, and with a loud voice glorified God.* (15.) O, my brethren, how exactly does this narration correspond with what is every day seen among

mankind! While suffering distress, they cry out to God, but if he raise them from sickness or trouble, they forget his mercy, and are guilty of increased iniquity. We have all received innumerable favors from the hand of God: for what have we that we have not received from him? and for all that we have received, we owe an indispensable return of gratitude. To a discharge of this essential duty, I mean to exhort you, by calling to your recollection some of the motives which claim your gratitude; and, in the second place, to direct you in the performance of this duty, by informing you in what this gratitude consists.

With respect to the favors we receive from one another, we should, in general, be ashamed to let any pass without expressing our sense of gratitude: but those, which we have received from God, are at once so numerous and transcendent, both in the order of nature and of grace, that to forget the Donor would argue an extreme stupidity, and to disregard them, when remembered, must be the most consummate baseness. Both reason and religion testify our obligations. Reason informs us that from God we received our souls, our bodies, and every external blessing; that for our convenience, use, and benefit, he formed the spacious firmament, with those resplendent orbs which irradi-

ate the vast expanse of heaven ; that for our direct, or intermediate, advantage or comfort, he has stocked the earth, air, and waters, with bird, and beast, and fish ; that consequently we are indebted to him for all that is within us, and without us ; for all that we have, and all that we are. By the light of faith, and the communication of religion, we are informed that, by an effect of pure generosity, God has created us for a supernatural destiny, for eternal happiness, to behold him as he is in himself, and to enjoy him for ever in heaven. By faith we discover that the God who created us, has so loved his creatures, as to send into this world his own eternal Son, to redeem us from the wretched slavery under which we groaned, in consequence of sin, to purchase our freedom, and reinstate us in our forfeited rights, at a great price, no less than the death of this Man-God upon a cross. But to enumerate the various favors received from heaven, would be a fruitless attempt. Each one, upon reflection, will discover a thousand mercies and graces bestowed upon himself ; some have received the invaluable blessing of uninterrupted health, some success in their terrestrial concerns, far beyond their expectations ; to these he restored health and vigour, when the original weakness and delicacy of habit, or a constitution impaired

by guilty excesses, had seemed to doom them to perpetual affliction; to those he has given the comforts of life, to which their origin no way appeared to entitle them: others he has blessed with the patronage of steady friends, and, through the medium of his own creatures, preserved them in virtuous innocence, amidst the nipping frosts of poverty, or the blandishments and seductions of vice; while many have been, by an almost visible miracle, reclaimed from the ways of sin, and, from an abyss of iniquity, restored to grace and mercy. But who shall recount the wonders of God's goodness and love towards his creatures? He has implanted too, in the human breast, a natural sentiment of gratitude; and therefore in despising and disregarding God's bounty, we oppose the best propensities of our nature, and resist the native inclinations of our hearts. Even by a positive precept, we are called upon and commanded to express our gratitude to our supreme and sovereign Benefactor. In the old law, the Sabbath was sanctified in an especial manner; that by a solemn rest from every earthly work, and a consecration of the day to the service of God, an acknowledgment might be made of the divine power and goodness, and of man's dependence. In particular, the remembrance of the formation of man, and the creation of the world, was re-

newed by this weekly solemnity. By the feasts of the passover, of pentecost, of tabernacles, the Ruler of the Universe, and the Lord of all things, was adored and blessed for the deliverance of his people from the bondage of Egypt, and for transporting them, with powerful hand and outstretched arm, through the waters of the Red Sea ; for the promulgation of his law upon Mount Sinai, and for his gracious protection of his people, during forty years, that the children of Israel dwelt in tabernacles, while they sojourned in the desert. On these, and on other occasions, *were offered up to the Lord oblations, holocausts, and libations, according to the rite of each day ;* (Lev. xxiii. 37.) and, for the same purpose of gratitude and thanksgiving, were offered up to God the first born of male children, and of every animal, and the sacrifices denominated *eucharistic*, from their being offered for the express intention of giving thanks to the Deity for all his gifts and blessings. These festivals and sacrifices cease to be celebrated for the same particular ends, since the coming of Christ ; but they have given way to other festivals of more solemn worship, and to a sacrifice of which those of the Jewish law were mere figures. The Sabbath has been transferred to the Sunday or the Lord's Day, in remembrance of our Lord's resurrection from the dead, and

of the descent of the Holy Ghost on that day, by which a more excellent law was promulgated, not in thunder and lightning, but in tongues, endued with the fire of the Holy Spirit, imparting the wonders of divine grace to the apostles; and hence *their sound hath gone forth into all the earth; and their words unto the end of the world.* (Ps. xviii. 5.) On the other feasts of the new law, we celebrate the mysteries of our Redeemer, and extol his power and goodness, in enabling our weak brethren to triumph over Satan and sin; we are animated to an imitation of their virtues, by contemplating their rewards, and by the *communion of saints*, by which an intercourse is kept up between the saints in glory, and the church militant on earth. All of us are then required, by reason and revelation, and by the express injunction of God, to testify our acknowledgments for his mercies, *giving thanks*, as the apostle says to the Ephesians, (v. 20.) *always, for all things, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father.*

Let us now examine in what our gratitude should consist, that we may know whether we have complied with our duty. The great St. Thomas Aquinas, treating upon gratitude, reduces its duties to the three principal heads. The first is a *sense and esteem* of a favor re-

ceived, the second is the *acknowledgment* of the favor, by an expression of thankfulness; and the third is the making a *return* to our Benefactor, in proportion to our ability. We must therefore endeavour justly to appreciate the bounty and generosity of God in our regard, by frequently calling to our recollection his gifts and graces, by ruminating upon their inestimable value, all tending to confer immortal bliss upon those who once had neither life nor being, but received existence, only to be made, as St. Paul expresses it, *partakers of a heavenly calling, partakers of Christ.* (Heb. iii. 1. 14.) We must also, with willing hearts, acknowledge and proclaim aloud, the wonderful goodness of God in our regard. With the psalmist, ought we to cry out: *Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what great things he hath done for my soul.* (LXV. 16.) This thanksgiving should you give to God the Father at all times, through Jesus Christ; *through him . . . .* says the apostle, *let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually . . . . giving glory to his name.* (Heb. xiii. 15.)

But, is it sufficient barely to acknowledge and praise the bounty of our God? No, my brethren, the principal duty, the only real proof of a grateful heart, is to make a return to him, according to the full of our limited means

and capacity ; by employing the gifts of God according to his intentions and commands, for his honor, and our salvation. It is for you to examine, whether you have performed this indispensable duty : to inquire whether you have ever yet been truly sensible that you were indebted to God for what you have received from him, or whether you have not been as cold and negligent in thanking him, as if all that you had came from yourselves, and was held in unalienable and independent possession. Alas ! with what daring insolence do men turn against God the gifts he has bestowed ! Instead of making friends of the mammon of iniquity, by relieving the distressed members of Jesus Christ, riches are employed for vicious purposes, and the *superfluous* is considered, not as the patrimony of the poor, deposited as a trust for their benefit, though undoubtedly this is the case, but as showered down upon them for any mode of expenditure, which folly, dissipation, or licentiousness shall inspire. The *superfluous*,—that is, whatever exceeds the exigencies of a creditable and decent maintenance, suitable to a man's situation and rank in life, ought to be devoted to acts of benevolence ; and yet, as if God gave riches merely to encourage an unfeeling selfishness, the world imagines that whatever can be spared above the usual claims

of domestic life and situation, they have a right to squander, just as extravagance or whim may dictate.

Power and authority are too frequently made, not the means of protection to the weak, but of oppression to the helpless;—wit and genius, not the medium by which truth is disseminated, true religion propagated, and virtue diffused and defended, but by which prejudices are confirmed, religion vilified and calumniated, virtue betrayed and ruined. Thus the Almighty's gifts are turned against him, by being made to minister unto the passions of ungrateful man! Were we seriously to reflect from whom we have received every smallest good which we possess, and every greater blessing, were to bear in mind the generous liberality of our God, and of our undeservedness, we should exclaim with wonder and gratitude; *O Lord, our Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him! . . . . admirable is thy name in all the earth!* (Ps. viii. 5, 10.) Not satisfied with an interior acknowledgment of his goodness, we should, on every occasion, extol his bounty, and never arrogate to ourselves that merit which is his due. When we seek the applause of men; when poor mortals make a display of their riches, power, genius, or beauty, do they not

forget that they are making a boast of what is not their own? That like menial servants who, in the absence of their master, assume a consequence from his superiority, and ridiculously attempt to shine in his character; poor, weak, unthinking man, glories in what is not his own, but only entrusted to his custody, by his supreme Lord and Master. Let us then cease to value ourselves for what belongs to God. *What hast thou, that thou hast not received? but if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received?* (1 Cor. iv. 7.)

Let us praise the Lord for all his wonders, goodness, and love; let us give thanks to God, through Jesus Christ; *to the king of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever!* (1 Tim. i. 17.) Let us dedicate to him who gave them, all the powers of our souls, and all the faculties of our bodies: let us bless him, if he bestow upon us the good things of the earth, and use them with moderation; and let us adore his wisdom, if he afflicts us here with adversity, and reserve his favors for the life to come. In sickness and in health, in disappointment and sorrow, as in the full tide of prosperity, let us give praise to God; let us magnify the Lord, and own the wisdom of his decrees.

With these sentiments, my brethren, you will never despond; whatever terrestrial calamities befall you, calm resignation will still hold her seat within your breasts, and heavenly hope will dart a ray of cheering consolation athwart the gloom of earthly misfortunes: and if you are elevated to a view of brighter prospects, you will be thankful and serene, but never elate; always remembering, that every best gift, and *every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.* (1 James, i. 17.) Attentive to your spiritual wants, you will expose them to your heavenly physician; like the lepers you will cry with a loud voice and fervent heart; *Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!* Beg of him that if you be in sin, he will heal the maladies of your souls; if in the state of his holy grace, that he will preserve to you that best and choicest happiness. He will hear the prayer that is poured out to him with humility, and a grateful feeling for his innumerable blessings; and if you continue in christian perseverance, serving him in holiness and justice all your days, he will take you to his heavenly kingdom, where, in the company of all the saints, you will sing canticles of jubilation and thanksgiving, for all eternity.

## SERMON XLVI.

### FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON SERVING GOD WITH LOVE AND AFFECTION.

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*No man can serve two masters.* (Mat. 6.)

My brethren, these are the words of Jesus Christ himself, and they contain a proposition of the last importance to the children of men. Happy they, who, seriously weighing its momentous signification, have been engaged in an honorable service; who with this truth ever before their eyes, have by it regulated their lives, and despising the fleeting pleasures of this life, despising too its transitory pains and evils, have courageously pushed forward to the joys and glories of the life to come, strong in the protection of God, and upheld by his assistance. But, alas! in reviewing the days that have gone over our heads, how few can console

themselves that they have preserved in their hearts, and in the practice of their lives, a steady conformity with the divine will! how few who have not been cold and indifferent; who have not even renounced his love and service, by submitting to the slavery of the passions, or at least have attempted to divide their services and affections between God and the world, to indulge in the vanities and pleasures which withdraw from God, and yet to flatter themselves with a hope of partaking in the joys of eternity. This, my friends, is an attempt to serve two masters, to save your souls without resigning any gratification, which the corruption of self-love has solicited. This is the case with those who have not discarded the sentiments which religion, a virtuous education, and the good conduct of others have impressed upon their early minds, yet endeavour to combine the love and service of God, with the love of riches, and every earthly satisfaction which is not branded with infamy, but is accredited by the world; and this allusion they are convinced must prove fatal to them; but rather than resign the pleasing error, and forsake the pleasures of the present, they shut their eyes against the light, and banish all sobriety of thought from their minds. To preserve you from the deception, if you are not un-

willing to be undeceived, and to prevail upon you to be truly wise, by assiduously attending to your best interests, I shall endeavour to impress you with a sense of the obligation incumbent upon all, of serving the Lord of heaven and earth with inviolable attachment and supreme affection.

In the services which men perform towards each other, they are influenced by a variety of motives. Some impelled by ambition and a love of glory, attach themselves to princes and potentates, while others do the same from the meaner motive of interest and the accumulation of wealth. Actuated by better sentiments, children assist and befriend their parents, from a principle of gratitude and filial love, which nature inspires, and reason and religion approve: friends administer reciprocal kindness in different acts of pure benevolence, from the inducement of mutual attachment, and mutual affection; while some are employed in various services to their fellow-creatures, constrained by hard necessity, and their state of life. But, my brethren, all and each of these motives concur in calling us to the service of the Almighty, honor, duty, interest, and happiness. Yes, *it is great glory to follow the Lord.* (Eccles. xxiii. 38.) If the service of earthly princes be honorable; if, in their cause, men refuse not to meet

the greatest dangers, and if they fall in their defence amidst the horrors of bloodshed, and cheerfully expire on the field of battle, flattering themselves with the ideal consolation that they die upon the bed of honor; how much more glorious is it to serve the King of Kings, and to receive the applause and congratulations of heaven's high court, and of the millions who surround the throne of God! The greatest monarchs of this our earth dwindle into insignificance and perfect annihilation before the face of him who made them. *By me, says the Lord, kings reign.... by me princes rule, and the mighty decree justice.* (Prov. viii. 15.) All power is derived from, and maintained by him, who, as the prophet Isaias expresses it, *hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and weighed the heavens in his palm; who hath poised with three fingers the bulk of the earth, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance.* (xl. 12.) *All nations are before him, as if they had no being, (17.) the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are accounted as the smallest grain of a balance.* (15.) How then do men neglect, and even refuse, to serve this mighty Lord? It should be a subject of thanksgiving and exultation, that he deigns to number us in his retinue, that he will admit us in the quality

of servants to attend upon him, who, blessed in the enjoyment of infinite happiness, and uncontrolled dominion, needs not our paltry services and homage.

Yes, my brethren, with all the bustle and fancied consequence of mortals, with all the disputes and high concerns of men, as they are boastingly denominated by us, which spread hatred, and devastation, and death, from one end of the earth to the other, what are we? poor, helpless creatures in the sight of God, who sees and knows that without him we cannot perform even the little insect-exploits for which we value ourselves, nor strut, in our imaginary greatness, for an hour or a single moment! Should we not then rejoice, that we are *suffered* to serve the great God of heaven, whose wisdom, power, and majesty, surpass all that earth contains, or the united efforts of created imagination can conceive? Have we not cause to wonder and lament, that the generality of mankind can be so insensible to genuine honor, as to be ambitious of transient earthly glory and renown, and to disregard the glory of immortality? that, for the sake of pleasing their worldly superior, they do not hesitate to offend the Master of earth and heaven? But if this first motive make not an impression on our hearts, if ambition warm

us not to generous enterprize, and induce us not to aspire after the honor of serving so great a Lord, let justice, let duty prevail upon us. Whether we consider God as he is in himself, or in regard to us, we are under the most pressing obligation of dedicating ourselves entirely to his service. If, by a supposition, absolutely impossible, we had received nothing at his hands, even then his infinite being and unbounded perfections would command our utmost endeavours ; in homage to his supreme excellence and sovereign dominion, we should be in justice bound to prostrate ourselves before him, in acknowledgment of his infinite perfection. But when we consider him also as our Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, can we, for a moment, hesitate to devote ourselves eternally to his service and love? Call to mind what is taught to you by the first principles of reason, as well as by the first elements of faith. Was it not the all-powerful hand of the Deity, that from nothing produced this vast fabric of the universe, embellishing and providing it with all that it contains, for the use and benefit of man? Has he not gifted you with life and motion? endowed you with a rational and reflecting soul, made after his own image, that you might live, move, and exist for his glory? Convinced of his wonderful good-

ness in giving existence, when you were nothing, and in choosing to place you in that state of existence which he had adorned with reason and understanding, proceed to that continual, and, as it were, renewed creation, by which he every moment preserves that existence which he has bestowed upon you. We are under the same obligations to God for preserving our being, as if he created us every moment of our lives; since, without his preserving care, we should, in each moment, relapse into our original nothingness. How base, therefore, what unnatural monsters of ingratitude must we be, if we can proceed from day to day, as forgetful of God as if we owed our existence and preservation only to ourselves, and were indebted for nothing to Almighty God. But still more enormous is our turpitude, when conscious of all his goodness, we bid defiance to his power, and turn even his favors against him, by deadly sin. Yet how many does this world contain, who seldom think, perhaps never with serious reflection, that the life which they are spending in criminal pursuits and sinful gratifications, is in the hands of him whom they are offending, that all that is in creation, and enjoys life, is animated, and preserved by the goodness of God: that he feeds the birds of the air, and clothes the lilies of the

valley ; that the thread of life is in his hand, and that every crime which sinners commit, is a provocation to withdraw his hand, and let them fall into that abyss of wretchedness and despair which he has prepared for the impenitent. To convince you, still more, of the injustice of those who neglect God's service, let me call to your remembrance the inestimable benefit of your redemption, purchased by the blood of his only Son, and that you are sanctified by his Holy Spirit. *You are bought with a great price*, says St. Paul, (1 Cor. vi. 20.) and to repay his mercies with ingratitude, to exasperate him by sin, who died to efface the guilt of sin by his blood, is an atrocious injustice, an ingratitude which nothing can parallel ! But to enumerate all his goodness to simple man, is impossible ; and if you feel not a sense of gratitude for his love, you must have torn up by the root every generous sentiment of the heart. O ! the ineffable goodness of our God is a subject on which the grateful soul will love to dwell ; it should be our delight to call to remembrance all his favors, and to pour out our whole souls in sweet effusions of thanksgiving and love for his innumerable acts of kindness to us !

But look to the rewards he promises his servants, you will see that not only honor and duty require of us to serve God here below, but that

our interest and our happiness here and hereafter, depend on our attaching ourselves to him with fidelity and affection. *Happy are thy men, and happy are thy servants, who stand always before thee, and hear thy wisdom,* said the queen of Saba to Solomon, (2 Paral. ix. 7.) but thrice happy are they, my brethren, who stand always before the Lord in humble adoration, hearkening to his voice, and obeying his commands: *happy is that people, whose God is the Lord.* (Ps. CXLIII. 15.) They shall enjoy the sweets of conscious virtue, free from the agonies which torment the guilty, and theirs shall be the recompense of joy eternal.

Now, my beloved friends, you admit, no doubt, the obligation under which man is placed, of serving the God who made him, who has loaded him with endless favors, and who has prepared for his servants the joys of eternal glory, as the reward of their fidelity. But have you ever considered the many motives which enforce that obligation? You may, indeed, have persuaded yourselves that you have discharged this obligation. But weigh well the greatness of his favors; estimate the return of gratitude, shall I say, or of justice? for all his goodness towards you, and then take a view of what you have done, of what you are still doing for God, and see whether it bear any proportion, with

what reason and religion tell you ought to be done. What do you for God? a few prayers are said to him morning and night, a mass occasionally heard, it may be too without respect or affection; while he is forgotten the rest of the day, and perhaps his commands violated without concern. Is this to serve God as he desires; as he requires to be served? But I refer the examination to yourselves, and to a better opportunity; when drawn from the world to the silence of retirement, you may interrogate your own hearts, and attend to the answers which conscience will make to the inquiry. But if you shall discover that hitherto you have wholly neglected to serve God, if you have injured him in his gifts, making the advantages of health, riches, wit, and beauty, subservient to your passions; instrumental in offending him yourselves, or in making others offend him; or, if you have served him by halves, submitting to a divided empire in your hearts, sometimes leaning to the side of virtue, but soon yielding to the corruption of nature, and seeking contentment in guilt,—oh! now at least be moved to a regard for your own honor, interest, and happiness, for your eternal welfare: let every motive, both in time and eternity, every inducement which reason, religion, or self-love can furnish, operate in withdrawing you from the galling servitude

of this world, from the tyranny of vice, the wretchedness which must necessarily be experienced from the reproaches of a conscience, loaded and oppressed by sin, to a life of peace and true satisfaction, to a life spent in the service of Almighty God, and hereafter to life and joy without end, to the sight and possession of God himself in the realms of everlasting bliss and glory.

## SERMON XLVII.

### FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

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*Behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.*  
(Luke, vii. 12.)

THE first object presented to our view in the gospel of this Sunday, is a funeral. As Jesus was entering a small town of Galilee, he meets a great concourse of people; and behold they are bearing to the grave a young man, the *only son of his mother, and she was a widow.* O my brethren, can any spectacle be conceived more affecting? What must have been the feelings of this afflicted parent! She considers every fond expectation, every joy, for which she wished to live, blasted for ever! Perhaps from his earliest infancy she had watched over her darling offspring, had directed his steps

through youth to manhood ; in the fondness of her heart had delighted herself in the representation of a thousand pleasing incidents, and had hoped that after enjoying with him for a series of years, prosperity and happiness, she would have yielded to the stroke of death, leaving her much loved son to transmit the name and virtues of his father, to a numerous progeny. But, oh ! how vain are all the calculations of human foresight ! Death has bereft the aged mourner of every promised consolation ; all her hopes are sunk in sudden disappointment, and he, who gave life to hope, is himself carried lifeless to the grave. But why is this melancholy scene exhibited to us ? Because the sight of a young man taken off by death in the flower of his age, must naturally bring to our minds that separation of the soul from the body, which will cut us off from every concern of this world, divorce us from every pursuit, from every dear and tender connection.

The day will certainly come, when these our bodies, now enjoying health and vigour, shall be conveyed cold and lifeless to the grave, be covered over deep with earth, and left to be consumed by worms. This event is seldom made a topic of conversation ; it is banished from those circles formed to indulge in present

gaiety: nor does it often enter a welcome guest into the minds of men, even in their closets; because it blunts the relish of earthly gratification. But, my brethren, in this sacred place, assembled as you are to prepare for another and a better world, to which death must give admittance, the subject cannot be intrusive. At all events it is unquestionably the duty of God's minister to call the attention of the faithful to the consideration of death, and its weighty consequences. The subject concerns me no less than yourselves; it is the concern of all. Let us then become sensible of its importance; let us convince ourselves that it is incumbent on us all to make preparation for death, without delay or intermission; and let us inform ourselves respecting the means necessary for making preparation.

It is acknowledged by all that all must die, that the time of death is uncertain; and the christian must own that it behoves all to prepare for that uncertain yet inevitable event, since it is not to be reasonably expected that *they* will die well, who make no preparation for a good death. But the fatal, and the prevalent error is this; they persuade themselves that though an unprovided death will involve them in endless and irremediable woe, yet is there no occasion for hurry, that it will be more

convenient or more easy at some future period ; or at farthest, it may be done, when the approach of death is certain, and therefore must of necessity exclude every other concern. That this mode of reasoning should be adopted by the professed votaries of pleasure, and present enjoyment, is not so much to be wondered at ; because they hardly think, in sincere persuasion, that this conversion will ever take place, and really expect to die just as they have lived, indifferent to what may happen to them in a future state. But it is truly inconceivable that persons professing a wish, and an intention to save their souls, and conforming to many of the external duties of religion, should be the dupes of so pernicious a delusion. Are we not justified in the apprehension, that, while they adhere to the *external practices*, they are strangers to the *spirit* of religion ? that in their hearts they love this world with supreme affection ? that in reality, they love nothing but this world, its pleasures, and vanities ? But whatever may serve as a pretext to defer the preparation for death, still is it our interest, our highest interest, as well as duty, to attend to it with incessant care ; and this, because to neglect this preparation is to expose ourselves to irretrievable ruin, as well as to deprive ourselves of the best consolation of which

mortal life is susceptible. Is it a trifling consideration, I would ask, to run the risk of losing infinite goods? eternal goods? of losing our souls, and that for ever? Nor merely to hazard the loss of happiness, but together with the loss of endless, infinite happiness, to incur everlasting torment and misery? To the christian it is incontestible that this is to expose ourselves to eternal pain and anguish, which a single moment may bring upon us, but from which, when once commenced, no efforts, no repentance, can free us, and which no length of time can terminate or diminish. Truth itself assures us that they who do not always *keep watch* shall be *surprized*, that they who do not stand *prepared, with their lamps in their hands*, shall be *shut out from the nuptials*, that the *negligent servant* shall be *bound hand and foot*, and *cast into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*. Were the loss of heaven and of the divine presence for ever, the extent of the calamity, though the loss would then be beyond the understanding of man to estimate, yet the insensibility of the decided worldling would not excite so much surprize. He would only give a preference to guilty, base, and sordid satisfactions, before the enjoyment of sovereign delight, and supreme happiness: but to be content to die

in sin, not only to be banished from the sight of all good, but to be condemned to *everlasting burnings*, subject to the tyranny of an inexorable enemy for *ever*, for *ever*, without a ray of hope, a glimpse of future, distant alleviation of suffering, should make, one would imagine, even the most obstinate sinner stop in his career, would make the most desperate and determined shudder.

Would they but reflect, fear would prevail where love were ineffectual ; self-interest would make impression where better considerations were without effect. But reflection is a horror to the wicked : as if they were resolved to shun whatever might be advantageous to them, they shut their eyes, their ears, their hearts, and minds against whatever is calculated to produce sobriety of thought, and serious consideration. Whenever reflection seems to press upon their minds, and urge to a change of conduct they fly to dissipation, to vanity, and sometimes to guilt, in order to free themselves from that which if indulged, would produce serenity and joy ; would light up for them the torch of hope, and the fire of charity ; would open to their view the sweet delights of heaven, and stimulate to virtuous exertion. But no ; that conversation, and that reading are studiously shunned, which have a tendency to alarm them

for their future safety, or rouse them to a concern for future happiness. Whatever can encourage their indifference, whatever can seem to excuse their insensibility, is seized with avidity. Sometimes does the father of lies embolden their timidity, with the hope of a long life, and future repentance, when age shall have subdued their natural levity, and cooled the ardour of passion; sometimes by the example of those, who having indulged in every vice, have, in the hour of death, shewn signs of sorrow, and afforded hopes of a true conversion. But O how weak a foundation is here for sinners! It is related, (Euseb.) that the mortified St. Jerome being near his end, uttered this alarming sentence: "Amongst thousands who have pursued a life of sin, scarcely is there one, who obtains mercy by a death-bed repentance. This" continued the saint, "I am convinced of, from certain experience:" and this, my brethren, our reason must demonstrate to us, that the presumptuous temerity of those, who expect to die well, without preparing for death, during the time of life and health, seldom experience that mercy which has been undervalued, and despised. If, escaping the misfortune of a *sudden* death, by which thousands are snatched away, and which they are convinced, would be their everlasting ruin, if escaping too the ago-

nies of a *violent* sickness, which prevent many more thousands from attending to that which has been long neglected; if they even enjoy the leisure afforded by a lingering sickness; is there even then, much ground for hope? Sin will never be forgiven, except it be detested, and forsaken in affection, as well as in effect, and the detestation of sin must be the gift of God: can it then be expected, that on a sudden they can hate that which they could never prevail on themselves to hate before? that which they have long loved with the most ardent affection? Can they all at once love with their whole hearts, and above all things, that God whom they had never loved before, whom they had through life offended and despised? Infinite, no doubt is the power of God; infinite is his mercy; but the change in question requires a particular exertion of his power, a miracle of his grace. *Say not*, admonishes us the author of Eccles. v. 6. *say not the mercy of the Lord is great; he will have mercy on the multitude of my sins. For mercy and wrath quickly come from him, and his wrath looketh upon sinners. Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day. For his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee.* Let us then use our best endea-

vours, my brethren, that death find us not unprepared ; let us, convinced of the necessity of being on the watch, consider by what means we may make our death securely happy, and let us determine instantly to embrace those means.

Without entering into the particular duties of each station of life, which must all be faithfully discharged, in order to please Almighty God, I wish only to inculcate one general maxim, which, if seriously attended to, will make that closing scene a source of consolation and happiness. *Blessed are those servants, says our Saviour, whom, when the Lord cometh, he shall find watching. Amen, I say to you he will place them over all that he possesseth.* (Luke xii. 43.) And again, *what I say to you, I say to all ; watch.* (Mark xiii. 37.) As a man lives, so, in general, is he found to die ; and on the care, which is taken to prepare for our departure out of life, will depend our happiness or misery after death. Since we know that we are to leave this to settle in another country, does not wisdom, does not common understanding point out to us the propriety of making all possible provision for our future reception and establishment ? To the good christian nothing can happen on a sudden. If the Lord visit him in the hours of repose, he is

ready, at midnight, as at noon, to accompany him to the nuptial banquet; his lamp is in his hand, nourished with oil; that is, his faith burns with purest brightness, fed by the oil of good works. If the just man be hastily carried off by death, his soul shall, notwithstanding, rest in peace. *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.* (Apoc. xiv. 13.) But should the virtuous christian possess the time to make an immediate preparation, by the reception of the sacraments, from whence his soul has been accustomed to receive the riches, and the plenty of God's grace, nothing will then be omitted that can help to purify his conscience, and increase his security. He glows with desire to see his God, the joy of his heart, and the portion of his inheritance. Then will he enjoy the pleasing reflection, that his life was spent in the service of his divine master; that he preferred the glory and bliss of heaven, before the fleeting pleasures of earth; every tribulation, every act of self denial and penitential austerity, every struggle with the world, the devil, and his own corruption, that shall then be remembered, will afford hope and comfort. Their pain is past, the merit attached to them is remembered by God, their fruit is mercy, and their end, peace. Cold and slothful christians, suffer yourselves to be un-

deceived ; know and value the consolation that is to be found in a good death, and be persuaded that the only security of your dying well, depends on your living a good life. Resign those criminal pleasures, those fatal satisfactions which long custom has made so dear to you. Once they were not regarded, and then you were not only more independent, but even happier than you are at present, when you have increased the importunity of your passions by yielding to their demands. Renounce those dangerous, those sinful habits ; you know them to be so to you, for often have they seduced you into sin ; you have laboured indeed to reconcile them to the dictates of conscience, and when that was not possible, you have run to them, and bidden conscience to be silent ; but in vain ; and you must still feel that in gratifying them, you offend your God, and prejudice your own souls. Cut off, eradicate, tear from your hearts whatever clings to them with guilty adhesion ; grace will make the effort less difficult than you are apt to represent it to imagination ; and though it were a thousand times more difficult than you suppose it, still ought you to despise difficulty, if, as you say, you desire to serve God, and effect your salvation. *Watch ye, therefore, because ye know not the day nor the hour.*

(Matt. xxv. 13.) If hitherto your lives have not been such as you would wish your deaths to be; if you have satisfied yourselves with a kind of distant intercourse with your Maker; if you have worn the mantle of religion, but suffered it to hang in loose diffusion; if neither *your loins* have been *girded*, nor have *lamps* been *burning in your hands*; if, in short, you have not been like men *waiting for their Lord, when he shall return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh they may open immediately*, O repair, while yet you have time and opportunity, repair all your past faults by sincere repentance. If you have, as too many do, entered into a kind of compromise with heaven, giving a few light, passing thoughts to God, but many, and far more earnest thoughts to the world, be roused from a conduct that will betray you into certain perdition; practise those exercises which the best teachers of a spiritual life recommend, in order to introduce and increase the love of God within your souls; frequent the sacraments, the sources and channels of grace, for in neglecting them, you break off your communication with heaven; retrench every superfluity in eating and drinking, every gaudy vanity in your attire: be, henceforward

upright in all your dealings with the world, not according to the general notions and maxims of worldlings, but according to justice and the law of God. Without this, you may please yourselves in the thought of succeeding in life, but the Lord will deride your paltry gains, and when you enter into another world, which admits no riches nor ornaments, but those of virtue, naked and destitute, forsaken and forlorn, the wrath of God shall execute the sentence of his justice ; and want, and misery, and distress, and everlasting horror shall be your portion.

Be ye then prepared, my brethren; instantly *set your house in order* ; let your lives be regular and edifying ; let not your neighbour be disedified by your uncharitable and unguarded conversation, your levity, your neglect of all that is holy. Neither let the pride of your exterior excite the disgust of your neighbour, nor the secret pride of your heart, provoke the hatred of God. Let modesty regulate all your actions, and chasten all your desires. Ask, and ask with fervour, with a desire of being heard, that God will give you a strong grace, that you may set about your conversion in earnest sincerity, that you may despise the world with all its follies, renounce for

ever the suggestions of self love and concupiscence, and by a pious life, ensure the happiness of a virtuous death, with the reward which is promised to the good and faithful servants of our heavenly Lord and Master.

## SERMON XLVIII.

### SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON THE VICE OF AVARICE.

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*There was a certain man before him that had  
the dropsy. (Luke, xiv. 2.)*

In many respects the disorders of the body are figurative of those which afflict the soul, and in healing the former, our Redeemer has frequently instructed us what is to be done in order to be delivered from the latter. The vice of avarice is generally considered as represented by the dropsy, as it is a continual and insatiable thirst after the riches of the earth. Never are the desires of the covetous gratified, in whatever degree they possess the object of their riches. That the pagans, whose view was not extended to the glorious joys of heaven, should have sought, with inordinate solicitude, the riches of the earth, and grasp them with im-

moderate affection, is less surprising, but that the christian, to whom the light of revelation discloses the immortal regions of bliss and glory, with all the riches and grandeur of eternity, should be captivated with the meaner glitter of polished dust, which in a few short years he must be compelled to resign, is an infatuation which nothing but daily experience, and the clearest evidence, could make credible. My brethren, extraordinary as this is, yet this base passion extensively prevails among poor and rich, young and old, in each sex, and in every condition of life. The young seek with eagerness the possession of wealth, hoping that wealth will make old age happy ; the old embrace it with fond attachment, in proportion as they approach the term which must dispossess them of all they have : the rich, who often enjoy more than reason would require, or extravagance can dissipate, still desire an increase ; those who have sufficient to satisfy every reasonable want of nature, and who might spare something towards relieving the distresses of the truly indigent : who even on some occasions wish to pass for affluent in the eyes of their neighbours, are ever longing for more ; while the poor, who cannot indeed love money in effect, idolize it in affection, and consider it as the only mean by which content and comfort are to be procured,

as conferring wisdom, virtue, honor, and happiness.

Yet is this vice generally overlooked; in the examination of our consciences, it is either entirely passed over, or we acquit ourselves of all guilt in its regard; and hence in the tribunal of penance it is not thought on; though it is not to be doubted, that many who profess themselves christians, are miserably enslaved by it, and will suffer for it eternal woe hereafter. May I inspire you with horror and detestation of this secret, but deadly sin, by shewing you that it is in direct opposition to the doctrines and precepts of our holy religion, pregnant with wretchedness and iniquity here, and productive of eternal woe hereafter.

This ignoble vice, my brethren, is either an irregular desire of possessing riches, or an immoderate attachment to them, when possessed. A just and regulated attention to the things of this world, without which life is not to be supported; it is well understood, is neither condemned by reason nor religion. Here is the specious subterfuge to which men resort; here is the cloak under which they conceal an inordinate love, or desire of worldly wealth. A reasonable and moderate attention is not reprehensible: but it is no longer reasonable and moderate, it exceeds all just bounds, when for

the sake of money, unjust means are resorted to, or when money is sought with immoderate ardour, even though the means be just and lawful. The regard for money is no longer moderate, no longer lawful, when the attachment to that which has been acquired, causes the possessor to be under an unceasing fear of losing it, or causes him to feel an overwhelming sorrow at the idea of resigning any part of it; much more when money is considered as the real source of happiness. We are all called upon to be poor, if not in effect, at least in affection; and if this poverty of spirit has been pronounced a real beatitude, by the Son of God, strangely erroneous must be the opinion of those who live on in an affected ignorance of what heavenly truth and wisdom have taught; who conceive all those to be *miserable* whom he pronounces *blessed*, and those alone to be happy who wallow in boundless riches, and sensual delights; although he has declared such to be really miserable, and against them has pronounced his *woe*. (Luke vi.) To be convinced how abominable this vice must be in the sight of God, it is sufficient to attend to what is said concerning it in holy writ, and to estimate it according to the ideas that have always been entertained of it by the wise and good. *There is not a more wicked thing, says*

the wise man, (Eccles. x. 10.) *than to love money, for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale.* St. Paul calls covetousness *a serving of idols*, and he declares the covetous man to be an *idolater*. (Eph. v. 5. Colos. iii. 5.) He declares riches to be a source of *temptation*, a *snare of the devil*, the occasion of *many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition*; for covetousness, he exclaims, *is the root of all evil*. (1 Tim. vi. 9.) Our Lord has declared that riches are *deceitful*, (Mat. xiii. 22.) promising happiness, which they cannot give; that they are *thorns*, wounding the soul of the possessor, (ibid.); and therefore that *it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven*. (Matt. xix. 24.) To love this source of every evil, must be a strange perversion of the understanding, an unaccountable preference of the shadow to the substance. Covetousness has always been considered as the meanest of the passions, the basest of propensities, because it is directed to the most despicable object, is a love of mere dust, to the prejudice of that love which is due to the Creator of all, beautiful, beneficent, glorious, and immortal. It is idolatry, in as much as the honor and affection due to God, are given to mere creatures, to divinities the most contemptible.

It is a source of misery here no less than hereafter : nor is it in the power of language to represent, in faithful coloring, the agitations and agonies which torment the avaricious ; to describe the fears, anxieties, and solicitude which perpetually prey upon their minds. Neither by day nor by night do they enjoy repose ; the sensations of gladness, serenity, and cheerful hope fly before suspicion and mistrust ; and their whole confidence being placed on what is uncertain, they can never experience tranquillity. Yet to this unworthy object of idolatry, do hundreds offer up, not the smoke of incense, nor the blood of animals, but their own immortal souls !

But do not acquit yourselves of all guilt, because you do not experience this anxiety and tormenting apprehension. It is, for the most part, the possessors of immense sums, who are capable of this continual alarm and apprehension. While they are ever vigilant to secure, and fearful to lose what they have amassed, others, with profane desire, are panting after and adoring what is not, and what perhaps may never be, within their reach. This vice was frequently and severely condemned by our Lord, and by him were the scribes and Pharisees often reproved on account of it. The whole of the life of our blessed Saviour was in conformity

with his doctrine. While he incessantly exhorted all to detach their minds and affections from earthly goods, while he energetically exclaimed, *Wo to you that are rich, for you have here your consolation*, (Luke, vi. 24.) he himself possessed nothing. Say, then, my brethren, can you deserve the name of his disciples, if your whole labour is directed to the acquiring of riches? Can you be said to be his followers, if all the desires of your hearts are confined within the narrow circle of earthly satisfaction?

But what ought to increase the dread and horror of this vice in the breast of the christian, is the multitude of other vices which we discover in its train. St. Paul, that experienced teacher of a spiritual life, styles it the *root of all evils*: and he adds; *they who desire to become rich, fall into temptation, and the snares of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition*. (1 Tim. vi. 9.) Seduced by a love of riches, he affirms, *that some have erred from the faith, and entangled themselves in many sorrows*; (ib. 10.) nothing exaggerated is here said by him—the example of past and present times confirms what he has asserted. When men become enslaved to this odious vice, nothing is refused that can gratify its demands; they become forgetful of God, unjust,

and unfeeling towards their fellow-men, often cruel towards themselves. The avaricious, and the slaves of mammon, are uniformly devoid of religion, their hearts are incapable of the glow of divine charity; they are without compassion for the distresses of others, a narrow selfishness confines and shackles all their affections, and while they seem to be actuated by self-interest in all they do, it is a false interest that imposes on them, a small contemptible profit that seduces them to the prejudice of true and unbounded riches, for they sell their souls to the devil for all eternity, for a temporary enjoyment of a little glittering dust. Nay, where riches are not possessed, the children of vanity feel a satisfaction in the appearance of possessing wealth, and will put themselves to much real and permanent inconvenience, that they may afford an occasional display of something which may induce their neighbour to estimate them somewhat higher than they could expect to be ranked from a knowledge of their real circumstances. Thus it sometimes happens that avarice is at once penurious and extravagant; while its little artifices to impose upon others are generally seen through and ridiculed. *Better is he that laboureth, says the wise man, and aboundeth in all things, than he that boasteth himself, and wanteth bread.* (Eccli. x. 30.)

No passion leads so directly to final impenitence as the love of mammon: it increases with age, and, like the disorder by which it is represented, its thirst becomes greater the more it is indulged. Other criminal affections generally grow old and feeble, as men advance into years; but this seems rather to acquire strength, as the strength of man decreases. This may arise from his delusion in first expecting happiness from wealth, and not finding it in that which he has acquired, he desires more, still hoping to be at last made happy by that which can never give contentment. Or it may be owing to the weakness of man, who, as he advances in years, seems to stand in greater need of support, and clings with fonder attachment to that in which he has been accustomed to confide. He becomes blind and insensible to his folly and iniquity, and so far from lamenting his past wickedness, he goes on, adding sin to sin, and, perhaps, when other unlawful propensities have died away, this survives them all, and every wish of the heart is directed to this criminal object. Even in death, when the emptiness of all that passes away with time ought clearly to be evinced, even then the avaricious man thinks with fondness on the base idol of his soul, would wish to carry it with him into the other world, dies with the same sentiments

with which he has lived, and incurs the same sentence which is past on the rich man, mentioned in St. Luke, *He died, and was buried in hell.* (xvi. 22.) Then he will find how appropriate are the words of St. James. *Go now, ye rich, weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon you, your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver rusted, and the rust of them shall be for a testimony against you, and it shall eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up to yourselves wrath against the last day.* (v. 1.)

My brethren, I know that all that can be urged by reason and religion, the view of the present shifting scene, and the representation of eternal ages, has little effect on the inconsiderate worldling. Even our blessed Lord, when he had exhorted his hearers to shun this vice, which is the damnation of thousands, was only ridiculed and despised by them. The *Pharisees*, says the evangelist, *who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him.* (Luke xvi. 14.) Many may persuade themselves that they are not concerned in what has been said; they indeed cannot consider themselves among the rich, they may wish they could. But let them and all remember that the vice against which these woes are

denounced, consists not in the possession of riches, but the love of them; that the poor may be guilty as well as the rich, and sometimes more so in the eyes of God.

It is possible, and often it is the case, to be poor in effect, and rich in affection; as it is also possible, by the grace of God, to be poor in affection, even in the midst of riches. Avarice exists, and reigns in every condition of life. The possessor of thousands may be guilty, and they of smaller fortunes: nay even, with a small pittance, avarice may be indulged, and covetousness, which is an inordinate desire, or love of wealth, may be indulged in rags. Those who make use of what providence has given them, purely to serve themselves, who plan, project, and economize, but all with a view to their own ease and enjoyment; and who, if they wish for more, have no object but self gratification, should look well to the state of their interior; examine their hearts and see whether they be wholly free from this inordinate vice; whether self love do not prevail over the love of God, and their duty to their neighbour.

The poor, too, should carefully observe the tendency of their hearts, for if they are for ever desiring that which they are probably never destined to attain, if they inordinately cling

to that little which providence has dispensed to them, they are, in some sense, more guilty than the rich, as they adore a less captivating, a less substantial idol, and when they look with envy and regret on those who enjoy a greater affluence, the object of their homage is less real while their guilt is not less certain. These are ever striving with vain solicitude to increase their little stock, and are frequently ready to effect their purpose by means which the laws of God, and his church condemn. The few festivals which occur in the course of the year are disregarded, as if God, from whom all success must be derived, would prosper their endeavours, while his service were neglected; and even the Sundays, when open traffic is suspended, are devoted to plans and calculations by which money may be acquired. But *blessed are the poor in spirit*, whether they enjoy the riches of the earth, and use them according to the designs of heaven, which bestows them, or be placed by providence at a distance from wealth, and the numerous dangers to salvation, which accompany it. Remember, my brethren, that riches and poverty, terrestrial success and terrestrial adversity come from God; while content of mind, and calm acquiescence in his appointments, can alone make any situation happy. Seek not then

*to treasure up to yourselves treasures upon the earth*, which cannot be long enjoyed, and which never confer happiness, exposed as they are to the continual risk of loss and plunder; but *lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth consumeth, and where thieves break not in and steal*; (Matt. vi. 20.) treasures which shall never perish or decay.

By the practice of humility, patience, and resignation; by works of benevolence and charity to Christ's suffering and indigent brethren, you will secure a reward from him, you will accumulate true riches, which neither malice nor accident can assail, nor revolutions scatter, nor time demolish. Then shall the days of your mortal life flow on in sweet serenity, brightened by the glorious prospect ever open before you, and daily drawing nearer to your view; half the sorrows of this world will be dispelled, and content and peace will be your portion here, and hereafter *yours shall be the kingdom of heaven*.

## SERMON XLIX.

### SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON THE LOVE OF GOD.

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*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. (Matt. xxxii. 37.)*

BEHOLD, my brethren, the first and greatest of God's commandments, which all are required to fulfil, and which once fully complied with in all its parts, relations, and bearings, we discharge the whole of our duty. Nothing can be more just than this law of God, whether we consider him as the sovereign Lord of the universe, exercising supreme dominion over his subject creatures, or as the parent, preserver, protector of all, claiming our love in return for his, the Being of infinite goodness and excellence. Oh then what can hinder man from complying with a precept so clearly and

indispensably imposed upon all, so unquestionably connected with the interest and happiness of all, both in time and through eternity! Is it that you see not benefits that accrue to those who love the Lord with all the powers of their souls? Little have you meditated on the author of all good, if you entertain a notion so erroneous. Or is it that you imagine the precept as impossible, or exceedingly difficult? If you have hitherto unfortunately been imposed upon by an error, the most dangerous that can deceive you, suffer yourselves this day to be undeceived. May I be enabled by the grace of God to convince you that it is easy and sweet to love the God of loveliness, and that ineffable advantages, eternal bliss, and glory, are the certain consequences of loving him! At the same time may you experience a heart-felt sorrow that so few amongst deluded mortals bestow their affections upon the source of all greatness and goodness!

These two propositions I shall endeavour to establish: that the precept of the love of God is easy to be observed, as well as infinitely beneficial in the observance; and, at the same time that the precept of loving God with our whole heart, our whole soul, and whole mind, is, alas! duly observed by very few.

If we place any reliance on the declarations

of God himself, we shall be convinced that what he requires of us is not a work of difficulty, exceeding our strength or ability: he assures us that what he commands is not impracticable. *This commandment that I command thee this day is not above thee, nor far from thee. Nor is it in heaven, that thou shouldst say, which of us can go up to heaven to bring it to us, and we may hear and fulfil it in work? Nor is it beyond the sea, that thou mayest excuse thyself and say, which of us can cross the sea, and bring it unto us, that we may hear and do that which is commanded? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.* (Deut. xxx. 11.)

Of this you will be strongly convinced, if you attentively consider the relation which our hearts bear to God, and the helps which he offers us, that we may love him. Our hearts were made by him, and made to love him; God is of himself the only object capable of satisfying our affections and desires, and the graces which he bestows upon us, to acquit ourselves of the obligation of loving him above all things, will, if corresponded with, make every difficulty which has been the consequence either of the fall of our first parents, or of our own malice, yield to their powerful

efficacy. Yes, my brethren, the heart of man, notwithstanding the loss it has sustained by our fall from original innocence in the state of pure nature, is still naturally attracted to what is good. Such is the natural propensity of the heart of man to that which the understanding represents to it as good, that it is carried powerfully towards it as soon as it perceives it. This made St. Augustine say, "The life of the heart is love; it is wholly impossible that the heart can exist without love." The mind is made for reflection: the function of the memory is to recall the past, but the duty of the will, whose residence is the heart, as the other powers reside in the head, is to love. This is its peculiar office, its employment and delight. Now, the more excellent the object, the more it claims our love; and the stronger is our attachment to any object in proportion as we discover it to possess merit or desert. This is discernible in our affections for terrestrial objects; for, if carried away by a passion for pleasure, riches, beauty, or any earthly excellence, the more ardent is our affection for the object in proportion as we discern in it more of that excellence which has excited our regard. This being admitted, which cannot be called in question, I maintain that in our hearts is found a natural and continual inclination towards

God as the only object which can fully and entirely satisfy them. In one word, our hearts were created for a *sovereign* good; nothing less than infinite loveliness can fill the capacity of our hearts, and never can they enjoy tranquillity and content, but when satiated with unbounded excellence and perfection. We are created to God's image; nothing created can satisfy us, for in God alone we find that which is capable of making us completely happy. *Out* of him we may admire and love, but something will still be found deficient, since all creatures being essentially limited, are of consequence imperfect: but when we are united to God by the pure bond of divine charity, when we cling to him as to the source of all good, the end and aim of our being, we then find a calm repose and soothing quiescence; a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. O eternal being, the Creator and Preserver of all, from whom necessarily emanates all that is great or admirable in heaven or on earth, how shall temporal beauty captivate our hearts and seduce them from thee! We know, that in giving the preference to any thing created, we renounce thy favor, and resign superior worth and excellence: oh never let us be so insensible as to surrender our hopes of possessing thee, for the sake of any inferior

enjoyment! Where can be the difficulty in loving God? Does it originate in him? No; for he is infinitely amiable. Nor in the constitution of our hearts, for they are formed to love that which is lovely. It is in our disordered affections, our irregular passions, which draw us to created objects: but the power of grace, if not rejected or abused, is superior to the force of passion, and will give us an easy victory.

If you require a motive, my brethren, to concur in the will of your God, and to employ his graces, think of the benefits that will accrue to you, both in time and through eternity, from giving your affections to your true and everlasting lover. To enumerate them all, and to display them in their native form is not in the power of man: to insist upon *some* of them, and to represent them in imperfect coloring, would require a long discourse. Let them be the subject of your frequent meditation. The subject will be found pleasing, and none can be more interesting. If you desire riches, seek *true* riches, and you will find them in God, for all good things come with him. No sooner do we love God with our whole hearts, than we are truly rich, however lowly our situation: for he alone is rich, who is contented; as on the contrary, if the love of God

reign not in our hearts, however great and wealthy we may be, according to the notions of the world, we are miserable and poor, distracted by a thousand cares, agitated by innumerable distressing concerns, the victims of unruly passions, and the sport of human accidents. True honor, sincere enjoyment, real riches, and genuine happiness are the fruits of charity, and by loving God we ensure to ourselves his love, and according to the promise of Jesus Christ, an intimate union with the Deity. *He that loveth me, shall be loved by my Father, and I will manifest myself to him.* (John xiv. 21.) *and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him.* (ib. 23.)

But it is not here on earth that the greatness of God and his liberality are displayed in all their excellence to those, who love him and keep his commandments. It is in heaven, the seat of his glory, that he will give himself without reserve, or measure, or end, to his faithful lovers and followers. *For the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him.* (1 Cor. ii. 9.) Who then would imagine that the love of God reigned not in the heart of every living creature? Yet we are compelled to acknowledge, that this love, the true love of God, is extremely rare amongst

men, even amongst those who admit the necessity, the facility, and the infinite advantage of loving him.

Mankind in general profess to love God, but their conduct too generally contradicts their professions. To love God, is to prefer him to every thing; to be disposed to suffer every thing, to lose every thing, to resign even life rather than to lose his grace. To love God, is, on all occasions, to seek and promote his glory; consequently to be sensibly hurt at every outrage committed against him; and, on our own part, to labour in his service, to be in all things submissive to the appointments of his providence, and to endeavour that he be served by all. To love God, is to think often on him, to refer all our most indifferent actions to him, and to desire a union with him; in fine, to love God, is to give ourselves and all that we have to him; and, for his sake, to love all mankind as we love ourselves, wishing to all and to each the same happiness that we wish ourselves. Now, my brethren, is it not to be greatly feared that very few indeed are thus disposed towards God and their neighbour? Do not they resign the grace and friendship of God, on the most trifling considerations? for a paltry interest, for the sake of a few feet of ground, for a vain point of honor, for an unworthy gratification?

This is not to prefer God to all things? Who are animated with a zeal for God's honor? While the actions and conversation of those around us are disgraceful to the religion we profess, and injurious to God, the author of true religion, where are they, who stand forward in defence of truth and virtue? Are we attacked, or is the character of a friend assaulted, we can display our zeal; but the injuries that are offered to the God whom we profess to love *above all things*, we can witness with calm indifference. O this is not to love God with a love of preference; this is not to love him even as we love ourselves. Where shall we find the christian, whose chief delight is to think on God; who suffers with gladness what God inflicts upon him; and whose aim in all things is the accomplishment of God's will, and the promotion of his glory? It is thus we should be affected, if the love of God reigned in our hearts, paramount to every other affection.

As to the love of our neighbour as of ourselves, which St. John represents as the criterion by which we are to determine whether we love God above all things, how few are there, who do not entertain a dislike for *some* of their fellow-creatures? who do not shun them from a guilty antipathy, and instead of wishing

them the same good they wish themselves, on the contrary, are grieved to hear of their prosperity, and take a secret satisfaction in any misfortune that befalls them ?

Instead of the love of God, we have continual proofs of the love which persons bear to vanity and luxury in all its branches, to sensuality and themselves ; and it is from their actions that their hearts are to be known, not from their professions. Tell me not, says St. John Chrysostom, that you love God, and love him above yourselves and all things. These are mere words, but prove them by your works, demonstrate that you love him by your actions. If you love him above your own *souls*, shew that you love him better than your *money*, and I will believe you. Desist from that sinful habit which you indulge in defiance of his command, and in direct opposition to the love of him, and then say you love God above all things. But as long as you refuse to give up a paltry interest, a base pleasure, a proud competition, a sinful resentment, or whatever he abhors, your passions are dearer to you than your duty, you love yourselves better than you love your God.

Since then it cannot be denied that numbers deceive themselves, while they imagine

they fulfil this great commandment, let it be your care, my brethren, to guard against so fatal a delusion. Sound your hearts, and if you discover any sordid love, any illicit affection, any forbidden attachment, implore the God of mercy and love that he will send down upon them the fire of divine charity ; that in the midst of them he will enkindle the sacred flame that may diffuse itself through every part, and consume whatever belongs not to him. Whom or what should we desire to love but him, from whom we have received all things? For this we were made, and he alone can fill the capacity of our longing hearts, which, if not occupied by him, present a dreary waste, a gloomy void. In vain will you seek content or happiness, from any earthly object ; every inferior pleasure and meaner gratification carries with it an inseparable alloy of bitterness. May we each of us be enabled to say with confidence, *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee* ; (John, ult. 17.) and glowing with this pure affection for the God of purity, sanctity, and love, may we persevere in his grace, till death, and be admitted to the joys of his presence, for everlasting ages.

## SERMON L.

### EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON RASH JUDGEMENT.

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*Jesus seeing their thoughts, said, Why do you think evil in your hearts? (Matt. ix. 4.)*

WE discover, my brethren, in the present gospel, an evident proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ. While he evinces his heavenly mission by the miracle which he performs, he demonstrates the divinity of his character by absolving from sin, by his own power and authority, which God alone can do, and by his penetrating into the hidden thoughts of his hearers, which are known to God only. He had said to the sick man, *Son, thy sins are forgiven thee*: he proves that he possesses this power of forgiving sins, by restoring him to the use of his limbs, and by the exertion of a power which must be derived from heaven,

and he confounds the secret rash judgements of the Scribes, who in their hearts accused and condemned him of blasphemy. Let us rejoice that our Saviour has afforded such powerful evidence in support of our faith; let us adore him as God and man; let us profit by what he teaches us; let us learn from the answer which he made to those who thought evil of him who was pure from all guilt, and the God of purity, never to form a rash judgement to the prejudice of our neighbour, but to interpret all his actions as favorably as it is in our power, and even when the exterior presents nothing favorable to our view, to hope that a virtuous, though possibly an erroneous *intention* may protect him from sin in the sight of God. Above all let us learn never to pass sentence of condemnation upon our neighbour, for judgement is the Lord's.

Against this sin of rash judgement and its pernicious consequences, so common among mankind, I intend to direct my present discourse; hoping to convince you that rash judgement passed upon the conduct of our neighbour, is contrary to the rights and authority of God, and opposite to christian charity. Hence it will necessarily follow that this offence in which men so frequently indulge without scruple or remorse, is a griev-

ous violation of morality, and ruinous to man's salvation.

By rash judgement, is understood the condemnation of our neighbour's actions or intentions, upon light or insufficient grounds. I wish not to excite scruples in the breasts of the timorous, as if I included every involuntary thought, or uncherished suspicion to the prejudice of our neighbour, which may rush upon the imagination, and from which the just are not secure; but I mean every voluntary thought, every suspicion entertained with full deliberation, every judgement formed with knowledge and consent, to the injury of our neighbour's virtue and character. This is in the first place, an injury done to God, who has expressly forbidden it in many passages of sacred writ. In Levit. xix. 15, he says, *thou shalt not do that which is unjust, nor judge unjustly*. Our Saviour Christ Jesus has confirmed the same, when he says, *Judge not, that ye may not be judged*. (Matt. vii. 1.) *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned*. (Luke, vi. 37.) *Thou art inexcusable O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest*; says St. Paul, Rom. ii. 1.; *for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself*. *He that judgeth his brother*, (says the Apostle St. James, iv. 2,) *judgeth the law*. *But if thou judge the*

*law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver and judge, that is able to destroy and deliver. But who art thou that judgest thy neighbour?* To judge then, is to invade the authority and rights of the Deity, and to violate his express command. Nor is it less a violation of christian fraternal charity, an injustice done to our neighbour. *Charity thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth.* (1 Cor. xiii. 5.) It would rather be deceived by inclining to a favorable construction, than offend God, and hurt its neighbour, by too much severity in forming an opinion. Charity directs us to give to others the same treatment which we could wish to receive ourselves: would we then desire, in similar circumstances, that our neighbour should condemn us? Oh, no: we are sufficiently tender of ourselves; and while we are condemning others, upon the slightest grounds, we are suspicious that our actions may be scrutinized in the same manner, and we reprobate the injustice, the cruelty of such conduct, when it concerns ourselves. We have doubtless a claim to the candour of our neighbour, but the right is reciprocal, and he has the same claim upon us; and as long as he commits no action criminal in itself, we are not authorized to condemn him, upon surmise and conjecture. How would you

cry out, if, upon suspicion, *you* were judged and condemned? Let your conduct be regulated by the laws of equity, and you will spare your neighbour; where, on many occasions, you condemn him, upon the same principles, which, in similar circumstances, would entitle you to mercy. Often is your fellow-creature and fellow-christian summoned to the tribunal of your judgement, upon the most trivial grounds, upon the slightest conjectures, or upon reports, which often originate in envy, malice, or unprincipled wantonness; you are not solicitous to find arguments to render report or conjecture improbable, but every effort is made to turn arguments against him, and a secret satisfaction is enjoyed, in pronouncing him guilty in a court, where witness, judge, and jury, are all combined against him. Frequently do you impute a bad intention to a doubtful action, which might have with equal probability, proceeded from a laudable motive; in short, prejudice, dislike, ill humour, interest, or some baneful passion, influences the judgement of the world, and ruins the good fame of innocence. If it proceed no further than your own heart, it inflames aversion, and a species of malice: but, unfortunately, from rash judgement, are produced consequences widely diffused, and most calamitous in their nature.

St. Francis de Sales, in his excellent introduction to a devout life, says, that from rash judgements are generated disquietude of mind, a contempt of our neighbour, a malignant pride, which turns from contemplating the faults, real or imagined, of others, to a self-complacent view of our own imaginary qualities. This is the certain effect of rash judgement; for imagine not that, when you persuade yourselves that in the aversion you feel for the errors of your brother in Christ, you are actuated by a pure love of God, and zeal for virtue. It is yourselves you are endeavouring to raise in your own estimation, by sinking the merit of another, forming an immediate comparison between him and yourselves,—giving, as it is natural to expect, the superiority to yourselves, and concluding, like the proud Pharisee, that you are not like other men, but in all your conduct circumspect, exemplary, and edifying. This is the view which prompts to that severe criticism, which man exercises upon his fellow-man, his fellow-servants; from hence result the other numberless bad effects of rash judgement: from this empoisoned source flow domestic broils, family aversions, jealousies between man and wife, and ten thousand fatal evils, which deluge civil society. For not content with exercising pride and malice within their own bosoms, with fos-

tering envy, and rancorous hate in their own hearts, the unhappy victims of this vice proceed to disseminate the mischiefs they have conceived, as far as their credit and influence extend. The injurious report is spread abroad, blown by the breath of detraction; in every conversation murder is committed,—the murder of the tongue; for under its repeated stabs, reputation expires. Oh! ill fated innocent! unsuspecting simplicity! while with easy heart and careless step thou proceedest on thy way, how often art thou abused, ruined by that merciless fiend, from mere envy of thy harmless felicity? The faults that are so often committed in conversation, by detraction and calumny, spring from those unfounded judgements that are formed in secret to the loss of charity, and the ruin of innumerable souls.

But the most dreadful of all the effects which this vice produces, is the danger of being condemned without mercy, at that tribunal where the doom is irrevocable. The sentence has already been notified to us by him who is to come to judge the living and the dead. *In what judgement you shall have judged, you shall be judged; and with what measure you shall have measured, it shall be again measured unto you.* (Matt. vii. 2.) You have condemned your neighbour, assuming to yourself the charac-

ter and office of judge, and thus have you furnished the universal Judge of mankind with matter for your condemnation. By your merciless conduct towards your fellow-servant, passing sentence upon him for faults which were perhaps never committed, or for which he is to answer only before God, you have brought upon yourselves the just anger of God. *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.* (Rom. xiv. 4.) *And judgement without mercy to him that hath not done mercy.* (James, ii. 13.) What would be our comfort, my brethren, if stretched on the bed of sickness, and menaced with approaching death, we could assure ourselves that we had never taken into our hands the wisdom and power of God, never passed sentence upon our neighbour in prejudice to charity! How full of hope and humble confidence, might we then go to appear before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, trusting that having always shewn, we should find mercy.

It is the spiritual sins, my brethren, pride, envy, rash judgement, &c. that are the most hateful in the sight of God, and give birth to the greatest variety of other vices, while they are too often the least attended to of any. Sins of anger, lust, and fraud, are not so easily overlooked, yet these others are not regarded. But

do you, I beseech you, weigh well their enormity, and as to the sin of rash judgement, banish it from your hearts, which should be the receptacles of brotherly love; and wage eternal war against it, if you value the love of God, have a regard for his honor, a sense of your duty, or a desire of your salvation. Pluck up from the soil of your souls the root of this evil, which is *pride*. In the second place, learn to judge yourselves with severity, studiously disposed to discover your own failings, and to correct them. Turn away your eyes and thoughts from the conduct of your neighbour, unless charity, pure unaffected charity, and the duty of your situation require you to watch over others, as responsible for their behaviour. Be not prompt to condemn, but suspend your judgement, and, if possible, judge not at all. Give to the actions of others the best motive of which they are susceptible, thus excusing the intention, where you cannot approve the work: suppose it was the effect of ignorance, (says St. Bernard,) surprise, or accident. The rule laid down by the amiable bishop of Geneva, is worthy his great charity. If an action, says he, could wear a hundred different aspects, we should view it on that which best becomes it. Beg of God that he will increase within you the love of him, and of your neighbour, ask his forgiveness for all

past offences in this way ; renounce for ever, from this moment, every disadvantageous opinion you may have conceived of any one, entertain for every fellow-creature, every brother in Christ, a sincere and christian affection, the feeling heart of a parent ; or, at least, if you must judge, the heart of an equitable and mild judge. This will be the best means of finding mercy from the Sovereign Judge, on whose mercy you must rest your hopes of finding forgiveness, grace, and salvation.

## SERMON LI.

### NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON THE TORMENTS OF HELL.

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*Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matt. xxii. 13.)*

No parable among the many which our Lord spoke to the multitude, and to his disciples, is more terrible, none more calculated to make a salutary impression upon our hearts, than that which the church has judged proper to propose to us this day. But it behoves us to attend to the signification of the parable, to consider what is represented to us by this king, this wedding, these guests. What is meant by this particular invitation, which being disregarded by the special friends of the king, is extended to every description of people, without regard to birth, rank, or external recommendation? What is figured by the wedding garment, and the

rigorous punishment inflicted on the man who had not this garment ?

My brethren, the king is *God himself*, the king of kings ; who having prepared in his court of heaven an eternal feast for his creatures, sent his only begotten Son upon the earth, to make a holy alliance with men. His divine Son, having been first announced to the Jewish people by their prophets, came to them himself in person, clothed in the nature of man, like unto themselves : the children of Israel, his chosen people, he invites to be gathered together, and to form his church, to acknowledge him for the *one sent*, the envoy of God, the Redeemer of the world, the first, and the head of the elect. But instead of acknowledging his mission, they treat him with the lowest indignities, and put him to death, nailing him to a cross. What is the consequence of this unparalleled guilt ? Their temple is destroyed, their city levelled with the ground, themselves dispersed, condemned to the quarries, led into captivity, sold as beasts of burden, and put to death in the most shocking and insulting manner, and their posterities, even to this day, bearing the marks of God's indignation ; while another people is chosen to compose his church, and partake of his banquet ; and you, my friends, are admitted to that signal happiness.

This should be to you a subject of unceasing gratitude and joy. But one consideration yet remains, which is, that it is not sufficient to be members of the church of Christ, but to be admitted and acknowledged at his heavenly feast, the nuptial garment must distinguish us, sanctifying grace must adorn our souls, and whoever, entering into eternal life and the presence of the great king, shall be devoid of this grace, will experience the sentence of the gospel, in all its rigour. *Bind his hands, &c.* Alarming sentence, big with calamity and woe, with pains and horror, that will never end! But no tongue can describe the pains and misery, the unavailing rage and fury, the never ceasing reproaches and black despair of the reprobate: faith informs and convinces you, that never-ending torments in hell are the certain lot of the unrepenting sinner, and common sense and common prudence impel us to the adoption of every precaution, which may serve to secure us from such accumulated wretchedness. Let us, this day, consider by what measures we may escape the dreadful sentence of eternal reprobation, be received at the nuptials of the Son of God, and in the feast of glory, prepared for his elect, be admitted to a place at his table.

It is an acknowledged truth, that all other circumstances supposed equal, the same sin is

more grievous in the christian than in the infidel: that the enormity of the offence is proportioned to the dignity and sanctity of the state in which he is placed who commits it, according to the light which he has received, and the ingratitude with which he is chargeable. As the christian stands distinguished by the character of baptism, so shall he be more degraded in hell, if condemned to that abyss of misery: as he has received a more abundant overflow of heavenly graces, he shall have a more lively sense of the eternal loss of his neglected benefactor; as he now sins with a malice more deliberate, so will he more acutely suffer the fire that shall never be extinguished, and the gnawing worm of a self-convicted conscience that will never die. *It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgement, than for you. And thou... who art exalted unto heaven, shalt be thrust down to the deepest hell.* (Luke x. 15.) Now, my beloved friends, it is a maxim generally admitted, that in proportion as the evil to be apprehended is great and imminent, our caution and exertion ought to increase. When the dread of a mortal contagion raging on every side alarms us, what do not men do to exclude infection and secure their lives? What pains are taken to guard against the evils incident to human life, and ending with it? We tremble

at the approach and the idea of temporal calamities. Should not the horrors of eternal damnation, of never-ending, never-intermitting torments which threaten the guilty christian, cause us to take every precaution, not only to make it probable that we shall escape the extreme of woe, but to make our election sure? Is it not inconceivable that christians, believing themselves to be concerned in an affair of such consequence, in which if we once fail, our failure is irretrievable, should, in apparent indifference and trifling away life, leave the affair of salvation, of happiness, or misery for eternity, as it were to itself, to take its chance; when they know, too, that negligence and indifference are sufficient to determine the chance against them, and consign them to certain misery? Oh! were we truly wise, these should be our sentiments. Penetrated with a sincere conviction of the superiority of eternal joys over terrestrial pleasures, of eternal torments over terrestrial sufferings; all the pains of this life, with all its collective humiliations and imaginable sorrows, should appear light and inconsiderable both as to intensity and duration: and whatever might be our situation here, we should bear it with magnanimity, knowing that time will put an end to earthly pain and sorrow. We know that God requires from us nothing above our strength,

and that by his assistance we may ensure to ourselves a state of future felicity. Do you really desire to possess this felicity, my friends? Preserve in your souls with careful vigilance, the grace of God, if you are happy enough to enjoy it: if you have reason to fear that you are not in the state of grace and friendship with him, use, without delay, the means of reconciliation: be ever prepared to meet the summons of your sovereign Lord; and constantly bear in mind the rewards prepared for the just, and the punishments reserved for the wicked. These are the means by which we may procure admission and gracious reception at the wedding feast of our great King.

Nothing is more indispensably necessary for escaping the just judgement of God, and eternal evils, than the state of grace: if we are so unfortunate as to be deprived of this, whatever good works we may seem to perform, we have but the exterior of virtue, and live in a state of reprobation. If you be so happy as to possess a well grounded hope that you enjoy the grace and friendship of God, learn to know your happiness, and labour to preserve it. This is a treasure, to purchase which we should sacrifice every advantage; for compared with this, every advantage is contemptible. Yet, while we find many professing themselves to be anxious to

secure their eternal felicity, they resign this essential mean of obtaining it, for the most paltry considerations, for a momentary satisfaction, which leaves nothing behind it, save only anxiety and remorse ; for a dishonest gain, which can never be possessed with real peace of mind, and must, sooner or later, be resigned, if conscience is ever to be attended to, or must, at last, be torn away by death. Often is this invaluable treasure lost, even against inclination, from a base fear, and from a shame to be virtuous : and, oh ! how often do men make up their minds to pass weeks, months, and years, without this robe of innocence, this nuptial garment, by passing weeks, months, and years in mortal sin !

Let the second means which I mentioned, rouse the sinner from indifference, to such a state of wretchedness. Think, unhappy mortal, on the torments that await the impenitent ; let not the name of that place of suffering, the name of hell, be used without causing you to shudder at the thought of having deserved to be plunged into it. If you intend ever to throw yourself at the feet of your offended Sovereign, let this thought occupy your mind, when you rise from bed, and when you lie down to rest. Let it often press upon your mind, and it will at length find its way to your heart. Say to yourself, deluded sinner,—Behold my helpless state,

without hope or comfort, a single step separates me from death ; in one instant may the blow be struck, when, foul with iniquity, I must infallibly be plunged into an abyss of woe. There in chains of fire, in a dungeon of obscurity, with every torment which my baseness has merited, I must for ever groan in agonies of despair, bearing throughout eternity the load of a sinful conscience, the punishment of a sinful life, and in language, which so many already employ, and which the gospel puts into the mouth of the guilty rich man, cry out, I suffer, I burn, *I am tormented in this flame!* Oh! were the God of all power, from that region of outer darkness where no order but everlasting horror dwelleth, to place here before you some unhappy sufferer, bearing within him and without him, those indescribable and inconceivable tortures which afflict the sentenced sinner, what impressions would not his presence make upon you! Would you not then prostrate yourselves before your God, and with a thousand thousand promises and protestations implore his pardon, and invoke his mercy? But even then would your promises be sincere? Would they not die away when the object of terror was removed? Have you not the strongest assurances of unerring faith to convince you, that the miseries of the damned are such

as neither eye hath seen, &c.? Have you not Moses and the prophets? Hear ye them. The authority of God's declaration is incontestible; and if sinners believe not upon the testimony of God's unerring word, *neither would they believe if one should rise from the dead.* (Luke, xvi.)

My beloved friends, you profess yourselves believers of what God has revealed to you; the enormity of sin, the severity and eternity of its punishment: let this fundamental article of your religion be not a mere external tenet; the profession of your lips, which, taught to you in infancy, has by frequency of repetition lost its signification; but meditate frequently upon the means of escaping that state of misery from which no subsequent repentance can deliver; in which there can be no repentance. No christian, says a doctor of the church, will fall into hell, who thinks often and well upon that place of punishment; while those who have refused to think upon it during life, will doubtless be precipitated into it after death.

With these dread caverns opened to your imagination, ask yourselves what particular faults of which you are conscious, are most calculated to draw upon you God's anger, what particular passion predominates within you; for you will, if sincere in your search, discover

some habit, vice, or inclination which holds superior sway and influence, and which you are consequently called upon to oppose with peculiar industry and perseverance, if you wish to escape its tyranny. To the fire of passion oppose the fire of hell; let every inordinate desire, every irregular affection be cast into those eternal flames; and may your souls be purified from every defilement that can displease the sight of God. Let every little cross and trial, every pain and humiliation, lose its unpleasantness in the contemplation of the incomparably greater sufferings reserved for sin hereafter; and in imitation of a devout servant of God, a patient, willing, and joyful sufferer, let God, and *God only*, be the object of your longing desires; his will the rule of your conduct. And may his happy vision in the life to come reward your perseverance; may you be admitted happy guests at his eternal feast, and partake in the glory of the elect for all eternity.

## SERMON LII.

### TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON THE EFFECTS OF SCANDAL.

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*See that you walk circumspectly, not as unwise but as wise. (Eph. v. 15.)*

IN the Epistle which St. Paul addressed to the christians of Ephesus is to be found a variety of instruction, adapted to different situations, and enforcing different duties of a Christian life. He endeavours to make them sensible of the singular favour conferred upon them, in their being called from the gloom of idolatry to the light of the Gospel; from the slavery of sin and ignorance, *to the adoption of children through Jesus Christ.* (i. 5.) He insists on the incomparable obligations, by which the Christian is bound to his Saviour, *by whose grace we are saved.* (ii. 5.) He dwells on the sublimity of the *knowledge of the mystery of*

*Christ, which in other generations was not known to the sons of men.* (iii. 4.) He animates them to *keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, as they were all called in one hope, professing one Lord, one faith, one baptism.* (iv. 3.) He warns them against the dangers and guilt of sin ; gives counsel to those in the marriage state ; inculcates the duties of children to parents ; of servants to masters, and informs them by what arms they are to withstand and overthrow the enemy of their souls.

Amongst many other topics of advice and instruction, he exhorts them to *walk circumspectly . . . . redeeming time, for the days are evil.* To this circumspection we also are called, and upon the same motives. *The days are evil* ; the enemies we have to contend with are powerful. Vice lords it over the land with undissembled effrontery, while those who are alarmed and disgusted by its bold appearance, are assailed, and their virtue is undermined by the artful stratagems of our insidious foe. It behoves us *to walk circumspectly*, shunning the allurements to sin, and carefully endeavouring that our conduct be not a cause of scandal, a stumbling block to our fellow Christians. It is to this latter branch of circumspection that I wish to call your thoughts this day ; to induce you to observe a guarded conduct, that your

neighbour may not be seduced through your example, or weakened in his attachment to religion and virtue, through your indifference and neglect; for though our Lord has said that *scandals there must be*, yet he has pronounced *woe against that man by whom the scandal cometh*. (Matt. xviii. 17.) With this view I shall endeavour to convince you of the enormity of the sin of scandal, in its own nature, and to point out to you some of the dreadful evils that are its consequences.

Following the usual distinctions of theologians, I must premise, that scandal is of two sorts, the one *given*—the other taken. The first consists in a real offence, by which our neighbour is allured, or invited to the commission of sin, whereas the second is merely the effect of a disposition to take offence where none is given; to be shocked at evil, which exists only in imagination. Let the worldling be informed that, besides the essential malice of the sin which he has committed, he becomes responsible for the scandal he has given to his brother in Jesus Christ; he instantly rejects the idea; considers it the representation of mistaken casuistry, mere squeamishness of conscience, and maintains that if people will be scandalized, it is their own fault. On the other hand, the professed devotee is, or affects to be, scandal-

ized at every weakness of a brother ; to be shocked at every foible in another ; and considers this disposition, which is not always without sin, often the indulgence of great uncharitableness, as the effect of a tender piety ; a lively sensibility for the interests of religion and virtue.

Let it then be understood, that while I exert myself to decry and diminish the former, I am not advocating the cause of the latter ; neither let any of my hearers, by alleging the possibility, or even the frequency of the latter, pretend to exculpate or justify themselves in the commission of the former. But whoever, by his immoral or irreligious example, weakens in the mind of his neighbour the horror for sin in general, or for any particular vice ; whoever encourages to the perpetration of guilt, by his daring neglect of the law of God ; whoever brings into credit that which is contrary to the law of God, or weakens the fences by which his law is guarded, judgement and woe to that man, for God will avenge his law, and visit the offender in his wrath. *He that deceiveth the just in a wicked way shall fall in his own destruction.* (Prov. xxviii. 10.) According to the expressions of holy writ, such a one is a murderer of souls. *The wicked man, says the Lord, shall die in his iniquity ; but at thy hand*

*will I require his blood.* (Ezech. iii. 18.) He is an Antichrist; for of those who lead their neighbour into error and sin, St. John says, *even now many are become Antichrists.* (1 John, ii. 18.) In fact, whoever is the author of scandal, is, conformably to every principle of religion, the murderer of souls that are scandalized by him; and whenever, my brethren, you become the wilful cause; the voluntary occasion of sin to your fellow Christian, either by withholding him from virtue, or inveigling him into the paths of vice; by communicating to him your licentious, immoral, irreligious sentiments, or infecting him with the contagion of your example, you become the murderer of his soul, and his blood will God require at your hand. Though he should be the most ignoble of this world, and the meanest of men, still are you guilty of spiritual homicide. Yes, observes St. Chrysostom, Jesus Christ has not said, "he who scandalizes one of the great ones of the earth." This may, indeed, be a more crying evil; *but he who shall scandalize one of these little ones who believe in me*; thus doing away the error, which might possibly be conceived, that the meanness of the person scandalized might authorize the scandal. Is not that soul, abject and contemptible as it may be, when judged of by its corporal investment; is not that soul the

work of his Almighty power ; of infinite worth in the eyes of its Creator ? Yes, and on this account the God who created it, and ransomed it at an immense expence, and who knows its value, has declared that it were better for you to be buried in the depth of the ocean, than dare to commit so heinous an offence. *He that shall scandalize one of these little ones who believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.* (Matt. xviii. 6.)

Murderers and assassins ? They are more to be shunned than the murderers of the body ; they observe a dangerous secrecy—a malicious silence ; frequently under the mask of love and friendship, they present the poisoned cup, sparkling with the glow of choicest beverage, and bedecked with fairest flowers. And who is it that is here consigned to death ? It is a brother. Alas ! Is it possible that you could give the murderous blow even to a brother ? The child of the same Father, who is in heaven ; of the same mother, the Church of Jesus Christ, who has borne you in her bosom, and fed you with the same celestial food, the bread of life !

Ah ! while it was your duty to lead him to virtue, you breathe into his soul the poison of vice ! and not content with precipitating your-

selves into the abyss of hell, you drag him with you into the same gulf of misery ! Do you not hear the plaintive voice of the poor unfortunate reproaching you with cruelty ? or do you not, wherever you go, meet the miserable victims of your unprovoked malice, who say to you ; ah ! why have we felt your cruel, your wanton barbarity ? Behold the wounds which you inflicted ; your consciences are still crimsoned with the blood of ours. Had you not lived to be our ruin, we should not now be lamenting in hell : your example emboldened and seduced us ; we are lost—lost, for ever, but at your hands will the Lord require our blood.

This is no idle declamation, my brethren ; it is truth—it is certainty ; may you never find it so to your cost. The parent who received her child from heaven, with the strict injunction of leading it back, or directing its steps to the same region of immortality and bliss, perhaps inspires and animates those passions, which it is her duty to regulate and compose ; instructs her offspring in deception ; presents the model of caprice, vanity, or resentment ; enkindles the fatal fire of impure love in the yet innocent breast, or fans the flame which early passion had enkindled ; or if she does not administer fuel to the passions, yet beholds their glow with unconcern, or without an attempt to extinguish

it, from an unwillingness to thwart the darling of her affections, while the cruel indulgence of an indiscreet mother prove the ruin of a spoiled child. It is the duty of parents, of masters, and mistresses; of all, in short, who are placed above others, to edify, in an especial manner, and to lead to virtue, according to their respective means, and the opportunities afforded them, which are frequently very favourable, those whom God, not without design, has placed beneath their care. Remember that it is not sufficient to refrain from inducing or encouraging to what is wrong; it is also required to encourage to what is right, by the lure of good example; sometimes by advice and exhortation. Let not *through thy knowledge the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died.* (1 Cor. viii. 11.) *Woe to the world because of scandal.* (Matt. xviii. 7.)

If we consider and reflect, we must be convinced that when, by our example, we induce or tempt others into sin, we take a decided part against the Almighty, and Satan-like become the advocates and promoters of iniquity: as if the power of hell were not already sufficient for the christian's conflict, we join in confederacy with the wicked one, and forward his cause, in the ruin of our neighbour. *Even now there are many Antichrists.* This expression of the

apostle St. John, is certainly strong, but it is not exaggerated. For what is done, or attempted to be done, by the scandalous sinner, this enemy of God, this child of perdition? He employs the same means, as it were, in subverting, as our divine Redeemer employed in establishing the work of salvation. He preaches by his conduct, and sometimes by his words, the doctrines of iniquity. See him seated, to use the expression of the royal prophet, *on the chair of pestilence*, (Ps. I. 1.) encircled by his disciples; hear him enforcing the maxims of vice and reprobation, encouraging one to shake off the remains of virtuous shame, which still preserves him from plunging into guilt; congratulating with another on his daring contempt of decency and morality; applauding a third for disregarding the institutions, discipline, laws of the church which he ridicules as antiquated but idle prejudices, as the charms of a religious enchantment, which are only dissolved by a philosophic mind, as fetters calculated to enslave only the weak and timid, but which the uncontrolled spirit of independent reason spurns with disdain.

. This, my brethren, is the jargon, but the successful jargon, by which thousands are duped out of their religion, while they persuade themselves they are asserting the rightful claims of a

freeborn soul. Our blessed Lord published the good tidings of salvation, the gospel of peace, under figures and parables, the scandalous christian every where sows the gospel of Satan, if I may presume to use the sacred word of gospel to express so foul a system of iniquity ; writings are disseminated, which serve to corrupt the heart of innocence, to instruct in premature knowledge of guilt the young and artless, who read for pleasure, while they imbibe a poison, and prepare the way for real pain and sorrow, while they shed tears over imaginary griefs, compassionate the cruel disappointments, the distressing anxieties, the bleeding sorrows, of fictitious characters ; with a name indeed, but without a being.

My young friends, shun with just alarm these dangerous productions ; parents keep from the hands and eyes of your children, and I blush to add from your own, for even old age can pore over the love-sick tale with overflowing eye and sentimental sympathy ; banish, banish far away these chronicles of folly and vice, these mysteries of corruption, these parables of seduction, written to captivate the tender mind, by every art and every gaudy ornament which can please the imagination, impose on reason, and favor deception.

Again : our divine Lord went from place to

place, scattering, as it were from his hands, the blessings of his heavenly grace : we behold him instructing the Samaritan woman, consoling and strengthening a Magdalen, converting Pharisees and sinners ; but while the general conduct of the sinner weakens the virtue of many, by a contempt of what virtue and religion inculcate and command, his visits and conversations have a still more fatal tendency. In them he often endeavours to do away those restraints which serve to keep the christian in the fear of God, and to preserve a horror of vice : he represents that language which tends to awaken the unchaste idea as perfectly harmless ; he persuades that those familiarities, which are so strongly opposed by the priest and the moralist, and which reason and conscience prove to be displeasing to the God of purity, are, at the most, but pardonable transgressions, which the warmth of age or constitution, or the irresistible force of nature and inclination extenuate, if not allow ; that, admitting the existence of a hell, the place of punishment allotted for sin, God is not so cruel, so inexorable, as to inflict such severity of torment on his own creatures, and that too for such slight, such passing offences. To succeed with greater certainty, he affects surprise at your alarm, he ridicules your fears as mere scruples, and wonders that you can have adopt-

ed notions so extraordinary, or which, at least, he is sure are exploded at the present day, by every one who has pretensions to good sense ; by all who have divested themselves of the trammels of bigotry and prejudice.

My brethren, though you may never have thus outrageously endeavoured to break down the fences of virtue, and to destroy the sacred influence of religion, yet, depend upon it, your sins, whatever they may be, provided they are public, or known to others, tend, in some way or other, to the propagation of vice, and the injury of others. Are you seen to behave with levity and disrespect, within these holy walls ? your example may, at first, disgust, and may always shock certain persons whose virtue is not to be shaken by the encouragement you hold out to as many as shall copy you ; nevertheless, some may be induced to lay aside that gravity of deportment which they had before considered as requisite in the temple of God, the contagion may spread, others may be infected, and that reverential awe, which was once the characteristic of our nation, and the admiration of foreigners, may be exchanged for that indifference, which, in other countries, produces the smile, the nod, the gaze, the familiar conversation, even during the solemnization of the tremendous mysteries. If it be observed by others,

particularly by your inferiors, that you scruple not to use the name of God on every trifling occasion, that you can utter the oath, or the expression bordering at least in sound to an oath, and consequently bordering on profaneness; if you are discovered to indulge in excess, to seek for gain by unlawful or equivocal means, your practices will embolden those who observe you; and the more your conduct may be, in other respects, correct and regular, the more probability is there of your doing harm by that, which is unjustifiable. Neither are you to flatter yourselves, that you are not guilty of the sin of scandal, because your example draws not your brother into sin. No, says St. Augustine, I declare to you, my beloved, and I repeat it, he who commits evil in the sight of another, killeth, as much as in him lies, the beholder. He is preserved from death, but you are still a homicide.

Since, then, such is the enormity of this sin, since it is so pernicious in its effects and consequences, let the fear of involving others in your guilt, deter you from the commission of evil, teaching you to *walk circumspectly, giving no offence to any one.* (2 Cor. vi. 3.) Henceforward let it be our care to stimulate to virtue, by our exactitude in the performance of every good work; let us shun all dissimulation, but let us

strive in all things to please God, *and let our light so shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father, who is in heaven.* (Matt. v. 16.) Let all impartially survey their own souls, and if they can discover that, by their negligence in the service of God, by their absence from the sacraments, from the great sacrifice of the altar, from public worship, they have scandalized or misled their fellow-christians, or those of their own house ; if, by a contemptuous disregard of the fasts and abstinences of the church, they have disedified their catholic brethren, and even those who dissent from their religion ; if, in a word, they have allured to sin either in thought, word, or deed, by persuasion or example, by dress or carriage, by teaching the evil which was before unknown, by engaging their neighbour in dissipating and dangerous amusements, let them grieve that they have imitated the base malice of him *by whom death came into the world,* (Wisd. ii. 24.) and *who was a murderer from the beginning.* (John, viii. 44.) Let them endeavour to co-operate with their blessed Redeemer, in the charitable work of reclaiming sinners, and leading souls to Christ. We are not all called to be apostles and evangelists, by publicly preaching the gospel of Christ ; but all are called to lend an assisting hand to those who

are under our influence, and entrusted to our care. They are not made our inferiors merely for our sake ; our duties and theirs are correlative ; and surely that spiritual avarice must be of the blackest die, which withholds from our neighbour that light, which may guide his feet into the way of peace. Let us, by our good example and virtuous conduct, diffuse around us the sweet odour of virtue, repair our past negligence, and by promoting the honor of God, and contributing to the salvation of our neighbour, ensure our own future everlasting happiness.

## SERMON LIII.

### TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON THE MEANS OF CONFORMING TO OUR BAPTISMAL  
ENGAGEMENTS.

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*Put ye on the armour of God.* (Eph. vi. 11.)

THE apostle St. Paul, who in this epistle to the Ephesians, has afforded us instruction, upon almost every christian and social duty, admonishes his disciples, or rather all who aspire to be the disciples of Jesus Christ, that in order to perform the duties of the christian, it is from heaven they are to expect and seek assistance. We have engaged ourselves, my brethren, to serve the Lord God, to him we have made our vows, all other influence we have renounced. "Remember," says St. Ambrose, "what you answered at your baptism: you renounced the devil and all his works; the world, with all its pomps and pleasures; you

spoke in the presence of the angels, who witnessed your engagements: to deceive, to evade, to deny what you then did, is impossible.”

It is only then from above that we can derive strength to fulfil our obligations; we must be *strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of his power*; (v. 10.) but to overcome is the duty of all, as it is in the power of all, through the grace of him to whom we are engaged; for we can do *all things in him who can strengthen and console his servants, and evince his almighty power* by making our *infirmity* victorious over *flesh and blood, over principalities and powers, over the rulers of the world of this darkness, over the spirits of wickedness in the high places*. But let us remember what the same apostle tells us in another epistle; that *we are not debtors to the flesh to live according to the flesh*; for, says he, *if you live according to the flesh, you shall die: but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live*. (Rom. viii. 12.) Most unquestionably we are debtors; we have entered into engagements with the Most High, and, by these engagements, we are required to deny ourselves, to resist the propensities of the flesh lest we die; to subdue our headstrong passions, to despise the solicitations and suggestions of the *spirits of wickedness* and the

powers of darkness ; to withstand with inflexible intrepidity the seducing maxims of a corrupted world, and to conform to the maxims of Jesus Christ, and the inspirations of his Holy Spirit. This however will scarcely be contradicted : to proceed therefore to that which constitutes the main point and the main difficulty, I shall endeavour, this day, to shew you what is to be done that a life may be led conformably to our engagements, that some may be *heirs of God and co-heirs with Jesus Christ.* (Rom. viii. 17.)

Although the motives which induce every rational creature to lead a life of mortification according to the spirit, and in opposition to the flesh, are of the most pressing nature ; yet such is the degeneracy of christians, that with greater reason than the apostle, we may say that there are many who *so walk, as to be enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction ;* (Phil. iii. 18.) who seek in earthly gratifications, and the pleasures of sense, that satisfaction which is only to be found in present mortification, and the hope of future enjoyment ; who, when they cannot, from circumstances and situations, indulge in actual commission, give a loose to a corrupt imagination, and the desires of a depraved heart, dwelling in thought and affection on what they cannot

attain to in reality ; *whose god is their belly, whose glory is their shame, who, in one word, follow earthly things.* O, my beloved friends, dear to me, since through you I am to receive the crown of fidelity, dear to your God, who made you, and made you for himself—O, that weeping over the general corruption of morals, so extensively prevalent, I could turn with complacency to you, and with the apostle, exclaim in terms of holy congratulation, *but you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit ; inasmuch as the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.* (Rom. viii. 9.) O that I could with confidence assert, that although your souls are united to your bodies, the spirit united to the flesh, yet that it obeyed not the impulse of the flesh, but that the Holy Ghost was to it the source of life and vigour, directing it in every movement by his divine inspirations ! O that the conscience of each one present could bear testimony favourable to the fidelity of each individual ; that you could assure yourselves that all was secure within you and without you, that the flesh was in perfect obedience to the spirit, the spirit to Almighty God ! But my brethren, let us inquire what is requisite to constitute a *life truly mortified*, that is dead to all that is not God.

I shall confine my answer to two general points,

which are absolutely necessary to a *spiritual, mortified* life; but these two points will include by their generality, every subordinate requisite. First, it is necessary that we should keep in subjection the earthly man, the old Adam, by repressing that inclination, which is natural to us all, the inclination to gratify our self love, to indulge and pamper the flesh, to allow full scope and unrestrained freedom to our senses; in a word, to be as free from restraint as possible in every thing. This is what is alluded to by the apostle, when he declares that they who belong to Jesus Christ, have crucified the flesh with its vices and concupiscences; and this is what he unceasingly recommends in all his letters; this he faithfully practised himself. *For though we live in the flesh, he says, we walk not according to the flesh; but I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection.*

Here, then, my brethren, it behoves us to examine whether we have hitherto practised this first requisite to a spiritual life. Certainly we are far from this spiritual life, as we are clearly devoid of the spirit of Jesus Christ, if we live in this world with an attachment to it; if gifted naturally with a desire of happiness, we seek terrestrial happiness in seeking the happiness of the body. For the joys of this

world are of such a nature, that they exclude from the joys of heaven those who are captivated by the joys of the earth, as it is clear that the earthly minded can never be admitted to delight, for which they have no relish. Is it not absurd to suppose that they should be admitted to the society of the saints, to be rewarded with a happiness that is to consist in singing the praises of God, whom they admire not, they love not? in contemplating his countenance, the beauties of which they have never contemplated in spirit? whose ideas of beauty and loveliness are quite material, confined to mere corporeal charms and attractions? Shall it be imagined that the vain Narcissus, male or female, whose adoration has been confined to *self*, shall find in heaven that veneration or love of the Deity, which on earth should have been employed in meriting the kingdom of heaven? or shall those empty, silly butterflies, who here below are solely employed in mind and action in decorating the exterior, to prove the deficiencies of the interior, and not unfrequently exposing the meanness of the picture by the elegance of the frame that incloses it; thus making, by means of contrast, deformity more deformed;—shall these expect to be received by the Almighty into the kingdom of heaven, with no other ornaments or embellish-

ments than those of dress?—No ; my beloved friends, if in this life we seek for the delights and pleasures which this life affords, we do nothing towards obtaining the happiness of the life to come : if we love and cherish the vanities of time, we cannot expect to possess the glories of eternity ; in a word, *if you live according to the flesh you shall die ; but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.* I informed you there were two general points to be attended to, as absolutely necessary to a spiritual life, and this is the second. For it is not sufficient merely to suppress the irregular desires of the flesh, but we are called upon to live *according to the spirit*, that is, conformably to the maxims laid down by Jesus Christ, maxims of humility and charity. Turning away with disgust from that ostentatious display of earthly pomp, from that pride of life, which in us poor worms of the earth, who hold ourselves up to view for an hour, and then are summoned away in the midst of our display of reptile consequence, is most absurd and contemptible ; we must forget our own importance to pay homage to that eternal, self-existent Almighty Being, who is, who was, and who shall be for ever. Convinced of our dependent nature, and obeying with awful submission the God *in whom we live, move, and have existence*, to him we must

direct our homage, grateful for his innumerable and continual mercies, glowing with love for his transcendent loveliness, directing our thoughts, desires, endeavours towards *that future glory that shall be revealed in us*, waiting in *expectation* of the *revelation* to be made to the *children of God*, (Rom. viii. 19.) *longing and fainting for the courts of the Lord*. (Ps. LXXXIII. 3.) Kept at a distance from the object of our dearest affections, struggling to be free, and to gain our promised felicity, preserving at least our hearts free from every earthly clog and impediment, not deigning to admire, or even to attend to any short-lived vanity, pressing forward in our journey through this deceitful life, with an ardour becoming the children of God, and heirs to immortal glory; turning neither to the right nor to the left, but with eyes ever fixed on the *sun of justice*, and hearts enamoured, captivated, enraptured by the inexhaustible source of incomprehensible beauty, and *desiring to be dissolved that we may be with Christ*. (Phil. i. 23.)

This, my brethren, is to live according to the spirit, the spirit of *charity*, and of true *wisdom*; a wisdom opposite to the wisdom of the world, which, as St. James says, is *earthly, sensual, diabolical*. (iii. 15.) The *wisdom that is from above*, he tells us, *is in the first place chaste,*

*then peaceable, modest, easy to be persuaded, consenting to the good, full of mercy and good fruits, without judging, without dissimulation.* (ib. 17.) Equally free from duplicity and malice, it neither judges with rashness the works of its neighbour, nor upholds the reign of vice from human respect. God is its end and object, as it is derived from him, and is warmed and animated by him alone.

Is such your disposition, my dear friends, is such the character of your life? Are you assiduous in resisting and repressing the force of the passions seeking illicit indulgence, in keeping under due restraint those propensities which are ever drawing mankind from spiritual delights, to specious, but transient, criminal, fatal enjoyments, which fill the soul with a confused, perturbed pleasure, even while they are present; when gone, are followed by remorse, agony, despair, and receive, too often, their just remuneration in the reprobation of God, and the eternal infliction of his vengeance. Ah! whatever may have been your conduct to the present time, thanks be to the God of mercy, he has spared you till this moment: he has not visited you in his wrath, but calls out to you, wishing to rescue you from guilt and misfortune; to draw you to himself and bliss.

Come then, my brethren, let us now begin ; there is danger in delay, and thousands by delay, have lost the golden opportunity which was in their hands, and now are lamenting with unavailing sorrow, their infatuation and their guilt. Rise from your lethargy, shake off the slumbers of death, efface whatever marks may be in you of the sensual, animal, and terrestrial man : and in its place substitute the image of the true disciple, the genuine christian. Mortify the flesh, that the spirit may gain strength by the prostration of its most dangerous enemy. Mortify the will, which, when indulged, is an ungrateful and traitorous rebel, that seeks our destruction, and leads us into certain danger, and as certain ruin.

Persuade not yourselves that you can live in peace and security : there is no peace for the christian in this life, which is a state of continual war and conflict. Be then prepared for battle : put on the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and in all things to stand perfect. You have enemies to encounter, but you have a friend and supporter in the God of heaven ; his grace shall invigorate you, his presence give a renewal of strength and confidence to you, while it shall confound your foes, and put them to flight.

These are your hopes at present, these your resources,—hereafter you have to encourage and support these hopes, a reward awaiting you in the kingdom of your God, a reward of infinite value, and of endless duration in the possession of him for eternity.

## SERMON LIV.

### TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON THE VICE OF HYPOCRISY.

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*Why do you tempt me, ye hypocrites?* (Matt. xxii. 18.)

THROUGHOUT the life of Jesus Christ we cannot but be astonished at the unyielding malice with which he was persecuted by those of his own nation. The Scribes, the Pharisees, the doctors of the law, were, on every occasion, endeavouring to interrupt him in his exhortations, to impede the designs of his charity, and to deprive him of that esteem and veneration, which the less enlightened, but more candid multitude, on all occasions manifested to him. In this gospel we have a striking instance of their malevolent designs upon our blessed Redeemer, and of their insidious artifices being turned to their own confusion. Baffled in their former attempts, they retire with shame on

their foreheads, but revenge in their hearts; determined by some deep-laid contrivance, to surprise his prudence, and effect his ruin. They had already tried him on the subject of religion, and on every occasion his answers had evinced a wisdom and sanctity, that had contributed rather to raise than injure his reputation. Having therefore consulted together, they resolve on sending to him their emissaries, who shall propose to him a question, which they imagining it will be impossible to answer, without either incurring the displeasure of the people, or drawing down upon himself all the resentment of the Roman prætor, as a disaffected subject and an enemy to the emperor. My brethren, from a view of their malice, may we learn to act on every occasion, with uprightness and sincerity, and in the behaviour of our Lord, may we discover and copy a model so eminently deserving of our imitation.

First, the Pharisees *sent to him their disciples with the Herodians*. Herod, at that time king of Galilee, was actually at Jerusalem, to celebrate the feast of the passover; and Nazareth, the abode of Jesus, was under his jurisdiction. Our Lord was consequently his subject; while Herod professed the strongest attachment to the Roman emperor. These considerations induced the Pharisees to join

some of his partizans with their own disciples. Could they succeed in extorting from him any expression detractive from the honor or authority of Cæsar, they knew he must be crushed by a power from which all the efforts of the people, would be unable to save him. Before him present themselves the disciples of the Pharisees; and those were doubtless chosen who were the best qualified to perform the character of deception, to carry the appearance of piety, the fear of God, and religion, even to scrupulosity. They affect the semblance of respectfulness, and in conformity with their instructions, they say: *Master, we know that thou speakest the truth, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man, for thou dost not regard the person of man.* (v. 16.) Base hypocrites! this was indeed the true character of our Saviour, and what they said, their consciences convinced them was the truth; but their intention was to flatter, by flattery to throw our Redeemer off his guard, and to draw from him a sentiment or expression which might by any possible distortion, be interpreted to his prejudice. Can you hear unmoved, my brethren, the deceitful eulogiums of these dissemblers? But are you never guilty of criminal adulation to obtain your ends? Do you never descend to commend

with your lips, those, whom in your hearts you know to be undeserving? Alas! the world is as it were, a school for dissimulation. Actuated by the same spirit, christians, as they are named, degrade themselves by encomiums which they bestow with liberal profusion, while they are conscious they are violating the maxims of sincerity, and the laws of truth; while they know that in reality they are dealing out mere lies. Never be you guilty, my friends, of this sinful deception. To be adepts in the art of paying compliments, is generally nothing more than to be accomplished in the art of flattery and lying: be not startled at the expression; they may be differently named by the world, with a view to palliate a too prevalent vice; but on the same principle, and with the same intention, many practices have lost their real names in the language of worldly vanity. Still however, vice will be vice, and virtue, virtue, in the sight of God: worldlings may affect to be shocked at the name, and flatter their consciences into a false peace; while they commit sin, without scruple, under an extenuating appellation: they may alter their vocabulary at pleasure, and what are the most enormous crimes, and what were once denominated as such, they may soften down to foibles, or term, if they please, the *amiable weaknesses*

of our nature : but the law of God, like the eternal mind, which dictated it, can never vary ; names may be altered, but right and wrong are determined by the divine will ; the essences of things are immutable.

Trust not then to the adulatory praises of a treacherous world : the ruin of thousands has been effected under the mask of friendship ; and virtue is never in greater danger of being subdued, than when assailed by the soothing sounds of commendation. Let female vanity and female simplicity be particularly aware of flattery. Unsuspecting themselves, and from their own sincerity credulous of the candour of others, often do they mistake the encomium which designing adulation bestows on them, for ingenuous openness ; concluding that they who are ready to applaud the trifling merit of others, must be themselves persons of valuable desert. Praise would cease to be dangerous, were it well understood to be generally interested, frequently falsehood in its worst disguise, and therefore always to be suspected.

The deputies from the Pharisees having thus prefaced their discourse, they proceed ; *Tell us, therefore, what thou thinkest ; is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not ?* (17.) No question could have been more artfully de-

vised ; and considering the nature of the Jewish deocracy, its peculiar laws and constitution, the diversity of opinions, which, at that time prevailed, respecting their terrestrial independence, the question was exceedingly difficult to resolve in such manner as to give umbrage to no party. The people who pretended to have no king but God, and who made independence on all earthly power, an essential point in their religion, were prepared to abandon our Lord, whom they had hitherto venerated and protected, should he attribute to Cæsar any authority, which they were not disposed to acknowledge. The Pharisees were at hand, to magnify any dubious expression into a disrespect for the law of God, and to stir up the people against our Saviour, should his answer be susceptible of an interpretation opposite to their prejudice, or the pretended rights of religion. On the other hand, the Herodians, who were joined in the deputation, were prepared to engage the governor to avenge the cause of Cæsar, by whom Herod had been raised to the government of Galilee.

The reply to their question was rendered still more perplexing, by reason of the diversity of sentiments which prevailed amongst the Jews themselves, on this subject. Of these some were closely attached to the Romans,

and, of course maintained the lawfulness and obligation of paying tribute ; whilst others, who passed for strict observers of the law, for true and faithful Israelites (and amongst these was the major part of the Pharisees) maintained with inflexible zeal, that it was not permitted to pay tribute to a foreign prince, that it was due to God only, the founder of their religion and government, and ought to be deposited in the treasury of the temple, and expended in the worship of God, and the support of his ministry.

The people already began to feel uneasy under the Roman yoke, to look up to Jesus as the son of David, as their future king, and to expect from him their deliverance from foreign domination. If then his answer should determine in favor of Cæsar, what would be the sentiments of the people in his regard? If against Cæsar, and the payment of tribute, he was ruined. What consummate art, and what deep-laid malice! The chiefs amongst the Jewish people had thus contrived a plan which they conceived must inevitably subvert the influence of our Lord with the people, or expose him as an enemy to the state. Ah, my brethren, learn from this example of the Scribes and Pharisees, to what lengths dissimulation, hypocrisy, and malice, will go to effect their

purpose, and this too while they fondly persuade themselves they are actuated by a laudable zeal for virtue and truth! Learn hence to suspect your own intentions, wherever your personal interest is concerned; for often, too often, do we condemn the conduct of others, or acquit ourselves under the idea of being guided by the purest motives, when self love is at the helm, and regulates our course.

Second. But in vain did these artful hypocrites attempt to circumvent our blessed Redeemer. His supreme wisdom confounds his enemies, and detects the snare which they had laid for him with so much dexterity and malevolence. Knowing their malice, he says; *Why do you tempt me, ye hypocrites?* (v. 18.) Thus does he lay bare the deceit of their hearts, and at once repels the crafty assailment of their insinuating praises. Their flattery is exposed and silenced. Should not we, my friends, frequently speak and act in this manner; when, on the contrary, we suffer ourselves to be soothed by the language of adulation? Ought not we, instead of swallowing with avidity the honeyed poison, to throw it from us, and dash to the ground the seducing cup, which is ministered to us by deceit! The Lord knew the hearts of his enemies, and exposed their malignity. When men, in secrecy and silence, lay

snares to injure, seduce, or destroy his servants, do they imagine that their guilt escapes the observation of God? Do they flatter themselves that their machinations are invisible to the eye of the Lord? And when we address ourselves to him, let us remember that he not only beholds the motions of our lips, but penetrates into the most secret recesses of our hearts: and, alas! how much dissimulation and hypocrisy does he not there discover! We, indeed, give him the titles which are his due, *we call him Master and Lord; and we say well, for such he indeed is;* (John, xiii. 13.) we call him our model and our God: but may he not reply; if I am your God, where is your respect, your obedience, your docility, and your love? *Why do you tempt me, ye hypocrites?* You ask for humility, purity, recollection, and devotion; you solicit a variety of gifts and graces. Mere words, and nothing more! *This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.* (Mark, vii. 6.) You ask for grace, but you desire it not; you, on the contrary, do all that is in your power to prevent me from bestowing it; and when it is received, you act in such manner as to stifle it within you, or to obstruct its operations. If we wish to receive the divine grace, let us be sensible of its worth, and sincerely desire it; let us lament our past in-

gratitude, and endeavour to co-operate with it, when it is bestowed, and God will not refuse us strength and support amply sufficient to bear with every trial, and to withstand every temptation. It would have required a lengthened dissertation to explain to the people, that, although God himself was the founder of their civil, no less than of their religious establishment, although he had constituted them free, and preserved them independent, as long as they continued to be faithful to his law and appointments; it was, notwithstanding, his will that they should submit with docility and respect to that foreign power, to which his providence had subjected them, in punishment of their repeated infidelities and prevarications. Such language would not have been relished by the people and the Pharisees, or the Herodians would have made it appear irreligious or seditious, by means of their comments and interpretation: Jesus therefore takes a more simple and concise way, more effectual, and less exposed to misrepresentation. *Shew me, says he, the tribute-coin . . . Jesus saith to them; whose image and inscription is this? They say to him; it is Cæsar's.* But in making this reply, they did not immediately perceive that they had themselves destroyed the snare they had laid to ruin our blessed Lord. For now the question

was solved, the difficulty removed, and a solution offered, which could give no reasonable offence to any party. For, if Cæsar could issue a coin bearing his name and figure, it was incontestable that the nation was subject to him, and could lawfully pay the tribute which he called for as their ruler and sovereign. The conclusion was self-evident. *Then he said to them ; render therefore to Cæsar the things, &c.* Great and admirable maxim this ; which extends much further than the question of the Pharisees ! for our Lord generally takes occasion to give more ample instruction, both with respect to belief and practice, than the actual circumstance seems rigidly to demand.

This decision of our Lord is therefore a maxim of religion, a precept of the new law. We are happily removed from the yoke of foreign domination : Cæsar is not to us a foreign prince ; we acknowledge him as our lawful sovereign ; we have been placed under his sway by the disposition of providence, and to him, as to our liege lord, we owe, not only tribute, but obedience, fidelity, and even actual service, each according to his respective situation. We owe our lives and services to our king and country ; to the state, to the community, and the public weal ; and we violate our duty, if we become seditious or refractory. Though excluded, by

reason of our religion, from the principal offices of state, and, on the same account, often subject to the odious imputations with which calumny and malice think proper to asperse our attachment to religion and conscience, yet, let us ever conduct ourselves as faithful and loyal subjects, and if we cannot *conciliate* the confidence and affection of our rulers and fellow-citizens, let us do that which is more in the sight of our supreme Lord, let us always *deserve* them. Ever true to our country and our king, let us endeavour to live peaceable lives, giving to *Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar*, our allegiance, our fidelity, our support, in matters purely terrestrial; but let us give to God that which belongs to God, nor let any hope of terrestrial preferment or emolument induce one of us to betray our conscience. We are convinced of the truth of the religion which we profess; if necessary, let us lay down our lives rather than relinquish our faith; our ancestors bled in its defence, and though exposed to the loss of property, of character, and life, they maintained their religion—they were true to God, and faithful observers of his law, in times of inconceivable difficulty and danger. Let us be always disposed to imitate their conduct, if ever the same should be required of us. *Let us give to God, &c.* We owe him our being;

we owe him interior and exterior worship ; submission to the mysteries of faith ; the obsequiousness of our understanding to what he any way reveals ; all the sentiments of our heart by a love of preference ; the compliance of our will to all his commands. We owe him a purity of body and soul ; fidelity to the dictates of conscience ; a conformity of all our actions to the regulations of his divine law, and an inviolable attachment to the religion which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, first established, and which, if his word be true, and his power equal to his promise, he will preserve pure, and unalloyed with error, to the end of the world. For he has declared that the *gates of hell shall never prevail against his church.* (Matt. xvi. 18.)

Ah ! my brethren, do we fulfil these duties ? If our life and being belong to God, our time and our employments belong to him. Do we give him our employments ? Do we give him our time ? Did we, when we gave away with sacrilegious profusion and unhallowed joy, so much of it to sinful pleasures, to worldly vanities, to idle, if not criminal amusements, during which God was not once thought on : his presence not once called to mind. Did we give him our hearts and affections, when we sought in his creatures wherewith to satisfy our desires,

and desired no enjoyments, no pleasures, but merely of a terrestrial nature, to gratify our immortal souls, which, however, can never be filled (such is their capacity) with any thing less than God himself.

Do you, my brethren, faithfully acquit yourselves to him of your duty in regard of prayer? On days particularly appointed for his worship, do you make his worship your particular employment; or do you not give all to the world, and to the passions to which we owe nothing, for we were created for God alone? and to give them what no way belongs to them, do you not rob God of what is strictly his due? for to him we owe all that we have and all that we are. O christians, let us acknowledge our negligence, when we consider that what we were alone created to attend to, that alone is, of all things, the least regarded; but let us also repent and amend. Let us henceforth endeavour to perform all the duties of citizens and subjects, and all the peculiar duties of our state and calling: let us ever *give to Cæsar, &c.*; but let us never forget to *give to God, &c.*; so that being faithful over a few things, we may be placed by him over many things, and by him be admitted into the joys of our Lord.

## SERMON LV.

### TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON SUDDEN DEATH.

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*Lord, my daughter is even now dead ; but, come, lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. (Matt. ix. 18.)*

THE merciful compassion of our Saviour Jesus Christ, as exhibited to us by the evangelists, calls forth every sentiment of love and gratitude from the true christian : in his life, as in his painful and ignominious death, endured for us, he proves his tender regard for sinful man. In this day's gospel we see him displaying his divine power, by the cure of a dreadful malady, and by raising to life the daughter of Jairus, *one of the rulers of the synagogue.* (Mark, v. 22.) We learn from St. Mark, (v.) that on his first coming to Jesus, his daughter was yet alive, and *he besought* our Saviour *to lay his hand upon her*, that she

might be restored to health; (23.) but while our Saviour was restoring to health and comfort the woman afflicted with the flux of blood, word is brought to him *that his daughter is dead*, and he is desired to desist from further solicitation. O what a sorrowful intelligence was here given to the afflicted father! what a wound to his already sinking soul! How cruel does he think the rebuke, by which he is requested no longer to trouble the friend to mankind, the more than human physician, with fruitless entreaties! In the very moment of confidence, every hope is blasted! *Thy daughter is dead; why dost thou trouble the master any further?* O Death, in thy hourly visitations to man, who was born to die, how many lofty hopes dost thou not overthrow—how many extensive projects dost thou not confound—how many thousands dost thou not tear away from amidst the full enjoyment of earthly pleasure; from the circle of laughter and thoughtless joy, I will not say to remove them lifeless to the grave (for that is only a temporary repose for the body) but to bury them in the bottomless pit of hell, where neither joy, nor comfort, nor light, nor one moment of ease shall ever be experienced! Let us make some reflections on the death which is offered to our view this day, that we may not, when our hour

comes, be taken unawares, but being still alive to God, may *sleep in the Lord*. The circumstances of the death presented to us in the gospel may be instructive to three conditions of life in particular, and may afford a salutary instruction to all situations and states in general.

In the first place, the death of the daughter of Jairus presents a multitude of useful reflections to the young of the female sex. Let them in imagination present before their eyes this young woman, who has just expired; or one of their female friends and companions, who, but a little while ago, shared with them the pleasures of life, but is now no more as to this world. Ah! she is gone from amongst you, whom she enlivened by her humour; whom she animated to hilarity by her example! She is now no more! But did she, by her example and persuasion, induce you to vanity or sin? She is no more to this world! her body lies in the cold grave! But, oh! where is her soul? Scarcely was she seen upon the face of the earth, and has disappeared! As described by the sacred penman, she came forth as a flower, just appeared, and was admired, and presently withered and died away! Alas! did she place her heart on this vain world? Did she seek to please it, and forget her God? Was the beauty of her soul forgotten in a criminal attention to

the body? Did she neglect to cultivate the immortal soul, while all her care was given to the decoration of mere clay? O females, what deplorable folly! and for what an insignificant bauble has heaven been thrown away! If with still greater guilt, the fading charms of person were studied and improved to obtain admiration; if modesty, the best jewel of either sex, was disregarded, and in compliance with the example of a licentious age, modes of dress were adopted, which are intended as snares, and which, in fact, excite and fan the fire of passion in the corrupted heart, while they distress, and agitate, and alarm the virtuous. O, if like so many of her sex, such was her life and conduct, and, if at the same time, perhaps, she ridiculed and derided the more reserved and modest, who dared to deviate from the common path, and in spite of every inducement, refused to seek an earthly conquest gained by the displeasure of their celestial spouse; if such was her character and manner of life, death has indeed destroyed all on which her heart was set, and involved her in misery! O, how much more happy, as well as wise, is the youthful female, the christian maiden, who by a frequent meditation on death, has learnt to undervalue all that she can present to the admiration of a sinful world, and all that the world can offer to

her, as of short duration, evanescent, and delusive; who, certain that she must soon be taken out of the world, renounces all affection for its follies, vanities, and crimes, resolves never to fix her heart upon what, like the meteor, just emits a dazzling lustre, and disappears; and if her condition requires that she should mix with the children of the world, does it as seldom as possible, always with dread and apprehension, and only with the intention of complying with the will of God, and the disposition of his providence.

Let the youthful now of the other sex approach, and contemplate the corpse of the deceased. It is by a frequent consideration of that inevitable event to you, and to all mankind, that you are to subdue the violence of passion, and at a time of life when constitution, inclination, the example of equals, when, in a word, all that surrounds you invites to present enjoyment, you are to preserve yourselves from the general corruption, which involves so many in the death of sin, and in the future everlasting death, the certain consequence of an obstinate persistence in it. Does the fire of concupiscence glow within you, or have you to sustain continued combats with that dangerous enemy? for once reflect with serious thought on that which passes before your eyes. Dead is that

fond object of your affections, of your homage, and profane worship! Behold her countenance, pale and ghastly, the lustre of those eyes which used to sparkle, is no more; no longer is the smile which once delighted, observed; a livid horror disfigures the face; moisture begins to cover the skin, and corruption has already manifested itself in the flesh. Here is the idol, to which was offered the incense of adulation, the divinity to which was often prostituted a profane homage, to the prejudice of the true God, by whom all things were made: here is laid out the being, on whom, forgetful of your God, depended, or seemed to depend all your happiness: whose smile diffused joy through your soul, whose frown spread a gloom of deepest melancholy.

O, my christian friends, will you never open your eyes? Will you never discover, or rather will you never despise the acknowledged illusion? Like the divinities whom you worship, you shall perish; like them become the prey of worms! Why will you not give yourselves to the living and eternal God? Why will you not place your hearts on true beauty, that shall never perish or decay? It was a view of the alteration which death makes in the fairest forms, that impressed the illustrious St. Francis Borgia with a strong sense of man's mortality,

and from duke of Gandia, and viceroy of Catalonia, transformed him into a humble religious, in the society of Jesus. Commissioned to convey to Granada the corpse of the empress Isabella, there to be deposited in the royal monument, and required to swear to the magistrates of that city, that it was the body of the deceased empress,—on opening the coffin, and unveiling the face, so noisome was the stench, which the body exhaled, so ghastly and hideous was that countenance which had been the admiration of the court, and the wonder of all Spain, that Francis could only swear, that from the care with which it had been guarded on the road, it was the body of Isabella, but could give no testimony from the recognition of a single feature, which, when living, he had contemplated with delight. A sudden change was wrought in him, and during thirty-three years that he survived this event, the impression made on his mind was never obliterated. Struck at the awful spectacle, he said to himself: “Oh! what is now become of those eyes once so sparkling? Where is now the beauty and grace which animated and adorned the countenance, which we so lately beheld? Is this her sacred Majesty, Donna Isabella? Is this my royal mistress, my empress, and my queen?”

When he returned from the celebration of the funeral obsequies, he locked himself in his chamber, and passed the whole night without sleep. Prostrate on the floor, and shedding floods of tears, he exclaimed: "My soul, what seekest thou in this world? How long wilt thou pursue and grasp at shadows! What is she become, who, but a little while ago, was so beautiful, so powerful, so exalted? Death, who has levelled to the dust the wearer of the imperial diadem, has already levelled his bow, and taken his aim at me. Soon shall he give the blow that must strike me dead. Would it not then be an act of the most urgent prudence, to prevent the fatal consequences of that stroke, by dying now to the world, that at my death, I may live to God?" Would to God that the young would meditate well on a subject, which, notwithstanding their early age, may be nearer to them than it is to the hoary elder, who totters beneath the weight of fourscore years; for the tempest, which rends the aged oak, does not unfrequently sweep away the tender flower! Let parents also consider well the scene presented to us in the gospel. *Thy daughter is dead.* Yes, that child is taken away from you for ever, who was the object of your tenderest affections, the solace of your life, and the basis of your hopes. If in that child you ever beheld

the gift of God, a deposit left for a while in your hands, with a right still reserved to himself to resume it, whenever it should seem good to him ; if you educated your offspring in the sacred maxims of religion ; if you formed your son or your daughter to the practice of piety and devotion ; if you removed from their eyes, their ears, whatever might injure their innocence ; if you never connived at their faults, never encouraged their dangerous propensities, nor ever feared to oppose them ; ah ! then you have not suffered a loss,—you prepared their souls for heaven, you did your duty, and you now surrender them to God, who gave them. But, on the contrary, if you have considered your children as your own property ; if you have doated upon them with immoderate affection, flattered their inclinations, and ministered to their illicit wants and pretensions ; if you educated them for the world, and not for God, filling their minds with notions of ambition and glory, their hearts with desires of earthly vanity and worldly pleasures ; if, to enrich them, you have defrauded your neighbour, or, by a robbery, not often attended to, neglected the poor ; if you have been the first to stifle the seeds of those virtues which appear opposite to your views, which, you conceive, might prevent your child from excelling in fashionable accomplish-

ments; if you have discouraged that humility which might make your children less attentive to modish formality, and ridiculous affectation; if you have been the first to ridicule, as squeamish prudery, that virtuous, that heavenly purity, which shudders at the bare idea of vice; if you have opposed a piety, that was above your own pursuit, or which was not exactly conformable to your own ideas; if you have thwarted them on the subject of their vocation to a state of life, which God had seemed to indicate, and which, therefore, you had no authority to set aside; if you have done all that was in your power, to make the world and its pomps agreeable to them, to subject them to those vanities and frivolous passions, to which yourselves were unfortunately enslaved, to bring them forward in life, as it is called,—that is, to introduce them into the societies, companies, and amusements of this life, where the life to come is never thought on; to set their hearts upon the representations of the theatre, where, to give entertainment to curiosity, and zest to pleasure, the most impressive and most dangerous scenes and situations of common life, are brought forward and exaggerated; if you have procured for them, or suffered them to peruse publications, calculated to pervert their understandings, or corrupt their hearts; if you have fomented in them vanity or

impurity, by approving or tolerating the dress of immodesty, the air and gesture of lasciviousness, the loose discourse, or oblique insinuation; if you have allowed them to remain in ignorance of the mysteries and duties of religion, to neglect the sacraments, to cherish an habitual disgust of prayer, and works of piety,—parents! if this have been your conduct, and your child be dead, you are indeed without consolation! The death of your child is a chastisement of heaven,—its woe is inevitable; and your sin can only be repaired by repentance, to be terminated only by your death. Oh, my friends, from what has been said, you will discover how extensive is the duty of parents, how important the charge entrusted to them, and how generally the duties of a parent are neglected.—But, my brethren, whatever be our condition and state of life, whether parents or not, whether we are young, or old, or in the maturity of steady age, we may all of us derive benefit from an attentive consideration of this day's gospel; and, as we are all concerned, (for death awaits us all,) we shall do well to meditate seriously upon that event, on which our everlasting destiny depends. The day is now seen in the divine prescience, on which our eye shall be closed for ever to the view of earthly objects! The day shall come, when our friends shall say of us, “he is dead,”

or "she is no more." Our Lord said to the ruler of the synagogue, as we read in St. Mark, v. 36, *fear not : only believe*. These sentiments of faith and confidence, the true and faithful christian will cherish, and by them will he be supported in the hour of death. Then, my friends, will our transgressions rush upon our memory. Our good works will then be seen with all their concomitant imperfections; our confessions, our communions, will be to us a subject of dread and apprehension; but let us trust in God, who will never forsake them who put their trust in him :—let it be our care now, by a frequent contemplation on death, which must inevitably take place, in regard of us all, though we know not when, to wean our affections from the vanities of this life, which is so intimately connected with death, that the cradle and the grave are not the breadth of a span removed asunder. Life and death may be considered as standing together with united hands, bargaining, as it were, for poor mortals.

Let us then, while the God that gave us being still allows time and opportunity, let us adopt the wise determination to give up the pursuit of vanity; to turn from fancied enjoyments and delusive gratifications, which, when possessed, will disappoint us, and only prove to us that nothing that perishes can give happi-

ness ; that *all is vanity*, except loving God, and serving him alone. Let us give ourselves then, wholly to his love and service. Yes ; great God of ineffable tenderness and charity ! we will repose on thy loving mercy ; we will obey thy word. We will *not fear*, but we *will believe*. All that we can do in life, shall, by thy holy grace, be done, and for the rest we will trust in thee. May we in the hour of death be neither agitated by fears and doubts, as to what is passed, nor troubled with a distressing anxiety for the future ! but may we, kind Creator, resign ourselves to humble confidence in thy mercies, and the infinite merits of our divine Redeemer ! May we believe, without doubting, all that thou hast taught—may we die true to thy holy faith ! in the faith which thou hast given us ; in the faith of that church which thou hast founded, and commanded all to hear. Never let us, with daring presumption, arrogate to ourselves the ability and the right to form or reform a system of belief : what thou hast revealed, that let us hold and maintain, nor let us ever give to human wisdom that credence which thou hast reserved to thy church, promising that the *Spirit of truth shall abide with it for ever*. (St. John, xiv. 16.) But, O God, *not every one who saith to thee, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but*

*he only who doeth the will of thy Father.* Let us then, not only believe what thou teachest, but let us practice what thou enjoimest; let us *hear the word of God, and keep it.* Strengthen our weakness, O God, and support us in the hour of temptation. Without thy divine aid, there is nothing good in man. Preserve us, therefore, nor cease, O Lord, to *help thy servants, whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.* *Keep us without sin,* and as we hope in thee alone, *let us not be confounded for ever;* but conducted through life into the glory of thy heavenly kingdom!

## SERMON LVI.

### TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

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ON INDIFFERENCE IN THE AFFAIR OF SALVATION.

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*As lightning cometh out of the east, and appeareth even in the west ; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. (Mat. xxiv. 27.)*

IN this gospel we read the prediction of our Saviour concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the signs and horrors that shall precede the dissolution of the globe which we inhabit. With respect to the ruin of the capital of Judea, the prediction has been literally verified. Forty years had not elapsed, when the Roman general, Titus, invested the city, which was then filled with an immense multitude, whom the solemnity of the passover had assembled from all parts. Reduced to the utmost extremity, their obstinacy seemed to increase in proportion as their resources diminished ; and though pillage and murder, and famine conspired

to open the eyes of this miserable people, while internal factions preyed upon them, yet were they blind to their fate, and rejected every proposal. Inconceivable are the miseries to which they were reduced. Nightly murders were perpetrated, without number; and at last, noon-day slaughter paraded the streets with impunity, till the sight of blood lost all its horror, and murder became a pastime! At the same time such was the unparalleled pressure of famine, that every noxious herb, and nauseous thing was ravenously seized for aliment: the mother was reduced to the unnatural necessity of feeding on her own child; and even the graves were plundered, and the putrified carcases of the dead made food for the dying! At length this impregnable city was taken; the triple wall was forced, and the town given up to the fury of an enraged army. The temple too, notwithstanding every precaution used by the general, to preserve this wonder of the world, was consumed in a manner, which demonstrated the interposition of a divine power.

The prediction of our Lord was accomplished to the letter: the Jews perished in heaps by the sword of the enemy, and they who escaped death, were made captives, sold, and scattered through all the provinces of the Roman empire. Jerusalem was trampled

under foot by the Gentiles, its soil is inhabited by strangers, who shall remain in possession of this once distinguished country, as long as the Lord shall abandon his ancient inheritance to the profanation of ignorance and barbarism. The abomination which caused the desolation of Jerusalem, will also effect the destruction of the whole earth, and with unerring certainty will be fulfilled all that the Son of God has foretold concerning that event. The day of the Lord is near at hand, and if the last day of the world be still at some remove from us, yet is the last day to *each of us*, the day of our *death*, very near to us all. And yet how indifferent do we appear! how unconcerned! busying ourselves each day with the concerns of this world; busying ourselves about future pleasures, and distant enjoyments, as if this life were never to have an end; or that a certain number of years were engaged and insured to us; whereas we are not sure of a single day, or even a single hour! Let us look into the causes of this fatal indifference; and let us, when we discover the origin of our folly, use every means to subdue it.

The first cause of our inattention to the great day of importance, and to the eternity of bliss or misery, that is to ensue, is the example of those about us. The argument of

encouragement, which is drawn from the immense number, who are in a situation exactly similar to our own, is found to have great weight in dispelling fear, and stifling the admonitions of religion and conscience. Men persuade themselves they have nothing to fear, because all have the same reason as themselves. They do only what the bulk of mankind are accustomed to do ; others proceed without concern, who have, at least, as much reason to be alarmed as themselves. To strengthen their confidence, they are wont to say :—  
“ Surely Almighty God will not condemn to eternal misery the whole world ; or, if there be a few who are more particular than the rest, there are so very many who live as we do, certainly we shall not all be lost !” My brethren, if the immense, omnipotent, eternal God, like the kings of the earth, had any need of us to maintain, or augment his power or happiness, then, indeed, some reliance might be placed on numbers. But, as he has nothing to fear from the united force of those creatures, who have all their force from him, and whom the same will which made them, could annihilate, so shall not the multitude of sinners arrest, or divert the course of his justice. As in the days of Noah, the numbers of those who sinned, instead of

disarming God's vengeance, accelerated the effects of his indignation; as the number of sinners amongst the jews, did not avert the divine wrath, but hastened to fill up the measure of their iniquities, so shall not the multitude of guilty men, in our days, delay the anger of God, or alleviate the severity of his sentence, but inflame his indignation, and increase the rigour of his justice. He has assured us that though *many are called, yet few are chosen*; (Mat. xx. 16.) he has declared, *that wide is the gate, and broad the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there are, who go in thereat*; (ib. c. vii. 13.) yet *how narrow is the gate, and strait the way, that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it*. (v. 14.) The love of present enjoyment serves also to stifle every thought of future account, and future responsibility. Yes; this life is thought to have its pleasures; its amusements, its varieties, afford a certain satisfaction, and men surrender their hearts to its seducing charms, without attending to what they forfeit, by their present inconsiderateness. They begin to wish it were to last for ever; and, as in general, it is not difficult to make our understandings the dupes of our hearts, by believing what we wish; if the vain, the frivolous, the idle, the dissipated of each sex, cannot

*completely persuade* themselves that life will have no end, they try as much as possible, to cherish the illusion, by banishing whatever might tend to dispel it, or disturb them in the enjoyment of the present ; and finally, they resolve to banish all concern upon that subject, and whatever may be the case, they live as if they were to live for ever. O christians, you know that you are practising a ruinous deception on your own souls ! You know that God is not influenced by our illusions or desires ; that *as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, even till that day in which Noah entered into the ark ; and they knew not, till the flood came, and took them all away ; so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be.* (Mat. xxiv. 38.) Yes ; what happened in the days of Noah, shall happen at the last day. Mankind will be engaged in the same vain, unprofitable, and sinful pursuits, which then engaged and still engage their minds and hearts, when another deluge, but not of water, a deluge of fire, shall suddenly come, and sweep them away from the face of the earth, to appear before God's tremendous majesty.—Another cause of indifference in christians, is the decay, and at length, the total extinction of faith. Yes ; sin gradually

diminishes divine faith, and, in the end, extinguishes it. At first, and for a certain time, sin occasions uneasiness and remorse. This is found a bitter ingredient in the cup of pleasure,—a great drawback in the enjoyment of sensual gratifications. To do away the reproach of conscience, as much as possible, some are so impious as to contemn the menaces of God, and laugh at his rewards : and when the importunate conviction of a Supreme Being, cannot be entirely obliterated, they erect an idol of their own, they represent to themselves a Deity insensible, or indifferent to good and evil ; who, after giving us existence, ceases to regard our conduct, or to concern himself about his creatures. But these blasphemies, engendered in the filth of a corrupted heart, change not the nature of God, and only serve to accelerate his vengeance. In these days of immorality and impiety, they, who have not gone so far as to reject all revealed religion, but whose lives will not stand the test of truth, affect a species of liberality, a kind of compassion for man's frailty, which is no more than a palliative for their own guilt ; they will pretend to consider the well-meaning man, as they are pleased to call him, whatever be his creed, as the most agreeable to the Deity.

This system, which is in direct contradiction

to the spirit of truth, which has declared that *there is but one Lord, one faith, one baptism,* as there is but *one God and Father of all*; (Eph. iv. 5.) that *without faith it is impossible to please God*; (Heb. xi. 6.) that *he who believeth not shall be condemned*. (Mark, xvi. 16.) This system of toleration and indifference, set up by man to favor vice and incredulity, while it is lenient to every novelty, is sure to decry the true faith, the faith of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, because this church, unalterably the same, has at all times opposed vice, without composition or connivance. This false liberality of sentiment, which opens the gates of heaven to sectaries of all descriptions, is daily gaining ground; as if at the command of men, or their united suffrage, the decrees of God could be altered, and the Deity could be made to patronize alike truth and falsehood, his own revealed doctrines, and the delirious effusions of impostors, fanatics, and madmen. Guard against these latitudinarian principles, my brethren, for if once you begin to entertain them, you will cease to respect your own religion, and the revelation of God, communicated to you by the church established by his only Son, and enlightened by his Holy Spirit: in a word, you will cease to believe with divine faith upon the authority of God, and religion

will be no more than an ingenious system, its code of laws, a prudent regulation for the present well-being and orderly conduct of its members. These dispositions are the evident signs of irreligion and incredulity ; and in proportion as they become more generally prevalent, are the forerunners of the divine vengeance : for when a hatred and contempt of religion have arrived at a certain point, then the anger of God breaks forth, and his menaces are realized by effects. It was this which brought the deluge upon the earth, this which drew down the wrath of heaven upon Jerusalem, and this full growth of iniquity will, at length, draw down ruin and destruction on our sinful world.

My friends, let the fear of the Lord be forcibly impressed upon our hearts, let us cherish it within us, by recollection and mental prayer, nor let us sacrifice it to any consideration. As long as it continues to live in our souls, we shall be preserved from offending God, we shall be preserved by it in innocence and piety, and at the last day it will be found our best defence.

Again : men are led away to vanity and forgetfulness of God's law, by a most absurd presumption, which makes them except themselves from the dangers which they are surprised to see so little regarded by others. They observe that amongst those of their own age and con-

dition, though many are carried off by death, yet several escape: they hear or witness accidents, which are fatal to those whom they befall; they hear continually of persons snatched out of this world by sudden death, or after a few days' illness; but they seem to assume confidence from the misfortunes of others, and each seems to persuade himself he is more secure from the calamity of those who, in all human appearance, were as remote from danger as himself. O what pains do men take to deceive themselves! He whom you lately beheld expire, or whose shocking death gave you so much alarm, on hearing it described, had, like you, formed an ideal exception for himself, and fancied himself secure; he felt himself encouraged, like you, with all the freshness of health and youthful vigour; nevertheless, he was struck by that invisible hand which, you know, will some time or other level you with the dead of past ages; he was struck,—and now is his fate, of never-ending happiness, or perhaps of eternal despair, decided. On what, then, do you presumptuously rely! May not you be carried off in the twinkling of an eye? And how do your accounts stand with God? could you, at this moment, present yourselves at the bar of unerring justice, and dare to stand your trial? O, if you knew that in the space of one half

hour you were to be summoned before your judge; ah! you would dismiss from your minds all those projects of vanity, sensuality, revenge, and ambition, which you now indulge: a cold horror would chill your blood, and how would you wish for the power to do that which you might now do, if you would! Fear then, and fear for yourselves; and while you have it in your power, set about that business which is paramount to every other, nor have to lament, with ineffectual grief, at the hour of death, that you have put it off till the night has come, and put an end to the power of working. This fear cannot but be salutary, while presumptuous security must be your ruin.

What delusive arguments do men use to deceive themselves! If any one of their acquaintance die, immediately are the causes of his death conjectured and descanted on, and they persuade themselves that they are wholly secure from similar danger. It was excess of fatigue, it was irregular diet, intemperance, an imprudent exposure of the body to a damp air, or the coldness of the season; whatever is presumed to have occasioned death, the conclusion is instantly formed; I will be cautious to avoid the like danger, and I shall be safe. He had such a complaint, which I have not: he had a constitutional predisposition to such a disorder;

this, I thank God, is not my case. He was in years, it is true, and nearly of the same age as myself; but how many arrive at a more advanced period of life? I will therefore make myself easy. Oh! if you have not the same complaint of which your neighbour died, have you not others? most probably you have some ailment, of which you are at present ignorant. When health appears the firmest, perhaps your blood is on the point of freezing in your veins; your heart about to discontinue its wonted pulsations. Prudence cannot guard you against accidents unforeseen, against dangers directed by Providence to end your life: be prepared by ever living in the love and fear of God, to obey his call; desire to be united to him, for whoever loves this world is an enemy of God.

How many are there who endeavour to make themselves easy respecting death, by a misapplication of that experience which ought rather to make them more cautious! The first whom they saw stretched out in the coffin, struck them with dread and consternation; but having now seen so many, they are without apprehension. On seeing the corpse of a stranger let down into the grave, a melancholy sadness oppressed their heart, and the silent tear stole down their cheek: but now they can contemplate the descent of the coffin, and can

hear the rumbling of the cords without emotion! Alas! the more of our friends we survive, the nearer do we draw to our own dissolution! Make not then that experience which was designed for your profit, wholly useless by laboured insensibility: make not your remedy your poison. Let not the mercy of God, which should inspire you with unceasing gratitude, serve to remove you from him, and fill the measure of your ingratitude. Many have been snatched away while you have been spared: but has it been your desert that has procured exemption for you? Where would you now be, if God, instead of those whom you have outlived, had called you? at such a period of life? after the commission of such a sin, in the practice of such a habit? O had you been snatched in such an evil hour, were you to be hurried off at this moment, what would be the consequence for all eternity?

O, my beloved, take example, fear, be converted, be assiduous in prayer, and every virtuous exercise. *Watch; because at what hour you know not, the Son of Man will come.* (v. 44.) Instead of indulging an idle curiosity, concerning the time of your death, let all your endeavours be directed towards your last hour; correct the faults, and errors of your past life, reform every evil practice; expiate by tears, by alms,

by mortification, your past sins ; break from this world, and aspire towards heaven ; seek in the holy sacraments, and a frequent intercourse with God, spiritual strength and consolation ; no longer place your hearts on these empty toys, which now enslave them, but abandon yourselves wholly to God, that when he comes to visit you, he may find you watching, and take you to the joys of his kingdom.

## SERMON LVII.

### FESTIVAL OF ALL SAINTS.

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ON IMITATING THE EXAMPLE OF THE SAINTS.

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*I saw a great multitude, which no one could number, of all nations, and tribes, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and in presence of the Lamb. (Apoc. vii. 9.)*

WHAT a splendid spectacle is here laid open to our view, my brethren; the veil is drawn aside; heaven is thrown open before us, and we are permitted to contemplate the blessed and honorable assemblage of angels, and arch-angels, of cherubim and seraphim, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, and virgins, clothed in white robes of spotless innocence, and bearing in their hands palms of victory and triumph! Let us contemplate this glorious association, and remembering that we are called to the same glory, let us consider attentively their state of unchangeable

felicity, that we may be inspirited to emulate their exertions, by a view of their reward. Ah, my friends, pain and sorrow have no admission there; toil and conflict are no more; the tear no longer trickles down the cheek of grief; the sigh no longer heaves the breast of anguish. Blessed are they who mourned; now are they indeed comforted; joy is theirs, and jubilation, and extacy, serene, yet rapturous bliss is their portion for ever.

But while you view the realms of bliss and glory, where these illustrious champions sit enthroned, remember that you are invited to a participation of their immortal honors; that they are your fellow soldiers and fellow members in Christ Jesus; that, in some measure, you are called upon to complete their labours by prosecuting the same war in which they were engaged; that, surrounded by enemies, they fought their way through opposing legions, and reached the land of their inheritance, that you are called to follow where they have led the way, to force a passage through hostile ranks, and to rejoin your leader. He is gone before, it is ours to follow. These our victorious comrades look down upon us with tenderest interest; they witness our struggles; they powerfully plead our cause before the throne of God, and earnestly desire our union with

them. We may participate in their glory if we imitate their fortitude and perseverance. It is for this the catholic church has instituted the festival we now solemnize, and the particular feasts of the saints, which we celebrate throughout the year, to thank God for his graces bestowed upon his saints ; to induce us to fight a good fight, and to follow their example by placing before our eyes their exertions and their reward ; and to implore their intercession with the great king, our Lord, and our God. That you may derive the advantage intended by the church of God, and be animated to proceed with intrepidity in the cause of God and your salvation, I purpose to shew you that the example of the saints does away every pretext of difficulty in consequence of natural weakness, or particular circumstances, and that no difficulty is permitted by God, that can excuse us from becoming saints.

First. To be saints in heaven it is clearly evident that we must be saints on earth ; for heaven is the reward of sanctity. This throws a gloom over the minds of some christians, who recoil at the thought ; perhaps from an interior conviction, that they are not leading lives which can any way claim the title of sanctity. They endeavour to invent some distinction, by means of which they hope to be admitted to

the crown exclusively promised to sanctity, without the practice of those offices and duties which constitute sanctity. They wish to persuade themselves that they may escape the punishments of the next life, as not being very guilty, and thus be permitted to come into heaven, without that merit which is certainly necessary for admission into the kingdom of holiness. As if they could expect to be admitted to the nuptial banquet with extinguished lamps, or as if the christian were only required to avoid evil, without the obligation of doing good. They excuse themselves, therefore, by saying they admire and applaud those who are more resolute and perseverant, but for themselves, they indeed could wish to live the life of saints, but, alas! so frail are they, and so far above their strength are the toils of sanctity, that they admire, but cannot imitate the example which is set before them.

Oh, my friends, you cannot imitate the saints in the practice of sanctity! And does the Almighty then require of you that you should be holy when you have not the means, the power of being so? Impossible: never will he exact any thing from you that is above your strength. *He will not suffer you* (says St. Paul) *to be tempted above what you are able*; (1 Cor. x. 13.) and yet he commands you

to be saints. *Be ye holy*, that is saintly, *because I the Lord your God am holy.* (Lev. xix. 2.) *Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*; (Matt. v. 48.) that is, be ye filled with the grace of God, be ye decorated with the beauty and loveliness of holiness, and let the perfection of the Most High embellish your souls. Away then with these excuses, mere pretexts, the artful pleas of self love and self deceiving sloth: by which thousands are duped and kept in a state of lukewarm indevotion, satisfied if they avoid the more shocking crimes, and those to which, perhaps, they have no propensity, but conniving at, palliating, and cherishing some favourite faults, which they have not the courage to eradicate or oppose. They persuade themselves that living in the world, they are licensed as to the neglect of certain exercises of devotion, or practices of piety, and the indulgence of certain vanities and gratifications, the commission of certain minor faults which they are pleased to qualify, by the extenuating appellation of defects, or it may be, imperfections.

But are not all required to attain to that degree of perfection which comes within their reach and ability? Or, when they renounced in baptism the pomps and vanities of the world, was there any salvo made for them; any pro-

test entered in their behalf; any exception in their favor? No, my brethren. We are called to holiness, and to attain to holiness is not impossible; it is in the power of each and of all; the aid of the Almighty is offered to all, and therefore we shall be without excuse before the judgement seat of God, if it appear that we have not laboured to become saints, and that we have not, in fact, become saints in this world.

But who were they whose triumphs we commemorate? What were they? Were they not like ourselves? Encompassed by the same mortal frame; invested with the same flesh; the same blood running in their veins? with the same senses, dispositions, inclinations, affections, passions, and natural propensities? Had they not the same difficulties to encounter as we? the same temptations to subdue? Alas! many of them had to resist and to overcome obstacles from situation and circumstances; from temperament and habit, incomparably greater than any we have to contend with. When they lived, did not our adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion, go about seeking whom he might devour? Was not the world then in opposition to God? Were not its pleasures then as dissipating, as fatal as at present? and were they not equally attractive? Did not they feel a law

in their members waging war against the Spirit and law of God? The maxims of the world, and the torrent of custom were to be surmounted by them, as well as by us. And how, then, did they resist? How did they succeed? Had they helps unknown or denied to us? Did they enjoy greater helps from heaven? Oh no. Their God is also our God, and is as ready to help us as he was to help them, nor is he less able. No; the arm of the Lord is not shortened; the boundless ocean of his mercy is neither dried up nor diminished; the blood of Jesus, which flowed for them, and in which they placed their hope, flowed for us also, and now pleads as powerfully for us as it did for them. If by it they became saints, so also may we. If we be not pure and holy, it is because we are unwilling so to be: we wilfully neglect graces, which would raise us from our state of servitude to the perfect liberty of the children of God, and finally, from the dunghill of this earth, to the throne of heavenly glory, to the society of the princes of his people. Blush then, ye who bear the name of christian, the children of the Lord of heaven, the disciples of Jesus, of a Man-God, who came down from heaven to raise us up to heaven. Be no longer terrified, no longer sunk in the sleep of death, no longer hesitating in doubt and irresolution, but

arise ; suddenly arise, spring forward, and snatch the crown which your immortal conqueror holds forth to you, and invites you to seize.

Yes, he invites and encourages you to enterprise and conquest. Look, he says to you, behold those happy souls, now great and glorious. They once, like you, were confined within the prison of their bodies, and inhabited this sinful earth. They had difficulties to overcome, temptations to overcome : like you, they they were weak and prone to evil, delicate and tender. Virgins of early age, and softest nature, despised the allurements of the flesh, and consecrated their bodies and their souls to me. In every age of life, in either sex, young and old, men bending under a weight of years, and youthful maidens, became witnesses to my name and doctrines, and died for my sake. They struggled, and they fought, but my grace gave them strength and victory. The same grace is offered to you ; your reward shall be the same ; and cannot you perform what they have performed ?

It was this that roused the spirit of St. Augustine to heroic exertion ; he was ashamed to be outdone by the young, the weak, the illiterate. Shall they take heaven by storm, said he, and shall I recline in sloth and idleness ;

shall I give up the crown without a struggle, without a single effort? Let the same reflection produce the same effects in you, my brethren : be wise, nor let the short enjoyments of this life, the amusements of an hour, be preferred to eternal honor, joy, and glory, nor let the mortifications and self-denials, by which the saints have purchased everlasting peace, be feared and abhorred more than the never ending woe and torment prepared for the wicked.

Talk no more of your weakness ; it is the consciousness of your weakness, that is to be to you a source of strength. Confide, but not in yourselves. In God is my trust, should be, and is, the motto of the christian. The apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, were weak and helpless of themselves, but were enabled to perform prodigies by him who was their support. Could they have braved the fury of tyrants, the prejudices of an indignant world? Could they, unlettered as they were, have confounded the reasonings of the philosophers, the sages of the earth, and silenced the eloquence of the greatest orators? Could they have defied the ingenuity of their tormentors, have smiled on the rack, and under the sword? Could they have borne the fierce flame that encompassed their bodies as the soft breathing of a refreshing breeze? and, what is still more,

could they have resisted the impetuous fire of concupiscence, and preserved their bodies and their souls, their thoughts and their desires, from all the assaults of lust, without supernatural aid, without the power and grace of God? This supernatural aid, this power and grace, is offered to you, my brethren; yes, to all it is offered, and if you will avail yourselves of it, will bear you triumphant over every obstacle, and place you in the regions of security, peace, and everlasting felicity.

## SERMON LVIII.

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ON THE MARKS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

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*He shall reign in the house of Jacob, for ever,  
and of his kingdom there shall be no end.  
(Luke, i. 32, 33.)*

THE Messiah, so ardently desired by the patriarchs, and so distinctly characterized by the prophets, is here described as about to commence the glories of his empire. Veiled under the infirmities of human nature, to which he had submitted in order to effect man's redemption, he patiently endured disgrace and contumely, and by a cruel death offered to his eternal Father an infinite satisfaction for the injury committed against him by sin. But, in submitting to the lowly condition of human nature, he not only reconciled us to the offended Deity, but announced to us the most grateful tidings,—our deliverance from the captivity of the devil, and from the servitude of sin; he preached the kingdom of heaven, and pointed out to us the road to that blessed

habitation. He established on an immovable basis the edifice of his church, *the city of the Holy One*, (Is. lii. 1.) *the pillar and ground of truth*. (1 Tim. iii. 15.) He placed it on a rock, and secured it from error, by promising to it his protection till the end of time. *The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills*. (Is. ii. 2.) *On this rock*, says Jesus Christ, (Matt. xvi. 18.) *I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*.

Whatever success the abettors of infidelity may have experienced, and though we are assured by the declaration of truth itself, that the time shall come when faith will scarcely be discernible upon the earth; yet (thanks to the preserving goodness of our God) there are still many who believe with unfeigned submission; and it may be presumed, with respect to our own nation, that notwithstanding the too prevalent corruption of morals, a great majority continue to profess without dissimulation a belief in Christ and christian revelation. These, of course, while they believe in Jesus Christ and his promises, must also believe that he instituted a church on earth, in which his mercy, grace, and protection are peculiarly ex-

perienced, which partakes of his spirit, and communicates, without corruption, the pure doctrine of his law. They must necessarily believe, that notwithstanding the diversity of opinions, and the opposite creeds, which rise, vary, and disappear, he who promised to support the edifice of his church to the end of ages, who sent his apostles, the heralds of his law, and ensured success to their undertaking, still inspires the same doctrine to their successors, of which himself was the author. Of this, no man, whatever be his religious tenets, can doubt, who believes that Jesus Christ was the true Son of God, that he promised to send down his holy Spirit, who should teach his followers all truth to the end of the world; and that being able to make good his promises, he prefers truth to falsehood. From these premises it follows that as truth is incompatible with falsehood, the church which possesses the co-operation of the Spirit of truth, is incapable of falsehood; and again it must be admitted, that as in the true church of Christ the faith is preserved as a sacred deposit uncorrupted by error, so every opinion which opposes the faith of that church, must of consequence, be false.

If then Christ has established one only

church, it becomes of the utmost consequence amidst the conflict of adverse sentiments with respect to religion, and the contradiction of jarring creeds, to discover that church which was founded by Christ, and is still directed by his divine influence. He has declared that it should be as a *city placed on a hill*, and must therefore be *visible*, shewing forth certain external visible marks, by which it is to be distinguished from the assemblies of those who are not of her communion. It is my intention to expose to you these marks of the church of Christ, at least those which particularly distinguish it, and to shew you that they are evidently impressed upon the church, of which you profess yourselves members; that you may not adhere to your religion without principle or motive, but, that strongly persuaded of the truth of your belief, you may offer to God a reasonable service, founded upon the firmest conviction.

The first characteristic mark of the true church, described by the Symbol of Constantinople, or the Nicene Creed, is *Unity*. This mark is essentially necessary to the church of Jesus Christ; because truth is indivisible, and Jesus Christ who is the very truth, cannot be the founder of two societies, which maintain as true, doctrines diametrically opposite. As there is but one God, so is there but one faith;

(Eph. iv. 5.) The members therefore of the church must be so united as to believe whatever is the firm, settled belief of the church; not following the self-sufficient and seducing guide of private reason, which has ever been found to favour passion, to inspire presumption and generate controversy in religious, no less than in literary and political matters. The faith of the church of Christ must also be the same through every age from the time of its divine Founder; it can never vary in the smallest particular, nor ever submit to patronize or adopt novel doctrines, because the faith which she professes is not of her own forming, but the faith of her spouse and head, Christ Jesus. If then in any society of men claiming the august title of the church of Christ, you can discover tenets of modern date, unknown to antiquity, hearken not to them; their doctrines are not the pure uncontaminated doctrines of the founder of christianity, but the opinions of men, the presumption of human reason, daring to alter, to reform, and to contradict the faith of Christ. As he has promised that the spirit of truth should abide with his church, and teach it all truth to the end of the world, (John, xiv.) every set of men, presuming to alter the received belief, virtually presumes to pronounce that the promises of Christ have

failed, that error has invaded his institution, and calls for their reformation.

In the church of Christ there must also be a union of sacraments ; that is, the same number must be admitted by the whole church wherever spread, the same number and the same sacraments must be maintained through every age to the present day. Christ has instituted them, and determined their number ; if any society adopt another number, either by adding to them, or diminishing them, it is the work of man and not of God.

The second mark which the Nicene Creed ascribes to the church of Christ, is *holiness*. The church which takes its origin from him, must be holy : he is eminently holy ; every institution derived from him, must be holy also. The church was instituted to procure us holiness, both in regard of this life, [in which our sanctity must commence, and of the world to come, when our sanctity will be consummated in heaven. *God has called us*, says St. Paul, (2 Tim. i. 9.) *with a holy calling*. *Christ loved the Church*, says the same apostle, (Eph. v. 25.) *and delivered himself up for it, that he might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life*. *That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it*

*should be holy and without blemish.* That church then must bear this mark of a divine institution and of divine protection, which counts amongst its members those who in every age since the establishment of christianity, have been eminently distinguished for holiness of life, for genuine, unequivocal, disinterested, and enlightened piety. That church is undoubtedly the favourite of heaven, and flourishes under its auspices, which is the most favourable to religious perfection and exalted sanctity; which ever studies to wean the minds of men from a love of earthly trifles, and raise them to a desire of what is eternal; which not satisfied with mere human virtues, if I may so express myself, exhorts, enjoins, and stimulates to the practice of heroic and transcendent virtue.

It is not to be expected, however, that all the members of the church of Christ be holy in consequence of the faith which they profess. St. Paul has declared to us, that *without faith it is impossible to please God*; (Heb. xi. 6.) but unless their conduct prove conformable to their faith, they condemn the grace of God, and become worse than the infidel. If, therefore, many of those whose faith is sound, be found faithless to what the church teaches of which they are members, it is not to be imputed to

the church, but to their ingratitude and unrighteousness. But as the principal end of religion is to draw off our affections from the false glitter of earthly grandeur, from the seducing charms of vain pleasures, and the paltry counters of human wealth; that religion will claim our preference, as best proving its divine origin, which teaches and enjoins the contempt of earthly pleasures and vanities, which encourages the total renunciation of them, and leads to the higher delights of pure spiritual enjoyment. That church holds out the visible mark of sanctity, which exhorts, animates, and impels to superior and heroic sanctity : which seeks not to inflame the passions by indulgence under the deceptive name of gospel-liberty ; but to restrain the passions, and subdue every vicious inclination by fasting, self-denial, and every method by which the flesh may be subjected to the spirit.

Another mark of the true church is its *Catholicity*. By *Catholic* is signified *universal*. The church founded by Jesus Christ, must therefore be universally extended ; not confined, as was the synagogue to the children of Abraham, nor limited to one small territory, but diffused through all nations. This is evident from the commission which he gave his apostles. *Go ye and teach ALL nations.* (Matt.

xxviii. 19.) He declares that it behoved the Christ to suffer, and rise again from the dead on the third day, and that penance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke, xxiv. 46.) The prophets had long before foretold this extensive propagation of the christian faith. Thus spoke Almighty God by his prophet Malachy, (i. 11.) *From the rising of the sun even to its going down, great is my name among the gentiles.* And to the same effect exclaims the royal prophet: *All the ends of the earth shall remember and shall be converted to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the gentiles shall adore in his sight: for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he shall have dominion over the nations.* (Ps. xxi. 28.) The church of Christ must be universal as to *time*; beginning with him, and therefore prior to any society or body of men divided from it. It is universal as to *place*; that is, it must be discovered to have flourished throughout the earth. It is universal as to *doctrine*: always teaching the same faith and following the same rule of belief throughout the world.

The church of Christ was distinguished by the name of *Catholic*, in the very infancy of the christian religion, as is evident, as well from the Apostles' and the Nicene creed, as from other

proofs ; and it was this name of *Catholic* which finally drew the illustrious St. Augustin from the heresy in which he had long persisted. He observes, that while the different sects of his time were denominated from their respective founders, the church of Christ knew no other name than *Christian* and *Catholic* ; and, although all who had separated from this church, were ambitious of the name of *Catholic*, yet should a stranger enquire of them in what part of the city the catholics assembled, none of them would presume to direct him to their own conventicle or place of meeting.

The fourth mark by which the church of Christ is distinguished in the aforesaid creed, is *Apostolicity*. In effect, the church which was established by our Redeemer, is undoubtedly the same that was propagated by his apostles : its pastors now derive their faith, their credentials, their mission, from the apostles, and trace a continued uninterrupted succession from the apostles. That this is a mark of the true church, is clear from the words of Christ, when he promised that the faith delivered by him to his apostles, and which he commanded them to preach to all nations, should never be destroyed by the machinations of hell, but be preserved pure and unalloyed to the end of time. *Upon thy walls, oh Jerusalem!* says the prophet Isaiah,

*I have appointed watchmen: all the day and all the night, they shall never hold their peace.* (lxii. 6.) From the apostles in unfailing succession, must be derived the mission of pastors and teachers: *for no man taketh the honor (of the priesthood) to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was:* (Heb. v. 4) much less can any man receive the powers of the priesthood, except they be received from those who have the power to give them.

The apostles received their mission from Christ, who said to them: *As my Father sent me, so I also send you.* (John, xx. 21.) They in like manner constituted pastors to succeed themselves, with power to send others after them. St. Paul and Barnabas were sent by the pastors of the church of Antioch, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, chap. xiii., and this is declared to be the work of the Holy Ghost. *Then they, fasting, and praying, and laying their hands upon them, sent them away. So they being sent by the Holy Ghost, went to Seleucia, &c.* (iii. 4.) St. Paul afterwards sent Titus, that is, commissioned him to govern the church of Crete, and ordain pastors under himself, as St. Paul had ordained him. *For this cause,* says he to Titus in his letter to him, (i. 5.) *for this cause I left Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and shouldest ordain*

*priests in every city, as I also appointed thee.* Unless duly and regularly authorized, none can exercise the sacerdotal functions : whoever assumes the character and office uncommissioned or self-appointed, *enters not by the door, and is a thief and a robber.* (John, x. 1.) Convinced of this, and persuaded that no man will be seriously and religiously accredited by the intelligent and sincere, who declares his authority to be derived from himself; we observe the leaders and teachers of every sect pretending to a divine mission, some by claiming a lawful descent from the apostles, and others, who cannot conjure up even a shadow of pretext for such a claim, by pretending to an extraordinary commission from the Holy Ghost. But it ought to be observed, that where pretensions are made to extraordinary mission, extraordinary proofs are required. Our Redeemer who came to abolish the old law, and to establish the new covenant of grace and mercy in its room, was not satisfied with barely requiring acquiescence in his doctrines, upon the sole authority of his word, but proved his descent from heaven by wonders and miracles. *If I had not done among them the works that no other man hath done, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.* (John, xv. 24.) But in the church of Christ, which shall last to the end of the world, true pastors will never be wanting,

an uninterrupted succession of the priestly powers from the time of the apostles will always be maintained, and traced back to them with clear and incontestable evidence.

These are the four principal marks by which the church of Christ is distinguished from every other society of men; it remains that I briefly shew you that the church of which you profess yourselves members, the church which holds communion with the successor of St. Peter, the bishop of Rome, is possessed of these distinctive marks. It is not to create in your minds any doubt or uneasiness, but rather to confirm your faith, to warm you to gratitude for the signal mercy of God in calling you to it, that you may render to God a reasonable service, and be able to give an account of the faith that is in you. Let us proceed to investigate the subject, and from it we shall draw conviction and comfort.

The church of which you are members, the church in communion with the see of Rome, is *one*, is *holy*, is *Catholic* and *apostolical*. It is *one* in its *doctrine*, in its *sacraments*, in its *pastors*. The unity of its doctrine is evident to demonstration. That which is taught as an article of faith in one country, by the pastors of our church, is taught in every country where it is professed. The same faith which is taught and believed by us in England, is taught and believed by those who are in communion with

the see of Rome, throughout the globe: in Spain, Italy, France, and Portugal, the same as in Armenia and Egypt, in Turkey and China, in Canada and throughout America, wherever our religion is professed, whether under the discouragement of persecution, or flourishing under the protection of governments, and the patronage of princes. Though its professors are exceedingly numerous and diffused through every part of the globe where the name of Jesus is held in veneration, though they differ in every other respect, in language, customs, manners, and interests; yet their faith is the same, their doctrine is the same, they every where profess the same tenets, and preach the same gospel. This unity of doctrine which prevails throughout the church to which you adhere at the present day, has prevailed through every age up to the time of the apostles, from whom the faithful received their belief, and transmitted it, according to the promises of Christ, pure and uncorrupted to us, and the same shall be transmitted by his divine power to the end of time. The church which holds communion with the see of Rome, as the centre of unity, is *one*, in the number of sacraments which it admits, one as to the matter of the sacraments and the general form of administering them. Enquire of its professors, whether at

Rome or Madrid, at Constantinople or Peking, or through the long extent of America, what number of sacraments they receive as instituted by Jesus Christ: they will uniformly answer (if they have any knowledge of the religion they profess) in the words of the Council of Florence; "There are seven sacraments, neither more than fewer." This church is *one* in her pastors: the same gradation of order, the same hierarchy is admitted throughout her communion: all acknowledge the same head, and all obey one authority. As to *holiness*, whether respecting the doctrine which it teaches, or the persons whom it conducts to sanctity, it is strongly impressed upon the same church. The most perfect purity is displayed in the uniform connected system of doctrine which it teaches. Every article of its belief is so holy in itself, and so conducive to holiness, that it is impossible to object one point which we really hold, that bears the smallest blemish. Hence that determined obstinacy in attributing to us what we have constantly disowned and rejected, as forming no part of our belief. Calumny and misrepresentation are called in to depreciate that unsullied purity which candour would discover in all its native beauty. It inculcates nothing that is not worthy of God, which does not conduct to God, or which is not calculated to withdraw

us from what would remove us to a distance from him. The persons whom it has produced in all ages, eminent for sanctity, are innumerable. How many seated on the throne of royalty, have diffused the splendour of their virtues throughout the world! How many have despised the pomp of a worldly throne, and heroically resigned the grandeur of a court, the transient lustre of a regal state and magnificence, to embrace a life of poverty and contempt to serve the Lord of heaven and earth, to sanctify their souls, and gain an eternal kingdom? How many, contemning every obstacle, have crossed the seas, and visited the most ferocious nations, to convert them to the faith of Jesus Christ, and the practice of virtue? It would take up much time to enumerate but a small part of those to whom this church has communicated the light of the gospel, and reclaimed from idolatry and vice to religion and virtue. She can count thousands of her children, whose lives have edified all who knew them, whose virtues have extorted admiration, even from their most declared enemies, and who have suffered the most cruel deaths for Jesus Christ, and in defence of that faith which we still profess. Not that we presume to assert, that all its members are distinguished by holiness, that the church is composed only of the predestinate: this error was

condemned by the counsel of Constance, Sess. 15; and alas! fatal experience demonstrates the contrary; but if they, whose lives are a subject of disedification, live in opposition to the injunctions of the church to which they belong, they incur the blame; their religion is unimpeachable. You all know that if your conduct be vicious, you act in contradiction to what your religion enjoins, and that you act to your condemnation. At the last day the Lord shall separate the good from the bad; *he will gather his wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.* (Matt. iii. 12.)

The mark of *Catholicity* which characterizes the true church is so appropriated to the church of which we are members, that no other society can reasonably pretend to it. It is ours by possession, and is given to us even by those who would dispute our claim to it. In effect, the faith which you profess is Catholic, or universal, both as to time and place. As to time, it has existed from the Apostles, and we may bid defiance to the world to shew that it took its rise at any later period. It is the same faith which they professed, who in the primitive ages suffered banishment and death in its defence, which animated an Ignatius, an Irenæus, a Chrysostom, an Augustine, and the many

illustrious prelates, with their faithful co-operators, who, by their virtuous lives diffused an odour of edification, and by their writings defended it against its enemies. It is Catholic, or universal, as to place, having been spread through every part of the globe where the name of Christian has been known, and flourished in those nations which are now overrun with ignorance and idolatry, for having rejected its salutary influence, long before the opinions of those who now dissent from us were reduced to a system, or even thought of.

This Catholic church in communion now, as always, with the see of Rome, is *apostolic*, and can trace its descent, in regular succession, from the Apostles. In the second century, St. Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, after having stated that the see of Rome was established by the glorious apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, and that to it all churches should resort, on account of its superior principality, (*potiorem, or potentiorum principalem*) continues to enumerate the bishops who had held that dignity from St. Peter to his own time, when, as he relates, Eleutherius inherited, in the twelfth place from the apostles, the episcopal ministry. (L. contra Hæreses, c. 3.) St. Augustine did the same in

the fifth century, from St. Peter to Innocent the First, at that time bishop of Rome, and the same we can do at this day, following down the chain of popes from the first ring, which was St. Peter, to the present pope Pius the Seventh, his legitimate successor.

Though I have detained you, perhaps, too long, yet, with respect to the proofs which I could have adduced, I have been as brief as possible. So inexhaustible is the subject, and such a multiplicity of arguments present themselves, that the difficulty is found, not in discovering, but in selecting them. I might proceed to shew you that the marks of the church of Christ, set down in the Nicene creed, belong to no other communion, but that which is united in faith with the see of Rome. I might easily convince you that instead of *unity*, they have no principle to unite them; no fixed invariable rule to cement them, but that each following his own fancy and imagination, new opinions, new forms of belief must be the consequence, and this daily experience demonstrates. I might shew you, that instead of increased *sanctity*, they themselves have complained that indiscipline, insubordination, relaxation of morals, and increased licentiousness have followed the introduction of their tenets, and the desertion of

the old religion. I might easily demonstrate that *Catholicity*, either as to *time*, to *place*, or *doctrine*, is by no means theirs, being modern in their origin; agreeing in no two places; hardly in two persons of the same places or country, and as to doctrinal matters, ever varying and unsettled. But I forbear, as my design in shewing you that the religion you profess is possessed of these distinctive marks is not to insult, or vainly triumph over the opinions of others who are separated from us. The Lord enlighten their minds, that they may see the light of his faith, and inflame their hearts, that they may assume courage to follow its salutary guidance. Error is never to be treated with derision, or wantonly sported with, but particularly in matters which concern religion, as in those matters, its consequences are likely to prove most calamitous; it should be feelingly compassionated. Let me then exhort you, while you thank Almighty God, who has made the light of his countenance shine upon you, to behave in such manner as to convince those with whom you live, that you are directed and governed by his grace. Let universal charity and unconfined benevolence be your praise; let your virtuous deportment confound the malicious aspersions of those who seek to calum-

niate you, and remove the evil opinion which prejudice has conceived and propagated in your regard. Let a regular, orderly, and edifying life be characteristic of your profession; pray with unceasing fervour that all may be united in one faith, and that all being of one mind and one heart, there may be but one fold and one shepherd.

## SERMON LIX.

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ON IRREVERENCE IN THE HOUSE OF GOD.

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*My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.* (Isaiah, lvi. 7.)

To whatever part of the universe we direct our observation, the wisdom, power, and goodness of Almighty God are eminently conspicuous, and demand with incontestable claim, our love, homage, and veneration. Residing over the whole of creation, and beyond the vast boundaries of space; *he reacheth from end to end, mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly.* (Wisd. viii. 1.) The heavens and the earth are full of his glory: for *in the beginning did he found the earth, and the heavens are the works of his hands.* (Ps. ci. 26.) To him is due from all mankind, the unreserved tribute of obedience, love, and adoration; because in him alone we all *live, move, and exist.* (Acts, xvii. 28.) In all places is this tribute due, because the Lord filleth all places with the majesty of his glory.

But, my brethren, while the presence of the Deity extends beyond the limits of space, and his unbounded power pervades all things,—though *the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, the world and all who dwell therein*, (Ps. xxiii. 1.) yet he chooses particular places for his special abode, that in them he may receive the united vows of his faithful people. He is ever near to them who call upon him: yet it is in his temples, erected to his honor, and set apart for his service, that he resides in a peculiar manner, and delights to confer his favors. In them he hearkens to the cry of distress, and the groan of wretchedness; he beholds with complacency his faithful servants bending before his altars, and rewards their devotion with the treasures of his grace. But let us remember that the Lord is a great God, strong and jealous. If he accept with approbation the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart, he beholds with indignation the arrogant approaches of those, who, regardless of his presence, exhibit a behaviour the most contemptuous and insolent. He demands the service of our hearts, but requires also an outward demeanour, suitable to the sentiments which warm our hearts, an external testimony of interior devotion.

Yet, alas! my brethren, in these temples,

devoted to the worship of the Most High, and sanctified by the celebration of the most august mysteries ; where every heart should glow with love, and every knee be bent in respectful adoration : here, in the house of God, to our confusion be it acknowledged, we too often behold a levity of deportment, a wantonness of behaviour, an irreverence of conduct, which bespeak the utmost indifference and indevotion,—I had almost said, an avowed contempt of whatever is respectable among men, or sacred in religion.

I am inclined to believe that by many this is overlooked, as a fault of little consequence ; but however harmless it may appear to those, who have never seriously or impartially weighed the subject, though it be supported by extensive usage, and the authority of numbers, it is, by no means, a transgression of trivial moment. On the contrary, I shall endeavour this day to convince you, that a disrespect for the house of God, is, in itself, a grievous offence in the sight of heaven, and that the consequences of a general and habitual commission of it, are such as should alarm all who value the friendship of God, or dread the severities of his vengeance. Your attention I solicit : and may the Lord of heaven and earth, the true fountain of light, and author of all knowledge, instruct my tongue and pour on my lips the grace of his blessing ;

may he at the same time enlighten your understandings, and prepare your hearts, that what I this day deliver, may redound to his glory, and your sanctification.

In perusing the inspired writings, we meet with repeated accounts of the wonders performed by Almighty God, during the first ages of the world, in those places where his servants erected altars to his honor; and when freed from the bondage of Egypt, the Israelites had constructed the ark of the covenant, which, as a portable temple, accompanied them in all their expeditions, the presence of God was continually evinced to them, and they experienced the most striking proofs of his power and protection. Before this monument of alliance between him and his people, fire is seen to issue from the bowels of the earth, and consume the seditious; the towers and walls of hostile cities fall to the ground, and the armies of infidelity, struck with panic at its approach, confess the presence of the Deity, and tremble at his power. At a more advanced period of the Jewish history, when the same people, under the peaceful sway of Solomon their king, erected a magnificent temple to the God of their fathers, it was forthwith distinguished by his peculiar favor, and his resentment of its profanation demonstrated by the most signal instances of his vengeance.

If then the Almighty has always exacted such respect for places devoted to his service, if faults, seemingly venial, have been so rigorously chastised, if an officious interference in support of the ark, is followed by the immediate death of the offender, and the same severe judgment inflicted upon fifty thousand, for a look of curiosity; if for profaning the sacred vessels, king Balthasar, in one night, loses his throne and his life; and the delegate of the king of Syria, is scourged by angels, at the head of his guards, for presuming to invade the treasures deposited in the temple; if, in fine, Jesus Christ, the model of meekness, testified external marks of anger at the violation of the outer precincts of the temple of Jerusalem,—what reverence, what awe, is due to our temples, sanctified by mysteries the most tremendous, and by the immediate presence of God himself! In the temple of Jerusalem were preserved the tables of the law, the ark, the manna, figures of future good things; in ours all the figures and mysteries of the old law are realized; our altars stream not with the blood of oxen or of goats, but with the blood of the immaculate Lamb, who offers himself for us, and offers us with himself to his Father, both priest and victim. What then ought to be our sentiments; how respectful our comportment, when we consider

that, on this altar, behind the cloud, which our corporal senses interpose, is present the king of angels, the light of the saints, the perfecter of our faith, Christ Jesus, the only son of the eternal Father, God and Man! Love demands a return of love; the claims of gratitude are indispensable. Remember then, that if the King of Heaven and Earth permits us to approach his throne, in pity to his lowly creatures, our contempt of him is on that account rendered more atrocious. The unbeliever assumes the exterior of decency, even impiety conceals its malignity; yet we, surrounded by the evidence of faith, and nourished by the breath of angels, whose gratitude should inspire particular fervour, come into the abode of the Divinity, and there, under the mask of devotion, display a scene of mockery and insult. What a weight of accumulated punishment must be in store for them, whose example, instead of tending to awaken the faith of those who wander in error, to confirm the weak, and confound the pretensions of the infidel; serves rather to obstruct the diffusion of truth, and furnish arms to the enemies of religion? Can we wonder at the unyielding prejudices of those who dissent from our religion, when our whole conduct is calculated to strengthen prejudice, and disgust the beholder? who is tempted to mistrust the sin-

cerity of our professions, and perhaps imputes the offence to the religion of the offender. No, he will say, these men may profess to believe the real presence of the Divinity in the sacrament; but their behaviour plainly evinces the opposite sentiments of their hearts. If their ancestors sincerely believed it, the present generation has manifestly renounced it.

Oh! Christians, it is a melancholy reflection that such charges can be made against us, yet cannot be disowned. That we must either submit to the reproach of obstinate hypocrisy in persisting to profess what we do not believe, or sit down under the guilt of inconsistency and impiety in mocking the God whom we acknowledge to be present on our altars. It is truly lamentable, that while we assemble for the purpose of honoring God, we, in conjunction with his declared enemies, insult his majesty even in his holy place! In these days of irreligion, when a contempt of all that is sacred supplies the place of religious creed; and the universal disbelief of revealed doctrine is become the grand, sufficient, sole desideratum of modern philosophism, and is considered as an equivalent substitute for learning, reason, and authority, it is deplorable to behold religion attacked in her last post, her only remaining fortress, by

those, too, who acknowledge her rights, and ought to feel her influence. On entering these sacred walls, every vanity and worldly solicitude should be dismissed, and the character of penitents assumed; a reverential awe should penetrate the heart, faith inflame the soul to devotion, and devotion inspire external respect. But, no; forgetful of themselves, of the place they are in, of the God who inhabits it, many there are who here labour to display all the vanity of the world, all the levity of indevotion, and all the irreverence of profane insult. The mind is suffered to rove in vain or criminal pursuits; and the heart, which ought to melt with love on approaching the throne of God, is never more insensible than when before his altar, and peculiarly in his presence. We profess to come hither to pay homage to the God of the Universe, yet we not unfrequently behold persons receiving the homage of those around them, and returning the compliment by all the forms of external ceremony, before they have bent a knee to the Author and Ruler of all things. Should they arrive even during the most solemn parts of the great eucharistic sacrifice, when mysteries the most stupendous are celebrated, and angels tremble in respectful adoration; regardless of the sacred moment, they observe not what is transacted before them,

till the look, the smile, the nod of familiarity have been punctually and profanely attended to. Hither resort the frivolous and the vain under pretext of serving the Almighty, while their behaviour here denotes contempt rather than worship. Unaffected by every powerful motive of religion, and unmoved by all the solemnity of the most august mysteries, they loll in lazy posture, practise every form of varied attitude, or gaze around with impertinent curiosity.

With still greater impiety, the slaves of sensuality, themselves consumed by the fire of impure passion, endeavour to enkindle it in the breasts of others; appear before the God of humility and purity, in all the wantonness of loose attire, and assert divided empire with the King of Heaven, by soliciting the idolatrous homage of his creatures. What a scandal to christianity, that in the temple of the Most High, where piety and recollection should be the distinguishing ornaments, the children of vanity presume to engage in ostentatious rivalry! What an outrage to religion, or rather what a convincing proof is given, that many of its professors are such only in their external declarations; when within these walls, where modesty should eminently prevail, they blush not to exhibit before God and his friends, how far they have yielded to the most scandalous

and unchristian modes of dress ; when, on the Lord's day, which should be less disgraced by sin than by servile works, all the pride, vanity, and sensuality, which perhaps industry or even hard necessity had restrained during the preceding week, burst forth from confinement, and flame in guilty effrontery before the altar of the living God.

Unfeeling indeed must be the heart which is unaffected at such indignities offered to the Lord of all things ; but dead to every sentiment of religion and decency, to every motive of self interest, and fearless of the divine justice must they be, who can be guilty of them without remorse and horror. There is a way which seemeth good to the sinner, but which endeth in death. Sunk, perhaps, in fatal insensibility, he may view his deplorable situation without concern, and secure in the enjoyment of external advantages, health, fortune, and worldly credit, disregard both the duties and interests of eternity : but this state of false contentment, which is the delusion of thousands, is the severest judgement which the Almighty can, in this world, inflict upon his enemies. To be far removed from his love and friendship, to be blinded against the light of heaven, to be callous to the impressions of grace, to have a heart insensible to the attractions of

infinite loveliness, without a desire of possessing infinite perfection, is a degree of wretchedness which nothing but the eternal deprivation of so much excellence, with a full sense of the loss, can exceed. Roused from his dream of fancied happiness, he may at length discover his danger, and terrified at the desolating scene which reflection offers to his view, plunge into all the horrors of desperation. The Lord will not be derided ; his justice remaineth for ever and ever ; and when his mercies have been rejected with scorn, his sanctuary treated with contempt, and the sinner has presented himself before the throne of grace, only to give force to derision, having abandoned God, God will abandon him. The arm of omnipotence is not shortened ; the eye of the Almighty is open to every insult ; and if he no longer make known his wrath by the infliction of visible punishments, if he hurl not his vindictive lightnings on the devoted heads of those who profane his sanctuary, his power is undiminished, and his vengeance though slow in its march, will, at length, overtake the presumptuous delinquents.

If then, you sincerely value the friendship of God, if you are solicitous to do his will, and to fulfil all justice ; how can you behave, as many do, in his holy presence, and not suffer the keenest stings of self-reproach ? How is it

possible for you to persuade yourselves that a demeanour of levity and disedification is unobserved or tolerated by heaven, or that even on the conclusion of the divine service, it is permitted to turn your back on the altar of God, and to join in familiar unrestrained discourse. O my beloved friends, favoured of God, and children of his love, be not thus unkind to his partiality, no longer forget his mercies, cease to abuse his parental love and protection! Remember that to you he has communicated the light of his countenance, and made you members of his mystic body. Let not this inestimable favor, this subject of eternal gratitude, be disregarded or undervalued. Highly sensible of their happiness, your forefathers exulted in the profession of their faith, preserved it with unshaken fortitude through the worst of times, and transmitted it to you unimpaired by restraint, and superior to persecution: with unfeigned devotion they assisted privately at those rites which it was forbidden them to celebrate with public solemnity, and embraced with grateful extacy each hazardous opportunity of approaching to the sanctuary of the Lord. There, assembled in holy union, they enjoyed, regardless of the dangers which continually menaced them, all the exquisite consolations which religion affords, and pouring

forth their whole souls in fervent supplications, imploring the indulgence of heaven for their posterity.

Their prayer was heard, and by us are enjoyed advantages which to them would have been the fulness of human felicity. We professing our religion with open security, let it not suffer under the derision or neglect of its professors, nor let that virtue be seduced by the smiles of prosperity, which the sternest frowns of adversity could not intimidate. Enkindle not the wrath of God by a contempt of his favors, adore his inscrutable counsels, and dread the severity of his judgements. He is a God of peace, of mercy, and kind forbearance, but he is a God essentially just, and cannot endure iniquity. He resides here, with fond affection waiting to dispense his blessings ; he calls upon all who labour and are heavy laden, offering refreshment in their toils, and solace in their afflictions : yet is he the avenger of guilt, and beholds every crime committed in these his consecrated abodes, with redoubled indignation. Perhaps, wearied out with our ingratitude and reiterated transgressions, he even now prepares a great revenge ; and soon may his fury be manifested in a diffusion of temporal calamities. The Jewish people, long distinguished by his peculiar regard, having

neglected the service of the altar, and profaned the holy place, were deserted by him, and even their temporal prosperity was permitted to decline and perish with their religious worship. The stability of the throne was connected with the duration of the temple, their destinies were united, and the contempt of religion was speedily followed by the loss of power, independence, and liberty.

Even during the solemn dedication of that stupendous fabric, while to their fidelity was promised the most unbounded protection, the heaviest menaces were subjoined should they abandon the law of God, and neglect his service. *I have chosen and I have sanctified this place*, said the Lord, *my eyes shall be open, and my ears attentive to the prayer of him that shall pray in this place.* (2 Paralip. vii. 16. 15.) *But if you turn away and forsake my justices and my commandments which I have set before you . . . I will pluck you up by the root out of the land which I have given you ; and this house which I have sanctified, I will cast from before my face, and will make it a by-word and an example among all nations.* (ib. 19. 20.) Of this he reminded them by repeated admonitions, and frequently assured them that his temple to which he had attached such magnificent promises, should be no pro-

tection to a sinful people, while they dared to violate its sanctity. *Trust not in lying words, saying the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.* (Jer. vii. 4.) *Is this house then in which my name hath been called upon before your eyes, become a den of robbers? I am he, I have seen it, saith the Lord. Go ye to my place in Silo, where my name dwelt from the beginning, and see what I have done to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel.* (ib. 11. 12.) These menaces which we behold so rigorously verified, should be a warning to us.

St. John Chrysostom complaining of the irreverences committed in the house of God, even in his days ; that the sacred mysteries were disregarded, and the church resorted to as a place of theatrical entertainment, trembled lest the Almighty, exasperated with the crimes of his people, should abandon them, as he had abandoned the Jews, and exhorted his flock to take counsel to themselves from the judgments which had fallen on that unhappy nation. "Go," exclaimeth this prince of christian orators, "go ye to Silo, go to Judæa, behold what the Lord hath done : go to the mountain of Sion, and there trace out if you can, the spot on which arose the temple of the Lord. Behold what he has done : his chosen people cast off, dispersed, and vilified ; his temple de-

stroyed ; Jerusalem levelled with the ground ; no vestige remaining to identify the spot, where once they stood, nor one stone left upon another, to perpetuate the remembrance of fallen empire and lost religion.”

Oh Christians ! go ye to Silo—go to Judæa. Go to that imperial city, where this illustrious prelate poured forth the golden stream of eloquence : see what the Lord hath done. There the voice of sacred oratory is heard no more animating to virtue and confounding vice ; the lofty temple no longer resounds with the divine Canticles, and the feeble form of oppressed religion is scarcely distinguishable in the universal prevalence of ignorance and infidelity. See what the Lord has done. Cross but the channel which washes your coast, and behold a land where faith exulted, and religion had swayed her peaceful sceptre for ages, deserted by the God of Truth—disgraced by injustice—overrun with impiety, and deluged with cruel bloodshed. Their temples have been polluted with profane and lascivious rites ; the sanctuary of the grave outrageously violated ; the shrines of sainted ancestors sacrilegiously invaded ; their altars overthrown with ignominy, and the very name of the Most High obliterated, perhaps, for ever ! *Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgement is righteous.* (Ps. CXVIII. 137.)

When a people, regardless of genuine devotion, is attached solely to shew the external appearance of worship; when attendance at divine service is barely permitted to rank among the visits of the morning, as a relief from melancholy; when the house of God is made the rendezvous of indolence and dissipation, to display, to admire, to criticise the ornaments of dress and personal accomplishments; where men, professing themselves Christians, abjure, by their unchristian conduct, the religion they profess, what wonder if the Lord arise, terrible in his wrath; scatter the horrors of war, famine, and pestilence, or, dissolving the bonds of social law and social confidence, resign a guilty nation to all the fury of anarchy and uproar.

My friends, let us not be unconcerned, as if secure from danger. We, too, have offended God; let us dread his anger; let the examples of past ages teach us to fear his just vengeance, and the yet smoking ruins of recent devastation rouse us to repentance. He beholds our guilt; but if we turn to him with our whole heart, he will yet remember mercy. He who has preserved us safe amidst the revolutions of states, and the storms of persecution, will not abandon his servants, *nor give his inheritance to reproach.* (Joel. ii. 27.) Animated by his holy grace, let us implore forgiveness, and hence-

forth, in all our actions, consult his greater glory. In every adversity, hither let us fly for refuge, and while the sincerest sentiments of love and gratitude warm our hearts, let our exterior deportment be humble, respectful, and edifying. Retiring from the vanities of the world, the house of God will be to us a house of consolation; the divine benedictions will descend upon us in rich abundance; our hearts will faint and languish for the courts of the Lord, the eternal tabernacles, where we shall be filled with the good things of his house, and our spirits exult for ever in God our salvation.

## SERMON LX.

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### ON THE SACRAMENTS.

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IN taking a view of ourselves in relation to God, and contemplating the immensity of his goodness in behalf of his creatures, we are lost in astonishment, and from the most forcible conviction, we are compelled to acknowledge the infinitude of his power and mercy. Our creation, by which we were called from nothing into existence; our redemption, by which the head of the infernal serpent was crushed, are favors so great and unmerited, that our gratitude (if we have any) must be worked upon at the remembrance of them, and the coldest heart must glow with thankfulness for such signal mercy. But not satisfied with creating and redeeming us, the Lord continually watches over us with careful eye; preserves us amidst a thousand dangers to which present life is exposed, and holds out to us those graces and powerful means by which life eternal may be

obtained. Great and glorious are his works, and of his wonders there is no end ! But of all the favors which he has bestowed upon us, there are none which are more salutary, nor, perhaps, at the same time so little attended to in general, as the holy sacraments, which he has left in the church, either to recover or preserve his grace. Of all the several parts of our heaven-derived religion, none are more necessary to be well known than these. The mysteries of faith, such as the unity and trinity of God, &c. we are only bound to know in speculation, that is, to believe them ; but our knowledge of the sacraments must be practical, in order to receive them with advantage to our souls. As they are the means appointed by Christ by which the merits of his sacred passion are applied to our souls, it is absolutely necessary that we should be well instructed in them ; that those holy mysteries may be received with due reverence ; may heal and sanctify those who partake of them. I propose, in this discourse, without speaking of each particular sacrament, to explain to you the general nature and efficacy of the sacraments, that, being made sensible of their necessity and importance, you may be induced to respect them ; to frequent them, and give glory to God for his goodness in instituting them.

To those who have hitherto been, either through negligence or through want of opportunity, unacquainted with the number of these sacraments, I must premise, that in the Catholic church we acknowledge seven sacraments, viz. Baptism, &c. It does not fall within the limits of my present plan, to prove, on this occasion, the institution of each: this will be done separately, in those which I shall select for your instruction.

A sacrament, in general, is defined to be *an outward sign of inward grace, instituted by Jesus Christ for our sanctification*. It is agreed by all that a sacrament is a sign of a sacred thing. It is a sign, because, besides the thing which it exposes to the senses, it brings us to the knowledge of some other thing. It is itself visible, but the grace administered by it is internal, imperceptible to our corporeal senses, and conferred upon the soul. Thus, to use an example which may give the most ignorant an idea of what I have said; in the sacrament of baptism we are washed outwardly with water, and a certain form of words is made use of. This water outwardly applied, is the external sign of the inward grace received by the soul. By this is signified, that by the virtue of the Holy Ghost, all the spots which defile the soul are inwardly washed away, and that the soul receives the excellent gift of justification. The pictures or

images which represent pious subjects, are signs of sacred things, but let it not be inferred from thence, that they are sacraments. They are signs of sacred things, 'tis true, but they do not contain or give grace : whereas the sacraments of the new law not only signify some sacred thing, but contain in themselves and give what is sacred, viz. divine grace. *He saves us*, says St. Paul, (Tit. iii. 3.) *by the washing of regeneration, and the renovation of the Holy Ghost.*

It being understood that the sacraments are outward signs, you are now to learn what is meant by inward grace, which these outward signs are said to signify. This it is proper for you to be acquainted with, my brethren, as it is this inward grace which is valuable in the sacraments, and from which the outward sign receives its claim to respect. By grace, we sometimes mean every favor of Almighty God, and in this sense it often occurs in the holy scriptures. At other times, this word is used to express the free gifts of God, which are called graces, because bestowed gratis, not for the desert, nor always for the benefit of the receiver, but for the good of the church, and promotion of God's honor ; such, for example, are the gifts of prophecy, preaching, working miracles, &c. But in speaking of the sacraments, grace is not taken in either of these senses, but is used to

signify an habitual sanctifying grace, which renders us holy in the sight of God, which makes us children of the eternal Father, brothers of and co-heirs with Jesus Christ, living temples of the Holy Ghost, and, as St. Peter says, (2 Ep. i. 4.) *partakers of the Divine nature.*

If such are the effects produced by the sacraments, when worthily received, we ought to hold them in the highest veneration. But yet there have been found persons who have derided and contemned them, because they are in appearance but ordinary things. Our souls, cry they, have a loathing of sacraments so abject and mean; the sacraments are only seals or testimonies to sustain and bear up the weakness of our faith, that by them we may testify our devotion towards God. But, my friends, if they be only seals or testimonies to bear up the imbecility of faith, why did Ananias say to St. Paul, (Acts, xxii. 16.) *Be baptized, and wash away thy sins?* Why did St. Luke write, (Acts ii. 38.) *Do penance, and let every one of you be baptized, for the remission of your sins?* Why did St. Paul say, *He saved us by the laver of regeneration?* (Tit. iii. 5.) What is meant by these words, but that the sacraments through the merits of Christ's passion, have force and power to cleanse the soul, and infuse virtues into it? If such be the efficacy of the sacraments,

why do so many members of the church lie maimed with so many wounds of sin? Alas, this their situation, is not to be imputed to the sacraments, as if they were on that account feeble and inefficacious. What effect can medicines, however good in themselves, produce upon the sick, if they will not make use of them? It is by the neglect of these spiritual medicines, or by the abuse of them, that so many professing themselves members of the church, still continue afflicted with the ulcers of sin, and groaning under the most dangerous spiritual indispositions.

Nor by attributing these powers to the sacraments do we in any measure detract from the merit of Christ's passion. No: the passion of Christ was amply abounding and sufficient to blot out the sins of the whole world. But Christ's passion is applied to us by the sacraments, to which God has annexed justifying grace, in such a manner that ordinarily he hath not decreed to confer it on us but by the use of them. The merits of our Saviour's passion are truly abundant, but unless applied can profit us nought. It is by the sacraments that Christ's merits are applied to us; they are, as it were, instruments by which his grace is effected in us. *The just man*, says St. Paul, *liveth by faith*, (Rom. i. 17.) but he says not that the just man

liveth by faith alone ; to the sacraments is left their force and virtue, and by their means the merits of our Saviour are communicated to us.

The sacraments were instituted by Christ for several reasons ; 1st. that he might accommodate himself to our lowliness and imbecility : for those things which we cannot immediately attain to by the force of our understanding, are conveyed to us through the medium of such things as are perceived by our senses. *The invisible perfections of God are understood from the creation of the world, and seen from the things which are made.* (Rom. i. 20.) By the outward, sensible signs employed in the sacraments, we discover the hidden virtues of the sacraments themselves. For, as St. John Chrysostom says, "If thou wert incorporeal, that is, without a body, God would have given thee incorporeal gifts ; but because thou hast a spirit added to thy body, spiritual gifts are delivered to thee in corporeal things." (Hom. 83, in Matt.) Another reason why the sacraments were chosen by Christ as means of communicating to us his graces, is that it might evidently appear that the grace which we receive by their means, is from God alone : for since a gift so excellent as is God's grace, is conferred upon us by things so abject, we cannot but ascribe the favour to God himself. Wherefore Christ himself gave

light to the blind man with spittle and dirt, rather than with some precious ointment, lest the virtue should be attributed to the ointment and not to his power. A third cause why the sacraments were instituted, is, as St. Ambrose remarks, (l. 5. de sac. c. 4.) that they might be remedies for the soul's health, and ready at hand either to recover or preserve it. Again, they serve as marks by which the faithful are known, by which the soldiers of Christ are discovered, and the members of his church distinguished. Lastly, the sacraments were instituted, that by them christians might be exercised in humility : for it was just that he who was created by God to rule over all things created, being now fallen from his dignity, should be compelled to humble himself, for the recovery of the grace of God, and to seek his salvation from him by creatures far inferior to himself.

As to the minister of the sacraments : It is not an angel, or every one of the people, but only those who are ordained for this purpose, as are bishops and priests. None, saith St. Paul, (Heb. v. 4.) ought to assume to themselves this honor, but who are called to it as Aaron. But it must be remarked that the sacraments do not depend for their efficacy on the dignity and merits of the ministers of them, but on the excellency and merits of Jesus Christ ; for the

ministers are only ambassadors or deputies of Christ, and whatever they act in this character, they do in the name of Christ. Wherefore, as St. Augustine says, (contra donat, l. i. c. 4.) “ *They are not* more true and more holy sacraments because they are administered by one that is better, but they of themselves are holy ; for as it makes no matter as to the efficacy of the seed and plantation, whether or no that be done with clean or foul hands, so that the seed be good, and the earth fruitful ;” so it matters not whether the sacraments be administered by a wicked minister or by one who is pious and good, provided he faithfully perform his office.

Since then the sacraments have this efficacy and dignity, since they were instituted by Christ as a means of salvation to his children, by being the channels of his grace, it should appear useless to exhort you to venerate them, and frequent those which you are interested to approach and which may be repeated. Remember that you can offer to Almighty God no affront more direct and injurious, than by receiving any one of these sacraments with improper dispositions ; nor can you render your souls more defenceless than by neglecting these means provided for your strength and support, or your reconciliation with your God. Remember that when you receive any sacrament, Jesus Christ standeth with

the chalice of his passion, ready to pour it on your souls to wash away your sins ; and remember that when you profane that chalice by receiving a sacrament unworthily, you then wilfully and deliberately tread under foot his adorable blood. Your Saviour has provided in the sacraments, a remedy for your weak and dying souls ; and instead of applying the remedy, you scornfully contemn and abuse it. By so doing, christians, your hearts are hardened against God ; and they who are guilty of this crime, if they continue any time in it, cannot without the greatest difficulty, and without a special grace of God, enter seriously into themselves, if ever they come to a true repentance.

With respect to the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, it sometimes happens that wicked christians receive them to their condemnation, return from them loaded with the same crimes with which they were before charged, and with the additional aggravation of sacrilegious profanation. Then it is that they force themselves not to tremble at vice, they strive to lull themselves into a lethargy which is death to their souls, and labour to silence the reproachful cries of a guilty conscience. Learn, christians, to respect and venerate these holy means provided for your salvation, and frequent them with devotion and awe. Neglect them

not ; for by so doing you deprive yourselves of innumerable graces which God would pledge himself to bestow on you in the rest of your lives. Know and remember that the sacraments are talents of inestimable value, given us with an obligation to profit by them. Remember the sentence pronounced against the servant in the gospel who had neglected to improve the talent entrusted to him : *Cast the unprofitable servant into exterior darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* (Matt. 25.) Should you neglect to improve these talents during life ; or should you abuse them by profaning them, what will your great Lord, your Redeemer Jesus Christ say to you at the terrible day of final retribution. You will be cast out into eternal darkness, eternal misery, where no order but everlasting horror inhabiteth. What weeping, what regret, what gnashing of teeth ; what rage and fury shall they experience who have despised such salutary means, such easy and frequent opportunities of securing salvation, of advancing in virtue and enriching themselves, not for the transitory days of human life, but for the never-ending days of eternity. May this never be your portion ! May you, on that great and important day, rejoice in the proper use you have made of these great blessings ; may you appear before the throne of God rich

in graces, and loaded with virtues; may you hear your industry and virtue applauded; and may each of you, placed on the right hand of your Father and your judge, receive that sentence of bliss and consolation, *Euge serve bone, &c.*

## SERMON LXI.

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ON BAPTISM.

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*Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (John iii. 5.)*

AMONG the seven sacraments admitted by the Catholic Church, the first in order and consequence, is the sacrament of baptism: it is the first in order, because it is the first which is received, and the gate by which we are admitted members of the church, and become capable of receiving the rest. It is the first in point of consequence, as it is absolutely necessary to salvation: for our blessed Saviour in his conversation with Nicodemus, expressly declares, that *unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (John, iii.)* The outward sign made use of in baptism, is the infusion of natural water with the form of words, *I baptize thee, &c.*; by which the inward, visible, sanctifying grace is conferred, which cleanses us

from all the stains of original and actual sin, makes us children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. That it was instituted by Jesus Christ is plain from the commission he gave to his apostles, and in them to the pastors of the church, when he said, *go and teach all nations, &c.* (Matt. xxviii. 19.) This being the first means by which we receive the grace of reconciliation with God, the merits of his death are, by baptism, applied to our souls in so superabundant a manner, as fully to satisfy the divine justice for all demands against us, whether for original or actual sin; and therefore God grants us in it a full and perfect remission of all our past sins, and of all the punishment due to them; and this is one great difference between this sacrament and that of penance, as in the latter, though the guilt and eternal punishment be remitted, yet a debt of temporal punishment remains to be paid. Here then is displayed the loving tenderness of our God; sin is done away, and grace received: but it is my intention this day to lay before you the great effects of this divine sacrament, and to remind you of the obligations which are contracted in receiving it. The design is favourable to virtue, and being interesting to all, deserves attention.

In the first stage of your lives, my friends,

while yet children, you were informed that the sacrament of baptism was instituted by Christ, to wash away the stain of original sin, entailed upon us by the disobedience of our first parent ; but have you ever seriously reflected on the effects of this sacrament ? What you were before you received this sacrament, and what you became in consequence of having received it ? Conceived in sin, and born in sin, we were all, before baptism, children of wrath, unworthy of heaven, and slaves of Satan ; but by baptism, the sin in which we were conceived, and in which we were born, was wholly effaced. A strong inclination to evil, it is true, still remains attached to us, and this we must expect ever to experience through life ; but it remains only to prove our virtue ; to preserve us in fear, humility, and diffidence of ourselves, and to make us sigh more earnestly after that heavenly country where sin will be no more. Before baptism we were the children of Adam, objects of displeasure in the eyes of God, and the devil had power over us. By baptism we became the adoptive children of God ; objects of complaisance in his sight ; the devil was expelled from our souls, and from that moment we had a claim to a heavenly inheritance. We were made brethren of Jesus Christ, and co-heirs with him, by means of the sanctifying grace

which is conferred by this sacrament of baptism, and which not only effaces the guilt of sin within us, but renders us, in some measure partakers of the divine nature ; purifies our hearts, and infuses into our souls the virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost. Nor is this all. We are incorporated with Jesus Christ: we are united to him, as the members of the human body are united with the head. Hence we are made members of the Catholic church ; we belong to it as parts of the whole, and the Catholic church regards us as her children. We are entitled to receive the other sacraments ; we become partakers of all the blessings of the Catholic communion. In short, baptism imprints in our souls an indelible character, stamped with the seal of the blessed and adorable trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. We belong to the Father, who has adopted us for his children ; we belong to the Son, who considers us as his brethren and fellow-members, and to the Holy Ghost, whose temples we are made.

If we attentively consider the excellence of baptism, and the astonishing goodness of God in our regard, we must necessarily be struck with sentiments of the warmest gratitude and admiration. Yes, my friends, we ought to esteem the title of Christian, with all its glorious

rights and privileges, as far exceeding every title of earthly honor. What a respect ought we to conceive for our souls and bodies, which are dedicated and consecrated to God, by this sacrament, to be irrevocably his ; to be eternally devoted to his love and service ! What affection ought we to shew to our fellow-creatures, sanctified by the same sacrament, and dedicated to the same God ! And do we feel no concern for these souls and bodies so solemnly consecrated to him ! Remember that you are Christians, that is, the followers and brethren of Christ ; remember the rank you hold ; remember that what is once consecrated to God ought to remain always his, and that it is a sacrilege to profane or violate what is once consecrated to him. Fly then, with care, from every thing which may be the occasion of sin, either in yourselves or others ; *consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Rom. vi. 11.) If you have been so unhappy as to offend this God, to whom you have made the most solemn vows of lasting allegiance, bewail your misfortune ; let confusion and regret penetrate your souls, and be determined henceforth inviolably to preserve your sacred promises, *that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so you also may walk in newness of life.* (ib. iv.)

You behold, Christians, the surprising effects of this sacrament ; the height of grandeur to which you are raised by virtue of it, and the dignity you have engaged yourselves to support invariably through life. Hence the obligations which you have contracted must ever be kept in view ; the obligations which correspond to the effects of the sacrament must be carefully remembered, that they may be exactly fulfilled. By baptism we were purified from sin, but at the same time we renounced sin for ever. We became children of God, members of Jesus Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost ; but in consequence of these favors, we are obliged to lead a life worthy of the high rank to which we were elevated. We were united to the number of the faithful ; we were made members of the one holy, Catholic and apostolic church ; but from that instant we became subject to that church, and bound to shew it all due respect and submission. In a word, by our baptismal promises, we engaged ourselves to renounce sin, to live the life of Jesus Christ, and to obey with filial duty the church which he established. These are the promises which, in baptism, you made to God, by the mouths of your god-fathers and god-mothers ; promises the most solemn and authentic, which the saints of God have styled vows, and the greatest vows, because by

them we made a solemn profession of the Christian religion. These vows which you then made are so essentially connected with your Christian name and profession, that they can never be dispensed with; of such perpetual force, that they oblige those who have made them to the end of their lives, and in every part of their lives.

But have you ever seriously reflected, my friends, on the nature of these vows; of the solemn promises you made when you received the holy sacrament of baptism? Have you ever felt the force of those explicit renunciations of the world, the flesh, and the devil? You then promised a perpetual allegiance to the Lord; you declared an eternal war against his enemies. As champions of Christ, you were anointed with the holy oil, denoting the spiritual unction of divine grace, first upon the breast, to signify the grace which was given you, to fortify your hearts with heavenly courage to fight and conquer your spiritual enemies, and then between your shoulders, to signify that the like grace was given you to enable you to support the crosses and troubles of this life with Christian patience and fortitude. Enlisted, then, into the service of Christ, you abjured the devil and all his works, and all his pomps; you became dead to sin and alive to

God, putting on Jesus Christ, that with him you might lead a new life. *Know ye not*, says St. Paul to the Romans, chap. vi., *that all we who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in his death? For we are buried together with him, by baptism unto death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life.* (v. 3, 4.) But purified as we were by the waters of regeneration, and cleansed from every spot of original defilement, how have we comported ourselves? Have not we frequently disregarded our profession of faith; our promises of allegiance to God, and renunciation of Satan?

The ceremonies observed on the occasion have excited in us but little remembrance of our obligations; the signs of the cross made over us to signify our dedication to Him who bled upon the cross for our redemption, the exorcisms by which our independence of the prince of darkness was expressed, the white robe the emblem of innocence, and the lighted taper the emblem of faith, have but rarely recurred to us, and it is to be feared, been little attended to; and seldom served to remind us of our sacred promises and engagements. Look around you, my friends, behold the numbers sanctified by the same waters of regeneration, sworn into the service of the same king, who have professed

themselves his servants, and abjured every other domination ; and like you, forsworn the works and pomps of Satan, and at the same time view their employment and pursuits. Hurry and bustle, care and solicitude, toil and labour, are every where discernible ; but what is the object of so much stir, anxiety, and assiduity ? Instead of avoiding the works of Satan, are they not in appearance studiously concerned for his interests ; and instead of despising his pomps and vanities, are they not, for the most part, grasping at every vain delusion, which their enemy holds out, to deceive and ruin them ? Let us now turn our eyes to ourselves ; let us examine whether we have preserved that innocence, represented by the white garment, which in baptism we are enjoined to bear, without spot or blemish, before the judgement seat of God. Dignified with the sacred title of Christians, and stamped with the mark of our profession, christian virtue and christian edification should be our aim and endeavour. But is this the case ? *Being made free from sin, are we become the servants of justice ?* (verse 18.) Have we wholly renounced the pleasures of the world, the vain baubles of ambition, the tinsel show of honour, the craving of avarice, the meretricious colouring of luxury and sensual gratification ? From your actions may you judge of the sincerity of

your promises ; from them you may learn whose servants you are. *Know ye not*, says the same illustrious Doctor of the nations, *that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are whom you obey ; whether it be of sin unto death, or of obedience unto justice.* (verse 16.) Ah, my friends, if we direct our judgement by this rule, we shall perhaps have reason to fear that we are betraying the interest of our chief, to whom we owe our allegiance ; and that we are, in effect, his servants, whom we have engaged to resist with unremitting opposition. For do we not rather submit to him than oppose him, when on every assault which he makes, he finds us unprepared ; when our actions and discourse are often a source of disedification to our neighbour, and even our best actions are rendered prejudicial to ourselves, because tainted with vanity or self-interest ? Do we not rather forward the dominion of Satan, than endeavour to controul it, when being made children of the church, and subject to its commands, we despise its ordinances ? Let those tremble at the reflection of the baseness of their conduct, who neglectful of God's commandments, acknowledge no law which is opposed to their passions, nor any rule but inclination. Let those tremble who hear without attention the precepts of the church, whose spiritual children

they are; who contemn the commands of fasting and abstinence, who refuse to comply with the obligation of paschal communion, and will not fulfil the salutary injunction of approaching the tribunal of reconciliation by even an annual confession; who perhaps laugh to scorn the reasonable submission to the power of the church, despise its decisions, and contemn its authority? But what shall be the confusion and dread of these, when Jesus Christ, the divine Redeemer of the Universe, divesting himself of his long-neglected mercy, and arrayed in all the terrors of insulted justice, shall remind them of their promises, arraign their perfidy, and with anger in his countenance demand justice of them! *From thy own mouth do I judge you*; by your own engagements shall you be tried; and by your contempt of your own engagements shall you be condemned. Then shall the nations of infidelity, on whom the same graces have not been conferred, condemn the faithless servant of Christ; then shall Tyre and Sidon rise up against the unhappy members of the christian communion who have not walked worthily of the vocation in which they were called; and less severely shall they be punished, as their sins have been less grievous: *for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the mighty works which have been wrought in you, they*

*would have done penance long ago in sackcloth and ashes.* But what language can express the shame with which we shall be overwhelmed, if, which God in his mercy avert, we should be so unfortunate as to be plunged into hell for our sins! Oh, Christians, the very thought should strike terror through our souls and bodies! More guilty than the infidels, our torments will exceed theirs; the character which was imprinted on our souls by the sacrament of baptism, that august and indelible mark, shall still remain, but only to increase our misery, and give redoubled pain to our sufferings.

And is it then possible, my friends, that the inestimable favour which God has conferred upon us in calling us to Christianity, should become the source of all our misery for eternal ages! Yet this must be infallibly the case if we are not found to have been faithful to our engagements. In order then to avoid so distressing a misfortune, often reflect upon the two objects which I have this day held out to your attention; the grace received in baptism, and the promises made in baptism; the one to testify your acknowledgments and keep alive the remembrance of the dignity of Christian with which you are honored; the other to animate you to a life worthy of the christian calling. Select certain seasons of the year for the re-

newal of your baptismal engagements ; for example, let the eves of Easter and Pentecost be appointed for that purpose, or Low Sunday, on which day the newly-baptized Christians put off the white robe received in baptism. Be ever mindful of your obligations ; be convinced of the importance of the warfare in which you are engaged : if you behave with magnanimity and resolution, great will be your crown ; but if you perfidiously go over to the enemy, or ignominiously surrender to him, endless woe will be the just punishment of your ingratitude. And you whose parental tenderness is awake to every corporal want of your much loved offspring ; who are studious to prevent every thing which seems to threaten pain or sorrow, be, at least, equally anxious to promote their spiritual interests and eternal happiness. It is strictly your duty to inform them of the grace and dignity which they receive in baptism, and to turn their minds to the ratification of their promises as soon as they shall arrive at the years of reason and discretion. Animate them to virtue by your own example ; they will more readily pursue where they see you lead the way ; make them sensible of their dignity of Christians, remind them of their duties as such ; and, as far as lies in your power, make them perform them with exactness. Ah, Christians, were all duly

studious to preserve the innocence of baptism in ourselves and others, what a universal alteration would take place through all ranks and situations of life! How greatly diminished would be those murmurs of discontent, those continual complaints of men dissatisfied with the place they hold in society. The comforts derived from the practice of virtue, the sweets of a good conscience, would alleviate the burden of labour and soften the rigours of penury. Pain and sickness would be supported with cheerfulness, even death itself would lose its terrors, from a well-founded hope, that though by it a period was to be put to our mortal life, yet it would be the gate that would conduct us to a happy immortality.

## SERMON LXII.

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ON CONFIRMATION.

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*They laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost. (Acts, viii. 17.)*

THE depravity of human nature ever inclining the will to sin, the envy and malice of the prince of darkness, who endeavours by every artifice to draw us from the path of virtue, the fascinating charms of earthly objects, all conspire to make the life of man on earth, a continual warfare, an uninterrupted conflict, in which he must frequently be discomfited, unless upheld by the powerful grace of Almighty God. Notwithstanding therefore that by the waters of baptism, the defilement of original disobedience is washed away, though in that sacrament we receive the Holy Ghost, become the children of God, the members of his church, and heirs of his kingdom, yet to arm us against the open assaults and malicious wiles of our spiritual foes, Jesus Christ was

graciously pleased to institute another sacrament, which from its effects is called confirmation. It is a sacrament in which, by the imposition of the hands of the bishop, the Christian receives the Holy Ghost, in order to make him strong and perfect, and to enable him to profess his faith with intrepidity and constancy.

That confirmation is a sacrament wholly distinct from baptism, is easily discovered from the faith, the practice, and the testimony of every age, from the present even to the apostles, who administered it to those who had already received the faith, and been baptized; that the faith which they had received might not be vain, but might be secured and strengthened by the grace of the Holy Spirit. By the fathers and writers of the first ages, it is called a sacrament by which the soul is fortified; the spirit is given in baptism, say they, to pardon, but in confirmation, to fight; in the former we are cleansed from iniquity, in the latter we are fortified with courage; in the one we are washed, in the other we are strengthened. (Tert. S. Melchiad, P. Damian.) And the most ample evidence to the existence, use, and efficacy of this sacrament, is given in the 8th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where we read, that *when the apostles, who were in Jerusalem, had learned that the Samaritans had received the word of God, by the means of the deacon Philip, who had preached the gospel*

to them, and baptized them, *they sent to them Peter and John: who, when they had arrived, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost.* Here we see that the apostles made use of the imposition of hands, whereby the Holy Ghost was received by those who had before been baptized; and though the precise time when Christ instituted this sacrament cannot be determined, yet it must have been from him that the apostles derived their instructions on this head; they would never have presumed that this ceremony could confer the Holy Ghost, unless it had been ordained by their master for that end. Their successors have uniformly preserved the practice to the present time, through every succeeding age, and the catholic church has ever considered it as a great sacrament, highly necessary to the christian soldier, in arming him against the attacks of his spiritual enemies, the security of faith, and the defence of virtue. To inculcate the efficacy, to shew the dignity, and explain the nature of this sacrament, is my design this day; that they, who have not yet received it, inspired with a due veneration of it, and convinced of its use and necessity, may be disposed to prepare for it with becoming respect and gratitude; may see their crime if they deliberately neglect

it; and that they who have already received it, may labour to co-operate with its graces, in order that the Divine bounty be not lost in their regard, and his mercy and love treated with contempt.

In the sacrament of confirmation, as in every other, there is discernible a matter and form, a visible external sign, expressive of the internal invisible grace, received in the sacrament. The matter of this sacrament is the imposition of hands of the bishop, and the anointing with chrism; the form is this: *I sign thee with the sign of the cross, I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name, &c.* That this anointing was made use of in the earliest infancy of Christianity, is certain, from the mention made of it in the first ages: and indeed we see it usual, both in the Old and New Testament, to anoint those with oil who are especially consecrated to God. It is an emblem of that activity, liveliness, and energy, with which the Christian should proceed in the race of human life, and as the wrestlers of old, and those who ran for a prize, anointed their bodies with oil to acquire an addition of pliant ease and vigorous alertness, so it signifies to the Christian, the decided part he is to take against the enemies of his soul, and expresses the activity and vigour which the sacrament interiorly communicates.

The balm which is mingled with the oil, is a figure of the odour of sanctity which we ought to breathe according to that of the apostle : *we are the good odour of Christ unto God.* (2 Cor. ii. 15.) It has also the property of preserving bodies from putrefaction ; and in this, it is with the greatest propriety applied in this sacrament, as the grace which is here received, tends principally to preserve the souls of the faithful, from the pestilential air of vice, and the contagion of iniquity. The sign of the cross which is made on the forehead, is to remind the Christian, that henceforth it is his peculiar duty to bear that sacred mark of his profession, the badge of his character, before him, neither fearing to profess his faith, nor neglecting to practise it. It is to remind him, that in spite of the taunts and sarcasms of profane and irreligious men, who often glory in throwing a ridicule on virtue, and labour to overturn that sanctity which they have not the courage to imitate, and which is to them an object of envy ; in spite of the clamours of some, and the insinuations, artifices, and snares of others, he should proceed with constancy, and be willing to bear in reality, those crosses of which that on his forehead is a sign.

A blow also is given him on his cheek, to signify that patient submission with which he

must bear the insults of the impertinent or vain, the oppressions of the proud and overbearing, and resign himself to the calamities incident to life, and the hardships of misfortune. In short, by confirmation the Christian is enlisted into the service of his heavenly king: by baptism he became his subject, and submitted to his laws: but in confirmation he enters the ranks, engages himself to defend those laws, receives the armour of defence, and stands forth the champion of his sovereign, to uphold his cause, and fight his battles.

The importance of this sacrament must be immediately acknowledged, if a moment be allowed to reflect on the great dangers to which faith and virtue are exposed. We live in an age when vice even dares to throw off the disguise which it formerly wore, presumes to appear in its true form, nor longer fears to create disgust and horror. This is evident both in the behaviour and conversation of men; profaneness, immorality, and loose ribaldry are listened to without repugnance, and joined without remorse. Nay, to express an unwillingness to co-operate in this folly and wickedness, to shew a backwardness, or manifest dislike, is treated with scorn, as the effect of weakness, unmanliness, and meanness of spirit: thus, the opprobrium due to vice is thrown

upon virtue, and fear co-operates to corrupt the heart, which inclination would lead to honor and integrity. If then, the racks and tortures of persecution be no longer dreaded, virtue is not secure from the assailments of enemies, perhaps more formidable, as their designs are warily executed, and under the shew of friendship.

Here then, my brethren, is discovered the inestimable value and use of this sacrament; for besides the general effect which is sanctifying grace to all who receive it worthily, its peculiar effect is a grace which makes us strong and perfect, faithful in the hour of temptation and trial, fearless under the attacks of our enemies, undaunted under the wantonness of ridicule, calumny, and the malice of resentment, and intrepid in the profession of our faith, though persecution and cruelty should menace us with torments and death. This effect was discernible in the apostles, who from a set of timid, weak, and cowardly men, became, by receiving the Holy Ghost, bold and undismayed: they no longer remained concealed, fearful of the Jews, their enemies; but exposed themselves to all the consequences of malice and envy, boldly professing their faith, and supporting it by the most irrefragable arguments. Fired with this spirit, they proceeded through

life defying the power of persecution, they thought it an honor to be reviled and insulted for the sake of Christ, and gladly laid down their lives for the same cause. *Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a detractor, but if it be your lot to suffer for being a Christian, be not ashamed, but glorify God upon that account.* (St. Peter, ep. 1. c. iv.) This is the language they held to their flocks, and the same they invariably adhered to themselves, thinking it an honor and a blessing to die for him who had undergone death for them. Let then those weak and timid Christians who profess their faith only as it were in secret, and in public blush at it, as though it were a disgrace; who are deterred from complying with the obligations under which the catholic church lays them, lest the world should deride their compliance as ignorance and weakness; let such at least be convinced, that without the grace of God, and without recurring to those means which he has ordained to convey his grace to them, they are unable even to profess, and much more to practise what conscience invincibly proves to be their duty.

In fact, the obligation of receiving this sacrament is of so strict a nature, both from its being necessary to the adult, and from the divine precept, that they who neglect to comply

with it when it is in their power, are inexcusably guilty of a great crime; for most certainly our blessed Saviour did not institute a sacrament for the benefit of all, and yet permit some to use or decline it at their pleasure. Moreover, as every sacrament has some particular grace annexed to it, which we cannot expect to acquire by any other channel; and as it would be highly criminal in us to look for that grace by any other means than by those which Christ has ordained for that purpose, so that strengthening grace, which makes us bold and perfect Christians, cannot be ascribed to any sacrament or ceremony, besides confirmation. Convinced of this, the primitive Christians, while under the severe trials of persecution, had recourse to this sacrament as the most certain means of acquiring strength, fortitude, and perseverance. Hence, when their bishops were imprisoned or banished, the faithful bewailed their absence as a most calamitous and afflicting circumstance, not only because they were deprived of the example and instructions of their pastors, but because they were by this debarred from this invigorating sacrament, and thus as it were, left defenceless amidst the dangers which on all sides surrounded them. The use and necessity of this sacrament still remain; if the enemy of man no longer direct his malicious

operations against your faith, by open persecution, yet his arts are still most dangerous ; nor are they less frequent because they may be less perceived. He endeavours to undermine the edifice of your faith by gradual encroachments, to steal upon you by surprise, to lull you into fatal slumbers, that he may then execute his purpose with security. My friends, amidst the greatest dangers, you cannot expect to escape unhurt without means of defence, nor can you avoid the evil which is advancing to meet you, unless you take all precautions to prevent it.

If then such be the excellence, dignity, and necessity of this sacrament, every Christian should desire it, and every endeavour should be made to receive it worthily. Certain dispositions are requisite to prepare the Christian for receiving it in the same manner as in the other sacraments ; certain preparations are necessary to receive them with fruit. First, as this sacrament is instituted, not to restore the sinner to grace, but to increase it in him, it is absolutely necessary that those who approach to it should cleanse themselves from every mortal sin, if they have been so unhappy as to lose the treasure of baptismal innocence, *for*, says the wise man, *the spirit of wisdom will not enter into a soul ill disposed, nor dwell in a body defiled with sin.* Secondly ; all rancour, envy, jealousy, animo-

sity must be laid aside, for the Holy Ghost is the spirit of peace, and not of dissention. Your affections must be drawn off from the world, for the spirit of God cannot reside under the same roof with the spirit of the world, as malice, pride, and vanity will ever be opposed to charity, meekness, and humility. Thirdly ; fervent prayer must be the immediate preparation for the reception of the Holy Ghost in the sacrament of confirmation. It is in the breasts of the devout and religious, who preserve the law of the Lord in the midst of their hearts, and who meditate upon it day and night, that the Spirit of God is pleased to dwell : dissipation, folly, vanity, and levity are his enemies ; he shuns them, and those who harbour them.

Christians, if you knew but your own wants ; if you saw the malice of sin ; the ruin in which it involves those who yield to it, and at the same time at how small a distance from it your passions place you ; were you duly sensible with what violence they urge you towards destruction ; how unceasingly the world and the devil labour in concert with them to the same effect, oh, alarmed at your situation, and terrified at the gulph below, on the very brink of which you are tottering, you would stretch out your hands and raise your hearts to him who alone can protect you and save you. Did you rightly

know the spirit of the world, and the infectious air you inhale from it, you would call upon your God to free you from this land of pestilence ; you would really wish to be dissolved, and to be with God. Do you, who have received this sacrament of confirmation, endeavour to keep alive in you the grace it imparts, and beg of the Almighty to increase his graces, and to guide your feet into the way of peace. And you who have not yet received this sacrament, hasten to receive it ; but use every proper means in preparing yourselves, that it may be to you a blessing, and not a curse. Beg of the Holy Ghost that he will descend into your hearts, and there take up his abode ; that he will bless you with all his fruits, and all his gifts. If you receive them not, it is because your hearts join in the interests of passion ; are attached to the transient enjoyments of the earth, regardless of their real interests, you then, who have not yet received this sacrament, prepare with strenuous endeavour to approach to it as soon as opportunity offers, with purity of heart, charity, and true devotion. And let all, with fervent supplication, entreat the God of mercy to send down his holy spirit upon them ; to purify their hearts, enlighten their understandings, and lead them to the mansions of eternal peace.

## SERMON LXIII.

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ON THE EUCHARIST.

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*The bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. (John vi. 52.)*

AMONG the sacraments of the Catholic Church, the most exalted, sublime, and admirable, is the Eucharist; in which we are taught to believe that in consequence of the power and promises of Jesus Christ, the faithful really receive the body and blood of Christ under the forms of bread and wine. We believe that by the power of Him who out of nothing created this universe so replete with wonders; who changed water into wine at the feast of Cana; who extends his power over those things which are not, equally as over those which are; the substance of bread and wine is converted into the body and blood of Christ Jesus. With pleasure should I employ my time in explaining to you the great and glorious effects of a worthy participation of these divine mysteries, and instead of exciting

your faith, endeavour by every endearing motive to inflame your charity; but because this heavenly banquet, this chalice of benediction, this sacrament of peace and charity, is considered by many merely as a figure and empty *remembrancer* of the passion and death of our loving Redeemer, because in short there are many who refuse to believe the express words of Jesus Christ, that the bread which he has given us is his *flesh* for the life of the world; that your belief may be confirmed; and that you may offer to God a homage founded upon conviction; I find myself called upon, in treating on this sacrament, to prove to you that in this sacrament under the outward visible forms of bread and wine, are contained the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Our blessed Saviour knowing that the time was near at hand when he should be delivered up to the malice of the Jews; as a pledge of union, and a testimony of that regard which he bore to his apostles, was pleased, even on the eve of his passion, and knowing that one of the twelve would betray him, to observe with due solemnity the passover of the Jews. *And whilst they were at supper, as it is related by St. Matthew, (xxvi. 26, 27, and 28.) Jesus took bread, and blessed and broke, and gave to his disciples, and said: take ye, and eat, this is my body;*

*and taking the chalice, he gave thanks, and gave to them, saying: drink ye all of this; for this is my blood of the New Testament which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins.*

These, my brethren, are the words which our Lord made use of in instituting this sacrament. In understanding them, we should follow the sense they appear to bear when considered in relation to the time, place, and other circumstances in which they were delivered, and as supported by other corresponding texts of sacred writ. The words as given by St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, are nearly the same, and have the same evident signification. By St. John the *institution* of the sacrament is not mentioned. How are they understood, Christians? By the Catholic church they are believed to express the real and substantial presence of the body and blood of Jesus Christ; and though some few have at times opposed this interpretation of them, the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist was the general, nay, universal belief of Christendom until the sixteenth century. A contrary doctrine was first broached by Scotus in the ninth age, and taught by Berengarius in the eleventh; but the former had no followers, and the latter retracted publicly his opinion. In the sixteenth century, Luther, the leader of the reformation, challenged the

world to overturn the doctrine of the real presence ; yet Zuinglius had the courage to oppose it, and when supported by the greater credit of Calvin, succeeded in drawing from the side of Luther one half of the reformation. By these the Eucharist is considered only to represent in figure the body and blood of Christ. But, Christians, the words of Christ understood literally, evidently demonstrate the real presence ; and they are to be understood literally, because the metaphorical and figurative sense is obscure, while the words of Christ should be supposed, on this occasion, free from all obscurity and ambiguity. The figurative explication is obscure and unnatural, for it hardly ever will of itself occur to any one ; nor did the Greeks, who were ever fond of allegory, discover any such meaning in the words before the time of Scotus Erigena. Even Zuinglius, who as he himself confesses, sought through all antiquity for this explication, owns that he could no where discover it, but in the obscure epistle of an obscure person. And Luther, who was desirous of embracing any opinion contrary to the Catholic faith, which could be upheld by the shadow of an argument, and wished to adopt that sense, yet found it too forced, too manifestly contrary to the belief of ages, to be supported. If, then, the figurative explication of the text is any way

obscure, that interpretation should be adopted which is clearer and natural; for certainly the subject on which our Lord was then conversing, the persons whom he addressed himself to, the circumstances of place and time in which he spoke, required that his words should be as perspicuous as possible. He was leaving his church a sacrament, he was declaring to his children his last will and testament. Whenever in the sacred writings the institution of a sacrament is recorded, either in the old law or the new, the words are always clear and intelligible. How plain are the words of Gen. xvii. where circumcision is appointed; of Exodus xii. where the paschal solemnity is instituted; and how obvious the sense of the whole book of Leviticus, where a multiplicity of sacrifices are commanded! How clear are the words of the last chapters of St. Matthew and St. Mark, where the institution of baptism is commemorated. Can it then for a moment be supposed that Christ, in instituting the noblest sacrament of the Christian religion, would have expressed himself in terms so ambiguous and obscure as to seem rather to mean what he did not mean than what it was his wish to signify? Or that his expression was figurative, merely to give us cause to lament that he had left us only the figure of that blessing, the substance of which his divine power

could have bequeathed us? Or that he had made his meaning dark and mysterious by the substitution of metaphor, where by the use of common language his meaning would have been plain and simple? Again, remember it was his last will to his disconsolate children. But does not the nature of a will require the exactest accuracy and nicest perspicuity, that every cause of litigation may be prevented? Where the Old Testament is established, (Exod. xxiv. 8.) every word is intelligible. Jacob, though usually figurative in his prophecies, yet in drawing up his will, (Gen. xlix.) uses words the most distinct and unambiguous. The same simplicity of diction is discernible in the wills of David, (3 Kings ii.) of the elder Tobias, (Tob. iv. &c.) and it exceeds improbability to imagine that Christ, our Lord, in whom were *all the treasures of the wisdom of God*, would have employed terms occult and captious in framing his will, in which as singular means of acquiring an eternal inheritance was concerned. Add to this the condition of those whom Jesus addressed himself to, and the time in which he addressed them. A loving father was speaking to children to whom, as he had himself told them, it was *given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*, (Matt. xiii. 11.) who of course ought to be made acquainted with a sacrament which they were

about to receive, and which they were afterwards to communicate to others. He was speaking to them at a time when he was about to pass from this world to his father; and therefore at a time when, if ever, the promise which he had made them might be expected to be fulfilled: *The hour cometh when I will no more speak to you in proverbs.* (John xvi. 25.) Finally, he was speaking to them, that having loved his own, he might convince them that he loved them to the end (John xiii. 1.); that to them he was speaking without disguise, in all the tenderness of parental affection. All these things considered, it must appear impossible that Jesus Christ, the splendor of his father's glory, in whom were all the treasures, &c. would have made use of allegory, metaphor, or any tropical mode of speech which might involve so important a subject in darkness and obscurity.

Nor do we find any astonishment expressed by the apostles on this occasion. Our Lord had before sufficiently informed them either of his intended legacy, or had sufficiently impressed them with a conviction of his power, to enable them to receive this extraordinary favour with due faith and respect. He had before promised to effect this prodigy of love; he chose an opportunity the most favourable to conviction, and adopted a manner the best calculated to gain their belief.

A little while before he announced his intentions, he had in a most miraculous manner satisfied a multitude of about five thousand, with but five barley loaves and two fishes, which had such an effect upon them, that they sought to take him by force and make him king. If we mark well the conversation he held with the multitude when they had again found him, we shall perceive the promise he made to them of giving them his body and blood, which he fulfilled at his last supper. We shall perceive the cautious manner in which he discloses to them so inconceivable a mystery, and discover the plainness with which he speaks, and the conformity of his words on that occasion, with those employed by him in the institution of this sacrament. After endeavouring to raise their affections from the things of the earth, the loaves and the fishes, and exhorting them not to labour for the *meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the son of man would give them*; as if about to announce to them something above the reach of human reason, he inculcates the necessity of divine faith which they could not acquire of themselves, but which was to come from above. *This is the work of God that you believe in him whom he hath sent.* (verse 29.) *Though it is the will of the Father that every one who seeth the Son and believeth*

*in him, may have life everlasting; (verse 40.)* yet, continues he, *no man can come to me, unless the Father who has sent me, draw him.* He had informed them that the manna which their fathers eat in the desert, was inferior to the bread of God which *cometh down from heaven and giveth life to the world; (verse 33.)* and they had earnestly desired this bread of which he spoke: *give us always of this bread.* (ver. 34.) But convinced as he was of the opposition which this mystery would meet with from the presumption of man's feeble reason, he again insists on the necessity of faith in him. *Amen, amen, I say unto you, he that believeth in me hath everlasting life.* (verse 47.) After insisting thus upon the necessity of their confidence in his words, he proceeds thus: *I am the bread of life; (verse 48.) your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead.* (verse 49.) *This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that if any man eat of it he may not die.* (verse 50.) *I am the living bread which came down from heaven; (verse 51.) if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.* (verse 52.)

Here, my brethren, our blessed Saviour gives them the sign which they asked of him in opposition to the manna which their fathers

had eaten in the desert : not a merely corporal food, but a food for the soul, to strengthen them unto immortality. If any man eat of this, &c. He speaks not here of any metaphorical food, but of a new sustenance, which he promises to give. The bread which I will give, says our Lord. Had he spoken merely of the spiritual food of faith, it was already received, it remained not to be given, as many of the apostles, disciples, and of those who were present already believed in him. Had the spiritual food of faith only been signified, the Jews had received and eaten it in the old law. *For, as St. Paul says, (1 Cor. x. 3, 4.) they did all eat the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink ; and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.* But he spoke of a real and substantial food, and in this sense he was understood by his audience : it was above the reach of human comprehension ; it baffled the efforts of their reason ; it amazed and staggered them. *The Jews strove among themselves, saying, how can this man give us his flesh to eat ? (v. 53.)* That he promised to give it was clear ; but not discerning the divine power, veiled under the humble form of *the son of Joseph, (42.)* they ask how ; and though hitherto his disciples, they refuse to submit to this *hard saying. (61.)* But Jesus,

approving of their interpretation of his words, but at the same time condemning their want of faith, *said to them,—Amen ; amen, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. (54.) He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day. (55.) For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. (56.) He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him. (57.) As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me. (58.) This is the bread that came down from heaven ; not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this bread shall live for ever. (59.) After this many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. (67.)* My brethren, you have heard the words of Jesus ! how do you understand them ? It is evident that the disciples themselves understood them not in a metaphorical sense, for so they would have contained nothing sufficient to make them doubt of his veracity, but in a plain literal sense, which being wholly new to them, and incomprehensible to human reason and understanding, alarmed their minds, and separated them from their master. But our blessed Lord, who on

other occasions always explained himself, when his meaning was not understood, could never have permitted his words to be thus mistaken. On this occasion, however, so far from informing them that they had misconceived him, he repeats it to the Jews in a still more forcible manner, adding the most solemn asseveration. *Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.* (54.) And so far from discountenancing the explication of his disciples, he in some degree increases the difficulty which had risen in their minds. *Doth this scandalize you,* says he; cannot you believe that I can give you my flesh to eat. If so, how much less will you credit my words, when I am gone to my Father? *If, then, you shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before.* (63.) What will be your thoughts? Here again he shews them that what he said was literally to be understood; for if his meaning had been spiritual and metaphorical, it would by no means be more difficult to believe in Christ after a glorious manifestation of his power by ascending to heaven, than when here on earth, humbled, despised, veiled under the form of a servant, and made to the likeness of weak man.

Now, my brethren, join the words of Our Saviour on this occasion, with those he used at

his last supper, and which I have already mentioned, when he said to his apostles, having taken bread, blessed, and broken it: *Take ye and eat; this is my body*; and when blessing the cup, he gave it to them, *saying, drink ye all of this; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins.* (Matt. xxvi.) Did he not here give them what he before promised: this was the bread which came down from heaven; (John vi. 59.) this was truly his blood of the new alliance, which, unless you receive, ye shall not have life in you.

Having thus mentioned some few arguments which occur from a review of the sacred text, I might represent to you, if time would permit, the dispositions necessary in approaching to these divine mysteries. I might have produced a thousand more proofs in favor of this august sacrament; but I hope I have said sufficient to remove every doubt, and satisfy every difficulty. The sixth chapter of St. John, where he promises to confer this ineffable favor on his children, and the twentieth-sixth of St. Matthew, in which his institution of the sacrament is recorded, if read without prevention and determined prejudice, must convince, I think, any reasonable mind and uncorrupted heart, that Jesus Christ, whose divinity was veiled under

our humanity, is really and substantially present under the outward appearance of bread and wine. I might endeavour to enforce the respect due to this divine Saviour when present on our altars, and at all times to our temples in which he resides. But these subjects, &c. I must leave unhandled, and only beg of you to weigh them in private, when departed from hence, and retired to your closets, ever remembering that he whom we here daily immolate and adore, and whom you occasionally receive, is the Lord of Glory, the Son of the Most High, the splendour of his Father, the Immortal King of Ages, the Redeemer of Man, the Head and Spouse of his church, the Bread of Angels; that he offers himself to you as the food and nourishment of your souls, to sanctify you and support you during your present pilgrimage, and to conduct you unto a never-ending immortality.

## SERMON LXIV.

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ON THE EUCHARIST AS A SACRIFICE.

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*From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation.*  
(Malach. i. 10.)

IN my discourse to you last Sunday, I spoke to you of the blessed Eucharist as a sacrament of the new law, instituted by Jesus Christ, in which his body and blood, his soul and divinity, are really and substantially present under the forms of bread and wine. This day I design to treat of the Eucharist as a sacrifice, consummated on the cross and perpetuated on our altars, comprising every other sacrifice, nor to be succeeded by any other more noble and perfect: first, however, I shall shew you the necessity of a sacrifice, in every time and age, and that those of the old law have retired before this excellent sacrifice of the new alliance, of which they were merely figures.

Religion is a homage which unites us to God by a perfect subjection of ourselves to the Supreme Being, and which makes us refer ourselves and all our actions to his glory. Now religion makes us fulfil this indispensable duty principally by sacrifice, which is an offering made to God, by which his sovereign dominion over whatever is created, is acknowledged. This offering must be interior, because *God is a spirit, and they who adore him, must adore him in spirit and in truth.* (John iv. 24.) But man being composed of body and soul, of matter as well as spirit, this oblation must also be external, in order to give visible and public marks of the interior disposition of his heart towards the sovereign majesty; consequently to internal sacrifice external sacrifice must be joined, and this is no other than a sensible sign of that internal sacrifice which is due to God as our creator and preserver. In consequence of this, in all times was this oblation made to God. The light of nature first inculcated the necessity of sacrifice, as the first and most essential act of religion. The sacred historian informs us, that in the beginning of the world Cain offered to God the fruits of the earth, and Abel, who was a shepherd, the firstlings of his flock. (Gen. iv. 3, 4.) Noah, also, when come out of the ark, *built an altar to the Lord, and*

*taking of all cattle and fowls that were clean, offered holocausts upon the altar.* (Gen. viii. 20.) The written law afterwards confirmed what nature had inspired, and declares to us that either to turn away the minds of men from sacrifice, or to induce them to sacrifice to any but God alone, were crimes of the blackest enormity. *The sin* (of the sons of Heli) *was exceeding great before the Lord, because they withdrew men from the sacrifice of the Lord.* (1 Reg. ii. 17.) And to inspire a horror of all idolatrous or superstitious sacrifice, it is enacted by the law of God, that *he who sacrificeth unto Gods, shall be put to death, save only to the Lord.* (Exod. xxii. 20.)

External sacrifice consists in offering to God some external thing, to be destroyed or changed; and that for four reasons, which constitute the four ends of sacrifice. First, as an acknowledgement of the sovereign dominion of God over every thing created. Secondly, to thank him for his favors and benefits. Thirdly, to obtain pardon for sin, and as a mark of what we owe to the divine justice. Fourthly, to implore all necessary aid. To fulfil all these ends, the law ordained different sacrifices: the holocaust, or whole burnt offering, as a testimony of the full and unreserved homage due to God; the victim of propitiation or sin offering; the

peace offering, to thank God for favors received, and to beg a continuance of his bounty. But these sacrifices, though ordained by the divine law, were no more than signs, incapable *of themselves* of pleasing God. They had neither force nor virtue, but by the faith of those who offered them, and who had in view that divine victim, *the lamb without spot, who taketh away the sins of the world*. When these sacrifices were offered by holy men, as were Abel, Abraham, Job, and all those who lived in faithful expectation of the Messiah to come, they were then pleasing to God, who received them according to the expression of the scriptures, as a sweet perfume ascending to him. But when the priests attended only to the external ceremony, and (with the people) separated the sign from what was signified; the holocausts divested of their virtue and merit, were no longer acceptable to the Lord. However attentive the priests were to select animals without blemish or defect, yet these were simply figures of the future immolation of him who alone was exempt from every spot of sin. That spirit which was required to animate these ceremonies of religion, diminished daily, when the prophets no longer appeared among the Jewish people; and irreligion and stupid ignorance had arrived at their highest

pitch, at the time immediately preceding the coming of the Messiah. In effect, what else was to be expected from the Pharisees, who contented themselves with the external practice of the law, and above all, from the Sadducees, who governed in the temple, and presided over the sacrifices, while they disavowed all belief of a future resurrection. Now, therefore, was the time when the figures were to cease, and when, according to the prediction of the royal prophet, God was to reject the sacrifices which had been offered till that time only in the temple of Jerusalem.

A new sacrifice was required, a sacrifice to be offered *in spirit and in truth*, and this our Saviour announced to the Samaritan woman, who enquired of him in what *place* it was proper to adore, that is, to sacrifice, for the Jews and Samaritans were divided, only respecting *place* of exterior *public* worship, and not concerning the place of private prayer, and exterior sacrifice, both perfectly agreeing that it was lawful to pray, and offer themselves to God in every place. The hour cometh, said he, when the true adorers shall adore, that is sacrifice, neither on the mountain of Garizim, (where stood the temple of the Samaritans) nor in Jerusalem, but they shall *adore the Father in spirit and in truth*, (John, iv. 23.) not confined to one spot. What Jesus here announced,

was the accomplishment of that remarkable prediction addressed by the prophet Malachy to the Jewish people: *I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will not receive a gift from your hand: for from the rising of the sun to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation.* (Malach. i. 10, 11.) By all the most ancient doctors of the church, this prophecy has been understood of the eucharistic sacrifice: and indeed it would be surprising not to see in it that God rejects the sacrifices of the Jews, and substitutes in their place throughout the earth the sacrifice of a pure and holy oblation.

The interior sacrifice of our hearts cannot be meant; that is not a *new* sacrifice, since it has been the constant sacrifice of all the just from the beginning of the world. What sacrifice has been substituted, except the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross, and upon our altars? But the bloody sacrifice of the cross was offered only on Mount Calvary: it must then be the unbloody sacrifice of our altars, which is offered in every place, and substituted in the room of the ancient victims. St. Augustine explaining this verse of the 39th psalm, *sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire*, places this truth in the strongest light. “Alas!”

exclaims the saint, "shall we then be left without sacrifice? No: God forbid. Attend to what follows in the prophecy; *but thou hast formed a body for me.* Behold here a new victim," continues he. "What then will God reject? the figures? What will he appoint to realize the figures? That body formed to realize all the figures; the adorable body of Jesus Christ upon our altars; that body which the faithful know, but which some of you, (meaning the catechumens) do not know: that body which *we* receive who know it, and which *you* also will one day know: and God grant that when you come to know it, you may never receive it to your condemnation."

This is then the sacrifice of the new law, the body of Jesus Christ offered and received at our altars throughout the earth. Let us now remark when this adorable sacrifice began; contemplate its perfection and the wonders it contains; and let us see how it fulfils and comprises all the figures and all the conditions of the Jewish sacrifices. In those unhappy days of irreligion immediately preceding the christian æra, Jesus Christ the reality of every figure, presents himself to supply the imperfection of all the ancient sacrifices. *Burnt offering and sin offering*, says he to his Father, *thou didst not require, but thou hast formed a body for me;*

*behold I come.* (xxxix. 7, 8.) Finding nothing in this world sufficiently pure to offer to God, he offered himself: and by this oblation, which is permanent and eternal, men are sanctified; for he offered himself once for all; his life was one continued sacrifice, till he shed his blood upon the cross. Then the figure of the bloody sacrifices of Aaron was fulfilled, and all those sacrifices which it was necessary to multiply on account of their imperfection, vanished; that the faithful might have recourse to the true sacrifice of our divine Mediator, which alone can expiate the sins of the world. Here in the sacrificer alone we find whatever we can look for or discover in all the ancient sacrifices; *God*, to whom the sacrifice is offered; the *priest* who offers the sacrifice; the victim to be offered: for this divine Mediator, Priest and Victim, is one with the God to whom he offers, and is united, or rather has united himself with the faithful, whom he offers to his Father. It is certain that on the cross he was at once the Priest and Victim; they who put him to death were his executioners, but not his sacrificers; it was he then who offered himself in sacrifice, and offered us with himself upon the cross.

But because he is Priest eternal according to the order of Melchisedech, who offered up

bread and wine, which he gave to Abraham and those of his family ; bread and wine are the matter of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to be changed into his body and blood, to be a true food and true beverage for the true children of Abraham, that they may be intimately united to their Saviour, and be offered together with him in sacrifice.

These, my brethren, are the wonders of the Eucharist, which Jesus Christ instituted immediately before he went to offer himself upon the cross. He instituted it out of the love which he bore his children, *knowing*, says St. John, *that all power was given to him by the Father*. And doubtless such a power was required to change bread and wine into his body and his blood, and such a love was required, to make, by anticipation, an effusion of his blood before his death, according to the expression of the Evangelist, as it stands in the Greek text: *this is my body which is given for you . . . this is the chalice, the New Testament, in my blood, which is shed for you*. (Luke, xxii. 19, 20.) A real and mysterious effusion into the bodies and hearts of his apostles, before the blood went out of his body visibly upon the cross. Jesus Christ, employing his supreme power in changing the bread into his body, and the wine into his blood, exercised at the same time his sacer-

dotal power, which he had not given to himself, says St. Paul, but which he had received from his Father, to be the *eternal Priest according to the order of Melchisedech*. (Heb. v. 6.) As his priesthood is eternal, he will eternally offer this sacrifice, he will receive no successor. He will be always on our altars, though invisibly, both Priest and Victim. But that this sacrifice may be visible, he has established for his ministers the apostles, and their successors, to whom he gives the power of doing the same which he himself did, always remembering that it is through him they do it. They have done it, and will continue to do it through the whole earth. They every where offer, says St. Augustine, under the High Priest Jesus Christ, what Melchisedech offered. And to shew us that this sacrifice will know no end on earth, we are ordered to partake of it, and by it announce his death until he come. (1 Cor. xi. 26.)

These wonders effected by the power of Jesus Christ, are related by the Evangelist with the same simplicity which is admired in the book of Genesis, where the Almighty creates the earth and firmament, by only saying, "be it made." Jesus had informed his disciples at Capharnaum, that to have life, they must eat his body and drink his blood; and in working the great miracle he before promised them, he

simply says, *take and eat, this is my body, take and drink, this is my blood.* (Matt. xxvi. 26.) Here is the consummation of this divine sacrifice, here the accomplishment of every mysterious figure! Here he renews his death, his resurrection, his life of glory: here he nourishes his church with his own flesh, to make it a holy body, and to impart to it the germ of glorious immortality.

The renovation and consummation of these sublime mysteries in the Eucharist, ought not to be unknown to Christians. Christians ought to know that Christ, changing the bread into his body, offers up that adorable body as he offered it up on the cross. "The sacrifice which we offer, is the passion of our Lord." (Cyp. Ep. 63, ad Cecil.) What was *externally acted* on mount Calvary, is indeed absent from our altars, but that had nothing in common with the sacrificer. The sacrifice of the cross consisted in the oblation which Jesus Christ made of his body; this same body he continues to offer on our altars; and to give to this divine sacrifice its full perfection, he condescends to nourish us every day in truth and reality, with this sacrament of his passion. This was wanting to the bloody sacrifice of the cross, and this constitutes the perfection of the unbloody sacrifice offered on our altars. *We have an altar, says*

St. Paul, *whereof they have no power to eat who serve the tabernacle.* (Heb. xiii. 10.) This was wanting to the altar of the cross, and it is at the altar of the church, it is verified by the holy communion. The same victim is offered on our altars as on Calvary, but on Calvary it was only offered, on our altars it is offered and distributed. Jesus Christ offers himself here on our altars, as he offered himself expiring on the cross; the manner of offering is alone different. He also offers himself here as at his resurrection, since he offers his body glorious and immortal: he offers himself as at his ascension, since he still ascends, according to the expression in the canon of the mass, from our altar on earth, to the sublime altar of heaven, there to reside and plead our cause: *offering one sacrifice*, says St. Paul, *for sins, he for ever sitteth on the right hand of God.* (Heb. x. 12.) Hence in the mass we say that we offer this sacrifice to renew the memory of the passion, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. Behold, then, the union of all the mysteries, which were the different parts, or the continuation of Christ's sacrifice; and the accomplishment of what we repeat in the Psalms, that God in giving this true nourishment for our souls, *hath made a remembrance of his wonderful works.* (Ps. cx. 4.)

It remains now to explain to you how the divine victim of this adorable sacrifice fulfills all the conditions which belonged to the victims of the old law in the most perfect sacrifices. Four conditions were necessary which formed the four parts of sacrifice. First, the acceptance of the victim by the priests. Secondly, that the victim should be offered to God. Thirdly, that the victim should be changed or destroyed. Fourthly, the consumption or participation of the victim was necessary. A chosen victim was first required, accepted by the priests, according to the command of God, who had pointed out to them what they were to admit, and what reject. The priests of the New Testament, in accepting the bread and wine destined to become the body and blood of Jesus Christ, act in conformity with the choice of the eternal Father, who has declared his Son to be a Priest according to the *order of Melchisedech*, who therefore offers bread and wine, but a bread which is to be converted into the body which God has appointed to be the true victim. Secondly, the accepted victim was offered to God by the priests of the law ; in like manner the priests of the New Testament, representing Jesus Christ, offer to God the bread and wine as about to become the body and blood of our Lord for our salvation. Thirdly, the holocausts

and sacrifices for sin and trespasses, the victim was immolated and slain. Here the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, who is immolated, and, as in a state of death, upon the altar, because deprived of the functions of that natural life which he had on earth, and because he is there with the signs of death, by the mystic separation of his body from his blood. Thus St. John beheld before the throne the Lamb standing alive, yet, as it were, slain by reason of the marks of his wounds, which he preserves still in his state of glory. Lastly, the consumption of the victim was necessary. If a holocaust was offered, the whole of the offering (as the word itself indicates) was burned in honor of God. In other sacrifices, a part was consumed for God, the rest distributed to the priests, and to those who had presented the victim. Here in the eucharistic sacrifice, the whole of the victim is for God, and wholly consumed by those who offer it to him. It is communicated entire to all without division, and is consumed in all without ceasing to exist.

The sacrifice of this divine Victim comprises also the reality of all the figurative sacrifices. It is a holocaust by the destruction of the substance of bread and wine, as in the ancient holocausts the material fire devoured and con-

sumed the victim with the bread and liquors, to give homage to the sovereign dominion of God ; so in this the fire of the Holy Ghost, which the church invokes for this end, consumes the bread and wine, inasmuch as they are changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, who gives to his Father that infinite homage which is his due. It is a sacrifice of propitiation for sin, since Christ is himself the victim which expiates sin. It comprises all the excellencies of the ancient peace-offerings, since it contains the great peace-offering, the true victim of propitiation, Christ Jesus himself, through whom we implore and receive every gift. It is a sacrifice of thanksgiving, because instituted by Jesus Christ as a thanksgiving to his Father for all the blessings he had received for the church : and because by this sacrifice we give marks of our acknowledgment worthy of God, by offering to him upon the altar his own Son, the greatest of all his gifts, and the greatest return we can make him for all the graces and favours we have received.

Thus you behold, my brethren, that this most adorable sacrifice of the Eucharist, though infinitely superior to all the sacrifices of the old law, contains every part of them, and fulfils all their conditions. It only remains to observe, that this sacrifice, which is that of Jesus Christ,

is at the same time a sacrifice of the whole church, which is offered up together with Jesus Christ. It is the sacrifice of the priests who are the ministers of the offering, and of all who wish to participate of it: who therefore ought to offer themselves in sacrifice, as Christ and his church offer themselves to God. As Christ offers in quality of Priest, and is himself offered in quality of Victim, so the church, in offering him, should also offer herself: for the church, being the body of such a head, learns to offer herself through him.

The sacrifice of the mass is then the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and of the church, the only external sacrifice to be offered to God, the true and sole sacrifice, which includes all others, the only sacrifice which expiates the guilt of sin, which merits for us grace, and which will be continued to the end of time. Adore, then, in humble sincerity, the greatness of God, and thank him for this proof of his goodness. Consider that Christ Jesus, in offering himself up, does for us what we ought to do for ourselves, but which all the united efforts of man are unequal to without him. He offers himself to adore his Father, to thank him for past, and to obtain of him fresh graces for us, and to appease his divine justice, exasperated by our iniquities. How agreeable to the Lord must be this victim

of humiliation! Could the God of purity behold without immediate vengeance the innumerable crimes which are committed upon the earth, if he beheld not upon our altars his only Son a victim for the sins of the world? Assist, then, at this adorable sacrifice, in union with this sacred victim, to pay homage to the Omnipotent, and to obtain pardon and mercy. Assist often and with respect. The devils tremble at his name, millions of heavenly spirits adore in holy fear before him, and we who have offended him and provoked his wrath, we presume to stand in his presence with indifference and dissipation. The pagans trembled before their false gods; and Christians are without respect before the living God; they paid more deference to inanimate figures, the work of their own hands, than we to the living God our Creator, our Sovereign Lord and our preserver. In what place shall God be secure from our contempt, if he is insulted in his own house, and while immolated for us. Oh, Christians, let us at least, if we have not sufficient influence to prevent these abominations, have faith and zeal enough to lament them. Let us endeavour to make some reparation for these insults, let us sigh and weep over the blindness of so many Christians, who insultingly scoff at him even

while he offers himself up in sacrifice for them, and let us by our example strive to animate others to a due respect and veneration of him, in whom they live, move, and are, the Lord and Ruler of heaven and earth. To whom be all honor, &c.

## SERMON LXV.

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### ON PENANCE.

CONTRITION, AND ATTRITION.

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*A contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. (Ps. L. 19.)*

THE sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist, both as a sacrament and sacrifice, having been already explained to you, the sacrament of penance demands next your attention. Penance is considered under two views: as a virtue and as a sacrament. As a virtue, it is that sorrow of mind, and detestation of sin committed, which is conceived for the sake of God, with a resolution of appeasing him for the past, and never offending him in future. Whoever has offended his God, must find sufficient reason to practise this virtue: and though we should be expressly assured from God, that our sins are forgiven us, still ought the very remembrance of our disloyalty, to keep alive in us a sorrow and detestation of our crimes, and ani-

mate us to a life of unremitted penance. St. Peter and St. Mary Magdalen received an assurance of pardon from the mouth of Christ himself, and David from the prophet Nathan, on the part of God ; yet ever mindful of the enormity of their past guilt, and the malice of wilful sin, their penance was prolonged through life, and could only be terminated by death. But what, alas ! should be our grief, who know that we have sinned, but are wholly ignorant whether God has pardoned our sins ! How eagerly should we seize the time which is in our hands, and spend it in unceasing sorrow, ever crying out to the God whom we have injured, to be merciful to us, and forgive us our iniquities.

To make penance a more easy and more powerful remedy of sin, Christ was pleased, in his infinite mercy, to make it a sacrament of the new law, instituting it *an exterior sensible rite, with a promise of grace for the pardon of sin committed after baptism.* For this he gave to the pastors of the church, the keys of the kingdom of heaven, with authority to bind or loose sinners, as they should present themselves, contrite and worthy, or impenitent and indisposed. This he clearly expressed, saying to St. Peter in particular, (Matt. xvi. 19.) *I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth,*

*shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed also in heaven:* and to all the apostles, and in them to their successors, the priests of his church, as is evident from the foregoing verse, in which he promises to build his church upon Peter, and to secure it against the force of hell, and the powers of darkness: and in the 18th verse of the 18th chapter, speaking to his disciples, he renews the same promise. The principal, proper, and natural meaning of these words, imports a power promised to the church, of remitting sin, an interior jurisdiction over the consciences of men, to be exercised in the name of Christ, according to the laws prescribed by him. Moreover, what Jesus here promised, he after his resurrection actually conferred on his apostles. (John, xx. 22.) He breathed on them, and said to them: *receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins, &c.* We believe, then, with the catholic church, that by virtue of these words of our Saviour, the pastors of the church are constituted his delegates and vicegerents in his tribunal on earth, and as their sentence shall be pronounced here below, it shall be confirmed and ratified in the court of heaven. This the words themselves clearly import, and that this has always been the belief of the church, the evidence of ecclesiastical tradition, and the con-

sent of the fathers, incontestably demonstrate. These are, in short, the proofs on which we rest our belief, that penance is a real sacrament instituted by Christ. The essential form of this sacrament is, *I absolve you*; the matter are the sins of the penitent, accompanied with contrition, confession, and satisfaction. These acts of the penitent are the constituent parts which compose the sacrament. You ought to be acquainted with the force and nature of them all. But as it would exceed the usual limits prescribed for this day's instruction, were they all to be explained at the same time, contrition will be the present subject of your attention.

Contrition, as defined by the Council of Trent, (sess. 14.) is *a sorrow of mind and detestation of sin committed, with a resolution of sinning no more*. It contains three acts. The first is, a sorrow of heart, consequently interior and real, not merely in appearance, not consisting in tears, groans, or any external gesture; nor is the sorrow which deserves the name of contrition, a simple disgust of sin, or displeasure with it, but an unfeigned grief of mind, for having offended Almighty God. The second is a detestation, that is, an abhorrence and abomination of all sin. This differs from a bare sorrow, but must accompany it; the damned grieve for sin, without a detestation of it: and

they who have never sinned (as the blessed Virgin) have an abhorrence of it, without a sorrow for having committed it. The blessed in heaven have also this abhorrence of sin, but without sorrow, as their happy state makes them incapable of grief. The third act implied in contrition, is a firm purpose of never more offending God by any mortal sin, or immediate occasion voluntarily incurred. When the sorrow of sin is mentioned in the sacred writings, we generally find this purpose of amendment, for the future, subjoined to it, as (Is.) *Cease to do ill, and learn to do well.* This is added in the definition of contrition by the General Council, fathers and divines, with St. Thomas : whence many are of opinion, that in an act of contrition, preparatory to the sacrament, it is essential that this purpose of avoiding sin for the future, be made explicitly ; and all agree that this should be done in practice, lest the sacrament should be null without it. The sorrow for the past only regards sin actually committed : but this purpose of amendment for the future, must be general, of avoiding all mortal sin, and all immediate occasions ; and must be expressly extended to all habitual sins, and their occasions, as this is a necessary means of avoiding them. The penitent must not content himself with general resolutions,

which seldom have effect, being forgotten in the particular occasions. He must descend into a detail of the proper means, at least as to certain chief points, and this with so much care, that he may be stronger against the like dangers for the future, than if he had never received a wound. But he is, by no means, to imagine himself so secure by his resolutions, as to expose himself to the former occasions of his fall, because he has resolved against his former transgressions. Such a presumption would expose him to certain ruin. It is chiefly by being more fearful and diffident of our own strength, and solicitous in putting our resolutions in execution with fidelity, that we may expect to become stronger. *I have sworn, says holy David, and decreed to keep the judgements of thy justice.* (Ps. cxviii.) This resolution must be formed with a liberal and great heart, for the penitent will receive the graces of support in proportion to his fervor. He must cry out with St. Paul, (Acts, ix. 16.) *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Command, O Lord, what thou pleasest, I am ready to obey. Must I separate from friends, country, or fortune? My heart is ready, if thy will command it. Must I endure hunger, cold, fatigues, poverty, persecution, chains, stripes, and death? My heart is ready.

Nor must we imagine, as the Catechism of

the Council of Trent observes, that our contrition is perfect, if we merely desist from our sinful habits, or by forming a plan of a new life, or by even entering upon our plan: but these must be joined to a detestation of our past lives, and an expiation of our former delinquencies, by satisfactory acts of penance. Like David we must labour in our sorrow, (Ps. vi. 7.) and cry out with the prophet, *I will account to thee, Oh Lord, all my years, in the bitterness of my soul.* (xxxviii. 14. 15.) These exclamations were the effect of a true sorrow for sin, and a detestation of past misconduct. The same will be ours, if we are truly penitent.

As to the conditions of contrition, the essential conditions are these *four*: that it be *interior, supernatural, sovereign, and universal*. It must be *first interior*. *When touched by the repentance of the heart, (Deut. xxx. 1.) thou shalt return to the Lord with thy whole heart, (2.) he will have mercy on thee. You shall seek me, and shall find me, when you seek me in your whole heart.* (Jer. xxix. 13.) No secret, fond attachment to past evil habits, must remain, no desire of forbidden pleasure, no affection to past enjoyments, no external separation with interior longing: the whole heart and mind must bid farewell to every object of unlawful passion, a universal reformation must take place both in sentiment and action. We must look back with

horror and detestation on our criminal actions, and recal them to mind, only to lament and abhor them. This we shall do, if we are turned to the Lord with our whole hearts, and love him with our whole souls. But this is so difficult, that St. Ambrose declares it as his firm opinion, that it is more easy to find one who has preserved his innocence unspotted, than one who, after his fall, has done worthy penance. Hence true repentance cannot be the fruit of our own growth, it must be the gift of God, it must be *supernatural*, which is the *second* condition.

A sorrow for sin conceived on motives purely temporal or natural, or without the motion of grace, is ineffectual to the remission of sins. True contrition is supernatural, both in its motives and principles. In its principle, viz. it must be derived from God. *No man can come to me unless my Father draw him*, (John, vi. 44.) because, if true contrition disposes to grace, as the Council of Trent assures us, and no one can dispose himself to grace, by the mere force of nature, it follows that it must be received from above, and therefore be supernatural. "Whoever," says the Council of Trent, (sess. 6. can. 3.) "shall presume to affirm that a man, without the preceding inspiration and joint assistance of the Holy Ghost, can repent in such manner as to receive the grace of justification, be he anathema." It must be superna-

tural in its motive also. It is from their motives, that actions principally take their specific character : besides, that sorrow for sin, which disposes to justification, must exclude all desire and will of sinning, and this a sorrow proceeding from mere natural motives cannot effect. Antiochus, who affords an unfortunate but notorious example of insufficient repentance, was not without this natural grief for sins, which had brought upon him so evidently God's anger ; but because his grief was only natural, it was imperfect in the sight of God.

A *third* condition is, that it be *sovereign*, or above all things. As God is the sovereign good, and to be loved above all things ; so sin, which is the sovereign evil, is to be detested above all things. Only God, who comprehends the full enormity of this monster, is able to abhor it, as it deserves abhorrence ; and as God, he pursues it with all the hatred of a God, with an infinite hatred. We are bound to detest it, and grieve for it in our souls, above all other possible evils ; so as to be disposed, were the case possible, rather to undergo all manner of ignominies, losses, and tortures, than ever to consent to any mortal sin. But in conceiving this sovereign sorrow for sin, it is neither necessary nor advisable, that the penitent should propose to himself every species of torment and tribula-

tion, and ask himself whether he would rather submit to such a disgrace, or such particular kind of death, than consent to sin: this might be exposing himself to great temptations. For, as the catechism of the Council of Trent remarks, sensible objects, and the representation of them, more easily effect the sensible part of the soul, than those which are spiritual, though she prefer the latter. The devout queen of France, mother of St. Lewis, might have been informed that her son had committed a sin, nor have changed her countenance upon the information, while to have heard of his death, might have occasioned her own: yet with full deliberation did she declare, while he was still a child, that she would rather see him lose his kingdom and his life, than live to lose the grace of God by mortal sin.

A *fourth* condition necessary to contrition, is, that it be *universal*, that is, extended to all mortal sins: for no one can be said truly to grieve for any injury, who pretends to lament one act of displeasure, yet cherishes, with fondness, that which gives equal offence. Whoever is thus grieved for certain sins which he has committed, while he is held captive by other habitual vices, and hugs with pleasure the chains which hold him down, proves that his detestation of the former is mere human dis-

gust, and cannot be truly penitent. The sorrow which will appease the divine anger, must be extended to every mortal offence by which the Godhead has been injured: wherever he commands repentance, he requires that it should be universal. God is not inconsistent; all mortal sins are infinitely odious in his sight: he cannot therefore be united by grace and friendship with him, who is guilty of any. *Be converted and do penance for ALL your iniquities, saith the Lord God, and iniquity shall not be your ruin.*

These are the conditions required for perfect contrition. Where these meet, the sorrow will be sincere, and this sorrow, joined with a real detestation of sin, will produce effectual resolutions of offending no more for the time to come. The heart which is penetrated with this sorrow, will glow with affections of divine love, and be ready to sacrifice every dearest interest, property, reputation, and life itself, for the honor and glory of God.

But in speaking of *contrition*, it will not be improper to mention to you what is signified by *attrition*. As that sorrow for sin which is perfect, is called contrition, so an imperfect sorrow, or act of repentance, is called attrition. The contrition of any hard substance, as of a stone, signifies, in Latin, the entire breaking and shattering of it into dust; attrition, only the

outward bruising of it. The words are applied metaphorically to the heart broken by perfect or imperfect repentance. Any imperfect degree of penance may be called attrition : but its most common acceptation is to signify a supernatural sorrow for sin on the motives of the fear of hell, the baseness of sin, or the loss of heaven. To fear hell more than sin, so as to be disposed rather to sin than fall into hell, (were the case possible,) would be a grievous sin, though it is hard to say a fear is such, unless the comparison be expressly made. But to hate sin for the fear of hell *absolutely*, is good and profitable. Certainly it is conformable to reason and virtue, to fear extreme torments, nor does such an act of detestation of sin, any way imply a design of sinning, if there were no hell. Whence such a fear of sin is good, a gift of God, an impulse of the Holy Ghost, as the Council of Trent expressly declares. (sess. xiv. c. 4.) God only threatens sinners to inspire them with this wholesome fear. (Exod. xx. 20.) *And Moses, &c.* This attrition is the commencement of true repentance, as in the Ninevites, it withdraws the heart from actually cleaving to sin, and disposes it to be moved to a more perfect hatred of that evil, by the nobler consideration of divine love. Whether it be possible, out of this motive, to detest sin with a sovereign

hatred, and above all things, as some think, and others deny, is no way material to justify this article of our faith. It suffices that it is allowed on all hands to be a wholesome sorrow for sin, grounded on good and just motives, that it removes the obstacles which oppose the entrance of the love of God into the heart of the sinner, and leads most powerfully to more perfect dispositions.

Having explained to you the nature of contrition, and the conditions essential to it, let me prevail upon you to use every means necessary to obtain it. Remember that it is not acquired by human efforts; it is the free gift of God. Beg of him, by earnest and persevering prayer, to grant you in his mercy, this inestimable blessing. Without this sorrow for your sins, bestowed by him, confession is fruitless, your sins remain unforgiven. We can sin of ourselves, but repentance must come from God. *Thy perdition is from thyself; thy relief only in me, says the Almighty.* (Osee, xiii. 9.) After having besought him to grant you the grace of true contrition, endeavour to penetrate yourselves with the proper motives of fear, love, gratitude, &c. Meditate on the last things, the enormity of sin, the sufferings of your bleeding Saviour, dying for sin. Place before your eyes the example of the royal

penitent, watering each night his bed with tears of compunction; the example of St. Paul, that incarnate seraph of divine love, trembling for himself, and rigorously chastising his body, lest he should be so unhappy as to incur the sentence of reprobation. Offer up, with a view to obtain true contrition, every anxious disappointment, every humiliation which you receive. Let alms-deeds and fasting accompany your prayer: by pitying and relieving the distress of your suffering brethren, you will excite the divine pity; *mercy to him who hath mercy*. Fasting and mortification have always been considered the parents of repentance. Compunction is not to be found in the abodes of pleasure, or amidst jollity and diversions. "As it is impossible," says St. Chrysostome, L. de Compunc. T. 1. "that fire should be enkindled in water, so it is impossible that compunction should live or be bred in delights. Compunction is the mother of tears, delights, of laughter; she straightens the heart, they dissolve it. If you cannot weep for your sins as you would," (Sir Thomas More, book 2nd, of Comfort, c. 7.) "at least desire to do it. The less affliction you feel in your souls, (Gerson) the more pain in recompense inflict on your bodies, and purge your spirit by the affliction of the flesh. He that doeth so, shall find his hard heart relent into tears, into

a wholesome heaviness, and heavenly gladness." Corporal suffering will be accompanied with spiritual comforts, and the fruits of salutary penance will be plentifully reaped in the eternal mansions of celestial bliss.

## SERMON LXVI.

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ON EXTREME UNCTION.

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*Is any one sick among you? Let him call in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil, in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him. (St. James, Ep. v. 14, 15.)*

To represent to ourselves, my brethren, the sorrows of sickness, and by the power of imagination to anticipate the moments of that dissolution, which closes the period of earthly existence, and fixes our everlasting doom, is naturally a gloomy and unpleasant employment: but to arm the soul against the arrows of death, by displaying the resources which the bounty of God has prepared for us, in that awful hour, is a grateful task, highly salutary to the Christian, favourable to virtue, and glorious to the author of our being. It is the constant unshaken hope in this goodness of our God,

which alone can administer christian fortitude under temporal afflictions, and it is a confidence in the same inexhaustible source of mercy, which alone can make us encounter the horrors of death, or view without despondence the consequences of sin, while we acknowledge our own injustice and iniquity. Eternal thanks be given by angels and men to the God of heaven and earth; who, ever mindful of his creatures, has preserved his graces for us in every stage of life; who, having opened to us the gate which leads to life, by the sacrament of baptism, has also provided us with support and comfort in the last stage of our pilgrimage; and by the sacrament of extreme unction, facilitated our passage from this vale of tears to the blissful regions of immortality and glory. If at any time the christian soul stands in need of particular aid, it is when the foe to human salvation uses every artful stratagem and infernal device to ruin us for ever: when he labours to plunge into despondence those whom he had before filled with the most unjustifiable presumption in the mercies of the Almighty. Then it is that the distressed soul views with dismay the many sinful actions, which it had before disregarded as trifles, and suspended, as it were, between life and immortality, is compelled to despise the fugacious joys of the

earth, and dreads the weight of divine retribution beyond the grave. Vice, divested of those charms in which prejudice and passion had decked it out, appears in all its native deformity; to have hearkened to its seducing voice, and yielded to its solicitations, is now discovered to have been the lowest degradation, and the extreme of baseness; the time which has been neglected or abused, seems too valuable to be repaired, and what remains, too short for repentance. In these tremendous moments when the sentiments of the peasant and the philosopher are the same, reason vainly attempts to inspire fortitude, and every human consolation must be ineffectual; the grace of God can alone support us, and for this end has Christ Jesus instituted the sacrament of extreme unction; the nature and effects of which I mean to show you, this day, and also to inform you what dispositions are requisite to receive advantage from it.

That sacred rite of the catholic church, according to which, those who by sickness are in danger of death, are anointed with oil, is called *extreme* (or last) *unction*. It is so called either from its being administered in the last stage of life, or that it is the last unction or anointing appointed by the Church, of all her sacraments and religious ceremonies. In the

dangers of sickness, it has, through every age, been considered as a necessary sacrament, purifying the soul from the remains of sin, fortifying it against the attacks of Satan, and comforting it under its distresses. In every age of the church, it is mentioned as producing these effects, and from the words of St. James, it evidently appears to be commanded, as a means of receiving spiritual, and even corporal advantage: the priests of the church are there mentioned as the ministers of the sacrament, the element to be employed in the administration of it, (viz. oil) and the effects to be derived from receiving it in a worthy manner. The remission of sin, which the apostle mentions as an effect of this anointing, is a benefit of so exalted a nature, as to be expected from God only; for he only can pardon our iniquities who has been offended by them. Jesus Christ must therefore have instituted this sacrament, and ensured to it those effects which the anointing with oil could never be expected to produce by its own natural virtue. This anointing with oil, and the prayer of faith that accompanies it, constitute the outward sign of this sacrament; and as it is by the eyes, the ears, and other organs of sense, that sin enters the soul, so is each particularly anointed, and the mercy of God implored for the remission of all the

sins which have been admitted through these avenues.

Where the sacrament is worthily received, this advantage is always communicated by it, sanctifying grace is imparted, and actual grace likewise. But let us *particularly* examine the effects which it produces. The first is, that it remits the guilt of *venial* sin, which may still defile the soul, and this is its direct and immediate effect. Secondly, it even washes away the guilt of *mortal* sin in certain circumstances; for instance, where the sacrament of penance cannot be recurred to, which may sometimes happen, as when a person is suddenly deprived of his senses, and becomes unable to confess his sins. In this case, or whenever mortal sin may lurk in the soul, which has either been committed since confession, or unknowingly remained there, even from before that period, it is remitted by the sacrament of extreme unction. But where the sin is known, and the person has the power of confessing it, the sacrament of penance must not be neglected, as it is the sacrament instituted by our Lord, precisely and directly for the remission of mortal sin. Nor is sin alone remitted by this sacrament, but the remains of sin are done away; not indeed so as to destroy them entirely, which can never be the case while we continue in this

land of trial; but the evil disposition of our nature to sin, the spiritual torpor and debility of the soul, which are consequences of original transgression, are so repressed, as to bear with less violence upon the sick person, and to permit him with greater relish and facility to attend to the meditation of spiritual things, and contemplate with greater freedom, divine objects.

Again, it calms the mind under the sorrows of infirmity, composing the soul to resignation and christian patience under the sufferings of sickness, and inspires a holy confidence in the divine mercies: it fortifies the soul under the assaults of the devil, and the temptations to despair, from a view of past sin, and a just apprehension of God's justice and severity. For imagine not, Christians, that the weak and half formed sentiments of contrition, which now so easily satisfy you, will then appear to you sufficient: imagine not that the cold, languid, indifferent, hasty manner, in which you approach to the sacrament of reconciliation, will then be thought a security against the wrath of God: oh! no: what have I done, will you say, I approached the tribunal of penance, but with what dispositions? Did I not consider it as the concern only of a moment, as an inferior duty, which, if complied with at certain times, left

me free to gratify my passions and inclinations, till custom or the common practice of others, again called me to the mortifying task? Yes, my brethren, these will be the reflections of thousands, and are daily the sad, afflicting reflections of many at the approach of death; who have continued uniformly to declare their renunciation of sin, at stated seasons of the year, while their hearts were fast rivetted down to it, and their lives defiled by its enormity. If the just man trembles at the idea of the divine scrutiny, and impartial justice, if he stands in need of a particular grace to console and strengthen him, when that moment is near at hand, which is to place him before his Judge, how will the tepid, the negligent, the criminal Christian be excruciated with horrid dread, when he is sensible that he is on the point of being hurried before a tribunal, where all his secret designs, the darkest counsels, the most hidden thoughts of his soul, must be revealed in all the infamy of guilt: where no subterfuge will screen, no art disguise, no power uphold, no patronage protect the miserable culprit: where justice pronounces the sentence, and eternity executes it. Kindly then has our Lord instituted this powerful aid to invigorate and inspirit the assaulted Christian, to console the just man, and to encourage the repentant sinner.

The last effect of this sacrament, is, that it restores health, when it is expedient. Often would the carnal, earth-enslaved sinner, when labouring under corporal infirmity, prefer this effect to every advantage which the more afflicted soul can receive from the sacrament. Without affection or relish for spiritual enjoyments, he is insensible even to that limited foretaste of heavenly joy, which urges the virtuous to strong desires of unbounded fruition; accustomed solely to material pleasures, and the low gratification of the senses, every intellectual delight has perhaps been unknown to him, at least every delicious sentiment which is enjoyed in the contemplation of *spiritual* objects is far beyond his desire or conception. Accustomed only to corporal enjoyment, he knows not how to appreciate the glory and happiness of the life to come; the soul, familiarized only with earthly objects, is degraded and debased by its low connection, and as much as possible materialized in its affections, while its nature had authorized it to aspire to views far more elevated, and to rest contented only in the possession of God himself.

Wherever this ungenerous disposition prevails, the enjoyment of every superior bliss, the contemplation and possession of God himself, make but a feeble impression: this life, with

its nugatory amusements, has alone been pursued, and this contemptible life with its false goods and pleasures, would content the infatuated worldling.

My brethren, how many, at least among the lowest orders of the community, are found, who in the hour of sickness, when death is inevitable, are so unaccustomed, so insensible to spiritual hopes and fears, as to be, with difficulty, brought to a fear of the punishments which attend the wicked, and would resign every pretension to heavenly joys, for the security of indulging themselves on earth in mere animal gratification. Hence, if by the goodness of God they are delivered from the gates of death, their lives run on in the same odious debasement, in profaneness, riot, excess, and the brutal enjoyment of shameful pleasures. What wonder then if this effect of the sacrament be not constantly perceptible! To the just, death is a blessing; it frees them from the land of trial, where virtue is exposed to constant assaults, and places them in possession of joys, which will never be taken from them. Where sickness tends to convert the sinner, or purify the christian soldier, by increasing his fervour, there it undoubtedly often produces the effect of restoring health, but where the Almighty wisdom beholds the inexpediency of

that effect, or where the sacrament is deferred till an evident miracle is required to produce it, it is not to be looked for.

From this concise exposition of the benefits to be derived from this sacrament when duly received, it must appear of the utmost consequence to learn what dispositions are requisite for receiving it worthily. You, my friends, who have been unacquainted hitherto with its nature, but who now, I trust, are sensible both of its nature and effects; you I entreat to hearken with attention, while I represent to you the conditions which are necessary in order to participate of the graces which it confers. Imagine not that when sickness has debilitated you, and ebbing life seems to warn you that a speedy dissolution is at hand; imagine not that you are then necessarily prepared to receive this sacrament, or that receiving it, you will necessarily derive advantage from it. No; this, as well as every other sacrament, unless you are suitably disposed and duly prepared, will be a curse to you instead of a blessing; a source of condemnation, not of justification.

*First*, then, it is necessary that every known mortal sin should be repented of and confessed, where it is in the power of the penitent to avail himself of the sacrament of penance; every offence against Almighty God which has been

committed through life, must be sincerely detested and abhorred. If this be neglected, or if any sin be concealed, or any sinful attachment remain, so far from receiving benefit from this sacred unction, it will bring with it a double judgment from its profanation. *Secondly*. Every presumptuous hope must be renounced, and the sick person must place his whole confidence in the mercy of God and the merits of his Redeemer. It is in this humble confidence that he will receive the peculiar grace of the sacrament; it is this alone that will enable him to die the death of the just, and conciliate to him the divine favour. *Thirdly*. He should endeavour to excite in himself the most unfeigned devotion; and as it is *the prayer of faith* which, according to the apostle, *shall save the sick man*, he should join his most fervent supplications with the prayer of the church, and renouncing all the follies and vices of his past life, dedicate himself by an eternal band of love to his Creator, his Preserver, and his God.

But oh, how different is the apparent preparation of many, particularly of the lower and least instructed! And how much reason have we to apprehend that these dispositions are frequently wanting! Often does it happen that the ministers of the church are suddenly demanded to hasten with all possible expedition

to those, who through the course of a long illness have banished every thought of repentance, and refused to return to God till the last moment of their lives. Who indeed will cry to the Lord for mercy, but at a time when the last breath of life is quivering on their lips, and when a series of many years spent in the perpetration of every crime to which the depravity of nature, increased by criminal indulgence, invited them. Can we cherish the presumptuous hope that their offended God will admit them to reconciliation on such terms? When they infamously attempt to impose on his goodness, and scarcely acknowledge his power? Yet this is the state in which many receive this sacrament, which I have endeavoured to convince you is of the utmost importance: this is the state in which many perhaps of you who hear me, would desire to receive it. Yes, many, to their shame, are so grossly attached to mere ceremony and form, that they venerate the outward sign with superstitious respect; while the inward grace, the substance of the sacrament, they are wholly unacquainted with. Many, through a scandalous ignorance, when they have by accident been present at the last offices of the church, which the minister of God, that no possible means might be omitted, has performed, almost in despair of their producing any salutary effect

over one whom he has found in the agonies of death, without utterance or even sense; and whom his companions acknowledge to have led a life not only barren of every virtue, but contaminated with every vice which immorality, profaneness, and brutal debauchery can number as their attendants; even then it sometimes happens that they exclaim that he is now gone, he has been administered, he is happy. Oh, my friends, you should not, it is true, condemn even the greatest sinner; the mercies of God are incomprehensible, you ought even to hope that these mercies have prevailed; but as even the mercies of God cannot avail the finally impenitent, where every appearance is calculated to inspire terror rather than hope; let such rather move you to consider your own conduct, and to awaken you to repentance and amendment.

The best preparation for death is a life of virtue: trust not to the achievements of a death-bed, when life retreating, leaves the poor sinner scarcely able to entertain a sentiment of piety, and present pain is the principal occupation of his mind. This, perhaps, some of you may have experienced; you who have been in that situation, will bear testimony to what I have asserted, that it was with difficulty you could raise your soul to God, and not with that fervour which you had flattered yourselves

would inflame your hearts, and fill you with the most sincere sentiments of repentance. As a farther proof, you may observe among those who have appeared to you to have made their peace with God in the agonies of sickness, who have even seemed to feel a keen remorse for their former iniquities, if by the power of God and a singular mercy, they are restored to health, and are thus enabled to realize the promises they made in the time of distress, you may observe how few turn from their ways of vice in sincerity of heart. No; when health has again removed from before their eyes the frightful image of death, their passions again assume command, the sacraments are neglected as before, every religious practice which had been recommended to them is disregarded, and they go on in the same round of vice, till again reduced by sickness they proceed as formerly; they make promises of amendment which would probably be again despised, if death were not to disable them from renewing their perfidy.

Be wise then, my friends; value the goodness of God in providing the sacraments for our support and the forgiveness of our sins; but trust not to their efficacy independently of your own co-operation. God, who is the sole author and giver of grace, will never bestow it on the soul which clings with profane attachment to sin:

he must possess the heart, and not behold it yielded to his enemy. You believe that he knows the secrets of that heart which he gave to you; it is mockery to insult that knowledge: you are convinced that he can and will punish your contempt; it is madness to brave his justice and power. No: rise from your lethargy you who have long neglected the calls of grace, and flattered yourselves with the hope of a final reconciliation; cast away the deceitful folly; as you have lived, so will you die; and if you are permitted to receive the sacraments of the church, they will probably only serve to increase your guilt by having profaned them. But if your lives be holy, your Lord will visit you in your last distress; he will comfort you, though sorrows encompass you on all sides; his sacraments will refresh and invigorate your soul in the decline of corporal strength; the prayer of faith will be heard in your favour, your sins will then be forgiven you; and the Lord will raise you up from this scene of misery and woe, to the blissful abodes of joy and immortality.

## SERMON LXVII.

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ON THE READING OF NOVELS, AND SIMILAR DANGEROUS PUBLICATIONS.

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*The heart of the wise seeketh instruction, but the mouth of the fool feedeth on foolishness.*  
(Prov. xv. 14.)

THE desire of knowledge is an instinct common to all mankind, and implanted by the Almighty in our nature, with the kindest views to our improvement both in happiness and virtue. When its object is to enrich the understanding, and enlarge the heart, when it tends to forward the interests of society, or by it we are enabled to discharge the duties of our respective stations with propriety, the desire is laudable, and ought to be encouraged; but when this distinctive privilege of our nature is exerted to unworthy purposes, when its object is criminal or vain, it becomes either highly reprehensible, or degenerates into an idle curiosity, which reason and religion forbid us to indulge. Against the diffusion or pursuit of

true wisdom, it were impiety to exclaim : but when under this plea, an effect entirely the reverse is produced, the mind obscured, and the heart corrupted, every friend to wisdom and virtue will contribute his best endeavour to stop the progress of so fatal a calamity. It is against an artifice of this description I mean to raise my feeble voice ; against a delusive artifice, which, under the fair pretext of improving the understanding, and conveying useful instruction in the guise of amusement, enfeebles the powers of the mind, corrupts the noblest sentiments of the heart, cherishes vice, and often gives a wound to innocence, which neither reason, reflection, nor religion can heal. Productive of these melancholy consequences, we behold myriads of insinuating productions daily shooting forth into existence, which, while they are calculated to injure the sense and morals of those who peruse them, spread themselves with incredible celerity through the nation. The young, the giddy and the idle, have recourse to them for entertainment, and sometimes persuade themselves they are imbibing instruction from the purest sources ; while, alas ! they are drinking down vanity, folly, and vice. These enervating fictions, these chronicles of fabulous intrigue, which inspire affectation, deceit, and loose desire, are circulated with inconceivable

rapidity, multiplied almost to infinity, and purchased with the fondest eagerness. The reading of them is become so prevalent, that it may be almost termed the universal passion of the present age; and is in itself so insinuating, that, when once indulged, it cannot be overcome without much violence. I know how difficult it is at all times to withdraw men from any favorite pursuit, however dangerous or vicious it may be. What inclination powerfully recommends, reason is easily made to justify: the judgement is soon imposed upon, and where the gratification of humour or passion is concerned, the strongest arguments may be urged in vain, and the most impressive eloquence exerted without effect. Conscious of this, still I am not devoid of *hope*; my own conviction emboldens me, and confiding in the aid of the Most High, I trust I shall be able to convince you, that the practice of reading these romantic fictions is generally criminal, and always dangerous; that it tends to obscure the understanding and corrupt the heart. If my endeavours prove ineffectual, I shall, at least, be able to console myself in the rectitude of my intentions, and the reflection of having done my duty.

To improve the faculties of the mind, every method should be adopted; and, as books are among the principal means of effecting that

great and laudable purpose, the reading of them when it is conducive to useful and virtuous attainment, and interferes with no duty, cannot be too much encouraged. They are, in general, more read in youth, than in the advanced periods of life, and it would be indiscreet and absurd to withhold from the youthful mind subjects suitable to its age and capacity. The young should be indulged in books entertaining as well as instructive, but their entertainment should be pure and innocent. The representations should be chaste, the sentiments manly, and the models exhibited to them patterns of perfection; that by the examples exhibited to them, they may be stimulated to the practice of virtue.

My brethren, are the books which I condemn of this nature? No: they are directly the reverse. In these futile *novels*, as they are called, nothing is found that can animate to virtue, nothing that tends, I will not say to raise the mind from earthly to heavenly things, but to improve, embellish, and exalt it. By frequent application to subjects of an elevated nature, the understanding is enlarged; by a contemplation of God and his attributes, the mind is raised from lower objects, its whole energy is exerted upon subjects of a higher order, the spiritual part of man becomes more spiritualized, he approaches

nearer to his Creator, and though his body is on earth, his better part is in heaven. But when trifles are suffered to occupy the mind, when it is wholly employed on subjects that are void of all importance, that are no sooner consigned to the memory than effaced by matters equally insignificant; the understanding is not only not improved, but seriously injured. Such is the effect produced by a constant reading of these compositions. In them every thing is sacrificed to amusement: this is the sole object of the writer. To effect this, the extensive regions of fiction are explored, nothing so extravagant can be devised, that is not adopted; the laws of order and method are frequently violated, and truth and even probability set at nought. How, then, can any substantial attainment be expected from such productions, by those who devote their time to them? Ever occupied, yet to no purpose, their days and years are consumed in a course of laborious idleness, their mental powers impaired, and those hours which might have been spent in improving their faculties, and acquiring a stock of valuable and extensive knowledge, lost in an employment, at best, nugatory and vain.

If, however, no other complaint could be adduced against these performances, than that from the perusal of them, nothing useful is to

be acquired, it were indeed well for many : but while they contribute nothing to improvement, they produce a fatal evil, by destroying all relish and desire of receiving improvement. They are not meant to improve. Could the mind, after feeding for hours on chimerical incidents and imaginary events, retain with firmness every delineation of character, every varied situation, every word, every idea ; useless would be its labour, for possessing all, it would know nothing. Amusement only is sought for. For this the deluded reader pores with incessant application, and if disappointed, lays aside the volume with disgust : but when successful in his research, the hours pass by unnoticed, the thread of connection is carefully traced throughout, the unravelling of the whole is impatiently desired, yet pleases when deferred ; and when arrived, all that was so interesting and captivating, is soon forgotten, and the vacant mind seeks fresh amusement in similar absurdities, equally deserving oblivion and contempt. By substituting fiction for real history, and idle amusement instead of useful knowledge, that laudable thirst after truth, which the Almighty planted in our nature, is destroyed, and a baneful love of falsehood inspired ; and when falsehood is introduced, with all the recommendations of wit, and every effort of invention exerted in providing her with gaudy decorations ; what

wonder, if thus attired, she attract an observation from the uncautious and inexperienced, which is refused to the modest, reserved graces of unaffected truth ! But when once the fables of fiction, by a pleasing chain of dependent occurrences, have been encouraged and indulged, adieu to genius and real knowledge ! they arrest attention, and fix it so deeply, and afford so lively a pleasure, that the mind accustomed to them, can no longer submit to the painful task of serious study, the taste is vitiated, authentic history becomes insipid, and solid acquisition and real improvement are set aside and disregarded for ever.

Hitherto, my friends, I have confined myself to the injury which the understanding receives from these insipid productions : let me now solicit your attention, while I expose evils of greater enormity, which are their consequences. While by means of them all relish for better studies is destroyed, while by them the understanding is enfeebled and reduced to a state of languid impotence ; reason resigns its command, unable to resist the slightest impulse of passion. As the mind becomes less qualified to regulate the affections of the heart, the seeds of passion take root, grow up, and are strengthened ; they diffuse a poison through the soul, and the whole man becomes infected. That these

effects are produced, that the mind is totally unnerved, and the heart thus corrupted by reading these fantastic fictions, reason and experience sufficiently prove : yet, unfortunately, their dangerous tendency is seldom attended to. Great precaution is often observed to secure the unexperienced from the corruptions of improper company, while books are commonly allowed them with very little restriction. But in vain are youth secluded from the corruptions of the living world, when books of this description are allowed them. These pollute the heart in the recesses of the closet, inflame the passions at a distance from temptation, and teach the malignity of vice in solitude. The effects of company and conversation are less permanent : discourse, in general, makes only a transient impression ; but a guilty book, as its effects are more prepared and studied, are also more durable. The images may be reviewed again and again, the ideas recalled at pleasure, till they are fixed in the mind never to be obliterated. In them every thing is more premeditated, the colours more glowing, the descriptions more animated, the language more polished, the incidents more artfully arranged : in a word, as in them the poison is more secret, so are its effects more certain.

Such are the books which I now reprobate ;

which, notwithstanding the venom they contain, assume the character of polite, are the most easily obtained of any, and with which every corner of this kingdom is abundantly supplied. Are they not histories, or rather mere fables, in which, under the form of history, the most inflammable passion in our nature is enkindled? In which, under the name of virtuous love, lust is fomented, encouraged, and is the spring of every other passion? In which all its weaknesses, all its transports, and all the extravagancies of which it is capable, are professedly described? In which nothing is to be met with but the maxims, protestations, the artifices and expedients of concupiscence? To this inglorious passion is sacrificed every dearest interest, every noble affection of the soul: even honor and ambition lie prostrate at its feet: man is represented as degraded to the lowest state of infatuation, till this passion becomes his whole employment, his sole object of pursuit, the end of his life, and the idol of his worship.

Contemplate for a moment the situation of those who are so unhappy as to be subject to its tyranny. No sooner has some alluring adventure captivated their minds, than they fly from company and conversation, and pore over the mischievous nothing with unwearied application. Whole hours are devoted to the vain

employment, the solid day is too short to gratify the fascinating pleasure, and the sweets of necessary repose are neglected to indulge in the noxious amusement. In these unguarded moments, in the silence and solitude of the night, without an eye to witness the indiscretion, the unhappy youth, or artless female, enter into all the passions that are represented; an imaginary inconstancy excites resentment, the doubtful success of an intrigue fills them with anxiety, a forced separation drowns them in grief, an unexpected meeting overwhelms them with joy, they shudder at pretended dangers, and shed tears over sorrows the most absurd. Then, when the heart is open to every impression, should some unguarded description present itself, tending to rouse, to stimulate, to gratify passion; they read, they pause, they read again: seduced by the fatal pleasure, they endeavour to impress it with all possible strength, and while they enjoy an apparent delight, suck in a deadly poison. Fictitious passions excite in their breasts real emotions; they wish to be actors in the scenes which they admire, and the crimes of others become their own.

Thus, under the plea of informing the mind, and acquiring improvement, the powers of genius are blunted, and all the unaffected sympathies of nature vitiated and spoiled. In their

stead is substituted an unresisting weakness, an obsequious propensity, which, under the name of sensibility, obliquely excuses the extravagances of the passions, chastens in the ideas of many, the least refined affections of humanity, and absurdly palliates transgressions forbidden both by God and man, as proceeding from an excess of those finer feelings which vanity has arrogated to herself as elegant and amiable distinctions.

If any shadow of doubt can be raised of what I have advanced, I appeal to those who have given much of their time to these pernicious writings; happy, if matured by reflection, and convinced by experience, they view their imprudence with regret and abhorrence. Tell me, then, or tell yourselves as with me you candidly interrogate your consciences, in proportion as you became attached to this practice, did not the spirit of the world obtain increased dominion over your hearts? Did not the spirit of religion diminish, and the principles of early education lose their influence? Did not your minds wander over imaginations of vanity, and every serious employment become irksome and odious? To acknowledge the truth without deceit or evasion, did you not perceive that through these corrupted mediums the demon of incontinence stole into

your hearts, the soft sentiments of passion arose, wanton ideas possessed your minds, loose desires were indulged, concupiscence fortified, and that in process of time, you were entirely changed and vitiated? Had it been otherwise, your preservation would be more than miraculous. Having before your eyes and in your hands, books infected as these are, it is not naturally possible for you to escape the contagion they inspire.

What apology then can be offered in favour of an occupation so dangerous and criminal? Let it not be said that the sentiments which are inspired by the reading of novels, are the sentiments of virtue! Are those the sentiments of virtue which so subdue the sense and reason of man, as to ravish all his thoughts, absorb his whole attention, and transfer the honor due to God, from him to his creature? Can that be called virtuous affection which makes a man neglect whatever he owes to God, to society, to justice, and to charity? Nor let it be pretended these books are necessary to form the manners and teach the world. When this is said, I well understand what is meant. To know the world in this sense, is to know all that is the worst in it; to be acquainted with all its deceptions, its crimes, its enormities. Thus instructed, you may be well practised in

all the refinements of vice, the insincerity of false friendship, the arts of affectation, the stratagems by which virtue is corrupted, and all the thousand ways of imposing on credulous simplicity. Tutored in this knowledge of the world, the hardened heart of villainy can triumph in the seduction of artless innocence, can glory in effecting under the sacred name of friendship, the ruin of those whom it had professed to esteem and love. Corrupted by this knowledge of the world, the youthful female, from a habit of becoming reserve and amiable modesty, assumes an air of forwardness, conceives ideas of self-sufficiency and consequence, despises the duties of domestic life, adopts the maxims, spirit, language and conduct of vanity, disregards parental authority and parental tenderness, and sacrifices all the genuine charms of unstudied simplicity, to the restraint of affectation, formality, and fashion. If this be to know the world, it is to know that world which you have renounced with all its pomps and vanities; if this be to know the world, may you ever prefer to remain strangers to the world, content to follow virtue, and save your souls.

Oh, my brethren, regardless of every baneful consequence, how often do we behold the young, the sprightly, and those whom heaven had destined for better purposes, devoting

themselves to these idle and iniquitous pursuits? those whose natural abilities, seconded by industry, might have shone forth an honor to themselves, and a light to those around them! How often is the vigour of genius unnerved by these effeminate productions, and all that nature had given of genuine taste and manly sentiment sacrificed at the low shrine of licentious folly! O, my friends, if you wish to cultivate real knowledge, if you value the talents with which God has endowed you, shun these wretched vanities! As the water which remains stagnant will corrupt, as the iron that is not used must be consumed by rust, and the field that is not cultivated be overrun with thorns and weeds; so the mind that is open only to trifling studies, must shortly become a barren waste, or be encumbered with useless produce.

If then you desire to improve your understanding, and mend your heart, if wisdom and virtue have any charms, despise the contemptible trifles which have hitherto seduced you: amuse yourselves with them no longer, lest amusement should be your destruction. The spark which is now unobserved, is still alive within you, and if neglected, may burst forth an irresistible conflagration. Yet a little, and vice secure in its usurpation, may defy opposi-

tion. It will not then be in your power to break from the chain of servitude, or to extricate yourselves from the evils of which you were yourselves the authors. The advice of age and experience will be then despised, reason and revelation will be laughed to scorn, and all the terrors of divine judgement disregarded. What! if these cannot prevail at present, will they then be attended to, when your souls have thrown off the empire of reason and revelation, and submitted to the lawless sway of the passions? Amidst their clamorous demands shall the still small voice of conscience be observed, or the mild doctrines of the humble Jesus be attended to, when the soft language of effeminate and affected eloquence has destroyed all relish for simplicity and truth? No, Christians; while some degree of strength and resolution remains, be roused to a sense of danger; while you yet possess a portion of liberty and virtue, exert their energy; while you have it in your power, determine to seek amusement and instruction at other sources. No longer have *fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*. (Eph. v. 11.) Seek the things which are of God, hearken to his word, search the scriptures: in them you will find wisdom, consolation, and true delight. Christ Jesus will be himself your

guide, instructor, and friend ; he has the words of eternal life ; he will feed you with the bread of angels, and give you to drink of the water which springeth up unto everlasting life. His wisdom shall *give to your head increase of graces, and protect you with a noble crown ;* (Prov. iv. 9.) the Lord shall be your protector through life, your hope and consolation in death, and in eternity your reward exceeding great.

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[This Sermon was preached in 1797, when the press teemed with dangerous novels and licentious works, against which it became necessary to protect the morals and religion of the rising generation ; and being attended with much success, is given herein, to convey a salutary caution to young people, on the danger of indiscriminate reading.]

## SERMON LXVIII.

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CHARITY SERMON PREACHED FOR THE BENEFIT OF  
THE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS ATTACHED TO THE VIR-  
GINIA-STREET CHAPEL, IN THE YEAR 1799.

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*He that hath the substance of this world and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him ; how doth the charity of God abide in him ? (1 John iii. 17.)*

COMPASSION for the sufferings of our fellow-creatures is a sentiment so strongly implanted in our nature, that whoever can behold the sorrows of another, and not experience a feeling of sympathy, must have resigned one of the noblest distinctions of humanity. The religion which Jesus came to establish on earth, breathes throughout a spirit of charity ; brotherly love and brotherly feeling are every where inculcated. If we are commanded to love God above all things, we are also commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves, to compassionate and relieve the wants of our indigent brethren ; and

while our Lórd reprovés with warmth the insensibility of the avaricious rich, he promises mercy and forgiveness to those who shall open their ears to the cries of the poor, and pour into their bosom plentiful alms. Obedient to the impulse of nature and the precepts of their divine Lord, the primitive Christians eagerly hastened to succour the distresses of the indigent, and displayed the most unrestrained liberality in alleviating their necessities. *The multitude of the believers*, says the inspired historian of the Acts of the Apostles, *had but one heart and one soul; neither was there any one among them that wanted. For as many as were owners of lands or houses, sold them and brought the price of the things they sold, and laid it down at the feet of the apostles; and distribution was made to every man according as he had need.* (Acts iv. 32, 34, 35.) Even in our degenerate days, when the fervour of the first believers has almost disappeared from the face of the earth, the sentiments of compassion which nature inspires, have not been so entirely subdued as not to break forth in expressions of approbation even at the recital of a humane and benevolent action. In spite of all the refinements of modern affectation, the selfishness of modern philosophism, and the ridicule thrown upon religion by modern impiety; still there are some virtues

enjoined by the gospel, which command respect and veneration even from the most abandoned. Such is the duty incumbent on the rich, of succouring from the superfluity of their worldly substance their needy fellow-creatures ; though for the most part, mankind are disposed to extol it rather as a virtue of choice, a work of supererogation, than to consider it as a duty of indispensable obligation. They who neglect it, experience no remorse of conscience ; and they who occasionally practise it, are apt to arrogate to themselves all the merit of gratuitous generosity, and applaud themselves for a virtuous exertion beyond the demand of necessary duty. By indulging this notion, they enhance in their own estimation the value of the performance, and reserve to themselves the liberty of withholding their donations when they think proper. But this is a delusion, my brethren ; and if there be any subject in regard of which the reasoning of the world is to be abandoned, it is on the subject of bestowing alms, and affording that charitable assistance to our necessitous brethren which their deficiency claims, and our competency allows us to administer. To plead the cause of poverty I this day appear before you. I shall, with this view, endeavour in the first place to convince you, that the law of God strictly enjoins the relieving of the poor by

alms-deeds ; and having established this point, I shall in the next place direct your charity to one particular object, which claims in a special manner your humane exertions.

Let it not be supposed that in handling this subject, it is my wish to wrest from you by a pious exaggeration any portion of your substance, and transfer it to the poor. I am sensible that there is a method of exalting the subject which happens to be before an audience, to a more than equitable degree of consequence, and of representing the virtue proposed for practice, as the most meritorious or most necessary. But it will not be requisite for me to have recourse to stratagem, or to attempt to work upon you by vague and indeterminate motives. I shall borrow every argument from religion and reason ; and I may venture to affirm, that upon the ground of religion and reason, the obligation of giving alms, and relieving with generous liberality the necessities of the poor, will be found to be immoveably established.

If we examine the writings both of the Old and New Testament, we shall find this obligation every where rigorously insisted on. *I command thee*, says the Lord, in the book of Deuteronomy, (xv. 11.) *to open thy hand to thy needy and poor brother that liveth in the land.* To the same effect he speaks by the mouth of

his holy servant Tobias : (iv. 7.) *Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person.* And by his prophet Isaias, (lviii. 7.) *Deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and harbourless into thy house ; when thou shalt see one naked, cover him, and despise not thy own flesh.* The precursor of the Messiah in energetic language exclaims : *Bring forth fruit worthy of penance. For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees ; every tree, therefore, that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire.* And the people asked him, saying : *what then shall we do ?* And he answering, said to them : *he that hath two coats, let him give to him that hath none ; and he that hath meat, let him do in like manner.* (Luke iii. 8, 9, 10, 11.) To apply these texts of scripture to the matter before us, no violence is requisite ; they need no exposition, they are clear and express. The language of Jesus Christ is invariably the same. Under the similitude of a man abounding in worldly wealth, yet deaf to the cries of the distressed, he condemns the transgressors of this duty ; and under the character of a charitable Samaritan, exercising mercy towards an injured and destitute stranger, he signifies his approbation of Christian liberality. He every where professes himself the patron of the poor, the

protector of the indigent ; he every where reprobates the conduct of the unfeeling, and promises the most splendid recompense to the compassionate and humane. But he not only solicits to the practice of this virtue by the promise of rewards, but expressly commands it ; and so indispensable is the precept, that the violation of it is declared to be alone sufficient to incur the sentence of eternal reprobation. In describing that great and terrible day when the *Son of Man shall come in majesty, and all nations shall be gathered together before him* ; when he shall say to those on his left hand : *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels* ; the gospel mentions no crime with which he reproaches them, but their insensibility to the distresses of the poor ; as if the whole severity of God's judgement would be confined to that alone, and Jesus come at the end of the world only to condemn to everlasting punishment those guilty of uncharitableness. *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire . . . for I was hungry, and ye gave me not to eat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me not to drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in ; naked, and ye clothed me not ; sick and in prison, and ye did not visit me.* (Matt. xxv. 41. et seq.) It was by your inhumanity to the poor and afflicted, that you

proved your contempt of me ; it was in the person of the poor, whom I consider as the living representatives of myself, that I suffered the extremity of indigence and woe, unpitied and unregarded. *Amen, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it not to one of these little ones, neither did you it to me.* (verse 45.) Shall then the rich presume to glory in their possessions, and take credit to themselves for the occasional disproportioned succour they bestow on those to whom providence has denied an equal share of earthly riches ; shall they consider their alms as a gift of pure generosity ? Alas ! it is from the deficiency of the poor that they abound : it is their duty to assist the needy sufferer, and therefore the law of God exacts it by an express command ; for the God of equity will never exclude his creatures from the joys of his kingdom for the omission of a mere counsel, but for the violation of his precepts.

Now, my brethren, let us examine upon what foundation this precept is constructed ; for from the discovery will result a powerful inducement to comply with it. The precept of alms-deeds is founded on two titles ; on the sovereignty of God on one hand, and the necessities of the poor on the other. By the primary law of nature, man appears upon the earth as its natural inhabitant ; all are constituted equal proprietors of

its fruits, and equally authorized to partake of its plenty. All are the works of the same Almighty hand, the children of the same parent, with equal claim to the enjoyments of his blessings. Our origin is the same, the same our destiny. *The rich and the poor have met one another*, says the wise man; *the Lord is the maker of them both*. (Prov. xxii. 2.) But this common possession and equal enjoyment, we are well assured can never subsist among men in the state of fallen nature; and will never be insisted upon or attempted, except by the designing invaders of social order, who delight in anarchy, and wish to annihilate the few remaining comforts, which in our fallen condition are derived to all ranks from regular subordination. It is therefore necessary amidst the corruptions of the human heart, to prevent the dreadful effects of equal power by submitting to superior constituted authority. Thus only can plunder and pillage, with all the horrors of universal discord and devastation be averted; for in the contests of ambition and avarice, force alone would be left to determine the cause of justice. It is necessary that there should be a diversity of conditions, that there should be a regular gradation in society, that some should command and others obey, that some should experience the lowliness of poverty, and others enjoy all

the pomp and grandeur of opulence. Unwelcome as may be this inequality of conditions to the poor, it is here that the providence of the Almighty stands forward in their behalf distinct and visible, with all its amiable and benign features. It is here, my God, when thy appointments appear the most rigorous and severe, that thy designs are replete with good will to men; it is here thou kindly restorest by thy parental care, what thou takest away in the inscrutable counsels of thy adorable wisdom. It was becoming the *goodness* of God to extend his protection and support to all whom he had called into existence; from the absolute *dominion* which he holds over all his creatures, he was free to provide for them according to his high will and pleasure; and his infinite *wisdom* has suggested a plan which human imbecility shall not presume to arraign or oppose. 'Tis true, he might, as heretofore, command the heavens to rain down manna upon the needy, or multiply in their hands the scanty pittance which now supplies their meal. The being who called into shape and beauty the unformed chaos of the universe, who can produce plenty from the barren soil, who each returning year gladdens our hearts with the cheering prospect of a yellow harvest, who *maketh grass to grow on the mountains, and herbs for the children of men*;

*who giveth to beasts their food, and to the young ravens that call upon him ;* (Ps. cxlvi. 8, 9.) the Lord God Omnipotent could by a thousand ways have provided for their distress, and extricated them from the rigours of chill penury. But for reasons which it is ours to venerate and adore, rather than attempt to scrutinize, he has pleased to prescribe certain regulations in the distribution of temporal goods, and impose an obligation on those who possess them, of sharing the gifts of his bounty with those who possess them not.

If it then appears that God has blessed you with the plenty of this earth, only that you may be the dispensers of his blessings, it follows that the bestowing of alms becomes a duty strictly incumbent on you ; and that the God of justice requires at your hands a tribute according to the full extent of your ability. You are the stewards and distributors of his treasures, not of your own ; and you grossly deceive yourselves if you imagine you satisfy the demands of your supreme Lord by offering a scanty relief, when your means allow a more plentiful assistance. Think not that you fulfil the duty imposed upon you by distributing the refuse of your wealth, the mere offal of luxury, the dregs of affluence, thrown out at hazard, or extorted from you by importunity. No ; if you desire

to comply with the command of God, examine well the situation of your affairs, not according to the scale of avarice or pride, but in the balance of the sanctuary; lest you become more culpable on account of what you withhold, than acceptable on account of that which you dispose of. A weighty consideration this, my brethren, and deserving your most serious attention. In almost every other concern through life, proportion is talked of and attended to: we often hear persons insisting upon the respect due to their rank, the style of living which their fortune requires, the degree of dignity, and elegance, and splendour to be observed proportionably to their situation: they strictly act up to this proportion, nay, frequently exceed it; but with respect to alms, in which proportion is a duty the most indispensable, they observe no proportion. To support the character of munificence, the pomp of ostentation, their profusion knows no bounds; where fashion leads the way, they will be lavish in their subscriptions even to prodigality; but where real distress solicits, and duty requires, they are miserably parsimonious: and in the sight of God, the humble mite of the compassionate artificer and laborious mechanic, which is spared with difficulty, but given with a cheerful heart, outweighs the larger donation

which falls from the cold unfeeling hand of niggardly opulence.

Again then let me repeat it, if God has blessed you with riches, you are not rich for yourselves only ; you are rich for the poor whom God has made dependant on your charity, that the dependance might impel you to relieve their wants and excite their gratitude. Oh, remember who they are that in plaintive accents supplicate that as a boon, which by the destination of God is their due ; and which, therefore, it is injustice to withhold from them ! Ah, they are your brethren ; they are the same flesh and blood as yourselves, gifted with the same nature, perhaps possessed of greater merit in the sight of God. They are children of the same father, called to the same adoption, to the same grace, to the same glory : heirs of God, and co-heirs of Jesus Christ. Oh ! if you have the substance of this world, shut not up your bowels from them ; acknowledge their claim, acknowledge your duty, acknowledge the strict command of God, and be diligent to obey it.

Having, I trust, satisfactorily proved that the duty of bestowing alms is of the strictest obligation, that, according to the means afforded by heaven, each one is bound to assist his indigent brethren in the Lord : having shown you that

the precept is founded in strict justice, from the consideration that God is the sovereign Lord of all things; that all blessings are derived from him, and bestowed with profusion on some, in order that their liberality may provide for the wants of the more helpless and needy: on another occasion I might proceed to inform you in what manner, to whom, and with what dispositions your alms should be distributed. But on the present I am directed, as it were, by yourselves, to forward an institution which I think you cannot support but with dispositions favorable to virtue, and which I feel bound to recommend to all the profusion of your liberality. The charity which I recommend, is of the most laudable nature, and the most beneficial tendency; it comprises two illustrious works of mercy, seeks the advantages of the soul no less than of the body, and considers the eternal as well as temporal interests of those whom it makes the objects of its concern. Its design is to rescue from poverty and ignorance, to instruct and clothe the children of poor parents; to free from corporal distress, and the more severe evils of mental wretchedness, those, who without the interposition of friendly and charitable aid, might pass through life in all the degradation of ignorance and vice. To a well-formed mind and a feeling heart, no repeated solicitation

or lengthened request is necessary to obtain assistance : the irresistible impulse of compassion urges them to relieve all who come within the sphere of their knowledge and the compass of their means. Indeed, it should seem impossible that any disposition can exist so adverse to the claims of suffering humanity, and so callous to the soft suggestions of sympathy, as not to compassionate at least, the sorrowful situation of the distressed, and wish to meliorate it. But alas ! the tear drops unobserved from the eyes of thousands in this great city, and the sigh is heaved unnoticed.

The great ones of this world, and they who are perpetually engaged in the hurry of business, eagerly pursuing, and fondly grasping at some airy bubble, which plays before their eyes, have not opportunity to behold neglected poverty undergoing the combined assault of hunger and disease ; or leisure to attend to the whispered solicitation of modest half concealed distress, which often feels a severer pang from the acceptance of an alms, than from the distress itself, which makes the acceptance necessary. Little do the proud and haughty, the votaries of pleasure, and the slaves of ambition think of the complicated afflictions, that weigh down a portion of their fellow-creatures. Could they, when seated at the festive board,

in the hour of convivial enjoyment, could they know the sorrows of the miserable hovel, or of the dank cellar, seemingly destined for the confinement of the villain or murderer, rather than for the abode of innocence: oh! if there be still alive about their heart, the smallest remains of tender sensibility, their souls would receive a shock that must force them to dash the cup of pleasure on the ground, and participate in the sorrows of their fellow-men. Could we transport them from their magnificent dwellings, where ten thousand arts combine to pamper their luxury, and swell their pride, to those baneful haunts of wretchedness and woe, and by the faint glimmering of a dubious light, just discover to them the damp corner where the forlorn sufferer lies overcome with sickness, destitute of all nourishment, or with such only as at once prolongs his sufferings and his life: could they see, on the scattered straw, a brood of helpless infants, perishing alike with cold and hunger, insensible to the wants and pains of their parent, who in all his anguish feels more for them than for himself: could they behold the unspeakable and speechless woe of the hapless mother, feeling at once the sorrows of a parent and a wife; could they see her dishevelled hair, her disordered eye, and from the

view of her exterior, catch an idea of the agony of her mind: could they, in short, contemplate the accumulated miseries of this mournful group, and not dissolve into all the tenderness of commiseration: habitual dissipation must have extinguished every virtuous principle within them; have steeled their souls to more than savage insensibility, and bereaved them of all that is amiable, decorous, and worth preserving in human nature.

It is to avert these calamities, too often attending upon poverty, that I now solicit your assistance and patronage. It is to procure, from your charity, that support and encouragement for these little ones, who, unbefriended by more splendid protection, claim your bounty. It is to give peace and consolation to the poor parent, when on the bed of death, by affording him an assurance that when he shall be no more, the kind hand of christian charity shall guard his infant offspring, and preserve them from ruin.

But the institution for which I this day plead, does not only aim at relieving the corporal necessities of the poor, but extends its influence to a superior purpose over the minds of those whom it adopts as its own. Poverty, though an evil, is less terrible in itself, than in its consequences. Close in its train are frequently seen

to follow ignorance, guilt, and infamy. If there be any who can contemplate, without concern, the gross ignorance which so frequently attends on poverty, let them consider the guilt and infamy to which it so often leads ; let them represent to their imagination those sad receptacles of intemperance, obscenity, and impiety, where man, raised by his Maker almost to an equality with the angels, is degraded almost beneath the level of the brute animal. If still indifferent concerning the diffusion of virtue, or the propagation of vice, there be one who can see, without concern, the fences of morality broken down, the distinction between moral good and evil exploded or disregarded, who can behold unmoved the religion of Jesus, the comfortable doctrines of grace and redemption contemned and discarded ; oh ! let him repair to the cell of the convict, and spend the midnight hour with the murderer who is doomed to fall a victim on the morrow to the justice of his country.

If you, my friends, by your pious liberality, have preserved one from this unhappy end, or from the crimes which deserve it ; if you have directed the pursuits, but of one, from fraud, violence, and brutal indulgence, to purer pleasures and better objects, you have acted to a noble and meritorious purpose. Congratulate with yourselves that some of those who

seemed, by their original situation in life, to be destined, at least, to ignorance and want, who, if not befriended by you, had probably lingered away life in idleness, which is the fomentor of every blackest passion, and the parent of every vice, have, by you, been snatched from the calamities that awaited them, devoted to God, instructed in his holy law and saving doctrines, and formed to industrious and virtuous habits.

Be assured, moreover, that besides benefiting the immediate objects of your bounty, you are rendering a beneficial service to your country, by diffusing the light of virtue through the lower orders of the community; you are strengthening the bonds of civil society, and contributing largely towards the peace and happiness of mankind. At a time when the spirit of delusion has gone abroad, dissolving all the ties of regulated society and subordination, instilling into the minds of men sentiments of discontent, and seducing them with the fallacious prospect of an equality, which, in this world, is absolutely unattainable; those are deserving of the thanks of their country, and the world, who endeavour to secure from contagion the inferior classes of the people, on whom the artifices of deception are generally practised with most success. While you instil the principles of religion into the breasts of these poor little ones, you do all that is in your power, to

make them worthy men, and worthy citizens, you contribute to the wealth, and add to the strength of your country ; for the wealth and strength of nations does not consist so much in the riches and number, as in the industry and virtue of their inhabitants.

It is not unusual to hear much talk concerning philanthropy and universal benevolence : but universal benevolence, without private feeling, is a chimera ; where private distress is absorbed in universal compassion, the character of universal benevolence is assumed, not possessed : it is a mask used to conceal the true character, which is universal selfishness. I believe the present expiring age, which is now hastily sinking into the grave of eternity, while it has styled itself the liberal and enlightened, and assumed to itself the decorations of every favourable quality and honorable distinction, has not merited the praise of increased virtue. It has been, at least, an age of levity and affectation ; and the revolution both in life and sentiment, which has marked its last years, seems to entitle it to a more opprobrious character. In effect, it is not under the influence of excessive refinement, that the more substantial and exalted virtues will take root and flourish, that religion can be expected to prevail, that acts of benevolence will be the most common, or generosity particularly display itself. It was before

the boasted civilization of the present day, that the destitute poor found the kindest relief from those above them, and were not induced to envy their fortunes and their titles, or to wish to see them pulled down to a level with the meanest, but were compelled to admire and applaud their virtues. Our ancestors, with unaffected modesty, have left us no panegyrics upon themselves, but deserved the highest. Their manners were blunt, but their hearts were honest ; truth and sincerity, the best accomplishments, were theirs ; their beneficence sprang from Christian principles, and they rose to actions of virtue, and enjoyed delicious satisfaction, to which the hardened heart of modern luxury and modern infidelity is a stranger. It was before the applauded improvements of modern times, that the virtuous owner of the venerable mansion, which had been the residence of his progenitors, bade the hospitable hearth to blaze, bade the gates open wide to receive his neighbouring friends, and glowed to see the threshold worn with the feet of the poor. The sick and afflicted depended not on the attendance of a hireling nurse, but the high-born dame, the illustrious matron, ladies high in rank and fashion, condescended to administer the salutary potion with their own hands, and to pour oil into the wounds of the traveller, and the poor destitute who had none to help him. Food, clothing,

and instruction, completed the beneficence of the pious matron, who appeared with a dignity in these humble offices, the loss of which, no titles, no finery, no studied graces, no fashionable airs of grandeur, can compensate. Compare with these employments and exquisite delights, the sickly pleasures of modern delicacy, the selfish indulgence of avaricious opulence, the tumultuous orgies of riot and madness. Compare with this feeling and noble character of our ancestors, the pride which scorns the situation in life immediately inferior to its own, the tyranny of fashion which would alone prevent the benevolent attention that tenderness might inspire, and acknowledge that vain are the pretensions to refinement where the manners are vitiated, and paltry the improvements of the understanding which have blunted every lively sentiment and tender feeling of the heart.

But I know, and I rejoice to know, that amidst all the devastations of corruption, the fire of British generosity is not wholly extinguished, and there are yet hearts which experience the delicious satisfaction of relieving the distressed. To such I now address myself. Remember from whom you are descended, that the same religion which inspired in them such laudable exertions, you still profess, and let it appear that it animates your conduct. Take, then, these innocent little ones under your protection:

to you they look with more than speaking eloquence: shield them against misery, and teach them, that whether by your assistance they emerge from dependence, or gain an honest livelihood by the labour of industry, while they can discharge the expences necessary to their subsistence, and persevere in the cultivation of virtue, they will be respectable in their situation, and must be happy. Let me intreat those who afford a regular subscription to this pious institution, to contribute, notwithstanding, on this day: their doing so, will excite others to imitate their example, while their neglect of it may furnish a pretext to many for withholding their bounty. Form the resolution this instant, nor let your charity be cooled during that sacred interval in which the victim of charity is immolated on this altar. Do this, and these poor children shall, with grateful hearts, acknowledge your kindness, supplicate heaven in your behalf, and the God of heaven, mindful of your performance, shower down upon you his choicest blessings through life, and reward you with the blessings of his kingdom through all eternity.

END OF VOL. II.











